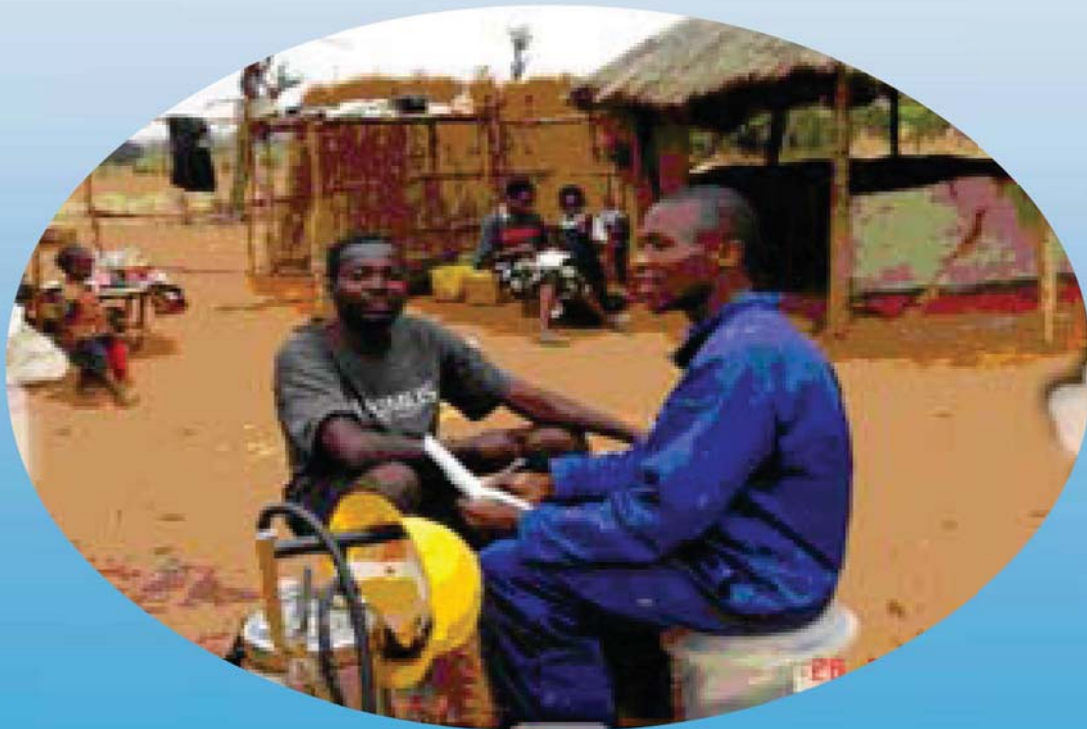


Indoor Residual Spraying Communication Strategy for Zambia



Preface

The Roll Back Malaria Initiative is aimed at reducing malaria morbidity and mortality. For it to work, the programme requires the participation of the people. This is especially true at district and community levels.

While policy and priorities are identified at national level, the sensitization, implementation, and monitoring takes place at community level. It is at this level where we expect Zambians to sleep under insecticide treated mosquito nets, take preventive and lifesaving medicines, and allow their homes to be sprayed.

In order for Zambia to reach a malaria-free future, it is essential that malaria preventive and control tools are made available, and their importance and use understood. This is where effective communication becomes critical with appropriate messages and messengers, delivered at the appropriate time to an appropriate audience. Sensitization on Indoor Residual Spraying (IRS), for example, has to be conducted before the commencement of the annual spraying campaign for it to succeed.

The Ministry has made a significant investment in Indoor Residual Spraying, now reaching 36 districts and covering over 1.5 million homes.

Though spraying is safe and effective, there are legitimate concerns that must be recognized and addressed before communities can fully accept and appreciate its effectiveness. These concerns include:

- insects emerging after spraying;
- that chemicals kill malaria-carrying mosquitoes but do not harm humans, and;
- that the inconvenience of spraying is only for a couple of hours in a year, a worthwhile trade off to protect families from malaria for the entire transmission season.

IRS can only be effective if all houses in an area are sprayed, therefore communicating about IRS is critical. Radio, television, door-to-door visits and testimonies from community leaders, are all effective channels to share the benefits of spraying.

The ownership of malaria control and prevention entirely rests on empowering the community to take action. This document has been developed as a guide. I encourage you to review the different types of communication channels described in this strategy, and select and adapt for implementation strategies that are most appropriate to your area.

