Improving community access to health products through the Flexi fund project

The Flexi Fund project is funded by Rutgers and implemented by STF, Family Life Education Program (FLEP), Healthy Entrepreneurs (HE), National Forum of PLHIV Networks in Uganda (NAFOPHANU), Reach A Hand Uganda (RAHU), Reproductive Health Uganda (RHU), Restless Development (RD), STF and Uganda Network of Young PLHIV (UNYPA).

The project aims to improve young people’s access to integrated SRHR information and services. It targets adolescents and young people (10-24yrs), in and out of school, young mothers and pregnant girls, young people living with and affected by HIV, and other community members with limited access to services. The project’s components are community health services delivered through Health Entrepreneurs, integrated SRHR-HIV training of peers to improve Community health service delivery, demand creation, Social Accountability for SRHR-HIV services, strengthening the referral System and operational research.

STF working with the SRHR Alliance members has trained 375 Peer Educators/Village Health Teams (VHTs) in Community service delivery using the Health Entrepreneurs (HE) model in Mayuge and Bugiri districts.

The initiative has also empowered Health Entrepreneurs with skills to engage communities and make referrals to health facilities in their communities to further improve young people’s access to integrated SRHR information and improve community health service delivery. To date they have served over 10,000 young people with SRHR information in the rural sub counties in the two districts of Iganga and Bugiri.

Editor’s Note


During this period, STF hosted His Excellency William Carlos, Ambassador of Ireland, during his familiarization visit to Karamoja.

In this issue, we share STF’s experience with the Flexi Fund project, an initiative addressing increased access to health care products in Eastern Uganda.

STF commenced a collaboration with the Danish Youth Council to build the capacity of Straight Talk club leaders through providing leadership and financial management skills. We hope you find this edition insightful!

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TF hosted His Excellency William Carlos, the Ambassador of Ireland, during his familiarization visit to Karamoja in February 2019. Ambassador William Carlos was hosted by STF at Moroto High School, one of the beneficiary Institutions of the Irish Aid Bursary Program. He was introduced to partners implementing the Prevention of AIDs among Communities in Karamoja (PACK) project also funded by the Embassy of Ireland.

In his remarks, His Excellency William Carlos commended Straight Talk Foundation for its outstanding performance in the management of the Irish Karamoja Bursary Program. Moroto High School administration was recognized for their outstanding contribution towards transforming the region through imparting education to the students as the country’s future leaders.

While interacting with the students, the Ambassador encouraged them to excel in their education because it was important in defining their future.

As part of the Karamojong culture of initiating a visitor into the region, the bursary beneficiaries dressed H.E (Nakatukok), handed him a stool (Ekicolong), a traditional hat (Akopia), a necklace (Akoromwa), a walking stick (Abela), a bangle and given a Karimojong name Lokolong meaning sun-shine because he visited during the dry season.

STF welcomes new Directors

Paul Ankunda works with the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. He is an expert in Finance, Audit and Governance, and a winner of ACCA African Region Advocate of the year 2018.

Mr Sam Bwaya is the Executive Director of the Institute of Work culture and Ethics. Sam has a rare combination of legal, finance, auditing business and leadership skills.

STF is pleased to welcome Mr Sam Bwaya and Mr Paul Ankunda who have joined its Board of Directors.

Mr. Sam Bwaya

Mr. Paul Ankunda
In February 2019, STF in partnership with UNGR— the union of youth clubs in Denmark with support from the Danish Youth Fund (DUF) commenced the third Youth Leader Exchange grant (2018-2019). Four Ugandans (2 boys and 2 girls) participated in a month long youth leadership exchange training program in Denmark working with youth clubs in Denmark. Participants were equipped with skills to enable them undertake youth led planning, youth to youth engagement, conflict management, advocacy and accountability.

Since their return, the youth leaders have commenced the provision of support to STF’s club development program. It is anticipated to serve 210 Straight Talk clubs through trainings in sustainable club management in 14 districts.

STF uses the peer-to-peer approach in its club trainings to empower youth leaders to undertake training in school clubs. The partnership with Denmark has supported STF to grow its club development program with the development of Club training guides.

Supported by UNICEF, the Raising Hope: Enabling the Adolescent Girl Realize Her Full Potential program aims to increase access to improved service delivery (education/learning program) and utilization by increasing and sustaining demand for education services, through promotion of positive social norms and creation of awareness for adolescent health education information and services among adolescent girls aged 10-19. The project is implemented in 14 districts of Abim, Amudat, Kaabong, Kotido, Moroto, Napak, Nakapiripirit, Iganga, Kamuli, Arua, Adjumani, Moyo, Nebbi and Yumbe.

