

## Letter from the Editor

While the public's attention is focused on the rising threat of noncommunicable diseases and emerging infectious diseases, old enemies that devastate the health of the poorest countries in the world sometimes fall out of sight.

However, in December 2006, several of the world's most powerful government, nongovernmental and private organizations came together to announce an array of new initiatives to fight malaria worldwide. At a White House Summit in Washington, a high-profile conference was hosted to launch new programmes in malaria and announce that 25 April 2007 will be designated as "Malaria Awareness Day".

On the eve of the White House Summit, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation committed \$83.5 million in new grants to expand malaria control, research and advocacy efforts. Part of the money will go to the World Health Organization (WHO) Roll Back Malaria Partnership and part of it to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which also announced a major increase in the number of insecticide-treated bednets available to families at risk from malaria. It is estimated that the nets will save the lives of 371 000 children over the next three years.

In the same week as the Summit, Dr Arata Kochi, Director of the WHO Global Malaria Department, made an important press announcement to environmentalists that WHO is challenging the decades old taboo on the use of the insecticide DDT. WHO is now recommending that indoor residual spraying with DDT and other insecticides will again play a major role in its efforts to fight the disease.

How have we become informed about the value of simple, cheap precautions such as bednets and indoor spraying? Through the efforts of researchers who provide the evidence on which policy-makers can act. Here at the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (EMRO) of WHO, research in malaria is one of the key priorities of the small grants scheme for Operational Research in Tropical and Other Communicable Diseases. Readers would kindly note that proposals are invited for the 2007 round of research grants and the deadline for applications is 14 February 2007. More information is available from EMRO website at: [http://www.emro.who.int/TDR/Media/Word/TDR\\_Small\\_Grants\\_Scheme.doc](http://www.emro.who.int/TDR/Media/Word/TDR_Small_Grants_Scheme.doc)