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Abbreviations

CHAZ	Churches Health Association of Zambia
COMBOR	Community Malaria Booster Response
DHMT	District Health Management Team
HSSP	Health Systems and Services Programme
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
IRS	Indoor Residual Spraying
MACEPA	Malaria Control and Evaluation Partnership in Africa
MoH	Ministry of Health
NHC	Neighborhood Health Committee
NMCC	National Malaria Control Centre
RBM	Roll Back Malaria
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organisation
ZANARA	Zambia National Response to HIV/AIDS
ZANIS	Zambia News and Information Services

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1.0 Introduction

Malaria, a preventable and curable disease, is a major public health concern in Zambia. Everyone is at risk of malaria infection.

Indoor Residual Spraying (IRS), with overwhelming evidence of it reducing malaria transmission and incidence, is one of the key preventive malaria control interventions used in the fight against malaria.

Zambia has conducted IRS campaigns since 2003/2004 during the peak transmission season (November to April). Since then, the spraying has scaled up from five (5) to 15 to now 36 districts, providing coverage to more than 1.5 million homes.

Since the introduction of Indoor Residual Spraying in Zambia, a number of challenges have arisen to the efficient implementation of IRS programme. Cardinal amongst these challenges has been the lack of accurate information and education in the general community on the benefits of IRS. This lack of information and education has resulted in myths, misconceptions and a number of community concerns such as skin and eye irritations, and the apparent increase in the number of cockroaches, fleas, bed bugs and other household insects that emerge after spraying.

Another challenge has been the lack of adequate notice given to designated communities prior to the spraying campaign. This again could be attributed to the lack of adequate community sensitization campaigns.

There is need, therefore, to strengthen Information, Education and Communication activities at community level to guide the smooth implementation of malaria control and prevention activities by health providers. In order to ensure successful Indoor Residual Spraying campaigns in the IRS targeted districts, the National Malaria Control Centre and partners have developed this communication strategy as a guide to all stakeholders implementing malaria control and prevention interventions.

2.0 Rationale

The National Malaria Control Centre has developed a Malaria Communication Strategy, a guide that paves the way for the successful distribution and use of the proven malaria interventions adopted by the Government of Zambia. However, despite the availability of the Malaria Communication Strategy, there have been a notable number of refusals at household level during spraying campaigns.

This IRS communications strategy was therefore designed to directly address community concerns, serving as a handbook of recommended messages and methods to sensitize the local communities and reduce the number of refusals at household level. The success of IRS depends on full participation of the community: the malaria-carrying mosquito must not be accorded safe havens in our homes to transmit the deadly parasite.

Research and continued feedback at community level from households, spray operators and district officers identified four primary reasons for refusals:

1. concerns of safety;
2. the apparent increase in the number of insect after spraying;
3. the inconvenience of preparing for the activity and then waiting for the walls to dry; and
4. lack of or late information alerting community members about the spray activity.

As the Ministry increases the number of districts implementing IRS, creative use of the recommendations in this strategy document will lead to increased community acceptance of IRS, moving Zambia towards its vision of a malaria-free nation.

3.0 IRS Communication Strategy: Components

Objective: This strategy intends to strengthen the capacity for districts to plan, implement and monitor IRS activities, and through this improve community participation and increase awareness and acceptance.

This strategy provides guidelines on:

- Identifying your audience(s)
- Core messages
- Messengers, media and mobilisation methods
- IEC supporting materials
- Approaches to Sensitization
- Role of National, Provincial, District and Community levels in sensitization activities
- Monitoring and Evaluating IRS communications

Audience: It is important to clearly identify the target audience to tailor messages and ensure effective communication. Some of these audiences include:

- Household heads
- Neighborhood Health Committees
- Faith based organizations and religious leaders
- Traditional leaders
- Residence Development Committees
- District Administrators
- Schools

A note on primary and secondary audiences: In any communication initiative it is imperative to identify and hone in on your *primary* audience. For example, IRS requires acceptance and approval at the household level where the head of household is the key decision maker. Therefore, messages aimed at IRS acceptance in a new spray district, or addressing an area with a history of high refusals, must target the head of household. At the same time, it's important to be aware of the *secondary* audience for your messages. This

audience might include other members of the family, neighbors, traditional and religious leaders, etc.

Core Messages: As with any malaria intervention, the following messages are intended to highlight the benefits of the activity and to directly address concerns identified at the community level.

