



# *Hatua Yetu*

Quarter 1: January-March 2024



# DESIP PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT PARTNER VISIT IN HOMABAY COUNTY

On February 14, 2024, the Office of the Governor of Homabay County, Hon. Gladys Wanga, received Population Services Kenya's CEO, Dr. Margaret Njenga, the British High Commissioner, Neil Wigan, and the Deputy Development Director, Foreign Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO), Eduarda Mendonca.

The visit was aimed at laying bare the palpable impact witnessed through the six-year UKAID-funded Delivering Sustainable and Equitable Increases in Family Planning (DESIP) programme, whose central focus is to increase access to and use of modern contraceptives across Kenya while increasing equity and sustainability, with a particular focus on people living with disabilities, and poor rural women.

The afternoon was marked with a hive of activities ranging from an auspicious reception of the High Commissioner, a press conference between the Governor and the High Commissioner, and later a tour around the Homabay County Referral Hospital, where the High Commissioner and CEO interacted with persons leaving with disabilities in the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) wing.

Speaking during the presser, the Governor, Gladys Wanga, lauded the strategic partnership between Population Services Kenya and the County Government of Homabay, acknowledging the pivotal role and positioning of Population Services Kenya in transformative interventions in reproductive health.

The Governor reaffirmed the county's unwavering commitment to fostering an enabling environment for partnerships to thrive, thereby ensuring continued progress in healthcare delivery and access for all residents.

The synergy between Population Services Kenya and UKAID under the DESIP programme, which spans over six years, has yielded commendable progress in maternal health indicators, reflecting a resounding testament to the efficacy of partnership-driven approaches in effecting transformative change.

Noteworthy achievements include an impressive 8% surge in modern contraceptive usage, a commendable 10% reduction in teenage pregnancy rates, and a substantial drop in the total fertility rate from 5.2 to 3.3, as recorded by the latest Kenya Demographic Health Survey (KDHS) data.

Dr. Margaret Njenga, Population Services Kenya CEO, a staunch champion of meaningful and change-driven partnerships, emphasised the role of strategic partnerships in effecting

and sustainable change in healthcare delivery. Reiterating Population Services Kenya's unwavering resolve to advance healthcare outcomes, particularly in underserved and vulnerable communities.

The visit to the Homabay County Referral Hospital served as an important reminder of the profound impact achievable through collaborative action and strategic alliances. As Population Services Kenya and UKAID strengthen their joint resolve to address prevailing challenges in reproductive health, it remains a blueprint for all parties to forge towards better health and wellbeing.

*"We have put a lot of focus on health because Homa Bay is among the counties with the highest levels of teenage pregnancy and maternal mortality. We are pleased with Population Services Kenya for its efforts in handling reproductive health in Homabay County." Hon. Gladys Wanga.*



*British High Commissioner Neil Wigan visit to the DESIP Programme in Homabay County.*

# HPV VACCINATION DRIVE IN NAKURU COUNTY

Cervical cancer stands as a formidable adversary to women's health worldwide, claiming hundreds of thousands of lives each year. It ranks as the second most frequent cancer among women in Kenya, with the majority falling between 15 and 44 years of age. According to the Information Center on Cancer, every year, 5,236 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer, and 3,211 die from the disease. While strides in medical science have significantly improved prevention and treatment, the underlying culprit behind the majority of cervical cancer cases often remains undetectable until it's too late: the Human Papillomavirus (HPV).

Population Services Kenya, through its Vaccination Action Network (VAN) project, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and implemented in Nakuru County's Njoro and Rongai sub-counties, carried out an integrated vaccination activity on February 5, 2024, in Tuyoitich Primary School, Rongai sub-county. The activity, carried out in collaboration with the Sub-County Health Management Team (SCHMT), reached a total of 550 students, with 200 being male and 350 being female.

The project, through the SCHMT, conducted an extensive awareness campaign to educate the students about the importance of vaccination. This included disseminating information on vaccine-preventable diseases, the benefits of vaccination, and addressing common myths and misconceptions. In addition to administering the HPV vaccine, the SCHMT embarked on COVID-19 vaccination efforts, providing the first dose of the Pfizer vaccine to 20 males and 26 females, followed by the second dose to 20 males and 46 females.



*Girls vaccinated against HPV in Tuyoitich primary school.*

Beyond vaccination, the team conducted an awareness campaign on cholera, focusing on educating students about crucial hygiene practices. They emphasized the significance of proper handwashing techniques, the importance of consuming clean water, and uncontaminated food.

Through such efforts, PS Kenya is paving the way for a healthier future, where the emphasis on prevention empowers communities to take charge of their health and wellbeing, potentially yielding long-term benefits, particularly to those in remote or hard-to-reach areas.

In a concerted effort to improve health outcomes among adolescent girls, the SCHMT prioritized the vaccination of girls aged 10 and above. This targeted intervention not only aimed to protect the young girls from HPV-related diseases but also marked a proactive approach towards preventing cervical cancer. By administering the HPV vaccine to this vulnerable demographic, the project endeavors to empower young girls with the tools to lead healthier lives and contribute to the long-term reduction of cervical cancer incidence in the community.

