NOTES ON JOB AIDS FOR MALARIA RAPID DIAGNOSTIC TESTS (RDTs)

These generic job aids were developed to help community health workers correctly use malaria rapid diagnostic tests (RDTs). WHO and its partners are still working to improve the design. You may wish to use these interim job aids as a basis for design of field versions.

To use these job aids, you should:

• Adapt the instructions to fit the specific RDT you are using.
• Translate the instructions into the health workers’ local language.
• Test and modify your adapted job aid to fit with local practices.

Even if your instructions are clear and complete, studies show that a job aid alone does not guarantee good results. Users will need some training.

Important notes for training:

• Train users with real RDTs, not just pictures.
• Assess users’ ability to interpret RDTs using real RDT test results. Include negative results, weak positive results, and invalid results. *
• Have users practice collecting the correct volume of blood.
• Stress the importance of waiting the correct amount of time before reading RDT results. †
• Remind users to:
  - transport and store RDTs in cool conditions.
  - avoid direct exposure to the sun.
  - check the expiry date.
  - make sure the RDT package is sealed (unopened).
  - wait until just before use to open the package.
• Train all users, even those skilled at preparing blood slides. Studies suggest that people with prior experience diagnosing malaria may actually be more likely to make mistakes.
• Emphasize blood safety and safe disposal of sharps.

Notes on modifying the generic job aid pictures:

• Be sure that drawings show the actual shape of the RDT you will use.
• Be sure that drawings show the correct number of test lines for the RDT you will use.
• Whenever possible, use realistic colours (red for blood; red-purple for control and test lines).
• Consider using digital photos of real RDT results if photos can be clearly reproduced.
• Important note: the examples show a straw for blood transfer. Modify for the product used.

Using rapid diagnostic test results:

Health services should establish clear guidelines for acting on RDT results. These guidelines should spell out what steps to take when a health worker suspects that results are incorrect. In severe cases where the RDT is negative but symptoms are highly suggestive, it is appropriate for health workers to provide anti-malaria treatment while performing additional investigation for other illnesses. Symptoms and signs should always be considered, in addition to the RDT result, when diagnosing malaria.

* Invalid results occur when no control line appears on an RDT. When this happens, the RDT should be discarded and a fresh RDT used to conduct a new test.
† Studies show that users often read test results too soon. This can lead to false negative diagnoses.