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*A health worker from Eldama Ravine District Hospital attends to a young mother, Atieno, and her child during a farmer field day. A team of 15 health workers provided services during the event.*

## Taking health services closer to communities through outreach

**W**hat do health workers and agricultural officers have in common? Both provide crucial services that farmers need: medical care and farming skills.

APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde recognises this important connection and has started supporting efforts to provide free health information and services through popular farmer field days in the Rift Valley. The project is implementing recommendations from research by FHI 360 and Land O'Lakes which found that such open days provide a good opportunity to offer reproductive health and other services to farming communities.

The research, funded by USAID, found that it is easier for farmers and their families to get health care if services are brought closer to them through integrated outreaches.

### Farming communities

APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde is working with the Ministry of Health to provide a wide range of services to community members when they visit open days to learn about farming.

During a recent farmers' field day held at Mumberes in Koibatek District, Baringo County, more than 70 people received health services including family planning, HIV counselling and testing, treatment of common illnesses such as malaria and screening for cervical cancer.

Sharon Rotich, who sells farm produce, said she was happy because she had been screened for cervical cancer and received family planning services. She was also counselled and tested for HIV. "These field days should be more frequent," she says.

The manager of Mumberes Cooperative Society, Collins Lebon, said his team was ready to host more field days because healthy farmers increase farm production. "The money that would have gone to medical bills is ploughed back into farming," he says.

APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde will continue to work with the Ministry of Health and various stakeholders to organise more integrated health services during farmer field days and other events, according to Dr. Joel Rakwar, Associate Project Director for Clinical Services.

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## A bigger role for people with disability

APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde is working with local groups to educate men and women with disability on reproductive health.

More than 100 representatives from 14 disabled persons organisations in Narok have been trained to reach out to their members with information on family planning, HIV and other reproductive health topics.

"This is a good partnership because disabled people, especially women, are often left out of education programs," says Paul Ole Sopia, chairman of Narok Disabled Integrated Program (NAIDIP).

NAIDIP hosts the secretariat of disabled people's organizations in Narok and is working with APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde to implement reproductive health activities.

"After the training, many disabled persons were tested for HIV," says Paul. "I was tested for the third time and this time with my wife."

A similar workshop was held in Nakuru and more are planned in the three other counties covered by APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde.

During the events, participants are trained in areas such as reproductive health, HIV and AIDS, and how to address sexual and gender-based violence.

"Participation of people with disability is important, so we work with them to identify champions who we train to mobilise others for HIV counselling and testing and HIV prevention," says Caleb Osano of APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde.



*Ole Sopia*

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# Support groups improving lives

## Dairy goats farming, rights education and social support help to sustain group

**Peter Karuri's** life turned upside down when he found out he was HIV-positive. He became very sick and was bedridden. But after he received home-based care and counselling, his health improved.

Karuri is taking ARVs and has regained his strength. He continues to work as a stone mason and is able to provide for his wife, two daughters and five sons.

The man is full of praise for Likii Home Based Care Support Group. When he was down, the group's members gave him hope and still stand by him as he continues on care and treatment.

APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde works to strengthen groups like Likii to enable them to improve the lives of individuals and families affected by HIV. The groups provide encouragement and livelihood options for vulnerable individuals and families so that they can improve their economic status.

With their own savings and a small grant, the group members bought land on which they rear chickens and dairy goats.

"Each member now has a dairy goat and we take turns to care for those in our common plot," says Martha Wangui, a group official.

The group farm serves as a demonstration site for the community. Members and other groups visit the farm to learn how to keep goats and chicken. They are also shown how to grow vegetables in kitchen gardens.

The group sells the goat milk, kids, chickens and eggs to increase their savings for future investment.

Besides farming, Likii Home Based Care Support Group is working with a non-governmental organisation to promote the rights of women in the community.