Remote or hard-to-reach areas like Tuyoitich Village, often characterized by geographical isolation, sparse population density, and underdeveloped infrastructure, face significant barriers to healthcare access. Limited availability of healthcare facilities, coupled with transportation challenges, heightens the difficulties in accessing preventive services such as HPV vaccination. As a result, individuals in remote communities like Tuyoitich experience disparities in healthcare access, leading to increased morbidity and mortality rates from preventable conditions like cervical cancer, which could be mitigated through timely interventions such as HPV vaccination campaigns.



*Nurse from Rongai subcounty administering HPV vaccine.*

# USAID PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT PUBLIC-PRIVATE COLLABORATION

Collaboration between the public and private sectors is key in addressing the pressing healthcare needs faced by Kenya. By harnessing the collective strengths and resources of both sectors, we can effectively distribute the burden of healthcare provision and ensure better outcomes for the population.

Population Services Kenya's USAID PSE program, riding on the wings of public-private collaboration, is committed to strengthening the local manufacturing sector while simultaneously enhancing healthcare accessibility.

Recently, the USAID PSE team embarked on a tour of the Nyanza region, engaging with key stakeholders from both governmental and private entities. This proactive approach not only fosters partnerships but also identifies opportunities for collaboration and innovation.

During a meeting with the County government of Kisumu department of Health, the USAID PSE program joined hands with the county government by signing a scope of work that will define the operations of the program in the county. An agreement that outlines the commitment to improving health outcomes in the region.



USAID Private Sector Engagement team signing a scope of work with the County government of Kisumu.

Dr. Gregory Ganda, Kisumu County CEC Department of Medical Services, Public Health and Sanitation articulated the significance of this collaborative effort, affirming,

"This partnership marks a key moment in our collective commitment to ensuring everyone receives quality healthcare. Together, we can achieve far more than we ever could alone."

Racheal Gikanda, Deputy Chief of Party, in her submissions, remained forthright that USAID PSE program has the capacity to strengthen the existing healthcare systems as well as unearth local manufacturing.

In a subsequent engagement with the county government of Uasin Gishu, the USAID PSE team signed a memorandum of understanding with the department of Health. Dr. Abraham Serem, the CEC department of health, hailed the collaborative approach to healthcare, sighting the critical need of the hour could only be met successfully through a consolidated approach.

"By bringing together expertise from both sectors, the we will be able to leverage resources and create innovative solutions to improve service delivery and drive growth." Said Dr. Serem

The agreements between the counties and USAID PSE program extend beyond paperwork and they pave the way for palpable actions and initiatives aimed at improving healthcare systems.



USAID Private Sector Engagement team during MoU signing with the County government of Uasin Gishu.

# THE IMPACT OF BINTI SHUPAVU PROJECT IN KILIFI COUNTY

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of March 2024, Tsangatsini area, Kaloleni Sub-county, Kilifi County was turned into a pink color fest as the A360 project dubbed 'Binti Shupavu', held its graduation ceremony. Against the backdrop of their proud families, project development partners, and dedicated implementing staff, 20 girls proudly graduated from the transformative project, marking a significant milestone in their journey of empowerment. PS Kenya's Binti Shupavu project, funded by the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF), and implemented in the counties of Kilifi, Narok, Homabay and Migori, is a comprehensive approach to addressing adolescents' sexual and reproductive health issues that considers the individual and societal factors that impact health outcomes.

The girls aged 15 to 19 years, are taken through comprehensive eight session programs that are designed to empower them by enhancing their life, business, and vocational skills. The curriculum encompasses crucial topics such as decision-making and communication, financial literacy including budgeting and savings, and targeted vocational training.

For most of these girls, Binti Shupavu provides them with an opportunity to not only change their lives but also break generational curses. By imparting crucial lessons on the significance of family planning, the project empowers these young women to make informed decisions about their reproductive health, thereby steering clear of the perilous path of teenage motherhood. While the 2022 Kenya Demographic Health Survey (KDHS) showed an improvement in the rates of teenage pregnancy in the country, the shadow of poverty and limited education still looms large, contributing to higher rates of adolescent pregnancy. According to KDHS, about 4 in 10 women aged 15–19 with no education have experienced pregnancy, a stark contrast to the mere 5% among those who pursued education beyond secondary level.

Since its inception in 2022, the Binti Shupavu project has made significant strides, reaching almost 100,000 new users of contraception and providing valuable skills classes to 2500 girls through the project. Binti Shupavu strategically involves and educates influential figures within the community, as well as those in close proximity to the adolescent girls. This collaborative approach aims to tackle misinformation effectively and ensure proper support for the decisions the young girls make concerning their bodies and future aspirations.

Through comprehensive education and support, Binti Shupavu equips these girls with the confidence and resources necessary to shape their own destinies, ensuring they have the agency to pursue their dreams without the burden of unplanned pregnancies weighing them down. In doing so, the project not only transforms individual lives but also nurtures the emergence of empowered, self-reliant communities poised for a brighter, more prosperous future.



