



Malaria still remains a serious global health threat, not helped by ever increasing extremes in our climate which results in weather conditions which aids breeding mosquitos, the carrier of the malaria parasite.

Scouts Against Malaria (SAM) is an initiative by UK Scouting to help Scouts in sub-tropical Africa reduce the incidence of this disease by conducting educational and net distribution campaigns in rural communities, with the help of the local health officers.

By fund raising an average of £5 (6€) per person, UK Scouts have been able to send funds to Scouts in Uganda, Malawi, Ghana and Gambia to enable them to purchase and distribute insecticide treated bed nets (ITN) to vulnerable people in these communities. But there have never been sufficient nets.

Our hope is that many of the 5500 Scouts attending KIJ will also learn about this disease and fund raise so more ITN nets can be purchased and distributed by African Scouts. to vulnerable families

The impact of malaria

Malaria is a life-threatening disease primarily found in tropical countries which are both hot and wet. It is both preventable and curable. However, without prompt diagnosis and effective treatment, a case of uncomplicated malaria can progress to a severe form of the disease, which is often fatal without treatment. More than 200 million people are infected annually resulting in more than 600,000 deaths

primarily of children under the age of 5 years old.



Malaria is caused by the bite of a female mosquito of the *anopheles*' species. In sucking blood to feed her young, the female species injects a parasite called a *plasmodium* which infects the liver and attacks the red blood cells.



This species is primarily active between dusk and dawn and so the safest form of protection is to sleep under an insecticide treated bed net. These nets not only prevent sleeping persons being bitten but also by biting the net the mosquito will swallow the insecticide which will kill it.

This 30-page booklet is being published which will enable Scouts of all ages to learn about the origins of the disease, the symptoms, the need for treatment if bitten and how to prevent being bitten. Also, why it is important to eliminate any sources of stagnant water

We have also developed a card that Scouts can carry to remind them of what are the symptoms and how to avoid being bitten.

Malaria card

<p>Prevent being bitten</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear suitable clothing after dark that is long sleeve tops and trousers • Sleep under an insecticide treated bed net and ensure there are no gaps • Eliminate all nearby stagnant pools of water in which mosquitos can breed
<p>Recognise symptoms and seek help if</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High temperature, chills, shivering • Nausea and unable to retain food • Breathing difficulties • Severe anaemia such as very tired, pale skin, dizziness

Distribution campaign, Forikom Community, Ghana

Louis Okyere reports - As the rainy season commences, the risk of malaria increases significantly, especially in rural communities like Forikrom in the Berekum Municipal of the Bono Region. To address this concern, a mosquito net distribution project was initiated to help curb the incidence of malaria among vulnerable groups in the community. The involvement of the Forikom nursing staff ensured proper identification of beneficiaries, as well as the dissemination of critical health education on the proper use of the nets.

Activities carried out included:

- Community sensitization and mobilization prior to distribution
- Health education on malaria prevention and correct usage of mosquito nets
- Distribution of the nets
- Follow-up on net usage in selected households

Achievements: included

- A total of 120 treated mosquito nets were distributed.to vulnerable families which included pregnant and lactating women, children (especially under five years of age) and the aged
- Increased awareness in the community about the dangers of malaria and the importance of prevention.
- Positive feedback from community members regarding the initiative.
- Strengthened collaboration between the community health team and local stakeholders.

Challenges encountered: included

- Limited transportation made it difficult to reach some remote parts of the community.
- Low literacy levels so some beneficiaries needed more time and attention to understand how to use the nets properly.



Net distribution and education into causes and prevention of malaria

Distribution campaign, Chikwawa Community, Malawi

Howie Maujo reports -

Malaria is a significant public health challenge in Malawi, affecting individuals, families, and communities. The disease is a leading cause of morbidity and mortality, particularly among vulnerable populations such as children under five and pregnant women. As an organization that works with young people from diverse backgrounds in Malawi, Scouting has witnessed firsthand the devastating impact of malaria on the lives of young people and the community at large.

We've seen families torn apart, futures cut short, and communities drained by the relentless cycle of illness and death. We've lost many lives to this disease, and it's imperative that we continue to work together to combat malaria and protect the health and well-being of our communities.

For many families in Malawi, affording mosquito nets to protect themselves from malaria during the evening hours is a significant challenge, leaving them vulnerable to the disease. Having the opportunity to receive a mosquito net can be a life-changing scenario for these families, as we've seen through the efforts of Scouts who have been distributing nets to many families in need.

Chikwawa is one of the districts in Malawi that is frequently hit by natural disasters, such as floods, which not only claim many lives but also exacerbate the spread of waterborne diseases. The area's landscape, with its numerous water bodies and floodplains, creates ideal breeding sites for mosquitoes, making its residents particularly vulnerable to malaria outbreaks.

The impact of the campaign



With funds raised by 3rd Alton Scout Group, Hampshire the mosquito net project has had a significant impact in Chikwawa, reaching 50 teenage mothers, 120 women and children, and 30 scouts.

Distribution of nets to vulnerable families

One of the beneficiaries, Esther Njagwila, expressed her heartfelt gratitude for the life-changing gift. *"When the sun sets, there's a constant buzzing noise throughout the night, and it's a sign that we'll get bitten,"* she said. *"But with this mosquito net, we'll be safe and enjoy a peaceful night's sleep. It's a huge relief to know that we can protect ourselves and our families from malaria. Thank you, scouts, for your amazing help and for caring about our community's well-being"*

As scouts, we are happy to have been part of this incredible project, which has given us the opportunity to make a tangible difference in the lives of others. We firmly believe that the mosquito nets we have distributed will greatly help keep scouts and the community safe from malaria, enabling them to lead healthier, more productive lives. By protecting them from this debilitating disease, we are confident that

they will be able to fully participate in community development initiatives, contribute to their local economy, and realize their full potential

Good health and wellbeing Scouts against Malaria is an activity which supports the World Organisation of Scouting Movements' (WOSM) global program, *Scouts for SDGs* (Sustainable Development Goals). contributing towards *Leading a healthy life*. If you or your Section/Group is willing to join the global partnership to fight malaria, visit our website www.scoutsagainstmalaria.org.uk or email us at info@scoutsagainstmalaria.org.uk.

We have developed a wide range of activities suitable for all sections which together with a slide set and videos of current campaigns can be downloaded from the SAM website. These are suitable for on-line learning for individual Scouts as well as sectional meetings.

Editor Rayner Mayer.

