

# COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS

## TACKLING HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE IN KENYA

SUBMITTED BY AMREF HEALTH AFRICA

**ACCORDING TO** the Kenya Cardiac Society, nearly one billion people have high blood pressure globally; with two-thirds of those in developing countries. High blood pressure (HBP) and hypertension are some of the non-communicable diseases (NCDs) that can be life threatening if not properly managed. Lack of adequate information on managing these NCDs while leading healthy lives sadly means some community members succumb to them. Further, they often have no warning signs or symptoms hence many people do not know they have HBP or hypertension until it is too late.

This situation has started to change following the training of Community Health Workers (CHWs) on HBP and hypertension by Astra Zeneca through Leap mHealth solution. Meet Jane Omenge, a CHW in Kanyimbo Community Unit (CU), Kisii County, Kenya. Through Leap, Jane learned the signs and symptoms of HBP and how to screen for and manage HBP. “Armed with this knowledge on high blood pressure, I was determined to help my household members,” says Jane.

During one of her household visits, Jane met Esther, a woman who did not know what was ailing her. Esther complained of frequent headaches. Her entire body was also swollen, and as a result affecting her mobility.

Fortunately, Jane had already learned about such symptoms and advised her to visit the health centre for BP screening. Once tested, it was discovered that Esther’s BP was very high and she was immediately put on drugs. She was also advised on lifestyle changes. In two months,

Esther was making good progress and had lost 17 kilos! “I shall forever be grateful to Jane who advised me to seek medical attention at the health facility. If it were not for her advice, my health would have deteriorated further, perhaps even leading to death. I am now getting better and better!” says Esther elatedly.

Jane has so far assisted two people to get HBP screening and take HBP medication. She continues to make follow ups and advise them on how to manage HBP, emphasizing lifestyle changes. She looks forward to helping even more community members!



Jane Omenge (right), a Community Health Worker in Kanyimbo Community Unit (CU), Kisii County, Kenya.

