

A4HU Newsletter

January - March 2020



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Dear Reader,

Hope you are staying Healthy. During the quarter, A4HU continued to make young people's access to sexual and reproductive health information and services a priority.

A4HU also made significant progress over the quarter in advocating for a conducive SRH policy environment for young people. Our passion for serving young people remains as strong as ever. During the quarter, we rolled up our sleeves and hit the ground running. I am fortunate together with my team to contribute to empowering young people in Uganda.

A4HU is currently implementing a number of projects and in this issue we shall share some updates and progress thus far. Feel free to share any ideas that you believe will make us better and stronger.

We strongly believe in your continued support, partnership and contributions that have enabled us reach this far during the first quarter.

The first quarter hasn't been without challenges. As you might know, we are battling a global COVID 19 pandemic and this has in a way affected our operations. We are currently working remotely and finding other ways of reaching our stakeholders.

In this quarterly issue, we share a quick snapshot of what has been achieved from January to March 2020.

Happy Reading, Stay Safe, Stay Healthy!



Dr. Florence Ajok

CEO – A4HU

District CSO Advocacy Meetings

A4HU conducted district CSO coalition's advocacy meetings to analyse the budget study analysis BFPs 2020/2021, develop annual CSO coalitions advocacy work plans and to develop common FP funding asks as we see commit-

ments from the technical working group meetings. Key of the asks was the need to revise the existing staffing norms to bridge the gap of understaffing in most health facilities.

A4HU collaboration with various duty bearers including District Health Office, District Community Office, Community Action Committees and Uganda Police is supporting improvements in service delivery of reproductive health information and services, strengthened referral pathways and coordination leading to a more efficient system that delivers services for young people and protects them from harm, abuse, and exploitation.

A4HU Led Advocacy Efforts Leading to Increased Budget Allocations.

A4HU supported Ministry of Health and district local governments to hold technical working group meetings. During the quarter, six (6) Family Planning (FP) technical working group meetings were conducted. Of these, two were at national level and one in each district of operation (Tororo, Mukono, Mityana and Kamuli) all advocating for maintenance and introduction of new FP budget line items in the annual sub national and national annual work plans. Through these meetings, the following commitments have been made and implemented;

A National task force that included A4HU was formed to finalize the development of the FP financing strategy that is expected to provide direction for FP financing in the country and review and evaluate the National FP costed Implementation plan.

In Mityana district, the office of the CAO committed to bringing on board more decision-makers to such meetings to support budget increment and the district committed to integrating the VHT activities in health facility work plans to support in the provision of FP services within the district and to maintain Shs. 5,800,000 towards, health education.

Mukono district maintained FP line items especially under Adolescent health and this includes FP and youth friendly services. Some of the line items include; school health, community health, maternal health, FP service provision, health promotion and education and health system

strengthening. In addition, the total amount allocated as per district budget framework paper (BFP) is Shs. 6,800,000.

Tororo District committed to invest in the capacity and mentoring of health workers on provision of LARCS and empower them with counselling skills on LARCS as reported in the Health annual report (July- Dec 2019/2020) that young mothers are opting for short-term methods without considering the repercussions.

Kamuli District committed to prioritize FP in the district work plan and budget to address some challenges like delayed supply of FP commodities, under reporting, and management of side effects through comprehensive training of health workers on FP service provision and management. In addition, to use the draft DCIP to support in the planning and FP programming in the district.

Supporting Young People to Access Youth Friendly Services

During the quarter, Action 4 Health Uganda (A4HU) worked with and engaged young people towards enabling them access youth friendly (health) services and having their voices heard in decision making processes at all levels. During the reporting period, A4HU reached 11,590 (5,173 Males and 6,417 Females) young people (both in and out-of-school) with reproductive health and sanitation and hygiene information and services (including menstrual hygiene).

