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DDT house to house spraying starts next year

2007-03-06 09:23:05
By Pascal Shao

Tanzania will start indoor residual spraying of Dipolrodiphenyl Tricloroethane, DDT, a pesticide used in the fight against malaria.

The government has reverted to DDT use after the World Health Organisation (WHO) last year endorsed its use in the fight against malaria, saying there is no health risk posed by its application.

National Malaria Control Programme Manager, Dr. Alex Mwita told The Guardian in an exclusive interview yesterday in Dar es Salaam that they were going to re-register DDT then carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) study.

‘Both process will be completed by the end of this year,’ he said.

Dr. Mwita said that the government had already commissioned the National Environment Management Council (NEMC) to conduct the study.

He said that both the study and re-registration would be completed by the end of this year, after which the spraying of households would begin.

He said that the decision had been arrived at due to increasing drug resistance by malaria parasites.

‘The programme has been budgeted for in the next financial year. The whole process needs planning on matters such as training of spraying personnel and the actual implementation,’ he said.

He said that DDT would be distributed for the sole purpose of indoor residual spraying in households with the aim of controlling malaria.

‘The pesticide is tightly controlled by the government so that it will not be reverted into other uses such as agriculture and fishing,’ he said.

According to the reports from the National Malaria Control Programme (NMCP), more than 50 per cent of all malaria death cases involve patients who attend formal health services during their final stages of illness.

Dr Mwita said if people were to attend the health facilities at the early stages, their lives would have been saved.

The NEMC Director of Environmental Communication, Communication and Outreach, Anna Maembe, confirmed that the council had already received the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare’s application to conduct an EIA on re-introduction of DDT for residual spraying in the households.

‘A study will be conducted in malaria epidemic-prone districts where the malaria occurrences have not existed and people in those areas have no immunity, such as the highland regions,’ she said.

Maembe said the ministry requested NEMC to conduct the study in the districts of Muleba and Karagwe in Kagera Region and Lushoto in Tanga.

She said that climatic changes could be attributed to the spread of malaria vector in cold areas such as the highlands.

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However, the Stockholm convention on persistent organic pollutants (POPs) has listed DDT among the restricted chemicals which can be strictly used for focused purposes.

Some African countries, however, have continued using it, although most have either switched to other kinds of insecticide or pursued a strategy of issuing insecticide-impregnated bed nets.

South Africa is one country that originally banned the use of DDT.

However, a decade later, mosquitoes developed resistance to the substitute compounds, thus compelling the South African government to revert to DDT use.

Environmental activists all over the world have been frustrating DDT usage in malaria control programmes, campaigning that the chemical has hazardous effects on the habitat and living creatures.

▶ SOURCE: *GUARDIAN*

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