

Strengthening community-based malaria prevention and surveillance interventions

SUCCESS STORY

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Training Health Extension Workers to provide community-based malaria prevention



Elfinesh Goa and Mebrat Haile, HEWs in Damot Sore

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

Malaria service uptake in the SNNPR is hampered by service delivery barriers for vector control interventions and household behavioural practices. For example, the 2015 Malaria Indicator Survey showed that only 45 percent of children under five in the SNNPR had slept under an LLIN the night preceding the survey, which is below the national target of 80 percent.

One year on since the project began, health extension workers (HEWs) and district health managers have been trained in indoor residual spraying (IRS) planning and monitoring, as well as in continuous distribution of long lasting insecticidal nets (LLINs) to ensure universal access.

One of the challenges identified by the Anbesaw Wolde, the malaria officer at the Disease Prevention and Health Promotion unit of the Wolaita Zonal Health Department, is low LLIN use at the community level.

Elfinesh Goa and Mebrat Haile are HEWs in the Shayamba Health Post in Damot Sore, Wolaita zone. These community-based health workers, all of whom are women, conduct home visits and provide curative services for malaria, pneumonia and diarrhoea at health posts. In the Shayamba Health Post, they are in charge of implementing a package comprising 18 services, including malaria prevention, treatment and control; maternal and child health; family planning; immunisation; nutrition; and others.

Since the beginning of the project, Elfinesh and Mebrat have received training on planning,

implementation and monitoring of LLIN distribution and IRS. They also attended a microplanning workshop on the distribution of LLINs and other malaria commodities.

“Now we have better capacity on planning and implementing and monitoring of the distribution of malaria commodities so it will help us to design and conduct these distribution activities,” says Elfinesh.

The training they received also taught them how to educate the community on the correct way to use LLINs: how to hang the nets properly, and how many family members should sleep under one net.

“That training will help us with future activities,” Elfinesh says.

They know how to calculate the number of households in need of LLINs, the number of LLINs to provide per family, and how to plan for an effective and fair distribution of nets.

Following the training, HEWs like Elfinesh and Mebrat have also been able to educate their communities on other preventive methods they can use, and the importance of seeking treatment as early as possible.

“It has helped us create awareness among the community members on how to properly use LLINs and how they should participate in these prevention activities,” Elfinesh 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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