

Newsletter

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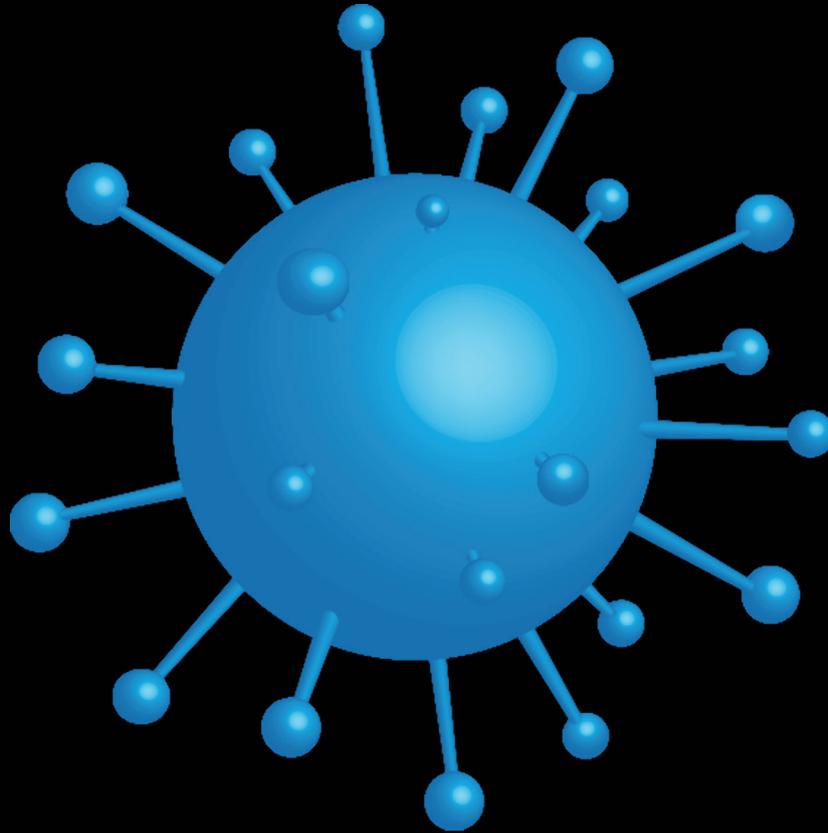
Since April 2022, UTJ Project is collaborating with other partners to support the uptake of COVID-19 vaccination of the eligible population to improve community coverage.

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Strengthening COVID-19 Vaccination



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Abbreviations

ART	Antiretroviral Therapy
CASCO	County AIDS and STI Coordinator
CECM	County Executive Committee Member
CHMT	County Health Management Team
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CXCA	Cervical Cancer
HTS	HIV Testing Services
HVF	High-volume Facility
ICF	Intensified TB Case Finding
IIT	Interruption in Treatment
JMW	Jua Mtoto Wako
JWP	Joint Work Plans
KHIS	Kenya Health Information System
ODF	Open Defecation Free
OTZ	Operation Triple Zero
PEP	Post-exposure prophylaxis
PLHIV	People living with HIV
PMTCT	Prevention of mother to child transmission
PrEP	Pre-exposure Prophylaxis
PSSG	Psychosocial Support Groups
RMNCAH	Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health
SCHMT	Sub-County Health Management Team
UTJ	USAID Tujenge Jamii
VL	Viral Load
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WLHIV	Women Living with HIV



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Deloitte.



UTJ Staff handing over sanitary towels donated by Deloitte CEO, Anne Muraya, to support adolescent girls in Marigat, Baringo County. Courtesy Photo.

Foreword

“UTJ together with the county departments of health continues to invest in strengthening HIV Services across the 95:95:95 cascade targeting all populations and age groups in Nakuru, Baringo, Laikipia, and Samburu.”



Dr. Moses Kitheka
Chief of Party
USAID Tujenge Jamii

Welcome to the fourth edition of the USAID Tujenge Jamii (UTJ) project newsletter. In this edition, we are pleased to share our collaboration across different program areas, including supporting the uptake of COVID-19 vaccination to vulnerable and hard to reach communities.

