



Amplifying the impact of the mass bed net distribution in Sierra Leone through the Zero Malaria Starts with Me campaign

Introduction

In April 2020, the World Health Organization projected that the COVID-19 pandemic could potentially double malaria cases and deaths in Sub-Saharan Africa this year alone. To respond to this threat, the need to act quickly was critical.

Since 2000, the increased use of bed nets has accounted for over 50% of the reduction in malaria cases¹. During the height of the pandemic in Sierra Leone, the Zero Malaria Starts with Me campaign leveraged its platform to reinforce public messaging about the importance of bed nets for the prevention of malaria.

As a result, the National Malaria Control Programme successfully implemented a scheduled mass bed net distribution campaign. **4.6 million bed nets were distributed overall, providing the equivalent of 1 bed net for every 2 people in the country.**

This case study outlines the various ways in which the Zero Malaria Starts with Me campaign supported the mass bed net distribution before, during and after its successful completion at the end of June, 2020.

A. Before the Mass Bed Net Distribution

World Malaria Day

World Malaria Day is celebrated annually on the 25th of April. This provided the perfect opportunity to begin promoting the importance of using bed nets in the lead up to the beginning of the mass bed net distribution. As such, the “Zero Malaria Social Media Challenge” was launched, which nominated social media users to post a photo of themselves making a “0” with their hands and nominate others to join them using #ZeroMalariaStartsWithMe.

In Sierra Leone, more than 30 individuals with significant social media followings, including comedians, musicians, DJs, models, TV and radio presenters, helped to launch the challenge.



The challenge not only gained momentum in Sierra Leone, but also gained significant engagement on an international scale, with 261 people taking part, including Youssou N'Dour, Dr Abdourahmane Diallo (RBM Partnership), Pedro Alonso (WHO Global Malaria Programme), Peter Sands (Global Fund), Yvonne Aki-Sawyer (Major of Freetown) and many others.



1 <https://www.who.int/news/item/09-12-2015-new-report-signals-country-progress-in-the-path-to-malaria-elimination>

B. During the Mass Bed Net Distribution

The Zero Malaria Starts with Me campaign also helped to highlight the importance of continuing the delivery of essential malaria services despite the operational challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic. The documentation also sought to showcase how malaria programs can quickly and effectively adapt their approach to conduct a mass campaign safely and responsibly in this context.

Quotes from community reporters:

The ITN bed net distribution workers are doing great work. In my community they go from one door to another and the process is going on correctly as directed by the government and there is no delay in giving them out to the community people. They MoHS staff are engaging community people in one on one talks in their different homes

Fudia
Gbom Samba

In the area of COVID -19, the MoHS staff are engaging community people to follow government covid-19 guidelines like washing hands frequently, putting on face masks, etc

Adama
Tonkolili

Interviews with bed net recipients²

I'm happy because I went there and got my face mask, washed my hands and went to collect without touching anyone and left quietly. I'm happy because there are many mosquitoes around at the moment and we don't have money to go to hospital. I'm happy because my children will use it and even myself.



Margaret Kamara
Kerene

The mosquitoes have been disturbing us, so when they have given us this net during the rainy season I feel good. Today, me and my family will sleep well and enjoy the net. I am begging my neighbours not to use the bed net for other purposes because this bed net is here to protect us from mosquitos.



Adama Masari
Kenema

Photos of the Mass Bed Net Distribution

i. Launch of the Mass Distribution Campaign



² [Click here to see 2 interviews in full.](#)

ii. Training of the distribution team



iii. The Mass Distribution



Adama Thullah, 31, Western Urban



Mohammed Momoh, Western Urban

iv. Recipients / Beneficiaries



Morlai Kamara and his family, 59, Western Rural



Margarette Kamara, Karene District, 41



Kadiatu Conteh, 29, Western Urban



Adama Kamara, 41, Western Urban



Ibrahim Kalokoh, 8, Western Rural

C. After the Mass Bed Net Distribution

The mass distribution was successfully completed at the end of June, coinciding with the 2nd Anniversary of the Zero Malaria Starts with Me campaign on the 2nd of July.

To maintain momentum, the following communications activities took place after the mass bed net distribution:

- The Minister of Health and Sanitation, Dr. Alpha T. Wurie, authored an opinion piece on [African Arguments](#), discussing why we must continue to scale up malaria programmes despite COVID-19.



