



Stories of Change

Strengthening the Civic Space

Engaging CSOs:
Amplifying Young
People's Voices

Community Actors
Advancing Young People
and Women's Rights

The Power to Youth Expedition

Impacting Communities

Prioritising Young People's SRHR

PtY Stories of Change Booklet

Empowering adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) from underserved communities to make informed choices, enjoy their sexuality, and be free from harmful practices in gender-equitable and violence-free societies



Reproductive
Health Uganda



Uganda Youth and Adolescents
Health Forum



WOMEN • GENDER EQUALITY • HUMAN RIGHTS

WHO WE ARE

Power to You(th) is a consortium of civil society organisations and activists dedicated to including more adolescent girls and young women from underserved communities in meaningful decision-making processes regarding harmful practices (child marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting), sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and unintended pregnancies.

We believe in the power of young people, especially Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW), to be meaningfully included in discussions and decisions. Gender norms can be changed, and not only by AGYW but also boys and men can positively contribute to that change process. Together we can achieve change with regard to harmful practices, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) as well as unintended pregnancies.

The Power to You(th) programme consists of seven country management teams [Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Malawi, Ghana, Senegal and Indonesia], four Global Partners [Amref Flying Doctors, Rutgers, Sonke Gender Justice and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs], and two technical partners [Choice for Youth and Sexuality and KIT Royal Tropical Institute]. In Uganda the programme is implemented by three consortium partners:





www.rhu.or.ug

Reproductive Health Uganda (RHU) is an indigenous, voluntary, not-for-profit organisation with a long-standing experience and expertise providing integrated comprehensive sexual

reproductive health and rights information and services which include sexuality education, family planning (FP), HIV prevention, care and treatment, breast and cervical cancer screening, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) management, immunisation, etc. RHU is proud to be associated with pioneering family planning in Uganda. For more than 65 years RHU has been involved in SRHR service provision and advocacy programmes that have defined the SRHR landscape in the country.



www.uyahf.com

Uganda Youth and Adolescents Health Forum (UYAHF) is a dynamic Youth led and Youth Serving Health, Human Rights, and Girl Centred Organization that seeks to advance quality health and wellbeing for young people. Specifically, UYAHF works to address and advance young people's specific needs as regards their sexual

reproductive health and rights (SRHR), gender equality and health promotion, livelihoods, climate change, and SGBV among others.



www.eassi.org

Eastern African Sub-regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women (EASSI) is a sub-regional, non-profit organisation that strengthens the capacity of women, youth and civil society organisations in governance, leadership, economic empowerment, policy advocacy and peace and

security.

EASSI is dedicated to six areas of focus as the regional priorities in the 12 critical areas of concern in the Global Platform for Action. These include education and training of

women, women and health. human rights of women, women and poverty, women and the economy; and women in power and decision making.



VISION

To empower adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) from underserved communities to make informed choices, enjoy their sexuality, and be free from harmful practices in gender-equitable and violence-free societies



MISSION

To raise public support, advocate for improved policies and laws, and strengthen civil society to amplify young people's voices to claim, protect and expand civic space

CORE VALUES

1. Southern Leadership
2. In representation, responsibility and decision-making
3. Meaningful and Inclusive Youth Participation (MIYP)
4. In representation, responsibility and decision-making
5. Partnership
6. Transparency, accountability and a clear division of roles
7. Scale learning cycles, vital documentation and evidence case, adaptation and a special emphasis on innovation and technology

OUR PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

1. To invest in spaces where CSOs demand accountability and state actors perform and are held accountable for their policy development and implementation duties
2. To invest in spaces where societal actors and cultural and religious leaders take responsibility to change harmful social norms and transform their communities
3. To improve women and girls' access to reproductive health services, education, information, and economic and political opportunities
4. To strengthen the civic space that young people need to engage in decision-making that affects them meaningfully

Dear Change Makers,

What a year 2023 has been! The highs and lows, we have been with you on this journey.

Welcome to heart and soul of empowerment – The Expedition. This is more than just a publication; it's a dynamic space crafted exclusively for you, the driving force behind change. It's about depicting the results you have contributed to- we are in this together and credit goes to all of us.

