

LAUNCHING OF SMILE-GAMBIA NET DISTRIBUTION IN CRR

Mr Rob Mather of Swim Against Malaria donated five thousand seven hundred (5,700) long lasting insecticide treated mosquito nets to Smile-Gambia Project spearheaded by Mr Kevin Bailey in collaboration with the Kunting Youth Association (KYA). The nets were cleared from the Gambia Ports Authority by the Gambia Red Cross Society on 12 December 2007.

Dr Mamo Jawla the advisor of KYA as well as patron of Smile-Gambia received the nets on behalf of the beneficiary communities. The President of KYA, the Manager of the National Malaria Control Program, the head of the Central River Regional Health Team in Bansang as well as the head of Kunting village were informed in order to prepare for a joint launching ceremony and to distribute the nets as planned in the proposal which was submitted to Swim Against Malaria. According to the proposal, the following three distribution points have been identified for the beneficiary communities:

1. Janjan Bureh – 1500 nets (one net per bed)
2. Kunting and surrounding villages – 3500 nets (one net per bed)
3. Karantaba Dispensary (700) through base and outreach Reproductive and Child Health Clinics for pregnant women and children under five years.

From 3rd to 8th January 2008, Dr Jawla travelled to Kunting and Janjan Bureh to conduct detail counting of beds in both areas. A team comprising six people including three school children, a community development officer, an agriculture extension worker and a teacher conducted the exercise in 15 communities.

In Janjan- Bureh a total of 2, 016 beds were recorded at the initial count. This however was later narrowed to 1500 beds of the indigenous/permanent residents. The majority of non permanent residents are mainly government civil servants on temporal postings who are living in government quarters. This small gap is expected to be filled by the global fund nets distributed by the National Malaria Control Program.

In Kunting and surrounding villages about 3438 beds were counted. These include those of government civil servants as well as extension workers of civil society organizations living in the communities.

At Karantaba dispensary and it's catchment areas, the method of distribution through the base and outreach Reproductive and Child Health clinics for children and pregnant women.

A launching ceremony of bed net distribution was held in Kunting village on 19 January 2008. The heads of all the surrounding villages accompanied by women and youth representatives were invited to the occasion. The villages concerned included Dobo, Tankong Kunda, Hyudara, Kunting, Yorna, Kujew, Banni, Jalla koto, Misera, Kallen Sainey, Kallen Jawo, Demfayi and Changai.

Invitation was extended to the Governor of Central River Region, Head Chiefs of Sami District and Janjan Bureh as well as the National Assembly Members of the two areas and members of the Regional Health Team in Bansang. However, due to their busy schedules organising local government elections in the area, the Governor, chiefs and National Assembly members could not attend but representatives of Regional Health Team and Janjan Bureh dispensary were in attendance.

Speaking at the launching ceremony, the head of Kunting village, Alhagie Babucar Jawla welcomed all at Kunting for this important ceremony and urged all to cooperate with health workers and intensify their efforts to fight against the scourge of malaria. On behalf of his fellow village heads, he thanked Rob Mather of Swim Against Malaria for donating nets through Mr Kevin Bailey of Smile-Gambia project. He also thanked Kevin Bailey for all his efforts in looking after the welfare not only of Kunting but the surrounding villages too. He noted that Kevin has been instrumental in linking Kunting School with Hackney primary school about ten years ago. Since then Kevin continues to provide support in various ways to Kunting School in particular and the communities generally.

In his capacity as advisor of KYA as well as patron of Smile-Gambia, Dr Mamo Jawla warmly welcomed representatives from Regional Health Team in Bansang, staff of Janjan Bureh dispensary, heads and representatives from surrounding villages, women groups, traditional communicators, staff and pupils of Kunting School and media representatives. He explained his role and involvement in the project as only a facilitator. The credit goes to Mr Kevin Bailey and KYA for proposing this good will gesture and extended his sincere thanks to Mr Rob Mather for donating 5,700 long lasting insecticide treated nets to Smile-Gambia project through Mr Kevin Bailey.

Dr Jawla presented to village heads 57 bales of 100 nets each and informed the audience that the transportation of the nets from Europe to Banjul and from Banjul to the respective villages was paid by Mr Kevin Bailey. He thanked all those who helped in the bed counting in the communities as well as the Catholic Relief Services for free storage of nets after clearance from the ports. He urged the village heads and other representatives to ensure the nets are distributed to all households as planned and advised them to make good use of the nets.

Mr Amadou Kanteh speaking on behalf of the officer in-charge of the Regional Health in Bansang also thanked Mr Rob Mather for donating nets, Mr Kevin Bailey and Dr Jawla for their efforts in delivering nets at the village level. He explained to the audience the use, benefits and safety precautions of insecticide treated nets and urged them to make better use of the nets in order to reduce the burden of malaria in their communities. He volunteered their office vehicle and driver to support Dr Jawla to video and monitor net distribution in selected villages.

A representative of the President of KYA extended their sincere thanks to all those present and promised that they will explore all possible avenues to forge closer

collaboration with Mr Kevin Bailey and Dr Jawla to bring more support to Kunting and surrounding villages.

The launching ceremony was entertained by drama group from Kunting Upper Basic school and traditional communicators from the women group.

Video and photograph coverage of the entire launching ceremony and net distribution in the communities was done by a member of the Kunting Youth Association.

The headmaster of Kunting School, Mr Dem chaired the launching ceremony and a journalist from the Governor's office in Janjan Bureh covered the occasion.

NET DISTRIBUTION IN COMMUNITIES

Immediately following the launching ceremony two vehicles from Bansang Regional Health Team and Janjan Bureh dispensary respectively transported nets to some communities. Others were transported on horse carts as indicated on video and photographs. On the same day in the evening, Dr Jawla and the video camera man followed some village heads to witness net distribution at household level. Dr Jawla used these occasions to conduct community awareness creation on prevention and control of malaria with special reference to mosquito net usage, environmental sanitation and signs and symptoms of malaria and appropriate treatment and compliance.

The next day, Dr Jawla and team transported more nets to Janjan Bureh, met the chief and explained all the details to him as the chief was not able to make to the launching ceremony. The team visited all the villages in order to ensure that the nets were distributed to listed households.

The team then proceeded with the rest of nets to Karantaba dispensary. On the way we sensitized several village heads in the catchment area and travelled with three of them for a briefing in the presence of the staff of Karantaba dispensary. Unlike Janjan Bureh, Kunting and the surrounding villages where nets were distributed one net per bed, in Karantaba area only children under five years and pregnant women have been targeted. This was thoroughly explained to staff and community members who were present at the time. The officer in-charge was urged to record on the infant welfare and ante natal clinic cards of children < 5 years and pregnant women respectively as well as on a quire book which will be monitored on subsequent follow up visits to be conducted in due course.

All the distribution process was recorded, video taped with photographs.

On behalf of Kunting Youth Association and the beneficiary communities, Dr Jawla would like to extend gratitude to Mr Rob Mather of Swim Against Malaria for donating nets and Mr Kevin Bailey for raising funds to transport and distribute nets at the household level in the communities. Dr Jawla and staff of Bansang Regional

Health Team will make a follow up visit before the rains to conduct more awareness creation and to ensure that the communities hang their nets as advised.



Dr Jawla and Truck driver collecting nets from the ware house into the truck