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A4HU registered 55.4% participation of young girls receiving SRH information, knowledge and services. A4HU believes that the provision of an integrated package of gender-sensitive and stigma-free sexual and reproductive

health services plays

a critical role in addressing the specific needs of young girls such as reducing unintended pregnancies. Women-only service types receiving increase in demand include cervical cancer screening as well as services related to menstruation. With a 44.6% participation of young males registered as receiving reproductive health information, it can be concluded that engaging and educating

young men around their own sexual and reproductive health is imperative in preventing STIs including HIV, preventing unintended pregnancies, and reducing the burden of these issues on women. As thus, clear strategic actions for building male involvement in SRH need to be defined



Young people line up to receive SRH services

and implemented as a means of improving both young men's and women's health outcomes.

A4HU Promoting SRHR and menstrual hygiene in schools

A4HU worked with the Mityana District Education Office, District Health Office, and health facilities to develop and implement termly school health education outreach work plans. As a result, 30 health talks and edutainment sessions were conducted to inform and empower 4,197 (1,689 Males and 2,508 Females) in-school young people with sexual and reproductive health messages including HIV prevention, sexually transmitted infections, teenage pregnancy, and menstrual hygiene. This has led to re-

markable change in the behaviour of the learners in regards to menstrual hygiene in schools. Occurrences of stigma associated with menstruation in school, especially by boys against girls has reduced, and the boys are becoming more responsive to girls who experience menstruation in school, by either referring them to the senior woman teacher or not laughing at them. In collaboration with health workers and District

Health Office, A4HU supported ongoing capacity building to senior men and women teachers in selected schools on sexual reproductive health and menstrual hygiene



Our Training Officer teaching students about body changes

Taking Services Closer to the Community Through Outreaches



A4HU facilitated trained Health Workers to conduct twenty-eight (28) health education outreaches in remote communities, together with peer educators. 1,165 (654 Males and 511 Females) young people were reached with messages on HIV/STIs and family planning services

(contraception counselling and provision) and condom usage. This knowledge is enabling young people to make more informed decisions regarding their own sexual health and rights.

Additionally, in an effort to enable young people access sexuality education and realize their sexual rights, A4HU supported 50 out-of-school youth clubs to reach 6,228 (2,830 Males and 3,398 Females) young people with reproductive health messages on HIV prevention and transmission, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), gen-

der based violence, family planning services and condom usage. Peer Facilitators reach club members and community through peer learning sessions, edutainment sessions and exhibitions. The interactive sessions have led to improvements in young people's health seeking behaviours. The theater for development sessions (edutainments and exhibitions) helped young people adopt effective HIV prevention and family planning strategies. Furthermore, in an effort towards improving reproductive health commodity availability at youth friendly health facilities, A4HU worked with Health Workers to track and report reproductive health supplies including family planning methods in 7 health facilities.

Strengthening of National Youth Secretariat

In an effort to establish productive linkages between Youth structures (YECs and Youth Champions), A4HU facilitated engagements through which various young leaders shared experiences, lessons and practices with other A4HU Young Leaders who are mobilized into the National Youth Network. This was meant to ensure that the network is able to coordinate and represent the young peoples' voices and issues, plan for 2020 was drawn and a refresher on the quick Wins for advocacy in A4HU Perspective was conducted. The platform will provide capacity building opportunities for young leaders to ad-

vance in leadership and advocacy towards addressing and promoting issues of concern for the young people. Commitments and advocacy change actions were documented, and an action plan formulated and are to be followed up by the young people and implementing partners. In her closing remarks, the CEO - A4HU Dr Florence Ajok thanked the young leaders for committing themselves to serve young people voluntarily. She cautioned them against actively getting into

politics. "Kindly disassociate yourselves from the politics or else you will be misunderstood in the community," she said.

She urged the youth leaders to plan for their clubs, be accountable to youth clubs and A4HU and identify clubs that can compete for funds from other donors.

The National Youth Secretariat was established to coordinate 40 clubs and 5 Youth empowerment centres in the district of Wakiso, Tororo, Mukono and

Busia. The secretariat has its offices at **Muvubuka Agunjuse** Empowerment Centre at Kisenyi health centre IV in Kampala.



