

## BED NET DISTRIBUTION:

### UPPER RIVER REGION

June – November, 2010



( Badari Village, URR)

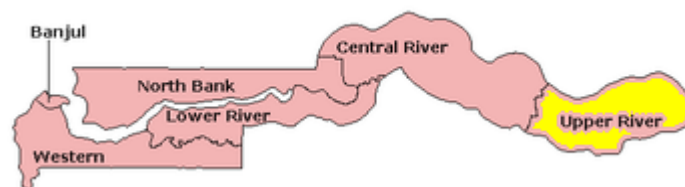
PEACE CORPS THE GAMBLA

## Introduction

Peace Corps the Gambia's uninterrupted relationship with The Gambia dates back to 1966, the year Peace Corps started operations in The Gambia, when the United States Charge d-Affaires signed a Protocol of Agreement with the Government of The Gambia. Forty-four years later, Peace Corps is working in the Gambia to meet the three goals of Peace Corps: 1) Helping people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women; 2) Helping to promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served; and 3) Helping to promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans. Today, there are 92 volunteers actively serving in the sectors of Education, Environment, and Health.

This project began as a cross-sector collaboration of volunteers from all three sectors of Peace Corps the Gambia (PCTG) working with Peace Corps Senegal. Malaria is one of the biggest killers in the world. It attacks at least 1.5 million people every year. About 70% of the deaths are children under five. That is equivalent to one African child dying of malaria every 30 seconds, or seven jumbo jets of children killed by malaria every day. Epidemiological studies have suggested that for every 20 nets used, a life is saved. Although the President Obama's Malaria Initiative does not operate in The Gambia, there have been a number of bed net campaigns. However, all of these campaigns limit themselves to pregnant women and children under 5 years old. Statistically, the most powerful way to attack malaria is a 100% coverage campaign in which every person in a village sleeps under a net. And once no one in a village has malaria, even if the mosquitoes bite, they are not spreading the disease. (This is how the American South, once malaria-ridden, is now malaria-free; they still have mosquitoes, but they are not spreading the disease.)

The Upper River Region (URR) in the Gambia contains some of the most remote, out of the way communities in the country, and is often over looked during distribution efforts. Many of the clinics and health centers in the region are also lacking bed nets. PCVs that started this project over one year ago began the efforts to collect bed nets and distribute bed nets against the popular style of bed net distribution, i.e., bed nets only being received by the elderly, pregnant women, and children under the age of five. A number of bed net distributions in URR took place in 2010, and contained in this report are distribution profiles of some of the sites. .



Upper River Region, The Gambia

### Kanubeh Village, URR



Malaria prevention songs

On June 18, 2010, three PCVs, Sunny Utterback, Brendan Loula, and Ashley Garrison, took part in the bed net distribution in the village of Kanubeh. Kanubeh is located in the Jimara district, and has a population of roughly 1,500 men, woman, and children. Each compound received bed nets in the community. During the distribution of each bed net, PCVs demonstrated how to properly hang and maintain a bed net in Mandinka, one of the local languages in the Gambia. 200 bed nets were distributed.

In addition to the bed net distribution, a neem cream demonstration was held. The neem tree grows rapidly all over the country, and when used to make neem cream, it is said to work as a mosquito repellent. Kanubeh community members and PCVs prepared neem cream together, and Loula led the community in songs about malaria prevention in Mandinka.



Hanging of the bed nets

On October 20 and 21, 2010, Gibril Sumbunu (Program Manager for the Health sector), Katim Touray (Program Assistant for the Health Sector), and Katie Clifford (Volunteer Leader for the Health Sector), distributed bed nets to three health centers in the URR. The Regional Health Director of URR, Baboucarr Jang, was also present.

### **Koina Health Center, URR**



The Community Health Nurse receives the bed nets

Koina Health Center is in Koina, in the district of Kantora, with a population estimated at 5,000 men, women, and children. 30 bed nets were presented to the Koina Health Center. Koina Health Center previously had a limited number of bed nets in their patient quarters. Bed net promotion to take on the battle against Malaria is one of Koina's biggest concerns, and thanks to the bed net distribution each of their patient beds now have a bed net available for use. Peace Corps was met by clinic staff, and the Village Development Committee (VDC), and an on-site bed net demonstration was conducted. Mr. Sumbunu, in collaboration with Mr. Jang, also gave a speech on the importance of using bed nets to lower the amount of Malaria cases in the community.



