

2020-2025

USAID Uganda Family Planning Activity

SUCCESS STORIES



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Naaku Deisy, a 24-year-old from Kanoni, Gomba district, faced challenges when she unexpectedly became pregnant at the age of 18. She subsequently dropped out of school and moved in with her boyfriend, but the relationship quickly turned sour as he became abusive and started seeing another woman.

During this difficult period, Deisy got pregnant again. Overwhelmed and unprepared for another child, she left her partner and returned to her family.

“**I wasn't ready for a second child, and my boyfriend wasn't supportive anymore, so I decided to return to my parents' house and stay with my mother and siblings,**” she recounted.

Following the birth of her second son, Deisy was determined to prevent further unintended pregnancies. She visited Kanoni Health Center III where she got an IUD after thorough counseling from a midwife. Her experiences catalyzed change; Deisy started volunteering at the health center, organizing files, and supporting the antiretroviral therapy (ART) clinic and immunization days.

In 2021, Deisy's dedication caught the attention of Family Strength for a Better Child (FASBEC), a



From Adversity to Advocacy: Nakku Deisy's Story



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community-based organization under the USAID/ Uganda Family Planning Activity (USAID/FPA), and she was recruited as a youth champion. She participated in training sessions, which increased her knowledge of reproductive health and family planning and equipped her to support and educate young people in her community.

Deisy facilitates "Young Emanzi," "First-time Parents," and "Men Alone" dialogues in her community to prevent teenage pregnancies and address social norms that affect the uptake of family planning services.

“The training also encouraged me to continue using the IUD and share my experience with the young girls I would meet at the youth corner, ” Deisy said.

Her dedication has led to further opportunities, such as attending the Safe Motherhood Conference 2022 and participating in facilitators' training in Masaka district. Through these platforms, she has actively challenged misconceptions, addressed social norms, and promoted the use of family planning methods.

With the support of USAID/FPA, Deisy has emerged as a pivotal advocate for change within her community.

“I've seen a significant shift in attitudes towards family planning methods like Sayana and IUDs in my community. Many young people who were once hesitant have embraced these methods, requesting Sayana injections, while others have opted for long-term methods like IUDs and implants. With transport facilitation payments provided by USAID/FPA for conducting community dialogues, I've saved money to pay for my children's school fees and cover their health care expenses. Additionally, I started piggery and poultry projects, mainly managed by my mother, generating a monthly income of UGX 300,000 (US\$ 78.91).

USAID/FPA has completely transformed me. I used to believe that I needed a man to succeed, but I now realize that I can handle things on my own. With my newfound confidence, I've taken control of my life, from keeping on my IUD to guaranteeing my children's education to managing our projects,” said Deisy

Asiga Steven, 28, and Nakafero Rose, 26, live in Budde village, Butambala district. Steven and Rose, who are both hard-of-hearing and speech impaired, have built a strong relationship and are proud parents of a 1-year-old baby.

During her pregnancy, Rose regularly attended antenatal care appointments at Kyabadaza Health Center II, where she first learned about family planning. However, after giving birth, she did not immediately take up a method. Two months later, her sister-in-law, Phiona, who had attended “Women Alone” dialogues conducted by USAID/FPA, reminded Rose about the importance of delaying her next pregnancy.

To take action, Phiona invited Joweria, a well-known Village Health Team (VHT) member, to their home. Joweria provided counseling to Steven and Rose, explaining the available family planning options. During the session, the couple decided to opt for a five-year implant. Since Joweria could only provide Sayana Press at the community level, she referred the couple to Kyabadaza Health Center II for the implant.

“ We haven’t faced any challenges with the implant. It gives us peace of mind because we can plan and are sure we won’t have an unplanned pregnancy, ”

shared Steven and Rose.



**Leaving No One
Behind: Steven and
Rose’s Journey to
Family Planning**

Leaving No One Behind: Steven and Rose's Journey to Family Planning

"We can now focus on farming to earn an income and take care of our growing family's needs."

