



Unleashing the Power of Young People to  
Transform Communities.



**STORIES OF  
CHANGE**



Welcome to "Stories of Change" by A4HU, a short, but captivating collection of real-life narratives that celebrate the remarkable work of youth igniting positive impact within their communities. These stories shine a light on each person's incredible potential to drive meaningful change.

A4HU, a non-governmental organization with a steadfast commitment to empowering young people, stands at the forefront of addressing pressing issues related to Sexual Reproduction and Health (SRH), economic empowerment, and poverty alleviation through comprehensive health and development initiatives.

At A4HU, our mission is to empower youth to become agents of change, and this publication embodies the heart of our work.

These stories highlight the indomitable spirit of individuals who confront challenges such as poverty, inequality, and the transformation of mindsets with determination. They exemplify the impact that dedication and passion can have in addressing some of the most critical issues we face today.

Whether you aspire to unleash your potential for making a difference or are simply eager to learn about the transformative work of Action 4 Health Uganda, this booklet is the perfect companion. Let these stories inspire you, stir your compassion, and kindle your determination to take action and make a lasting difference in your own community. Together, let us embrace the spirit of change and work towards creating a brighter future for all.



# LABOUR OF PASSION



After David and his fellow peers from Kitayunjwa Youth Champions of Change and Inspiration Actors Youth Club attended an outreach by Action 4 Health Uganda (A4HU), they approached the field team to find out more about the organisation. The field team then invited them to attend a youth meeting. Their participation in this meeting earned them the support of A4HU, which funded the club's registration at the sub-county in 2021. Once this relationship with A4HU was sealed, one of the youth club members was invited to participate in entrepreneurship training at the Bonita Training Center, which is housed at the A4HU head offices in Lubowa. That member then returned to train his peers in the youth club.



The club agreed to start a savings group. From their modest savings, the club rented a small piece of land where they decided to grow passion fruits and bought seedlings and other inputs. The garden is managed by the group members who did the initial grafting by themselves and the fumigating to rid the garden of mole rats and pests. Despite the challenges with climate change causing unreliable rainfall patterns, pests and disease, the club is in its third season of growing passion fruits. With proceeds from the passion fruit sales, they managed to increase the size of the land that they initially planted on and also bought three piglets, of which one is pregnant. The club plans to give each member a piglet to empower them with their own 'income generating pig'. Additionally, some of the members are able to grow beans and on the same land as the passion fruits which gives their incomes a boost.

With the incomes coming in, Kitayunjwa Youth Champions of Change and Inspiration Actors have been able to conduct several community dialogues in schools and in different communities where they give education talks and share age-appropriate SRH information with young people In and Out-of-School. Specifically, they have taught students how to make reusable sanitary pads with simple tools like needles, thread and fabric. They see that period poverty impedes girls' education in their communities and are keen to address the issue.

The club's efforts were noticed, and they soon gained recognition for their work in the community. They have been invited to speak at various events, and people have taken notice of their passion and dedication.

Ultimately, David and his Kitayunjwa Youth Champions of Change and Inspiration Actors created a movement that inspired young people to become agents of change in their community. They showed that with hard work, dedication, and a passion for making a difference, lives can be changed.



# Cutting Edge

Kato Joseph, a 25-year-old father, has a dream of owning a chain of barber shops. However, to make this dream a reality, he knew he had to step out on his own. After careful deliberations, Kato quit his job at a salon belonging to someone else to open his own salon in his community. Although being a business owner took work, Kato believed that it was the right step towards achieving his dream. However, Kato soon realized that running a barber shop was not without its challenges. Some days, the shop would struggle to stay afloat, and there were times when it would remain closed. Determined to elevate his life and his young family, Kato joined Katoogo Youth Club. It was during the club discussions that the members decided to venture into agri-business. Together, they pooled funds and planted corn (maize) to create income for their members and run club activities.



The youth club members jointly maintained and looked after the garden, and they were able to reap a harvest that earned Kato UGX300,000 (75 Euros). The money earned from the corn (maize) gave Kato hope for his business. He invested some of the money into his struggling salon, and the rest he ploughed back into agri-business to continue growing corn (maize). Kato is keen on growing his now one salon to a chain of salons on properties he wants to own rather than rent.

