Editor’s Note

As we close 2017; we are delighted to share with your the Straight Talk Foundation E- Newsletter for the latter part of the year. In this particular issue, we will share with you some insights from our interventions in Karamoja following a visit of the STF Board of Directors to the region. The newsletter highlights key achievements made from projects such as the prevention of violence against children; with the technical support from Global Health and funding from the Oak Foundation. In a separate collaboration, Closing the Gap STF concluded the refurbishment of several facilities, that were formally handed over to the local governments in Gulu and Kitgum.

STF Board of Directors visit Karamoja

The STF Board of Directors visited the organization’s sites in Karamoja on 7th July 2017. The programs visited included the Irish Aid Bursary Program, the “Raising Hope” Project supported by UNICEF, and the Prevention of HIV/AIDS in Communities of Karamoja (PACK) funded by the Embassy of Ireland. The team participated in the following.

Inspiring young people: STF Board members had informal interactions with young people in selected learning institutions that included Moroto High School and Karamoja Development Programme Primary school (KDP). Members provided words of encouragement to learners through motivation talks; career guidance and counselling on various issues.

Engagement with stakeholders: STF Board visited a health facility in Moroto (DMO’s clinic) to gain insights into STF work with the health system and their contribution towards the establishment and support of safe places for young people. At school level, STF Board had interactions with teachers and staff who expressed appreciation for the Board visit and support to the education and health of adolescents in Karamoja.

Engagement with the community: STF Board participated in a community dialogue in Lorengae sub county in Nakapiripirit District. During this visit; STF Board gained insights into the level of importance the locals attach to education for their children especially girls. Community leaders emphasized and encouraged community members to send their children to school. Despite such community initiatives, it is was evident that community mobilization was still important so as to enhance
In 2014, with funding from the United States Department of Labor (USDOL), STF entered a collaboration with World Education, Inc. /Bantwana in partnership Uganda Women’s Effort to Save Orphans, and RECO Industries Limited to implement Adolescent Youth Empowerment and Development Initiative (AYEDI), a three year project that has been concluded. The project interventions aimed at reducing adolescent youth engagement in hazardous work in the districts of Gulu, Lira, Iganga, and Bugiri.

The project served at least 4,277 vulnerable youth aged 15-17 years by providing youth with little or no formal education with functional literacy and numeracy skills; a Non-formal Education Trade Certificate program targeting youth interested in pursuing work in a specific trade; and enrollment in secondary school for primary school graduates.

Further to this, youth were equipped with entrepreneurship and agribusiness skills, linked to companies to start a micro franchise or micro enterprise, and/or linked to internship opportunities. At least 40,000 indirect beneficiaries were reached through dissemination of occupational safety materials, links to existing Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) groups for caregivers, training of teachers in life skills and HIV prevention, and community mobilization activities conducted by youth.

In 2015, STF received support from Planned Parenthood Global-Africa (PPG) to implement “Closing the Gap” a three year project that seeks to support maternal and child health with a focus on increasing uptake of family planning services through collaboration with 18 health facilities, both public and private facilities in Kitgum and Gulu Districts. As the collaboration draws to a close; there have been significant achievements made in the following areas.

Health facility renovation: In light of the limited coverage of rural electrification, STF with support from PPG, supported Gulu and Kitgum local governments by renovating facilities and installing solar power to improve the quality of health service delivery among other benefits.

Supply of health equipment: These include Delivery beds, Bed screens, Drip stand, Gynae Lamps, Autoclave drums, BP machines, and weighing scales among others.

Establishment of youth corners: All collaborating health facilities were supported to establish youth friendly spaces through donation of equipment such as TV flat screens and DVDs to support youth and educate them on healthy choices to enable them have direct access to health information and services.

The installation of solar power have greatly improved uptake of services at the facilities as noted by a Nursing Officer at Mucwini Health Centre III Mr, Ronald who stated; “We were using candles and phone lights to deliver women before we started referring them to Kitgum General Hospital. The day STF installed solar at our facility, marked the end of our referrals”.