Despite their communication challenges, the couple has created unique ways of interacting with each other and the people around them. "They didn't attend special needs schools, so they can't write or use formal sign language, but we've developed our signs, and they work perfectly for us as a family," said Phiona, Rose's sister-in-law.

“ I am happy to help vulnerable people to make informed family planning choices. I have over 10 years of experience as a VHT, and this family impressed me—especially the way their relatives, and Steven in particular, supported Rose in accessing family planning without hesitation. ”

"Sometimes, communication can be challenging, but with the help of their sister-in-law, we've found ways to understand each other and ensure they get the care they need," said Joweria.





Teenage Mother Becomes an Advocate for Change

Eighteen-year-old Sharon Ayebale is using her experience as a teenage mother to advocate for improved reproductive health behaviors in Kyenjojo district, western Uganda. Sharon became pregnant at the age of 14, forcing her to drop out of school and leaving her parents disappointed.

According to Sharon, she would not have gotten pregnant had she accessed comprehensive information about pregnancy prevention. Sharon's decision to use family planning was hampered by different myths and misconceptions about the methods. She did not think she could get pregnant at 14.

“I never knew how to use family planning—I thought it was only meant for married people. I also feared that it would affect my fertility in the future if I started it early, ” said Sharon.

Sharon's childhood dream was to become a doctor, but she could not pursue her dream after dropping out of school. This frustrated her, but it inspired her to work toward ensuring that no other girls in her village would ever have to go through the same.





Teenage Mother Becomes an Advocate for Change

In January 2021, after recognizing her potential, the district youth coordinator recommended Sharon to support USAID/FPA as a youth champion in Kyenjojo district. USAID/FPA trained her and other youth champions on providing accurate and comprehensive information on family planning.

“I learned about various family planning and health issues, including HIV prevention,”

Sharon said.

Sharon has reached over 500 boys and girls between the ages of 15 to 24 in her community with information on pregnancy prevention and has referred them to health facilities for reproductive health services.

Sharon takes advantage of any youth gathering, such as football matches, to discuss sexual and reproductive health issues drawing from her own experience to change negative attitudes. In addition, she goes door-to-door in the villages to reach adolescents and young people.

“I tell them my story as a teenage mother and encourage them to use family planning to avoid experiencing the same. They understand and believe me,” she said.

Emmanuel and his wife Knight, from Mugume Village in Buliisa District, were facing a heartbreaking challenge: They had lost five of their nine children to complications during childbirth. Despite visiting several hospitals in search of a solution, the couple found none, and Knight's condition was becoming increasingly life-threatening.

It was during this difficult time that Emmanuel learned about "Men Only" dialogues organized in his community under USAID/FPA. Emmanuel attended the sessions, which became a turning point for the couple, as they learned about various family planning options available to them.

After completing the sessions, the couple reached out to the dialogue facilitators to seek guidance. They expressed interest in a permanent family planning method to prevent further childbirth complications.

The facilitators referred them to Buliisa General Hospital for further counseling and support.


In June 2023, Knight underwent a successful tubal ligation, marking the beginning of a new



Engaging Men in Family Planning Through Group Dialogues

Engaging Men in Family Planning Through Group Dialogues

chapter for the couple—one filled with peace of mind and hope for the future. Three months later, Emmanuel and Knight visited the USAID/FPA team to express their gratitude for the support they had received.

“I am happy that my husband and I were counseled by the medical personnel at Buliisa General Hospital, and we agreed to use this family planning method,  Knight shared.

“We are doing well and now focusing on our farming projects to increase income and take care of our three children.”





Overcoming Bias: The Story of Justine Alaka

Justine Alaka, a midwife at Bugoigo Health Center II, was shocked to see young adolescent girls seeking family planning services, and she kept sending them away. “I used to fear discussing family planning with them,” Alaka said. “I believed that family planning was only for older people, so I would tell them we didn’t have stock at the facility and send them away.”

In 2022, while implementing USAID/FPA, Bugoigo Health Center II was enrolled on the Pathfinder’s Beyond Bias program. This program’s objective was to address provider bias toward providing family planning services to young people and increase the delivery of nonjudgemental, inclusive services to young people.

