

Documenting the impact of community leaders to increase the uptake of seasonal malaria chemoprevention in Northern Bahr el Ghazal, South Sudan

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Community leaders can contribute to improved uptake of interventions

Introduction

In South Sudan, malaria is one of the leading causes of child mortality.^{1,11} Seasonal malaria chemoprevention (SMC) is an effective strategy to prevent malaria and is widely used to protect children 3–59 months. To improve the uptake of SMC, 85 community leaders, including pastors, priests and local chiefs, were recruited to disseminate accurate information and promote the intervention during the four cycles of SMC conducted in 2023. This study aims to enhance understanding of the impact of community leaders on the uptake of SMC in Aweil South and Aweil West counties.

Methods

- A desk review of end-of-round evaluations and key informant interviews were conducted to gather community perceptions on the role of community leaders.
- We interviewed 10 community leaders, including six cultural and four religious leaders, about their role in sharing SMC information to influence the uptake of SMC.
- Data were analysed thematically using an inductive approach.

Results

- Of a total of 1,435 respondents, 32.5 percent (467) considered community leaders to be a source of SMC information while 20.9 percent (300) said religious leaders were a source of SMC information. Community leaders increased awareness about SMC by directly sharing information with 280 people using various community platforms.

Conclusion

Engaging with local actors who are a trusted source of information within communities can be a helpful communication avenue for SMC programmes. These actors have a considerable amount of influence and present an opportunity to encourage and sustain uptake of this intervention.

