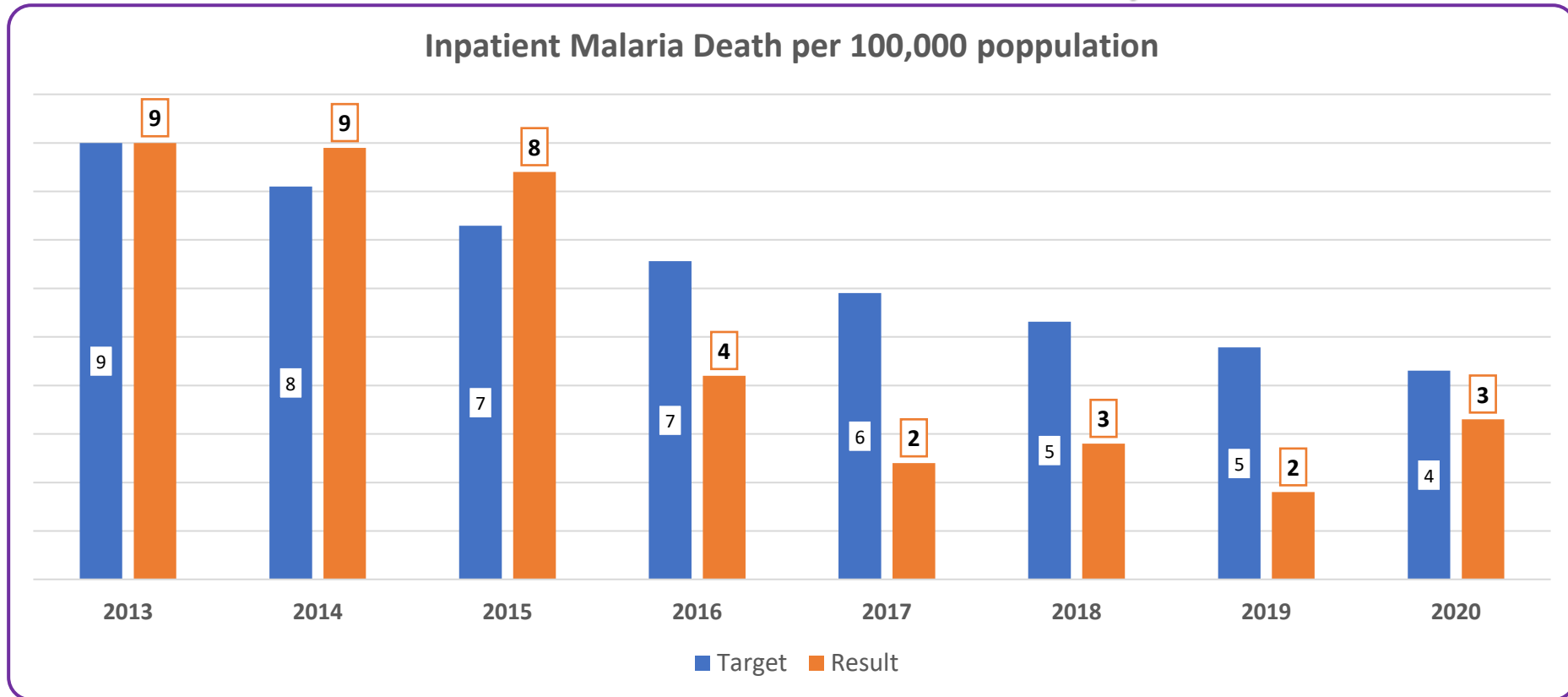


The Gambia: Adapting to COVID-19 for sustained routine distribution of ITNs

By Balla Kande

Introduction

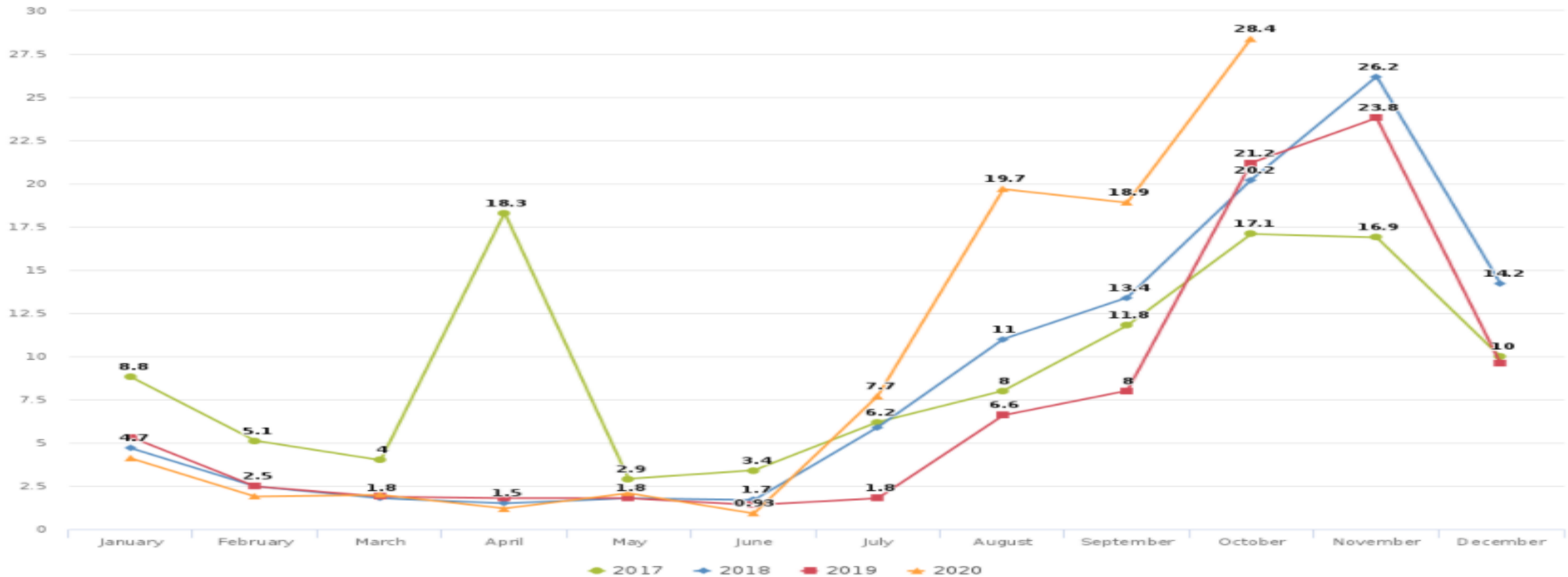
Decline in Malaria Mortality



- ✓ MSP goal of reduction of at least 40% in malaria case incidence and mortality rates, compared to 2013 levels
- ✓ 80% reduction in malaria case death per 100,000 population over the MSP period, exceeding the MSP target

