

# Coolfinity

GUICHET

## DON'T FORGET THE PHARMACIES

By Alinta Geling | February 2020 Kati, Mali

*Alinta Geling is Coolfinity's Business Developer in West Africa. She grew up there, went to high school and university in The Netherlands and now lives and works in Mali. In this piece she will discuss her first hand experience on the need for reliable cooling in rural pharmacies.*

Today I am visiting the Community Health Centre (CSCOM) in Kati, a secondary city in Mali, close to the capital Bamako. CSCOMs provide basic health care and services in maternal and child health. They are the first and essential contact point in

the Malian health care system. Every CSCOM has a pharmacy, allowing patients to buy medication needed and providing some income for the CSCOM. I am invited by the pharmacist, Mr. Coulibaly, to experience the cooling needs here first hand.

I am meeting Mr. Coulibaly in the pharmacy, where he is on duty. The pharmacy does not have a cooler even though the need is high. "We received a vaccine cooler from the Ministry of Health a year ago," explains Mr. Coulibaly,

*"However, this is a small cooler and we are only allowed to store vaccines in it." This is problematic because many patients need other medication that needs to be cooled. "The demand for vitamin K and insulin are high, but if there is a need we ask the patient to come back the following day. This allows us to go to the regional depot by motorbike, buy the medication, drive back and give it to the patient immediately. If he needs it again the next day, we will repeat the same procedure." This is indeed an elaborate and inefficient process for a CSCOM that receives about 60 to 90 patients a day.*

It seems to me that the vaccine cooler has been out of order for months, so I ask Mr. Coulibaly about this. *"For a few months in a row, we were not able to pay our electricity bill, and we were cut of electricity. Every vaccination day, Tuesday and Thursday morning, we would go to the depot, buy the needed vaccination and vaccinate the children in the clinic. But we had to be careful, if we bought too much we would*

*waste the vaccines. If we bought too little we had to ask the patients to come back next time, even though they sometimes came from far for the vaccination". The CSCOM hopes to receive a solar cooler soon, it is the only way they can avoid more electricity problems in the future.*

The problems in Kati do not stand alone. The CSCOM in Kati is one of the 1368 CSCOMs in Mali and 70% do not have access to electricity. Many have similar problems: The lack of electricity and very little means to keep medication at the right temperature. Coolfinity coolers would especially allow the pharmacies to provide the required medication to patients, optimize their logistics and even generate more income by providing better services.

Indeed, before I leave Mr. Coulibaly, he urges me one more time: *"Don't forget the pharmacies, we can help many more people, with a little bit of cooling".* ■

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