



THE ASSOCIATION OF YOUTHS AGAINST MALARIA (TAYAM)

REPORT OF MOSQUITO NETS DISTRIBUTION IN LOWER RIVER REGION

SUMMARY SHEET OF LLIN DISTRIBUTION IN LRR

Period	December 2007
Region	Lower River Region
Planned activity	LLN distribution
Donated by	Gambia United Society based in United Kingdom
Target groups	Children under five, Pregnant Women and the Economically marginalized
Output	4200 LLN distributed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 1030 LLNs distributed to children under five ➤ 256 LLNs distributed to pregnant Women ➤ 2914 LLNs distributed to Economically marginalized
Partners	CRS, NMCP, CIAM, RHT (LRR), Africa Muslim Agency, Regional and District Authorities and Local Communities
Date	12-14 th December 2007

In The Gambia malaria accounts for 40-50% of consultation for children under the age of five years and 20-24% consultation for pregnant women, whilst 36.9% of deaths among under five are due to malaria (NMCP 2006). This is indeed alarming for a country with a population of about 1.5 million people and a cause for concern for every Gambian whether at home or away. This alarming situation prompted the Government to canvas for support from International Organizations, Institutions and all other Gambians in order to help in the fight against malaria.

Gambia United Society (GUSUK) is one such organization. It is a UK based charity and its membership comprises of mainly of Gambians and friends of the Gambia resident in UK. They have history of rendering help to people in the Gambia. GUSUK's involvement in the campaign against malaria came about after its Chairman, Bakebba Camara, visited the mortuary in Banjul in the summer of 2005 and saw for himself a large number of dead children who were victims of malaria. When he returned to the UK he raised the issue with his colleagues and persuaded them to initiate their own malaria campaign.

They decided to raise funds and mobilize resources in order to purchase and donate Long Lasting Insecticide Nets (LLIN) to some needy Gambians. As part of their fundraising activities, the renowned Gambian musician, Jaliba Kuyateh and his band, agreed to tour Europe for GUSUK in the summer of 2006. During this tour Gambian culture was widely promoted. In the

end, £5,000 was raised. A Distribution Proposal was submitted to the Against Malaria Foundation (AMF) to gain their involvement and support for a distribution. They contributed significant additional funds to buy nets so our 4,200 LLINs proposal was fully funded and approved. Nets were shipped to The Gambia in November 2007.

The purchasing and shipment of the LLINs were supervised by our partner, AMF, which is headed by Rob Mather. AMF closely worked with GUSUK throughout and without their expertise and influence the project would not have been smoothly successful. To this extent a great deal of appreciation is extended to AMF.

Prior to the purchase of the nets, partners in the Gambia such CIAM and the National Malaria Control Program (NMCP) were consulted for advice regarding the types and dimension of nets that are preferred for use and a partner that could distribute the nets once they arrive in The Gambia. The society was referred to TAYAM as an organization involved in the distribution and promotion of LLINs used in the coastal regions of the country. Having been approached by GUSUK, TAYAM agreed to collaborate with us on the distribution and took the task of selecting a region and identifying the most vulnerable groups to whom the nets could be given. The region selected was Lower River Region whilst children, pregnant women and the physically disabled were recommended to be the beneficiaries of these nets. In total 17 communities were identified within LRR where the nets were distributed. The distribution, as part of the control process of the Against Malaria Foundation, was reviewed and approved by the NMCP and we are grateful for their support.

ARRIVAL OF THE NETS IN THE COUNTRY

A consignment of 16,600 LLINs in bales of 100 nets each were shipped by AMF, GUSUK's nets being part of that shipment. The nets arrived in country in mid-November 2007 and were cleared from the port by NMCP on behalf of partner institutions. Following their clearance from the port on 28th November 2007, they were transported to CRS warehouse in Kanifing, off loaded and stored. These nets were shipped to three institutions namely TAYAM, Red Cross and Smile Gambia with each of them receiving 4,200, 6,700 and 5,700 respectively.



