

Brief 8: Special requirements of social mobilization in urban areas

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL TO ACCOMPANY CHAPTER 6

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1. Communication in urban areas

In urban areas, communication around net distribution activities should focus on encouraging registration and net pick up at distribution points, as well as addressing and counteracting misinformation that may arise about the aims and process of the campaign.

People living in urban areas report more familiarity with ITNs and understand their role in protection from malaria better than people living in rural areas¹. As a result of the greater urban knowledge base around malaria and the benefits of sleeping under nets, behaviour change messaging should generally focus on reminding people to use nets at all times and less on the causes of malaria. Nevertheless, there may be exceptions to this rule, and campaign messages should be tailored to meet the specific requirements of a given area using the data available. Population-based surveys, such as the Malaria Indicator Survey (MIS), the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), often report knowledge of malaria, ITN coverage and use, and most common sources of information disaggregated by urban and rural areas and so can be important sources of information for developing appropriate and effective communication messages and selection of appropriate communication channels.

For urban households, text messages, television and radio are generally important media for reinforcing positive ITN use behaviour, care and repair, and informing the public about registration and distribution. Some segments of urban populations may also be reached through print and digital media.

Normally, urban areas have populations with diverse demographic characteristics, and communication methods for registration and distribution will need to be tailored to different neighbourhoods, e.g. shantytowns and lower-class, middle-class and upper income areas. Barriers to participation in the registration (e.g. no proper housing structure or guarded households), the distribution (e.g. the hours of distribution, location of distribution points) and to ITN use and care (e.g. strong preference for conical nets, inability or unwillingness to put nails in walls) will differ across and within these demographic characteristics. In addition, depending on age and socio-economic status, households will vary in their access to specific media, including text messages, social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp, radio stations, television channels, newspapers or loudspeakers. In some countries, with the aim of saving costs and maximizing population reach, disseminating messages to the public, or running a launch event during occasions at which large crowds gather (e.g. football games, cricket matches, religious and cultural events) has been a successful method of reaching urban audiences.

2. Household registration

In urban areas, the system of traditional leadership to support social mobilization is often weak or non-existent. In such cases, other authority figures such as elected or appointed officials, and influential people such as musicians or sports personalities may be engaged to provide vital support in the mobilization of the population. In many urban areas, community health workers/volunteers who undertake household registration

1. NetWorks Project, Stakeholder Review Experiences in Long Lasting Insecticidal Net (LLIN) Urban Distribution Campaigns, March 2013. www.vector-works.org/wp-content/uploads/Review-of-Urban-LLIN-Distributions-March2013-FINAL-submitted.pdf.

may not be as well-known personally by urban residents as they are in rural areas, which is a reflection of the focus of community health outreach systems on rural and hard-to-reach areas with poor health facility access. Therefore, the use of visibility materials by registrars, such as aprons, t-shirts and/or caps, or badges/other identification helps them to be more quickly recognized and clearly associated with the distribution campaign. This reinforces their authority and engenders trust in the registrars by households, signalling that registrars are people who are doing a specific job and are knowledgeable. This enables registrars' access to households and minimizes cases of refusal to allow entry or to provide certain information.

Resident absenteeism due to urban life style differences poses special challenges in urban communities. Urban populations are often not home during weekday daytime hours which makes registration challenging. Visiting households on weekends, early mornings and/or evenings when household members are more likely to be at home can improve the registration process. It is also important to take account of religious days and cultural and community events and plan registration times to make sure people are home (e.g. in the afternoon following a religious service).

The communication strategy should describe in detail the methodology of household registration in urban settings. For instance, if a volunteer visits a household and does not find anyone at home, he/she can leave a "business card" with

contact information for the household to make an appointment for their registration after having followed the campaign protocol for number of revisits for households not at home. Alternatively, mass media messaging can be used to ask unregistered households to go to the nearest facility and provide their name and address to allow a follow-up registration visit.

In urban areas, there is also a greater likelihood that households may not contain just family members. There may be unrelated residents, a fact that affects the number of nets required to protect household members and also raises issues about the definition of a household. This must be considered in development of training materials for the campaign.

The training for the household registration in urban areas must include a strong focus on the operational definition of a "household" that is being used for the campaign, and participants must understand that there can be more than one head of household in a structure. Household registration personnel must be well trained to be able to communicate clearly regarding how a household is defined, who can be registered, how ITNs are being allocated and to manage expectations of individuals in the households that they are registering. Practical interpersonal communication exercises that familiarize volunteers with ways of addressing household diversity are a particularly important way to teach communication skills that will help ensure that households are properly registered.

