

PATH Today

A Newsletter for Friends and Supporters

Winter 2012

A sweet secret

What's so important about the color orange? In a sweet potato, orange could mean the difference between malnutrition and health for an African child. The secret of that sunset color? Beta-carotene, which the body converts into vitamin A.

In Kenya, the Mama SASHA (Sweetpotato Action for Security and Health in Africa) project is unlocking the secret of sweet potatoes by linking agriculture with health care. New mothers are coming home from prenatal visits with something unexpected: a sweet potato seedling that will bring healthier food to the kitchen garden.

Serving up better health

Sweet potatoes are easy to grow and drought- and disease-tolerant. But in Kenya, white and yellow varieties, which are low in beta-carotene, are mostly eaten. Adding orange-fleshed sweet potatoes to the mix can help prevent vitamin A deficiency and the blindness, disease, and death that it can cause.

"Without the Catalyst Fund, the sweet potato idea might never have made it off the ground."

— CAROL LEVIN
SENIOR HEALTH ECONOMIST, PATH

At Margaret Simiyu's house, orange sweet potatoes are now on the menu three times a week. Margaret learned about the new variety when

PATH/Eric Becker



A bumper crop of orange-fleshed sweet potatoes means Margaret Simiyu and her children are not only better fed, but getting the essential nutrients and health care they need.

she was two months pregnant and a health worker visited to talk about the importance of a healthy diet. He told Margaret that if she went to the clinic for prenatal care, she could get vouchers to redeem for sweet potato vines from a local farmer.

Inspired, Margaret went for care earlier than with her previous pregnancies—important for the health of both mom and baby. At home, the seedlings were soon adding critical nutrients to family meals.

From you to Kenya

With Mama SASHA now in its fourth year, it's clear that giving women access to this humble orange tuber is leading to healthier mothers and children. But how does a project like this get started?

It was the unusual link between health and agriculture that inspired PATH

and our partner, the International Potato Center, to launch Mama SASHA. Because the idea was so new, we needed your support to make it a reality. Our donor-supported Catalyst Fund, a critical source of funding for new ideas like this, helped with early research and project design.

And it was Catalyst funding that allowed us to leverage additional support, transforming a bright idea into an innovative project that now straddles two districts in Western Kenya. Nearly 3,000 women have participated, more than triple our initial goal.

A thriving garden, family, and community

At a clinic near Margaret's home, nurse Eileen Barasa is excited. She's seeing fewer underweight children and fewer

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Good reason for hope in Peru

To the women of Pacasmayo, breast cancer means death. Lately, many of these hard-working women fear that *cáncer de mama*, as it's called in Spanish, is claiming even more lives in this northern province of Peru.

And they're right. Breast cancer rates are rising in Peru and other developing countries. But there's good reason for hope, says Jenny Winkler, a PATH reproductive health expert: "There's something concrete we can do about it."

Knowledge is power

Breast cancer is a mystery in Pacasmayo. "We would like for someone to come and explain where this cancer sickness comes from," one woman says, "but since we don't know, we aren't prepared." Most women in rural Peru have never had a breast exam, much less a mammogram.

Your support is advancing a model project that could change all this. The goal: to give women better access to screening and care and the information they need to take advantage of these services.

In partnership with Peru's cancer institutes and the Ministry of Health, we're promoting clinical breast exams in local health centers and teaching providers how to identify suspicious lumps. We identified three health centers to start—then support from the Catalyst Fund allowed us to *more than quadruple* that number, training providers in every clinic in Pacasmayo.



Group discussion—with pictures—is one way to encourage women to get clinical breast exams. Providers at local health centers are now trained to do the exams.



Local health volunteers in Peru are promoting breast cancer screening—part of a successful model PATH hopes to adapt next for countries in East Africa.

If providers suspect cancer, they can now refer women for diagnosis at the local hospital, where doctors have been trained to do biopsies. Winkler explains why this training was critical: "Traditionally, women suspected of having cancer had to travel a long distance to the regional cancer institute. It was costly and they lost work time, so they often didn't go. This way we don't lose women at this important step."

We're closing the loop by bringing breast cancer education right to women's neighborhoods. Local health volunteers teach women about breast health and the importance of getting breast exams. It's vital information—and gives the women of Pacasmayo the power to face their fear.