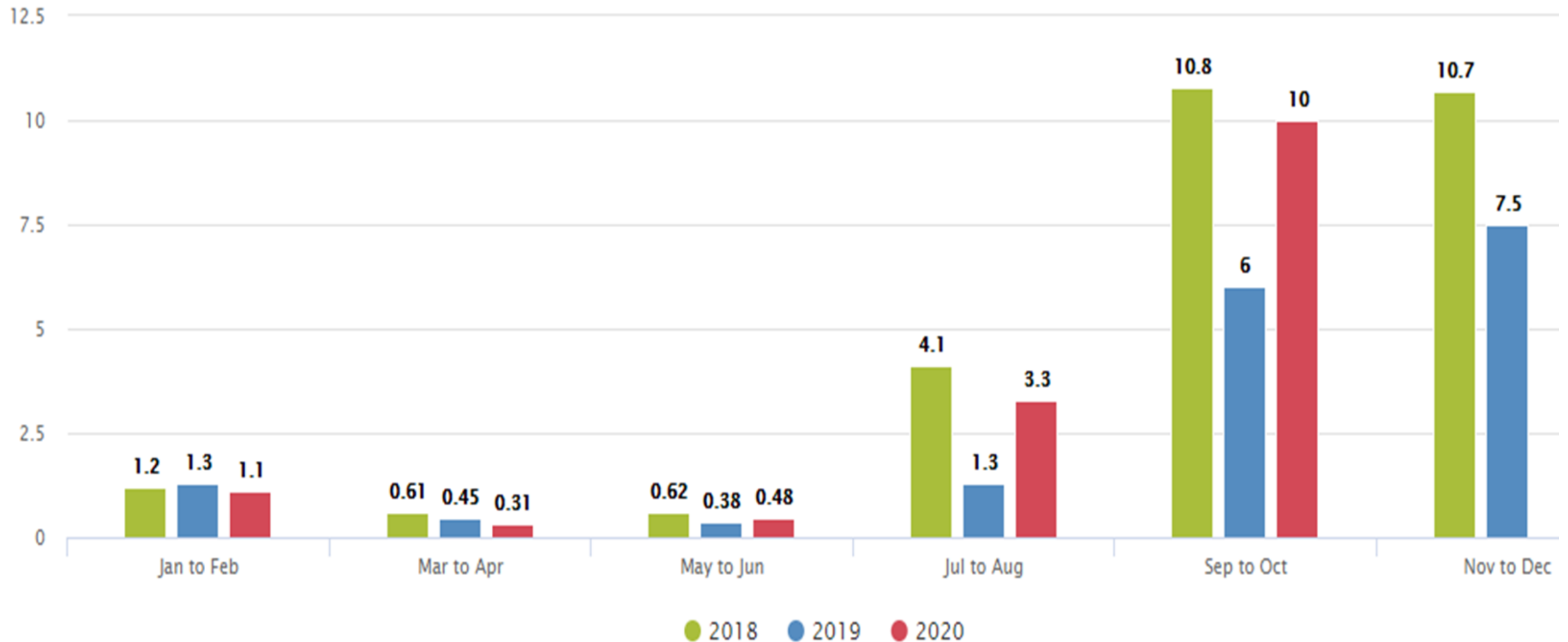
Progress update (technical): Jan-Jun 2020

MAL - Test positivity