



**WORLD SWIM AGAINST MALARIA (WSM) FREE NET
DISTRIBUTION IN BATOURI HEALTH DISTRICT
CAMEROON**

February 2007



I- Introduction

It was exactly 1 P.M. on the Wednesday 31st January 2007 when we arrived in Batouri after a long and tiring journey. On our arrival, the first thing we had to do was to get in touch with the chief medical officer of Batouri health district (Dr Mebouinz Daniel). We could not reach him on the phone until 6 P.M and we were informed that the lorry transporting the nets from the port of Douala to Batouri was still on the way. With him we planned a meeting which took place in his office the following day (1st February 2007) at 10 A.M. in the presence of Dr Tougordi, the World Health Organisation (WHO) malaria unit head in Cameroon..



Planning meeting: from left to right the chief medical officer of the Batouri Health District, the ACMS team and the Cameroon WHO office representative

The discussions during our meeting focused on the condition of acquisition of nets by the target (children under five), the list of health areas where nets are to be

distributed and the calculation of the proportion of nets to be distributed in each health area concerned.

II- WSM nets arrive in Batouri

On the same day 1st February 2007 some hours after the meeting we had with the chief medical officer and the WHO representative, we were informed by the ACMS logistician on the telephone that the lorry carrying the nets had arrived in Batouri. After many attempts we succeeded in reaching the driver of the lorry by telephone phone. He told us that he was being held by custom officers around Sandai (18 kms from Batouri town). This was around 3 PM. Together with the chief medical officer we travelled out to Sandai to find out what was going on. The reason advanced by the customs officers for holding the truck was that the numbered seal appearing on the container was different from the one on the accompanying shipping documents. (This is because the original seal was broken when the container was inspected by customs officials when the nets arrived in the port of Douala).



**The WSM Container of nets and the lorry carrying it,
stopped by customs officers**

We then called back the ACMS logistician who clarified the issue but the customs officers were not ready to release the lorry. It was at that point, at around 8 PM, that we called the problem to the attention of the Head of Customs officer who was not aware of all difficulties we passed through with his men. Having listen carefully to us, he asked one of his men to escort us with the lorry up to Batouri and to make sure nothing was missing in that container. As it was quite late, for security reasons we could not return to Batouri. The only option we had was to find a guest house and sleep at Sandai and return the following morning.



The arrival in Batouri of the lorry carrying the WSM nets

The nets arrived in Batouri early in the morning of February 2, 2007, and at around 2 PM, in the presence of local authorities (administrative, traditional and religious), the provincial authorities and the National Malaria Control Program (NMCP) representative, the WHO representative and ACMS Team the container was unsealed and opened.



Authorities present for the opening of the WSM container in Batouri



The opening of the WSM container

After the opening of the container and verification of the number of nets received, hand over documents were signed between the ACMS team and the NMCP represented by the provincial unit NMCP officer and the chief medical officer of Batouri Health District.



Authorities witnessing the counting of WSM free nets



The signing of documents handing over WSM nets



The chief medical officer of Batouri health district receiving the signed documents

II- The process

The WSM free nets were planned to be distributed alongside with the measles immunisation campaign from day one. Unfortunately it was not until February 5, 2007 that the chief medical officer of the health district finally organised the quantity of nets for each health area and this against the suggestions of all authorities who suggested the direct distribution of nets to children under five starting from Saturday 03 February 2007. The chief medical officer unfortunately felt that ACMS's duty was limited to bringing the nets up to Batouri and their distribution was the sole responsibility the health district. However ACMS, with the support of the NMCP, persisted and the distribution of WSM free nets was organised as followed:

S/N	Health Center	Population	Children 1-5 years	Nber of free nets received	Observation
1	Bandongué	5793	869	600	WSM free nets
2	Batouri centre	14489	2173	1500	WSM free nets
3	Batouri north	15637	2346	1200	WSM free nets
4	Batouri west	8582	1287	900	WSM free nets
5	Batouri south	7245	1087	600	WSM free nets
6	Belita II	6852	1028	600	WSM free nets
7	Boubara	14086	2113	1300	WSM free nets
8	Gadji	11444	1717	1000	WSM free nets
9	Gounté	4110	617	300	WSM free nets
10	Ketté	10896	1634	300	WSM free nets
11	Lala	2627	394	100	WSM free nets
12	Mbounou	11172	1676	1000	WSM free nets
13	Nguélébok	4890	674	400	WSM free nets
14	Taparé	3130	470	200	WSM free nets
	Total	132168	19917	10000	WSM free nets



