

# Young children with severe malaria in remote areas of the DRC: a contextual analysis of the perceptions, attitudes, and health-seeking behaviours of their parents.



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## Introduction

- 500k malaria deaths, children < 5
- Timely treatment is crucial



**Challenge:** In the DRC's remote areas, children often receive delayed treatment

**Potential Solution:** Introducing pre-referral RAS administered by CHWs

**Objective:** To explore parental healthcare-seeking behaviours and attitudes towards RAS.

**Impact:** Understanding these factors can guide effective RAS implementation, reducing child mortality

## Methods

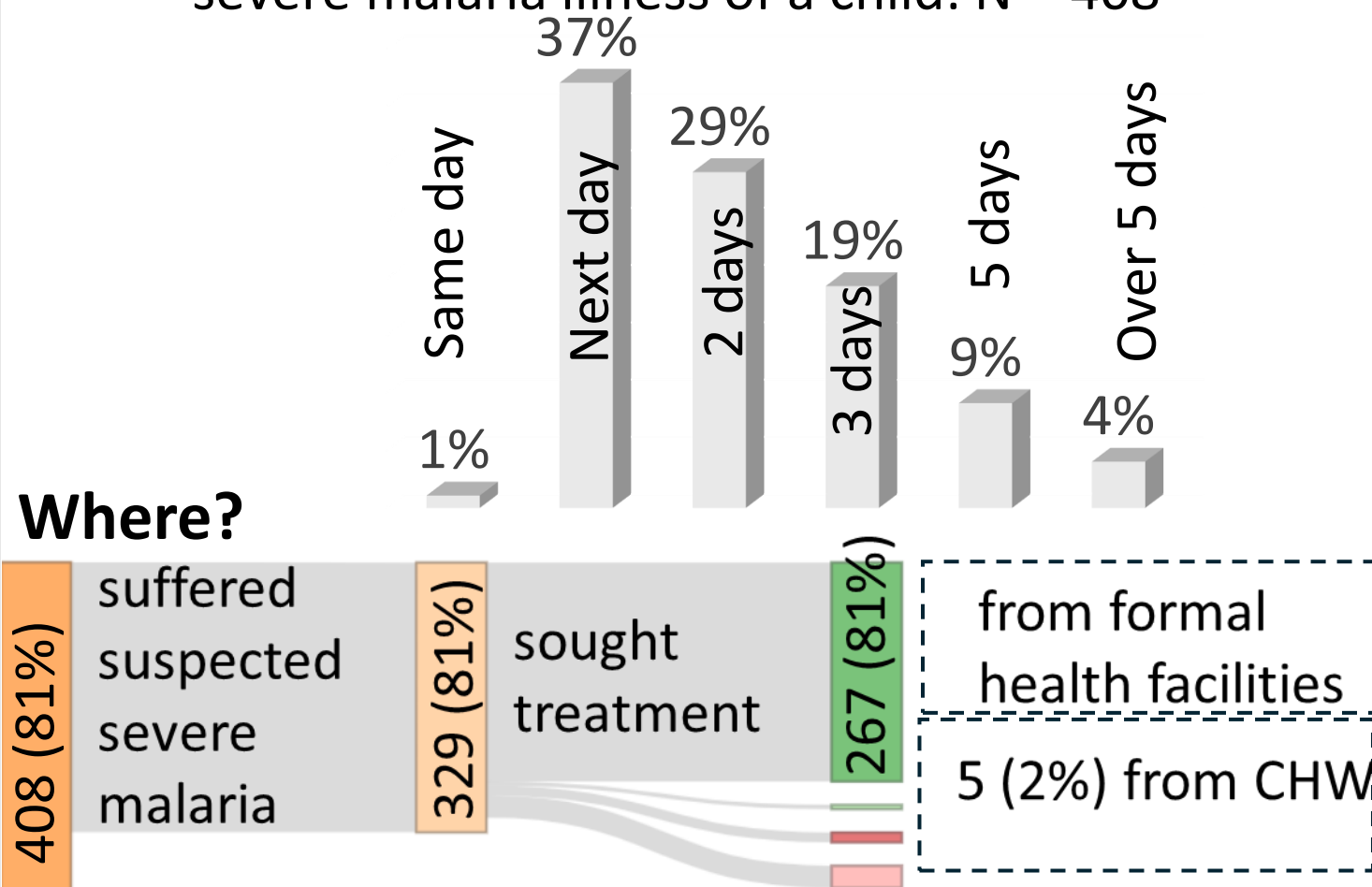
- Mixed methods**
  - Quantitative:**
    - 30 x 30 Cluster/village survey.
    - Analysed data from 905 participants across 30 villages using logistic regression to assess factors influencing the utilization of formal health facilities during child illness events.
  - Qualitative:**
    - Focus groups: 1 per selected village with a purposive sample of 8-12 caregivers.
    - Preliminary analysis was done using a thematic approach.