rate (RDT) - Gambia



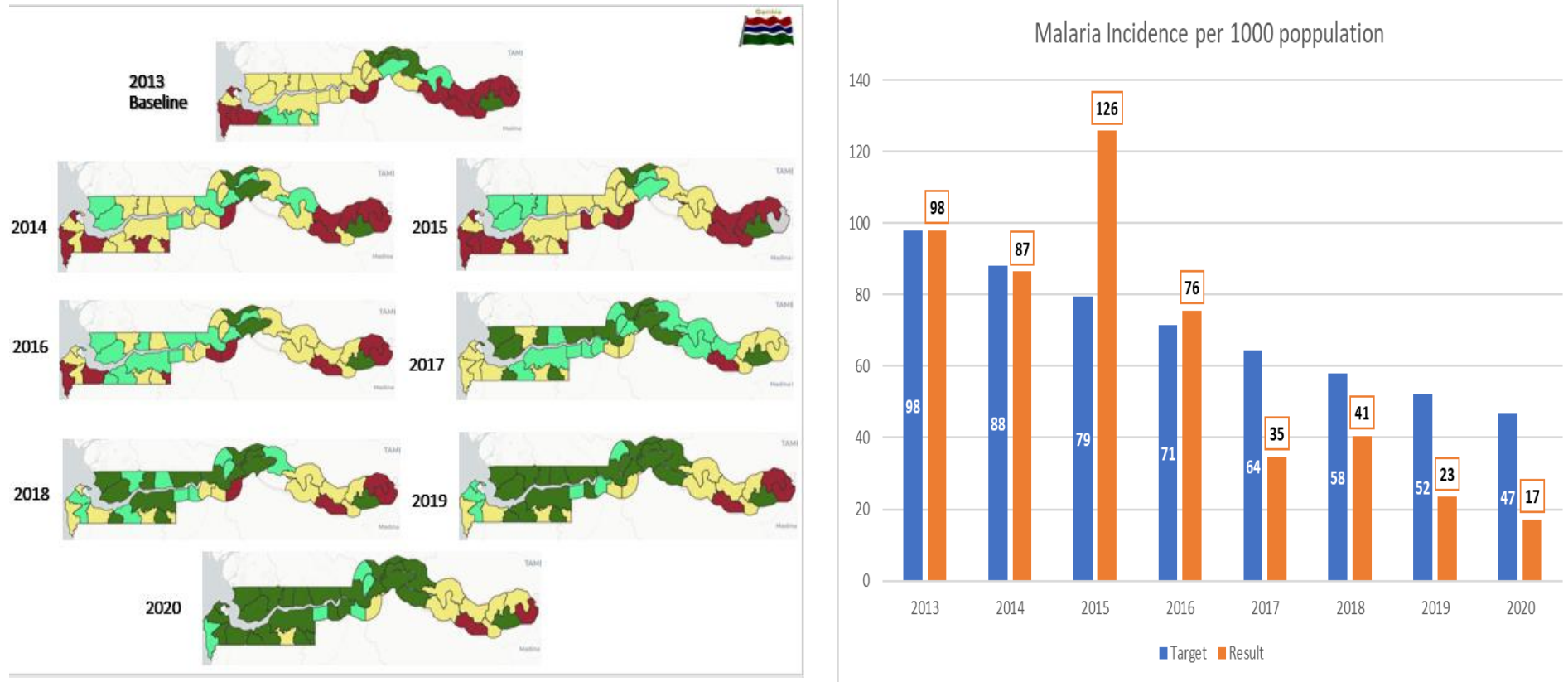
Progress update (technical): Jan-Jun 2020

