

Meet Segá's Community Health Workers

In Segá sub-location, 17 community health workers (CHWs) are the first line of defense against illness for the area's nearly 10,000 residents. These local women are responsible for staying in touch with each household in their village, offering information and advice to prevent and treat a range of health problems. Sometimes, when supplies are available they can offer oral rehydration salts for sick babies or water purification chemicals, or they might help people obtain free mosquito nets. But most often they are able to bring only knowledge and education as local residents welcome them into their homes.

Segá's CHWs have been volunteering for between 9 and 27 years. They're bright, gracious, dedicated, women who see their job as a way to support friends and neighbors.

Gladys Ogutu

"I am sometimes put in the difficult position of having to help a laboring woman deliver, but knowing that the woman would have more skilled and professional assistance at the health center"



"I know I am teaching and modeling good community service behavior for my children."

Age: 50

Family status: married with 9 children and 6 orphans (9 months to 31 years)

Worked as a CHW for: 20 years

Education: finished Grade 8

Other experience: none

Additional occupation: housewife and works on her family farm

Community group membership: Work Smart women's group, and member of the Merry-Go-Round co-operative lending group

Pamela Ogwe

"I like my job, I like talking to people about health, I like to educate, mostly children."



"We tell our sick people the truth; we tell them the importance of hospitals."

Age: 42

Family status: married with 4 children (6 to 14)

Worked as a CHW for: 9 years

Education: finished Grade 8

Other experience: works with the Association of People with HIV and AIDS, checking in on patients to ensure they're taking medication

Additional occupation: employed by Care Kenya, working with small savings and loan groups

Community group membership:

Alice Owako Okech

“My community - these are my friends and my relatives. When I help them, I feel like I am helping my mother, my aunties, my nieces. And I feel good to know that there is a CHW in my home village who is caring for my mother, father, aunties, and nieces just the same.”



“Sometimes I’ll visit someone like a widow who doesn’t have food and is already sick. I’m afraid to go empty-handed. You have to try to find something to give.”

Age: 44

Family status: married with 6 children (13 to 27)

Worked as a CHW for: 10 years

Education: finished Grade 10

Other experience: Volunteers with the CDC

Additional occupation: housewife and works on her family farm

Community group membership: St. Gabriel’s Church meeting group, Chamluchi women’s group, a lending co-operative

Jane Ogola

“That’s a big challenge. Some people expect more, but I don’t have. If they don’t have money, they ask you for some for transportation or for payment. Instead, I advise people to sell a chicken, a goat, or something else they possess to fund the necessary treatments.”



Age: 60

Family status: married with 4 living children (32 to 48) and two deceased

Worked as a CHW for: 27 years

Education: finished Grade 6

Other experience: none

Additional occupation: housewife and works on her family farm

Community group membership: Ugenya widows and orphans support group, St. Mary Goretey church member

Florence Akinyi Ooro

“Health education can have a real and positive impact. When I educate them about health, that’s my reward.”

“There are women who are pregnant, and they deliver at home. I want them to know the risk factors of delivering at home so they go the hospital.”



Age: 34 years

Family status: married with 4 children (5 to 17)

Worked as a CHW for: 11 years

Education: finished Grade 8

Other experience: none

Additional occupation: housewife and works on her family farm

Community group membership: Group leader at Nonya church, Work Smart women’s group, and Umoja women’s farming and poultry group

Pamela Nyabongo

“Sharing knowledge with the community is my primary goal as a CHW. The training has provided me with plenty of expertise and health information that I’m happy to share.”



“When I go for a home visit and find a sick child, I can advise them to take the child to a clinic. There are some people, if you don’t tell, then they won’t go.”

Age: 32

Family status: married with 4 children (3 to 11)

Worked as a CHW for: 10 years

Education: finished Grade 8

Other experience: none

Additional occupation: housewife and works on her family farm

Community group membership: Nyamosmos Group, a micro-savings co-operative

Janerose Apind

“The community I belong to, they also belong to me. They have a belief that even if their child is sick, I will come with some information.”



“There are no resources for us to treat sick people, and I hope someday we will have kits to offer basic painkillers and injections. We have the skills, but we don’t have the kit. You find someone who is in pain, but there’s nothing you can do.”

Age: 49

Family status: married with eight children (8 to 26)

Worked as a CHW for: 27 years

Education: finished Grade 10

Other experience: volunteers at Segga dispensary

Additional occupation: housewife and works on her family farm

Community group membership: Kupa Women’s sewing group and the Osiepe women’s support group

Salome Ogutu

“Another of our challenges is convincing people to accept proper medical care. Pregnant women, for example, often think medical care will be too expensive or they have no way to travel to a clinic late at night. We encourage them to go to the hospital, but they don’t because of the money. Usually they give birth at home.”