- IRS is safe because the amount of insecticides sprayed on the wall are not harmful to human beings
- IRS is effective because it reduces malaria: the insecticide kills the mosquito that transmits malaria
- Spraying takes place only once a year but protects your family for the entire malaria transmission season
- The insecticide irritates cockroaches and other household insects forcing them to come out of their hiding places. These insects may or may not die immediately
- IRS works effectively when all houses are sprayed in a given neighborhood
- Mosquitoes must get into contact with the sprayed surface for them to die, but could still be seen before they rest on the sprayed wall surface
- Sprayed walls should not be washed or painted for at least six months because the effects of residual spraying last for six to nine months

Messengers, Media and Mobilisation methods: To ensure effective delivery of messages, it is important to choose suitable combinations of communication channels, including:

- Door-to-door campaigns using the Neighborhood Health Committees, Spray Operators, Malaria Agents, Community Health Workers and Environmental Health Experts to deliver notices and print materials on the benefits and importance of IRS
- Public announcements using ZANIS public address systems
- Mobile Video Shows
- Drama performances
- Public announcements in local languages using community radio stations

- Radio programmes: Live phone-in shows, interviews, testimonials, interviews with health experts, etc.
- Television discussion programmes
- Religious leaders
- Traditional leaders
- School teachers / curriculum
- Posters strategically placed in communities
- Newspaper advertisements and statements
- Community / village meetings
- Health talks at health facilities

IEC Supporting Materials: These materials may be already produced and are available from central level. However, districts could produce materials appropriate to their audience.

- Radio spots for placement on community radio stations and mobile video vans through public service announcements by ZANIS
- Television drama documentaries in English and local languages for use during mobile video shows
- Print adverts / Ministerial statements to launch campaign
- Storylines and drama scripts
- Discussion guides for Radio Presenters
- Letters to various officials, chiefs and other local leaders
- Flyers and posters in English and local languages
- Information kits

4.0 IRS Communication Strategy: Implementation

Approaches to Sensitization: A successful IRS activity requires individuals/teams who are properly trained in effectively communicating on malaria and the benefits of spraying. In a rural setting, homes are generally too far apart to expect the spray operators to alert homeowners to the spray activity one day, and return the next to conduct the spraying. This sensitization can be best accomplished by Neighborhood Health Committees. Spray Operators are trained to address homeowner concerns, but if they only show up on the day of spraying without prior communication they may end up losing valuable time spent explaining the purpose of the activity and convincing the residents that it important and

has to be done. The lack of prior sensitization is likely to result in refusals.

To address the need to sensitize rural communities, NHCs could serve as the advance team by:

- alerting homeowners to the timing of the activity;
- answering any questions or concerns; and
- distributing sensitization materials.

In urban and peri-urban settings, where the structures are much closer together, the sensitization can still be done by the spray operators. The door-to-door IRS sensitization activity must be prioritized, i.e., adequate time built in to the spray schedules and resources dedicated to ensure there are enough trained operators to conduct the visits.

The house visits should be complemented by other activities, including ZANIS mobile video units and public address system, community radio stations, DHMT officers and community leaders.

To ensure prompt and complete implementation of the IRS communication strategy, key actions must take place at each level, including.

Actions at the National Level

- Develop and distribute standardized IEC materials
- Provide technical support before, during and after the IRS activity
- Organise national launch
- Support partnership involvement in IEC activities

Actions by Provincial Health Office

- Supervise and monitor the spray teams
- Ensure IEC materials are distributed before the spray campaign
- Supervise implementation of community IEC

Actions by District Health Management Team

- Plan District IRS launches
- Involve political leadership, religious and civic leadership in planning and launching
- Coordinate activities with Neighborhood Health Committees and ZANIS
- Create awareness through mass mobilizations
- Display and distribute IRS IEC materials
- Conduct monitoring of sensitization campaigns
- Participate in radio discussion programme
- Provide support and information to radio producers
- Develop notices to inform household owners when the spray teams will be in their areas. These must be distributed in advance of spraying.
- Improve supervision of Spray teams disseminating information

Actions by Community Leaders: Traditional / Religious / Civic

- Conduct community meetings
- Distribute information kits
- Coordinate IRS activities with other Chiefs to solicit support and dissemination of information
- Hold community meetings convened by chiefs to disseminate information
- Announcements by respected religious leaders in Churches and through church groups
- Appeal to household owners to accept IRS
- Hold meetings of departmental heads
- Utilise any event/occasion such as meetings, traditional ceremonies to disseminate information on malaria

5.0 IRS Communication Strategy: Monitoring and Evaluation

How to assess impact: Whenever possible it's important to design a communication initiative with monitoring and evaluation built-in, recognizing that an evidence base can be used to redirect or

strengthen future efforts. In the area of IRS sensitization there are two monitoring opportunities: one passive, one active.

1. Measure the number of households that refused to have their homes sprayed versus the same number from prior years. This should provide some indication on the effectiveness of your communication.
2. During household visits, whether by NHCs or spray operators, inquire about exposure to IRS messages. How many residents were exposed to messages by attending a community meeting, hearing an announcement in church, viewing a mobile video show?

If the latter is cemented into the IRS sensitization work, complete with short, simple forms to be filled out and processed, the spraying activity will be much better informed leading to greater efficiency. This documentation can also be extended to record details of each refusal incidence. Problem areas and concerns can then be identified and promptly addressed.

