

WomensTrust Free LLIN Distribution
Pokuase, Ghana, West Africa
Summer 2008
Written by WomensTrust intern Sasha Chait



Introduction

On May 20, 2008, I arrived in Pokuase, Ghana, West Africa where WomensTrust Program Director Gertrude Ankrah greeted me. The following day, I met the WomensTrust office staff and Pokuase Community Nurse Victoria Owusu who was excited about the nets and had agreed to help with the distribution. Gertie and I contacted WomensTrust Executive Director Susan Kraeger and Rob Mather from Against Malaria to confirm that the insecticidal mosquito nets were in a storage facility in Tema, Ghana, a town about an hour south of Pokuase. We arranged to have directions sent and planned to pick up the nets at the beginning of the following week.

With the confirmation on the arrival of the nets, Victoria announced at The Well Baby Clinic (a weekly clinic attended by mothers and babies for weight checks and free vaccinations) that the mosquito nets would be available starting the following week. Gertie, the WomensTrust staff, and Victoria helped to spread the word about the nets to the community focusing on local schools and churches.

We arranged to pick up the nets on Tuesday, May 27, as the 26th was a national holiday. A local Pokuase resident, Youngs, was able to drive Gertie and I to Tema to pick up the first 1,500 nets in his van. He then returned to pick up another 1,700 for a total of 3,200 nets for distribution.



Picking up nets in Tema



Nets in Pokuase!

Distribution

We started distributing the nets on May 29, 2008. Nets were offered to the WomensTrust loan communities – Pokuase, Ofankor, Amasaman, and Medie – to children between the ages of two and five. Children under five are the most vulnerable to malaria in Ghana and the government currently provides nets for children under age two. The nets from WomensTrust filled the gap to ensure that all children in the most vulnerable age bracket are protected.

The community nurses and health extension workers distributed nets under “The Big Tree”, an outdoor community meeting area in Pokuase. Parents, older siblings, and teachers from the Seventh Day Adventist and Glorious Child Schools brought kids to receive nets. To receive a net, each child’s health card was required in order to confirm their age and whether or not they were up to date on vaccinations. Free vaccinations and nets were provided to children in need. In Ghana, children are required to receive vaccinations for measles, polio, tuberculosis, yellow fever, diphtheria, tetanus, and hepatitis B. Distribution took place under the tree on May 29, 30, and June 2.



Waiting for nets at the distribution under The Big Tree



A young boy receives a net from Victoria



Community Nurse Victoria giving a net to the Seventh Day Adventist Schoolteacher who helped to facilitate distribution.

Nets were also distributed in the WomensTrust office as well as the Community Health office both located in the Area Council Building in the center of town. Though only Pokuase residents received nets under The Big Tree, residents from any of the villages where WomensTrust operates, could receive nets in the offices. Distribution continued in the Area Council Building until all nets were dispersed.



Members of the Tantra Hills loan group receiving nets in the WomensTrust office

Between The Big Tree and the Area Council Building, over two-hundred nets were dispersed on May 29, over three-hundred fifty on May 30, and over one-hundred on June 2. On June 3, flyers were given out at the Mayflower, Shepherd, Celestial Light, Charity, and Paradise Schools. We informed the headmasters of the net distribution program so they could make an announcement to parents. On June 5, we distributed nets to over sixty children at the Mayflower School with help from the headmaster. Nets were also dispersed at the Well Baby Clinic on June 4. Two hundred children are seen at this weekly clinic.

Success, Continuing Distribution, and Follow-up

Nearly one thousand long lasting insecticidal mosquito nets had been distributed to the Pokuase area when I left Ghana on June 9. The remaining two thousand nets continued to be dispersed by community nurse Victoria Owusu and the WomensTrust staff in Pokuase out of their offices in the Pokuase Area Council Building.

A nursing student from the US completed follow-up of the distribution with home visits and assessment of net use in August 2008.



Happy children after receiving nets in the Area Council building



Cousins cuddle under a new mosquito net

Final Results

As of the end of October 2008, 3200 long lasting insecticidal mosquito nets have been distributed to children between the ages of two and five in the Ga West District of Ghana.



Community Nurses and Health Extension Workers distributing nets under the “Big Tree”



Me (Sasha Chait) with Community Nurse Victoria Owusu outside the Health Office