

## SUCCESS STORY

# Increasing monitoring of pregnant women by identifying pregnant women for early antenatal care in Possotome, Benin

Knowing the importance of antenatal consultations (ANCs), Possotomè's quality improvement team was not satisfied that only 43% of pregnant women in their catchment area were receiving at least four ANCs (the minimum standard), and only 35% were receiving their first ANC during their first trimester. They knew that a change was needed to improve the situation.

Possotomè's health facility, located in the Comè-Bopa-Grand-Popo-Houéyogbé (CBGH) health zone in southern Benin, is one of 250 public health facilities supported by USAID-funded Advancing Newborn, Child and Reproductive Health Program (ANCRE), which is implemented by University Research Co., LLL and its partners. When Possotomè's quality improvement team voiced their concern, and wanted to take action, ANCRE helped them move from an idea to action, resulting in success.

The idea was to identify women early in their pregnancy so they could get their first ANC in the first trimester, which is crucial to early identification and subsequent management of risky conditions and recommended by the



A Possotomè auxiliary nurse checking blood pressure of a pregnant woman who came for ANC

***“The guidance provided by the clinic allowed me to receive adequate care...very early.”***

World Health Organization and Benin's Ministry of Health. With coaching from the health zone management team and ANCRE staff, the health facility's quality improvement team set up a referral strategy from the ambulatory clinic

APRIL 2018

This success story was prepared by the USAID/Benin Advancing Newborn, Child and Reproductive Health (ANCRE) program. ANCRE is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)/Benin in Cooperative Agreement No. AID-680-A-14-00001. The program is managed by University Research Co., LLC (URC), in collaboration with Dimagi, Inc. and the Results for Development Institute (R4D).

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to the maternity ward for all women of reproductive age presenting with amenorrhea or pregnancy-induced vomiting: no matter what they came to the clinic for, women of reproductive age are screened for these signs of pregnancy. Once at the maternity ward, the pregnancy is confirmed, and, if pregnant, she is screened, registered, and receives her maternal card. She also receives advice and counseling on when to come for her ANC, danger signs during pregnancy, and creating a birth plan.

Clients who have benefited from this system expressed their appreciation. Koutonnou Martine, 37, stated, “I appreciated the health center’s approach. The guidance provided by the clinic allowed me to receive adequate care. I am especially happy to have had my first consultation very early.” Messan Claudine, 25, felt the same way. “I really appreciated the fact that I was able to kill two birds with one stone. This type of practice is efficient for me.”

Since Possotomè started implementing this approach, they have seen an important increase in clients receiving ANC. The percentage of women receiving an ANC during their first trimester of pregnancy increased from 35% in July 2016 to 72% in October 2017. Likewise, the proportion of pregnant women who had at least four ANCs according to the recommended standards also improved: from 43% in October 2016 to 76% in October 2017. The quality improvement team at Possotomè know that with continued diligence, these numbers will keep improving.

For the head midwife in the Possotomè maternity, Mrs. Carole Codjo, the team work alone has been an advantage to their clients.

***“The approach has consolidated the team work between the ambulatory clinic and maternity. We regularly discuss referred cases and actions to take depending on the circumstances.”***

Possotomè’s approach was implemented without any additional material or financial investments. The QI team worked together and reorganized services using integration and continuum of care as their operational basis, an approach that is, by its very nature, sustainable. The Possotomè health facility intends to work to maintain these achievements and to regularly monitor utilization of antenatal care services. The team is also proud that their approach is now being extended to 34 other health facilities in the CBGH health zone.



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