“Things are moving on  
**WELL**”



However, his biggest hurdle is capital, as he would like to put a fresh coat of paint in the salon to make it more appealing to his mostly youthful customer base. 'The money from the corn (maize) gave me hope for my business. Bitambula bulungi (things are going well).' He openly discusses Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) topics with his wife and credits his small family size to the knowledge he has gained in SRH from the youth club. My wife and I are keen on family planning, which is why I have a 5-year-old. I am not yet ready to have a second child. Kato prides himself on being able to look after his young family and believes that family planning has been crucial in enabling him to do that. One of the best things that has happened to him since joining Katoogo Youth Club is the good friendships he has made and his change in mindset. His biggest advice to his peers is to stop playing around and focus on hard work. Kato's story is a reminder that achieving one's dreams is not without challenges, but it is possible with determination, hard work, and community support. He has been able to elevate his life, make new friends, and learn new skills that have helped him personally and professionally. When we come together as a community, we can achieve great things.



# LIQUID SOAP AND SANITARY PADS:

## A Menstrual Hygiene Story

The Youth Club at Katogo is the scene of an exciting story. We met with the chairman of the youth club, Amos Nsimbe, to learn how their Income Generating Activity (IGA) rescued young girls from period poverty. Period poverty is a significant issue in Uganda, particularly among girls and women in rural areas and low-income communities. Despite the Ugandan government launching the Menstrual Health Management Policy in 2018, a 2018 report by UNICEF showed that only 22% of girls in Uganda have access to sanitary pads.

The lack of access to menstrual products significantly impacts girls' education, as they may miss school during their periods or drop out altogether. Those who miss school due to their periods are also more likely to fall behind in their studies, which can have long-term consequences for their prospects.





The young girls in the club approached Amos to talk candidly with him one day. They shared their challenges during the menses (monthly period). They told him that they could not buy sanitary pads when needed, and their parents were not able to buy the pads for them. This meant they had to use old pieces of clothing, leaves and even newspapers if they didn't want to miss classes. This left the girls vulnerable to infections yet, which they could not effectively treat since they didn't have money to go to the health facility. The young ladies did not want to drop out of school. They hoped the youth club would train them to make reusable sanitary pads. This, however, was not possible at the time because it would have been a huge undertaking and the club could not afford to do it. Faced with this dilemma the members presented, Amos saw it as an opportunity to dispel myths and misconceptions within his club about Menstrual Hygiene Management. The youth quickly realised that they would collectively need a regular source of income if they were going to afford their own pads. They zeroed down on liquid soap as their IGA. After three weeks of training in making liquid soap, they made one five-litre jerrycan of liquid soap at a cost of UGX15,000 (3.75 Euros), which they sold at 30,000 (7.5 Euros).



Incidentally, their first customer was the doctor at Katogo Health Centre III. With their parents and community behind them, these young ladies and their youth club started selling the liquid soap. They quickly figured out that they could make more sales on the days when the health centre was especially busy. They also use every community outreach as an opportunity to sale their liquid soap as they interact with their peers within different communities.

The club set up weekly meetings scheduled every Sunday to discuss business plans and how to share the profits accrued. The young ladies who initiated the business receive a percentage over and above as co-founders and can now purchase their own sanitary pads. This has reduced the likelihood that they will drop out of school and marry young because of period poverty.

These weekly VSLA meetings have created a robust platform for the club members to discuss Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) topics, including family planning, HIV/AIDS, and menstrual hygiene management..



By doing so, they are breaking down the stigma and shame associated with these topics and providing a safe space for young people to learn and share their experiences. In addition to discussing these topics, the youth in the club also use their liquid soap business to promote good hygiene practices, particularly related to SRH. For example, they educate their customers on the importance of washing their hands before and after using the toilet and practising safe sex to prevent the spreading of sexually transmitted infections (STIs).



The youth in Katogo Youth Club demonstrate that economic empowerment and community health education can go hand in hand to tackle social issues. Their innovative approach is a shining example of how young people can drive change in their communities and create a better future for themselves and those around them.

As a result of this progress, Katogo Youth Club plans to allow teenage mothers in their community to join and participate in empowering themselves. They also plan to train in making reusable pads to save some of the money they spend on disposable sanitary pads.

As part of their commitment to one another, the club members pledged to do regular HIV/AIDS screening and testing and encourage their community peers to do the same.



