MARCH | APRIL 2024 EDITION
UMCI BI-MONTHLY NEWSPAPER, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA'S MALARIA INITIATIVE
UCMI JOURNAL

UCMI BOOTH RECEIVES OVER A THOUSAND VISITORS AT HEALTH FAIRS PROMOTED BY THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH

The Ministry of Health and Women's Rights conducted several Health Fairs in all districts of the country throughout March and April, aiming to deliver services and information on projects and partnerships designed to combat the country's main diseases to the populations.

In this context, UCMI participated throughout the fairs with activities such as distributing informational materials and raising awareness about the strategy UCMI intends to implement to contribute to the elimination of malaria in STP. Various topics and demonstrations were presented and discussed at the UCMI booth, including the viewing of *Anopheles* mosquitoes under a microscope and educational models of the mosquito life cycle, malaria transmission, and how the use of genetically modified mosquitoes could revolutionize public health in STP.

The fairs featured the presence of the Minister of Health, who visited the project booth.

Students mentioned that it was their first time viewing objects under a microscope, which piqued the curiosity of over 1,000 fair attendees, including health professionals, children, youths, and the general public.

Other partners, such as the National Center for Endemics - CNE, were also present during the fairs.

UCMI IS CONDUCTING TRAINING SESSIONS FOR COMMUNITY LEADERS AND HEALTH AGENTS

Approximately 300 health professionals from the districts of Mé-Zóchi, Lobata, Cantagalo, Lembá, and the Autonomous Region of Príncipe attended training sessions on the UCMI project. These sessions focused on a new method to combat malaria, which involves the use of genetically modified mosquitoes, and discussed the project's forthcoming phases to counter misinformation in the communities. This initiative is part of UCMI's commitment to informed decision-making. It is crucial that everyone has access to transparent and comprehensive information about the project's progress, studies, and upcoming stages, to ensure a clear understanding of the proposed methods.

Therefore, it is crucial to have local authorities, health professionals, and community leaders present during the training sessions. In Lembá, for instance, the project was attended by the president of the City Council, who opened the activity and encouraged the community leaders present to embrace the knowledge in order to increase its dissemination within their communities. In Água Grande, we engaged a diverse group of professionals, including nurses, nutritionists, medical assistants, and the health delegate. In Cantagalo, approximately 75% of health agents participated. The active involvement of community leaders throughout the training circuit significantly contributed to discussions and clarifications of doubts about the project.

1ST UCMI COMMUNITY FAIR IN CLAUDINO FARO, CANTAGALO DISTRICT

Claudino Faro hosted the 1st UCMI Community Fair, featuring participatory activities that saw significant involvement from the residents.

Among the activities conducted at the site, we organized a community clean-up to eliminate mosquito breeding sites, mass malaria screenings with rapid tests, and dynamic sessions to explain the project's objectives, studies conducted, and upcoming phases. The event also featured a dramatization by a national theater group about UCMI, a musical performance by the bulauê group with a theme song created for the project, accessible messages for all, and a football match between the UCMI team and the local men's team.

Throughout a full day of activities, the entire community's engagement was evident; they collaborated positively and gained information about the project, addressing relevant questions. In total, more than 150 people actively participated.

DISTRICT COMMANDERS FROM THE NATIONAL POLICE AND NAVY PARTICIPATE IN TRAINING SESSIONS ABOUT UCMI

District Police Commanders in the Me-Zochi and Cantagalo districts, along with soldiers from the Navy in the Autonomous Region, participated in training sessions about the studies conducted by UCMI. The sessions also reinforced current community awareness activities promoted by the project's outreach teams in these districts and the Autonomous Region. Additionally, municipal employees also took part in these sessions.

TEACHERS AND EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANTS RECEIVE INFORMATION ABOUT UCMI

UCMI engagement teams conducted discussion cycles with teachers, early childhood educators, and assistants at the Olof Palme Kindergarten (Mé-Zòchi), Aeroporto, Picão, Tchada (Príncipe), and Trindade Sousa Pontes Elementary School. The discussions focused on the current malaria situation in the country and the strategy of using genetically modified mosquitoes for malaria control that UCMI is proposing.

Additionally, about 200 preschool children also participated in the project's awareness activities, including dramatizations about the project and malaria prevention by the national theater group.

