



# Hatua Yetu

Newsletter Q.4 2024



## Development Partners Evaluate Family Planning Progress in Marsabit County



Marsabit County recently hosted a significant milestone in advancing healthcare services, as stakeholders gathered in November for the DESIP Programme Closeout review visit. The visit aimed to evaluate the implementation, challenges, and sustainability of family planning (FP) services while fostering stronger partnerships for integrated health initiatives.

The visit began with a courtesy meeting at the County Health Management Team offices, where health officials provided a comprehensive review of their achievements under the DESIP programme.

Key highlights from the visit included:

- Expanding access to family planning (FP) services through capacity building and community engagement.
- Bridging gaps in service delivery and infrastructure to improve the reach and quality of FP services.
- Crafting sustainability plans to ensure the continuity of FP services beyond the programme's timeline.

Challenges in reproductive, maternal, child, and adolescent health (RMCAH), such as high rates of teen pregnancies and maternal deaths, were also discussed. Participants emphasized the need for integrated approaches and sustained collaboration between the government and development partners to address these systemic issues effectively.

### Key Discussions and Observations

A crucial component of the discussions was a detailed overview of the Logistics Management Information System (LMIS), presented by the Sub-County Pharmacist. The LMIS, which is pivotal in tracking and managing FP commodities, highlighted several challenges, including inconsistent supply chains, storage limitations, and inadequate training at health facilities.

The delegation also visited other healthcare facilities, including the Marsabit County Referral Hospital, Dakabaricha Dispensary, and Isiolo Samburu Marsabit Clinic (ISMC) Hospital. These visits offered insights into FP service delivery, data quality, and integration into broader healthcare services.

The team also prioritized community outreach, fostering awareness and dialogue around family planning. At Logologo Dispensary, community members, including men, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and youth, engaged in discussions aimed at promoting FP uptake. Similarly, religious leaders at Jamia Mosque participated in conversations linking child spacing to cultural and religious values, encouraging greater acceptance of FP services within the community.

To broaden the impact, Dr. Charlotte Pahe, PS Kenya's Reproductive Health Director, participated in a live radio session. The discussion revolved around sustaining FP services, leveraging public-private partnerships, and addressing gaps in healthcare delivery.

