

Children gather for a drama performance on malaria prevention and treatment

PROJECT BRIEF

Mbale Malaria Control Project

The aim of the project is to contribute to the reduction of deaths in children due to malaria and other severe childhood illnesses through a strengthened health system

Project outline

The Mbale Malaria Control Project aims to reduce deaths from and the incidence of severe childhood illnesses by ensuring a practical community referral system and better care in health facilities.

Malaria is the most common cause of illness and death in children in Mbale District, which suffers the highest malaria burden in the country. Statistics from Mbale Regional Referral Hospital show that almost half of all child in-patients are diagnosed with malaria. Most care givers in Mbale District do not seek care in time, or seek care outside the formal health system. This lack of connection between the community and public sector health services is due in part to a lack of awareness and understanding of health issues, a lack of trust in public health services, inadequate skills and knowledge of health workers, regular stock outs of drugs and medicine supplies, a strong belief in traditional healers, a widespread practice of self-medication, and a lack of affordable means of transport.

The Mbale Malaria Control Project is using both proven and innovative approaches to tackle most of these issues that prevent a sick child from getting appropriate healthcare in time.

According to the Ministry of Health's policy, and in cooperation with the District Health Team, 2,748 community members selected by their peers have been trained by the project's team to sensitise the community about a range of health issues, especially the prevention of common illnesses and care-seeking behaviour, as well as how to identify sick children and refer them to the nearest health facility in time.

Some 184 health workers have been trained in malaria case management. Additionally, innovative forums (peer-to-peer review meetings, provider-client discussion forums, clinical audits, and clinical sessions) are being introduced for the improvement of both skills and behaviour of health workers. The project is also providing support to laboratory services

Country

Uganda

Donor

Comic Relief

Length of project

June 2011 to May 2015

Partners

Ministry of Health

Mbale Regional Referral Hospital

Mbale District Authorities

Central Public Health Laboratories

through capacity building of 70 laboratory personnel in malaria diagnosis and regular support supervision. The triage system at health facility level is being introduced (or strengthened where in existence) to identify and prioritise severe cases.

Buffer stocks of drugs and other health supplies are established to reduce stock outs at all levels of the health system. Health workers are also being provided with current policy and guidelines, as well as job aids and information material for themselves and their patients.

A selection of motorcycle taxi drivers (*boda-bodas*) will be trained by the project to handle the transport of sick children to the health facility. VHTs will give them vouchers indicating the amount that the health facility will pay the driver depending on the distance travelled.

In order to change the health seeking behaviour of children's carers, improvement of the health services delivered must be coupled by an effective communication to the beneficiaries. Several channels are being used to inform and educate

community members, including radio, three drama groups composed of VHTs, and a school choir.

Malaria Consortium is working in close partnership with the Mbale District Authorities and the Ministry of Health to design and implement these activities to ensure the sustainability of the project's interventions.

Project aims & achievements

- » To ensure that a strong referral system is in place from the community up to the hospital level
- » To make the necessary tools and supplies to appropriately and promptly manage malaria and other severe childhood illnesses available to health workers at all times
- » To contribute to the improvement of health workers' and laboratory personnel's practices in case management of childhood illnesses

- » To ensure community's involvement through the VHTs and improve health seeking behaviour in the community

The project is going to generate learning on the impact of simultaneous interventions, at both community and health facility levels, on the referral system and the health system in general. This learning will be used to develop recommendations to inform policy-makers and partners, as well as advocate for the scale-up of the most effective interventions.

This project has a direct impact upon the following:

- ✓ *Malaria control*
- ✓ *Control of childhood illnesses*
- ✓ *Health systems strengthening*
- ✓ *Capacity building / human resource development*
- ✓ *Behaviour change & communication*
- ✓ *Monitoring & evaluation*
- ✓ *Policy change / advocacy*



Mbale Regional Referral Hospital children's ward

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 disease control, better health