



PRESIDENT'S MALARIA INITIATIVE



INDOOR RESIDUAL SPRAYING FOR MALARIA CONTROL

Information, Education, and Communication / Community Mobilization Lessons Learned and Best Practices Report

Indoor Residual Spraying (IRS 2) Task Order One

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Abbreviations

CHW	community health worker
IEC	information, education, and communication
IRS	indoor residual spraying
NMCP	National Malaria Control Program
PMI	President's Malaria Initiative
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

1. Introduction

In September 2006, RTI International was awarded the Indoor Residual Spraying contract (IRS 1) by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to expand IRS programs in sub-Saharan Africa as part of the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI) to reduce the impact of malaria in sub-Saharan African countries. One of PMI's four objectives is to reduce malaria-related mortality by 50% in 70% of the at-risk populations in sub-Saharan Africa. The related IRS objective was to achieve at least 85% coverage in targeted communities.

RTI and its partners provide technical assistance to African National Malaria Control Programs (NMCPs) in support of safe and judicious application of insecticides to the inside walls of homes in target areas of selected countries in Africa, preventing the spread of malaria by killing mosquitoes that carry the malaria parasite.

Meridian Group International partnered with RTI International to implement the information, education, and communication (IEC) and community mobilization component for IRS. Meridian provided strategic guidance and, in addition, played an active hands-on role in implementation of various country projects.

RTI works with the NMCPs within the Ministry of Health in each country to establish effective mechanisms to ensure that the IRS is conducted safely. The NMCPs are the lead partner agencies. IRS is implemented within the existing national policy framework, and respects country priorities. RTI's mandate is to build capacity within the NMCPs and other partners to plan and implement safe and effective IRS operations. IRS intervention aims to significantly reduce rates of malaria transmission in the target areas.

1.1 Objectives of the Report

The IEC/community mobilization lessons learned report documents the experiences and lessons gathered during the implementation of the IRS project.

2. Definition of IEC/Community Mobilization for IRS

IEC and community mobilization is one of the key components of IRS. This component creates an enabling environment for a successful spray campaign to take place. The purposes of IEC and community mobilization in IRS are to sensitize communities and stakeholders on the importance of IRS as a malaria prevention strategy and to inform the target population of the necessary preparations required to assure adequate human and environmental safety for successful spray operations.

In addition, IEC and community mobilization increases acceptability of IRS activities among target populations through engaging them and encouraging their active participation in project activities. Door-to-door sensitization is the key community

mobilization strategy, supplemented by advocacy, mass media, and IEC materials. Below are the objectives of the IEC and community mobilization component.

2.1 IEC/Community Mobilization Objectives

The objectives of the IEC/community mobilization for IRS are as follows:

- Involve and engage key stakeholders to create program sustainability.
- Provide information on the positive benefits of IRS in controlling and preventing malaria and malaria-related deaths.
- Inform the beneficiaries about their role in IRS before, during, and after spray operations.
- Provide accurate information to the key stakeholders and beneficiaries about safety issues related to environmental and health effects of using the selected insecticides.

Implementation of the IEC/community mobilization component generally falls into one of three scenarios across the IRS countries:

- RTI recruits IEC officers or consultants to spearhead the IEC/community mobilization component.
- NMCP and other relevant government departments or other stakeholders implement the IEC component.
- Other organizations contracted by PMI provide IEC support to the IRS project.

2.2 Elements of IEC/Community Mobilization

To achieve community mobilization objectives, the project conducted the following activities:

1. **Stakeholder identification/engagement:** This was an integral part of the community mobilization process because of the expected stakeholder involvement and community participation. This activity was needed for project buy-in and support at all levels from the government and community.
2. **Advocacy:** RTI reached out to local leadership at the national, regional/provincial, district, and grassroots levels. RTI provided advocacy briefs and held sensitization meetings to disseminate information on IRS as a malaria prevention strategy and to garner project support.
3. **Planning (micro-planning):** RTI and stakeholders met to develop detailed action plans on how the IRS would be implemented. This activity included sharing of roles and responsibilities among project staff and all stakeholders.
4. **Training:** RTI conducted training in three cascades: a) the national training-of-trainer level, b) the district level, and c) the regional level. This produced a pool of IEC mobilizer master trainers, who in turn trained IEC supervisors and mobilizers.
5. **Process:** This involved conducting activities at the household level. It included identifying eligible structures, collecting IEC data for entry into the

MS Access database, and issuing IRS structure cards for every identified structure; making door-to-door visits to sensitize communities on the importance of IRS as a malaria prevention strategy; and informing community members on required house preparation during the spray campaign; and, finally, providing community members with information on safety issues related to environmental and health effects of using the selected insecticides. The process was complemented by mass media campaigns using local radio stations and by distribution of IRS brochures and other promotional materials.

