



FIRST PERSON

Fighting Back Against Malaria in Burundi

Sleeping under insecticide-treated bed net saves lives



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“That net changed our lives. For the first time in years I slept through the night.”

—Genevieve Ndagijimana

Telling Our Story
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Washington, DC 20523-1000
<http://stories.usaid.gov>

My name is Genevieve Ndagijimana. I am 34 years old and live with my husband, our four children and my late brother’s two children in Muzinda, a small town near Burundi’s capital Bujumbura. Muzinda is a flat open plain that allows us to grow the rice that is our staple food.

I always encourage people to use their mosquito nets because mosquitoes have no mercy-- they kill. I have lost family and have suffered a lot from the bugs. But now my family and I are sleeping safe and sound and I also want others to sleep safely.

We have not always lived here. We are from the north but were forced to flee during Burundi’s 1993-2004 Civil War. I had two children and was pregnant with my third. I remember always being sick back then, mostly with fevers from malaria. My husband kept pushing me to go to the hospital, but no matter how many times I went for treatment, the sickness returned.

When my baby was born I was so happy but when he was a year and a half he came down with a terrible malaria fever. Shortly after, he died. The same happened with my next pregnancy. Those were horrible years. I used to stay up all night chasing away mosquitoes and worrying every time I saw a mosquito bite one of my children. But it seemed like whatever I did, we would get sick. When I was pregnant with my fifth child I went to the local health center to see if they could help. That’s where I met Mrs. Therese Kaburungu, the health center manager. She told me why it was important for me and my children to sleep under a mosquito net. She gave me a mosquito net that was free, a gift from the American people.

That net changed our lives. For the first time in years, I slept through the night – not worrying about my children or being bitten. When we woke up, none of us had any bites, and since we started using the mosquito net none of us has become ill.

Since March, 2010, USAID has distributed over 300,000 insecticide-treated nets in Burundi, and is supporting a large scale-up in the numbers of pregnant women and children under five who sleep under this powerful life-saver.