

POST DISTRIBUTION REPORT – UGANDA LODGE, RUHANGA NTUNGAMO, DECEMBER 2010

Background

Uganda Lodge is situated in a rural area in South West Uganda. Some 4 years ago a small guest house was built by a local family with a view to being able to employ a few village people as they are all subsistence farmers with very little additional income. Denis Aheirwe who instigated the project met with a visiting holidaymaker and she decided to try and help these delightful village people where she could. Two years later at the request of the village women she raised funds in UK and built and opened a nursery school. In 2010 there were over 100 children, aged between 3 and 9, attending the school and we found that many were getting sick and most weeks there were 2 or 3 in the local hospital getting treatment for Malaria. The best way to prevent Malaria is to provide Mosquito nets treated with insecticide (LLINS) so after discussion with Denis and the chairmen of the 3 nearest villages, Migorora, Kasiizi, and Nymahani, Ann decided to try and fund-raise so she could provide all the families surrounding the school with nets.

Pre-Distribution

In May of 2010 a family of 4 volunteered at Uganda Lodge to help at the Ruhanga Development Nursery School and the mother, who was a doctor, took on the job of researching all the criteria needed to apply to “Against Malaria” for some of their nets. She visited the local hospital and district medical centres to find the information needed. We decided that as there are only a few of us working this project we would scale down our initial plans and fund-raise for 300 nets. At the same time the Ugandan Government received money for nets to be distributed in Ntungamo district to homes where pregnant women and children under 5 were living. This extra number of 300 nets, we estimated, would blanket cover the main catchment area of our school.

Collection

Once we heard that the nets had arrived in the Kampala warehouse, Denis borrowed a vehicle and collected the two big bales of nets as they needed them out of the way quickly at short notice and stored them at his boss’s home in Kampala. The next visitor that arrived to volunteer with us agreed to take them on the bus with her when she went down to Ruhanga – a 6 hour long journey. Willing hands off-loaded them from the bus and we stored them until Denis was able to come down to Ruhanga again and oversee the distribution.

Education and Training

The previous week at the school we had several sessions with the young children teaching them about Malaria and the use of bed nets and showed them two of the DVDs from THARE MACHI EDUCATION called “Using Bed Nets” and “Against Malaria”. We have them translated into Runyankole as well as English so are ideally suited to young children, especially as they are interactive.

On distribution day we started to show these DVDs to the adults while they were waiting to receive their nets but, as this is Africa, the power went off for the rest of the day! The portable

DVDs we have worked for a while but after the batteries flattened, we resorted to using verbal training and a couple of the posters that we used for the Government distribution.

Distribution

Distribution day was set for 2nd December 2010. We knew roughly which families had already received nets as I had the Government distribution lists relating to two of the three villages. The third list seemed to be missing!

News got around very quickly that we would be giving out nets and by mid-day there was a massive crowd patiently waiting for them. I had planned to top up properly by giving one net for every 2 people in each house but Denis advised me that we would soon run out as they were inclined to include absent family members or forget what they had received from the Government. We ended up by giving one net per family in most cases, and still ran out. It seems that children sleep 3 or 4 to a bed anyway.

As the people arrived we provided chairs to try and get them to wait in an orderly fashion. They each had to view a net that we had already put up and give their name and details of how many adults and children were living in their house. Each was told that we would be round to inspect the following week to see if they had been hung correctly and if they weren't they would be taken away from them.

We kept a record of the names of each person that received any net and how many children and adults lived in their house – that book is at Uganda Lodge to use for follow-ups.

Challenges

It appears that we could not rely on information from the individual as to their household circumstances as I was soon told they were telling me what I wanted to hear in order to get extra nets! Denis resorted to standing next to me and they instantly became more truthful after a few words from him. In hindsight we should have called each cell or village in on a different day and enlisted the help of the local chairman and, indeed, our CBO (Community Based Organisation). No-one suggested that to me until after the event.

Successes

The following week some of the volunteers went with one of our co-ordinators to many of the homes to check and see if the nets were up and being used correctly. I didn't go into many homes as they live too high up in the hills but had feedback that Amon complained loudly to them if the nets had not been hung. Some excuses were no string or no nails so he threatened to take them away again! We estimate that 70% were hung at first visit. Amon went back to check on the offending home owners the following week and had better results.

I will be out there again to organise a new home survey 3 months after the original distribution. Also in the school we again show the DVD's and try to assess what percentage of children are sleeping under the nets and if Malaria incidence is dropping.