



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

WEST AFRICA

FIRST PERSON

A Role Model for Family Planning

Community Health Worker
Training Creates a Role
Model for Family Planning



Photo:

“The decision to join the USAID AWARE II training to be a Community Health Worker is the most important decision I ever made because I got the skills needed to save lives, my own first.”—Apegnon Akpene

Apegnon Akpene is a 20 year-old mother of three: four year-old Joseph, two year-old Romance and one month-old Akou Jacqueline. She says her decision to join the USAID Action for West Africa Region, (AWARE II) training to be a Community Health Worker, “is the most important decision I ever made because I got the skills needed to save lives, my own first.” Not only is Akpene now enjoying the benefits of family planning as a client, but she is also promoting family planning in her village.

Akpene is one of three community health workers in Diguegue, a small village of about 800 people in the hills of the south-western forest separating Togo and Ghana. Diguegue is 47 km from the nearest health facility. The village is served by a 12 km dirt road that winds through the thick forest. Distance and the difficult terrain are major barriers to accessing health care for the residents of Diguegue.

Akpene attended school for eight years, but when she became pregnant at 16 she was forced to drop out. Now with three children within four years, Akpene has watched her life slowly slip away. When the opportunity came for her to be trained as a community health worker she grabbed it with both hands. But she faced challenges. Her baby was barely a week old and she became ill. She was admitted to the hospital, but advised her husband that “instead of coming to the hospital to see me you should attend the training and later share with me what you have learned.” Fortunately, Akpene recovered just in time to join the training.

Today, Akpene knows the benefits of using contraception and she is a role model for family planning in Diguegue. She has already introduced four other women in the village to family planning. “I know my daughter was born too close to the previous one but she came at the right time,” said Akpene confidently. Thanks to her training, Akpene says “my daughter is in a safe pair of hands and her survival is more secure than my first two children.”

Telling Our Story
U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523-1000
<http://stories.usaid.gov>