Alaka recalls the summit phase—the program’s initial engagement—as a turning point for her. “I left feeling guilty yet transformed,” she said. During discussions, they highlighted the consequences of withholding support from young girls.

“I realized that my refusal to offer family planning services to these girls had resulted in some of them returning to the same facility pregnant, with no hope of returning to school,” she recounted.



Overcoming Bias: The Story of Justine Alaka

Alaka embraced a fresh perspective guided by the principles of Beyond Bias. She created a safe and welcoming environment for young people, and now offers comprehensive, inclusive services non judgemental counseling and access to youths and other vulnerable groups.

To further create impact, Alaka established *Butiaba Community Women Support Network*, a community-based organization aimed at promoting positive sexual reproductive health behavior and addressing gender behaviour and addressing gender-based violence. Her organization hosts events, such as

football matches between teachers and health workers in the community, to draw crowds and provide an opportunity to share vital health messages with attendees.

Alaka's work has garnered recognition from different organizations. Some have supported her efforts by donating items like t-shirts and balls, or by hiring her drama groups for a small fee during health education events.



“I see a bright future for the girls in my community, and am forever grateful for the impact USAID’s Family Planning Activity has had in Buliisa district, ”

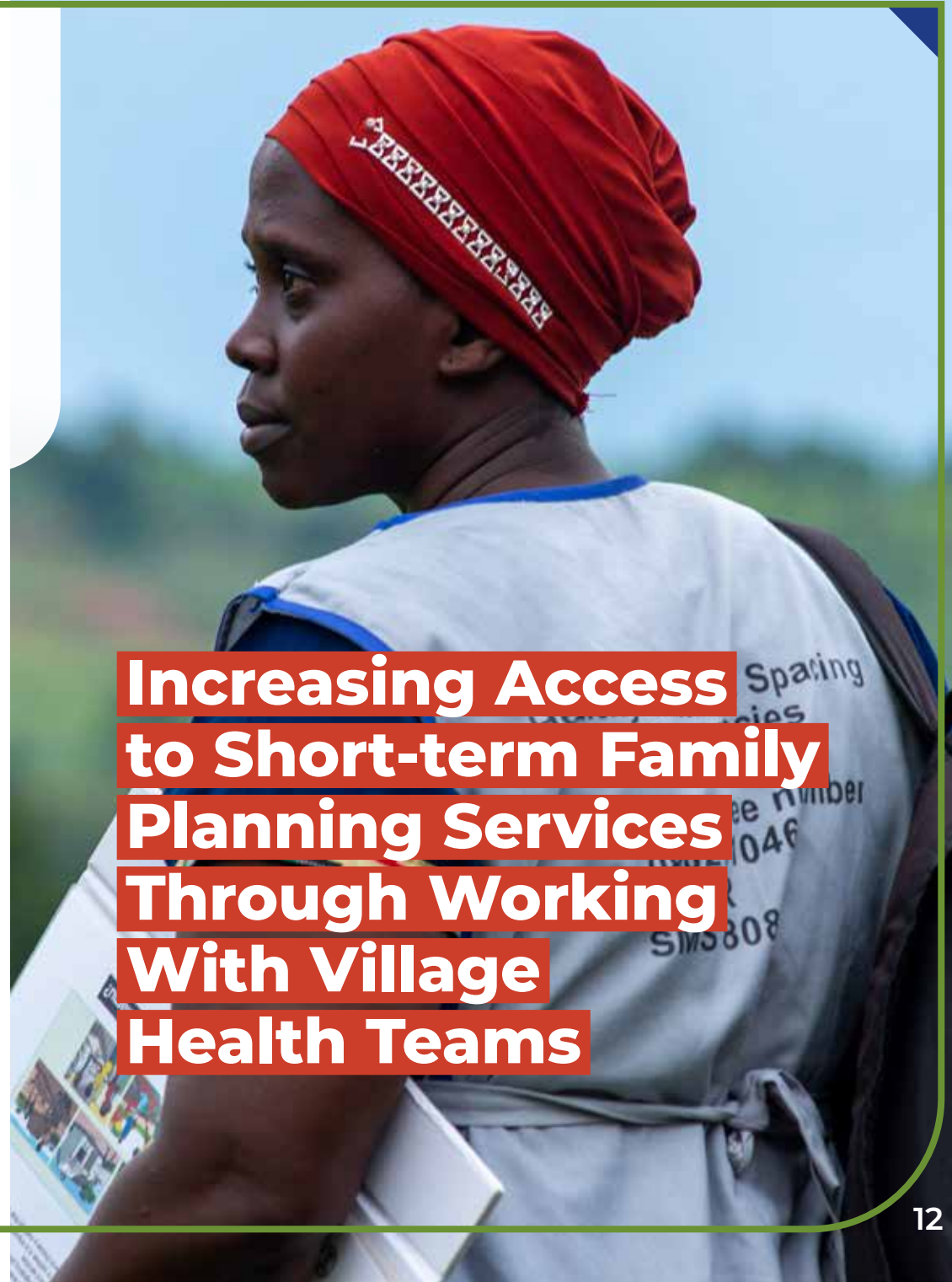
Alaka said.