UTJ together with the county departments of health continues to invest in strengthening HIV Services across the 95:95:95 cascade targeting all populations and age groups in Nakuru, Baringo, Laikipia, and Samburu. We work in HIV prevention, care, and treatment services using a data driven approach, with fidelity in implementation that is key to our common goal of ending HIV as a public health threat by the year 2030. In Nakuru, we continue to use a systems-based approach working with the county to improve access to RMNCAH, WASH and Nutrition services at the facility and community to truly make an impact that matters to our beneficiaries.

In this quarter we have particularly expanded our COVID -19 vaccination efforts across all 4 counties, targeting people living with HIV (PLWHIV) and the general population.

The project has invested in tracing back vaccine recipients who have not completed the vaccination schedule to be fully immunized, and working on efforts to enhance booster dose update. The vaccine scale up is administered through mobile vaccination units (MVUs) that reach eligible people outside health care settings in marketplaces, places of worship, schools, colleges, and at the household level.

I commend our gallant UTJ team members who work every single day together with our county colleagues to make this dream viable. Your invaluable hard work and commitment to our vision and purpose is what makes UTJ a winning team. I am sure we will continue to keep the torch burning to continue serving our beneficiaries.

I invite you to read on and hope you will enjoy the newsletter as much as we have cherished every minute serving our communities.

“As a purpose-driven firm, we are deliberate in the choices we make, the culture we foster, the solutions we create, the initiatives we support, as well as the partnerships we nurture.”



Bernadette Wahogo
Partner
Deloitte

The UTJ project is a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded five-year project being implemented with a consortium of partners led by Deloitte. This newsletter provides key highlights of our technical support and collaborative activities conducted in Nakuru, Baringo, Laikipia, and Samburu counties.

As a purpose-driven firm, we are deliberate in the choices we make, the culture we foster, the solutions we create, the initiatives we support, as well as the partnerships we nurture. We strive to deepen our impact through strategic partnerships with UTJ and the county departments of health in making a positive contribution to communities.

The core vision is to create a county-owned, county-led, and county-managed integrated platform for delivery of HIV, Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH), Water

Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Nutrition services.

The healthcare systems in our counties are taxed, resulting in health implications not only for patients with COVID-19 but also for other people who require healthcare services. Our project is working with the national and county health departments to strengthen the health systems to better respond to current needs.

Since April 2022, UTJ Project is collaborating with other partners to support the uptake of COVID-19 vaccination of the eligible population to improve community coverage.

The project is supporting in activities that are aimed at strengthening COVID-19 vaccination to minimize the impact on overall performance of the project and HIV response and reduce COVID-19 related morbidity and mortality especially among HIV recipients of care.

Our collaboration with the

county health departments provides a tangible example of how we stepped up to make an impact that matters at a time when the rural communities and especially people living with HIV (PLHIV) were most vulnerable.

We are very proud to work through UTJ, making a direct, tangible impact on the health and well-being of citizens in Kenya.

Key Numbers

34,579

Clients tested for HIV (HTS_
TST)

890

Clients tested HIV positive
(HTS_TST_POS)

2.6%

Positivity rate

916

Newly initiated on
antiretroviral therapy (ART)
(TX_NEW)

103%

ART linkage rate

58,162

Clients currently on ART (TX_CURR)

94%

Viral load suppression (TX_PVLS)

933

TB patients diagnosed with TB and put on treatment

10,328

Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) clients with known HIV status (PMTCT_STAT)

406

(100%)
PMTCT clients initiated on ART

1.8%

EID positivity (PMTCT_EID_POS)

*Numbers for July 1 - September 30 2022 period

Project Coordination

The project works closely with the County Department of Health in Baringo, Laikipia, Nakuru, and Samburu led by the County Directors of Health and the County HIV and STI Coordinators (CASCO) representing the County Health Management Team (CHMT) for executing strategies to reach the communities.