Mr. Robin the administrator at Kitgum general hospital noted that; “Before the renovation of the youth corner at the hospital, the number of youth turning up for health services fluctuated between 50-100, but the renovation have greatly increased their number to between 150-200 daily.”
Violence against children (VAC) in Uganda is widespread with many children routinely exposed to physical, psychological or emotional, economical, sexual violence. This is further complicated by negligent treatment of children in homes, schools, state institutions such as care and justice systems, workplaces and other settings. Much of the violence against children remain normalized and socially condoned and yet perpetuated by individuals responsible for their protection and wellbeing.

STF in collaboration with Global Health Uganda embarked on implementing “Raising the Bar on VAC” a one year with funding support from the Oak Foundation to strengthen sector leadership and commitment for prevention of Violence against Children (VAC) with a particular focus on the Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health (ASRH) Sector in Uganda.

This project supports the integration of violence prevention into the ASRH health sector through work with MoH and selected ASRH stakeholders through sharing and learning from VAC related evidence in Uganda.

Is envisaged that the selected stakeholders will develop strategies to effectively prevent VAC in Uganda. These include Ministry of health (MOH), Ministry of Gender, labor and Social Development, Ministry of Education, Judiciary, police and local and international organizations (CSOs) that focus on adolescents.

As part of startup, initiatives sought to foster commitment by ASRH stakeholders integrate prevention of violence against children into existing interventions. A total of 32 stakeholders were identified and selected to participate in a learning session to jointly identify mechanisms to promote violence prevention as an agenda within the reproductive health sector.

This was informed by dissemination of the results of the Violence Against Children Survey 2015 conducted by MoGLSD in close collaboration with UNICEF Uganda, Centre For Disease Control (CDC) & Division of Global Health HIV/AIDS (DGHA) Uganda.
STF engagements at the national level

The Psychology Matters Event:
STF participated in the Psychology Matters Event that took place at Makerere University, Freedom Square; organized by the School of Psychology, Makerere University in collaboration with The Psychology Club and the Counseling Center of Makerere University.

The event aimed at promoting the field of psychology, to destigmatise seeking of mental health services and to demonstrate the diversity and use of psychology in different occupations and NGOs, to provide a platform for NGOs to share how they engage, utilize or promote the science/ field of psychology as well as to engage and promote collaboration between the School of Psychology and like minded organizations.

STF showcased the innovative ways of integrating psychology through the counseling techniques used, IEC materials developed and the different activities psychology graduates have contributed to in the Organization.

STF participated in the SRHR/HIV and SGBV Integration Market Place held during the East and South-African Technical Consultation and Ugandan National Dialogue on SRH/HIV/SGBV Integration that was held on 2nd November, 2017 in Entebbe. The aim of the meeting was to bring together key national stakeholders to be updated on progress to date in strengthening SRH/ HIV/GBV integration in Uganda, learn lessons from other countries within a South to South exchange plus plan for national standardized scale up over the coming years. During the market place session, STF showcased the different ways that HIV/SRH/SGBV is being integrated in programming. Specifically, STF shared IEC materials, tools and MenEngage Network resources.

STF participated in the national World AIDS Day commemorative event that took place in Kole District with the theme; Reaching men, girls and young women to reduce new HIV infections. The commemorations were in line with the main area of focus for the Presidential Fast Track Initiative to End AIDS in Uganda which recognizes men, girls and young women’s right to access quality HIV and AIDS services.

STF disseminated HIV/AIDS advocacy messages and shared best practices as well as lessons learned with a particular focus on advocacy activities implemented through Advocacy For Better Health Project as well as work done with men and boys through Men Engage Network Uganda geared towards ending AIDS.

World AIDS Day Commemoration

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The Vice President HE Edward Sekandi at the STF stall in Kole District