Support Young People to Participate in National Commemoration Events

In a bid to expose and engage more young people in advocacy and decision making forum, young people were supported to attend this year's annual women's day celebrations that was held on Sunday 8th March 2020 in Mbale District Eastern Uganda.

This year's women's day celebrations were held at Malukhu grounds in Mbale under the theme **"I am Generation Equality: Realizing Women's Rights"** and the chief Guest was the president of the republic of Uganda. A4HU was represented by 25 young people (10 males and 15 females) in a marching procession before the chief guest.

In partnership with world vision Uganda, A4HU supported in convening a young people's children's parliament with the aim of formulating the children's major asks for the main celebrations as part of pre-event activities. The children parliament brought together over 200 young people from various primary and secondary schools from Mbale, Butalejja, Manafwa, Bududa and other District leaders from the said Districts. The policy makers in attendance were the DHO, Senior probation officer, Town clerk all from Mbale District.

Youth Jam

Action for Health Uganda, Eagle Youth Development Initiative and WEtalk Series Uganda

and the local leaders of Busukuma held a youth jam. The 5th Youth Jam transpired at OutSpan primary school in Kiwedda village, Busukuma Sub County, Wakiso district on 31st January 2020. **60** people attended the Youth Jam of which **29** were males and **31** females under the theme: **'Ending Rape and Defilement amongst youth in community or homes'**. The Youth Jam is a safe space for young people to dialogue using community panels, edutainment, power speech, sign language themed poetry, and hard-talks on topics they choose as young people. Commitments and advocacy change actions are documented, disseminated and followed up by the young people and implementing partners.

Through this, 709,000 people were reached online using twitter with a total engagement of **2100** people following the hash tag #YouthJamUg

Joining a youth club saved me from drug addiction and Teenage Pregnancy

Oweki Rukia aged 17 from Arubaine village, Busia district in the eastern part of Uganda is poised for greater things after surviving drug addiction and teenage pregnancy.

Girls in Oweki's neighborhood and among other communities across Uganda navigate a complex web of socio-cultural barriers that limit their access to Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) information and services. Myths and misperceptions around contraception remain widespread and public health facilities often lack youth friendly services.

The consequences run deep. The resulting lack of knowledge and access to services as well as stigmatisation of young people's SRH in societies impede the majority of them to live a healthy SRH life. This has contributed to high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and other STIs, teenage pregnancies and its associated complications, including unsafe abortions, high mortality rates and fistula.

The Uganda Demographic and Health Survey (UDHS) 2016 indicates that females aged 10-14

have already started child bearing. One in four girls aged 19 years and below has already started child bearing, 12% of young women aged 15-24 have had sex before age 15 while 17% of young men aged 15-24 have had sex before age 15 or younger and teenage pregnancy rate stands at 25.

A 2017 district report indicates that teenage pregnancy in the district stands at 28% above the national average which is 25%.

Luckily for Oweki, she survived addiction and teenage pregnancy all thanks to the Action 4 Health Uganda (A4HU) and

Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW) supported Social Economic Empowerment Project (SEEP) that coordinates peer to peer cascading of SRH information to over 2000 young people in 40 youth clubs in Wakiso, Tororo, Busia, Kampala, and Mukono districts.

"Joining Provident Initiatives Uganda Youth Club enabled me to change my life and behaviour," Oweki says. "I come from a family education is expensive because my parents are poor and because of that, my mum and brother tried to forcefully marry me off in my Senior One when I was only 14 years of age."



Oweki narrates that she became disgusted with life and started taking opium, marijuana and other drugs including alcohol. She notes that her parents went ahead to torture her for refusing to get married until she threatened to sue them.

This forced her to join some dancing group in town where she met three other girls young than her. In this group, Oweki says they would go to disco clubs, abuse drugs and alcohol so as to gain confidence to perform on stage.

Oweki saw her life going to waste until she met members of Provident Initiatives Uganda Youth Club Edutainment team performing at an outreach.

