

WORLD TRENDS

DDT Saves Africans, But Ruins Livelihoods

By JOSH KRON

ATEK, Uganda — When the American government began an organic-farming program to help rural economies here, Bosco Acope prospered: the half hectare he used to farm became three.

But the very next year, with Uganda facing unrelenting malaria, its government teamed up with the United States to use chemical insecticide sprays — including DDT — to combat the disease.

“The whole village was sprayed,” Mr. Acope said.

His produce could no longer be

increased infant deaths.

Still, the risks of not spraying are clear as well. In Africa, malaria kills 2,000 children each day, according to Unicef, and costs \$12.5 billion in lost incomes each year, the Malaria Consortium says.

In the Apac region of Uganda, the United States focused on two conflicting agendas: developing organic farming and eradicating malaria.

“Organic farming provided a good price at low production costs for farmers; however, it was exactly in those areas they also supported spraying of DDT,” said Michael Brander of BioVision, a Swiss organization focused on eco-friendly economic development.

Now Uganda’s constitutional court is expected to hear a case brought by a Ugandan environmental organization against the government that asserts that officials failed to meet World Health Organization standards for using DDT.

But given the prevalence of the disease, “chemical spraying with strict monitoring and supervision is one of the most effective measures to control malaria in high-risk areas,” said a United States Embassy official.

The village of Atek is a place where mangoes can be eaten directly from trees and children walk to school shoeless. Farming is a way of life, and the American aid agency’s organic-farming program gave the village a competitive edge.

When the DDT was sprayed, organic-farming companies say they



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The use of DDT in Uganda has eliminated the income Bosco Acope and his family derived from growing produce that could be certified as organic.

Malaria eradication and organic farming clash in Uganda.

certified as organic and, just like that, his market was gone.

Once condemned as poisonous and inhumane, DDT has staged a recent comeback.

In 2006, the World Health Organization endorsed DDT’s use on indoor walls as a cheap and long-lasting weapon in the fight against malaria.

Studies have linked DDT to diabetes and breast cancer. One examination of the consequences of using DDT to fight malaria in sub-Saharan Africa said the chemical might have

lost the bulk of their supply immediately.

The organic-farming companies sued the Ugandan government, and a high court issued a temporary injunction on the use of DDT in 2008, but the case was later dismissed.

The American government says it has not returned to using DDT in Uganda since the court ruling. Now, the main chemical being used in the insecticide-spraying program, bendiocarb, has also been discontinued in the United States, and it is considered to be more expensive and less

efficient than DDT.

“At a certain point bendiocarb will fail,” said Richard Onen, a field coordinator for Abt Associates, a business contracted to carry out the indoor spraying program. “I cannot rule out the possibility of using DDT. It is cheap.”

But there are questions as to how well DDT worked in Uganda in the first place. “Mosquitoes had become resistant to the DDT,” said Kale Dickinson, a nursing officer at a local health center. “DDT was not effective.”

For Lillian Etime, Mr. Acope’s neighbor and a mother of six, the death of her chickens during the first round of spraying set off alarm bells. “We feared that the children could touch the wall,” where spray was administered, “and they could die,” said Ms. Etime, 32. Ultimately, it was business that suffered the most, she said, with her revenue reduced by more than half.

Mr. Acope, who is helping sue the government, remained stoic. “I am now working on my own,” he said. “Still growing.”

Brazil’s Nannies Aspire to Middle Class

By ALEXEI BARRIONUEVO

SÃO PAULO, Brazil — In a decade working as a nanny, Andreia Soares finally joined Brazil’s middle class.

With the money she saved, she bought a two-bedroom apartment with granite kitchen countertops and a small veranda, a house for her mother, land for her brother and a Louis Vuitton purse.

Later this year, with her monthly salary of \$3,100, which she earns caring for a toddler in an upscale neighborhood, she plans to buy a \$39,000 car — in cash.

While she has done better than many of her counterparts, Ms. Soares, 39, is part of a nanny revolution that is shattering the colonial stereotype of inexpensive but dedicated domestic help in Latin America. As their expectations for a better quality of life rise, nannies are increasingly seeking to work for the very wealthy and becoming less affordable for many middle-class families.

Fading fast are the days when

white-frocked nannies worked for a menial salary, with only two days off every 15 days. Better-qualified nannies are refusing to sleep over or work weekends, and they are demanding salaries that are two to four times what they were paid just five years ago.

The income of domestic employees in Brazil, including nannies and

In São Paulo, low-cost domestic help grows rarer.

maids, rose 34 percent from 2003 to 2009 — more than twice the average increase for all of Brazil’s active workers — said Marcelo Neri, an economist at the Getúlio Vargas Foundation. At the same time, he said, the hours of domestic employees fell by 5 percent to 36.2 hours a week.

“Today, what I need from a nanny

job is different than before,” said Ieda Barreto, 32. Seven years ago, she was making about \$400 a month and had only 24 hours off every Thursday. Today she expects to make almost \$1,900 working Monday to Friday, and she charges \$250 on weekends.

Once isolated, nannies now trade information about the market and working conditions through e-mail, blogs and social networks.

“It’s a mafia,” said Jacqueline Szwarc, 44, a psychologist, adding that she has been lucky to hold onto the same nanny for 10 years.

Michelle Tchernobilsky, 29, has changed nannies about 10 times in the past year, searching for someone affordable yet qualified. Cutting the nanny from her budget is not an option for Ms. Tchernobilsky, a public relations manager, but neither is paying a salary that she considers exorbitant. “We are hostages,” she said.

Rodrigo Constantino, an economist at Graphus Capital, said a lack of investment in education in Brazil would prevent many domestic workers from finding better-paying work,



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Andreia Soares’s training has enabled her to earn a bigger salary. She played with her client’s child in São Paulo.

and salary demands could stoke inflation.

Still, nannies like Ms. Soares are investing in themselves. It began nine years ago when she took a nursing course. She followed up two years later with specialized nanny courses. Next year she plans to take English lessons.

After two years working in New York, she found her way to the home of Fernanda Parodi, a lawyer married to an executive in São Paulo.

Ms. Parodi says she has no complaints about Ms. Soares’s salary, though she is counseling her to buy a cheaper car.

“I don’t ever want her to leave,” said Ms. Parodi, 38.

Where some mothers see a debilitating revolution, she sees social progress. “If Brazil wants to move beyond a third-world country, then it needs to allow everyone to participate in the growth,” Ms. Parodi said. “It’s the price you pay for progress.”

Myrna Domit contributed reporting.