SOCIO-CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS IN PROCUREMENT AND RATIONAL UTILIZATION OF INSECTICIDE-TREATED BEDNETS IN BUSIA DISTRICT, KENYA

BY

ROBERT NYAMWEYA NDIEKA
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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University or any other award.

ROBERT NYANWEYA NDIEKA

Signature _____ Date 07/05/03

We confirm that the work reported in this thesis was carried out by the candidate under our supervision.

Prof. ALLOYS S. S ORAGO

Director, Centre for Complementary Medicine and Biotechnology / Department of Zoology, Kenyatta University

Signature _____ Date May 8, 2003.

Dr. SYPRINE A OTIENO

Lecturer, Department of Zoology, Kenyatta University

Signature _____ Date 8/5/2003

ABSTRACT

Malaria is a major killer disease that threatens 40% of the world population with over 80% of the global disease burden occurring in Africa south of the Sahara. Insecticide treated bed nets have been an effective prophylactic measure in malaria control and has shown the potential for preventing malaria morbidity and mortality. World Health Organisation (WHO) and its development partners have particularly recognised insecticide treated bed nets (ITNs) in "Roll Back Malaria" initiative as an effective measure in reducing malaria burden. Even though advocated, adoption of ITNs has been slow due to problems in making nets and insecticides available to populations at risk and ensuring that the nets are correctly used, well maintained and routinely treated with insecticides.

This investigation was a cross-sectional household study aimed at establishing socio-economic and cultural factors that may affect acquisition and proper utilization of ITNs in reducing malaria transmission in Busia district, western Kenya. The data were collected from 360 respondents using structured interviews, focus group discussions and observations then analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

The results of the study indicate that while adults rather than children were more likely to use a bed net in the household, pregnant women were more likely to sleep under a net. Households with more than one bed net presented a slightly higher

opportunity for the child to use it. People sleeping on mats had the lowest chance of using a bed net even when it was to be provided free of charge.

Most households slept and woke up before and after mosquito peak biting hours. Therefore, bed nets are able to reduce mosquito-man contact thereby reducing malaria transmission and consequently malaria burden in the area.

Coverage of mosquito nets was very low and could be attributed to use of mosquito repellants (traditional and modern), perceptions that bed nets are luxuries rather than health maintenance items and lack of available funds to buy bed nets. Most mosquito nets in the community were not treated with insecticide. Inability to treat them had its roots in lack of insecticides for treatment and ignorance.

Residents of Bunyala south might not be willing to buy mosquito nets, as they do not value them highly. Even though most households were able to afford at least one net. They may not buy them especially when mosquito nuisance has reduced. To increase net acquisition and use in the community it may be imperative to develop aggressive bed net marketing strategies, provide credit facilities and start projects that can improve economic status of the residents.