

Savings for the poor

An example of the cost effectiveness of malaria prevention

Elvanisi Nyanjura and Alice Kangume, aged two and a half and five years respectively, proudly show off their dresses which are similar to their mother's head scarf. The girls live with their family in Bugambe sub-county, Hoima District in the western part of Uganda. The aim of the visit is to follow up with the family regarding a mosquito net that was given to them by Azur Christian Health Center; to make sure they received it and that they were using it properly.

Azur Christian Health Center is a local Community Based Organization (CBO) that was facilitated and trained by Malaria Consortium Uganda to distribute Long Lasting Insecticide treated Nets (LLINs) to children under five and pregnant women in four sub counties in Hoima District. Malaria Consortium is an international not-for-profit organization dedicated to the comprehensive control of malaria.

Due to their close proximity to the communities, Malaria Consortium selected various CBOs to distribute nets and to build their capacity in the planning and implementation of quality net distributions on a large scale.

Tereza is quick to recognize her local village Community Medicine Distributor (CMD), Kenneth, who registered her household along with many others and took part in the distribution last year. Unlike other homes where the nets were used by the head of the household, the only net in the house covers a papyrus mat where Elvanisi and Alice sleep at night. This goes to show that the sensitization sessions were very effective as children under five are very vulnerable to malaria. Every year 50% of children under five suffer an average of six episodes of malaria.



Tereza, her husband and their three children

Malaria is the leading cause of loss of household incomes. Ugandan families lose around 25% of their income each year on malaria treatment and prevention.
(Ministry of Health study 2005)

Tereza spends about 5,000 Uganda shillings (\$2.5) or more on transportation to the health center to get treatment for malaria if the free drugs are available. If the health centre is out of stock, she has to spend another 12,000 Uganda shillings (\$6) to buy the effective Artemisinin Combination Therapies (ACTs) medicine at a private clinic. Her neighbor, Nyangoma, decided to take her son to a private clinic when he became sick because it was closer and she felt it had better services. She had to spend 30,000 Uganda shillings (\$15) on treatment for his severe malaria.

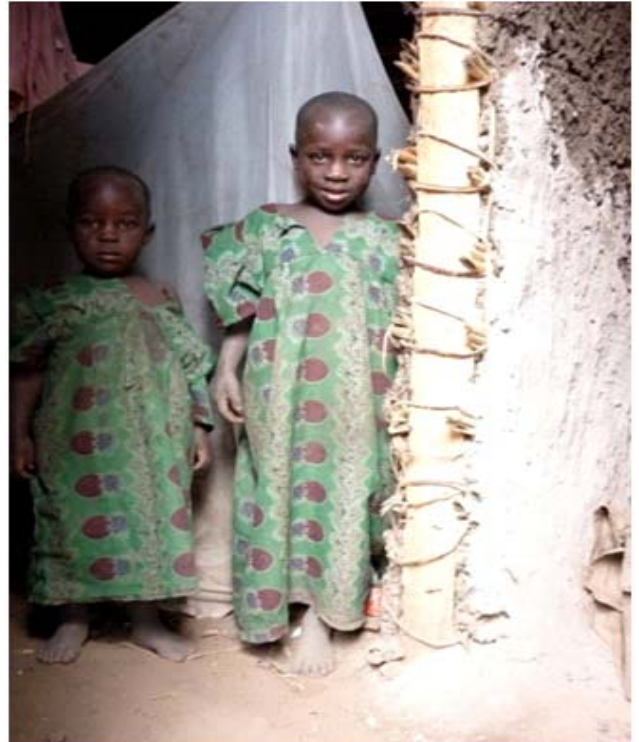
Tereza earns her income from selling some of her farm produce. She uses the little she earns to buy salt, soap and clothing for her family of nine. She also cannot afford to buy a Long Lasting Insecticide treated Net (LLIN) which costs about 16,000 Uganda shillings (\$8) to protect her family.

It is estimated that Ugandan families lose around 25% of their income to malaria each year, in terms of loss of earning potential as well as directly on treatment. 80% of household income is earned from subsistence farming.

Mosquito nets have proven to be a cost effective means of protection against malaria. If used properly and consistently, they can protect families from mosquitoes which cause malaria. With fewer malaria episodes families are likely to increase their savings as money for treatment is used for other family expenses. It also means that absenteeism at work and school is minimized.

Malaria Consortium Uganda plans to achieve universal coverage with nets in Hoima District ensuring every household receives at least two nets. Additional nets will be provided to pregnant women through antenatal care clinics. This will provide protection for families and reduce the annual number of fever episodes that children under five will experience in each household by about 40% .

Furthermore the family will be able to save some money meant for treatment and increase their earning potential as the number of fever episodes will be reduced, allowing adults to participate in economic activities and children to go to school.



Elvanisi and Alice in their bedroom with a mosquito net hanging.

“An episode of malaria affects health, education, agricultural activity and food security. All these build up to increasing poverty in homes.”
(Monitor Newspaper, 2008)

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