*Martha Wangui, an official of Likii support group, shows off a multi-storey garden used for demonstration.*



*Peter Karuri with a goat he received from the support group.*

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## How four Good Samaritans created opportunities to empower women

**Good Samaritan Smart Ladies Group** started with four members in June 2011. The pioneers met weekly and contributed 50 shillings each to a savings scheme. Although it was not much, the Sh200 weekly savings came in handy in emergencies.

On seeing the benefits, other women joined the group. Today Good Samaritan Group has more than 20 members. Savings have grown rapidly.

APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde is strengthening the support group by working together with Family AIDS Initiative Response (FAIR), a local implementing partner. With technical assistance from APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde, the group's members have been trained in different health topics and how to manage their affairs as a group.

The group is now registered with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social

Development. Members have been trained on how they can obtain funds from the Women Enterprise Fund (WEF) and other sources to start up their own businesses. They have also been educated on how to address gender-based violence and on their rights and obligations under Kenya's new Constitution.

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## Fighting stigma and promoting livelihoods

**Kimana People Fighting AIDS Together (KIPFAT)** is a community organisation in Loitoktok, Kajiado County, that supports individuals and families affected by HIV. It has 25 members. Twenty-two of them are living with HIV.

One of the group's key objectives is to fight stigma against people with HIV and their families. Another is to give

the people knowledge and skills to live decent lives.

Members of the group move door-to-door to educate the community about HIV prevention and care. The group works closely with Ministry of Health officials to promote HIV counselling and testing in the community.

Their efforts were recently boosted with a Ksh300,000 grant from the

Constituency AIDS Committee.

To ensure the group remains together in the long-run, members started a savings and credit scheme using the Internal Saving and Lending Communities (SILC) model promoted by APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde. The group has saved and given out Ksh30,000 to members as loans.

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# ‘This should not happen to anyone’

Blind and HIV-positive, Ezekiel is on a mission to educate his peers



*Ezekiel Mutugi with his mother, Enid Kaare. She did not know Ezekiel had HIV until he became very sick. She advises families to ensure everyone is tested for HIV so that who are infected can receive care and support. The ones who are not infected can be empowered to protect themselves.*

**T**he last time Ezekiel Mutugi saw his mother’s face was when she took him food in hospital five years ago. He became blind shortly after that meeting, just two weeks after joining high school.

Doctors told him that he also had tuberculosis and this together with HIV caused his blindness.

“I cried a lot when I realised that I could never see again,” says Ezekiel, now aged 22 years. “It was not easy for me. I did not understand how I could get HIV and yet I had never had sex. I felt useless. I felt as if my life had come to an end.”

Ezekiel was referred for HIV care and treatment. His mother was already on treatment. Both were linked to a support group and received home-based care from Living in Faith Association (LIFA), a community organization supported by APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde to care for children and adults affected by HIV.

Ezekiel was depressed despite the help he was getting. He even attempted to commit suicide.

It took several months of counselling for Ezekiel to accept his status. “I stopped seeing death and instead saw a new life,” he says.

In 2008, Ezekiel starting taking antiretroviral drugs (ARVs). He was soon ready to return to school but his mother, a casual farm worker, could not raise school fees.

Fortunately, a wellwisher helped Ezekiel to join a special school, where he started learning braille and new skills to help him have a quality life as a blind person.

His education has now been taken over by LIFA because the sponsor could not continue paying fees.

“I work with LIFA to create awareness about HIV, especially among young people in schools and the community,” says Ezekiel. “I have been on radio shows and given motivational talks in many schools and in the community.”

Ezekiel also has a message for parents: “It is important that parents get to know their HIV status and that of their children early... Had my mother told me about my status earlier, it would not have got to this (blindness).”

In a way, Ezekiel saved his siblings from HIV. His mother, Enid Kaari, became better informed after his status was disclosed to her and asked for help from doctors when she got pregnant. As a result, Ezekiel’s two younger brothers are HIV-negative.

“They know my status and have accepted me the way I am,” says Ezekiel.

“My passion is to be a counsellor because I would not be alive today if I had not been counselled,” he says. “I want to be able to have a livelihood and be independent so that I can help others . . . One day I’ll give my mum a ride in my own car.”

