

SUCCESS STORY

Beating malnutrition through ASTUTE home visit strategy in Kigoma, Tanzania



Sohia and her daughter, Advera.

“Advera grows well and healthy and has never fallen sick compared to her elder siblings, for whom I didn’t practice these recommended behaviors that I learned from the CHW.”

Photo: IMA World Health

Sophia Clement, 39 is a mother of three children from Kavomo Village, one of the 2,500 communities across Lake Zone regions where ASTUTE intervened to reduce stunting to children under age 5.

Like many other mothers and caregivers in the region, Sophia’s knowledge about what to feed her children was limited. She received no prior counselling from any health worker. She worked 10 hours a day on a farm, where she labored intensely. This need to work so much led her to initiate complementary food at a mere 3 months for both her first born (now, 10) and her second child (age 5). Both children were often sick, suffered diarrhea episodes, and didn’t grow well. This family is not alone: inadequate knowledge contributed to high levels of malnutrition in the region, 38.9 percent from TDHS, 2015.

Sophia became pregnant for the third time in 2017. Labani Alex, a community health worker (CHW), counseled Sophia and her husband, James, on changes to her life that would positively impact her baby’s development.

“My husband and I learnt from Labani that heavy physical work during pregnancy may result in delivering an unhealthy child, so my husband began to help me with house chores and farm activities when I was pregnant”.

Tanzania



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Sophia says she has been learning better nutrition behaviors as CHWs trained under ASTUTE continue to visit her and James at their home.

Through the home visit strategy, ASTUTE trained CHWs on maternal nutrition, feeding practices, environmental hygiene and sanitation. Early childhood development and gender aspects are also addressed. The effort targets 1,000 days households to promote behavior change.

Sophia is among the 1.5 million beneficiaries reached with other ASTUTE strategies like radio spots, support groups and counselling by health workers.

Sophia said that having the ASTUTE program in her community helped her third pregnancy develop, until she gave birth to a well-nourished baby girl, weighing 3.3kg. Her new daughter, Advera, is now 2 old.

Though ASTUTE, Sophia learned to breastfeed Advera exclusively for 6 months before introducing supplemental foods. Labani helped Sophia to identify and use local, nutritious foods readily available including sweet potatoes, nuts, fruits and eggs from their chickens to feed her new baby.

“Advera grows wells and is healthy,” Sophia said. “She has never fallen sick compared to her older siblings. I think it’s because of the things I learned from Ibani, our community health worker.”

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