As Power to Youth, we recognise the transformative power that resides in the hands of today's young leaders, innovators, and change makers.

Through compelling stories, we invite you to embark on a journey of empowerment, exploration, and discovery. We are here to celebrate the mark imbedded through advancing southern leadership and to celebrate young people's achievements and their limitless potential.

Here, the youth are not just the future; they are the driving force behind positive change today.

Get ready to be inspired, informed, and engaged as we unfold the pages of this expedition magazine- your go to source of everything youth-centric, progressive, and impactful. Join us as we embrace the



power to youth, shaping a world where the voices of the young are not just heard but amplified.

So, dive in, explore, and join the movement. Because at Power to Youth, the power is yours, and the change starts with You(th).

Enjoy the reading

Creating a future where every youth voice is not just heard, but respected and empowered

Dianah Nanyange is the Programme Manager of Power to Youth Uganda. She has been at the core of the programme's coordination since 2021. In her role as programme manager, Dianah not only oversees the implementation of the programme by the three partners in Uganda, but also focuses on addressing sexual reproductive health and rights issues faced by young people. Dianah shares her perspectives and reflections of the programme and its direction for 2024.



What is Power to Youth Uganda programme most proud of this year?

This year, the programme achieved significant milestones. Our commitment to fostering inter-country linking and learning initiatives has been evident, notably seen in collaborative exchanges between Uganda and Malawi. These platforms provide invaluable opportunities for civil society organisations, extending beyond the confines of Power to Youth. These interactions facilitate networking, partnerships, and significantly broadening the

programme's reach and relevance across borders.

Secondly, our deliberate partnership of media as a powerful tool for raising awareness and influencing public and political discourse has been a highlight in 2023. This proactive approach has significantly contributed to our programme's presence in shaping critical conversations and agendas, expanding our impact and engagement within the broader community.

How do you describe 2023 for Power to Youth Programme?

The year 2023 for the Power to Youth Uganda Programme stood as a transformative journey, marked by crucial reflection, resilience, and innovative strides toward youth empowerment and advocacy. A pivotal milestone in this journey was the mid-term evaluation, a comprehensive effort aimed at unpacking challenges, distilling valuable lessons learned, and identifying best practices. This process significantly contributed to improving programme results.

Throughout the year, the programme demonstrated expertise in navigating challenges by engaging in strategic collaborations, fostering coalitions, and actively participating in advocacy networks. These endeavours played a pivotal role in shaping policies, amplifying the voices of the youth, and championing human rights.

One of the defining features of the year was the collaborative spirit, where the programme networked with like-minded organisations and governmental bodies. These partnerships facilitated the expansion of the programme's reach, diversified its impact, and laid a strong foundation for sustained advocacy efforts.

What is Power to Youth's focus in 2024?

In 2024, the Power to Youth programme will focus on consolidation and sustainability of results. Several strategic interventions will be implemented to achieve this including establishing communities of practice aimed at providing continuous mentorship for youth advocates and community-based organisations in advocacy, gender-transformative approaches, and meaningful youth participation.

We shall also focus on strategic partnerships and policy advocacy. This will include strategic collaborations with other civil society organisations to push for policy adoption and implementation at national and regional

Youth Policy, Family Policy, the National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancies, and the Sexual Offenses Bill.

Additionally, the programme will closely collaborate with community change champions and the MenEngage Uganda Network. This collaboration aims to mobilise communities in support of adolescent girls and young women's rights. We shall continue to engage men and boys in activities aimed at eradicating harmful practices and fostering male involvement towards this cause.

What major challenges has Power to Youth Uganda faced this year?

Power to Youth Uganda has faced several major challenges this year. One significant challenge was the enactment of the Anti-Homosexuality Act that hindered access to health services, especially at the beginning. Another challenge has been the presence of organised opposition groups that have affected the formulation and passage of policies aligned with Power to Youth issues. The prolonged policy processes have also posed challenges in achieving PtY results.

Despite these challenges, Power to Youth Uganda remains committed to its mission and continues to find innovative solutions to address the issues faced, ensuring progress towards its goals.

Any last words as we conclude?

