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STRENGTHENING UGANDA'S SYSTEMS FOR TREATING AIDS NATIONALLY

~ SUCCESS STORY ~

Use of Linkage Facilitators in Following-Up Clients in HIV Care

Left to support her daughter's now 16-month-old triplets, is 45-year-old Rose Awiiri, who is also caring for her five school aged children with help from her husband. Rose believes her 18-year-old daughter abandoned her husband and babies, from fear of becoming pregnant again when she discovered that multiple births were not uncommon in their lineage.

Because the triplet's mother is HIV positive, they received nevirapine syrup at Dokolo Health Center IV for six weeks to prevent mother to child transmission (PMTCT) of HIV. The twins then received their first deoxyribonucleic acid polymerase chain reaction (DNA PCR) test at six weeks old which showed they were all negative for HIV. The triplet's mother left home when they were 13 months old, one month after she had stopped breastfeeding, and they were yet to undergo their second DNA-PCR test.

Jackline Etap, the Maternal, Neonatal, and Child Health In-charge, and Esther Akello, the midwife who helped deliver the triplets, heard about Rose's situation through Monica Amayo and Anna Alum, the linkage facilitators supported by the USAID/SUSTAIN project. Knowing the triplets did not have their second DNA PCR, Jackline and Esther asked the linkage facilitators to encourage Rose and her husband to come to the facility for counselling. During the counselling session, the grandparents were given a health talk on HIV transmission and strongly advised to return the triplets to the health center for their second DNA PCR in three weeks. The grandparents



From L-R: Jackline Etap, Monica Amayo, Rose Awiiri (grandmother), Anna Alum and Esther Akello with the triplets at Dokolo HC IV.

Who are linkage facilitators?

Members of the community selected by District Health Management Teams to support access to health services by helping facilities and health workers manage client affairs associated with their treatment.

were also given Ready-to-use Therapeutic Food to supplement the triplets' nutrition.

Monica and Anna stopped by Rose's home to remind her of the triplet's appointment and check on the family's welfare. On the date of the appointment, Rose brought the triplets to Dokolo Health Center IV for their second DNA PCR and results for all three babies were negative.

"I'm glad the linkage facilitators came and checked on me. I felt stranded,

I didn't know what to do but now I feel confident, I'm ready for the HIV rapid test." said Rose

Linkage facilitators build trust with caretakers like Rose to ensure clients enrolled in HIV care are not lost by regularly following up clients who miss appointments. Without treatment, the likelihood of HIV passing from mother-to-child is 15% to 45%. However, antiretroviral therapy and other effective PMTCT interventions can reduce this risk to below 5%.¹ USAID/SUSTAIN supports delivery of comprehensive PMTCT/early infant diagnosis interventions across all supported facilities in Northern Uganda with the aim of reducing the risk of mother-to-child transmission among HIV-exposed children to less than 3%.

¹ World Health Organization (WHO) 'Mother-to-child transmission of HIV'

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