To date, the project has served 420 schools by training senior women and men teachers in the provision of adolescent youth health service delivery within the established safe corners. This intervention has further supported school clubs to serve as platforms to schedule specific activities to address Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHH), prevention of Violence Against Children in Schools (VACIS) and other Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) information concerns. The project has recorded 264 functional clubs that meet regularly and implement plans overseen by a Senior woman / man teacher. The initiatives have been critical in supporting target schools in establishing strategic networks with health facilities to enable learners access services through visits of health workers to schools. The visits serve as an opportunity for further information dissemination, psychosocial support through counselling and are a source of referral.

The initiative has been instrumental in equipping communities with knowledge on key family practice packages through provision of on-going counseling for adolescents at family level. This linkage further keeps communities abreast of school activities and has facilitated advocacy for enabling environments at schools through the School Management Committees (SMCs). Important to note is that such advocacy has resulted in the creation of supportive learning environments such as the provision of sanitary pads within the safe spaces. Joint monitoring of the project with the District Local Government structures has further strengthened program initiatives and yielded a sense of ownership at district level.

The Junior Journalists trained in each of the districts provide further linkage between schools and communities and facilitate adolescent - district leader engagement. During such fora, adolescents discuss gaps and challenges that hinder the creation of an enabling environment at school. Commitments from these engagements are followed up by the Junior Journalists.

The project has further linked out of school adolescents to vocational training opportunities through work with Enabel in the provision of vocational skills. As a result, 45 young people have benefitted from this skills development component.
Calculating the cost of pregnancy: Informing family planning programming for young people, Advancing Partners and Communities (APC) project

This collaboration with FH360 was initiated in 2018 in Butaleja District. The project seeks to create awareness about the availability of family planning services and information, identify and address social cultural barriers that hinder uptake of family planning services especially for young people, persons with disabilities and women of low parity in Kachonga Sub County in Butaleja district. The key point of referral for this project is Nabiganda Health center IV. At district level, STF collaborates with African Women Service Trust (AWOST) a community-based organization in Butaleja district.

In the interventions, Butaleja District Local Government (DLG) and other stakeholders support the initiative through conducting dialogues to stimulate discourse on the cost of pregnancy using the Pregnancy Calculator, an innovation developed by STF. The method enables communities appreciate in economic terms, the costs of managing a pregnancy and to critically consider using FP to have children by choice and not by chance.

It considers the monthly costs of facilitating a pregnancy in terms of the essential needs like clothing, antenatal care and other requirements until delivery. Activities from this project have served a total of 312 (155M, 157F) people. Of these 141 are young people (15 – 24) years.

To date the Nabiganda health center has registered 67 complete referrals (7 for Bilateral Tubal Ligation, 21 for Injectables, 17 for Implant, 16 for Depo-Provera and 6 for Sayana Press. From August 2018 to date, access to family planning at Nabiganda Health center has increased significantly from 85 to 229 and the numbers served with injectables directly by the VHTs, from 18 to 102 according to data at the facility.

Other activities in this project include; Advocacy and networking targeting different opinion leaders. The leaders have made commitments including integration of FP information and messages in their work. In other areas, health workers are invited by opinion leaders to provide information communities and congregations on FP. Home vists reached 137 couples including 5 women with disabilities and 106 young people out of school with FP information and counselings.

Issues identified during the pregnancy calculator dialogues were linked to community radio programs and 64 community members from Kachonga. Topics of discussion included men’s involvement in family planning, social cultural barriers to FP, myths and misconceptions on FP.

INCREASING ACCESS TO SRH INFORMATION AND SERVICES FOR VERY YOUNG ADOLESCENTS IN WAKISO

STF and Save the Children have collaborated since 2017 to increase access to SRH information and services for young adolescents in the four sub counties of Gombe, Kakiri, Masuulita and Namayumba in Wakiso district. 81 schools supported by Save the Children were targeted with the intervention through the production and distribution of age-appropriate SRH information in the Young Talk newsletter.

STF uses face-to-face interactions with young people at the different stages of production of the Young Talk. The program supports referral linkages with health facilities, working hand in hand with key duty bearers.

In skills development, young people have been trained in using local resources to make sanitary pads. This is aimed at increasing girls’ attendance, retention and completion of school.

Through this collaboration 46 ‘Junior Journalists’ have been trained in basic skills in journalism for print and radio to enable them speak out on SRH issues in their communities through interviews, dialogues and community mobilization.

The collaboration seeks to build the capacity of young people, selected community champions and important people in the lives of young people to provide psychosocial support through counseling.

STF trajectory is that young people in these four sub counties will reach out to their peers and confidently mobilize their communities to ensure a healthier future generation within their areas of influence.