

Success
story

Caribbean Zika Prevention and Response Project

Keeping water in and mosquitos out
with drum-proofing

Dominica Red Cross



*Mosquito eggs found at an elderly woman's residence in Soufriere, Dominica. Water drums are perfect breeding grounds for the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito.*

When a mosquito is looking for a place to lay its eggs it has many options as it hunts for stagnant water in discarded cans and bottles, in old unused tires and in the myriad of water collecting waste that surround where humans live. However, some of the best conditions for mosquitos are in things people would rather not throw away – water storage drums. Data from the Dominica Ministry of Health found that the drum, a water storage container kept in around 90 percent of Dominican homes, was the most common mosquito breeding container in Dominica (70 percent of all mosquito breeding sites were drums).

The Dominica Red Cross Society has responded to this threat by working with communities to stop these drums from becoming mosquito breeding grounds. “We want to have the biggest impact in the communities we work with so we’ve gone after the biggest mosquito problem we can find. The drum-proofing activity gives us a chance to educate people while giving them something tangible that can prevent their families from getting sick.” Sylvester Jean-Baptiste, Zika Project Manager for Dominica Red Cross.

The drums are most often left outside, near the home and collect rainwater to be used for household chores. So, a lid is often not the best solution to the problem because while it keeps mosquitoes out, it also stops water from collecting in the drum. The solution was to create a water permeable mesh cover for the drum that could be tightly sealed, that



A Red Cross volunteer and community member work together to prepare the materials for the drum proofing exercise.

prevented mosquitoes from entering and adding a tap to the drum's base so that water could be easily accessed. The materials for this activity were purchased with the support from USAID through the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' (IFRC) to the Dominica Red Cross Zika Project. The materials for this exercise were aligned with previous efforts to proof drums spearheaded by Environmental Health Officers through a PAHO supported Ministry of Health project.

Throughout the activities, staff and volunteers from Dominica Red Cross who had been trained through the project educated community members about the Aedes mosquito, which transmits Zika, dengue and chikungunya, where it breeds and how to prevent them. The Zika project has allowed Dominica Red Cross to take a multi-pronged approach to fighting the Aedes mosquito from activities like this which promote commu-

nity-based vector control to risk communication and warning pregnant women and their partners about Zika risks.

Dominica Red Cross targeted three communities for the drum-proofing exercise – Grand Bay, Soufriere and Marigot where 90 drums were “mosquito-proofed”. Drum-proofing activities were interrupted on September 18 2017 when Hurricane Maria hit the island, the first Category 5 hurricane to strike Dominica. Dominica Red Cross staff and volunteers mobilized quickly to respond to the disaster and the experience of drum-proofing was not forgotten. The drum-proofing exercise building of lessons learnt in the Zika project, was built into the Hurricane Maria Emergency Appeal noting the increased threat of mosquito borne-diseases after the disaster. Dominica Red Cross has procured the materials for a second round of drum-proofing activities through ongoing support from IFRC through USAID. Replication of this activity in other countries in the Caribbean wide Zika Prevention and Response project are planned for the projects third year in 2019.



Red Cross volunteers assist a pregnant mother to prevent mosquito borne-diseases by sealing her water drum



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