

Title: Assessment of knowledge, attitude and practices towards malaria prevention and control among primary school children in Busia district, Kenya

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Abstract: Malaria is endemic in Busia District in Western Province Kenya. In the year 2003 malaria was incriminated for 50.0 % all cause mortality in the district. Malaria is on the rise in spite of available effective and proven tools. Conventional malaria prevention and control efforts have hitherto failed to strike an epidemiological breakthrough. Involvement of children in malaria prevention and control has not yet been attempted in the district. The overwhelming need for innovative approaches to defeat malaria has increasingly become an overwhelming priority. This study used; structured questionnaires among 649 pupils. 16 guided interviews among pupils. In-depth interviews among science teachers and focus group discussions among stake holders in the malaria sector to gather information on malaria. The objective of this study was to assess the knowledge, attitudes and practices of the pupils in Busia district. Results show that 94.1% of the pupils had knowledge on malaria transmission. These findings were better than results from studies in other endemic areas. Use of mosquito nets (55.0%) and ownership (93.8%) had a significant statistical difference ( $p < 0.001$ ). There was a significant statistical difference between chemotherapy use (99.7%) and compliance with prescribed dosage (45.0%,  $P < 0.001$ ). Chemoprophylaxis use was dependent on age ( $p < 0.001$ ) class of pupil ( $p < 0.001$ ). Having been taught about malaria in class ( $p < 0.001$ ) number of malaria bouts ( $p < 0.001$ ) and compliance with prescribed dosage ( $p < 0.001$ ). Use of Mosquito nets significantly improved with scaling-up of net coverage ( $p < 0.001$ ). Radio ownership significantly influenced chemotherapy use ( $p < 0.001$ ). Perception on visiting a health facility positively influenced health facility visits ( $p < 0.001$ ). Perceptions on mosquito net use positively influenced net use ( $p < 0.001$ ). The teacher interview results show that there is lack of malaria education in the primary school curriculum. Focus group discussions findings show that there is lack of collaboration among the malaria sector players. In conclusion, many respondents had knowledge on malaria etiology. Consequently. Concomitantly fewer bouts of malaria were reported. However varied and dynamic environmental factors hampered diametrical gains from practices. It is recommended that policy formulation on malaria be directed towards information. education and communication; monitoring and evaluation and intersectoral collaboration.