

## **Responding to the scourge of malaria among refugee populations: The International Council of Nurses, the UN Agency for Refugees and Merck & Co., Inc.**

**GENEVA, 27 April 2007** – On the occasion of Africa Malaria Day, the International Council of Nurses (ICN), the UN Agency for Refugees (UNHCR) and Merck & Co., Inc. call global attention to the scandal of one million preventable deaths from malaria each year - many of those among refugee populations. Malaria is particularly devastating to refugee communities across Africa and is often the greatest single cause of illness and death. Lack of access to appropriate, current clinical information among health workers is part of the reason for these unnecessary deaths. Well informed and properly trained nurses can do much to alleviate the situation.

To ensure that nurses working with refugee populations are better informed to deal with malaria and other health challenges, the International Council of Nurses (ICN) and partners UNHCR and Merck & Co., Inc. are providing up to date information and clinical training to nurses and health workers caring for refugee populations in Zambia and Tanzania through the Nursing Library for Refugee Health. The libraries contain current nursing and health information addressing the key health challenges in these settings, including malaria. A robust training programme accompanies the libraries, with a particular focus on malaria.

“This programme is meeting a clear and urgent need for the information necessary to help combat malaria in vulnerable refugee populations”, stated Judith Oulton, Chief Executive Officer of ICN. “A well informed nursing workforce is an essential requirement if the aspirations of the Millennium Development Goal of combating malaria are to be achieved.”

“Merck is pleased to work in partnership with ICN and UNHCR and we look forward to expanding the programme to continue to combat malaria and meet the health needs of refugee populations in other countries in Africa,” declared Jeff Sturchio, Vice President, Corporate Responsibility, Merck & Co., Inc.

“These libraries and the associated training have provided a tremendous boost for the health workers who work alongside UNHCR staff in the field. The malaria training reflects the national malaria protocols and targets nurses who are often neglected when it comes to education and training opportunities.” said Olivier Delarue, Head of Corporate Partnership for the UN Refugee Agency.

Since its launch in February 2006, 62 nursing libraries have been established in refugee camps and settlements and hosting districts and over 60 related training events have accompanied the libraries. Hundreds of nurses working on the frontline of malaria diagnosis and management have participated in clinical updating on malaria. Nearly 2,000 nurses and health workers have benefited from training in the management and effective use of the libraries.

### **Editor's note**

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) is a federation of 129 national nurses' associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses for nurses since 1899, ICN is

the international voice of nursing and works to ensure quality care for all and sound health policies globally.

**For further information contact Linda Carrier-Walker**

**Tel: +41 22 908 0100 - Fax: +41 22 908 0101**

**Email: [carrwalk@icn.ch](mailto:carrwalk@icn.ch) - web site [www.icn.ch](http://www.icn.ch)**

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