



Lil Mosquito, Big Problem Campaign: Phase II

► Introduction

In February 2023, Breakthrough ACTION and the Ministry of Health (MOH) employed a second human-centered design process to further refine Guyana’s malaria social and behavior change (SBC) interventions. Findings from the first phase of the Lil Mosquito, Big Problem (LMBP) campaign initiated in 2019 were triangulated with new data, strategies, and guidelines, and a new set of key insights emerged:

- Some of the project’s most effective communication channels, such as television and print materials, were also some of the most challenging to deliver.
- Recognition was mutually reinforcing: The audience interacted with the campaign more when they recognized someone they knew, and the people who were recognized were more likely to promote the campaign.
- Although SBC efforts had not yet focused on secondary audiences in a concerted way, these key influencers showed an interest in the campaign and had significant potential to drive change.
- The Volunteer Malaria Tester (VMT) program did not fully respond to the needs of miners. Specifically, the number of VMTs was insufficient, inactive testers were not replaced with new ones, and testers often faced stock-outs of both SBC materials and testing and treatment supplies.
- Infrastructure challenges hindered communication between regional Vector Control Services/National Malaria Program (VCS/NMP) and VMTs and movement to and from the interior. These challenges had repercussions for SBC interventions, delivery of essential supplies, and timely reporting.



The insights informed a two-week Design and Test sprint to generate ideas for new design opportunities, create low-fidelity prototypes, and test the ideas with intended audiences in Regions 7 and 8. The core design team integrated the feedback from the Design and Test phase to refine these solutions and launch a new complementary suite of interventions.

► Interventions

LMBP’s final Phase II interventions included the following:

Miners’ Buzz: This innovative entertainment-education approach wove authentic narratives from miners about life in the mines with crucial malaria messages in one- to two-minute video segments. Breakthrough ACTION produced 20

“Gyaff from the Mines” segments, “by miners, for miners,” in which real miners spoke openly about topics ranging from their experiences with malaria to family life to encounters with wildlife. These recordings provided anecdotal and

contextual information to then develop 10 “Yuh Ain’ Know” segments, in which malaria experts responded to frequently asked questions from miners and addressed misconceptions about malaria, treatment, and prevention in the mining regions. The project dubbed five of the centerpiece Miners’ Buzz segments into Spanish and Portuguese. Breakthrough ACTION disseminated Miners’ Buzz through the LMBP Facebook page, WhatsApp, and television.



Malaria Backdam Champions: The Malaria Backdam Champions intervention engaged community shopkeepers and business owners, such as barbers and restaurateurs, to become points of contact for miners to access malaria information. The champions promoted prompt care-seeking behaviors and facilitated access to updated testing and treatment locations. Once champions were recruited, Breakthrough ACTION provided them with several tools to help them in their role, including a shop sticker to identify them as a champion, a tester tracker listing the names and locations of VMTs within the communities, and rapid counseling cards to address commonly asked questions about malaria. They also received a laminated card with malaria information tailored to miners and the region, and flash drives loaded with malaria audio content to be played on shop sound systems. Additionally, as a form of recognition and appreciation, the champions had the option to have their pictures taken and featured on the LMBP Facebook page.

Malaria Super Teams: This intervention was established to recognize and incentivize the outstanding commitment of VMTs and their supervisors. Breakthrough ACTION introduced a structured reward system to bolster motivation, elevate retention rates, and amplify proficiency in essential

duties. For instance, VMTs were meant to be regularly assessed on testing excellence (i.e., timeliness of report submission, accuracy and completeness of reports, adequate stock levels maintained), community engagement (i.e., regular coordination and communication with regional health facilities, referral of clients requiring additional care), and quality and innovation (i.e., exceptional service, implementation of an innovative intervention). Participants would qualify to win prizes such as t-shirts, caps, umbrellas, or backpacks based on their performance. Malaria Super Teams also established regional WhatsApp groups for VMTs and their supervisors to enhance communication and coordination. This program aimed to foster an environment of excellence and recognition within the malaria prevention and control workforce.

Malaria Boss: Malaria Boss leverages a network of private drivers and transportation partners to streamline the delivery of malaria test kits, treatment, SBC materials, and reports to and from interior locations. This initiative was designed to address the logistical challenges faced by regional VCS/NMP and VMTs in remote areas where inadequate transportation services often resulted in VMTs being periodically left without essential supplies. Breakthrough ACTION recruited trusted drivers who regularly traveled between the regional capital and the backdam. The project branded the bosses’ vehicles with stickers and mirror hangers; trained them on malaria basics so that they could engage with passengers and clients around diagnosis, treatment, and prevention; and equipped them with supportive SBC materials (see Cross-Cutting SBC Materials box).