"Since I have always had the love for

music and dance, I got lured to join the team through an A4HU peer educator name Shalaba Denis who introduced me to the youth club leader. I later joined the club and for the first time I tested for HIV/AIDS and started attending peer learning sessions, training in drama about SRH which enabled me realize the value of my life," she said.

Adding, "I also stopped going to disco clubs and quit drugs. That's how I survived drugs and teenage pregnancy. Oweki notes that sadly, her colleagues who remained in the former dancing group are now victims of teenage pregnancy.

With support from Denis (a member of Provident), Oweki was able to start working in a salon where she currently earns a living. The group also moves to functions for instance graduation and weddings ceremonies to entertain guest to generate money for survival. The group also does peer learning sessions in communities.

"Peer learning sessions enabled me to get to know how to make informed decisions about my life. It also made me realize that it's my responsibility to take care of myself and not my parents," says Oweki.

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Innovatively Mobilising the Community Using Youth Truck Model

During the quarter, the Youth Truck supported the following events; Youth Jam, community dialogue, Integrated Community Health outreaches in Tororo, International Women's Day awareness activities in Mbale district, SGBV integrated community outreaches in Mityana and Integrated community health outreaches in Busia. The community integrated health outreaches are aimed at strengthening clubs and YEC activities at the grass root level through increased uptake for SRH services.

vices among the young people. The activities conducted included; mobilization of communities, focused group discussions on SRH related issues, edutainment, and condom distribution.

During women's day celebrations, the Youth Truck took lead in creating awareness in the communities of Namisindwa, Manafwa and Bududa districts about gender responsiveness and its benefits to the

lives of young people especially girls through distribution of IEC materials, film shows, dialogues, condom demonstration and distribution and road shows with support of the youth truck. The Youth Truck is a mobile rural outreach service, which gives access to information and training of millions of vulnerable young people Many of whom live in the far outer lying areas of Uganda including internally displaced. The



Youth Truck enables A4HU to take its services according to needs and demands directly to target groups and to adapt them to the

local services and needs, with a trained youthful team on board.

A4HU/Bonita Training Centre

A4HU/Bonita Training Centre is a premier training facility located at the heart of Lubowa hill. The facility is brainchild of DSW International and now under management of Action 4 Health Uganda. The facility has a serene, spacious and friendly secure space for both indoor and outdoor trainings, workshops, conference, meeting, retreat, youth camps and private functions

The A4HU/Bonita Training Centre of Excellence offers the following customized courses Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights,

Family Planning Policy Advocacy, Monitoring and Evaluation, Entrepreneurship and Business Development, Life Skills and Resource Mobilization

The Training Centre identifies trends and developments gaps in the public health and translates them into capacity building needs and requirements for the different sectors and constituencies.

During the quarter (Jan – Mar 2020), the Training Centre hosted a number of activities among which were; Conducted a Training Centre facility Needs review

and Assessment; Conducted A4HUs staffs training needs assessment survey; Hosted and facilitated the 30 FAWU Uganda Youth Volunteers Training; Hosted 7 wellness sessions with A4HUs staffs in partnership with Kitebi Youth club; Hosted the National Secretariat transition to National Youth Network; Held 1st Business Development Consultative meeting; Reviewing the training materials; Hosted TEAM -UP partners review and planning meeting.

Action 4 Health Uganda

A4HU Training Centre

Located at the heart of Lubowa hill, A4HU has a serene and spacious Training Centre with friendly secure space for workshops, conference, meeting, retreat and private functions. The Training Centre has a capacity to host 300 guests, endowed with two consultation/discussion rooms. Highly professional in-house keeping catering services that provides all meals and barbeques. Wide and green gardens with the capacity of hosting up to 800 guests for outdoor events - Hostel facilities are available for up to 30 guests double occupancy. Some of the courses offered are; Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Family Planning Policy Advocacy, Monitoring and Evaluation, Entrepreneurship and Business Development, Life Skills, Resource Mobilisation etc.



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