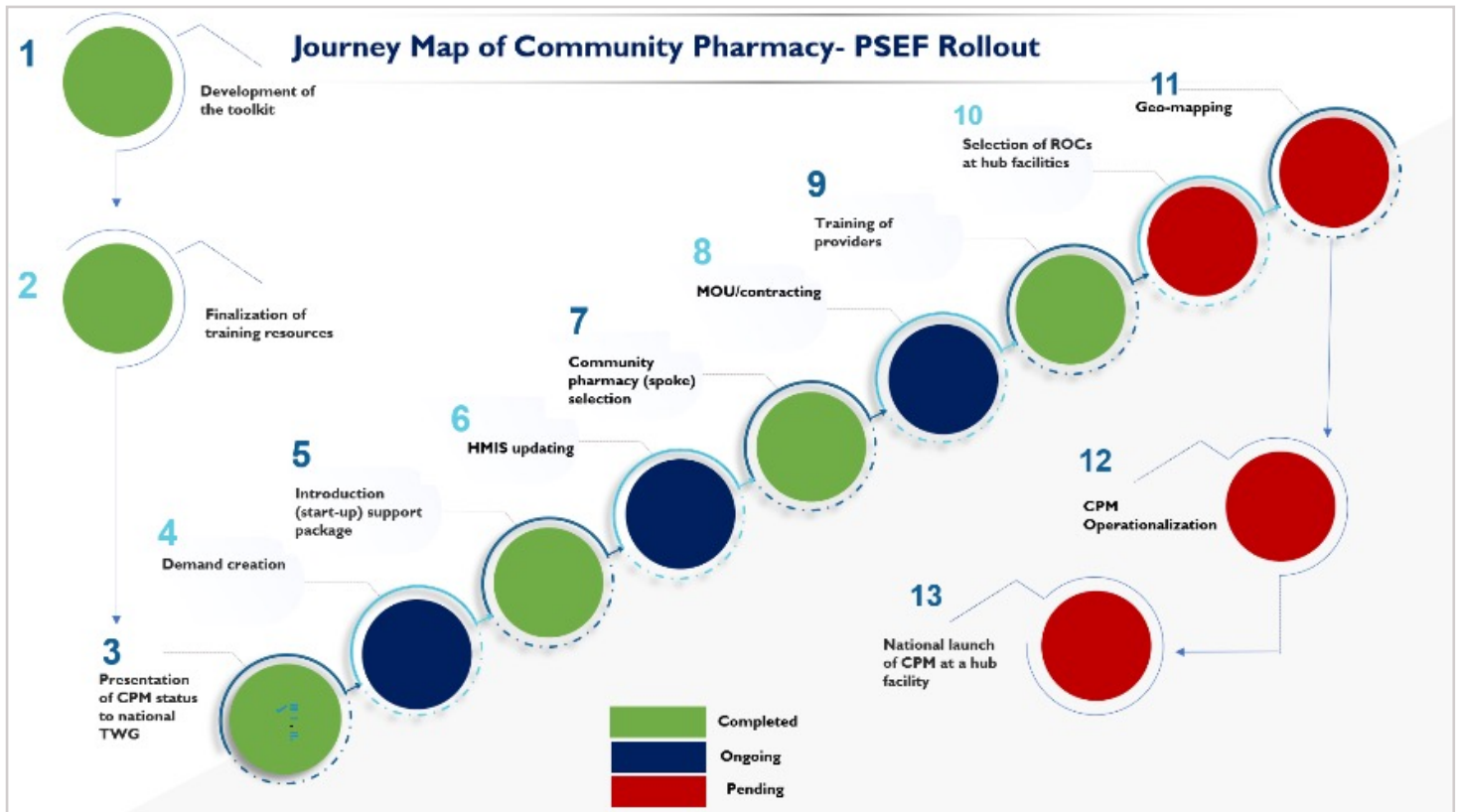
The Marsabit visit underscored the significant progress made under the DESIP programme while highlighting areas needing continued focus, such as commodity security, infrastructure development, and community engagement. The collaborative efforts of UKAID, PS Kenya, and local stakeholders demonstrated a shared commitment to fostering inclusive, culturally sensitive, and sustainable health interventions.

## Advancing HIV Care: Community Pharmacy Model Rollout Progress

The USAID Private Sector Engagement Program has continued to support NASCOP in the rollout of the Community Pharmacy Model (CPM) across Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru, and Kisumu counties. In Nairobi, the program has made substantial headway, where all selected community pharmacies have signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and the final ratification by the County Government's Chief Officer for Health is anticipated in December following legal team approval.

In Mombasa, Nakuru and Kisumu counties, the Program, in collaboration with county governments and HIV implementing partners, has facilitated

multiple engagements to support the MoU drafting process, which is currently under review by respective county legal offices. This initiative aims to leverage community pharmacies to provide antiretroviral (ARV) medication to recipients of care, thereby reducing congestion in the already overwhelmed public health sector. The Program continues to work closely with stakeholders to expedite the process and ensure the timely implementation of this innovative model to enhance access to HIV care services through community pharmacies.



## Mobilizing for Change in the Battle Against Gender-Based Violence



PS Kenya actively participated in the 2024 Launch of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (GBV), which kicked on November 25<sup>th</sup> 2024. This year's theme, "UNiTE! End Violence Against Women and Girls," underscores the urgent need to address GBV, a pervasive issue affecting many women in Kenya. According to the Kenya Demographic Health Survey (KDHS), over 40% of women have experienced physical or sexual violence from intimate partners at least once in their lives. Furthermore, The Nairobi Women's Hospital reports handling approximately 4,000 GBV cases monthly, with a significant number involving women.

During the 16 Days of Activism, PS Kenya launched an online campaign aimed at raising awareness about GBV and mobilizing community support. This campaign is part of their broader strategy to engage various stakeholders in advocating for women's rights and combating harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and early marriages.

