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Malaria Ambassador for Africa Commemorates the World Malaria Day in Mtwara



Yvonne Chakachaka

Africa's malaria ambassador and renowned entertainer, Yvonne Chaka Chaka commemorated the World Malaria Day in Tanzania, together with national and local leaders as well as residents of Mtwara region. This year the World Malaria Day was nationally observed in Mtwara region on 25th April. The theme for this year's event was "Counting Malaria Out". This theme was used as a reminder to the commitment made by African Heads of States and Governments on 25th April 2000, in Abuja, Nigeria, to halve the burden of malaria in the continent by the year 2010.

During the commemorations in Mtwara, Chaka Chaka visited the selected Reproductive and Child Health clinics to

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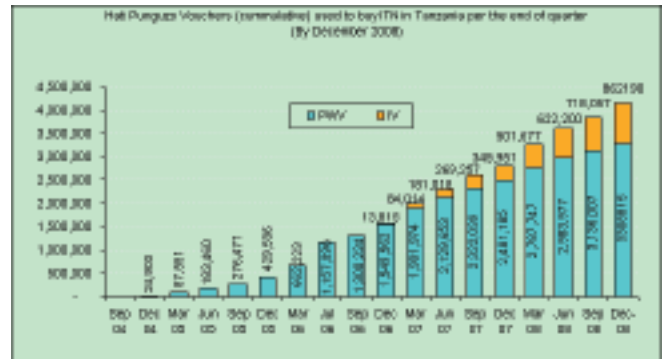
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TNVS Beneficiaries surpass 4.3 Million

The Tanzania National Voucher Scheme (TNVS), commonly known in Kiswahili as *Hati Punguzo*, continues to protect more pregnant women and their children from malaria. By January 2009, over 4.3 million pregnant women and infants had used their *Hati Punguzo* vouchers to obtain Insecticide Treated Nets (ITN) at a subsidised price. This represents an overall increase of over 8% compared to the cumulative figure of pregnant woman and infant vouchers redeemed by the end of September 2008.

Through the scheme, every pregnant woman attending antenatal care clinic and every infant aged 0-9 months gets a discount voucher valued at Tsh. 3,250/=, which

covers the cost of an insecticide treated net bundled with an insecticide treatment kit. However, plans are under way to up grade the scheme through a "Keep-up Strategy" which will enable the target beneficiary to purchase a Long Lasting Insecticide Treated Net (LLIN) at a fixed top-up price of only Tsh.500. Implementation of the Keep-up Strategy is set to begin later this year.



Health Minister launches U5 Catch-up Campaign

The Minister for Health and Social Welfare, Prof. David Mwakyausa, launched the Under-five Catch Up Campaign in Mbeya Region on 2nd March, 2009 during the Annual Conference for Regional and District Medical Officers. The launch follows a successful pilot process of the campaign conducted in Mpanda District—Rukwa Region in September 2008.

The national roll-out process is set to begin in Mtwara and Lindi Regions. The major implementing activities of the campaign including mapping of the under-fives through a

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The Minister for Health and Social Welfare, Prof. David Mwakyausa hands an Long Lasting Insecticide Treated Net to a mother of an under five child at the Launch of the Under 5 Catch Up Campaign in Mbeya region.



Tanzania National Voucher Scheme



United Republic of Tanzania



National Malaria Control Programme

Editor's Note

We are delighted to bring to you the 10th edition of *Natnets News* after a short break in our production schedule. We also want to thank all those readers who sent us various enquiries and comments regarding the Newsletter, for the period we were not able to bring you the edition due to circumstance beyond our control. We very much appreciate your loyal readership and support!

In this edition, we focus on the Under-five Catch Up Campaign, recently launched by the Minister for Health and Social Welfare, during the District and Regional Medical Officers Annual Conference held in Mbeya. Through the campaign, 7.2 million under-five children in Tanzania Mainland will benefit from free distribution of long lasting insecticide treated bed nets, while the rest of the population will benefit from free mass re-treatment of ordinary bed nets - thanks to the generous support by the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM); the World Bank; Presidential Malaria Initiative (PMI), Malaria No More; and Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC).

We also remind our readers of other complimentary initiatives in scaling-up ITN use especially among groups most vulnerable to malaria. The initiatives include the Pregnant Woman Voucher, Infant Voucher, Keep-up Strategy and the Communication and Malaria Initiative in Tanzania (COMMIT) Project which aim at overcoming barriers in the fight against malaria through behaviour change communication interventions.

