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Nuru
Newsletter

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A mother reads one of the short text message disseminated as part of a health campaign to encourage pregnant women to visit antenatal clinic, deliver in hospital and breastfeed long enough.

How mobile phones and maps are improving care for pregnant women

APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde is testing an innovative approach that combines mobile phone text messages and Global Information System (GIS) health maps in a community-based intervention to improve care for pregnant women.

The community health maps created by volunteers and later refined with GIS technology show households with pregnant women. The maps contain information on location and mobile phone contacts of every pregnant woman, community health workers who serve them and the health facility.

Community health volunteers have been trained and regularly update maps to include new individuals.

Using information on the maps, health volunteers and facility-based health workers can quickly trace the women in case of an emergency.

The GIS maps are linked to software to enable mothers receive tailored health tips on their phones. Community volunteers can also send short messages in Kiswahili and vernacular to remind mothers to keep clinic appointments.

Early results of this mHealth intervention show that more women are completing the recommended four antenatal visits (21%) compared to control sites (14%).

The volunteers say that they are comfortable with the system and easily receive and send information via smartphones, while pregnant women have reported more support from male partners after they see MCH messages.

Other mothers say messages have encouraged them to adopt health behaviours. For instance, one first-time mother said she had not thought about exclusive breastfeeding. But a text message she received encouraged her to feed her baby on nothing else but milk for the recommended six months.

The mHealth intervention was informed by findings of a survey which showed that very few women were using maternal, neonatal and child health services in Baringo County. Looks like this is now changing.

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32 health facilities get equipment for maternal & child health

APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde project presented equipment for improved maternal and child health services to 32 of the busiest health facilities in five counties in Kenya.

Procured with support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the equipment includes basic but essential tools to monitor the condition of pregnant women and make childbirth safer, which is a direct action to ending preventable deaths.

“This equipment will fill gaps identified by health workers and enable the high-volume facilities to provide essential maternal and newborn health services,” said Dr. Jamlick Mutugi, Clinical Services Advisor for the APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde project. “With this support, we are complementing the significant investment by county and national governments to improve health services,” he continued.

Hospitals and health centres receiving the new equipment include 15 in Baringo and Narok counties, which are designated as priority regions for interventions that improve access to health services for mothers, newborns and children. Other counties benefitting from the project are Kajiado, Laikipia and Nakuru.

APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde mainly works to improve the quality of services by providing technical support to facilities jointly with the Ministry of Health and counties.

The project also helps to facilitate support supervision, mentorship and on-job-training as well as limited renovations to high-volume facilities.

Priority areas of support include in prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and ensuring babies born with the virus get timely treatment.

■ See photo on page 4

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New reusable sanitary pads kit helps to keep vulnerable girls in school

According to Kenya's Ministry of Education, thousands of Kenyan school girls in classes four to eight miss one and a half school months of class each year due to their menstrual cycles. School absence lowers girls' academic performance and self-esteem and widens gender disparities in educational achievements.

And, many girls who cannot afford sanitary napkins endanger their health by resorting to unhygienic solutions, such as leaves, old cloth, sponges, soil or feathers.

To address this problem, AIDS, Population and Health Integrated Assistance (APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde) project partnered with a local textile company to develop reusable sanitary pads. Approximately 30,000 vulnerable girls living in six counties across Kenya will receive the products free of charge.

APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde, which is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), partnered with Bedi Textile in 2014 to develop the washable, reusable pads. The kits — which contain two pairs of underwear, four reusable sanitary napkins and two convenient carrier bags — are designed to last up to two years.

Urgent need to respond

The innovation supplements the government's Sanitary Towels Program, launched in 2012 to provide pads to school girls to ensure that they do not miss classes during menstruation.

"This initiative was prompted by an urgent need to respond to the situation of girls in Kenya's rural and low-income urban areas who cannot afford disposable sanitary pads," said Ruth Odhiambo, APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde Project Director. "We hope other partners will join us to scale up production so that even more needy girls can benefit from this hygienic, cost-effective solution," she continued.

APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde involved girls in the design process and used their feedback to refine the product. "When we pretested the kit in two primary schools in Nakuru, pupils and teachers liked it," said Simon Makori, APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde Associate Director. "The pupils chose the name Ever



Photo: George N. Obanyil/FH360

Eunice, a 14-year-old school girl from Marigat in Baringo County, holds a sanitary pad kit provided through APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde project.

Sanitary Pads to signify that it will always be available."

The reusable sanitary kits are being distributed to orphans and vulnerable girls from poor families that the project supports in the Baringo, Kajiado, Laikipia, Nakuru, Nandi and Narok counties.



30,000

Number of vulnerable girls benefitting from reusable sanitary kits in six counties to supplement Government program.

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IN BRIEF

73 joint work plans ready

A total of 73 joint work plans for 2015 have been developed to guide collaboration between APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde project and health management teams at the county, sub-county and facility levels. The plans include activities to support coordination of HIV service delivery, strengthen health systems and enhance support supervision. Collaboration between the project and MOH has resulted in improved performance.

Groups save Sh37 million

APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde project has helped to strengthen over 400 support groups for vulnerable families as part of interventions to address social determinants of health. The groups have, in turn, started 683 savings and credit that have over Sh37m in savings. Much of the money has been given out as loans for small businesses. These households support more than 18,000 orphans and vulnerable children across five counties.