6. **Post IRS meetings:** The project held meetings with partners and stakeholders to evaluate the achievement of objectives of the IRS campaign, gather lessons, identify challenges, and inform preparations for the next spray campaign.

3. Constraints and Challenges

The following constitute some of the difficulties encountered in implementing the IRS program.

- Contracting the IEC/community mobilization component to other organizations (Senegal, Rwanda, and Ethiopia) often posed a serious challenge to RTI's ability to implement IRS field activities smoothly. It was difficult to coordinate IRS field activities that were contracted to different organizations. In the countries where the IRS implementer was in charge of IEC and community mobilization, the challenges were fewer and delivery of the community mobilization component was often more successful. It is possible for the IRS implementer and the IEC/community mobilizer to coordinate and collaborate effectively. However, for this to happen, it will likely require that PMI and the NMCP mandate coordination and collaboration, starting from the stage of work plan development by each organization; facilitate this effort throughout the campaign; and hold all concerned accountable for results at the end of the campaign.
- Illiteracy and low literacy can hamper the implementation of projects that rely on local human resources to collect data. Implementation of the IRS project in countries with low literacy levels presented a major obstacle to collection of accurate data. In these countries, it was not easy to recruit people who met the minimum requirement to conduct mobilization.
- IEC/community mobilization activities were not properly structured and there were no quality control measures in most countries. Before 2010, IEC/community mobilization was haphazardly done—there were no training guidelines and in some countries no data was collected, this made it difficult to control quality and compare activities across countries.
- Employment of consultants and/or RTI staff to oversee the community mobilization for IRS does not promote partnerships because the consultants and IEC staff tend to work independently and rarely explore existing local resources. The practice can hamper the emergence of a spirit of partnership, thus affecting capacity-building efforts in NMCP and other departments.

- The community mobilization component did not always get adequate attention. The general perception in many countries was that IEC was easy. Disregard for IEC often led to delay in start-up of activities and sometimes to allocating fewer resources for IEC.
- Reliance on government partners for supervision was challenging. In most cases, governments do not have enough human resources. Most government staff are involved in several projects, making it difficult for them to dedicate time to a particular project and to be fully accountable. Therefore, RTI often had to hire temporary staff to address the gap.
- Use of heads of health posts as mobilization supervisors was not an effective strategy because of their existing heavy workload. Supervision of community mobilizers requires daily trips to the field, which was not feasible for these cadres, who are in charge of health facilities. However, because it is important to maintain close working relationships with the heads of health posts, they can be allocated less demanding responsibilities that do not require them to leave the facility (e.g. signing off and storing data forms before forms are taken to the data entry centers).

4. Innovations

In 2010, RTI embarked on improving IRS operations through the introduction of innovations to the IEC/community mobilization component. These innovations resulted in significant improvements on IRS operations. The innovations included the following:

- **The IRS structure card:** The card was introduced to replace the stickers that had been used to mark structures during spray operations by both mobilizers and spray operators. The replacement of stickers was a cost-effective move. Printing and distribution of cards is a one-off expense; one card could be used throughout the life of the project, while stickers had to be printed annually. For example in 2010 the IRS Kenya project procured one mobilizer sticker at Kenya shillings 4.75 and the spray operator's sticker at Kenya shillings 4.65. In 2011, IRS structure cards were printed to replace the mobilizers and spray operator sticker. The structure card was procured for Kenya shillings 3.50. The cost of one card which is incurred once in the project's life time was cheaper than the cost of stickers that was incurred annually. Countries that used the card correctly reported that it effectively streamlined IRS field operations and activities and as a quality control tool, the card it improved performance for monitoring and evaluation of activities. There were however a few challenges reported such as loss of cards.
- **A pictorial IRS brochure:** A user-friendly, pictorial output-based brochure was developed to replace the various brochures that existed in IRS countries. This was part of harmonization of the IEC/community mobilization component. The brochure is precise and simple; it summarizes the key IRS messages.

- **Use of the Ministry of Social Affaires to conduct community mobilization:** In many countries, various structures (Ministry/departments) within the government system are responsible for mobilizing communities for any event. In 2010, use of these structures to conduct community mobilization was explored in some countries. This approach was in line with the IRS project's mandate to build local capacity for project sustainability. Mali and Benin used these structures and reported successful IRS campaigns and high acceptance of IRS among target communities.
- **IEC mobilizer training guide:** A standardized IEC mobilizer training guide was developed and shared with all the IRS countries with the aim of harmonizing content. The guide is currently in use in all countries.
- **Standardization of tools:** The data tools used previously to collect IEC information were not standardized, making it difficult to compare information across countries. Standardized data collection tools were developed, and are included in the IRS MS Access database system.
- **Use of mobilizers to carry out structure enumeration:** This strategy was piloted in 2011 in Benin, Mozambique and Rwanda as part of improving IRS operations. The approach saves time and reduces mobilization level of effort, and provides actual numbers of existing structures.