Nets being unloaded from the container by labourers to CRS ware house in Kanifing



Bales of the nets neatly arranged in the store on arrival from the ports

On 12th December 2008, the nets were formally handed over to TAYAM by Mr. Saikou Jaiteh, the representative of GUSUK, who was sent purposely to oversee the distribution exercise at community level. The handing over ceremony was punctuated with speeches delivered by the Acting Chairman TAYAM Board of Directors (Mr. Lamin Manneh), the representatives of NMCP (Mrs. Adam Jagne Sonko) and CRS (Mr. Balla Musa Joof) all of whom expressed happiness and thanked GUSUK for their goodwill gesture, citing it as timely and appropriate since the use of LLINs is one of focus for current malaria prevention strategies. For his part, the representative of GUSUK, expressed satisfaction for seeing the nets arrive in The Gambia safely and bound for distribution amongst its intended beneficiaries. He further thanked all the authorities in The Gambia in particular CRS, NMCP and CIAM for their willingness to support TAYAM distribute these nets appropriately. The ceremony was chaired by Mr. Omar Ceesay the Ag. Project Director of TAYAM and the vote of thanks was delivered by Mr. Malick Gai representative of the Regional Health Team (W). It was attended by staff of TAYAM, partner institutions, media houses and a cross section of the communities.

Following a brief but colorful handing over ceremony, all the nets that were supposed to be distributed by TAYAM (4200LLINs) were immediately loaded and transported to LRR for distribution to its intended beneficiaries. Logistical support required for the transportation and distribution of the nets in LRR was provided by CRS and Africa Muslim Agency. They also provided financial incentives to the volunteers on the ground.

ARRIVAL OF THE NETS IN LRR

On arrival in LRR, the nets were received and safely stored by officials of the Regional Health Team (RHT). On the same day, 12th December 2007, officers from TAYAM and GUS UK traveled to LRR to take part in the distribution of these nets within 17 communities including children under five, pregnant women and economically marginalized. Soon after their arrival, a strategic planning meeting was convened to map out distribution strategies. Members to this strategic meeting were the two TAYAM Project Managers and three staff from the RHT in the capacities of the Regional Public Health Officer, Regional Public Health Nurse and the Regional Vector Control Officers.

Prior to the commencement of the distribution exercise, supervisors of the distribution team were led by Mr. Nyalling Sambou, the Regional Health Officer to the Office of the Regional Governor at Mansa Konko to brief him of the arrival of LLINs donated by GUSUK to 17 identified communities in his region. During this visit, the Governor was introduced to the representative of the Gambia United Society Mr. Saikou Jaiteh who was with the team at the time. Mr. Jaiteh took the opportunity to inform the Governor of his society's readiness to complement efforts by others in the fight against malaria through the use of ITNs. He further informed the Governor that his society had agreed to distribute the nets with the help and advice from TAYAM which is a locally based NGO involved in the free distribution and promotion of LLINs use among children under the age of five, pregnant women and other vulnerable groups.

For his part, the Governor welcomed the team and thanked them for having selected his region. He said although malaria is a problem all over The Gambia, LRR is also one of the regions that are badly affected by malaria especially during rainy season. He assured the team of his fullest support and all other district authorities within his region. Finally he urged all other Gambians at home and abroad to emulate GUSUK who for their foresightedness is helping in the socio economic development of the country by trying to reduce the burden of malaria through the free distribution of LLINs to the most vulnerable groups.

PARTNERS INVOLVED IN THE DISTRIBUTION

The distribution in itself is an activity that requires lots of resources both human and financial if it is to be successfully carried out. Thus following the receipt of some 4,200 LLINs from GUSUK by TAYAM, resources were mobilized in order to facilitate the distribution of these nets to its intended beneficiaries in LRR. NMCP provided support by clearing the nets from the port and transporting them to CRS warehouse in Kanifing on behalf of partner recipients...

In the LRR, the RHT, Office of the Governor, District and Village heads all participated actively throughout the entire period of the distribution exercise which lasted for two days. Community Health Nurses, Public Health Officers and TAYAM youth Links served as volunteers to distribute nets to the beneficiaries.

TARGET GROUPS

The groups targeted as beneficiaries for the donated LLINs were children under five, pregnant women, and differentially able persons (economically disabled persons) in LRR. They were mainly selected due to their susceptibility to malaria which could be attributed to many factors including their physiological conditions and their socioeconomic status. Their level of maturity in case of children, poor income in case of the other two groups made it difficult for them to afford LLINs for themselves and sleep under it consistently. It was against this background and the severity of malaria impact on them that they were identified as the beneficiaries of the LLINs.