Every bed has a net

### Garawol Health Center, URR



Community meeting

Garawol Health Center is located in the community of Garawol, in the district of Kantora. Garawol has a population roughly the size of 7,500 men, women, and children. 60 bed nets were presented by Peace Corps to the staff of the Garawol Health Center. Prior to the distribution, the health center suffered greatly from a lack of bed nets available for patient use. Staff members of the clinic and the VDC were present for the handing over of the bed nets. Because of the distribution, each of the patient beds on site is now covered by a bed net. During the distribution, a demonstration was made on how to properly hang the bed nets in the clinic. The remaining bed nets were also handed out to community members later by the health center based on need.



Demonstration of how to hang a bed net



### **Gambissara Health Center, URR**



Driving through URR

Gambissara Health Center is in the community of Gambissara. The community is located in the district of Jimara, and has an estimated population of 6,000 men, women, and children. At this stop, 90 bed nets were presented to the health center. Like a majority of health centers in the region, and even the country, the lack of bed nets available for use in patient quarters was a major problem in Gambissara. A tour of conducted of the facility, including a small bed net demonstration led by the staff for community members who will be receiving the remaining bed nets.



Handing over of the bed nets to clinic staff

On November 3, 2010, Katim Touray (Program Assistant for the Health Sector), Katie Clifford (Volunteer Leader for the Health Sector), distributed bed nets to four villages in the URR. The Senior Community Health Nurse, Sheriff Jammeh, was also present for the distribution.

### **Badari, URR**



Meeting with community members

Badari is located in the district of Toumana, with a population that is estimated at 2,000 men, women, and children. The nets were received by the VDC and head of the women's group, as well as the community as a whole. 60 bed nets were distributed to the community of Badari. Ways to hang a bed net were discussed, as well as how to probably maintain a bed net. Not every compound in the community at the time had bed nets, so the Community Health Nurse received the nets to distribute to community members who are currently without a bed net.



Chairpersons of major community committees and CHN receive the bed nets

**Sarigaraba, URR**

Bed nets to be distributed

Sarigaraba is located in the district of Toumana, with a population estimated at 1,000. 90 bed nets were received by the Alkulo (community head) and VDC. A village meeting was held with all of the elders of the village present. The village health worker was also in attendance, and spoke to the community about the importance of sleeping under a bed net and the fight against malaria. Majority of the village sleeps each night without a bed net, and the village health worker was tasked to present each compound with bed nets and assist in the hanging of each bed net.



Village Head and VDC receive the bed nets



### **Karantaba, URR**



Breeding ground for mosquitoes

Karantaba is located in the district of Jimara, with a population estimated at 500. Community members were present to for the handing over of the 30 bed nets presented to the community. The village health worker received the bed nets, and was tasked to hand out the bed nets to each compound and demonstrate how to hang the bed net. This was one of the smallest villages visited on the campaign, and really stuck true to the goal of bed nets for all.



Community members receive the bed nets

### **Sami Koto, URR**



Community gathers for bed net distribution

The community of Sami Koto is located in the district of Toumana, and has a population roughly the size of 1,000. The elders of the community, the VDC, and village health worker led the meeting for the handing over of bed nets to the community. The village health worker received 94 bed nets, and also gave a speech to those present about the importance of not only hanging the bed net, but also to sleep under the net. Many people in the village sleep outside during the hottest months of the year, often when mosquitoes are at their worst, and the village health worker told community members if they sleep outside, then they must still sleep under a bed net.



Handing over the bed nets to elders and Village Health Worker

## Conclusion

Overall, over 15 communities were reached during the bed net campaign, and the goal of providing every member of the community with a bed net was reached. PCTG hopes to continue to raise awareness and lower the rates of malaria in The Gambia through other means, including future projects to provide community members with bed nets in other areas of the country as well. There were many successes of this project. A good number of communities were reached, and malaria desensitization was conducted at each stop. There were also some major challenges with this project. A large number of funds had to be raised not only to supply the bed nets, but also funds to transport and distribute the bed nets to the furthest region in the country. This project also took a long time to complete, and the people who spearheaded the campaign concluded their Peace Corps service before the completion and real implementation of the project, leaving behind people to take over who were not always sure what the plan was. Detailed and organized planning will be an important factor in an even more successful in future endeavors like this one.



Bed nets for all

**SUBMITTED:**  
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