This reminder wouldn't have come at a better time than now, as we prepare to commemorate the World Malaria Day on April 25, the day that African Heads of States and Governments resolved in Abuja-Nigeria in 2000, to halve the burden of malaria in the continent, by the year 2010.

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Health Minister launches U5 Catch-up Campaign

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comprehensive process involving the Local Government authorities; training of key actors at the district and sub-district levels; distribution of long lasting insecticide treated bed nets; mass re-treatment of the existing net crops for all community members; community sensitization and mobilisation to participate in the campaign, and monitoring and evaluation of the whole process.

The campaign will see 7.2 million bed nets distributed to under-five children



A section of mothers who attended the launching ceremony of U5 Catch-up Campaign.

and 6.5 million ordinary belonging to the rest of community members, treated using retreated using insecticide with a binder (*NGAO ilijoboreshwa*), in the whole of Tanzania Mainland.

Studies have shown that the use of LLINs reduces infant deaths by 30% and anaemia in pregnant women by 60%. Therefore the campaign is envisaged to avert several potential malaria related deaths among the under-fives and other vulnerable population groups. The key partners who are implementing the campaign are the Malaria Control Programme, (NMCP) which provides overall programme coordination, World Vision Tanzania which is in charge of training of key implementers at the district and sub-district levels; Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA), responsible for the distribution and issuing of the LLINs; Population Services International (PSI-Tanzania) which responsible for behaviour change communication; Campaign International, responsible for registration of net beneficiaries; and Ifakara Health Institute, responsible for monitoring and evaluation.

The campaign is funded by the Global Fund to fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria; the World Bank, Presidential Malaria Initiative (PMI), Malaria No More, and the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC).

During the launch in Mbeya, the Health Minister, Professor David Mwakyusa mentioned that the Under-five Catch Up Campaign will be followed by a "Universal Coverage Campaign" through which 14 million LLINs will be distributed to every family. The Campaign will enable every household to have an average of 2-3 bed nets.

Swiss Government extends Support to ITN Cell

The Government of Switzerland has reaffirmed its long-standing support, by signing a bilateral agreement with the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania through which the country will benefit from another grant of Tsh.2, 714, 600,000/= (CHF 2,450,000) for a period of three years (from 2008 - 2011) to support co-ordination of the National Insecticide Treated Nets (NATNETS) Programme through the ITN Cell of the National Malaria Control Programme.

The agreement, which was signed on 17th December 2008 on behalf of both governments by His Excellency Ambassador Adrian Schlaepfer and the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, Mr. Ramandhan Khijjah; marks another extension of Switzerland's cooperation with Tanzania's health sector.

The support is in recognition of the important role the ITN Cell plays in co-ordinating different aspects of the NATNETS Programme including net re-

treatment and distribution; behaviour change communication interventions; and delivery of targeted subsidies for insecticide treated nets to the groups most vulnerable to malaria (pregnant women and under-five children) through the Tanzania Voucher Scheme (TNVS).

The Swiss Government also recognises that successful control of malaria especially among pregnant women and under-five children is critical to attainment of the Abuja target of halving the burden of malaria by 2010, as well as realisation of the health-related Millennium Development Goals

(MGDs) by 2015.

Therefore, the objective of the grant is to contribute to reduction in malaria related morbidity and mortality especially among the groups most vulnerable to the disease. The national target is to ensure that by 2011, 80% of pregnant women and 80% of under-five children are protected from malaria through sustainable use of insecticide treated bed nets.

The objective is to contribute to reduction in malaria related morbidity and mortality especially among the most vulnerable groups

Protecting Groups Most Vulnerable to Malaria ...

The Tanzania National Voucher Scheme (TNVS) is an initiative of Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and its Partners, committed to the goal of reducing malaria related morbidity and mortality by at least 80% by year 2013. The objective of TNVS is to protect the groups most vulnerable to malaria (pregnant women and under-five children) by increasing their access to insecticide treated bed nets (ITNs) at a highly subsidized price. This is done using a set of interventions which include the Pregnant Woman Voucher, Infant Voucher, Under-five Catch-up Campaign and the Keep-up Strategy which cuts across all the initiatives. These initiatives primarily focus on increasing access, affordability and use of ITNs among the groups most vulnerable to malaria. These interventions interlink and therefore complement each other towards realization of the overall objective of TNVS. Thus, in this section, we profile the initiatives by highlighting their individual objectives and linkages in addressing the issues of accessibility, affordability and coverage ITN use among the groups most vulnerable to malaria.