COUNTRY CASE STUDY

In Tanzania's capital, Dar es Salaam, campaign planners took steps to overcome challenges of urban registration encountered in previous campaigns similar to those mentioned above. First, the number of days for registration was increased. Secondly, two rounds of registration were held, the first by volunteers who issued vouchers at household level, and a second which was preceded by a communication campaign requesting unregistered people to go to their Mtaa Executive Officers for registration (usually termed a "mop up" exercise). The second round of registration took place three weeks prior to distribution. This follow-up registration strategy, which was considered successful, required strong coordination, particularly for logistics and between the different implementation partners to ensure all target communities received information on when the registration and distribution were to take place.

During their training, registrars should become familiar with key messages that need to be communicated to members of the urban households that they visit. Many of these messages are not specific to urban areas but necessary messages for all areas the campaign is targeting.

**SEE BRIEF 9:
PLANNING SOCIAL MOBILIZATION
AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR CHANGE
COMMUNICATION**

Messages include:

- Key facts about malaria, its prevention and when and how to seek treatment
- That the ITNs are free of charge
- The location of distribution sites and dates and hours of operation for retrieving nets. As per all areas targeted for the campaign, the distribution is organized by distribution site (the beneficiary can only go to the site listed on the voucher/coupon/form of identification), but in urban areas, may also be organized by day (only on the day listed on the voucher/coupon/form of identification) or both. This requires specific communication messages
- The procedures that will occur at the distribution sites
- Who should collect the household's allotted ITNs, which should be decided early on in the planning and what they should bring with them such as a voucher/coupon and/or an ID
- How to prepare a new net for hanging and ways to hang up ITNs
- Instructions on how to undertake proper care and repair in order to ensure that a net provides the needed protection throughout its life expectancy
- How to dispose of or repurpose old nets and the plastic bag in which the new nets may be delivered
- Suggestions on how to obtain additional nets if a household is short of nets, given differences in sleeping patterns and other household circumstances, as well as changes

in households such as a woman becoming pregnant or a new baby arriving

- The community protection from malaria that is obtained when neighbours sleep under an ITN

The key messages in urban areas should also try to mitigate against issues that may come up, such as falsification of vouchers/coupons. Household representatives should be clearly told during the registration that falsified vouchers/coupons will be destroyed and the family will not receive nets. It should be explained that all vouchers/coupons will be verified at the distribution point (even if this is not the strategy adopted) to limit the motivation to falsify the vouchers/coupons received. Other issues that are higher risk in urban than rural areas include household representatives taking the voucher/coupon to a distribution point other than the one allocated because it is closer to their work, or nets being sold immediately in the market. Campaign communication planners should adapt urban messages to situations and experiences from the previous campaign in order to minimize the risks of having the same issues re-occur.

The role of registrar as communicator of the key messages should be complemented with a robust mass media campaign that begins in advance of the registration period to provide dates and times that registration will be taking place in different neighbourhoods.

**SEE BRIEF 6:
MEDIA ENGAGEMENT**

The mass media campaign should convey to the public the opportunity to receive an ITN and the beneficiaries' responsibilities for getting registered and picking up nets. Additionally, the mass media campaign should include messages explaining why the public should sleep under a net every night and the community-wide protection obtained through compliance. Television and radio programmes or spots (public service announcements) that illustrate or describe different methods for hanging and for caring for nets may be broadcast.

COUNTRY CASE STUDY

In some densely populated states in Nigeria, past experience with “rowdiness” at distribution sites led the national malaria elimination programme (NMEP) to adopt a policy that only women could collect ITNs at the designated sites. If there were no women in a household, then a man could pick up the nets. Accordingly, there was a need for the household mobilizers (registrars) to directly communicate to the women in the household their role in going to the distribution point to pick up their allocated nets.

3. Communication at the distribution site

At distribution sites, plans should be adopted to facilitate crowd control, in part because of the sheer numbers of people who may come to pick up nets and in part because people may not respect either the distribution point on their voucher/coupon (they work in proximity to a distribution point distant from where they were registered) or the day for the distribution (recipients are free on a different day than specified for them to receive their nets). Distribution site personnel must be prepared to communicate clear messages to waiting beneficiaries as to how the distribution will proceed and what to expect in order to minimize frustration and anxiety.