METHODOLOGY OF NET DISTRIBUTION IN LOWER RIVER REGION

Distribution of nets is never an easy task irrespective of where it is going to be conducted. It was in view of this and other anticipated challenges that a brief planning meeting aimed at mapping out distribution strategies was held with the RHT staff prior to the commencement of the distribution exercise in LRR. At the end of the meeting, it was decided that one of the two Project Managers (PM) from TAYAM, Mr. Buba Jagne, be assigned to supervise the

distribution in Jarra districts whilst the other PM Mr. Pa Yusupha Sowe supervised Kiang districts. Each of the PMs was assisted by staffers from the RHT

At community level, volunteers from CHNs, PHOs and TAYAM youth link members totaling 38, were identified and used as distributors. Even though none of them underwent formal training for the purpose of the distribution exercise, they were able to do it effectively with minimal supervision. These people were further assisted by village "Alkaloos" or their representatives who helped mobilize the recipients and organized them to form queues thereby making the distribution exercise orderly and peaceful as well as deterring unscrupulous people from receiving more than one net.



Women with under fives in LRR queuing to receive nets donated by GUS UK



GUSUK rep. Mr. Jaiteh explaining to women how to use the nets

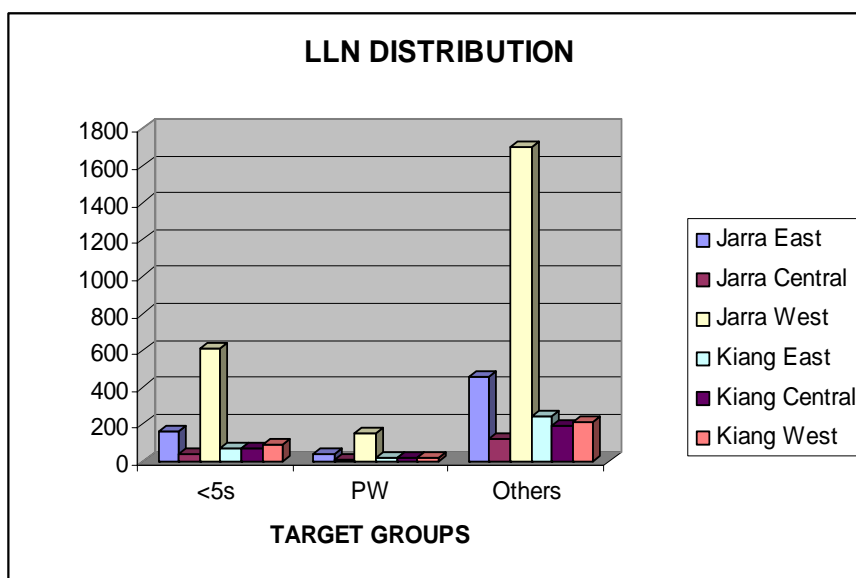
In each of the benefiting communities in all the six districts of the region, nets were delivered to the village Alkalo's compound. These Alkalos (village heads) participated actively by helping mobilize villagers to come out and receive the nets. Distribution of the nets was done by the volunteers with help from the village authorities.

Separate registers, divided into three sections of under 5s, Pregnant Women and Others, were printed for each of the communities and entries of all nets issued were recorded in these registers. As the beneficiaries came one after the other their names were entered into these registers and their clinic cards marked as an indication of receipt of a net. However this was not the same for the other vulnerable groups who were not in a possession medical cards which could have been marked but nonetheless their details were entered in the registers.

