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ETHIOPIA

SUCCESS STORY

Empowered Health Extension Worker Atsede transforms a health facility to Welkait's exemplar



“The weight and growth of our children are now promising after we started feeding our children with diversified food based on the new nutrition knowledge and practice that we gained from Health Extension Worker during cooking demonstration”

- Addis, a parent at the Tekeze Health Post

Due to limited community nutrition knowledge, lack of proper equipment and the lengthy absence of a health extension worker (HEW), the Tekeze health post was ill-equipped to meet the dire nutrition needs of Welkait Woreda.

Growth through Nutrition targeted Tekeze as one of the health facilities where the implementation of two government-initiated quality improvement models (KAIZEN and Model for Improvement) is supported. Project activities include training for Sustainable Undernutrition Reduction in Ethiopia (SURE) and Enhanced Community Communication (ECC), as well as exchange visits between good performing and poor/average performing health facilities.

Tekeze's challenges did not intimidate Atsede Seifu, a Health Extension worker who mastered Kaizen after receiving on-the-job training. Things improved drastically soon after Atsede's arrival and the health center began receiving technical support from the project.

Atsede also took her own initiative to implement KAIZEN at the health post, which is now well equipped, more organized, clean, and a conducive place to deliver quality health services to the community. The type and volume of health services provided are properly tracked and recorded and the facility now meets health service and nutrition targets, which include growth monitoring, maternal and child screening, Iron Folic Acid supplementation, and vitamin A supplementation. Monthly cooking demonstrations conducted outside the health posts were also instrumental in improving the nutrition knowledge and practices of the community members.



Atsede measures the MUAC of an under-2 baby and provides nutrition counseling based on the results

Atsede described her motivations for this hard work as twofold, saying "I have two extreme feelings." She expressed the first as "that intensive sadness and worry of seeing children suffer from malnutrition despite the availability of different food items in their hands or at home." She said, "the best solution I have laid out is to conduct ECC sessions for pregnant and lactating women and have also under five children as well as monthly regular cooking food demonstrations is undertaking and I have adequate documents."

Atsede encouraged the community members to practice home gardening by educating them on how to plant fruits and vegetables on a small plot of land. Following her participation in the Enhanced Community Conversation (ECC) sessions that educate pregnant and lactating mothers on nutrition knowledge and practices, she also took her own initiative to scale up ECC, mainly by educating the community members on maternal and child nutrition, despite the HP not being targeted for ECC scale up.

One of the community members expressed how she benefited from services that the HEW provided by saying, "before, we didn't have enough knowledge and practice of preparing and consuming varied food - now we've learnt how we can easily prepare and feed ourselves and our children to improve their nutrition and health."

"My second feeling is happiness when I see children have recovered from malnutrition after their mothers started applying the knowledge and skills they have gained from ECC session and cooking demonstrations."

Through the combined efforts of Growth through Nutrition and Atsede Seifu, a dedicated health extension worker and responsive community member, the health post is registered as one of the best performing health posts in the woreda, playing a critical role in improving the nutrition status of mothers and children in the community.

Growth through Nutrition targets more than 75 health facilities to implement and scale up quality improvement initiatives and ECC sessions to improve the delivery of quality nutrition services and improve the nutrition knowledge and practice of the community,

ultimately leading to the improved nutritional status of mothers and children in the four major regions of Ethiopia