I'm immensely grateful for the impactful initiatives and aspirations of the Power

communities in decision-making processes related to child marriage, female genital mutilation/cutting, sexual and gender-based violence, and unintended pregnancies remains an ongoing commitment.

Together, our collective dedication to advocacy, stakeholder engagement and fostering collaboration towards a future where every youth voice is not just heard, but respected and empowered will yield lasting results.

As the Uganda programme manager, I extend heartfelt gratitude to our esteemed donor, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, our invaluable consortium partner Sonke Gender Justice, and our implementing partners—Reproductive Health Uganda, Uganda Youth and Adolescents Health Forum, and The Eastern African Sub-Regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women (EASSI).

I also acknowledge the crucial support from the district local governments, the unwavering dedication of community members, the collaborative efforts of other civil society organisations, and, most significantly, the young people. Your involvement has been instrumental in driving forward this transformative journey, and I express sincere appreciation for your invaluable contributions.

Empowering youths in Mbale



Reagan emphasising a point during one of the PtY Mbale district TWG meeting

In the heart of Mbale district in eastern Uganda, transformation is happening. Power to Youth is lighting the way towards empowering young people to claim their rights, take up spaces and leadership roles and advocate for their rights, including youth inclusion in decision-making.

The Power to Youth project seeks to empower young women and adolescent girls to increase their agency, claim their rights, address gender

inequalities, challenge gender norms, and advocate for youth inclusion in decision making including budgeting. At the centre of PtY mission lies the commitment to address harmful practices such as early marriages, sexual gender based-violence and female genital mutilation. The results are inspiring and one youth's story Reagan Wanyama, is a testament of the project's impact. Reagan, a 27-year-old and his fellows started Elite Youths of Uganda, a youth -led organisation

STRENGTHENING THE CIVIC SPACE

working in Mbale district soon after their University. They had gathered experience working with grass-roots communities but needed a partner with similar objectives to walk with them the journey they had started.

Reagan's turning point came when he became the vice president of the Technical Working Group (TWG) of Power to Youth. This is a structure comprising CSOs, district leaders and young people that was formed to monitor, report, advise and provide guidance on key areas of interest of the PtY programmes within a particular district. With his position, he has been a beneficiary of several PtY capacity building trainings like SMART advocacy and digital story telling trainings.

"The SMART Advocacy training changed my life. It helped my team and I reflect on new perspectives to transform our advocacy initiatives as we work to ensure equal rights for the youth in Mbale and Uganda as a country. We have had to change our strategies and

mission and achieve our goals in a smart way," says Reagan.

"The digital storytelling exposed us to new ways of doing advocacy. We now advocate on social media pages, which we didn't do before. It has also helped everyone at Elite tell stories of their communities in a simple, affordable, but impactful way. All these trainings were made possible by PtY," he adds.

Reagan is grateful for the platform and social capital that he has gained because of Power to Youth.

"It is easy for us to work with the district's reproductive health department towards a common goal. We

are able to access them and engage them in different activities, which was not the case before," he shares.

For Reagan, his leadership role in PtY has presented him with a chance to contribute to positive change in different communities.

"Through the programme, we mobilise young people in communities where we raise awareness about harmful practices. In Mbale, teenage pregnancy and SGBV are common. Through Elite and PtY, we reach the grass-roots communities, where we teach young girls and boys how to stay safe. We also remind them of their right to say no to sexual advances, being married off at a

young age, and urge them to report cases of defilement and rape to the Police," Reagan says.

He adds, "Through male engagement forums organised by PtY, we remind men to love their partners, provide for their children, keep their children in school, and protect their families from harm. It's reassuring when we see men changing and taking on their fatherly responsibility."

For him, seeing change in his community and knowing that he is inspiring other youths to follow in his footsteps is his greatest joy.



Members of the PtY TWG from different districts during a coordination meeting in Kampala

Beyond just likes, retweets and shares....

When we think about social media, it is very easy to keep it sectioned off into one corner. A thought passed along on X (formerly Twitter) might elicit response, perhaps even a retweet or sometimes ignored. Facebook and Instagram stories posted may get a like or two.

But have you ever imagined social media post can become something much more than the sum of its likes, retweets and shares? Do you know lives can change because of social media interaction! Johnson Kalanda Kiboneka knows better and tells his story.

