



Trees for the Future
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PRESS RELEASE
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Trees for the Future: Reducing the Spread of Malaria Through Agroforestry
Organization explains three ways to fight deadly water-borne disease through tree-planting

Silver Spring, Md. – In honor of World Malaria Day on April 25, Trees for the Future, a leading nonprofit organization providing economic opportunity and improving livelihoods worldwide through seed distribution and agroforestry training, says that tree-planting can play a vital role in the prevention of malaria by helping minimize the breeding habitat for malaria-vector mosquitoes while at the same time increasing the locale for its predators.

“We already know that planting trees can help stop soil erosion, increase crop yields and nourish the land, but we are now also learning that planting trees can help stop the spread of malaria,” says Gorav Seth, head of international programs for Trees for the Future who coordinates the organization’s projects in 30 countries worldwide. “People think of tree-planting as just being good for the environment, but it also helps people, sometimes in ways that aren’t obvious.”

As nonprofits and governments around the world work to prevent this deadly disease, experts on agroforestry with Trees for the Future point out that planting trees can help reduce the incidence of malaria in three major ways:

- Reduces standing water. Trees absorb substantial amounts of water through their root systems reducing areas of standing water where mosquitoes breed. Water pooling is often exacerbated due to poor filtration into the soil as a result of deforestation. By planting trees you greatly increase the absorption of water into the soil, therefore decreasing the incidence of malaria.
- Increases habitat of natural predators. Planting trees helps increase the biodiversity of an area by providing important habitat for natural predators of mosquitoes such as birds and spiders, which can help fight the spread of malaria.
- Produces a natural mosquito repellent. The neem tree (*Azadirachta indica*), which Trees for the Future widely plants in Africa and India, produces a natural insecticide which can be easily extracted from leaves and seeds and made into soaps, creams, and powders that are effective at repelling and controlling mosquitoes. Neem can also be planted around compounds and villages to reduce the prevalence of mosquitoes in areas where people live. “When we talk about ways to prevent the spread of malaria we usually talk about mosquito nets, bug repellents and prophylactic medicine,” adds Seth. “But the role of tree-planting and other agroforestry initiatives definitely needs to be part of the conversation.”

About Trees for the Future: Since 1989, Trees for the Future has been helping communities around the world plant trees. Through seed distribution, agroforestry training, and in-country technical assistance, it has empowered rural groups to restore tree cover to their lands, protect the environment and help to preserve traditional livelihoods and cultures for generations. To learn more, visit <http://www.treesftf.org>.

Watch the Trees documentary video here! <http://www.treesftf.org/resources/tftfvideo.htm>