

Strengthening community-based malaria prevention and surveillance interventions

SUCCESS STORY

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Working with communities to prevent the spread of malaria



Health Development Army leader Zenebech Wada outside her home

Strengthening community-based malaria prevention and surveillance interventions is a three-year project, funded by the James Percy Foundation. The project's aim is to strengthen the management and technical capacity of the primary health care unit for better planning, delivering and monitoring of high-impact malaria control interventions in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR) of Ethiopia. In addition, it will build the health system's ability to detect and respond to outbreaks, monitor malaria, and use data for decision making.

"There has been a change in the short time the project has been around. There is a decrease of malaria burden and morbidity compared to other years. Knowledge and awareness among health professionals and the community have also increased, especially when it comes to IRS and the distribution of LLIN."

- Anbesaw Woldie, Malaria Officer at the Disease Prevention and Health Promotion unit of the Wolaita Zonal Health Department

Identifying breeding sites is a significant part of the project. Mapping conducted by Malaria Consortium in the Boloso Sore and Damot Sore districts of Wolaita zone indicated that there were several potential permanent mosquito breeding sites, including rivers (which create intermittent breeding sites during the dry season), ponds, swamps, streams and irrigation canals. In addition, numerous temporary breeding sites are created during major transmission seasons.

Elias Bajore is the head of the Legama Health Centre in Boloso Sore, which serves 20,000 people. According to him, malaria has brought a significant burden to this health centre because there are a number of breeding sites nearby.

Elfinesh Goa, a health extension worker in the Shayamba Health Post in Damot Sore district, said that most of the area under her health post is a wetland and needs to be carefully managed to prevent the development of breeding sites.

Elfinesh undertakes control and detection of breeding sites and environmental management activities with the community.

“The community is now well aware of these preventive methods and the benefits of their contribution. They are willing to cooperate with our environmental management activities. They invest their energy and time to work with us.”

Training the HDA

The project has also engaged Health Development Army leaders to help with this work. The Health Development Army (HDA) is a community-based network of women that links primary health care units (health centres and health posts) with the community.

Through the project, HDA leaders were trained on how to identify mosquito larvae and breeding sites, how to control larvae using temephos larvicide and other environmental management activities, and how to educate the community around breeding sites and mobilise environment management.

Zenebeech Wada is HDA leader in her village. She plays an important role in the prevention and control of malaria. Zenebeech discusses malaria prevention and control methods with network member households, and ensures that long lasting insecticidal nets (LLINs) are hung properly during her visits to their homes.

She also checks for breeding sites. If there are any, she takes care of them in collaboration with the villagers by conducting environmental management activities.

“We are now able to protect our community,” she says. “Previously we were attacked by this disease and now we are able to identify breeding sites, treat them with chemicals or control them with source reduction, and send anyone from our village with suspected malaria to the nearest health facility for early treatment.”

Like Zenebeech, other HDA leaders residing in the catchment area of Legama Health Centre were also trained on breeding site detections and environmental management. Elias says that this is very helpful for vector control activities, and very helpful to the health facility to manage all sites located within their respective villages.

“It helped with the reduction of a number of malaria cases and has helped a lot with prevention control activities within the health facility’s catchment area,” he says.

This success story is published as part of a series from James Percy Foundation’s Strengthening community-based malaria prevention and surveillance interventions project. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect the position of the donor.

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