



Channeling net use promotion through children as malaria ambassadors – the PataPata Children’s Radio Show

Innovative Net Use Messaging - Case Study #3

Engaging children in malaria behavior change communication was pivotal to the success of Tanzania’s PataPata Radio show, aimed at improving net use in households. The show not only educated children about malaria and its prevention; it also facilitated a community outreach component headed by community change agents (CCAs). These CCAs mobilized children to serve as educators and advocates for malaria prevention and net use and to lead by example in their homes and communities.

BACKGROUND:

Between July 2009 and the end of 2010, Tanzanians received more than 26 million nets through two mass distribution campaigns. To help ensure that those nets were being properly used, the Communication and Malaria Initiative in Tanzania’s (COMMIT) behavior change strategy utilized an innovative enter-educate radio program to reach children 6-12 years of age. Focus group discussions of adult men and women in 2010 revealed that many people did not know *how* to use their net consistently. With this information in mind, the design team considered different strategies that they could use to improve and increase net use behavior. Mass media campaigns targeting youth and focusing on topics such as physical activity or smoking have been shown to be effective in positively changing youth’s health behaviors [1-3]. The design team wanted to test whether a campaign targeting children could change behaviors around malaria: the campaign would encourage children to protect themselves and to serve as agents of change in their families and communities.

In 2011, there were no children’s radio programs in Tanzania focused on malaria. While some children’s programs in the past touched on the topic

of malaria, there was nothing as comprehensive as what this initiative planned to produce. To engage school children in malaria prevention, the project collaborated with existing Saturday children’s radio programs to deliver malaria messages to children.

STRATEGY:

The Saturday children’s radio program – PataPata – aims to inspire children aged 6-12 not to accept malaria as a fact of life and to take action, thus building attitudes, a lifestyle, and ultimately a culture that support Tanzania’s national Malaria Haikubaliki (malaria is not acceptable) campaign. It encourages children to talk to their parents, friends and community about malaria prevention behaviors such as sleeping under a net every night; properly hanging, washing and tucking in a net; net care and repair; correct and on time malaria treatment; and taking intermittent preventive therapy during pregnancy.

The PataPata shows are 10 minutes, and are intentionally kept short to keep kids entertained and engaged. The first five minute segment is a drama, featuring Kinara, the smart kid, and his friend, Maua, who are always in trouble with Bi Kiduku, an older lady who is always after Kinara for one thing or another. Kinara is also pestered by Annie Anopheles, the malaria-transmitting mosquito that tries to trick Kinara by giving him the wrong information about malaria. However, Kinara is always clever enough to unravel Annie’s misinformation. In each episode, an issue regarding malaria is discussed in a dramatic and entertaining way and resolved by Kinara and his friends by the end of the episode.

The second five minutes of the program are used for an interactive discussion with the radio presenter and an audience of children, in the studio and at home.

Children in the live studio audience and those calling in answer questions about the story and about malaria. Because not all children can call into the show, it sometimes airs previously recorded responses to questions by children encountered through outreach in the community – on the street, in schools, etc. – and incorporates those responses as discussion points in the second half of the show. Prior to beginning the broadcasting of PataPata, local radio presenters were trained and given a discussion guide with talking points and comprehension questions for each episode to help them host the interactive second half of PataPata on the radio.

The program included 44 episodes in its first year and was broadcast on four national and six regional radio stations. The second season, which began in January 2013, has 24 episodes and was broadcast on four radio stations in three regions that are implementing the School Net Program as a Keep Up strategy.



Discussion guides for Pata Pata listening groups, used by Community Change Agents

While children can learn by simply listening to the radio show, the Community Change Agent (CCA) platform allows children to ask more specific questions and learn from one another's experiences. The CCAs are 1,200 community volunteers (one per ward in Tanzania's high-risk malaria areas) who are well known and respected in their communities. They were trained to work with women's groups, schools, and other community groups to improve knowledge and practices around malaria prevention and control. A few weeks before PataPata began airing, CCAs were given wind-up/solar radios to lead listening groups with primary school students from schools within

the CCA's ward. The listening groups allow more in-depth discussions around malaria, particularly for children without access to radio at home. Before PataPata, CCAs educated children about malaria during school. In order to lead PataPata listening groups, the CCAs needed to be trained on working with children outside of school, including obtaining permission to recruit and gather children, leading listening groups, and keeping children engaged in a more relaxed environment. The CCAs had discussion guides to use along with each episode. The guides include explanations, games and quizzes, as well as a summary story for each episode, which provide CCAs with the week's key messages in case interruptions in the broadcast or a malfunctioning radio prevent the listening group from hearing the full episode.

The CCAs task children with ensuring that their parents and siblings are sleeping under a net every night, ridding the environment in and around the home of potential mosquito breeding sites, and seeking timely care and correct treatment for malaria. Informed children can be effective advocates for change in their own homes since they are often observant, ask a lot of questions and can remind their parents and younger siblings to practice key malaria prevention behaviors.

Many of the listening groups also formed PataPata clubs, where children conduct community outreach activities such as house visits to repair nets, make sure nets are hanging and remind their neighbors of key malaria messages.

The PataPata program taps into children's influence by encouraging them to bring home the messages they learn from PataPata and share them with their families, as well as advocate for and demonstrate malaria prevention behaviors in their communities.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION:

Monitoring of the PataPata program took place twice using national omnibus surveys in 2011 and 2012 to ensure the program was reaching its target audience. Reports tracking process indicators throughout the program's airing showed a high level of listenership and acceptability among children.

To measure the program's success in meeting its objectives, a separate qualitative evaluation was conducted in August 2012 with children exposed to the program and their parents, teachers and CCAs [4]. Results from the evaluation revealed that among children interviewed, listenership ranged from 3 to 35 times within a year, and the majority of the children reported having listened to the program more than 10 times. The children also reported that they liked the show and it increased their knowledge around malaria prevention.

The results showed that parents also benefited from the program because their children listened to the show and then discussed malaria with them and others in the community. In response to this information, parents reported adopting prevention behaviors to protect their family member from malaria. The teachers and CCAs interviewed expressed a willingness to continue facilitating listening groups and reported that they believed the children had increased knowledge around malaria as a result of the PataPata program [4].

LESSONS LEARNED

- PataPata is an example of an assets-based approach to working with children in shifting social and cultural norms around malaria prevention and net use.
- Using multiple channels to engage children (e.g. radio program, discussion guide, PataPata clubs) helped ensure greater participation among children and accommodated children's various learning styles.
- Community Change Agents were a beneficial resource for mobilizing and empowering children to address net use and other malaria prevention measures.

"Initially we did not use the mosquito nets during the dry season because we believed there were no mosquitoes then, but my daughter explained its importance over and over and told me the only time I take the mosquito nets off our beds is to wash them."

- Mwanza, 27 year old mother

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