Pregnant Woman and Infant Vouchers

In October 2004 the TNVS officially launched the Pregnant Woman Voucher (PWV), commonly known by its Kiswahili translation as *Hati Punguzo ya Wajawazito*. The objective of the initiative is to protect pregnant women and their infants from malaria by increasing their access to ITNs at a subsidized price. Under this scheme, every pregnant woman is eligible to receive a voucher at her first antenatal care visit. The voucher is valued at Tsh 3,250/= which can be used by women as part-payment for an ITN from any retailer who is participating in the scheme.

The PWV was initially assumed to directly cover both the pregnant woman

and her infant. However, different studies have shown that most women do not sleep with their children especially after one year, thus these children still remained vulnerable due to exposure to malaria transmitting mosquitoes.

Subsequently, a second voucher was introduced in 2006 to directly offer protection to infants by increasing their access to ITNs at a highly subsidised price. Thus, the Infant Voucher (IV) initiative began as a complementary intervention to PWV.

Through this scheme, every child aged 9 months is eligible to receive a voucher

for purchase of an ITN upon their measles vaccination. By January 2009, 862,190 children had obtained ITNs using the Infants Voucher. The initiative is currently implemented in all regions of Tanzania Mainland. However, there have been concerns that since an ordinary ITN obtained through the IV, can last for about two years only the child may be left without protection from the 3rd year of life. Thus, the Under-5 Catch-up Campaign has been introduced to offer protection to all under-5 children, with LLINs.

Under 5 Catch up Campaign

In Tanzania, malaria accounts for 43% of all under-five outpatient attendances, 35% of under-five hospital admissions and 37% of under-five deaths. In its efforts to cut malaria deaths and ensure that large margins of the vulnerable groups are protected, the NMCP in collaboration with stakeholders introduced the Under 5 Catch up Campaign (U5CC) in 2008. This campaign is an expansion to the existing voucher subsidies i.e. the Pregnant Woman and Infant Vouchers (IV).

The Catch-Up Campaign is a one-time effort by the government to distribute more than seven million free Long Lasting Insecticides Treated Nets (LLINs) to all children under the age of 5 in Tanzania mainland. The goal of this campaign is to rapidly increase bed net ownership and coverage rates for this key vulnerable group from the current level of 30% up to 80% or higher.

The U5CC supports the current voucher scheme by covering children who are not qualified for the IV to be able to receive LLINs. The campaign

also introduces for the first time in Tanzania, mass Distribution of LLINs which can last up to 5 years without being retreated, hence providing a much longer protection. The U5CC is combined with mass re-treatment re-retreatment of ordinary nets using insecticide with a binder (*NGAO iliyoboreshwa*). This

exercise aims at extending protection to the whole community by increasing the ability of the existing nets to repel mosquitoes through re-treatment.

The U5CC was officially piloted in Mpanda District in September 2008. The pilot campaign was launched by the Prime Minister, Hon. Mizengo Pinda, and is now being rolled out throughout the country. The implementation of this campaign will be complemented by the Keep-up Strategy, designed to focus more on the issues of affordability by allowing pregnant women and the children to purchase

LLINs at a fixed top-up price of only Tsh.500/= using the Pregnant woman and Infant Vouchers.



The Prime Minister, Hon. Mizengo Pinda hands an LLIN to the Under 5 in Mpanda District.

The Keep up Strategy

This strategy focuses on promoting the constant use of LLINs through the voucher system. The strategy aims at addressing the challenge of unaffordable top-up prices which has been a major barrier to accessing insecticide treated nets. This strategy will upgrade the Pregnant Woman and Infant Voucher schemes, by reducing the top-up price for purchasing LLINs to a fixed amount of only TSH 500/- throughout the country. Voucher distribution to the eligible groups will be conducted using the same system through RCH clinics.

Implementation of the strategy is planned to start in mid 2009 and will continue for a period of two years. The strategy will allow a considerably equitable access to long lasting insecticide treated bed nets by pregnant women and their children.

All of these initiatives are planned and implemented by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare through the National Malaria Control Programme in collaboration with the district councils and partners. The interventions are funded by the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM), the World Bank, and US President's Malaria Initiative (PMI).

Through the Keep up Strategy LLINs will be available at a top up price of only Tsh. 500 county wide.