PS Kenya's Accelerate Project, funded by the Embassy of Denmark, plays a crucial role in enhancing access to sexual and reproductive health services while supporting GBV survivors. This initiative aims to empower communities by providing comprehensive and integrated GBV response services across 13 underserved counties in Kenya. Notably, the

project has facilitated direct medical services for over 55,000 survivors and psychosocial support for more than 150,000 individuals through partnerships with organizations like the Gender Violence Recovery Centre (GVRC) and Population Services International. Despite ongoing efforts, the rise in femicide remains alarming.

Nairobi women's representative, Esther Passaris, highlighted the need for accountability within the justice system to deter potential offenders effectively. "It is quite unfortunate that we are still witnessing such violence against women, the justice system must ensure that perpetrators are held accountable," Passaris stated.

The Kenyan government has committed to implementing 12 key actions focused on advancing gender equality and eliminating GBV by 2026. These actions include increasing budget allocations for GBV survivors and enhancing service delivery systems.

The 16 Days of Activism serves as a vital reminder of our commitment to ending violence against women and girls. While these days are significant for raising awareness, true change requires sustained action throughout the year. Together, we can foster a future where every woman and girl lives free from fear and violence.

## PS Kenya Showcases Innovations in Health Solutions at the Lake Region Digital Health Conference



Population Services Kenya (PS Kenya) recently showcased its groundbreaking digital health interventions at the Lake Region Digital Health Conference, focusing on how digital campaigns and chatbot technology are advancing healthcare delivery across Kenya. Held in the Lake Region, Kisumu County, the conference brought together health professionals, tech experts, policymakers, and public and private sector stakeholders to explore the transformative potential of digital health solutions in reaching rural and underserved communities.

At the conference, PS Kenya's CEO, Dr. Margaret Njenga, highlighted the organizations success in using digital campaigns to promote preventive healthcare practices and educate communities on critical health topics. By harnessing social media and mobile platforms, PS Kenya reaches millions with tailored health messages on preventive remote & curative family planning, maternal and child health, gender-based violence and infectious disease control.

A key component of these campaigns is a focus on behavioral change, achieved through targeted content that resonates with various demographics. PS Kenya's campaigns are designed not only to inform but also to engage, encouraging individuals to adopt healthier behaviors through actionable insights and accessible health resources. These digital campaigns have proven to be particularly effective in reaching younger audiences, who actively engage with mobile and online content.

In addition to its digital campaigns, PS Kenya has integrated chatbots into its digital health strategy, positioning them as crucial tools for providing immediate, personalized health information. At the conference, PS Kenya demonstrated how chatbots are used to support a range

of health services with our most recent one being part of the 'Confirm Unajijua' campaign that encouraged the use of HIV self-testing kits. PS Kenya also has the USSD service developed under the Binti Shupavu project that allows users to access reproductive health content on their mobile phones by dialing \*406#. Young women and girls can navigate a menu that provides information on topics like menstrual health, family planning, and sexual health rights. This tool empowers them to make informed health decisions and understand available health resources, especially in rural regions where health information may be scarce.

As digital technology continues to reshape the healthcare landscape, PS Kenya remains dedicated to leveraging these tools to address health disparities, improve health literacy, and empower communities to take control of their health.

## Transforming Adolescent Health: Binti Shupavu Quality of Care

In October 2024, PS Kenya's Binti Shupavu program underwent an external Quality of Care Evaluation (QoCE) across four counties: Narok, Kilifi, Homabay, and Migori. The evaluation revealed remarkable achievements while charting a clear path for strengthening adolescent friendly sexual reproductive health services.

Binti Shupavu, in close collaboration with Ministry of Health (MoH) county teams, demonstrated a people-centered approach to service delivery. A key highlight of the evaluation was the Binti Shupavu sessions, which integrated contraceptive counseling with life skills, economic empowerment and adolescent sexual and reproductive health messaging. Evaluators observed the program's ability to allow meaningful connections with clients through small group and one-on-one engagements. These sessions empowered adolescent girls to make informed decisions about their reproductive health while addressing persistent barriers such as stigma, misinformation and societal pressures.

The program's impact was evident in its tangible outcomes. In one sub-county in Homabay County, the adolescent pregnancy rate dropped significantly from 33% to 22%, with no recorded maternal deaths for the year. The Sub-County SRH Coordinator emphasized the program's inclusivity, stating, "We expanded our services to include girls with disabilities, ensuring no one is left behind."