The county, sub-county and site level mentorship teams led by a senior technical officer are co-located with the Sub-County Health Management Team (SCHMT) to provide day to day site level support and mentorship working closely with the mentors.

At the county level, the CASCO, Reproductive Health Coordinator and the County Health Records and Information Officers (CHRIO) support the mentorship teams, working closely with the Senior Technical Officers across the main program areas. The Deputy Chief of Party provides overall technical guidance and direction including leadership and coordination of the mentorship teams

The M&E and data management teams works with the CHMTs to report and assure quality data for timely program interventions and decision making. The teams participate in granular data driven review and planning meetings including the daily situation review meetings to review and monitor progress/ results to inform implementation strategic shifts and targeted technical support.

The county and sub-county public health departments have been brought on board to support the COVID-19 program repair activities and promoting the vaccine.

The project implementation approach is anchored on county leadership and health system strengthening (HSS). The leadership engagement activities included co-creating and co-implementing a joint workplan contextualized to the unique needs of each of the four counties. The project has set aside resources to support county leadership and coordination, with specific allocation to the county health management teams to provide strategic direction and oversight for health services in the counties.

The health system strengthening activities included sustaining current human resource investment, supporting initiatives to increase county health financing allocation, technical and financial support to improve annual work planning, and resource mobilization.

Through the health system strengthening approach, UTJ works with the county leadership to increase private sector engagement focusing on wrap-around activities outside the health sector that complemented health service delivery such as engagement of flower farm management to improve access to health services including HIV care by their workers.



Samburu CASCO, Bosco Lemarkat (Left) leads a three-day annual joint work planning and co-creation meeting with the County Health Management Team (CHMT) members from Baringo, Nakuru, Laikipia, and Samburu counties. The team produced a joint work plan for the Departments of Health from which partners will build activities to ensure a harmonized approach towards strengthening and increasing access and demand for quality health services. Photo by Teddy Cheney Alenga/UTJ

COVID-19 VACCINATION COVERAGE IMPROVEMENT

Kenya reported the first positive COVID-19 case on 13 March 2020, and ever since, the pandemic has adversely affected health services, including HIV services. At the sub-national level, the county departments of health are working with the national Ministry of Health (MOH) and have shifted significant attention to slow down the pandemic.

In the wake of COVID-19 there is increased pressure on the health system to enhance service provision, improve response, and case management while still providing routine services. UTJ is working with the national and county health departments to strengthen the health system to better respond to current needs while preparing for increased COVID-19 cases from continued spread and upsurge.

Vaccination against COVID-19 is the surest way to mitigate the negative effects if one gets infected. Since April, UTJ has supported vaccination of the eligible people where only 2.7% were

fully vaccinated. The project is making efforts to scale up COVID-19 vaccination uptake to improve community coverage to achieve herd immunity. UTJ has scaled up the COVID-19 vaccination campaign through a whole-government whole-society approach leveraging on national government agencies, county governments, Faith Based Organizations, and the private sector.

There is also need for continued prevention measures to complement the vaccination efforts to protect the gains in health programs including the HIV and family health programs.

The project has used resources to trace back vaccine recipients who have not completed the schedule according to national guidelines based on the type of vaccine given as the first dose. The vaccine scale up is administered through MVUs that reach eligible people outside health care settings such as marketplaces, places of worship, schools and colleges, and at home for those who are immobile.

The MVUs are facilitated to move from place to place to increase access, document those being vaccinated, and track any adverse events following immunization (AEFI).

In line with UTJ’s core vision to create a county-owned, county-led, and county-managed integrated platform for delivery of health and social services, the project has supported activities in creating enhanced COVID-19 vaccine awareness and access. The support is aimed at making a tangible impact at community level through increased vaccine uptake and completion of the vaccination schedule.

The activities are aimed at strengthening COVID-19 vaccination to minimize the impact on overall performance of the project and HIV response and reduce COVID-19 related morbidity and mortality especially among HIV recipients of care.