## A Participants characteristics

- Focus group discussions: 30 discussions each with 8 – 12 participants.
  - 100% females
  - Mothers and grandmothers

## B Health seeking behavior

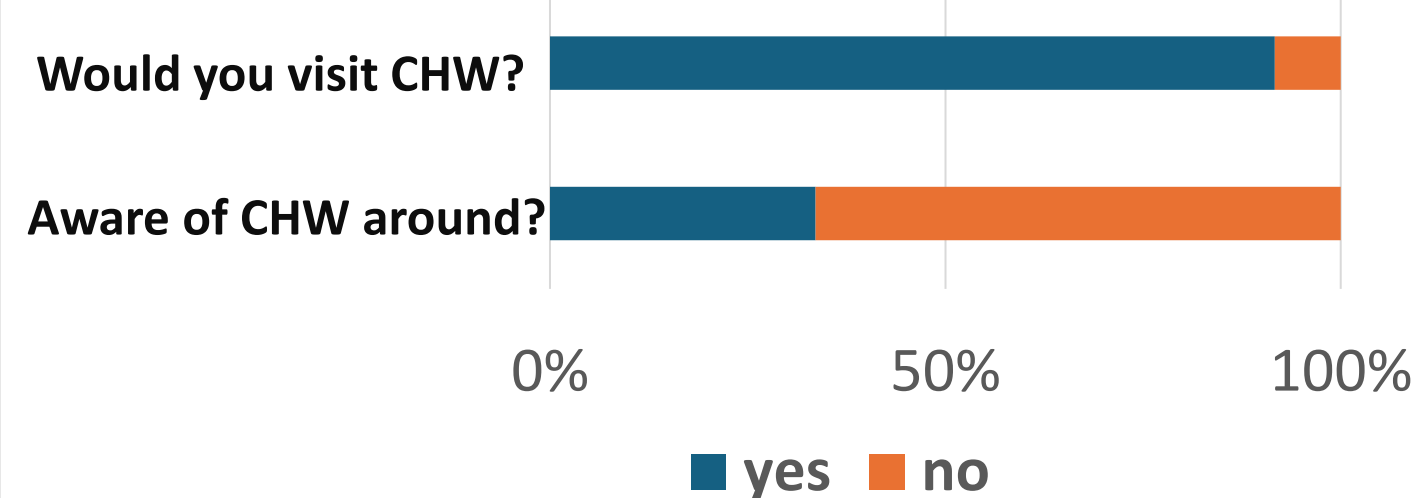
Time taken to seek care in the event of severe malaria illness of a child: N = 408



From the participants in the FGDs we learnt that:

- Attitude of HCPs hinders caregivers to seek formal healthcare.** "We often don't leave when we are referred because people without money are not welcome"
- Persisting symptoms triggers seeking of formal healthcare.** "We go to the health center when the child's situation does not improve at home..."

