

Kerstin goes Uganda 2012/2013

10 Monate bei der Ugandan Red Cross Society in Iganga

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The last five

days have been extraordinarily interesting for me – here's what happened in Iganga:

From the 12th – 16th December 2012 an organization called Water Reference Center in cooperation with Uganda Red Cross Iganga branch did a study on a common water purifier and its medical effects on malaria positive people in Luuka district in Iganga – and I was part of it!

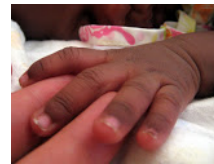
The Belgium representative of the Water Reference Center Klaas and the Dutch book author Leo came on Wednesday morning from Kampala to the Red Cross office in Iganga. They gave us a short briefing on the program for the days and information about the water purifying chemicals we were going to use. Two vehicles were packed with water bottles, mosquito nets, technical equipment and a team of about 13 people, including a camera man, six Ugandan Red Cross volunteers, Enno and me, departed for Luuka district.

Having arrived in Luuka people were already waiting for us. Different stations including the registration, the malaria fast test point, the lab, the result interpretation point and the purified water distribution was set up and volunteers were assigned to their respective stations.

People – and I have to stress the point that we had everyone from a one month old baby to over 80 years old people turning up for malaria testing – were registered first and went for a malaria fast test afterwards. If the test showed positive they got tested again with a blood strip under the microscope. Tested negative or positive, people were given purified water which was prepared by Ronald, Enno and me. Thereby the amount of drops of water purifier varied by age and malaria status. After taking the purified water people were also given bottled water to take home as they had to drink a lot for the chemical to take action in the body. The next day the malaria positive cases were told to come back for another test and a present in form of a mosquito net. The immediate reactions after taking the purified water were worrying to me: People disliked the smell, taste and some children had to vomit. Unfortunately we had to tell people that these symptoms might carry on at home for the day.

The following days showed an unbelievable result: On average we tested and treated around 150 people per day. About 95% of the people tested malaria positive were tested malaria negative after only one day while the remaining 5% were tested malaria negative after taking another dose the day after. Among the 5 % who tested malaria positive again were children, whom we had given a too small dose of the purified water since we were worried about the vomiting.

I have got to say that I was skeptical about the water purifier and the whole project for the first two days. But I was thoroughly amazed to see little wonders happening. As this occurrence has moved me a lot, I want to write about a



Impressionen aus Uganda

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woman who was tested malaria positive, given the purified water and tested malaria negative the next day. When she turned up the first day, she could barely walk. Not having eaten anything for nearly three days, she struggled to swallow the water and immediately fainted. She was lying on the ground for over an hour unable to stand up and close to vomiting. I felt so sorry for her and was seriously worried about her condition. The next day another volunteer had to tell me that this is the woman who was lying on the ground yesterday, since I did not even recognize her! I was stunned! She came towards me and thanked me with a big smile on her face. She even stayed for another two hours talking to people and watching us. I could hardly believe how she had changed her condition over night – very impressive.

This water purifying chemicals seem to have the potential to make a great difference in malaria regions, since they are cheap and, according to the people who work with it since many years, are also curing and preventing other life-threatening diseases.

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Joseph Riggio sagte am Mai 6, 2013 um 12:49 nachmittags :

Kerstin ... do you have any updates on this trial in Uganda ... there is simply no news of it in the mainstream press??? If you want to email me privately please do I am extremely interested in following up with the story. Thanks for your posting!

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