The project worked with partners and the Ministry of Health National Vaccines Program and Health Promotion to conduct COVID-19 vaccination demand creation during the Mimi Mkenya townhall meetings in Nakuru County. Photos by Teddy Chenya Alenga/UTJ

County	Tx_Curr 12+	Screened for covid-19	% Screened for covid-19	Fully vaccinated	% Fully vaccinated	Partially vaccinated	Total vaccinated for COVID-19	% Total vaccinated for COVID-19	Unknown vaccination status
Nakuru	39907	20736	52%	13256	33%	1479	14735	37%	25172
Baringo	4996		44%	1106	22%	56	1162	23%	3834
Laikipia	8926	5085	57%	3335	37%	285	3620	41%	5306
Samburu	1600	374	23%	190	12%	8	198	12%	1402
Grand total	55429	28403	51%	17887	32%	1828	19715	36%	35714

The table above shows the vaccination coverage among PLHIV

ACHIEVING HIV EPIDEMIC IN THE COVID-19 ERA

UTJ project was pleased to be part of the Kenyan National AIDS and STI's Control Programme's (NASCO) 1st Annual South Rift Valley Regional Technical Working Group Conference on HIV Prevention, Care and Treatment where partners highlighted best practices on "Achieving HIV Epidemic Control through the implementation of proven innovations in the COVID-19 era."

The participants held discussions on the best practices from the eight South Rift Valley counties to help improve the quality of service provision for PLHIV and especially children and adolescent living with HIV (CALHIV) who have been shown to have worse outcomes during their care.

The project pledged continued support for activities in Baringo, Laikipia, Nakuru, and Samburu experiences in the field of HIV management in line with the conference theme. The abstracts presented alongside the cases was a culmination of the great undertakings that will not only contribute to the fountain of practical knowledge but also mark the milestones achieved in the breakthrough of longitudinal cascade in HIV prevention and control.

"I urge the counties to also look for ways to finance and sustain HIV programming and have a reliable supply of commodities," said the UTJ Chief of Party, Dr. Kitheka during the opening ceremony for the three-day conference in Kabarnet, Baringo County.

As of 2021, approximately 1.4 million Kenyans are HIV infected with 1.2 million people currently on antiretroviral therapy. Kenya has made tremendous progress in slowing down the spread of HIV/AIDS in recent years while improving the health and lives of persons on the lifelong ART treatment and care.

The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic disrupted critical health services and undermining years of progress fighting diseases such as HIV and tuberculosis. Access to health care services declined significantly due to challenges facing both medical facilities and the patient community. For patients, the fear of contracting COVID-19 from their visit was the greatest concern for not seeking medical care. This was compounded with inability to reach health care facilities due to disruptions in public transportation and stay-at-home orders.

For medical facilities, the focus on COVID-19 reduced access to standard health care services while others were overwhelmed with treating COVID-19 patients presenting acute symptoms of respiratory infection.

In the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak the World Health Organization (WHO) recommended that governments implement adaptive measures to reduce the volume of visits to clinics and improve health services delivery. Such actions included provision of long-term drug prescriptions to ensure uninterrupted access to medication and incorporating TB screening in digital health screenings for COVID-19.

According to the Baringo CASCO, Dr. Abraham Sumukwo, the disruption to critical health care services poses a serious threat to undiagnosed individuals, their local communities, and global health.

"The abstracts presented, the discussions and sharing of knowledge and experiences will go a long way in strengthening health care delivery and realization in the implementation of Kenya AIDS Strategic Framework and the County AIDS Implementation Plans," said Dr. Abraham in his address to the participants.



Delegates pose during the 1st Annual South Rift Valley Regional Technical Working Group Conference on HIV Prevention, Care and Treatment where partners highlighted best practices in Kabarnet, Baringo County. Photo by Teddy Chenya Alenga/UTJ

STEP UP FOR BREASTFEEDING: EDUCATE AND SUPPORT

Each year, from 1-7 August, countries, organizations, and nutrition champions celebrate World Breastfeeding Week all over the world. In 2022, under its theme 'Step up for Breastfeeding - Educate and Support', UTJ project provided technical assistance and supported the Nakuru County Department of Health to raise awareness around the importance of breastfeeding as a fundament of good nutrition, food security, and reduction of inequalities.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it was challenging to protect, promote and support breastfeeding. UTJ joined the Nakuru County Department of Health and other organizations during the launch of the World Breastfeeding Week to advocate for breastfeeding among other nutrition interventions that give children a healthy start to life.

