Have you heard of schistosomiasis?
Knowledge, attitudes and practices in Nampula province, Mozambique

Schistosomiasis is a parasitic infection that is acquired when people come into contact with freshwater infested with the parasite.

It is a neglected tropical disease (NTD), which mainly affects poor and marginalised people.

To effectively break the transmission cycle, as many people as possible need to adopt good hygiene and sanitation and take part in mass treatment campaigns.

The disease is highly endemic in Mozambique. In Nampula province, one of the worst affected, 77% suffer from the infection.

Community perceptions matter

What people know about the disease and how it can be prevented is a crucial factor in any effort to beat schistosomiasis.

To find out more about people’s perceptions, Malaria Consortium conducted a representative household survey in four districts of Nampula province with a total of 791 households interviewed.

Results

91% are aware of schistosomiasis

20% can correctly name a risk behaviour

58% don't know how the disease is spread

22% incorrectly think it is a sexually transmitted disease
Knowledge of treatment is low

61% don’t know if there is a drug that treats schistosomiasis

Only 5% name mass treatment campaigns as a control mechanism

5% of adults interviewed have taken Praziquantel

87% say they would take Praziquantel if offered

The results from Malaria Consortium’s survey demonstrate the need to educate people about the cause of the disease and how it is transmitted. Too few people know how to protect their families from the disease. Most people appear to be willing to take medication if offered. It is therefore essential to work with at-risk communities to increase the uptake of preventive practices, such as mass treatment campaigns.

What is Malaria Consortium doing?

In collaboration with the Direcção Provincial de Saúde de Nampula, Malaria Consortium is currently testing whether the community dialogues approach can be used to enhance communities’ understanding of schistosomiasis. Regular community dialogue meetings, led by facilitators from within the community and trained by Malaria Consortium, have been conducted in all communities in four districts of Nampula province since August 2014. The community dialogues approach provides visual tools and a simple, repeatable 10-step process to help communities explore how schistosomiasis affects them, identify potential solutions and take locally relevant actions.

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