

CHISU Results in Action

Improving data quality and use in eight districts in Malawi contributes to increased uptake of malaria prevention services

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Background

Malaria continues to be a major public health issue in Malawi, with an estimated 6.2 million cases each year peaking between November and April. Across all age groups, malaria is a major cause of morbidity and mortality in the country—accounting for 30 percent of all outpatient visits and 34 percent of inpatient visits.¹ And malaria can have specific adverse effects on a pregnant woman and her baby, including maternal anemia, fetal loss, premature delivery, and delivery of low birth-weight infants.

To combat the problem of malaria in pregnancy, the Government of Malawi included support for delivery of a comprehensive package aimed at preventing malaria during pregnancy and improving pregnancy outcomes and maternal survival in its Malaria Strategic Plan. This includes increasing the uptake of intermittent preventive treatment (IPTp) administered through antenatal clinics (ANC). Administering SP (the recommended IPTp to protect against



Mr. Lameck Mzava, Mchinji Malaria Coordinator, with Dr. Juliana Kanyengambeta (Director of Health and Social Services, Mchinji District), receiving a trophy from Deputy Minister of Health Ms. Halima Daud. (Photo credit: Elizabeth Kayange)

¹ Malaria Strategic Plan, 2017-2022

malaria in pregnant women) requires that pregnant women take at least three doses of SP to ensure their protection from malaria, as well as the protection of the baby.

Despite having adequate IPTp commodities available, Malawi has been recording low uptake of the second and third doses of SP due to late presentation (after the first trimester) of pregnant women at ANC clinics. This is due to a lack of knowledge among pregnant women about the dangers of malaria in pregnancy and the existing malaria in pregnancy preventive services.

Pregnancy-related issues and health-seeking behaviors are often linked with local customs and culture, which means that community-level health promotion efforts should be used to address them. Such efforts have faced challenges due to inadequate use of quality malaria data, which would enable better identification of communities with low IPTp uptake and the ability to target them with health education messages.

Steps Taken

In 2022, the CHISU program started working with Malawi's National Malaria Control Program to improve the quality and use of the malaria data by targeting eight high malaria burden districts—namely Mchinji, Dowa, Kasungu, Nkhatakota, Nkhata-Bay, Mangochi, Lilongwe, and Mulanje. CHISU developed and supported these districts to implement a data quality standard operating procedure (SOP), trained the district staff in data quality, and provided technical support for outreach training and supportive supervision (OTSS) and district data reviews.

During the integrated supportive supervision and district data reviews, the district teams reviewed their program data to identify underperforming program areas and the specific facilities and then assign relevant interventions. For example, these interventions may include community mobilization, supportive supervision, and mentorship activities.

Results + Next Steps

Mchinji, Kasungu, and Dowa districts identified low coverage of the third dose of IPTp and targeted the affected facilities with social and behavioral change communication messages, leading to an overall improvement in use of IPTp 3 services to 60 percent in 2023—up from 56 percent in 2021. These districts each received a trophy from the Deputy Minister of Health, Ms. Halima Daud, on April 25, 2023.

“I am very excited for the award given to our district for being outstanding in the implementation of malaria activities,” said Lameck Mzava, Mchinji Malaria District Coordinator. “I would like to acknowledge that the support that CHISU has been providing to the district has greatly contributed to the achievements of our district.”

CHISU will continue to support these activities across all eight districts, and will cover more malaria thematic areas.



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