During the breastfeeding week, the county health management team were supported to conduct market storming sessions on breastfeeding demonstration within the Maternal, Child Health and Maternity wards across the 11 sub-counties. The events provided an opportunity to emphasize the health benefits of breastfeeding, and the positive role in preventing disease and improving child nutrition.

The sessions helped reinforce this year's theme and create awareness on the importance of breastfeeding and improved exclusive and continued breastfeeding practices. The team conducted continuous medical education and health talks at the health facilities and within the communities reaching approximately 500,00 people,, with increased participation of men and other community members.

In the last year, a total of 62,732 children 0-23 months were reached with community level nutrition interventions. Breastmilk is the supreme source of children's nutrients and optimal growth and development in the early stages of life. It is everyone's responsibility to protect, support, and promote lactation in the early stages of life.



The county public health team was supported to conduct continuous medical education and health talks on breastfeeding at the health facilities and within the communities reaching approximately 500,00 people. Photo by Teddy Chenya Alenga/UTJ

HIV EXPOSED INFANTS GRADUATE AFTER TWO-YEAR PREVENTION PROGRAM

UTJ supported the Nakuru County Department of Health to enhance community access to health care through the community health volunteers with skills and resources in health promotion and disease prevention to improve maternal health, hygiene, and nutrition.

With support from UTJ, the Nakuru County Health Chief Officer, Dr Daniel Wainaina launched the distribution of identification clothing and badges to more than 3,000 community health volunteers. The community health system aims at building demand for health services at the community level by improving community awareness and health-seeking behaviours.

The project interventions embrace a multi-channel approach to community

engagement based on needs identified in the community. These include Champion Community Model (CCM), Community-based nutrition services, pregnancy screening, mapping, and referral. The health volunteers also engage with religious, community-based organizations, and national government administration officers in their mission to provide and support supervision, data tracking, and mobilization for integrated outreaches targeting youth and adolescent girls.

Our Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) interventions are designed through a consultative process employing community activities and communication channels to promote the adoption of accelerator behaviours, facilitate health-seeking, and address the societal constructs to improve better health outcomes.

The focus is to increase the level of engagement of community health volunteers and strengthen their technical skills to promote healthy behaviours, facilitate community group dialogue, and ensure the provision of basic commodities at community levels and facilitate effective referral for facility-based services.



A section of the Baringo County HEIs during the graduation in Marigat. Photo by Teddy Cheney Alenga/UTJ

LABORATORY BIOSAFETY AND BIOSECURITY TRAINING

UTJ partnered with the National Public Health Laboratories' Biosafety, Biosecurity Unit to conduct a five-day training for 40 laboratory personnel from Nakuru and Samburu counties to integrate biosafety and biosecurity principles with quality management systems during laboratory operations hence contributing towards meeting the standards for accreditation.