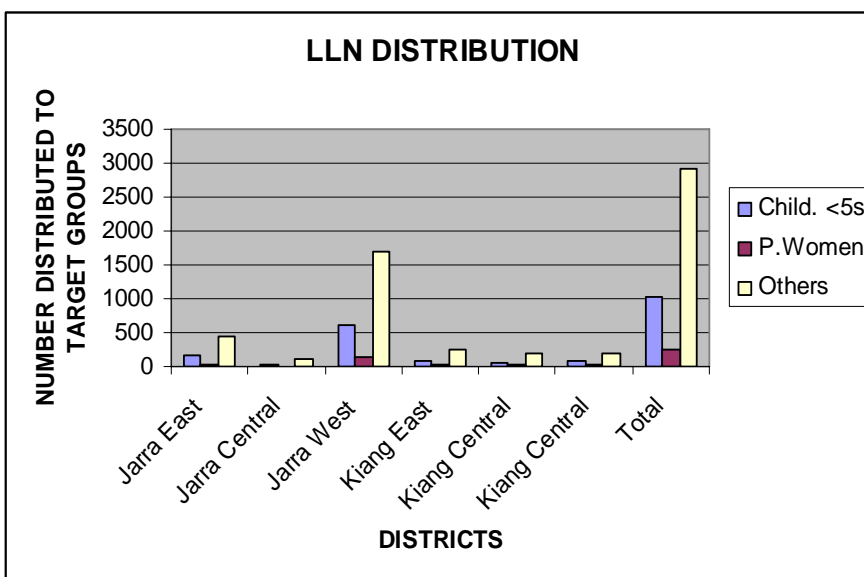
Table showing # of nets distributed to the various target groups and # volunteers used per site

Districts	Villages	# of nets issued to Children < 5 years	# of nets issued to Pregnant Women	# of nets issued to Other Vulnerable	Total # of LLNs issued	# of distributors
Jara's	Sukuta	19	5	56	80	2
	Pakaliba	36	9	103	148	2
	Bureng	52	13	149	214	2
	Wellingara Ba	51	13	146	210	2
	Jappineh Marikoto	41	11	119	171	2
	Jappineh Tembeto	25	6	71	102	2
	Sankwia	55	14	156	225	2
	Soma	402	99	1149	1650	6
	Jenoi	50	10	112	172	2
	Pakalinding	74	19	212	305	2
Kiang's	Kiaf	54	14	153	221	2
	Generie	32	8	92	132	2
	Kwenella N/ Kunda	40	10	114	164	2
	Kwenella	27	7	76	110	2
	Manduarr	21	5	61	87	2
	Kantong Kunda	20	5	58	83	2
	Jatta Ba	31	8	88	127	2
TOTAL		1030	256	2914	4200	38

Graph showing LLN distributed to three target groups



Graph showing total LLN distributed in the six districts of LRR



Overall, 1030 nets representing 24.5% were distributed to children under five, 256 nets representing 6.1% were distributed to pregnant women and 2914 nets representing 69.4% were distributed among the economically marginalized groups. However, high number of the nets about 2454 representing about 58% was distributed in Jarra West for having been more populated than the other districts.

NOTE: The projection for the figures used in the selected communities was based on the outcome of the bed net count carried alongside the polio vaccination campaign in Lower River Region in 2003. Those communities selected were the ones used by UNICEF during the LLIN distribution to children under five under the Dutch Grant.

Constraints encountered during the net distribution in LRR

The distribution of the nets in Lower River Region came at a time when the feast – EID AL Adha was fast approaching and people who supposed to participate in the distribution could not be traced easily due to personal engagements. Constrains encountered were:

- Difficulty in contacting the distributors and supervisors in some of the areas proved extremely difficult.
- Poor road network posed difficulty to reaching some distribution points.

Recommendations

The importance and benefits of sleeping under ITNs were known to all and the demand is getting higher by the day. Thus it is in view of the high demand for nets that I recommend the following:

- International organizations or societies like GUS UK should be contacted for help in providing more LLINs to the remaining vulnerable groups in both Western and Lower Regions who were unfortunate not to receive nets.
- Funds should be mobilized early to facilitate Net distribution when ever there are donated nets by philanthropists or other Organizations.
- More fund should be mobilize to help provide nets to all people at risk of malaria.
- There should be massive sensitization at community level if nets are donated and need to be distributed.

Conclusion

In conclusion one could say that the distribution exercise though hectic was carried out as planned with crucial lessons learnt to improve services in the future. The benefiting communities cherished the gifts and applauded the initiatives of the Gambia United Society and TAYAM and all other partners who contributed to the success of making them received the nets. In addition the beneficiaries promised to make a good use of the nets so as to reduce the incidence of malaria in their communities.