

SUCCESS STORY

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Taking the fight against Malaria from Home to school

Malaria is a major cause of ill health in Uganda and a cause of poverty. The impact of malaria is not only felt in terms of the human suffering and death that it causes, but also by the significant economic cost and burden. The disease is associated with major negative economic impacts which includes costs of health care, working days lost due to sickness, days lost in education, decreased productivity due to brain damage from cerebral malaria, and loss of investment.

Twinomugisa Harriet, a 42-year-old teacher in Bulindi primary school Hoima District, after defeating malaria from her home, she decided to embark on ensuring that even her pupils in Primary two are free from malaria. She would summon parents of children who always missed classes due to malaria until they got better.

Twinomugisa bought chicken for business from the money she saved on medical expenses due to malaria.



Twinomugisa Showing how she uses her net and protects it from getting dirty and being damaged at home.

BACKGROUND

Malaria is one of the most common infectious diseases and is an enormous public health problem. It accounts for 25-40 percent of outpatient visits at health facilities, 15-20 percent of all hospital admissions, and 9-14 percent of all hospital deaths (UDHS 2016). In Uganda, Malaria is not just a disease commonly associated with poverty, but it is also a cause of poverty and a major hindrance to economic development.

Twinomugisa a teacher of Bulindi Primary school in Hoima district, has been for long battling malaria since 2016. Being a teacher and educated she could not understand how she failed to defeat malaria in her home.

Missing classes and her pupils could hurt her but what could she do, she was sick. During her routine household visits, Mary Mutumba, one of the key influencers trained by USAID's Malaria Action Program for Districts (MAPD), kept visiting Twinomugisa, emphasizing to her the importance of using a net and ensuring that her surrounding was clear of tall grasses and empty bottles. But Twinomugisa had so many myths about the net, (its hot, I will suffocate me, it itches)... But Mary the key influencer did not stop visiting her. With continuous support Twinomugisa stopped giving excuses and started using the net. During the mass distribution of nets, Twinomugisa received new nets and disposed of the old nets. She ensured that

everyone in the family sleeps in a net. She would check on the children at night every day. After a while, Twinomugisa noticed that the malaria episodes in her home had reduced, until there was no one falling sick of malaria to date.

Twinomugisa decided to save the money she used to spend on each child per month and purchased a chicken for each child as a remembrance that she defeated malaria. **The chicken have been laying eggs both for sale and home consumption..** Her son decided to sell his chicken and bought rabbits.

On average Twinomugisa would spend 20,000/= (Twenty thousand shillings) on malaria treatment for each person in her household of 4 people. **She says, “I would fall sick and as I got better, my child got sick. It was a cycle of malaria infection in my family”.**

After defeating malaria at home Twinomugisa decided to start sensitizing children in her classroom on malaria prevention. But it did not work, the children continued to fail in class and absenteeism continued, until she decided to summon the parents. By the time corona came, the children would only be absent for other reasons but not malaria. **“The parents were**

very grateful with me” a smiling Twinomugisa said.



Twinomugisa with Mary the Key Influencer who helped her change her behavior.

NEXT STEPS

- I keep talking to my neighbours so that they also changed.
- Twinomugisa has also been taken for a radio talk show to share her experience and she is willing to continue sensitising people even beyond her village.
- She always makes sure that she does not miss sharing one or two malaria messages with her pupils in Primary 2 class.

This success story is published as part of a series from the USAID’s Malaria Action Program for Districts project. For more information, see www.malariaconsortium.org/resources/publications/977/ or contact: Dr Sam Gudo, s.gudo@malariaconsortium.org

USAID’s Malaria Action Program for Districts aims to improve the health status of the Ugandan population by reducing childhood and maternal morbidity and mortality due to malaria. The project will support the Government of Uganda for a period of five years, focusing in particular on children under five years of age and pregnant women.

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Malaria Consortium Uganda, Plot 25 Upper Naguru East Road, PO Box 8045, Kampala, Uganda / Malaria Consortium, Development House 56-64 Leonard Street, London EC2A 4LT, United Kingdom / info@malariaconsortium.org / www.malariaconsortium.org
