

School Net Program

Distribution of Long-Lasting Insecticide Treated Nets to School Children

Malaria in Tanzania

Tanzania has made enormous strides in lowering the national impact of malaria. The 2012 Tanzania HIV/AIDS and Malaria Indicator Survey (THMIS) showed that malaria prevalence had declined from 18.1% in 2008 to 9.5% in 2012. Over 90% of households own at least one insecticide treated net (ITN), and ownership of any net type has increased from 75% in 2010 to 95% in 2012 (Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey [TDHS] 2010, THMIS 2012). The percentage of children under age five who slept under an ITN the previous night also increased from 64% in 2010 to 72% in 2012 (TDHS 2010, THMIS 2012).

Despite this significant decrease in prevalence and increase in net coverage, malaria remains a major public health problem in Tanzania. It is a leading cause of morbidity and mortality, especially in children under five years of age and pregnant women.

A National Response

The Government of Tanzania has been working diligently to maintain the gains achieved in net coverage and scale up net distribution and communication efforts where they are needed most. The National Malaria Control Program (NMCP) aims to achieve and maintain “universal coverage” rather than focusing solely on vulnerable groups. The NMCP’s objective is to have at least 80% of the population of Tanzania sleeping under a long-lasting insecticide-treated net (LLIN) every night, leading to an overall reduction in malaria transmission.

The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW) instituted a variety of methods for distributing nets. Starting in 2000, the MoHSW distributed nets to the most vulnerable groups, such as pregnant women and children. A Tanzania National Voucher Scheme, initiated in 2004, provided a new strategy for reaching vulnerable groups with nets. In 2009, MoHSW instituted a “catch-up campaign” to ensure that children under five

had access to LLINs. The MoHSW distributed free LLINs to all children under five during this campaign. Again in 2010, a Universal Coverage Campaign distributed 34.3 million LLINs through vouchers and distribution campaigns in an effort to increase coverage to at least 80% among all groups.

To sustain this protection and support universal coverage, the MoHSW initiated a “keep-up campaign” in 2013 to replace worn out and damaged nets by distributing free LLINs to school children and through the ongoing voucher program. The MoHSW implemented the school net distribution campaign in 2013, 2014, and 2015 in the Southern Zone regions of Lindi, Mtwara, and Ruvuma, with the intention to later scale up to a national program.



Children at Medi English Medium Primary School in Mtwara, MC line up to receive their ITNs on Issuing Day for SNP3.
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Supporting School Net Distribution with Communication

While the first campaign in 2013 was supported by the USAID-funded Communication and Malaria Initiative in Tanzania (COMMIT) project, implemented by the Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs (CCP), CCP supported the 2014 and 2015 programs through the Tanzania Capacity and Communication Project (TCCP).

The social and behavior change communication (SBCC) component of the school net distribution campaign targeted both children ages 6-14 years and heads of household as primary audiences, empowering these audiences to take action while clearly conveying the benefits of getting everyone covered – including neighbors – by drawing on popular “sharing” beliefs that exist in Tanzania. The school net program (SNP) also targeted primary school teachers, TCCP Community Change Agents, Ward Educational Coordinators, and other stakeholders, including local government authority (LGA) officials, heads of schools, ward and village officials.

The campaign aimed to create awareness of the school net program and ensure that each target audience knew their role in the roll-out of the initiative. Campaign messages focused on the rationale for the school net distribution program, why nets were being distributed to schools and to certain children, redistribution of nets, net care and repair, net use, and roles and responsibilities within the household and community related to net use.

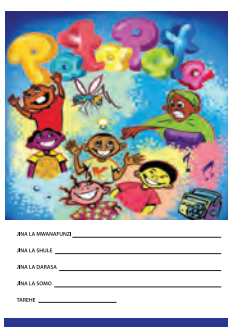
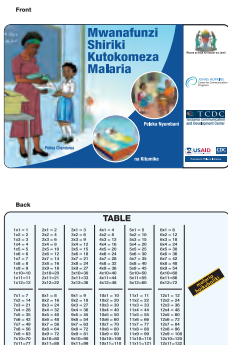
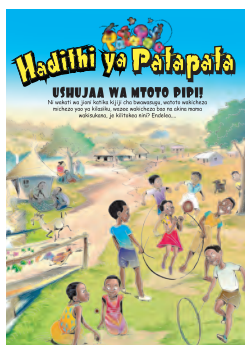
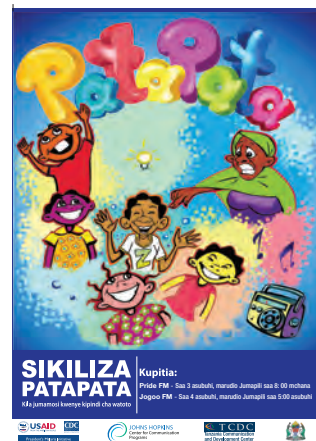
Campaign Development

CCP designed the overall SNP campaign under the COMMIT project in 2012 in collaboration with the NMCP, the MoHSW Health Education and Promotion Section, and partner organizations. The initial campaign included four radio spots, posters, and brochures. This consortium also developed a radio program for children, *Patapata*, which blended storytelling, songs, and games into an engaging and fun platform for the delivery of key messages around malaria and LLIN use. Cue cards and a *Patapata* discussion guide were developed as job aids for Community Change Agents. Teachers also received *Patapata* cue cards for discussion in class. All materials and programs were pre-tested with members of the target audience.

