

ACTIVITY REPORT

Activity: Public health workshop on gastroenteritis
Financed by: Organization of American States (OAS)
Focal group: Indigenous communities of southeastern Suriname, from the village of Tepu
Execution: The Amazon Conservation Team (ACT), Virginia, USA; President: Mark Plotkin;
ACT Suriname Program Manager: Neville Gunther.
Counterparts: the Trio indigenous community of Tepu
Date: August 28, 2004

The objective of this one-day workshop was to provide training in infection mechanisms and prevention and treatment of diarrhea, especially with vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly. This subject was selected because of the high number of “late treatment cases” of diarrhea in the areas of Kwamalasamutu and Tepu.

Activities were coordinated by the ACT Suriname Health Coordinator Mr. Jeetandra Jitan. Technical training was provided by the head nurse of the Medical Mission clinic. Translation from Sranan Tongo to Trio was performed by one of the Trio villagers.

The total number of participants was 12. The workshop was observed by the head captain of Tepu.

WORKSHOP REPORT

Mr. Jitan welcomed all participants and explained to them that diarrhea occurs in all parts of the world, even in the city of Paramaribo and likely in the Trio lands. In all parts of the world it is treated differently. The shaman’s apprentices program provides an opportunity to transfer traditional knowledge across generations, ensuring preservation. Mr. Jitan explained that traditional knowledge may be of great use when one is working in the jungle with no access to Western medicine.

The head nurse of the Medical Mission presented a broad overview of the natural and induced causes of diarrhea, as well as the sanitary measures to prevent diarrhea from occurring. She stressed the vulnerability of certain groups such as children: when children are dehydrated and become unable to walk, it may be too late and the child may die. She explained that if a child reaches this stage, it is twice as difficult to return them to full health.

The head nurse also explained the measures to prevent spreading of the disease within the household and the environment. Good hygiene, amongst others, is the most important issue to consider with the spread of diarrhea. The collective responsibility and actions needed to prevent diarrhea from spreading was emphasized.

Mr. Jitan encouraged the participants in the workshop to use both the Medical Mission clinics and the traditional knowledge clinics. He explained that every clinic has its use and its specific set of illness to treat. The Trio community applauded this statement and asked several questions regarding the treatment of diarrhea, specifically how to indicate the timing of getting help.

The workshop was concluded with the consensus that the Trio communities must take responsibility for their own health, and neither neglect their own health or that of their environment.

CHALLENGES:

The participants have limited time to participate in workshops because of their busy lives. The presence of the Head Captain stimulated the participation of community members. The community members are generally not aware of their own health status. Efforts should be made to convince the locals to take health issues more seriously.

FOLLOW UP:

A proper follow-up activity will be a series of workshops that focus on the most significant health concerns in Tepu. Frequently occurring diseases as malaria and waterborne diseases will be discussed with the community in the future.

Workshop Participant List

Name	Function	Age	Sex
Shokonono	Apprentice	38	Female
Faari	Apprentice	35	Female
Keiti	Apprentice	41	Female
Susari	Clinic Intern -Apprentice	19	Female
Klarice	Novice	18	Female
Endenie	Novice	16	Female
Anria	Novice	16	Female
Rachel	Novice	15	Female
Enisian	Novice	16	Female
Morina	Staff	50+	Female
Asusu	Staff	50+	Female
Lokashi	Staff	42	Female

Annex 2: Photo Documentation
Traditional Medicine clinic at Tepu

