

## ETHIOPIA

# Strengthening the community approach to malaria prevention



*Students use the mini-media kits to promote malaria prevention messages during the school day*

Malaria and other febrile illnesses are the lead causes of illness and death for children under five in Ethiopia. Despite existing initiatives to prevent malaria, incidence rates remain high in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR), where malaria accounts for one-fifth of all inpatient and outpatient cases. This high incidence is reflected in significant gaps in the uptake of malaria prevention and control interventions at the community level.

To improve the use and effectiveness of community-based health services in the SNNPR, Malaria Consortium implemented the Integrated Community-based Interventions for Malaria Services (ICIMS) project in 2014 in two districts, Boloso Sore and Halaba. The ICIMS project, funded by the James Percy Foundation, is implemented in partnership with the public health system to bridge existing gaps in health service delivery at the community level.

As part of the project, health workers are helping to improve attitudes and behaviours related to malaria prevention and management, by disseminating information to communities, such as the correct use of mosquito nets, early healthcare seeking and acceptance of indoor residual spraying. The project is strengthening a community-based referral system to ensure that all children with fever receive early diagnosis and prompt treatment at their community health post or at other health facilities.

To target communities effectively, the project works with schools in Boloso Sore and Halaba districts to educate students about malaria prevention and the appropriate health-seeking behaviours. Anti-malarial school clubs have been set up where children learn about malaria prevention and treatment. School children are then able to relay these messages to their family members and neighbours.

*“Since we received the mini-media kit for the anti-malaria school clubs, there has been a sharp increase in school enrolment, from 500 students last year, to 800 students this year. We believe that students are attracted to the school because of the additional activities offered by having the stereo and PA system, as well as solar power which allows for evening study and adult learning classes, which are normally only available during daylight hours.”*  
-Essayas, Principal, Bassa Gofera Junior School

‘Mini-media kits’ were installed in schools to support the development of the school clubs. The kit consists of a cassette stereo with recording capacity, an amplifier, loudspeaker, and microphone. Indoor lights, as well as a solar panel and battery inverter system to power the mini-media kits were provided to selected schools without electricity.



*A community health worker at a health post in Galato, Halaba, shares the positive impact of the ICIMS project*

Through this system, schools have been able to promote malaria prevention messages during school days and at special events, such as Parents’ Day, and address questions from students and the community. In turn, this is improving school children’s attendance rates.

Parents of students and other adults in the community are also able to benefit from having electricity, as they can access adult evening learning classes. These classes teach key skills such as basic literacy and numeracy, health and agricultural practices.

*“Not only are our children learning about malaria and teaching their peers, family members and neighbours, but I also have had the opportunity to attend evening classes and learn basic maths, which helps me be more effective as a trader in the market.”*  
-Abdi Ahmed, parent, Halaba

With solar power in the schools, senior students are able to stay after class to do their homework and prepare for their exams, rather than do this at home where electricity is not guaranteed. In Bassa Gofera School, test scores for senior students taking national exams have been seen to improve since an evening study hall was established.

Through this project, Malaria Consortium is supporting the Ethiopian health system in encouraging people to use available health services and seek early diagnosis for illnesses. As dialogues around malaria prevention increase in Boloso Sore and Halaba, communities are learning to protect themselves from malaria better, which is contributing to the reduction of malaria-related morbidity and mortality.

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The Integrated Community-based Interventions for Malaria Services project is a three-year project (2014-17) in Southern Nations, Nationalities and People’s Region (SNNPR), Ethiopia. This project is funded by the James Percy Foundation. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect the position of the donor.

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Malaria Consortium is one of the world’s leading specialist non-profit organisations. Our mission is to improve lives in Africa and Asia through sustainable, evidence-based programmes that combat targeted disease and promote child and maternal health.

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