

## ***Being inclusive, saving lives step by step in Isiolo County.***

### **Acronyms**

**MoH**----- **Ministry of Health**

**EDD**----- **Expected Date of Delivery**

**ANC**----- **Ante natal clinic**

**LMP**----- **Last Monthly Period**

**PWD**----- **Persons with Disabilities**

**CHV**----- **Community Health Volunteer**

Isiolo County is vast with various hard to reach areas, this has in itself the challenges of health facilities accessibility and lack of or inadequate other social amenities. Rumate a remote area in Isiolo central sub county, Oldonyiro ward is such an area.

Meet Naserian (not her real name), a 14-year-old mentally challenged girl from Rumate village in Oldonyiro. Rumate village is 11 kilometers away from Oldonyiro dispensary. The area is characterized with deep valleys and galleys which hamper accessibility at a very large scale. It takes at least 2 hours to walk to the dispensary and another 2 hours back in the scorching sun. The dispensary has a wide catchment area with some residents going to the facility covering more than 22 kilometers. Oldonyiro area is mostly occupied by the *Samburu* and *Dorobo* tribes. The two tribes are renown for sticking to their cultural practices including some retrogressive practices such as *moranism*, cattle rustling, female genital mutilation and early marriages.

The ministry of health Isiolo has established a clinic in Tuale which is closer to public; however, the facility is usually understaffed and occasionally the facility experiences stock out, making many people to prefer to go to Oldonyiro dispensary. F2A consortium partner, ADS Mt. Kenya East through DESIP Project started supporting integrated health mobile outreaches targeting some of Oldonyiro dispensary sites such as Rumate, Lepus and Tuale villages in the month of September 2019. It is during this outreach on 16/9/2019 at Rumate that Nurse Agnes identified

Naserian when she came for ANC clinic for the first time. On enquiring Naserian did not know the EDD as she could also not tell LMP because she is mentally challenged. The most saddening bit is that she did not even know who had sexually assaulted her causing her to conceive. On assessment by the nurse, the delivery was due by or before October.

Eventually, Naserian delivered a healthy, bouncing baby girl. When she brought her baby for immunization during the outreach in November 2019, the nurse counselled Naserian together with her mother on best breastfeeding practices, various family planning method mix and take care of persons with disabilities like Naserian. In her condition as a person with disability makes her vulnerable to risk of getting pregnant again. This is because men in the community will take advantage of her and impregnate her again which will be a burden to Naserian and her mother as well. This is because the culture accepts the practice through “Moranism”. After counselling by Nurse Agnes, Naserian was put on 3 years implant while the mother took COC. Thanks to DESIP supported outreaches, the live of Naserian is saved and is safe from unplanned pregnancy. It is by being inclusive and purposively targeting of PWD through DESIP project that Naserian has been helped.

During subsequent outreach in December 2019; it was noted that Naserian was having problem in breastfeeding her baby because of her mental challenges. She was linked to Catherine Lesaja the CHV covering her village who formed a Mother to Mother Support Group (MTMSG) where they learn on breastfeeding, nutrition for lactating mothers and social inclusion every Tuesday. Such forum as the MTMSG that was established will now act as an avenue of sharing information, awareness creation for services. The community members were as well sensitized that persons with disabilities require to be taken care of, they have all organs functioning normally therefore them getting pregnant is not uncommon, they require family planning as any other woman of reproductive age.

The community health volunteers are the backbone of health service delivery in hard to reach areas; they play a major role in linking the health care workers with community members. The Counties need to consider a stipend for them. The social cultural practices are deep rooted in the

communities living in Oldonyiro. The Desip project will need to play a big role in male involvement, use of CHV, peer educators and religious leaders' awareness. There issue to do with stigma especially of women who are on FP is still rife in the area, thus the organization uses tinted ambulances to ensure that the client have privacy while being attended to.



**Figure 1:Naserian (in red shuka) holding her baby for growth monitoring during outreach on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2020**

Narrated by Abraham Mwangi