



SUCCESS STORY

THE INTEGRATED HEALTH SERVICES ACTIVITY (IHSA)

Seasonal malaria chemoprevention

Malaria is the leading cause of mortality among children under five and morbidity among adults in Benin. For Aïma Bouboukaïssa, a mother of two, and many other parents, the fact that they often need to travel long distances for their children's treatment is a source of anxiety.



Aïma Bouboukaïssa and children. Photo credit: Jocelyn Akakpo/IHSA

To fight this disease, in 2019 the Government of Benin launched an important seasonal malaria chemoprevention (SMC) campaign, where antimalarial medications are given monthly to treat and prevent the disease. SMC has been implemented in the northern regions of Benin, where malaria transmission is highly seasonal. The government, community leaders, and communities themselves have a strong interest in these campaigns, which include four three-day waves of treatment spaced four weeks apart, as SMC is a proven way to reduce malaria cases and mortality in children under five.

Training of community health workers on SMC

The USAID-funded Integrated Health Services Activity (IHSA) supported the Ministry of Health of Benin and the National Malaria Control Program (NMCP)

About the Program

The USAID-funded Integrated Health Services Activity (IHSA) is a five-year project implemented in Benin. The purpose of IHSA is to strengthen local expertise in delivering high-impact malaria, family planning, maternal and child health (MCH), and gender-based violence (GBV) services with strong citizen engagement to reduce maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent girls' mortality and morbidity.



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to train community health workers (CHWs) before the implementation of the SMC campaign in July 2019.

Many stakeholders have worked together to train health zone management teams on the profile, roles, and responsibilities of each CHW and on the mapping of targeted populations for SMC. IHSA has also supported a communications strategy to reach as many people as possible and encourage them to participate in this campaign, including mobilizing political and religious figures and hiring *crieurs publics*.

In total, 1,148 CHWs, 227 local supervisors, and 95 *crieurs publics* were trained in the health zone of Malanville-Karimama (MK), and 1,296 CHWs, 274 supervisors, and 197 *crieurs* in the health zone of Tanguiéta-Matéri-Cobly (TMC).

A significant decrease in the number of malaria cases

The team spent one week on a mapping exercise to determine the number of children to target during the SMC campaign and was able to identify 19% more children in the TMC zone and 25% more in the MK zone than originally anticipated.

A member of the Minister Cabinet launched the SMC campaign on July 11, 2019, in Tanguiéta. A number of stakeholders participated in the event, including USAID, WHO, members of the prefecture, journalists, and health care providers. This was the first campaign where each CHW was responsible for providing treatment to a specified number of children.

The results of this campaign have been striking. CHWs who administered treatment exceeded the target of 95% of identified children for the three waves. Additionally, 5,974 cases of malaria were recorded in July; 4,137 in August; 4,283 in September; and 5,674 in October in the TMC and MK health zones, representing a 50% reduction in malaria cases compared to the two previous years.



Photo credit: Jocelyn Akakpo/IHSA

After the implementation of the SMC campaign, Aïma Bouboukaïssa said how satisfied she was with the results. In addition to the fact that her children didn't get sick, she is thankful to the CHWs for their advice during the campaign, including on using nets and regarding her children's treatment and well-being.

CHWs and hospital staff also share this impression: hospitals aren't as crowded as in previous years, and CHW Moussa Mamaï observed that none of the children he was responsible for fell ill.

“As indicated by a locally elected member of the commune of Cobly, the SMC is a critical activity. Results are visible immediately and, consequently, we have seen a strong buy-in from the population. I acknowledge the commitment of the CHWs and the people involved that have worked very hard to reach every child even in the most remote places.”

Dr. Hortense Kossou, Principal Technical Advisor for IHSA



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Preparing for yearly implementation

The fourth wave of this first SMC campaign took place in October. In addition to making the data on case incidence during this fourth wave available in November, a formal evaluation of this campaign coverage will take place during the month.

To sustain the achieved results, IHSA will continue to discuss and advocate with government stakeholders, the *Conseil national de lutte contre le VIH/sida, la tuberculose, le paludisme (CNLS-TP)*, the NMCP, and the *Direction nationale de la Santé publique* to specify SMC tasks for CHWs in their mission statements. IHSA will also support the NMCP to advocate for additional resources to lead similar campaigns in two other zones of the Alibori department that are eligible for SMC campaigns.



Moussa Mamai (center) and two other community health workers talk about the results of the SMC campaign. Photo credit: Jocelyn Akakpo/IHSA