



CHINTAN

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Prevention of malaria is a very important step for the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare but the concern for the environment should not be left behind. The Ministry has floated a tender for 10 million mosquito bed nets and each net has to be packed in plastic bags. Though when distributed, these nets will reach the end user without the plastic to make sure that they are not being resold by the users. (www.rites.com or www.mohfw.nic.in)

According to the tender, all the nets shall be individually packed in plastic bag and 25/50 nets depending on size shall be placed over on another and tied with cotton / polyester/nylon/HDPE, 2-3 mm diameter twine/rope to form a bundle. 2/4 such bundles shall be wrapped in low density polyethylene film of 60um thickness (150 gauge) or any other suitable material as agreed to between the Purchaser and the supplier. The bale shall be stitched by HDPE/Nylon twine/rope with not less than 12 stitches per dm taking care that net do not per pierced. The bale shall be strapped along with clips. (National Vector Borne Disease Control Project).

This system will produce approximately one extra plastic bag for every 12 twelve Indians, or 10 million trashed plastic bags. Most of these nets will go to the rural areas in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa, Maharashtra and approximately 6 other states where there already exist sanitation problems. This extra manufacture of plastics would accumulate to the problems of drainage and consequent health issues among the rural poor, where waste collection system do not exist. Besides, plastic bags themselves accumulate water and offer a breeding ground to mosquito.

Many states and cities in India have banned or restricted plastic bags because of the difficulty of handling them and the health problems they cause. This packaging will undo such efforts.

Chintan suggests the use of bio-degradable, tamper/weather proof material without individual plastic bag in bulk packaging of 20, 30 or 50 nets in order to minimize the damage.

We support the drive to distribute anti-malaria mosquito nets and recognize that malaria is a severe problem that must be aggressively tackled. But we urge the Ministry to reconsider this packaging, as it does not change the quality of delivery. If the plans continue, this tender will create waste of 10 million plastic bags with insecticide contamination equal to approximately 500 MT of waste for the rural India. The decision must be taken before the last date of May 24th, 2012.

For more details, please contact:

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