

FREE NETS DISTRIBUTION

September - October 2010



Unloading the nets at Lilongwe

REGION

**Singo Village and surrounding areas,
Nkhata Bay District, Northern Malawi**

Introduction

The Reverend Joseph Chimembe travelled from Singo Village to Lilongwe – a round trip of approximately 860km – on the 20th September 2010 to pick up 2000 long lasting insecticidal mosquito nets.

He was only able to fit 1600 nets in the vehicle he had borrowed for the task, and the remaining 400 nets were delivered to Mzuzu, 50km from Singo Village, on the 6th October 2010.



1600 nets loaded onto a borrowed truck

The initial 1600 nets began being distributed on the 21st September 2010 and the remaining 400 nets were distributed on the 7th October 2010.

The Process

The Community Malaria Committee and the Church Health Department, in conjunction with Government Health Personnel, provided educational activities at the main distribution points prior to the nets being issued. This educational programme included:

- What malaria is
- How it is contracted
- Signs and symptoms to look for
- The availability of treatment
- A demonstration of proper use



A bed net hanging demonstration in progress

Target Groups

The main target groups for distribution were:

- Pregnant women
- Children under five years
- Malaria cases
- HIV/AIDS positive people
- The disabled
- The elderly



An elderly recipient

Distribution

The main distribution centre was at Singo Village which is approximately 4km from the edge of Lake Malawi. The nets were distributed to each of the qualifying houses here, and to the qualifying houses in the nearby small villages. The distribution then moved to those villages that were slightly further out.

The people gathered in large numbers to receive the educational information and demonstration from the health personnel before they lined up to receive their nets.



Packets of nets being prepared for distribution

Demonstrations were given at each distribution point prior to the nets being given out.



Waiting for their packet to be opened and distributed

Challenges

The biggest challenge of all was getting the nets from Blantyre to Singo Village. The first trip Reverend Chimembe made was to Blantyre on the 18th August 2010, however, he had to return home empty handed as there was a problem with the nets being cleared by customs. It then took a month for alternative arrangements to be made by the clearing company, when they transferred them to Lilongwe. The second transport problem was that all of the nets would not fit into the truck that Reverend Chimembe borrowed to collect the nets. This was resolved by the clearing company taking them to Mzuzu a couple of weeks later when it was making another delivery in that area.

It also transpired that Nkhata Bay District Hospital Personnel asked for allowances to be paid to them for their services, hence the use of other health personnel.

A smaller challenge that the group faced was explaining to those who were not eligible for nets that they would not be able to receive one as the number of nets was limited.

Successes

Local distribution was relatively easy. In total, 2000 nets were distributed in a very short period of time. The initial delivery of 1600 nets was distributed within 3 days and the second delivery of 400 nets was distributed within one day.

Education on malaria, and its prevention, was given to everyone who received a net, and control of large numbers of people was maintained throughout.

The immediate post distribution follow up with a sample group was reported to have been very successful.

There was overwhelming joy among the people as they received their nets and heartfelt thanks were expressed towards St Nicholas Parish Church, Prestwick, Scotland, and its supporters in the provision of these nets.

Conclusion

After the transportation issues were sorted out, this was a very successful campaign to distribute 2000 mosquito nets to groups of vulnerable people in rural areas, to help in the fight against malaria.

