

Private Sector Companies in the Ashanti Region of Ghana Fly with Malaria Safe: The Case of Agricare Ltd. and Asanko Gold Ltd.



The Asanko Malaria Champions after their training

Introduction

A private sector malaria initiative called Malaria Save is gaining ground across Ghana, with some notable stand-outs in the Ashanti Region. Two companies in Shanti stand out for their determination in fighting against malaria: Agricare Ltd., a poultry and livestock feed processing firm and Asanko Gold Ltd., a gold mining company. Funded by the U.K. Department for International Development, the Private Sector Malaria Prevention (PSMP) project introduced Malaria Safe, a private sector malaria prevention initiative, in Ghana in 2017. The goal of Malaria Safe is to enable businesses to take actions that protect their employees and communities from the devastating effects of malaria.

Agricare Employee and Community Support Program

After Agricare Ltd. realized that it was spending about 144,000 Ghana Cedis annually on malaria treatment for its employees, and that about 70% of workers' ill health was due to malaria, the company's management decided to act. In 2017, Agricare signed with the Malaria Safe

partnership and, facilitated by PSMP, procured and distributed about 300 family size insecticide-treated nets (ITNs) to its 51 employees and households in the company's catchment area of Tanoso-Kumasi. According to Mr. Awuku Ahiadormey, the company's managing director, preventing malaria is now a key component of Agricare's corporate social responsibility, because the company could not afford to continue losing working days to the disease when workers could easily prevent it. "Please, sleep under the ITNs and ensure your household members also do, so that we can bring down the rising cost of treating malaria and sustain our level of productivity," the managing director reminded his employees during a Malaria Safe sensitization event.

To encourage the effective use of ITNs, Mr. Nyanor Fosu, Chief of Party for the PSMP project, reminded the Agricare community that the ITN is the most effective and affordable preventive tool currently available. He explained that ITNs are treated with synthetic pyrethroid insecticide that repels and also kills mosquitos on contact. Mr. Nyanor-Fosu called on all parents to ensure their children sleep under ITNs to prevent malaria, which may affect their

brain development and, therefore, their future performance in school.

The Asanko Gold Malaria Control Program

The increasing incidence of malaria among the workforce compelled the Asanko Gold Ltd. management to seek support from PSMP in organizing its malaria control program. In 2016, the company's employees had 640 cases of malaria; by the end of 2017, this jumped to more than 839 cases. Using the theme, "Reducing the burden of malaria, our collective responsibility," Asanko Gold Ltd. implemented the four pillars of the Malaria Safe Initiative. The four pillars emphasize protection for employees and dependents, education for employees and dependents, visibility for workplace malaria activities, and championing best practices through networking.

Start of Shift Malaria Information Sharing

Throughout the first quarter of 2018, all 1,700-plus employees of Asanko Gold Ltd. were mobilized to participate in discussion sessions, during which they heard information about the causes and prevention of malaria. These discussions, at the start of each shift in all departments were led by the mine's clinic health teams. PSMP supported the shift learning sessions with malaria information materials, including reminder leaflets and posters.

Malaria Safe Champions Training

Sustaining malaria prevention activities among the workforce is vital to the effectiveness of the Asanko Gold malaria control program. With technical support from PSMP, 40 staff members and 60 community leaders were trained as Asanko Gold Malaria Champions. They learned the signs and symptoms of malaria, how malaria affects pregnant women and children under five years, and the effects of malaria on household income and business. The role of ITNs in preventing malaria, and demonstrations of how to hang ITNs, featured prominently during these trainings. These malaria champions established the basis for sustaining the program.

Procurement and Distribution of ITNs

To enable employees to put into practical use the lessons in malaria prevention, Asanko Gold Ltd., through PSMP, purchased 2,000 ITNs for distribution to its employees. With this investment, the company expects a reduction in the burden of malaria on the workforce and Asanko's business at large.

Monitoring Malaria Prevention Efforts—The Dashboard

To monitor the effectiveness of its malaria prevention



Aricare community receive their ITNs

program, PSMP introduced a dashboard monitoring tool to Asanko Gold Ltd. Six staff members were trained to use this tool to track the impact of the company's Malaria Safe activities in reducing malaria cases recorded in the mine clinics.

Lessons Learned

The four pillars of the Malaria Safe Initiative are suitable for application whether a company is as small as Agricare Ltd., with only 51 employees—or as large as Asanko Gold Ltd., with over 1,700 employees. All companies can support the national goal of eliminating the disease by taking these actions: investing in malaria prevention – e.g., distributing ITNs and promoting us - using malaria education, raising visibility of actions taken, and championing the course of fighting malaria.



PSMP is a three-year project funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) and operated by the Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs (CCP). The purpose of the PSMP is to catalyze private sector engagement in malaria control, in particular in the supply and distribution of Long Lasting Insecticidal Nets (LLIN).