

AFYA UZAZI: IMPROVING HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT IN NAKURU COUNTY

Communities in Nakuru County experience related health and social challenges, such as teenage pregnancy, high maternal mortality rates, harmful practices and social norms, and weak infrastructure for the uptake and provision of family planning and reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health (FP/RMNCAH) services. These issues affect their daily lives. At the same time, a changing environment and degrading natural resources, including the Mau Forest, make meeting household and livelihood needs difficult and worsen threats from natural disasters. A multisectoral response can address these challenges.

Integrated Challenges, Integrated Solutions

Afya Uzazi (“healthy parenthood” in Kiswahili) is a five-year project funded by the United States Agency for International Development and implemented by a consortium of partners. It aims to improve access to FP/RMNCAH services and address the underlying connections to natural resources, livelihoods, and household well-being.

Among its activities, the project applies a well-known community development approach called Population, Health, and Environment (PHE), which uses integrated activities to cut across different but related sectors, such as reproductive health, primary health, and natural resources management, to reinforce the interconnected nature of the difficulties communities face.



Reaching Rural and Indigenous Communities

The PHE approach improves access to sexual and reproductive health services in hard-to-reach communities, engages men in conversations around FP/RMNCAH, promotes women and girls' participation in natural resource management and environmental conservation, and enhances young people's meaningful participation in shaping their health outcomes.

Importantly, Afya Uzazi's PHE activities will reach a local indigenous community that has historically faced problems related to land access and use. The project seeks to increase the community's knowledge of FP/RMNCAH and the links between their access to health services and environmental challenges, as well as promote forest conservation activities.

Three Components to Implementation

To achieve its goals, the Afya Uzazi PHE strategy includes three critical components:

- 1. Community champions:** Volunteers trained to help establish, facilitate, and encourage the adoption of improved social norms around FP/RMNCAH focus on a series of seven to 10 small, doable actions that cut across PHE sectors and can improve health outcomes.
- 2. PHE Minimum Package:** Afya Uzazi uses this tool created by global stakeholders to guide the development of PHE project activities, establish accountability, and monitor and measure PHE indicators.
- 3. Sustained policy advocacy:** Afya Uzazi and the Policy, Advocacy, and Communication Enhanced for Population and Reproductive Health (PACE) Project, are preparing stakeholders to communicate and advocate for long-term subnational policies that support integrated, multisectoral approaches to FP/RMNCAH, the environment, and other sectors.

AFYA UZAZI IN ACTION



Afya Uzazi reaches school children in project communities.

Model households adopt sound environmental and health practices, such as tree planting, modern FP, immunization, using energy-saving stoves, and sending girls to school. An **integrated school health program** reinforces these practices with PHE messages for youth. Afya Uzazi integrates adolescent sexual and reproductive health; water, sanitation, and hygiene; livelihoods; and other issues to prioritize adolescent learning and engagement.



Community-based organizations support sustainable livelihood activities.

Community forest associations integrate FP and reproductive health service delivery with environment activities such as ecotourism, water harvesting initiatives, tree nurseries, and sustainable income-generating activities. These activities ensure that communities near forests can access FP commodities through health volunteers and PHE promoters.



A Nakuru County PHE stakeholder speaks during a PHE technical working group meeting.

Community-based technical working groups and intervention advisory teams coordinate and monitor Afya Uzazi's PHE activities. These teams enable a research and learning agenda that supports using data in decisionmaking and capturing lessons learned to inform future interventions.



A young champion speaks during a policy communication training.

An Afya Uzazi PHE community of practice and network of champions includes multisectoral stakeholders from community-based organizations with training on PHE. These organizations represent youth, women, religious groups, and sectors such as health and environment. The champions engage in advocacy for increased PHE scale-up and accountability for healthy and sustainable practices.