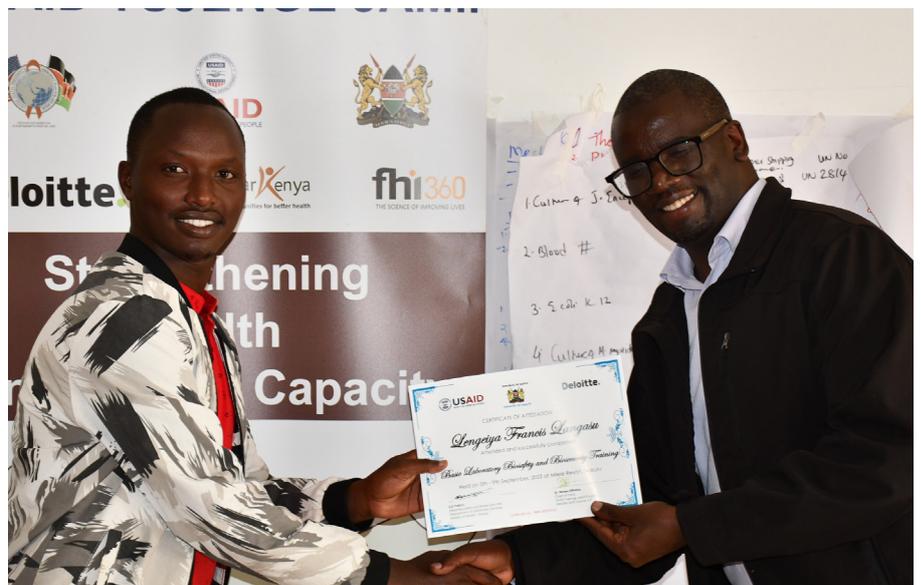
The training helped integrate biosafety/ biosecurity principles with quality management systems during laboratory operations. It focused on healthcare systems strengthening including laboratory biosafety and biosecurity.



National Public Health Laboratories' Biosafety, Biosecurity Unit conducted a five-day Basic Laboratory Biosafety and Biosecurity Training for personnel from Nakuru and Samburu counties. Photo by Teddy Chenya Alenga/UTJ

The staff gained skills and in-depth knowledge on new curriculum of biosafety and biosecurity including COVID-19 concepts and safety practices to enhance occupational health and safety and hence fostering adherence to accreditation requirements.

Biosecurity is the protection, control, and accountability for biological materials within the laboratory to prevent intentional misuse, diversions, or intentional release. The sessions covered containment principles, technologies, and practices implemented to prevent unintentional exposure to pathogens and toxins or their accidental release.



The Project Chief of Party, Dr Moses Kitheka, hands over a Basic Laboratory Biosafety and Biosecurity Training Certificate Samburu Laboratory Personnel, Longeiya Francis Langasu. Photo by Teddy Chenya Alenga/UTJ

ENHANCING COMMUNITY ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

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Nakuru County Health management team launched the distribution of over 3,000 identification clothing and badges to Community Health Volunteers. Photo by Teddy Chinya Alenga/UTJ

INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL

UTJ supported the Baringo, Nakuru, Laikipia, and Samburu County Department of Health and health care workers with infection prevention and control skills and tools to do their jobs more efficiently and effectively in context of COVID-19.

The project has supported proper waste segregation and disposal by providing color-coded bins and liners at the health facilities. The project is also supporting infection prevention and control trainings in the context of COVID-19, focusing on health care waste management, instrument and equipment processing, and personal protective equipment's donning.

The training sessions focus on MOH and WHO training guides on infection prevention control at health facilities. The training was informed by the increasing cases of COVID-19 reported in health facilities hence the need to train health care workers on measures to take to avoid cross infections at the workplace.

The project is also supporting health care workers to address workplace stress and burnout by providing mental health assessment sessions while keeping a tab on the work culture as impacted by COVID-19 pandemic.

The support to health care workers is conducted through training and sensitizations, mentorship, and supportive supervision to keep staff updated with the current health service provisions in Baringo, Laikipia, Nakuru, and Samburu counties. The support will ensure delivery of quality health services to the communities.



The project has supported the proper waste segregation and disposal at the health facilities by providing color-coded bins and liners at Kimanjo health dispensary. Photo by Teddy Chinya Alenga/UTJ

SUCCESS STORY

IMPROVING UPTAKE OF CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING SERVICES FOR WOMEN LIVING WITH HIV

Women living with HIV (WLHIV) are at a higher risk of developing and dying from cervical cancer due to their compromised immunity. According to the Kenya National Cancer Control Strategy, cervical cancer is the leading cause of death while it is one of the most preventable and treatable cancers if managed early with adequate prevention, screening, and treatment tools.