Nakiseka Sophia, 40, from Seeta A subcounty in Butambala District, has been a VHT member at Kabasanda Health Center II for over a decade. When USAID/FPA began, Sophia was among the VHTs trained to counsel and administer Sayana Press in the community.

These comprehensive trainings included community mobilization and family planning counseling, with regular refresher sessions to ensure quality service delivery. Sophia also facilitated one of USAID/FPA's key dialogue categories, the "Women Alone" dialogues.

Initially a user of implants, Sophia switched to Sayana Press after experiencing side effects. Her journey to effective family planning was not without challenges, as her husband Faizal, a devout Muslim, was initially opposed to her use of any family planning method. However, his perspective shifted after attending and completing the "Men Alone" dialogues organized by USAID/FPA.

“My husband was transformed, and now he is very supportive. Whenever I’m not home and women come for Sayana Press, he calls me to come and serve them, 🙋🏾” Sophia shared.



**Increasing Access
to Short-term Family
Planning Services
Through Working
With Village
Health Teams**

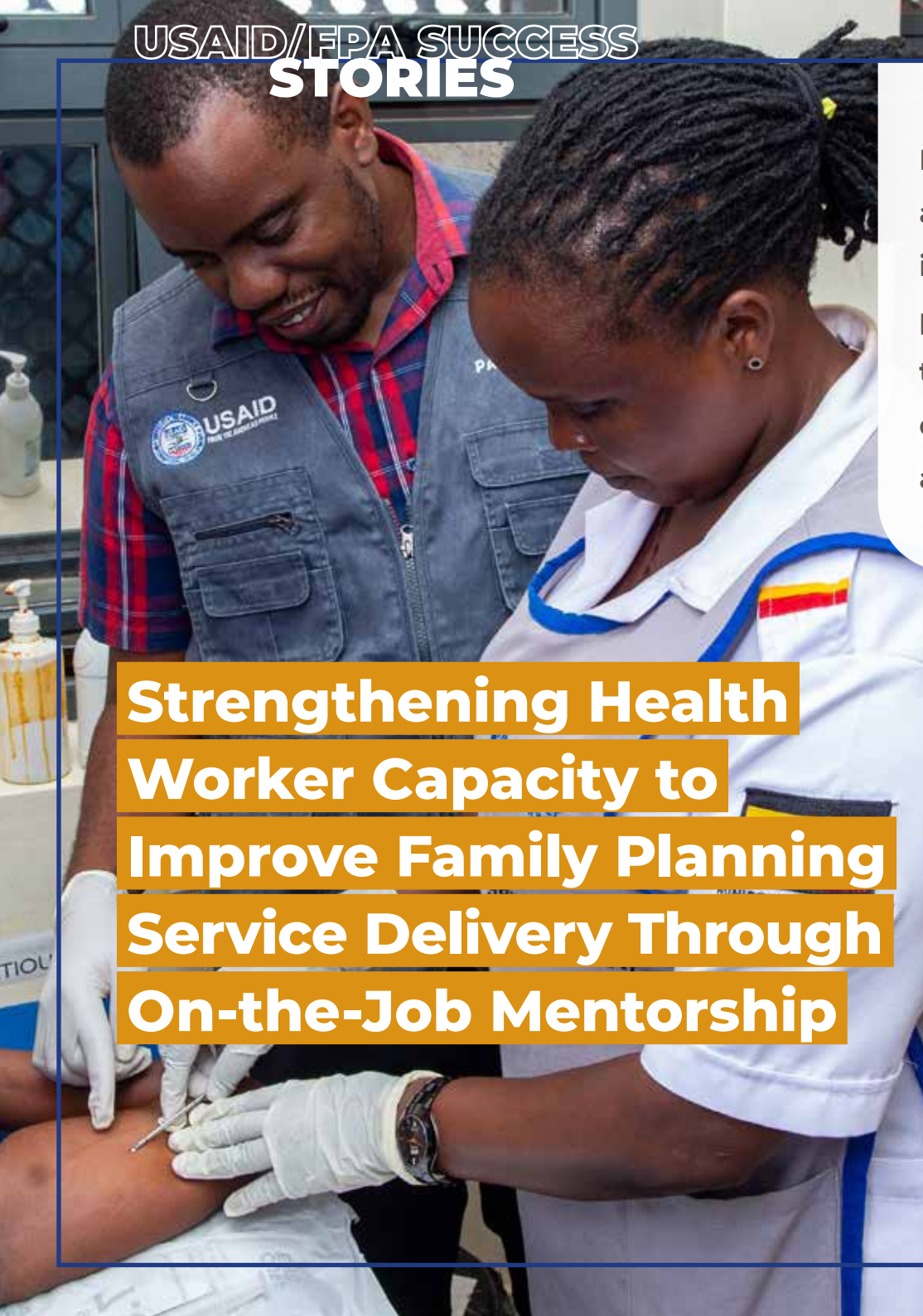
Increasing Access to Short-term Family Planning Services Through Working With Village Health Teams

Before the introduction of community-based services, accessing family planning was a struggle for women in the area. They had to travel long distances to health centers, often enduring long waits due to the heavy workload on health workers. This led to delays and, in some cases, violence at home. Now, family planning is just a step or a phone call away, with Sophia always prepared to deliver services wherever needed.

“Not so long ago, you’d see women with multiple young children of similar ages at social functions, but that has changed. We’re witnessing positive development in our community. Youths have also embraced these methods, ” Faizal shared.