Age: 35

Family status: married with two children (10 and 12) and an orphaned nephew (15)

Worked as a CHW for: 10 years

Education: finished secondary school

Other experience: none

Additional occupation: housewife and grows vegetables on her family farm

Community group membership: Kupa Women’s Sewing Group

Mary Achieng Amien

"I enjoy the training seminars that



sometimes provide new information. My job is then to pass that on to the community, where some members don't want to talk about

sickness or admit any poor health to their neighbors."

Age: 45

Family status: married with 6 children (7 to 25)

Worked as a CHW for: 10 years

Education: finished Grade 7

Other experience: none

Additional occupation: housewife and works on her family farm

Community group membership: Work Smart women's group, which raises poultry, the Amien self-help group, the Miguna women's group, and a church member

Carolyn C.K. Ogon

"It can sometimes be challenging to get



reliable answers to my questions. People might say they have no mosquito net, for example, in the hopes that we will provide something for

free. Other families ask me for medication that I can't provide."

"Walking through the heat or the rain to visit households is not always fun, especially because we are not getting paid. But new technology can make the job easier."

Age:

Family status: married with three children (3 and 12 (twins))

Worked as a CHW for: 10 years

Education: finished secondary school

Other experience: worked for a chemist

Additional occupation: housewife and grows vegetables on her family farm

Community group memberships:

Mary Omala

"I see opportunity to improve the



community's health with my new tools and information. Maybe if there's an outbreak of ringworm, it will be easier to identify and

also I can see where the problem is."

Walking long distances on her visits to check on all the local households can be tiring. "A bike would make getting around easier, but I'm still happy to do it."

Age: 49

Family status: married with three children (26 and 20 (twins))

Worked as a CHW for: 10 years

Education: finished Grade 7

Other experience: none

Additional occupation: housewife and works on her family farm

Community group membership: Work Smart Women's group, which raises poultry

Jackline Odul

"I'm always happy when I save a life, even if I don't get anything."



"Mostly I use my role as a CHW to encourage women to take their babies to a clinic or a sick family member to the

hospital, even if the residents don't always see the importance of paying for treatment."

Age: 32

Family status: married with five children (5 to 16)

Worked as a CHW for: 10 years

Education: finished Grade 6

Other experience: none

Additional occupation: housewife and works on her family farm

Community group membership: Nyamosmos Group, a micro-savings co-operative

Sabine Mola Ogongo

"It's hard to see sick people who won't go to the hospital. All I can do is keep visiting and encouraging them to seek treatment; eventually, some will go, while others don't see the point of spending money at the hospital."



"I hope that technology will help us spend less time writing out data by hand. It could also make accessing the information much easier."

Age: 53

Family status: married with 3 living and 3 deceased children (24 to 37)

Worked as a CHW for: 9 years

Education: finished Grade 8

Other experience: has training as a tailor

Additional occupation: she has a small business sewing clothes at home

Community group membership: chairlady of both a St. Ann's Catholic Church group and the Work Smart women's group

Rose Obimo

"People have knocked on my door late at night when someone is sick or a pregnant woman is in labor. When that happens, I use my skills and experience as a CHW to offer some home remedies for basic illness, or I will go with the patient to a hospital."



Age: 42

Family status: married with 6 children (6 to 18)

Worked as a CHW for: 8 years

Education: finished Grade 8

Other experience: none

Additional occupation: housewife and works on her family farm

Community group membership: Ugenya women's support group for HIV positive women

Consolata Ngesa Oloo

"I enjoy my work as a CHW. I like sharing with sick people...If you don't share with them, you don't know their problems."



"The community health training I receives is always appreciated, and that knowledge helps me as I deal with different household illnesses. Still, there are always people who hope for more from me."

Age: 50

Family status: married with six children (10 to 29)

Worked as a CHW for: 12 years

Education: graduated secondary school

Other experience: none

Additional occupation: housewife and works on her family farm

Community group membership: part of five different women's groups

Prisca Auma Akendo

"In the course of helping, I also learn many things I didn't know."



"Sometimes people take no consideration to what we're telling them. But that doesn't keep me from doing my job. It's just something that you know and you want to help that person."

Age: 49

Family status: married with 4 children (20 to 32)

Worked as a CHW for: 10 years

Education: finished Grade 10

Other experience: had a small business selling various products in Segha

Additional occupation: housewife and works on her family farm

Community group membership: Work Smart women's group, and a church member

Margret Ogola

"Making an investment in your family's health is a good choice. That's the advice I offer to my friends and neighbors when they have a sick family member but are worried about the cost."



"I work hard to help the community with what I have. I meet with community elders to discuss health issues, offer education at public meetings, and also help to distribute mosquito nets given by outside organizations."

Age: 47

Family status: married with six children (13 to 27)

Worked as a CHW for: 10 years

Education: finished Grade 8

Other experience: none

Additional occupation: housewife and works on her family farm

Community group membership: Ritingima women's lending co-operative