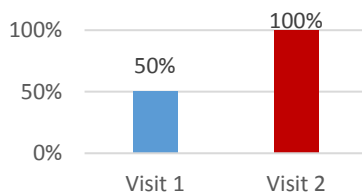


Notes from the field

Improving the quality of health services in Mara, Tanzania

Malaria is Tanzania’s leading cause of illness and death, accounting for 40 percent of all outpatient hospital visits. Approximately 10–12 million cases are treated each year. With funding from the US President’s Malaria Initiative, MalariaCare works in close collaboration with Tanzania’s National Malaria Control Program (NMCP) to improve the quality of malaria case management in health facilities across the country. MalariaCare works through a quality assurance approach, which includes training health providers on diagnostics and clinical care, supporting trained NMCP supervisors to conduct outreach training and supportive supervision (OTSS) visits to health facilities, and holding “lessons learned” forums to share feedback. A key aspect of OTSS is that supervisors work with facility staff to identify challenges in case management and develop action plans to address them. This process helps provide insight into the knowledge gaps and other obstacles that may prevent the staff from performing at their best.

Malaria testing before treatment at Surubu Dispensary, by OTSS visit



Surubu Dispensary, in the Mara Lake Zone region of Tanzania, was among the five poorest performing facilities in Tarime district. During OTSS visits at Surubu, trained supervisors observed laboratory technicians and malaria rapid diagnostic testing, and subsequently helped facility staff develop action plans to address gaps before the next visit. After the first OTSS visit supervisors began to see significant improvement on many indicators, including whether or not patients were tested before receiving malaria treatment (see figure).

During one of the visits to Surubu, supervisors noticed that the facility’s laboratory technician had trouble diagnosing malaria because basic equipment—such as a proper chair and table—were not available. The technician had to sit on a crate, with other crates supporting the microscope! After the visit, the supervisor and laboratory technician worked closely to develop a detailed action plan to improve the facilities and presented them to the district’s Council Health Management Team and the District Medical Officer. When supervisors returned to Surubu several months later, they found the laboratory technician working comfortably and effectively with a new desk and chair. She can now conduct her work more efficiently, and is able to provide higher quality services to patients.



Laboratory technician’s work environment before and after an OTSS visit.

Photo: MalariaCare, Tanzania.

For more information, or to request program or technical assistance:

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