Through her passion and the support of her transformed husband, Sophia has improved access to family planning services in her community.





**Strengthening Health
Worker Capacity to
Improve Family Planning
Service Delivery Through
On-the-Job Mentorship**

Provia and her colleague Irene Kyomuhendo are midwives at Kishaagazi Health Center II in Kyegegwa District, western Uganda. They participated in the on-the-job mentorship sessions that were provided by USAID/FPA to increase delivery of long-term family planning services and reduce the unmet need.

In early 2022, USAID/FPA identified a skills gap and a need to enhance the health workers' knowledge of delivering quality voluntary family planning services. The program mentored Kishaagazi's health workers on how to counsel clients, provide comprehensive information on each family planning method, and administer various methods, including implants. These mentorships were hands-on, allowing health workers to gain practical skills and confidence in their ability to perform these procedures.

During the mentorship, USAID/FPA also helped demystify misconceptions about contraceptive use and provided accurate information on managing side effects—one of the primary barriers to family planning uptake. Now, Provia and Irene can easily teach clients how to manage side effects.





Strengthening Health Worker Capacity to Improve Family Planning Service Delivery Through On-the-Job Mentorship

Today, Provia and Irene administer a range of contraceptive methods, including the IUD, which they had never done before. Their clients now have multiple contraceptive options to choose from, unlike in the past when they were limited to short-term methods. This has significantly increased the number of clients visiting Kishaagazi Health Center.

For Namanda Josephine at Gombe Hospital in Butambala District, the experience is similar. USAID/FPA mentored her team to provide long-acting reversible contraceptives and introduced continuous quality improvement projects that have helped identify and bridge gaps affecting family planning uptake.

