



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

SENEGAL

CASE STUDY

Bringing Healthcare Closer to Home

Trained volunteers improve health by detecting and treating malaria



Photo: USAID/Heather Robinson

Community health volunteer in the village of Dialocoto, Ma Badio (right), sells treated mosquito nets at a subsidized cost.

“Thanks to the health worker placed in the village, there are fewer evacuations of women. And in each family compound, we have nets to protect us from mosquitoes.”

—Awa Mané

Challenge

Senegal’s annual rainy season brings both a blessing and a curse. While every drop is precious to the country’s farmers, rains also create a breeding ground for malaria-laden mosquitoes. Thousands of Senegalese die every year from the disease, and children and pregnant women are particularly vulnerable.

In the immense collective of Dialocoto in southeastern Senegal, malaria hits hard. Dialocoto has only one health worker, a nurse, to serve the needs of 14,000 people spread among 50 villages in a space larger than Delaware. For many patients, a trip to the nurse is an exhausting and expensive ordeal.

Initiative

In June 2002, residents of Dialocoto approached USAID for assistance in fighting the annual wave of malaria. They worked together to train community health workers to prevent malaria and to detect and treat minor cases, before residents became seriously ill. USAID also hired a Senegalese doctor who specializes in malaria to work with village leaders to refine their strategy. With USAID funds, the community paid for technical and management training, educational brochures, mosquito nets, disinfectants and medicines.

Results

By identifying and treating minor cases of malaria, trained village health workers helped reduce the number of patients seen by the nurse from 2,082 in 2001 to 1,234 in 2002. The number of serious cases of malaria also dropped sharply.

The prevention, early detection and treatment strategy has had important economic benefits as well, saving villagers time and money previously spent on transportation and treatment, and allowing them to tend to the fields from which they derive a livelihood. Between 2003 and 2004, Dialocoto’s success in combating malaria inspired 13 collectives in other regions of Senegal to develop and implement similar initiatives supported by USAID.