Cross-Cutting SBC Materials: Breakthrough ACTION developed several supportive SBC materials that were applicable across various initiatives:

- **Welcome to the Mining Regions Laminated Cards:** These regionally tailored materials drew attention to the fact that miners were in a high-malaria risk area, and they used actual images of camps and miners to share essential information about malaria prevention, testing, and treatment. In addition to being distributed to Malaria Backdam Champions and Malaria Bosses, the cards were strategically placed in various locations highly trafficked by miners, including commuter boats, checkpoints, airplanes and airports, restaurants, and bars.
- **Testers Tracker:** Regularly updated and posted in visible locations, this paper-based template aimed to record the locations of testers throughout the region, ensuring miners knew where their closest malaria service delivery point was.
- **Malaria Pocket Cards:** This set of resource cards could be used by Malaria Champions, Malaria Bosses, and Malaria Super Teams to share crucial information on malaria with others.

Results

- Breakthrough ACTION reached an estimated 7,807 people through Miners' Buzz.
- Breakthrough ACTION recruited, oriented, and branded 48 Malaria Backdam Champions (21 from Region 7 and 27 from Region 8), 44 of whom were still actively engaging in community advocacy for malaria at the end of the project.
- The project oriented 25 new testers from Region 7 and 12 supervisors (five from Region 7 and seven from Region 8) on the Malaria Super Teams intervention.
- In Region 7, Breakthrough ACTION approached nine drivers to participate in the Malaria Boss intervention (three from Region 7 and six from Region 8). The project provided all drivers with SBC materials. As of September 30, 2024, two drivers, one from Region 7 and one from Region 8, are still active as Malaria Bosses.
- Regional VCS/NMP supervisors reported that the establishment of the regional Malaria Super Teams WhatsApp groups significantly improved coordination among regional supervisors and VMTs. Team members reported better alignment on objectives and a greater sense of camaraderie. Regular communication around commodities and supplies minimized stock-outs and helped to improve supply chain issues. It also led to a marked increase in the timely completion and submission of reports, which enabled more accurate tracking of malaria cases and facilitated data-driven decision making.



Lessons Learned

- **Peer-driven entertainment-education strategies enhance credibility and interest.** The “by miners, for miners” peer-to-peer approach of the Miners' Buzz segments enhanced trust and engagement in the content. Entirely unscripted, the “Gyaff from the Mines” segments were based on the real-life experiences of miners who live and work in these challenging environments. The audio-visual testimonial format overcame the literacy barriers prevalent within these communities. The relatable tone, unexpected content, and familiar faces were carefully crafted

to capture and maintain the attention of miners, making the learning process both enjoyable and impactful. The interviews with the miners offered valuable insights into misconceptions about malaria that then informed the development of the “Yuh Ain Know” segments. Numerous community members advocated for the creation of additional audio-visual content, given how well it resonated with the mining community.

- **While promising in theory, Malaria Boss faced several implementation challenges in practice.**

When initially approached by the project, most drivers were enthusiastic to support the initiative, citing the importance of supporting malaria activities in the difficult-to-access interior of the region and acknowledging their ability to do so. They were eager to display the LMBP materials and learn more about the program. Others, however, expressed disappointment regarding the lack of monetary compensation for their participation. While willing to display malaria SBC materials in their vehicles, they were not prepared to transport malaria SBC and service delivery commodities and supplies to and from the region, referencing the difficult terrain, increased cost to traverse this area, and limited time. Attempts to engage mining companies in the program were unsuccessful due to strict security protocols preventing drivers from stopping en route, which made test and report deliveries impossible. Breakthrough ACTION recommends focusing on quality over quantity for Malaria Boss; rather than recruiting more individuals, focus on strengthening the existing network of recruited Malaria Bosses, emphasizing the establishment of trust-based relationships. Engaging additional public and private sector partners who have committed to improving malaria outcomes in Guyana through a multi-sectoral Memorandum of Cooperation may help Malaria Boss overcome some of its challenges.



- **In volunteer-based SBC initiatives, reward and recognition interventions have significant potential for increasing motivation and improving retention, but must meet volunteers' expectations.** In its new suite of interventions, Breakthrough ACTION also introduced new cadres of volunteer-based roles. In addition to VMTs, the project now also had Malaria Backdam Champions and Malaria Bosses. The project intentionally incorporated multiple recognition “touch points” for these volunteer cadres. From Facebook appreciation posts and WhatsApp kudos to branded backpacks and umbrellas and being featured in Miners' Buzz segments, participants had a wealth of opportunities for recognition. The nature of the rewards offered to testers, however, sparked mixed reactions. While recognition and tools to improve their work were appreciated, the actual rewards did not entirely meet their expectations for enhancing job performance or recognition. The interventions would benefit from additional discussions with the volunteer cadres to further clarify preferred forms of recognition.



This brief is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of Breakthrough ACTION and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.