AFFRICANARGUMENTS.ORG
We must continue to scale up malaria programmes, despite COVID-19 | African Arguments

- A video featuring many of national champions of the campaign, including Mayor of Freetown, Yvonne Aki-Sawyer OBE and Honourable Minister of Health and Sanitation, Dr. Alpha T. Wurie, was produced. This helped to further re-enforce the key messages in Krio of “malaria e don wan dae na mi han” and “sleep insai maskita tent oltem” (in English: zero malaria starts with me, sleep under a mosquito net every night).



Dr. Alpha T Wurie
 Minister of Health and Sanitation



Yvonne Aki-Sawyer OBE
 Mayor of Freetown

- An animation was produced and broadcast on national television networks following World Mosquito Day on the 20th of August.



- At around the same time as this, 12 well-known singers and rappers began to collaborate on writing a song to support the Zero Malaria Starts with Me campaign as a whole, with a particular focus on supporting key messaging related to the mass distribution of bed nets. The song was released on the 5th October on <https://audiomack.com>, and it was played widely on over 60 national and community radio stations in Sierra Leone, including Culture Radio, Citizen Radio and Star Radio.
- The artists also conducted radio interviews to support the release of the song and reinforce the sensitization messages.



Samza
 Afriradio 105.3 FM



Kelema
 Wabe 90.1 FM

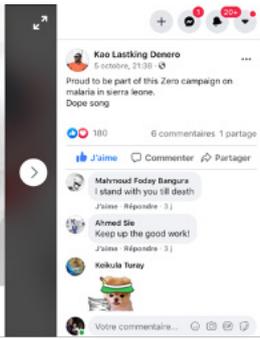


Maggie
 BBC Media Action

- It was also widely shared through social media channels, capitalizing on the large social media platforms of the artists involved.



Kao Denero
Facebook



Mr. Young
Facebook

- A [press release](#) was published by at least 5 national news outlets including Salone Times, Sierra Express Media and Modern Series.

5 octobre 2020

Malaria elimination finds its rhythm in Sierra Leone

“ We got involved in the campaign and using our voices and our platforms just seemed to make the most sense. We’re looking forward to spreading the word and continuing to champion Malaria e Don Wan Dae Na Mi Han! ”



Drizilik
a multiple award-winning rapper in Sierra Leone

“ Malaria e Don Wan Dae Na Mi Han means that we all have a responsibility in this fight, so we did what we know how to do: to sing, rap and dance! I have faith that my fellow Salone man dem will light the path to elimination for the rest of Africa. ”



Fantacee Wiz
a long-time and passionate activist and award-winning folk singer

“ We are honoured and proud to see these young Sierra Leoneans use their talents, voices and platforms to raise awareness about malaria during a time when the world’s eye is fixed on the coronavirus. I welcome this initiative and encourage everyone to declare Malaria e Don Wan Dae Na Mi Han and work together towards a malaria-free Salone. ”



Yvonne Aki-Sawyer OBE
Mayor of Freetown

- The music video is currently in production and will likely be released in coming weeks, providing another huge opportunity for national exposure and public engagement with the campaign.

Call-to Action and Sensitization Video

In November, [a short video featuring a wide range of campaign champions](#), was produced to reinforce the key sensitization messages related to the campaign and the mass bed net distribution.



D. The Impact of Covid-19 on Speak Up Africa's Work

2020 has been a challenging year for us all and COVID-19 has threatened to reverse years of hard-fought progress towards malaria. Despite these challenges, we are immensely proud of the dedication shown by communities and health workers across Sierra Leone. The fact that the Zero Malaria Starts with Me campaign has been able to distribute 4.6 million nets across the country is a remarkable achievement



Fara Ndiaye
Deputy Executive Director

The Zero Malaria Starts with Me Movement has been gaining pace across the continent in recent years, and not even COVID-19 could slow down its achievements. We know how critical long-lasting insecticidal nets are for the prevention of malaria and we are extremely proud of what Sierra Leone has been able to achieve during these challenging times. We hope to continue mobilizing and empowering communities to take ownership in this fight against malaria so that we can finally end malaria for good.



Yacine Djibo
Founder & Executive Director