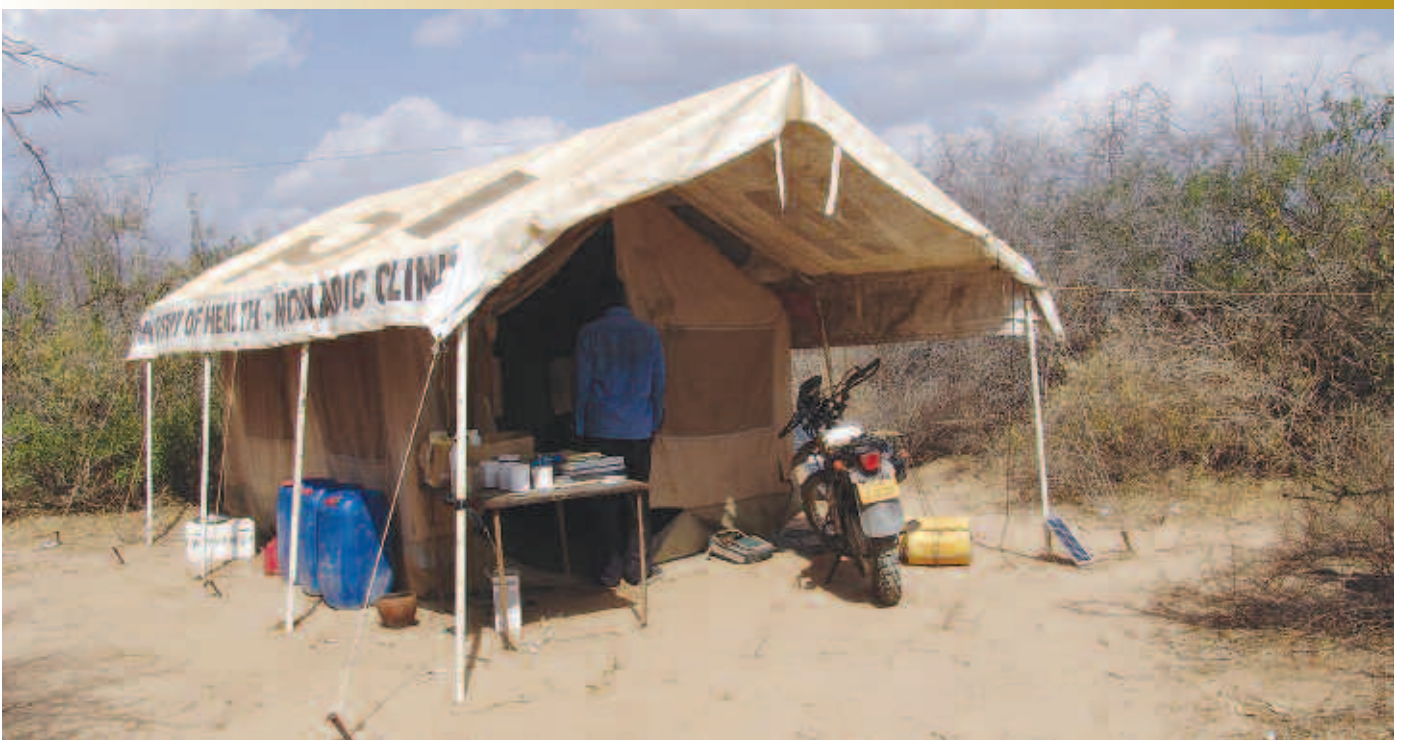




HEALTH SECTOR SUCCESS STORY



A nomadic clinic provides basic medical services to remote areas. Photo: Danida

TAKING HEALTH CARE TO THE PEOPLE

Fatuma is a 17 year old mother living near Kubialo in the Mandera district of Kenya's North Eastern Province. Like most inhabitants of North Eastern Province her family are pastoralists. Fatuma however, stays in Kubialo most of the time, taking care of her one year old son and waiting for her husband to return. Her son has been coughing for some days and thanks to Danida, Fatuma has taken him for treatment at a nomadic clinic that has been based at the village all week.

"If it were not for this clinic, my child would not have had any treatment at all," she says. "Where we live, there is no health facility and the closest one is far away in Takaba. We don't have any means of getting there and there is no public transport to that place."

LOW HEALTH INDICATORS

North Eastern Province borders Somalia to the east and Ethiopia to the north. It is sparsely populated with just 1.3 million people, mainly Muslims of Somali origin, who move from one place to another in constant pursuit of water and pasture for their livestock. The province is one of the poorest in Kenya with considerable shortcomings for nomadic people. Health service delivery to pastoralists has always been a choice between mobile outreach and static health facilities.

Health indicators are also poor. The immunisation coverage is far below the national average, and infant and child mortality rates

are higher than average. The lack of maternal health services means that very few pregnant women are attended by skilled health workers during delivery and is associated with higher pregnancy related morbidity and mortality rates.

To address this complex issue the Kenyan Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation, in collaboration with Danida's 360 million Danish Kroner Health Sector Programme Support II, developed an innovative way of bringing services to the population in the form of the nomadic clinic. The clinic is in a tent and can be moved according to the migration patterns of the population. It offers services similar to those in static facilities – treatment for various ailments including malaria, respiratory tract infections, skin diseases, diarrhoea and other gastrointestinal infections. Children up to five years old receive basic immunisations while pregnant woman get antenatal care and immunisations; pregnant woman are also assisted by a professional during delivery, even if it takes place at home.

LIVES SAVED AT LOW COST

The nomadic clinic uses low-cost technology and low maintenance medical equipment and is provided with basic drugs. Operational research findings show that nomadic clinics effectively bring health services closer to the people of North Eastern Province and help to save lives. In addition, patient attendance at the nomadic clinics is much higher than at static health facilities and people have expressed satisfaction with the services provided. Since the introduction of nomadic clinics, health sector performance reports indicate that immunisation rates have improved, which is expected to lead to a reduction in infant



*Equipment for a nomadic clinic is packed up and ready to be moved.
Photo: Danida.*



A nomadic clinic uses low cost technology and low maintenance medical equipment. Photo: Danida

mortality. In addition, the distribution of treated bed nets has grown, thus reducing malaria incidents in children under five.

Back in Kubialo, the nomadic clinic will remain for 10 more days before moving on to one of the other five settlements it visits. In a few months it will return to Kubialo, stay several weeks and again move on. In this way, the clinic is able to assist a population of up to 40,000 semi-nomadic people. Thousands of people in the large area covered by the clinic would otherwise have no access to medical care. Meanwhile Fatuma can relax, sure in the knowledge that her son has been treated for his respiratory infection and that the vaccinations he has received will help to protect him from further illness.