Because there is likely to be greater geographic mobility among an urban population, official population estimates and the number of nets required per urban district have the potential to be inaccurate following the initial quantification for procurement, with large discrepancies noted between projected (number used for procurement and microplanning) and actual (household registration needs). The household registration is likely to show that the number of residents in a given area exceeds that which had been planned given poor baseline planning data, while at the same time, it is likely that, for various reasons, not all households have been reached. Often, the

number of nets available for a distribution site may fall short of the numbers of nets that are promised to registered households, without yet taking into account households that arrive not having been, or claiming not to have been, registered. Logistic and distribution point management challenges are likely to arise if a significant proportion of households arrive at distribution points without having been registered or received a voucher.

It is important to have a communication plan in place explaining any ITN shortage and, if possible, providing a solution for those seeking nets. Plans should be in place for this communication in advance of the shortages to ensure that the messages passed at all distribution points are consistent and confusion is not created due to different information from different parts of the urban area. The trainings for personnel staffing distribution sites should prepare them to deliver the approved messages to those beneficiaries affected by a net shortage. The mass media may also be employed to inform the public about anticipated shortages and what to expect at the distribution sites.

**SEE BRIEF 6:
MEDIA ENGAGEMENT**

In urban settings, individuals who have come to pick up nets will typically not be a captive audience for communication following reception of their ITN, largely because the quicker pace of life in cities means that beneficiaries will come and go as quickly as possible. In addition, delays in the distribution due to heavy verification procedures or insufficient personnel will limit the time available for people to remain at the distribution point after their net is received. Nonetheless, site volunteers should seek to communicate with beneficiaries while they are waiting in line to enter the site. This communication opportunity, though it may be limited, should be used to remind the beneficiaries of the “do’s and don’ts” with the plastic packaging,

if their nets are packaged. It is also an opportunity to communicate to beneficiaries about net care and maintenance, as well as to ask if they have any questions about net hanging. Messaging about net hanging, care and maintenance should continue via the media during the post-distribution phase.

4. Planning and budgeting

Careful planning for urban areas is crucial to distribution success. Planning should, from the outset, involve the district health management team responsible for the area to build on their experiences with vaccination, mother-child health and previous ITN distribution campaigns. It is important to consider the overall malaria burden when considering how to allocate resources. At the time of the planning for the campaign (i.e. before net procurement), the quantification for the urban areas should be determined (number of households per day and number of days for registration to calculate number of registrars needed, parameters for number of distribution points and number of distribution point personnel per DP) to avoid insufficient funding for the number of people required. However, despite early planning for the increased urban needs, it is possible and not uncommon for distribution in urban areas to consume more resources than were initially budgeted. Budget projections should take into account the likely need for more registration days than planned, at least in certain areas where the population estimates were poor and the number of registration personnel insufficient to reach all households in the planned period for the registration. In addition, pick up at distribution points may be slow if information has not been communicated in advance of the distribution, leading to more days to reach the expected distribution targets. The *Stakeholder Review* cited below also indicates that individuals involved in planning, implementing and supervising urban campaigns were often engaged in other formal employment and tended to expect a larger reimbursement for their time than their rural counterparts.

Budget underestimation can translate into fewer funds being available for follow-up activities such as post-distribution communication through mass media channels to promote use and proper care and repair of nets. Where there are insufficient funds for post-campaign communication, data should be used to determine how best to target the limited resources, focusing on the areas with the highest behavioural barriers to use. See [The ITN Access and Use Report](#). In urban areas where ownership of mobile telephones is high, it may be possible to engage mobile phone companies to send SMS reminder messages free of charge.

**SEE BRIEF 4:
PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT**

The NMCP and implementing partners must ensure that early agreements are reached on specific adaptations to the national ITN campaign communication plan, guidelines, curricula and tools to suit the urban context.

An extensive list of recommendations, including for planning for campaigns in urban areas, can be found in “Table One” in *Stakeholder Review: Experiences in Long Lasting Insecticidal Net (LLIN) Urban Distribution Campaigns*, NetWorks Project, March 2013. See: www.vector-works.org/wp-content/uploads/Review-of-Urban-LLIN-Distributions-March2013-FINAL-submitted.pdf.