## D Acceptability of RAS from CHWs

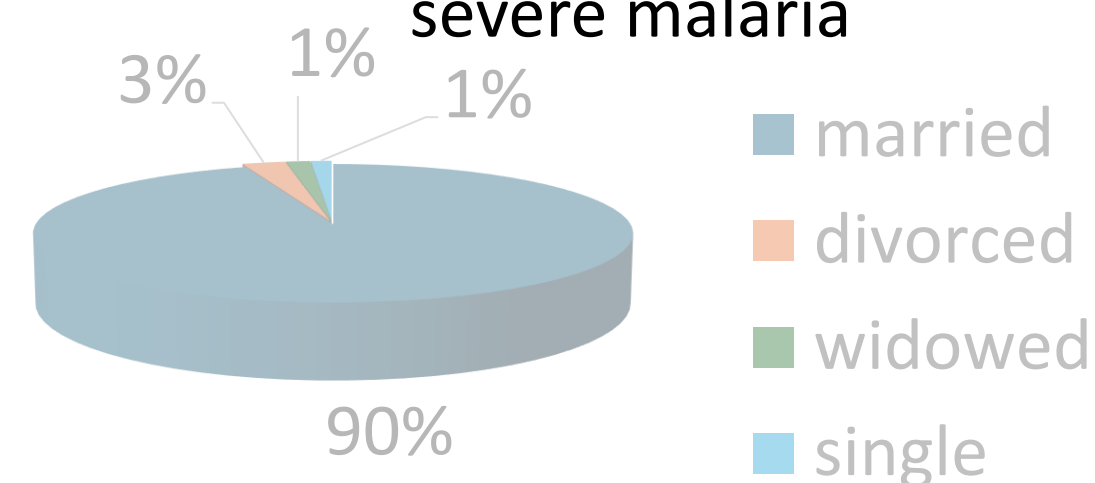


Results from the FGDs show that:

- RAS seems acceptable and is seen as a solution to fill the gaps in the health system:** "We have heard little about RAS, but we are eager for new solutions."
- However, there is distrust in CHWs.** "we want to choose the CHW who will manage the RAS, otherwise they will be inaccessible or accessible for money as happens with certain products..."

## Preliminary Results

- Cluster survey: 905 caregivers
  - 85% females
  - 1244 children < 5
    - 408 reported suffered suspected severe malaria



## C Barriers to Healthcare Access:

Factors associated with the Utilization of Formal Health Facilities in the event of Child Illness (Adjusted ORs with 95% CI and p-values)

Age	1(0,98-1,02;p = 0,96)
Sex: female	
Male	1,48(0,86-2,61;p = 0,16)
Status: married	
not married	0,62(0,24-1,6;p = 0,32)
Radio :no	
Yes	1,19(0,81-1,76;p = 0,37)
Motorbike: no	
Yes	1,56(0,88-2,84;p = 0,14)
Messages: no	
Yes	<b>1,86(1,27-2,73;p = 0,00)</b>
Transport: walking	
other transport	1,13(0,69-1,85;p = 0,63)
Time to HF	<b>0,89(0,79-0,99;p = 0,04)</b>
Nearest HF: CHW	
Public Health Facility	<b>2,59(1,55-4,32;p = 0,00)</b>
Other	<b>0,65(0,35-1,19;p = 0,00)</b>

HF is health facility: Time to HF is time in hours normally taken to the nearest HF; Messages is whether they received malaria messages.

- Those who heard malaria messages have higher ODDs of visiting a formal HF in the event of child illness of suspected severe malaria.
- As travel time to the nearest HF increases the ODDs of visiting a formal HF decreases.
- Residing near a HF is associated with increased ODDs of visiting a formal HF in the event of child illness.

FGDs results showed that:

- long distance/bad road to health facilities, lack of medication and financial issues are mentioned as important barriers.**

"Roads are impassable and clinics often lack essential medicines."

"You come with the child, there is only one bed, and the bed is in bad condition"

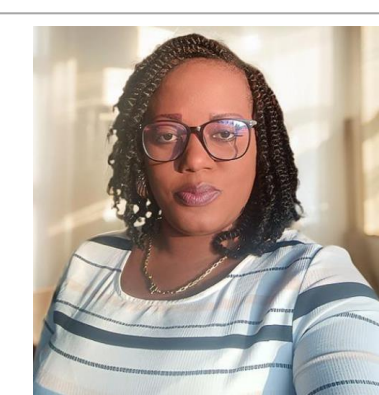
## Conclusions:

**Community Insights:** Local health-seeking behaviour is crucial, with traditional care often used before formal healthcare.

**Barriers and Opportunities:** Transportation, finances, and access hinder timely treatment.

Community interventions are key.

**Policy Implications:** Targeted education on RAS and active community involvement are vital for success.



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