Figure 1. Platforms used by local actors to share SMC information

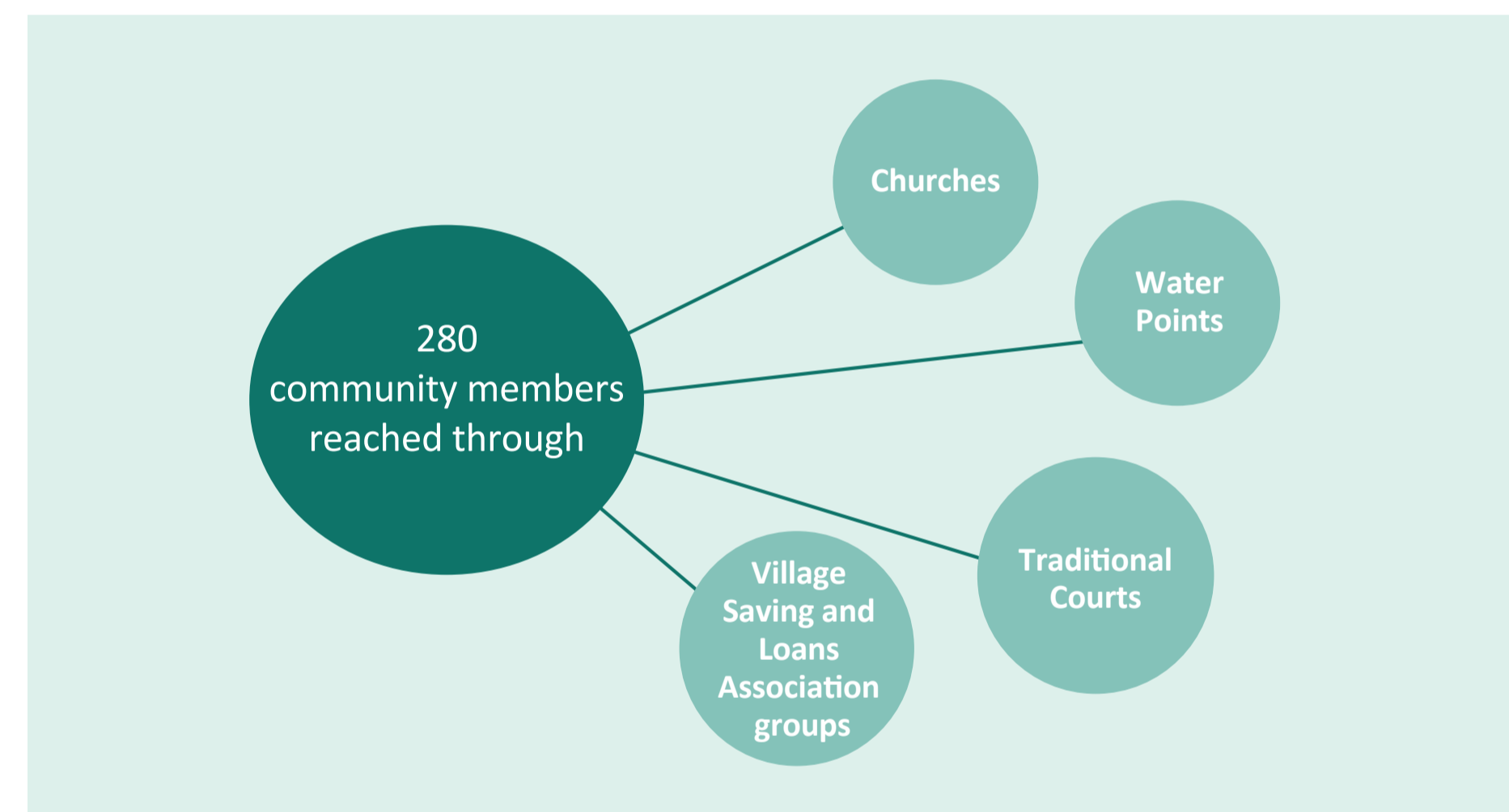
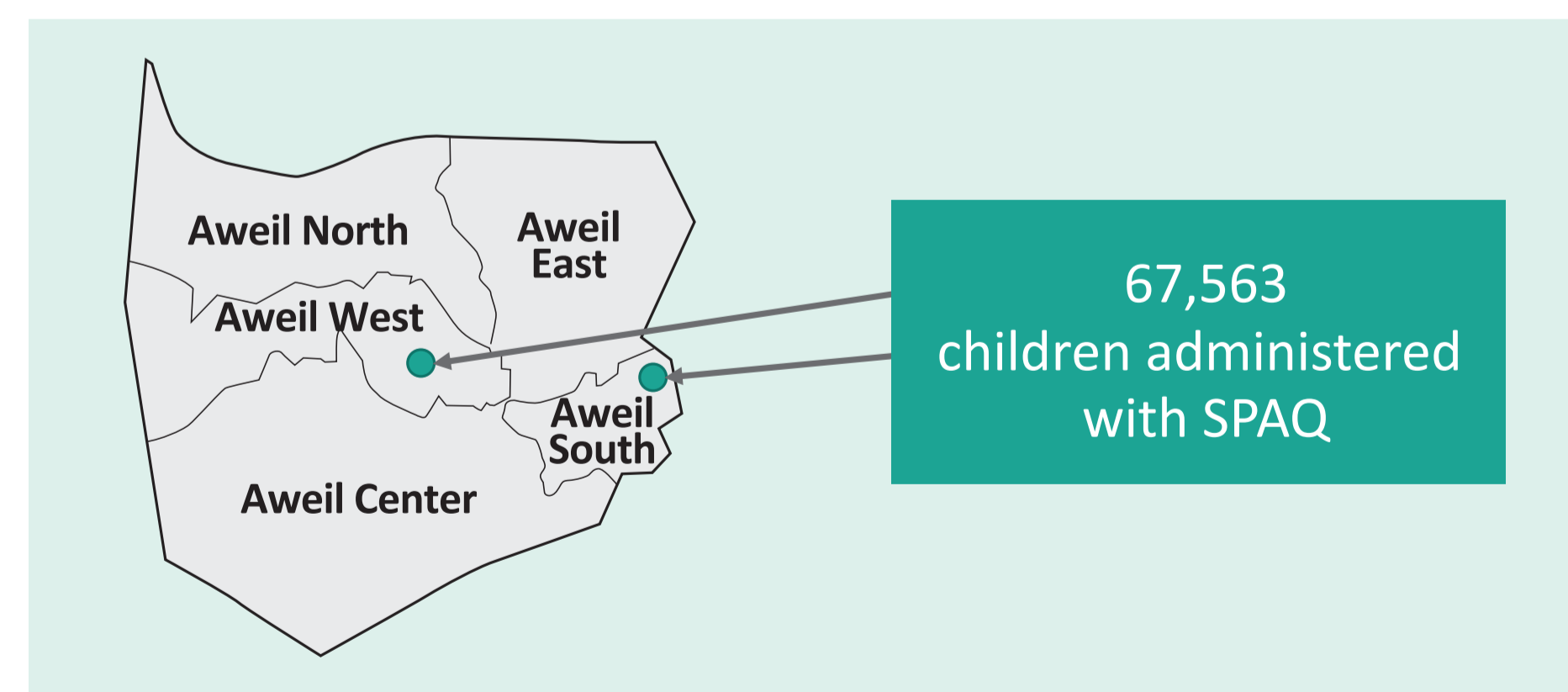


Figure 2. Map showing counties reached with SPAQ



“Such programmes are of immense help to us. So, I urged my people to maintain peace with the drug distributors. I was present to ensure peacefulness during the distribution, to confirm that all children received their medicine and to verify that every child was served.”
Sultan, local chief, Aweil West.

Figure 3. People who viewed local actors as important sources of SMC information



Acknowledgements

South Sudan SMC programme team.
The SMC programme is funded through philanthropic donations received as a result of being awarded Top Charity status by GiveWell, a non-profit organisation dedicated to finding outstanding giving opportunities.

References

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