



## SUCCESS STORY

# Community Group in Mali's Segou Region Takes Ownership of Treatment Efforts for Neglected Tropical Diseases



*CDDs are equipped with medicines and dosing poles for the MDA. Dosing poles use a person's height to determine the recommended dose of medicines needed to treat an individual.*

**Photo: Helen Keller International**

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Taking to heart an old saying in Mali, “to stay healthy is worth more than any sacrifice,” a community group in Cinzana mobilized volunteers and other resources to provide safe and effective treatments for the control and elimination of neglected tropical diseases (NTDs). Located in Mali's Segou Region, Cinzana includes 39 villages and 15,000 inhabitants. It is an area known to suffer from a high disease burden caused by NTDs such as trachoma, schistosomiasis, soil-transmitted helminthiasis, and lymphatic filariasis.

Mali is one of the countries supported by the NTD Control Program, a global initiative funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), to control and eliminate neglected diseases. In partnership with Mali's Ministry of Health, the Program was launched in 2007 to help communities distribute safe and effective drugs to treat and control NTDs. However, reaching every person eligible to receive NTD treatments is a difficult undertaking. The NTD Control Program faces many challenges, including limited resources and poor road infrastructure, making it difficult to reach outlying villages, especially during the rainy season.

Since Mali's national NTD control program began, the community in Cinzana realized the importance of this health initiative and resolved to do its part to ensure the program's success. They recognized that a large number of people could be treated faster and more efficiently with a greater number of community drug distributors (CDDs) working to provide treatments to the local population.

The Association of Community Health (ASACO), a local economic interest group composed of Cinzana community members, mobilized an additional 200 CDDs to distribute drugs, augmenting the government's efforts. ASACO supported the extra CDDs by equipping them with materials, such as notebooks, pens, and dosing poles, which are pieces of wood with markings used to determine the correct drug dosage based on an individual's height. Agents working with the national NTD control program in Cinzana—from the director to the security guard—supported ASACO's efforts by volunteering to prepare dosing poles and patient registers.

At the end of the drug distribution in 2009, Cinzana achieved outstanding results, with 100% geographic coverage rates, as well as high rates of reaching individuals eligible to receive drug treatments. The community in Cinzana, with their contribution of human and material resources, succeeded in taking ownership of NTD control efforts by harnessing their own resources and enhancing national efforts. Cinzana pledged to continue their support of the NTD Control Program and achieving its goals.