# ADVOCACY: The Kasawo Way

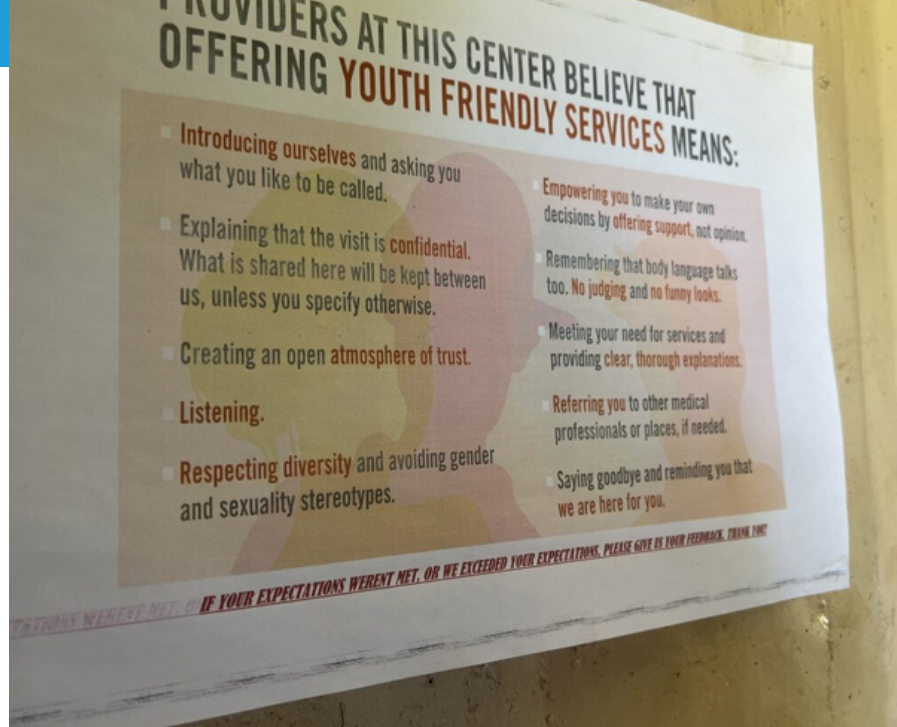
In the vibrant community of Kasawo, nestled in the heart of Mukono, a group of passionate and determined young individuals came together to form the Kasawo Youth Club. They recognized the pressing need for accurate sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information and services for their fellow peers in the community. It was July 2021 when the club first took shape, finding its home at the youth corner within the Kasawo Health Center III.

The primary objective of the youth club was to provide a safe space and platform for young people to address the challenges they faced. As the club's membership grew, its members began identifying gaps in their community's SRH support system, particularly at the health centre. They took up the role of advocating for change and improvement.

With unwavering support and facilitation from the health centre, Kasawo Youth Club received an incredible opportunity. In December 2021, they were invited to participate in a community dialogue alongside the health facility. This platform allowed them to engage with duty bearers, including parents, teachers, and other community gatekeepers, presenting their concerns about teenage pregnancy, stockouts of essential supplies, the inaccessibility of modern contraceptives for youth, and the absence of youth-friendly services in the community.

Their advocacy efforts paid off big time, their voices were heard, and the health facility's management noted their valuable insights. In a momentous decision, the youth corner was officially established as an independent department accountable to management. The commencement of this new era occurred in the Financial Year of 2022, solidifying the club's place and purpose within the health centre.

With new found authority, the Kasawo Youth Club blossomed. Its members embraced their roles as resident SRH advocates in the community. They tirelessly work alongside the health facility staff, ensuring that the young people in Kasawo had access to the support and services needed to thrive.



No longer mere volunteers, the youth club became an integral part of the health centre's operations. They served as a bridge between their peers and the facility, disseminating accurate SRH information, providing essential services, and making referrals for those needing further assistance.

The Kasawo Youth Club's impact extended far beyond the health centre's walls. Through their dedication, the club members inspired their peers to take charge of their own health and well-being. They organized awareness campaigns, conducted workshops, and initiated community outreach programs to empower young people with the knowledge and resources necessary for a brighter future. Kasawo Youth Club continues to thrive. Their unwavering commitment to their community's well-being and relentless pursuit of change has transformed the landscape of SRH support in Kasawo.

In the end, the determination of a group of young individuals sparked a revolution of care and support in Kasawo. The Kasawo Youth Club has become a shining beacon of hope, lighting the path toward a healthier and happier future for all.





# ANTI-GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE CLUB (GBV)

In the vibrant district of Kamuli, we meet a young woman named Lilian Mubezi, whose journey began when she participated in A4HU's SHAPE (Strengthening Health Advocacy and Peer Education) project. SHAPE aimed to empower and mentor youth in SRH and family planning budget advocacy. It provided training, guidance, and a platform for young individuals to create positive change in their communities.

Lilian's involvement in SHAPE sparked a fire within her, igniting a passion to create a lasting impact in her community. Empowered by the knowledge and skills she gained, she joined forces with her peers and co-founded the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Youth Club. This safe haven provided young people a platform to share their experiences, challenges, and aspirations.

What started with just ten determined youth soon grew into a thriving community of thirty members. Their shared goal was to address the health and welfare of youth, including the prevalent issue of gender-based violence, and promote a culture of respect, equality, and support. Together, they embarked on a journey of resilience, unity, and empowerment.