Disparities in access and availability remain a significant barrier and contribute to 90% of the deaths due to cervical cancer. UTJ project is supporting the strengthening of health systems to scale up cervical cancer screening amongst WLHIV across four counties in Kenya with funding from United States PEPFAR. For the last year, the project has supported the National Cancer Control Program to train more than 150 health care workers including 30 trainers of trainees on cervical cancer screening, treatment, and strengthening routine cervical cancer prevention services.

Facilitating access to routine screening and appropriate treatment services can ensure the detection of cases before they advance to severe stages and reduce the burden of cervical cancer. Using community-based health care workers helps reach women in hard-to-reach areas with necessary education and information on where they can go for prevention services. According to the Samburu Health Reproductive Health Coordinator, Samson Leerte, the training sessions conducted by the project have empowered the team of health care workers with relevant skills to ensure proper screening and treatment services.

“We did not know about the availability and use of the screening and treatment equipment and most of our clients moved hundreds of kilometers to Nakuru County for referral yet we had relevant thermocoagulation machines lying idle within our pharmacy stores,” said Mr. Leerte during a training session for the health care workers in Samburu.

The project uses the training sessions to map out and conduct equipment inventory system in sites and gynaecologists have been identified to support eligible women who screen positive, thus minimizing referrals to treatment sites and promoting quick client access to the services.

The sessions also help to create demand at facility level through health talks and amplification of human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination messages to scale the vaccination for adolescent girls on care at the comprehensive care centers. The project continued to track referrals for clients identified as cervical cancer screen positive who were ineligible for single visit approach and facilitating necessary referrals.

Cervical cancer screening can prevent up to 80% of cases, but most women are not regularly screened. Through the local department of health at the counties, more than 10,000 women recipients of care have been screened for cervical cancer with 90% of them aged 25-49 years with a positivity rate of 1.7%. Those who screen positive for precancerous lesions, the treatment (removes abnormal cervical cells and prevents progression to cancer) includes cryotherapy, thermal ablation, and loop electrosurgical excision procedure (LEEP). The screen-negative women should rescreen within two years and WLHIV who suspect invasive cervical cancer should be referred to the appropriate diagnostic and treatment services.

The project also maps adolescent girls 10-14 years who are recipients of care for HPV vaccination and will be providing community education on importance of cervical cancer primary prevention to ensure more than 90% of adolescent's girls get immunized.



Samburu County Reproductive Health Coordinator Samson Leerte during a practical session to demonstrate the use of thermal ablation gun to health care workers in Samburu. Photo by Teddy Alenga/UTJ.

PICTORIAL



A mentors supervision support session with Muramati health facility staff. The project is supporting health care workers to address workplace stress and burnout by providing mental health assessment sessions to address stress and burnout while keeping a tab on the work culture as impacted by COVID-19 pandemic. Photo by Teddy Chenya Alenga/UTJ



Deloitte CEO, Anne Muraya led a team to deliver a brand-new motorcycle to the Marigat Sub-County Hospital in Baringo. The motorcycle was bought due to the generosity of Deloitte staff to support ease of movement within the region to ensure medical supplies are delivered on time. Photo by Teddy Chenya Alenga/UTJ



UTJ Staff handing over sanitary towels donated by Deloitte CEO, Anne Muraya, to support adolescent girls in Marigat, Baringo County. Courtesy Photo.



The UTJ project staff pose for a group photo during the team building session in Nyahururu, Laikipia County. Photo by Teddy Chenya Alenga/UTJ