The tools to take over

The first stage of this project reached more than 3,000 women with early screening and diagnosis. Now, with your help, we'll be able to reach many more. Says Winkler, "The funding allowed us to expand from a much smaller demonstration area so that we can really show that the model works."

The government of Peru is convinced. In September, the Ministry of Health began planning for an expansion of the project to a second region. We'll continue to be there, providing support as they take ownership. Says Winkler, "It's an exciting time." ●

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eye and skin infections associated with vitamin A deficiency. Not only do women come more often for prenatal care, their visits provide an opportunity to immunize children, do HIV testing, and offer malaria prevention.

"It's a hook," Eileen says, "and then we

can offer them so many other things."

Margaret eagerly tells her neighbors about the benefits: Her baby, Jason, has never been sick and started crawling earlier than her other children. Even Jason's older siblings seem to get sick less often.

Margaret's sweet potato crop is flourishing along with her children. She has enough to keep her family well-fed and leftovers to share with other families. A seed of an idea, transformed by your support, is now a win-win venture for an entire community. ●

Your gift doubled through Dec. 31

All year we share stories of what you've achieved through your commitment to PATH. From healthier children to lives saved with new technologies, your support is truly making a difference.

Now you can double your impact through a matching challenge from a group of dedicated donors. Until midnight on December 31, all gifts to PATH's Catalyst Fund will be matched. You can make your gift online at www.path.org/challenge2012/ or use the enclosed giving envelope. Consider making a gift in honor of someone special—we'll send a card to tell them you care.



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New frontier in Myanmar

PATH is excited to begin a new chapter in Myanmar with the launch of our first project there. The long-isolated country has one of the highest infant mortality rates in Asia. With our partner, the Burnet Institute—and funding from a private foundation—we're improving the skills of the midwives and traditional birth attendants who deliver most babies. With your support, we'll be able to do even more to improve the health of the country's mothers and children.

Reaching up to 3 million women with family planning

Millions of women in the world's poorest countries will have access to family planning services and a long-lasting injectable contraceptive, thanks to a new collaboration between PATH and Pfizer. The contraceptive, depo-subQ provera 104™, is delivered through the prefilled, autodisable Uniject™ injection system. Created by PATH, Uniject™ is so easy to use, women may eventually be able to administer the contraceptive themselves. Support from the Catalyst Fund provided critical momentum to begin the manufacturing of depo-subQ in Uniject™. As a result, women will have more control over the number and timing of their children—and a better chance of living a healthy life.

Toward a malaria-free world

We have new stories to share about PATH's work to eliminate malaria—from "track and treat" teams who hunt down every last case in remote villages to a high-tech lab where a vaccine is being developed to prevent the disease. Visit www.path.org/our-work/malaria/ to learn about work that is changing lives now, projects that could one day free millions from malaria's threat, and the people who are bringing these solutions to life.



PATH has Charity Navigator's highest rating—four stars!

When you support PATH, you can be confident that your donation will be used efficiently.

PATH'S MISSION

*is to improve
the health of people
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A smart investment

As a recent college graduate earning his first real paycheck, Bryan Kim was in search of a cause that he could support. With a mind for numbers—he was embarking on a career in finance—Bryan was drawn to PATH's approach to improving global health.

"It struck me as a good way to

Courtesy of Bryan and Martha Kim



Bryan and Martha Kim are challenging donors to renew their gifts to PATH before the end of the year.

leverage financial resources to very big problems," says Bryan, who made his first contribution to PATH in 2003. "PATH invests in developing the technology, then further invests to bring that technology to where it is needed. That appealed to the inner technologist in me."

PATH's work in developing vaccines and diagnostics, in particular, captured Bryan's attention. The lab on a chip, for example—a credit card-sized device for quickly diagnosing illness without a laboratory—solved a challenging technical problem and addressed an important health issue.

When Bryan married his wife, Martha, she had more personal reasons for joining him in championing health solutions. "We're fortunate to be born into the society we've been born into," says Martha, who's a computer science professor, "and I think we have a lot of

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doubled through
December 31 by
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responsibility to support those who are more vulnerable."

Martha and Bryan see their contributions to PATH as akin to fertilizing the base of a tree and watching it grow and flourish. To nurture even more life, the couple has joined more than 130 other donors to match gifts made to PATH through the end of 2012. By supporting PATH, Bryan and Martha believe that they—and those they inspire—are contributing to a fundamental need in society and helping others build a solid base for the future. ●

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