



SUCCESS STORY

Women Pioneer In Anti-Malaria Efforts

Fighting malaria as insecticide spray operators



Photo: Research Triangle I.

Diane Sagbohan pioneers for women as an insecticide spray operator combating malaria in Benin.

Participation as spray operators opens a new social dimension for women fighting malaria.

Diane Sagbohan is one of six women among the 265 trained spray operators who volunteered to participate in the first insecticide residential spray (IRS) campaign in Benin. Sagbohan is native of Seme Kpodji, a community well-known for suffering from high rates of malaria transmission and deadly illnesses. Seme Kpodji is one of the four communities in Benin selected for insecticide spray operations.

Benin is one of 15 countries which receive funding through the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI), a United States Government initiative led by USAID. The initiative is designed to reduce malaria deaths by 50% by achieving 85% coverage of the most vulnerable groups - pregnant women and children under five years of age - with preventive and therapeutic interventions.

PMI uses four highly effective interventions: treatment with lifesaving anti-malarial drugs; insecticide-treated mosquito nets; preventive treatment for malaria during pregnancy; and indoor spraying of homes with insecticides.

Sagbohan, a 23-year-old mother of a two-year-old boy, volunteers with PMI to spray inside of homes with insecticides. In her professional life, Sagbohan is employed as a typist, but she was compelled to join the fight against malaria. When asked what motivated her to become a spray operator, an activity where men are in the majority, Sagbohan responded that it was an opportunity to participate in the fight against malaria, which is the most common disease in her village, and also the leading cause of death.

"I feel valued and useful to my community by taking part in the insecticide residential spray campaign," she said. "I am motivated and ready to participate in the next campaign."

Sagbohan's participation as a spray operator opens a new social dimension for women leaders in combating malaria in Benin. In her community, she is considered a pioneer in the fight against malaria and a promoter for changing the community's behavior toward malaria prevention. The participation of Sagbohan and the other five female spray operators is helping to raise awareness about malaria and ultimately, induce behavior changes throughout Benin communities.