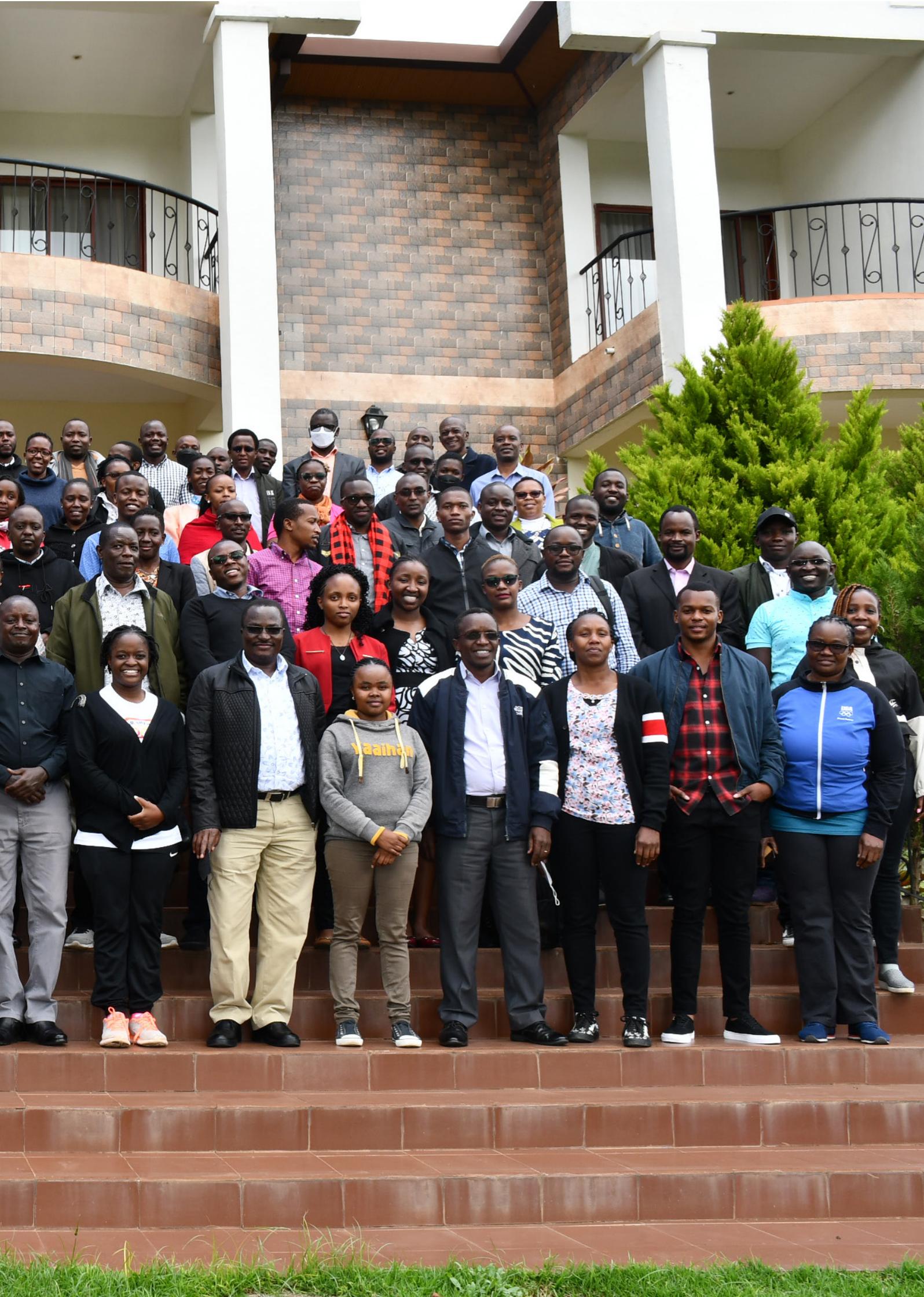
Nakuru County Department of Health and UTJ mentorship team members pose with certificates awarded during the 1st Annual South Rift Valley Regional Technical Working Group Conference on HIV Prevention, Care and Treatment where partners highlighted best practices." Photos by Teddy Chenya Alenga/UTJ



The UTJ Project Deputy Chief of Party, Dr Lucy Matu conducts a community sensitization session on COVID-19 vaccination with the members of the public in Naivasha Sub County. Photo by Teddy Chenya Alenga/UTJ



The UTJ project staff pose for a group photo during the team building session in Nyahururu, Laikipia County. Photo by Teddy Chenya Alenga/UTJ



This newsletter is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the USAID Tujenge Jamii project. The contents of this newsletter are the sole responsibility of its authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or United States Government.

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