

APHIAplus Western Success Story Submitted by PATH

The word "afya" in Swahili means health. For mother-of-three Gorretty Akinyi and thousands of others in densely populated Western Kenya—which bears a heavy burden of infectious disease like HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis—a project funded by the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) called APHIAplus Western also means health.



The largest integrated health project in East Africa is addressing a spectrum of health needs, from HIV to safe childbirth. In the process, we're transforming health care and empowering communities. Photo: PATH/Eric Becker.

When Gorretty Akinyi was pregnant with her third child, she got a visit from Pamela Akinyi (no relation), who works as a community health volunteer in their tiny town in rural southwestern Kenya. Gorretty, 23, had little previous contact with the health system. Pamela, as one of more than 5,700 volunteers in Western Kenya who have been trained to support their communities on the road to health through a wide-reaching project called AIDS, Population, and Health Integrated Assistance Zone 1 (or APHIAplus Western for short), insisted Gorretty go to the local health facility for a prenatal check-up.

That visit changed Gorretty's life. At the clinic, she tested positive for HIV. With Pamela's support, she told her husband, and he, too, learned he had HIV and got treatment. Gorretty returned to the clinic for four prenatal visits, just as Pamela recommended. And when she gave birth, the services there helped to ensure that she did not pass the virus on to her baby. "Had it not been for Pamela's assistance, there is no way I would have had an HIV-free child," Gorretty said.

APHIAplus Western is led by PATH. It works with nearly 800 health facilities in 10 counties that hold more than 10 million people. APHIAplus Western's community-based programs are increasing the use of services to treat and prevent these diseases, as well as to improve maternal health, and support for orphans and other vulnerable children. In some areas, use of health services has risen by as much as 40 percent, and – by linking services to one another and to the larger health system to magnify their efforts – the project is making the most of limited resources to create impact.

In fact, the program to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV is available at 270 health centers and covers 91 percent of pregnant women in the area. Over the course of four and a half years, more than 550,000 pregnant women like Gorretty were tested and provided treatment when necessary. Through the same program, Gorretty also became an ambassador for prenatal care in her community.

Further, due to U.S. investments like APHIAplus, we've seen some other striking improvements in maternal and child health:

- **Ninety-five percent** of children born to HIV-positive mothers now get treatment to prevent transmission, up from 78 percent when the project began.
- HIV transmission from mother to child dropped **38 percent** and now occurs in just 7 percent of children.
- Skilled attendants assist at **60 percent** of births, nearly double the proportion in 2011.

- **Ninety-nine percent** of the area's 185,000 orphans and other vulnerable children were receiving support services by 2015.

By supporting a broad range of services involving all parts of the local health system, APhiAplus Western is helping some of Kenya's most vulnerable people address a spectrum of needs while strengthening the entire system. The integrated health project is the largest of its kind in East Africa, and is made possible by smart U.S. investments.