

Closing the Gap Between Insecticide Treated Net Ownership and Use for the Prevention of Malaria

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What Is the Purpose of this Study?

- To improve insecticide-treated net use for the prevention of malaria by involving the community in the creation and implementation of an intervention.

What Is the Problem?

- Malaria is the leading cause of illness and death in children younger than 5 years and pregnant women in sub-Saharan Africa.
- If used, ITNs reduce malaria cases by more than half and all-cause mortality in young children by 15% to 30%.
- Despite their tremendous potential, use of these nets is poor across sub-Saharan Africa.

What Are the Findings?

- Based on community input, we changed the way that ITNs are distributed, as well as the support system for their use. Instead of community members receiving ITNs in a bag with little education, they were assisted in hanging the nets, given a 15-minute flipchart-based education, and followed up monthly by fellow community members.
- ITN use increased from 29% in net-owning households before the new approach to 97% 1 year after using the new approach.

Who Should Care Most?

- Individuals working on malaria prevention.
- Individuals involved in community-based programs that involve behavior change.

Recommendations for Action

- Involve community members in the design of behavior change programs regarding ITN use.
- To overcome the initial effort in hanging ITNs, enlist community members to assist with hanging nets and providing education.
- Provide an ongoing support mechanism for community members.