While growing up, Johnson, a laboratory technician at Kalangala Health Centre IV, was convinced by his parents that the only way to make it in life was to pursue sciences courses to either become a doctor or an engineer.

In school, a vibrant and enthusiastic Johnson joined the entertainment department where he started reading news on school assemblies. This he says was the birth of his love for journalism and telling stories.

"That's when I realised that even if I continue with sciences, I will have a side hustle in journalism. It came so naturally for me and it was exciting to do," Johnson shares.

In his senior six vacation, Johnson opened Facebook and X accounts under the name "#Kibo_Media" where he started sharing what he thought were



"usual stories" from his community, Kalangala Town Council.

"I am born in a family of 15 with seven sisters. Because of the 'structure' of the island, none of them went through with school because they got pregnant. I started sharing their stories in an interesting and interactive way that

would have people commenting and liking," Johnson says.

"I posted stories of my sisters and how they got pregnant and how we as the young brothers are taking care of them. They all got married to fishermen because in the islands those are the

people we think have money. Some of them are back to our parents' house because their men either abandoned them or were beating them. Every time I shared these stories people online laughed and said whatever they wanted," he adds.

When the Power to Youth (PtY) project rolled out in Kalangala district, in 2021 Johnson says that the District Community Development Officer, Jude Musaazi who had seen his posts on social media recommended him to be part of the PtY digital storytelling and SMART advocacy trainings. In the training, Johnson says he learnt how to use his phone to strengthen tell stories and advocate for better services for the youths in Kalangala district.

"They taught us how to take pictures, videos and using the phone to edit them. We learnt captioning, picture stories and using social media for advocacy by sharing issues in Kalangala and task the responsible people for better services," he says.

"Most importantly we were taught about the ethics. Asking for permission from people before sharing their pictures or stories, blurring faces of children and being respectful," he adds. After the training, Johnson registered his Kibo Media account as a foundation and started lobbying for funds through social media to support young girls in

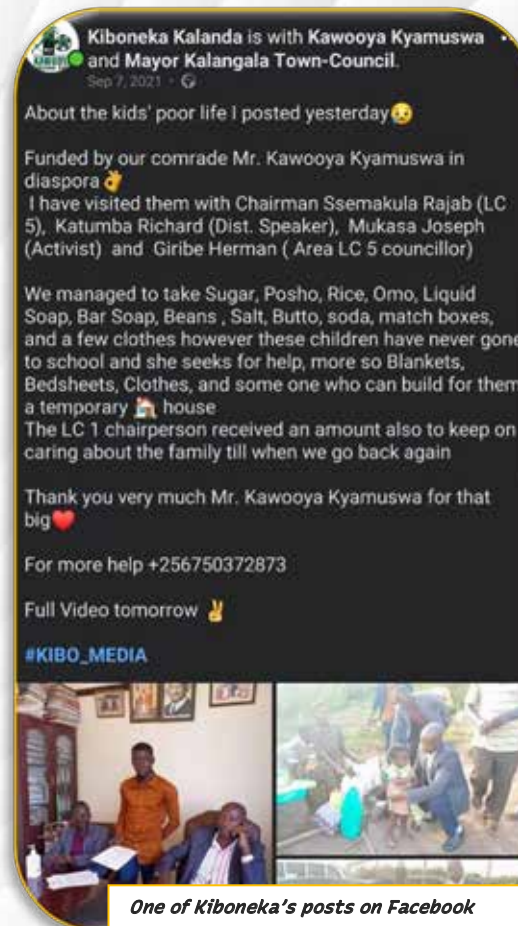
the islands by taking them back to school.

"After the training I realised that there is so much I can do with my pages. When I would share stories of girls on social media, people would ask me how they can support the girls. I had heard about Go Fund Me in the training so I opened an account where people have been sending money and we pay the school fees for the girls," he says.

"There is a story of a 12-year-old girl in Banga village who was impregnated and abandoned by a fisherman. [In 2021] I visited the family and asked for permission from the mother to tell her story on social media. When I shared it, someone from America sent UGX3M to support her until she gave birth and promised to pay her school fees after giving birth," he adds.