In September 2022, the GBV Youth Club reached a significant milestone. With their collective efforts and careful financial planning, they had saved enough funds to purchase a cow. The club's investment totalled UGX650,000 (162 Euros), a testament to their dedication and hard work.

The cow soon became an invaluable asset to the club. Its pregnancy symbolized new beginnings and hope and presented opportunities for additional income generation. The club capitalized on this by offering catering services within the community. With their unwavering determination, they swiftly built a reputation for providing exceptional services, and their client base expanded.

In a stroke of fate, the GBV Youth Club participated in a sports gala held in Kamuli. To their delight, they emerged as the winners, securing a prized goat as their reward. The goat, pregnant and full of promise, reinforced the club's journey of growth and success. These milestones were celebrated not only within the club but also within the community, inspiring other young people to believe in their ability to shape their own destinies.

Within the club, a group of young women came together to support one another. Every Sunday, they contributed a small amount of money, pooling their resources to help meet each other's immediate needs. This act of solidarity demonstrated the power of collective care and compassion, nurturing a sense of sisterhood within the club.

The GBV Youth Club didn't limit its impact solely to its members. They recognized the importance of spreading awareness and knowledge about SRH within their community. Regularly, they held health education talks, specifically focusing on SRH topics and making modern contraceptives, like condoms, easily accessible to their peers. The club had transformed into a beacon of support, hope, and education.



As Lilian shared her journey, her face lit up with joy and pride. She remembered the timid young woman she used to be before the A4HU training and mentorship. She credited the organization for equipping her with invaluable networking skills, enabling her to connect with influential individuals in her sub-county and district, including the Community Development Officer (CDO).

Lilian's story epitomizes the power of youth leadership and the transformative influence of organizations like A4HU. Through determination, resilience, and a shared vision, she and her peers have created a safe space for their community where individuals can heal, grow, and rewrite their narratives.

The GBV Youth Club stands as a shining example of the strength and determination of young people to shape their own stories and effect positive change. With each milestone they achieve, they inspire others to join their cause and embrace the power within themselves to create a brighter future.



# GADDAF MWESIGWA



Gaddaf Mwesigwa had always possessed a spark within him, a desire to make a difference in the lives of his fellow youth. However, in 2019, when he was selected to be a youth advocate, he found himself struggling to find his voice. Timidity held him back, hindering his ability to speak up and advocate for the causes he believed in.

However, Gaddaf's story took a remarkable turn when he became a part of the Kitayunjwa Youth Initiative Club. His life changed when he was able to participate in youth training workshops facilitated by Action 4 Health Uganda (A4HU). The excitement in Gaddaf's heart was palpable as he embarked on this new journey.

The training, skills, and mentorship provided by A4HU over the past few years became the catalyst for his transformation. Through these workshops, he learned to believe in himself and his abilities. The A4HU officers inspired him to dream bigger and encouraged him to follow his goals with unwavering determination.

Gaddaf's journey was a rollercoaster of growth and self-discovery. The organization's guidance and support allowed him to flourish as a peer educator and youth champion. Equipped with new found knowledge and skills, he began to navigate different platforms and spaces where he could interact with decision-makers.

As he interacted with these influential individuals, Gaddaf realized that he had the power to lobby on behalf of young people. No longer timid, he fearlessly voiced the concerns and aspirations of his peers. His passion for Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) drove him to educate and teach other young people about this vital subject.

The transformation was truly remarkable. He went from a shy, hesitant young man to a confident advocate for SRH, using his voice to effect change. His growth was not limited to his public speaking abilities; he also honed his writing skills. He authored position papers on SRH, leveraging his knowledge and passion to influence policy and decision-making processes.





As Gaddaf reflected on his journey, he recognized the immense impact that A4HU had on his life. The organization's commitment to youth empowerment has paved the way for his personal and professional growth. Through their guidance, Gaddaf has transcended his own limitations and become a beacon of hope and inspiration for his community.

Now, as the Chairman of the Kamuli Youth Empowerment Center, Gaddaf continues to make a difference in the lives of young people. He leads by example, demonstrating the power of perseverance and the ability to overcome obstacles. His story reminds all young people that dreams can be turned into reality with the right support, guidance, and belief in oneself.

Gaddaf Mwesigwa, the once-timid youth champion, now stands tall as an influential advocate for SRH. He has discovered his voice, his purpose, and his ability to shape the world around him. His story inspires others, demonstrating the transformative power of determination, mentorship, and a belief in the potential of young people to create lasting change.