TCCP began implementing SNP SBCC activities in 2013, and continued the use and production of materials and programs developed under COMMIT, including the *Patapata* program.

Strategically Timed SBCC

The implementation of SNP timed specific messages for before distribution, during distribution, and after distribution for each annual campaign. These timed messages were integrated into radio spots, the *Patapata* children’s radio program, and through community mobilization activities. Pre-distribution messages focused on describing SNP and how it worked. Messages during distribution focused on reminding school children to keep their net safe and to take it home to their parents, along with messages on net use. After distribution, messages focused on proper net use, net care and repair, and sharing of nets.



JIHLIA MWANAFUNZI _____
 JIHLIA SHIRIKI _____
 JIHLIA DARASA _____
 JIHLIA SONO _____
 TAMBIE _____

Elements of the Campaign

Radio Outreach:

TCCP aired radio spots at high frequency during the pre-distribution phase of each campaign, partnering with regional radio stations where SNP was implemented. Regional radio stations also aired radio programs featuring live interviews with SNP experts. The *Patapata* program aired on Saturdays during popular children's radio programs.

Community Mobilization:

TCCP's Community Change Agents used cue cards to conduct SNP community dialogue sessions. They also coordinated *Patapata* listening groups with children on Saturdays and Sundays. Village meetings provided opportunities for further dialogue, and print materials such as posters were displayed prominently at the school and community level.

School Activities:

Teachers conducted discussions on *Patapata*, placed SNP posters in their schools, and discussed net use with their students. Community Change Agents visited schools and reminded children to take their nets home and use them. Peace Corps Volunteers also visited schools and supported *Patapata* radio listening sessions, taught about malaria prevention, the importance of proper net use and maintenance, and discussed how children can act as positive role models in their communities. Peace Corps Volunteers also trained community counterparts and secondary school students to facilitate sessions and dialogues at other nearby primary schools.

Why did you decide to give away your extra net?

"My children who were in standard 3 and 5 received nets at school and brought them home. I received the nets, used one and kept the other one. Later on I heard from the radio that we are supposed to give an extra net to a neighbor. I was moved by the message and I agreed it was a good thing to do. I gave the extra net to my neighbor who I learned did not have a net."

-- A mother of two primary school children in Mitego Ward of Mtwara District

District-Wide Events:

District-wide events were added during the third round of SNP to complement mass media and community mobilization activities. Events took place in district towns, and involved traditional dances and performances by local and national artists. DJs engaged community members and asked quiz questions. Events were supported by road shows at ward level. The road show vehicle moved around the communities two days before the event, stopping at village centers for at least two hours. Road shows involved drama and dance performances related to school net distribution, and net use, care, and repair.



Monitoring Progress

Surveys conducted in implementation districts after the second campaign in 2014 showed that heads of households had heard of the SNP at high rates – 92% in Mtwara region, 91% in Lindi region, and 90% in Ruvuma region. Respondents cited school children, radio, and friends and neighbors as the primary sources of that information, indicating that the campaign inspired a good deal of interpersonal communication.

Some challenges were uncovered during the monitoring of distribution. More than 86% of children stated that the provided net belonged solely to them, when in fact the intention of SNP was to support universal net coverage by having children transfer nets from their schools to their homes where they could be shared with other family members and neighbors that might not have a net. Additionally, low radio coverage in parts of Lindi and Mtwara posed a challenge for disseminating messages.

An Innovative Campaign

The TCCP School Net Program was unique in several ways, incorporating innovative approaches to net distribution.

The program used school-aged children as agents of change within their families and communities. Through the *Patapata* radio program, children were inspired to talk to their parents, friends, and communities about malaria prevention behaviors such as sleeping under a net every night, proper net use, net care and repair, and net sharing. Anecdotal feedback from Community Change Agents indicated that children enjoyed the program, and that parents reported increased interpersonal communication with their children about the importance of sleeping under the nets they were given at school.

Additionally, the campaign focused on framing LLINs as community resources that should be shared not just with family members, but neighbors and community members that might not have a net. By distributing multiple nets to the same school children over three consecutive years, many families ended up with more nets than they needed, and they were encouraged to share those nets with other families that did not have school-aged children. Net sharing messages were creatively developed by drawing on popular “sharing” beliefs that exist in Tanzania, such as *kizuri kula na mwenzio*: “sharing is caring.”

Finally, the campaigns phased approach to messaging ensured that messages were timed specifically to coincide with the three phases of the distribution process: before distribution, during distribution, and after distribution.