Malaria Ambassador for Africa Commemorates the World Malaria Day in Mtwara

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witness how pregnant women and children were issued with ITN vouchers (Hati Punguzo) for protection against malaria. She also met with the Malaria focal persons and regional and district leaders for familiarisation of malaria situation in Mtwara and Tanzania as a whole.

During the familiarisation ceremony, the malaria ambassador was stunned by the high malaria mortality rates in the region. She however, reminded the local leaders that, while the central government and donor interventions are necessary to achieve the Abuja targets and cut down malaria mortality and

morbidity rates; local leaders and community members need to play an active role in advocating the use of preventive measures such as ITNs and mobilising and educating people so as to change the negative mindsets and seek care and treatment whenever they feel the symptoms of the disease.

Statistics show that, more than 80, 000 infants die every year from malaria and related complications, making malaria the number one killer disease in the country. Mtwara and Lindi are the most affected regions with malaria in the country. Other regions that are also mostly affected include Kagera, Mwanza and Mara in the Lake Zone.

Overcoming the Barriers to ITN Use

Over the past four years Tanzania has witnessed substantial investments in delivering malaria control intervention such as Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs) to the communities. Although there have been outstanding achievements in accessibility, affordability and coverage of ITNs, there are still barriers and challenges in using ITNs/LLINs. These barriers are manifested in varied forms, from colour and shape preferences, to cultural and religious beliefs, perceptions and practices, whereby bed nets have often been compared to burial cloths or graves. While these preferences and perceptions may not pose such a big threat, they largely influence bed net use among households. This, to an extent, undermines the disease prevention efforts by leaving some of the target groups still exposed to the risk of getting malaria.

In addressing these barriers, the Communication and Malaria Initiative in Tanzania (COMMIT) is in implementing culturally relevant Behaviour Change Communication campaigns, which are being disseminated using interpersonal communication (IPC) channels so as to provide appropriate knowledge and promote the use of ITNs/LLINs in communities where cultural and religious perceptions affect the use. Community based IPC is mainly carried out by trained community change agents through activities such as discussion groups, one-on-one outreach, small group workshops, as well as individual, group or community dialogues.

Through these approaches, targeted messages which are designed to influence change of specific behaviours are discussed and several myths as well as perceptions are confronted by comparing them to facts and by communicating the economic and health benefits of using ITNs/LLINs. The Communication and Malaria Initiative in Tanzania (COMMIT) is a malaria behaviour change project with the objective of building the ongoing malaria control initiatives by ensuring that Tanzanian communities, households and individuals are equipped with relevant knowledge and skills about the malaria disease so that they can take advantage of the available life saving measures.

Mpanda DMO Shares the Campaign Experience

Mpanda District successfully piloted the Under 5 Catch up Campaign in September 2008. The three day exercise involved distribution of LLINs and re-treatment of old nets. Dr. Yahaya Husein, the District Medical Officer (DMO) shares with Natnets News factors that led to the successful implementation of the campaign.



facilitate smooth running during the campaign. Pre-registration was conducted for all children under 5 as well as nets that required re-treatment. This was accompanied by community mobilization and sensitization exercises.

What were the major challenges?

Mpanda is a very large but sparsely populated District, with poor infrastructure hence some areas were very hard to reach. As a result of this, there are some wards where children were not registered on time.

Also due significant presence of pastoralist communities, some children missed either the registration or distribution process. Other wards were affected by misunderstanding of the intentions of the campaign, which contributed to under registration, hence distribution of fewer LLINs than planned, to the target beneficiary.

What strategy has the District put in place to reach children who did not receive LLINs?

Extra nets remaining in the ongoing distribution in other districts in Rukwa region will be given to those children who missed the distribution in Mpanda. If this will not accommodate all eligible children who didn't receive nets, then their details will be taken and forwarded to the DMO for further action in consultation with the NMCP.

What are your comments on the campaign?

The campaign is an effective way to increase access and coverage of LLINs for protection against malaria transmitting mosquitoes. Also the collaboration has proven to be an effective way of implementing such a diverse activity as it increases efficiency and timely delivery of needed goods and services.

Mpanda is among the biggest districts in Tanzania; how did you prepare for the campaign?

We had 1 month of preparations whereby, the District Council, NMCP and partners came up with an action plan which defined roles for each partner and guided the entire implementation. Training on registration, re-treatment, distribution of nets, and reporting was provided to Regional and Council Health Management Teams, Ward and Village Executive Officers, and volunteers to



Children in Mpanda District display the nets immediately after the distribution exercise of the LLINs.

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