Johnson intimates that this was by far his most proud moment in his social media journey. He adds he has realised that social media is a powerful tool when used correctly and respectfully.

"I am now teaching some other boys who are my friends and spend a lot of time on social media. They have also started using their pages to share stories from their communities," he says.



"I thank everyone from PtY for choosing us to be part of this training," Johnson adds.

Empowering women through media and advocacy



Women Are Able": A New Online Show Challenges Gender Stereotypes

Shamim Namome, a sub-news editor and radio show host has made her mark in

the fight against harmful practices that perpetuate gender inequality through

the waves of the eastern Uganda Voice of Bugisu Radio.

Shamim was among the participants of the GTA training, which targeted media personalities, including field reporters, news editors, bloggers, health show presenters, vloggers, and influencers, aimed to enhance their capacity for effective reporting on sexual reproductive health (SRH) issues.

Shamim reflects on the impact of the training, saying, "We were made to realise that reporting and presenting issues related to harmful practices go beyond just the news articles. We need to dig deeper into the root causes, analyse stories objectively, follow up on them, and consider ethical considerations and survivor protection."

Before the training, Shamim admits that she had a limited understanding of SRH. "Honestly, whenever I heard about SRH, my mind only focused on sexuality education. I never realised it encompassed teenage pregnancy and other harmful practices until I attended the training," she shares.

As the host of the popular morning show "*Inyukha Asi* [Rise Up]," which airs from 6:00 to 10:00 am on 102.6 Voice of Bugisu FM, Shamim initially focused on politics. However, after the

GTA training, she recognised the importance of health, particularly SRH, and began dedicating monthly segments to these topics. She invites various stakeholders, including district officials, parents, cultural and religious leaders, and advocates, to discuss SRH issues on her show.

Through the radio phone response to these topics, Shamim has been able to support communities in reporting cases to the police, resulting in the rescue of three girls from forced child marriages in the Bugisu district of Bududa.

Since the training early 2023, Shamim has covered 12 SRH topics on her show, including teenage pregnancy, child marriages, gender-based violence, and rape. As a sub-news editor, she has also instructed her news reporters to include an SRH story in one of their weekly bulletins.

In addition to her radio show, Shamim has incorporated a segment on her morning show where she reads sections of Uganda's constitution and policies, focusing on the rights and protection of girl children.

"It was through the Power to Youth programme and the GTA training that I realised the significant role journalists can play in addressing SRH challenges and challenging harmful practices. I am grateful to the Power to Youth programme for building our capacity and recognising us as key stakeholders in

addressing the SRH issues of young people," Shamim concludes.

With her new-found knowledge and passion, Shamim plans to launch an online show "*Women Are Able*" on YouTube. Through this platform, she aims to challenge harmful practices and highlight women's achievements in various fields.

With this show, Shamim also aims to showcase the capabilities of women in various fields that were once considered the domain of men.

"This show will focus on showing the capability and achievements of women, breaking stereotypes and inspiring others," she explains.



One of the New Vision media journalists trained by PtY as part of the efforts to strengthen the civic space and amplify the SRHR/gender equality issues

I can now boldly speak against FGM- Brian Kapyagon

We feature the inspiring story of Brian Kapyagon, a young, vibrant and passionate youth advocate from the border district of Bukwo in eastern Uganda. As a youth advocates under Power to Youth he has been essential in scaling down the objectives and goals of the programme to the community, sharing information with young people and community players through community, intergenerational and cross boarder dialogues. Brian is determined to advocating for the rights of girls and young women in his district and making an impact in ending female genital mutilation, early marriages and teenage pregnancy.

ENGAGING CSOS: AMPLIFYING YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICES

Can you tell us your name and what you do?

My name is Brian Kapyagon. I am a 28-year-old youth advocate and champion from Bukwo District in Sebei Region.

What inspired you to be a youth advocate?

I grew up in a community where young people are not listened to— in homes, schools, markets, gardens, and other places. If you had a problem, it would be watered down simply because you're young. I wanted to change this at a young age. It is the youth and young people who understand their own problems, and thus we cannot delegate other people to speak on our behalf. I joined leadership platforms in primary school, where I was elected as a class

monitor, and during my form six [the last class of secondary education]

vacation, I joined groups of activists in Bukwo that speak out for the rights of



Brian speaking to students in one of the schools in Bukwo district on the dangers of female genital mutilation

young people. It's safe to say that I have never looked back.

