

Newsletter #29 April 2024



In this issue to celebrate World Malaria Day on 25 April; we discuss the current state of this infectious disease and progress towards reducing its incidence. Also what Scouts can do to reduce the incidence of this disease in African countries most affected by this disease and recent campaigns in Malawi and Ghana which have been funded by UK Scouts.

Overview

Malaria is a disease that infects up to 200 million persons world wide and is caused by the bite of a mosquito carrying a parasite which infects the liver and attacks the red blood cells . This results in the death of more than 600,000 persons annually, primarily young children under the age of 5 years old.

What is disturbing is that the fight against malaria faces rising threats from –

- Increasing resistance to some insecticides which can kill the mosquitos
- Changes in climate resulting in more extreme weather conditions – like flooding which results in stagnant pools of water in which mosquitos can breed and warmer climate resulting in expansion of the habitats of mosquitos and accelerating their development
- Financing gaps in providing preventative measures, medicines and vaccines

The cumulative results of these threats is that progress in fighting malaria has stalled since 2015. Malaria is an ever evolving disease so if we continue to do just enough to combat it, any progress that is made, could simply ebb away and consequently many more persons could die. .

Impacts

In Africa, where 95% of malaria cases occur, malaria is not only deadly but increases poverty, strains health systems and deepens gender inequality by disproportionately affecting women and children. The increase in extreme weather conditions such as cyclone Freddy which impacted large parts of Mozambique and Malawi a year ago, worsens the challenge as natural disasters displace vulnerable populations and limit their access to essential malaria services.

Despite Africa's minimal (4%) contribution to global carbon emissions responsible for global warming, it is the continent most affected by our changing climate. So there is an ever increasing need to strengthen health systems and adopt a multi-sectorial approach to fighting the disease.

ITN treated bed nets

While a variety of solutions exist to prevent people being bitten by a mosquito carrying parasite, the most cost effective solution is to sleep under an insecticide treated (ITN) bed net. This not only prevents the mosquito biting a person, but also the insecticide with which the nets are treated, can kill the mosquito. However only half of the population of Africa, where the disease is most prevalent, are protected currently by bed nets.

So UK Scouts have been raising funds since 2015 so that Scouts in Malawi, Ghana and Uganda have been able to purchase and distribute bed nets to local communities in their countries.

Chinyolo Campaign, Malawi Howie Maujo reports ...

Malaria still possesses danger in Southern Africa including Malawi. Scout Association of Malawi in partnership with UK Scouts embarked on a joint venture to reach out to vulnerable group of people in Malawi and under privileged communities especially in rural and hard to reach areas where people with physical challenges, orphans, widows and elderly have been identified as beneficiaries of this distribution of insecticide treated bed nets.

In this intervention, the Scout Association of Malawi, noted the need in the Northern Region District where there were a lot of cases of malaria which were identified by Scouts through their meaningful interventions in their Communities. This time around the intervention was conducted in the District of Rumphu at Chinyolo Village where 200 households were identified and received the ITN treated nets.

Chinyolo area, under the Nthenje health center, was targeted for the sensitization campaign and net distribution because of its high malaria prevalence rate. Large numbers are treated for malaria at Nthenje health center, as was explained by Mr. Chaula the Health Surveillance Assistant for the area. The distribution of the mosquito nets targeted pregnant women, children under the age of 5 and the elderly. In total, the initiative targeted 200 beneficiaries, thus (125) females and (75) males.



Chinyolo Scout group which initiated the intervention an distribution of ITN bed nets

The Chief and the community leaders appreciated the good work done by the Scouts in their community for reaching out to the vulnerable families in the fight against malaria. The people in the community pleaded with the Scouts to scale up the project in order to reach out to many families in the area so they could become more productive in their daily activities..

A different group of people, who were targeted as beneficiaries of this project, were mothers with children under the age of five, as Serah Msiska [a mother] narrates, “The mosquito net will help me and my baby to stay away from the mosquitoes bites as such that will prevent me from infection of malaria”



Serah Msiska with her ITN bed net

Gogo Liness Sapwe, another of the beneficiaries, says she is very thankful to the scouts for giving her the mosquito net because this will accelerate development at her home since she will be sleeping under the mosquito net, and she will not suffer

from malaria.



She further asked the scouts to consider extending this good gesture to all elderly women who have not been reached during this distribution. as the demand is very high for fellow elderly women. Most of them did not receive the ITNs as the number was escalating due to the high demand for them.

There were a number of activities that the Scouts show cased in a bid to spread the message about malaria infection and prevention.



The girls sung choir songs encouraging the beneficiaries to sleep under the nets they have received each and every night throughout the whole year.

Beneficiaries waved with their nets thankfully

Aflao-Agblekpui campaign, Volta Region, Ghana Prince Akese reports

In response to the prevalence of malaria and other mosquito-borne diseases in Ghana, the Ghana Scout Association, in collaboration with UK Scouts under the project "Scouts against Malaria," donated one hundred (100) treated mosquito nets to the people of Agblekpui in the Volta Region on 22nd February, 2024, on Founders Day celebration.

The primary objective of the mosquito net distribution was to increase access to and utilization of mosquito nets among residents of Aflao-Agblekpui community. By providing mosquito nets free of charge, the program aimed to reduce malaria transmission rates and improve overall health outcomes in the community.

The team, upon arrival at Aflao Agblekpui community at 9:27am, visited the Chief's palace to greet the chief and elders of the community. The Chief warmly welcomed them and granted permission to do the donation. From the Chief's palace, the team moved from one household to another donating the treated mosquito nets and educating them on how to use the treated mosquito nets.

In each household, the team took their time to educate the people on how to fix the net and how to maintain it so it lasts longer. Every presentation emphasizes the purpose of this exercise which was to assist reduce the number of deaths caused by the fatal disease known as malaria.



The donation exercise was done with much focus on pregnant women, lactating mothers, children and the aged in mind since they were the most affected by the disease caused by mosquitos.

The team then moved to Aflao Agblekpui Basic School, where they gathered the people and educated them on how to use mosquito nets to protect themselves and their families from malaria, as well as giving a practical demonstration on how to fix mosquito nets with the permission of the school's headmaster, Mr. Mickson Akpavor. Following the sensitization, mosquito nets were provided to everyone present, the majority of whom were pregnant women, lactating mothers, and elderly persons



Demonstrating how to erect an ITN treated bed net

Fund Raising.

We acknowledge the tremendous fund raising efforts of the Cub Packs in Blackdown District, Somerset, who over the past year have learnt not only about malaria and how it can be prevented, but also have raised more than £900 which have funded these campaigns in Malawi and Ghana

We hope that other Scout Groups will take part in this global partnership by learning about malaria, why it so deadly, how it can be prevented and how as little as £5 raised could save a life.

Sectional activities

Scouts against Malaria is an activity which supports the World Organisation of Scouting Movements' (WOSM) global program, *Scouts for SDGs* (Sustainable Development Goals). SAM activities contribute towards SDG #3 *leading a healthy life*.

If you or your Section/Group is willing to join the global partnership to fight malaria, visit our website www.scoutsagainstmalaria.org.uk or email us at info@scoutsagainstmalaria.org.uk.

We have developed a wide range of activities suitable for all sections which together with a slide set and videos of current campaigns can be downloaded from the SAM website. These are suitable for on-line learning for individual Scouts as well as sectional meetings.

Alternatively we are willing to visit your Group and organise an evening's activities if you are willing then to raise funds to purchase ITN treated nets and live within a reasonable distance of NE Hampshire..



Editor Rayner Mayer