The evaluation highlighted critical strengths that contributed to these successes, including adherence to infection prevention and control standards, availability of clinical equipment and non-expired consumables and the dedication of youth champions who mobilized with the support of peers through a peer to peer led mobilization system dubbed Local adolescent forums.



Despite these achievements, the evaluation highlighted areas for improvement, particularly in contraceptive counseling. Key recommendations included addressing unconscious biases, enhancing provider-client interactions, training additional Trainers of Trainers (ToTs) for Client-Centered Counseling (C4C) and strengthening mentorship and supportive supervision. The integration of C4C components into Kenya's national family planning guidelines under the Balanced Counseling Strategy Plus (BCS+) framework was emphasized to promote informed choice, improve service delivery, and ensure sustained contraceptive use which we were able to integrate in within national family planning guidelines in November.

The success of this evaluation underscores the power of strategic partnerships, innovative approaches, and commitment to adolescent and youth empowerment. PS Kenya remains dedicated to transforming adolescent health outcomes, ensuring every young person has access to high-quality, respectful and inclusive care, paving the way for a healthier generation across the Counties.

## Spreading Cheer on The Festive Season

In this year's festive season, PS Kenya had the honor of spreading cheer to some of the most vulnerable members of our community—the children at New Life Home Trust (NLHT). This initiative aims to bring joy and support to the vulnerable children at NLHT, while also fostering community engagement and awareness about the needs of these children. Each year, countless children in Kenya face abandonment and neglect, with statistics revealing that over 3,000 babies are left without care annually. Many of these children find their way to NLHT, where they receive love, support, and a chance for a brighter future.

Founded in 1994 by a compassionate family from the UK, NLHT has grown into a vital support system for abandoned and vulnerable babies in Kenya. The organization operates four homes across the country, located in Nairobi, Kisumu, Nakuru, and Nyeri, where it has provided care for over 2,550 children since its inception. Approximately 85% of these children have been successfully placed into loving homes through adoption or reintegration with biological families. It is currently housing approximately 138 children, including a special needs unit. The Nairobi branch, which we visited, had a capacity of 51 children and was staffed by 60 dedicated professionals, including doctors and nurses, who provided medical care as part of their registered clinic services.

We began our visit with a comprehensive walk-through of the facility, learning about its history and operations. We were deeply moved by the environment created for children, particularly in the newborn unit. Officially designed to accommodate eight infants, we were struck to find 11 tiny lives nestled in cribs, each one a symbol of hope amidst a pressing need for care. As we toured the facility, we were impressed by how clean and orderly everything was, reflecting the dedication and hard work of the staff. Their commitment to maintaining a conducive environment was evident in every corner, from the well-organized nursing stations—segmented by age groups. (0-4 months, weaning babies, crawlers, and toddlers), all following a structured schedule for rest, meals and playtime.

They also have the 'Isolation' Room where new children receive medical checkups and care. Play Area/Dayroom which is a space for children to engage in playtime activities. The staff's unwavering dedication ensured that each child received not only medical attention but also love and nurturing, creating a home-like atmosphere that fostered growth and happiness.

Interacting with the children was an absolute delight. We had the opportunity to cuddle and feed them, which brought immense joy to both us and the kids. Their laughter and smiles filled the room with warmth, making it clear that despite their challenging beginnings, these children were surrounded by love and care. A cake-cutting ceremony further celebrated our visit, embodying the spirit of giving during this festive season.

Our experience at NLHT was not just about providing support, it was a powerful reminder of the impact we can have when we come together as a community. The stories of these children and the incredible work being done by the staff inspired us to continue advocating for their needs and to foster partnerships that can enhance their lives even further.



## Photo Gallery



The launch of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence in Makeni County.



UK Government donates Reproductive Health Commodity to KEMSA at the Supply Chain Centre in Nairobi.



Accelerate consortium partners year five work plan engagement.



The PS Kenya Board of Directors and senior management end of year meeting.



Development of family planning 'NEST' magazine workshop by NCPD.



Courtesy visit by USAID PSE Program to MoH Health Principal Secretary, State Department for Public Health and Professional Standards, Mary Muthoni.



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### For More Information

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