What are you most proud of in your youth advocacy journey?

The government introduced the youth livelihood programme as an intervention to respond to high unemployment and poverty rates among the youths in Uganda. Unfortunately, in Bukwo district, older people who are not qualified for the programme were the ones receiving the money. We protested and held meetings with the district officials to always cross-check the beneficiaries, which saw many unqualified people kicked off the programme. [Eventually] the funds went to the intended beneficiaries, and for that, I am proud.

What activities have you organised or been part of as a community champion to accelerate PtY's agenda?

I and my colleagues have organised school outreaches where we create awareness about teenage pregnancy, early marriages, female genital mutilation, and gender-based violence. We go to both primary and secondary schools to share this knowledge. The young people enjoy these sessions. I have also been part of intergenerational dialogues, cross-border meetings [that are between Uganda and Kenya so that similar efforts are undertaken across], and stakeholder meetings, among others.

How has Power to Youth impacted you as an individual?

I have gained a lot from this programme. First of all, it has made it easy for me to access district officials, who were very

hard to meet in the past. It is now very easy because we are always with them in meetings and engagements organised by Power to Youth. Secondly, I am now a very bold person. I was a youth advocate before, but I was scared of talking about topics like FGM [female genital mutilation] because some people believe in it, and when you start talking about it, they say you're going against the culture. This is not the case anymore. I can now talk about FGM and its implications on adolescent girls and women because I know I have the backing of the PtY programme, which works with district officials, police, cultural leaders, and others. The most important thing PtY has done for me is make me a role model for my fellow youth. This is important to me because young people now look up to me and seek to follow in my footsteps. Because of this, I know that even when I leave today, there will be someone to replace me. Indeed, they're giving the power back to the youth.

How is Power to Youth impacting your community?

The PtY programme has had a tremendous impact in different communities in Bukwo district. From its inception, PtY quickly identified communities that are hotspots for female genital mutilation. Sensitisation trainings have been held in hotspot communities, where young and old religious, political, local, and cultural leaders have been actively engaged. The trainings equipped young girls with information about the dangers associated with the practice and opened

their knowledge about the law. FGM in Bukwo is deeply rooted in culture, so engaging cultural leaders is a win because they will go a long way to speak against it because they now have the knowledge. Sensitisation has also been done on local radio stations, which are listened to by many local people.

PtY has engaged adolescent girls and young women about their rights. Most girls in the communities are married off because their families want to get bread and money, among other things, when a girl is married off. Most girls now refuse to be married off or run to the police to report it once their families hint at marrying them off.

During the lockdown, Bukwo, just like other districts, saw an increase in teenage pregnancies. With PtY in the district, men and women have been sensitised about contraception uptake, having few children that one can take care of, sexually transmitted diseases, and general information on sexual reproductive health. This has given adolescent girls and young women an opportunity to stay in school because some of them have embraced family planning.

The last thing I will talk about is how bringing men on board in these discussions has helped them appreciate the challenges faced by young women and adolescent girls. Some people in the community joke by saying that men are the troublemakers, so bringing them on board solves the problem half-way. Generally, PtY has impacted Bukwo in many ways, and we appreciate them choosing our district to be a beneficiary.

What more should be done to amplify the Power to Youth programme?

I know PtY is not an economic, skills-building, or livelihood-based programme, but including that aspect will help in the fight against FGM. If you have lived in Bukwo, you know that most of the surgeons who mutilate girls do it because they're not economically empowered. By mutilating, they get local brew, money, a cow, and other gifts as a form of payment. We have surgeons who denounce the practice for a short time and go back to mutilating girls once they're offered something. This is all because they have no job, as mutilating was their only job. We have to think about empowering them economically if

we want them to denounce this practice for good.

If Power to Youth is phased out today, where will its departure leave Bukwo district?