The proportional distribution of free nets by health center

PROCEDURE DE REPARTITION DES MII

Health Center	Population	Percentage	Net Distribution (MII)
AS BANDONG	569 / 19915	4% × 11971 = 479	479 MII
BRI CENTRE	2173 / 19915	10% × 11971 = 1197	1197 MII
BRI NORD	2246 / 19915	11% × 11971 = 1317	1317 MII
BRI OUEST	1987 / 19915	6% × 11971 = 718	718 MII
BRI SUD	1087 / 19915	5% × 11971 = 599	599 MII
BELITA II	1028 / 19915	5% × 11971 = 598	598 MII
BOURBARA	2113 / 19915	10% × 11971 = 1197	1197 MII
GADSI	1717 / 19915	8% × 11971 = 958	958 MII
GOUNTE	617 / 19915	3% × 11971 = 359	359 MII
KETTE	1634 / 19915	8% × 11971 = 957	957 MII
LALA	294 / 19915	1% × 11971 = 120	120 MII
DBOUNOU	1676 / 19915	8% × 11971 = 957	957 MII

The distribution chart

These nets were carried to respective health centers on the fifth of February 2007.
The ACMS team had to move round Batouri town to witness the operation.



Nets loaded to be taken to a health center.



The ferry crossing to a health center

III- Communication on long lasting net (LLN) use

Prior to WSM distribution people were sensitized on the new type of net they were to receive. In fact this was the ever first set of LLNs distributed in Batouri health district. The health talk consisted of briefing the on the malaria burden of disease, how malaria is contracted, the signs and symptoms and the preventive methods. Concerning prevention, emphasis was placed on the use of insecticide treated bed nets and in particular, on the new long lasting technology of the nets distributed.



ACMS promoter educating mothers on malaria and LLN use in Batouri



A group of women listening to a nurse talking on Malaria and LLN use

IV- Nets distribution at the health center

Nets were distributed within the health facilities in each health area. A voucher was given to the mother or caretaker of each child vaccinated against measles during the February immunisation campaign. The voucher was then exchanged at the closest health centre against a free net.



Mothers and children waiting to exchange their voucher against a free net



A woman exchanging her voucher against a free net



A woman and her child after the reception a free WSM LLN in Batouri



Many were those children who will be covered by free WSM net in Batouri Health District.

V- Free distribution follow up

Barely a month after the free distribution of WSM nets in Batouri Health District, another ACMS team was sent to appraise the distribution net through house to house inspection in various health areas concerned. They observed that many of the distributed nets were already in use.



The free WSM net hung in a house in Batouri-Kette health area



A child taking a nap under a free WSM net in Bandongué health area



A baby sleeping under a free WSM net in Mbounou health area



A WSM net hung in a house in Belita health area

However, in some houses, the free WSM nets were kept in suitcases or the bags waiting to be used for the next baby or just because they still have ordinary nets that were already in use.



WSM free net kept in a suitcase in Kette health area



WSM net hanging on the wall of a room in Gounte health area



The old net remains in use while the free WSM net is waiting.

VI- Achievements

- The free WSM distribution of LLNs in Batouri has increased tremendously the net coverage in Batouri health district. In fact almost 50 % children under five have received a LLN.
- This has help to reinforce the partnership between the private not for profit sector (ACMS) and the public sector (NMCP) for the fight against an ancient disease.
- It has help the population of Batouri health district as well as local authorities to understand the importance of sleeping under a LLN.
- It has also created awareness of the existence of a new technology : the LLN .

VII- Challenges

Challenges faced in the course of these activities include:

- The delay in the distribution of nets starting from day one of the Immunisation campaign
- The poor attitude of customs workers
- The reluctant attitude of public workers at the community level towards private partners
- The poor road infrastructure and delaying activities in many areas.

Conclusion

This was a fascinating exercise despite all challenges. Similar exercises should be encouraged to protect the lives the rural poor community. We send a heart-felt thank you on behalf of the children in Batouri to this initiative of World Swim against Malaria and to all of the many swimmers around the world who made this possible!

The Association Camerounaise pour le Marketing Social (ACMS) is an affiliate of Population Services International (PSI). To learn more about what we do in Cameroon, we invite you to visit the Cameroon country page on PSI's website at www.psi.org

If you have questions about this distribution, please send an email to Mr Christien Yameni at yamchrist2@yahoo.fr.