

SUCCESS STORY

Improved Nutritional Status from Positive Deviance/Hearth Intervention in Kagera



Photo: IMA World Health

Alex is now an active and healthy child, thanks to interventions made possible through ASTUTE.

“Within a week, he started running around the compound, playing with other children. On lifting him up, I could feel a change of weight in my child’s body.

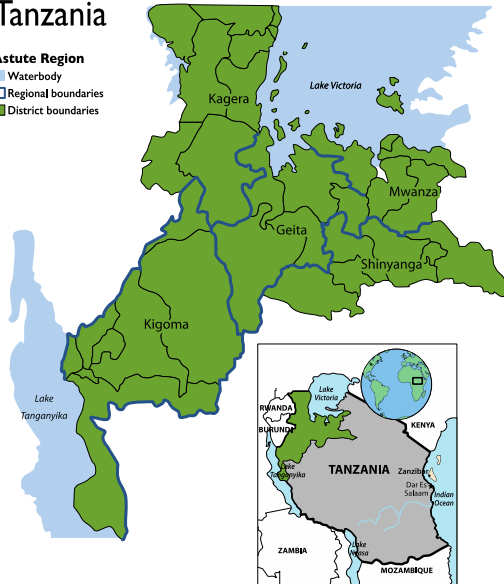
These changes motivated me to continue with the hearth sessions as well as additional feeding at home.”

Alex Evodius, a 3-year-old boy from Kashenge Village, had not gained weight for over four months. His mother, Adventina, was worried, noticing that he had a poor appetite and would not play with other children in the village like before. Alex’s condition is unfortunately common in the Kagera region of Tanzania, one of five regions in which the UK aid-funded ASTUTE program operates. Based on the 2015-2016 DHS survey, approximately 42% of children under 5 years old in Kagera region are stunted, meaning they have low height for age.

Adventina met with her local ASTUTE community health worker and learned that inactivity in young children could be due to poor feeding practices. The community health worker recommended that Adventina and Alex enroll in ASTUTE’s Positive Deviance/Hearth (PDH) program, an approach that enables community members to discover the uncommon but positive practices of well-nourished children from equally impoverished neighbours. Based on findings from these “positive deviants,” rehabilitation (hearth) sessions promote the successful feeding, hygiene, sanitation, and early childhood development practices of families with well-nourished children. Adventina quickly agreed to participate, hoping that it might help Alex get better.

Tanzania

Astute Region
 Waterbody
 Regional boundaries
 District boundaries



Adventina and Alex participated in PDH sessions for 12 days. On day one of the hearth session, Alex weighed 10.9 kg. At each session, his mother fed him nutrient-dense foods that hearth participants cooked during each session, such as eggs, fish, and nuts. They also learned about and then practiced other behaviours learned from positive deviants, including proper hygiene and sanitation, and stimulation of young children. These behaviours were then practiced at home. By the 12th day, Alex weighed 11.5kg, enough to “graduate” from the hearth session.

Today, Alex is doing well and continues to gain weight at a healthy rate, which Alex’s mother attributes to the PDH classes. Alex’s weight gain is a critical step to reducing stunting. Adventina and Alex are among over 1.5 million beneficiaries reached by ASTUTE through radio spots, home visits, support groups, and counselling by health workers on topics such as child nutrition, exclusive breastfeeding, complementary feeding, early child development, and hygiene and sanitation. PDH in particular will reach 45 villages in Tanzania’s five lakes regions this year.

ASTUTE is made possible by:



ASTUTE has demonstrated that when caregivers have a better understanding of the food, care, and health their children need, children, their families, and the entire community benefit enormously.

ASTUTE is funded by UK aid from the British people.

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