Proportion of outpatient malaria cases – Gambia



Introduction

Decline in Malaria Incidence per 1000 population



- ✓ MSP goal of reduction of at least 40% in malaria case incidence and mortality rates, compared to 2013 levels
- ✓ 76% reduction in malaria case incidence per 1000 population over the MSP period, exceeding the MSP target

Key enabling factors for maintaining ITN access in The Gambia during the COVID-19 pandemic

- **Strong coordinated support from the Ministry of Health (MOH)**
 - Establishment of a multisector committee to ensure continuity of services
 - Development of additional messages to include COVID-19 to avoid fear etc
 -
- **Extension of working hours of health facilities** to ensure flexibility and increase opportunities for pregnant women and caregivers of children to seek antenatal care (ANC) and other reproductive and child health (RCH) services –
- **MOH re-organized RCH services and established mechanisms to allow users to practise physical distancing** to mitigate the risks of COVID-19 transmission,

Key enabling factors for maintaining ITN access in The Gambia during the COVID-19 pandemic

- Redirected the LLINs distribution from the “pull” system to “**push system**” to allow recipients who were fearful or no longer able to come in person to seek health services.
- The NMCP and Catholic Relief Service (CRS) with financial support from GF to **build on existing community partnerships and community initiatives** to reach vulnerable populations and ensure they received ITNs in line with the national malaria policy.
- Established partnership with local clan leaders (Cabilos), Traditional Birth Companions (TBC), Village Health Workers (VHW) and community health champions.

Challenges in 2020 LLINs delivery



Challenges

- Reduction in the number of patients visiting Health Facilities (Fear)
- Fear of pregnant women to seek ANC and RCH services in person in health clinics during COVID-19.
- Misguided use of social media to spread false information about Malaria and Covid

