

School net distribution in Luapula, Zambia

The Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ) prioritizes malaria elimination through a standard package of malaria elimination approaches and strategies, one of which is the consistent use of insecticide-treated nets (ITNs). Zambia conducts mass distributions of ITNs every three years, as part of its universal coverage campaign in an effort to reduce mortality of children under five years old from malaria. In between universal coverage campaigns, Zambia has a program to distribute ITNs through schools to sustain coverage levels.

A pilot distribution of ITNs was conducted in four districts in Luapula province (a province with a high malaria burden) where ITNs were distributed through schools. In the pilot, students in grades one and four in the four districts were given ITNs. The main purpose of the pilot was to learn practical lessons and best practices from the processes. These learnings will inform future implementation of ITN distribution, based on refined strategy and guidelines as stipulated in the Zambia Continuous Distribution Guidelines (2014). The school ITN distribution is a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, with technical assistance provided by the Program for the Advancement of Malaria Outcomes (PAMO). PAMO is funded by the United States government's President's Malaria Initiative. The school-based distribution was well-received as reflected in the below testimonial from Ashley Riley, a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer who was involved in the distribution at her local school in Luapula province:



A teacher gives a pupil an insecticide-treated net to protect against malaria in Luapula province, Zambia

On October 25, 2016 three teachers and I came together to distribute mosquito nets to the grade 1s and grade 4s at our local school. The week before, the three teachers invited all of the involved pupil's parents to a sensitization meeting where the teachers talked about how malaria is transmitted and the importance of using a mosquito net. On the distribution day, Ba Charles (one of the involved teachers) and I did an interactive demonstration to show the pupils how malaria is transmitted and how a mosquito net protects them from malaria and protects against the spread of malaria. The pupils loved the demonstration and were very attentive. The interactive demonstration included a fake mosquito that went around and bit pupils that were acting in a sketch. When the actors were under a mosquito net, the mosquito couldn't get to them and then died because of the insecticide! After the demonstration we reminded the students to hang up their new net right as they got home if someone in their household did not have a net to sleep under. If the household had enough nets, we encouraged the students to save their new net for when it is needed. We gave out 184 nets to pupils that day! The pupils not only received mosquito nets to protect themselves from malaria, but are now armed with the knowledge to protect themselves and their families from malaria!

-Ashley Riley, Peace Corps Volunteer

The next steps include the updating of the Zambia Continuous Distribution Guidelines, which will guide implementation of school distribution in the remaining districts in the province and eventually scale-up to other districts and provinces in Zambia. This will help maintain high ITN coverage in between mass distribution campaigns. It is envisaged that distribution through schools will contribute to the ITN-to-sleeping ratio of at least one-to-one, where each child under five years sleeps under a net, and where the mother sleeps under a net. The outcome will be a reduction in malaria incidence going forward and a reduced prevalence of malaria in the impacted districts.