Faster CD4 test results

HIV patients visiting some of the health centres that APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde project supports now get their CD4 test results much faster after the placement of point of care equipment in a partnership with the Clinton Health Access Initiative and NASCOP. Pima CD4 equipment is at Ntulele, Enabelbel and Sogoo health centres and Ololunga sub-district hospital in Narok; Eldama Ravine sub-district hospital in Baringo and Laikipia's Ndindika Health Centre.

Fishing communities empowered

All over the world, fishing communities are known to face a higher risk of HIV than the general population. Between 2011 and 2014, APHIplus Nuru ya Bonde implemented a program to reduce the spread of HIV among fishing communities around Lake Baringo in Baringo County and Lake Naivasha, Nakuru County. The project used an approach called Stepping Stones, which encourages communities to talk about HIV, what

causes it to spread and local solutions. Working with Beach Management Units, the project trained community representatives to continue some of the health education activities to ensure HIV prevention takes root. The volunteers are able to organize outreach to beaches for HIV counselling and testing services and to refer individuals to health facilities for other services, including treatment.



Photo: George N. Obanyi/FHI360

Mother of four spearheads HIV prevention drive on beaches

Roseline (above), a boat owner and health educator talks to young men as they prepare to set out fishing on Lake Naivasha. Rose, a 43-year-old mother of four, has been trained to pass on HIV prevention messages and encourage community members to find solutions to issues such as gender violence that fuel the spread of HIV. After the training, Roseline and other trainers took small groups through 11 learning sessions that cover diverse topics on health

living. The topics include HIV prevention, caring for people with HIV, family planning and dealing with alcohol abuse.

in 2014, more than 1,100 fishermen and traders have benefitted from learning sessions organized by Roseline and 35 other peer mobilizers on landing fishing-landing beaches on Lake Naivasha shores.



Volunteers inspired to serve; social norms start to change

After attending training for health peer educators organized by APHIplus Nuru ya Bonde, Evans (left) was inspired to serve his people. He travelled to Nakuru town and enrolled for a short course in social work in a local college. Today, Evans is a committed change agent in his community on the shores of Lake Baringo. He teaches people about HIV prevention, maternal and child health and other healthy behaviours.

Evans has inspired his twin sister Sharine, a shopkeeper, to also train as a peer educator.

This story of Evans demonstrates that the community values the the HIV prevention program. People are also showing this appreciation in other ways. For instance, they are willing to talk more openly about HIV and what can be done to stop its spread. They openly talk about cultural practices and risky behaviours that fuel the spread of HIV such as the exchange of sex for fish and having multiple sexual partners.

As a result of this discussions, most of the fishermen, fish sellers and others working around the lake have accepted HIV counselling and testing and the use of condoms. Some have been tested twice. Knowing one's HIV status is an entry point to accessing prevention, care and treatment.

2,950 Number of people in fishing groups who completed Stepping Stones sessions on HIV prevention

60 Number of peer educators and other community resource persons trained

37,000 Condoms distributed around L. Baringo in a year

DATA SNAPSHOT: January - March 2015

141,857 individuals were counselled and tested for HIV and received their results at facility level

32,350 pregnant women were counselled and tested for HIV and received their results

80% of HIV-positive pregnant women received antiretroviral treatment to reduce risk of mother-to-child transmission (MTCT)

65% of infants born to HIV-positive mothers who receive prophylaxis to reduce MTCT

88% of infants born to HIV-positive mothers are not infected

41,413 adults and children living with HIV who receive at least one clinical care service

2,263 children with advanced HIV infection were newly enrolled for antiretroviral treatment

8,837 women delivered under care of a skilled birth attendant

70% of children have received Vitamin A supplements through US Government-supported programs

27,089 pregnant women attended four antenatal clinic visits; **12,681** completed recommended four ANC visits.

70% of children under 5 years have received Vitamin A from US Government-supported programs.

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NEWS IN PICTURES



Medical staff in Narok County receive equipment, procured with USAID support, from the APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde project. Left to right: FHI 360 Senior Technical Officer Kennedy Yogo, FHI 360 Snr Clinical Services Advisor Dr. Jamlick Mutugi, County Executive Committee member Vivian Sereti Mpeti, Narok North Sub-County Medical Officer of Health Francis Kamwaro, Chief Officer Medical Services Faith Njoki and County Medical Director Dr. Francis Kiio.



Dr Isabella Yonga (right) leads a USAID team to debrief staff of Langa Langa Health Centre, Nakuru on the findings of a site visit to monitor the quality of technical services provided through APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde project to improve health services. The USAID team, project and county health staff regularly visit project sites as part of continuous quality improvement.

APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde Strategic Partners

Family Health International (FHI 360) is responsible for overall program management, technical leadership, strengthening HIV counselling and testing, PMTCT, reproductive health and family planning, MNCH in facilities, capacity building of local implementing partners and coordination of M&E activities.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) is the lead partner in home-based and community care for families affected by HIV, and in support for orphans and vulnerable children.

Gold Star Kenya provides technical assistance to the private sector to provide quality HIV clinical care and other services, and HIV prevention for most-at-risk populations.

Liverpool VCT, Care and Treatment provides technical assistance for provision of community-based HIV testing and counselling, sexual and gender-based violence.

National Organization of Peer Educators (NOPE) promotes healthy behaviours among marginalized youths and links them to services offered at health facilities.

APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde has its head office in Nakuru and regional offices in Kabarnet, Narok, Eldoret, Nanyuki and Ngong.

AIDS, Population and Health Integrated Assistance (APHIAplus) program is funded by the President's Emergency Fund for AIDS Relief through USAID. It aims to empower people lead healthier lives by increasing access to quality HIV and AIDS, reproductive health, family planning, maternal & child health services.