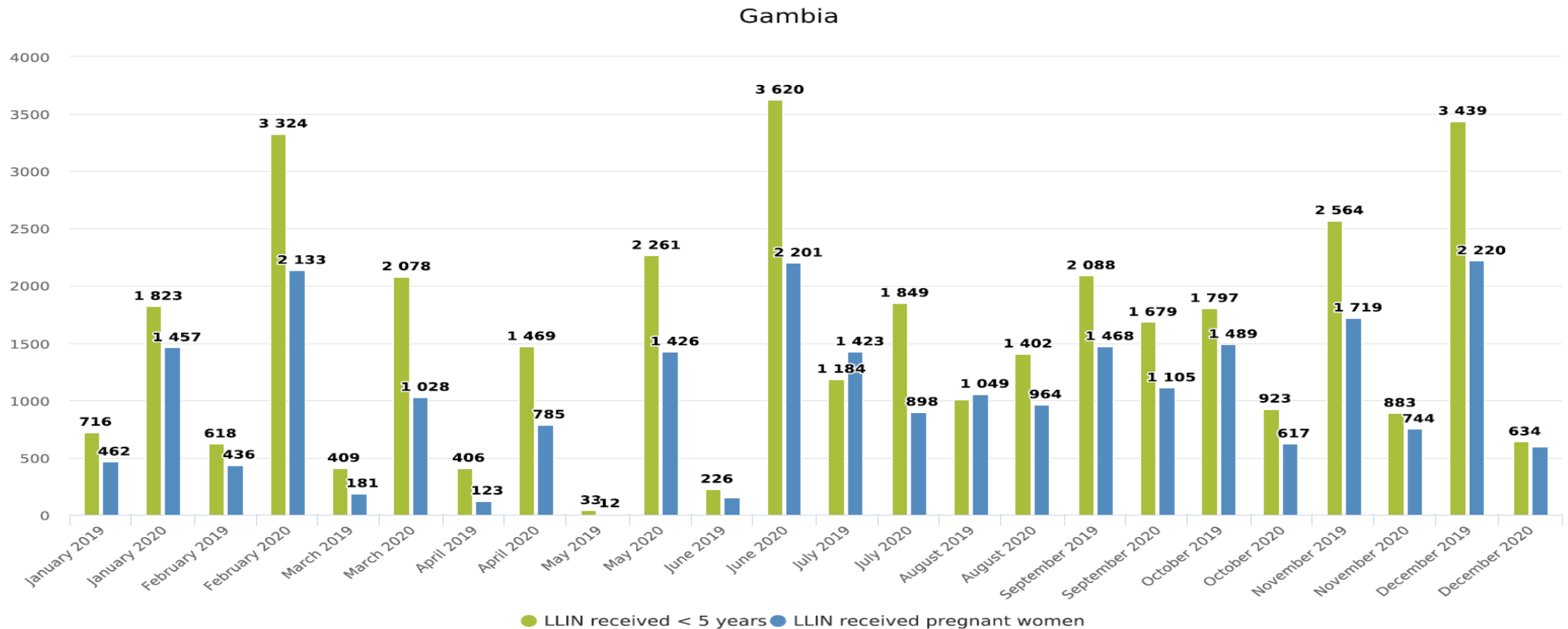
Proposed/ applied Solutions

- **MoH** mobilized funds from GF to strengthen SMBCC at community level
- Setting up of WhatsApp groups for Health workers
- Interception and addressing of malicious audio WhatsApp messages

Number of LLINs Distributed to Pregnant women and Children Jan-Dec 2020

Gambia		
Period / Data	LLIN received < 5 years	LLIN received pregnant women
Jan-20	1 823	1 457
Feb-20	3 324	2 133
Mar-20	2 078	1 028
Apr-20	1 469	785
May-20	2 261	1 426
Jun-20	3 620	2 201
Jul-20	1 849	898
Aug-20	1 402	964
Sep-20	1 679	1 105
Oct-20	923	617
Nov-20	883	744
Dec-20	634	594

LLIN Distribution comparison of Months of 2019 and 2020



Achievements

- A total of **48,398** LLINS were distributed from Jan-Dec 2020 (Covid 19) compared to 76,323 LLINs in 2019 (dropped in clinic attendance by 25%)
- LLINs distribution to pregnant women and children across the country was maintained , even for those who were unable or fearful to seek ANC and well-child services in person in health clinics during COVID-19.

Lessons learned and recommendations

- **The population appreciates and uses health services provided during extended opening hours of health facilities.**
- **Strong MOH-led coordination combined with making good use of existing community networks**
- **Building on national MOH communication initiatives**, such as local advocacy through *Kabilos* and other well-known leaders to encourage continued trust in health services as well as disseminate knowledge of new health facility extended hours and key malaria messages.
- **Community health actors in The Gambia sustained post-distribution social and behaviour change (SBC) as part of their overall routine activities.**