Malaria fighters speak out to support DDT use

By ACSH Staff — October 26, 2012

Inspired by Rachel Carson’s anti-science book Silent Spring, the ban on the chemical DDT has cost countless lives through an upsurge in malaria. (DDT is used to control mosquito populations, which spread the disease). Now it seems the United Nations Environmental Programme is violating the Stockholm Convention by pressuring the seven remaining countries still actively spraying to stop using the cheap and effective chemical, as well as pressuring India to stop making it.

An editorial in *BMJ* [1] by Richard Tren, the director of Africa Fighting Malaria; Richard Nchabi Kamwi, Namibia’s minister of health and social services; and Amir Attaran, a professor with the University of Ottawa strong advocates of the continued use of small amounts of DDT indoors to kill malarial mosquitoes and to prevent their entry into homes calls the UNEP’s actions premature and illegal.

Instead, UNEP should follow the Stockholm Convention and encourage measured steps, probably requiring decades of research, to bring about safe, effective, and affordable alternatives that one day will make DDT redundant, they write. Racing toward DDT elimination, as UNEP is doing, is ill considered and will undoubtedly cause much harm.

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