*Binti Shupavu, CIFF development partner visit in Kilifi County.*

# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



*Dr. Margaret Njenga, during the IWD panel discussion held on March 8<sup>th</sup> 2024.*

Population Services Kenya (PS Kenya) joined the rest of the world in marking International Women's Day, held on March 8, 2024, under the theme "Invest in women: Accelerate Progress." In collaboration with a local leading media house, the women-led NGO took part in an event that brought together various organisations from the private and public sectors with a keen interest in championing for female empowerment and ensuring that women's and girls' rights are upheld in all areas of their lives.

The event theme highlighted the crucial role economic participation plays in achieving a more equitable world for all. It underscored key points, inter alia, that economic empowerment was fundamental to women's overall health and wellbeing and independence. Notable industry leaders and women in leadership were present, including the Chairperson of the Council of Governors, H.E. Anne Waiguru, who presented the keynote address. Also contributing to the overall success of the event, PS Kenya's CEO, Dr. Njenga Njenga, participated in a power panel moderated by media icon Janet Mbugua under the theme "Promoting and Advocating for Gender Equality: Challenging Gender Stereotypes and Mentoring Women and Girls." The discussions revolved around the nexus between women's health (reproductive health, mental health, and access to healthcare) and economic empowerment.

Dr. Njenga highlighted the plight of many adolescent girls in Kenya under the emerging triple threat of sexual gender-based violence, HIV infection, and teenage pregnancy, which currently holds a national prevalence of 15%. She also echoed the major concerns with teenage pregnancy, which often spell out the end of schooling for adolescent girls, the beginning of motherhood in childhood, and an uncertain future for the underage mother and her child for those who survive the health risks associated with teenage pregnancies.

According to the 2022 Kenya Demographic Health Survey (KDHS), teenage pregnancy rates declined to 15% in 2022 from 18% in 2014. Poverty and lack of education were associated with higher rates of adolescent pregnancy, as about 4 in 10 women aged 15–19 who have no education have ever been pregnant, as compared to only 5% of women who have gone beyond secondary education. PS Kenya addresses such issues through its various reproductive health projects, such as Binti Shupavu, which is implemented in four counties with the highest prevalence of teenage pregnancies, namely Narok, Kilifi, Homabay, and Migori. The project takes the adolescent girls through a comprehensive curriculum that focuses on various business and vocational skills while empowering them with information on family planning.

Dr. Njenga concluded with a call to action for collaboration among all key stakeholders, including development partners, governmental and non-governmental actors, and the public and private sectors. She also insisted on increased domestic investment in adolescent reproductive health in order to bolster donor funding and foster self-reliance in the wake of dwindling donor support. Further, school re-entry strategies for teenage mothers as well as campaigns to end stigma associated with teenage pregnancy were part of her submissions in her final remarks.

PS Kenya got a chance to showcase its various interventions in the world of reproductive health, including its DESIP and Accelerate projects, with the former being in 12 counties and working towards contributing to reduced maternal mortality, newborn and child mortality, and an increased modern contraceptive prevalence rate, and the latter focusing on achieving the three ICPD25 promises of zero maternal deaths, zero unmet need for contraception, and zero gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices in 13 counties. PS Kenya will continue to push barriers in order to ensure that women and girls, particularly the young, rural, and marginalised, have the opportunity to accelerate progress and contribute to the overall advancement of communities and nations.

*"When women are educated, they stay longer in school, they are economically empowered to generate income for their own households, and they make better decisions. In PS Kenya, that is some of the work that we do, particularly in rural and marginalised counties," stated Dr. Njenga.*

# QUARTER ONE IN PICTURES



Staff annual planning meeting held in January 2024



DESIP Programme booth during the KASH conference in Nairobi



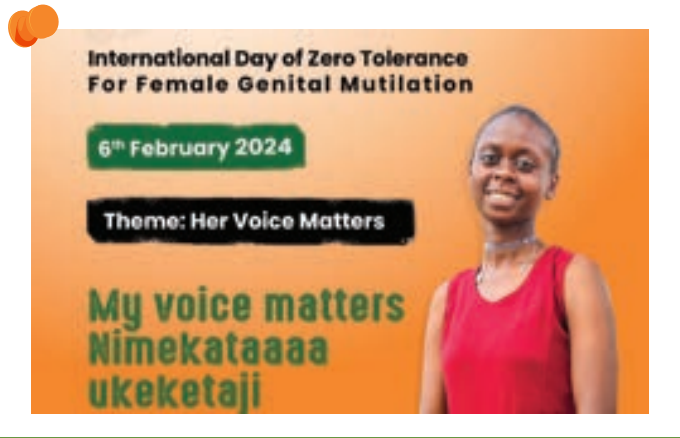
Accelerate team during IWD at the UoN grounds



PS Kenya participates in HOBIIIC conference in Homabay



Commercial department marks the world Condom day



Accelerate project marks the International day for Zero Tolerance for FGM



PS Kenya attends the launch of NCPD five year strategic plan in Nairobi



The launch of the new 500ml Waterguard on the 22nd March 2024



USAID PSE in conjunction with the MoH explore the UHC Act