“ USAID/FPA mentorship didn’t just develop clinical skills, but also improved soft skills with some team members lacking communication skills. I am passionate about supporting women to realize their reproductive health choices, and this is my daily motivation to wake up early and come here to work, ” said Josephine

For a long time, Florence Kansiime, a midwife at Mbale Health Center III in Kyenjojo district, western Uganda, had a negative attitude and perception toward providing family planning methods to young people.

“I had issues with giving family planning methods to young people. I asked myself why a young person would need a method,” she said.

Provider bias is a major barrier to accessing quality family planning services for young people. This often arises from several factors, including judgment around sexual activity between young people and concern about impact on future fertility.

In recognition of the unmet need that young people face, USAID/FPA rolled out a Beyond Bias strategy in 2022 to address the different types of provider bias and behaviors that hinder young people from accessing contraceptive information and services.

The strategy aims to ensure that young people ages 15 to 24 have access to empathetic,



**Overcoming Provider
Bias to Improve Young
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nonjudgmental, quality counseling and provision of a full range of contraceptive methods, regardless of their marital status or parity. Additionally, the strategy aims to motivate health workers to recognize and address biases, leading to better performance and improved quality of family planning and sexual health services for young people.

“After the Beyond Bias session, I appreciated the importance of young people accessing family planning services and the challenges that arise when they do not have access,” said Florence.

Florence encouraged her colleagues to provide services to everyone who needs them. Now, Mbale Health Center II provides family planning services every day, unlike in the past where they had designated days.

To date, USAID/FPA has reached over 500 health workers through Beyond Bias. This has greatly shifted the perspective of providers, improving access to family planning services for young people.



Improving Family Planning Service Delivery at Rwebisengo Health Center

Increasing access to and supply of contraceptives plays an important role in reducing the unmet need for voluntary family planning. A well-organized supply chain stretches from commodities supplier to consumer, ensuring that health facilities have a method mix and adequate supplies to meet users' needs.

In Uganda, many health facilities face problems with stockouts of contraceptives. This interrupts access to and uptake of family planning and reproductive health services, leading to unwanted pregnancies.

“We have not run out of any stock because we always order for enough... We now have many clients coming in because they are sure of finding all family planning methods,” said Moses Rusoke, Health Sub-District Medicines Management Supervisor.

Rwebisengo Health Center IV serves over 11,000 people living in Ntoroko District in western Uganda, including refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo. The facility faced challenges with storing and managing contraceptive commodities, leading to recurring stockouts of family planning methods, including condoms, injectables, implants, and pills. Consequently, the facility was unable



“ We can now manage our stock. Our clients are not being sent away because of stockouts...we now see more clients coming in each week, ”

said Moses Rusoke.

Improving Family Planning Service Delivery at Rwebisengo Health Center

to offer a wide range of methods to meet its clients' needs. Often, as a result, clients would leave after failing to access their desired method.

Recognizing this need not only in Rwebisengo Health Center IV, but also across the supported health facilities, USAID/FPA identified select district and health facility staff to participate in a training of trainers on supply chain procedures for essential medicines. They were then able to cascade the training with the goal of strengthening the capacity of all health facility staff to improve contraceptive commodity security.

Through this training, Rwebisengo Health Center IV's midwife and storekeeper learned the importance of forecasting, procuring, and managing commodities for the provision of quality family planning services. This included ensuring they understood how to use stock cards for tracking and monitoring commodity availability. The health facility now has the capacity to better manage their stock and effectively monitor expiry dates. The facility also reported increased reliability of contraceptive supplies due to timely ordering. Now, their clients have a variety of methods to choose from.



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Pathfinder is implementing the USAID Uganda Family Planning Activity (2020-2025) in partnership with Uganda Protestant Medical Bureau, Samasha Medical Foundation, and the Uganda Youth and Adolescents Health Forum, to address underlying social, cultural, and structural barriers to contraceptive access, particularly among young people, first-time parents, and low-parity women in 11 districts across Uganda.

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