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## Stronger communication for health promotion

APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde project is working with diverse stakeholders to promote effective use of communication to create demand for quality health services.

The Health Communication team is working with project partners to improve the ability of districts to design and implement effective communication strategies that respond to local needs. Already 10 district behaviour change communication (BCC) committees have been established jointly with the Ministry of Health. These committees will advise District Stakeholder Forums on health promotion.

At another level, the project is supporting community resource persons to improve health promotion. These include peer educators, community health workers (CHWs) or volunteers and Community Health Extension Workers (CHEWs).

Various guiding documents and key messages have been developed to support these frontline workers. The resources include fact sheets, modules for peer educators and guidelines on community dialogue.

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## APHIAplus and AMPATH reorganise project areas for greater efficiency

**A**PHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde sites in North Rift will be transferred to AMPATH by March 2013 in a reorganisation of interventions run by the two USAID-funded projects.

Activities that were being implemented by AMPATH in Baringo will now be under APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde, which has most of its interventions in South Rift.

The two projects exchanged sites to consolidate activities in South and North Rift for increased operational efficiency and impact.

APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde now covers five counties: Nakuru, Baringo, Narok, Kajiado and Laikipia.

Uasin Gishu, West Pokot and Nandi that were under the project will now be covered by AMPATH.

### Baringo office

APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde has opened a regional office at Kabarnet to serve Baringo County. The office is located on the second floor of Mwalimu Plaza, Western Wing. The office can be reached via telephone 0774336200.

The other regional offices are in Narok town, Nanyuki and Ngong. Nakuru County is coordinated from the project head office.

Each of the offices has multidisciplinary teams that work closely with the head office, government ministries and local partners to implement activities.

Regular support supervision and on-site mentoring by various teams ensure standards in implementation.

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Photo: Jane Muriuki

APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde Technical Officer in Reproductive Health, Eliza Wachuka Wambui, shows Scholastica Makau (left) and Carol Saitoti how to use a cryotherapy machine during on-the-job training at Narok District Hospital. Eliza, who is based in Nakuru, is a member of the project's Multidisciplinary Mentorship Team.

## Patients to benefit as health care workers trained on cancer management

**W**omen in Narok County will get treatment for early signs of cancer of the cervix at the local district hospital, following training conducted for health care workers by APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde.

Fifteen health workers were trained on how to detect early cervical cancer using visual examination and treat patients with signs of the disease using the cryotherapy machine available at the hospital.

A cryotherapy machine uses gas to freeze infected cervical cells, reducing their chances of developing into overt cancer. Health workers trained included doctors, nurses and clinical officers from Narok and Ololunga District Hospitals.

Previously, patients who had signs suggestive of cancer were referred to Kenyatta National Hospital for cryotherapy.

In 2011, Narok District Hospital screened 111 patients for cervical cancer. Four of them needed treatment and were referred.

During the three-day practical training, 22 clients were screened. One client had suggestive signs of cancer of the cervix and was treated using the cryotherapy machine. Two patients had more advanced signs of possible cancer. They were referred for specialised investigation within the district hospital.

APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde supports public and private hospitals to provide quality reproductive health, cancer screening and management in line with government guidelines. The project works with health facilities to collect data on the disease for effective decision making.

Other hospitals to benefit from the on-job training include: Loitokitok, Kajiado, Molo, Nanyuki, Naivasha and Provincial General Hospital (PGH), Nakuru.

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## 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.

**AMREF** is the lead partner in supporting roll-out of the community strategy.

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

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

**Gold Star Kenya** provides technical assistance to the private sector to provide quality HIV clinical care and other services, and implements HIV prevention with selected most-at-risk populations (MARPS).

**LVCT Care and Treatment** provides technical assistance to address sexual and gender-based violence, including services prevention among MARPs, specifically discordant couples.

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

The USAID-funded AIDS, Population and Health Integrated Assistance (APHIAplus) program aims to empower people lead healthier lives by increasing access to high quality HIV and AIDS, reproductive health, family planning, maternal and child health services.