UCMI AT THE BIOSPHERE RESERVE, PRÍNCIPE

The population of Santo António in Príncipe participated in a UCMI exhibition, which focused on the project's activities in STP, the life cycle of the *Anopheles* mosquito, and the fight against malaria on the island of Príncipe.

MALARIA CASE IN PRAIA SECA, PRÍNCIPE

The UCMI team monitored a case of malaria recorded in the Praia Seca community, in collaboration with the team from the National Center for Endemics - RAP Delegation, to raise awareness among the population about the importance of fighting the disease.

ENGAGEMENT TEAMS PARTICIPATE IN PROGRAMS ON VARIOUS RADIO STATIONS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

UCMI engagement teams were invited to participate in informational programs on São Tomé's Rádio Lobata and Príncipe's Regional Radio. They presented the project to listeners, discussed various topics, and answered questions from the public via phone.

Additionally, the team took the opportunity to provide updates on the ongoing preparations for the next phase of the project.

COMMUNITY CLEANUP ACTIONS

UCMI collaborated with the Regional Directorate for Environment and Climate Action on clean-up actions around the city of Santo António (Príncipe) and at the insectary of the National Center for Endemics in Príncipe. The goal of the clean-up was to eliminate potential breeding sites for malaria-transmitting mosquitoes. In São Tomé, UCMI conducted clean-up activities at Roça Laura in Mé-Zòchi district, Claudino Faro in Cantagalo district, and Pantufo in Água Grande district in partnership with the local community and health agents, aiming to enhance the environmental conditions and eliminate the identified breeding sites.

MORE THAN 50 LOCALITIES ENGAGED IN TWO MONTHS

Throughout March and April, engagement agents reached over 50 localities on the island of São Tomé and in the Autonomous Region of Príncipe with a variety of activities. These included community meetings, door-to-door awareness campaigns, and impromptu gatherings during active search sessions for local residents, among other initiatives.

During these awareness activities, many residents mentioned that they were already familiar with the project through radio, TV, and Facebook. They appreciated the opportunity to clarify their questions in person, noting that this personal approach is innovative in the country and enhances trust in the project

UCMI CONDUCTS ACTIVITIES IN OBSERVANCE OF WORLD MALARIA DAY - 25 APRIL 2024

In observance of World Malaria Day, UCMI was active in the communities of the Autonomous Region, ensuring that the celebrations did not go unnoticed. This year's theme was 'Promoting Health Equity, Gender Equality, and Human Rights.' To align with this, the project team conducted the first community debate about the project to assess the communities' perceptions of it.

Additionally, UCMI undertook clean-up operations around the CNE insectary in Príncipe and held a health fair in partnership with the Regional Health Delegation

UCMI CONTINUES TO CONDUCT BLOOD MEAL ANALYSES AND STUDIES ON THE LIFE CYCLE OF ANOPHELES COLUZZII

As a complement to the work initiated on the island of Príncipe in January, the UCMI field team, in collaboration with the CNE team, conducted new captures of resting mosquitoes in the localities of Aeroporto, Hospital Velho, Praia Burra, and Rua dos Trabalhadores. The purpose was to identify the resting behavior of the mosquitoes and their preference for blood meals.

Collections were made inside and under residences using manual aspirators and headlamps from 5 to 7 AM, capturing all the mosquitoes present. The collected mosquitoes were sorted according to the state of the blood in the abdomens of the females.

The Molecular Biology laboratory team at the University of São Tomé and Príncipe has been working with the mosquito samples collected to identify the type of blood meals the mosquitoes take to determine the host preferences of the mosquito populations that transmit malaria.

Other activities, such as PCR for genetic identification of resistance to insecticides, have been carried out with Anopheles mosquitoes from the Autonomous Region in Príncipe.

As a complement to the previous studies conducted on the life cycle of the Anopheles coluzzii mosquito in São Tomé, entomologists have been assessing the longevity of adult mosquitoes in both laboratory and semi-field settings, where external parameters are not controlled.

The studies aim to evaluate how many days both female and male mosquitoes survive in laboratory and natural environments. For this analysis in natural settings, the mosquitoes are kept in entomological cages inside a larger outdoor cage positioned at Omali Lodge, under uncontrolled external conditions of temperature and humidity