5. Key Success Factors

Factors for the success and ease of implementation include the following:

- **RTI implementation of IEC and community mobilization:** Programs where RTI was mandated to conduct IEC and community mobilization were implemented successfully and with minimal challenges. RTI's strategy of using local structures, such as local leaders, women's groups, school clubs, youth groups, and CHWs, to conduct community mobilization was effective in promoting the project's objectives and creating buy-in, which led to high acceptance of IRS among community members. The strategy was carried out using proper community entry processes, including respecting and observing all necessary protocols. Where this approach was used, a high acceptance of the IRS project was experienced.
- **Tailoring messages to address IRS specific issues:** IRS specific messages were developed to create awareness among target communities with information on household preparations before during and after spraying. These messages disseminated information on increased activity of insects after spraying, re-plastering and covering of wall surfaces after spraying.
- **Standardization of training across all IRS countries:** This improved delivery of the community mobilization component. In 2010, a standardized IEC mobilizer training guide was developed and translated into the three main languages of IRS countries for use during IEC mobilizer trainings. This ensured that activities were uniformly presented and conducted.

- **Recruitment of community mobilizers from their localities:** This increased IRS acceptance among community members since they knew the mobilizer. The strategy also increased coverage, as mobilizers knew their geographical areas very well. Therefore, they were able to mobilize all the eligible structures and guide the spray operators to them. The strategy reduced costs, resulting in savings on mobilizer allowance and transport costs. Mobilizers were engaged for a period of 4–5 days, and they did not have to be transported from one point to another because the distances were short.
- **Engaging key stakeholders early:** This is critical to the success of the IRS project, especially to the community mobilization component. The planning and successful implementation of community mobilization requires time and external human resources to coordinate activities. Where stakeholders were engaged early, strong partnerships were formed, leading to good participation and successful spray campaigns. Therefore, it is recommended to engage stakeholders early to ensure adequate time for IEC preparations.
- **Stakeholder engagement and partnership:** This yielded active participation in project activities by community members and created a strong sense of project ownership. This was demonstrated by the participation of local leaders in the identification of IRS temporary staff for the community mobilization process and the participation of CHWs in community mobilization.
In addition, local leaders assisted in resolving any matters arising between community members and project staff, such as refusals for IRS and conflicts between RTI workers and IRS temporary staff. The strong partnership also led to good participation of, and support from, community members. For example, well-mobilized communities often provided water to the spray operators, cutting operating costs.
- **Use of local CHWs to conduct community mobilization:** This is an effective strategy to build local capacity and retain knowledge. CHWs rarely move from their communities, thereby reducing the need to train people annually; refresher trainings are all that is required. Because CHWs are part of the Ministry of Health community health education structure, the addition of IRS messages into their workload ensures that IRS messages are disseminated to community members all year long, like other public health messages. This ensures continuity of IRS message dissemination. The other advantage of using CHWs is to gain high acceptance for IRS because the workers are well known to community members.
- **IRS structure card:** This RTI innovation in 2010-11 proved to be a very effective quality control tool. The countries that used the card indicated that it effectively streamlined IRS operations and activities and it markedly improved performance and quality control for monitoring and evaluation.
- **User-friendly, relevant, and focused IEC materials:** These can boost community response to program activities. In 2010, a standardized, pictorial, user-friendly IRS brochure was developed, and samples were distributed to

countries. Feedback from the field indicates that community members were responsive to the brochure because of its preciseness and simplicity.

- **Use of popular local radio stations:** In areas where listenership is high, radio is very effective in disseminating IRS messages. All the IRS countries used local radio stations to complement the door-to-door mobilization, and the community response to these messages was positive.
- **Harmonization of the IEC and community mobilization strategy:** Harmonization across IRS and establishment of uniform systems improved delivery of IRS and made cross-country comparison of activities possible. Integration of IRS field activities into government plans through joint planning and execution resulted in better coordination and performance. Disjointed planning and execution of activities results in confusion, lack of coordination, time wastage, and underperformance.
- **Pre-entry of mobilization IEC data before spray operations:** In 2011, RTI piloted the pre-entry strategy. Pre-entered data was very useful, informing the project in advance of the actual number of structures in a village. This made it possible to estimate more precisely how many days it would take to spray. Because the data also informed the project in advance about the number of refusals, the project could send community leaders to convince the specific households to accept IRS. This strategy made it more feasible to cover 100% of structures in a given area.
- **Use of local structures and mechanisms to mobilize communities:** Every country offered opportunities to link up IRS with public health campaigns, such as Expanded Programs for Immunization (EPI). In Mali and Benin, where these opportunities were used, successful community mobilization campaigns resulted, reducing costs and building local capacity for long-term project sustainability.