When PtY started off in Bukwo district [in 2021], there were very few community-based organisations in the district, but once they were informed that the programme sought to work with local-based organisations, they quickly organised themselves into groups and registered their organisations. These organisations have received capacity-building, mentorship, and guidance from PtY, and as PtY leaves, they will have the capacity to advocate for the rights of women, fight against teenage

pregnancy, and address other key issues in the community. Another thing that is vital for us is that the district has now realised there's a need for more sensitisation and awareness in the remotest villages. They will now plan for the sensitisation by setting aside a budget for these engagements with the locals, which has not been happening in the past.

Do you have any last remarks?

I want to thank everyone from PtY for choosing Bukwo district to be a beneficiary of this programme and, most importantly, for working towards uprooting FGM in the community. People are becoming more and more aware, and soon it will be history.



Students of Amanang secondary school in the eastern Uganda district of Bukwo raise up and commit to fight female genital mutilation

The Power to Youth programme enabling young people to drive change in their communities

The Power to Youth programme in Uganda is making significant strides in addressing sexual reproductive health and rights issues faced by young people. Through empowering grassroots communities and fostering inclusive decision-making, the programme aims to address challenges and empower adolescent girls and young women to increase their agency and advocate for their rights.

The programme recognises the importance of involving those directly affected and works closely with young people from each district of implementation. Grassroots structures, including youth advocates, district focal persons, technical working groups, and

civil society organisations, have been established and/or strengthened to ensure meaningful participation and ownership of the programme.

Chrisantuhs Kakingwa, the district youth focal person for Isingiro, states, "As a district focal person, I am at the forefront of planning and budgeting processes, coordinating activities in close collaboration with the district leadership."

"Through the programme, we have successfully organised impactful community dialogues. These community dialogues have served as platforms for young people to voice their concerns and contribute to shaping the programme's objectives.

"Youth champions have been recruited from these dialogues, and they have advocated for youth-friendly corners in various health centres across the district, enhancing access to sexual and reproductive health services for young people," Chrisantuhs says.

The programme has already identified several health centres, including Rugaaga Health Centre IV, Rwekuubo Health Centre IV, Kabuyanda Health Centre IV, and Nyakitunda Health Centre III, where these youth corners will be established. Chrisantuhs reveals that he, along with other youth champions, have met with the District Health Officer (DHO) to ensure the activation of these youth corners.



Youth Representatives under Power to Youth, together with different stakeholders, pose for a group photo after a two-day workshop, held in Kampala in July, to validate findings of the National Youth Policy 2016 review

"The DHO pledged to refurbish the youth corner at Rugaaga health centre IV, which is currently shared with patients receiving ART refills, causing stigma among young people. Furthermore, the DHO committed to establishing a new youth corner at Rwekuubo Health Centre IV," Chrisantuhs explains.

On his part, Isaac Manana, the youth focal person for Mbale district, says, "Being part of the Power to Youth programme has opened my eyes to the immense value of involving young people in finding solutions to the issues that directly impact their lives. I have actively participated in various decision-making forums at the district level, where I have been able to make suggestions, particularly in the realm of sexual and reproductive health, to ensure the needs of young people are addressed," Manana says.

"Furthermore, I have had the privilege of actively engaging in trainings and even contributing to the design of these trainings, ensuring that young people receive the knowledge and information that directly aligns with their specific concerns and challenges."

Meanwhile, at the heart of the programme's decision-making processes lies the Country Management Team (CMT), comprising youth representatives from various districts where the programme is being implemented. These young people not only hold the implementing organisations within the Power to Youth consortium accountable but also actively participate in the decision-

making processes. With voting rights and the ability to contribute to budgeting, they bring forward issues faced by young people through the programme's Youth Advisory Group, which includes representatives of young people from different districts of programme implementation. The CMT convenes quarterly to discuss and plan for the programme, ensuring that project activities align with its overarching goals.

The programme has also provided international and national spaces for young people to have their voices heard. For example, young people from Bukwo, a district facing the harmful practice of female genital mutilation, were facilitated to attend and participate in the International Conference on Female Genital Mutilation in Tanzania.

To ensure sustainability and transparency, technical working groups were established in each implementation district. These groups consist of district leaders and young people who collectively guide the programme's implementation and help steer it towards its objectives. Through these platforms, young people have the opportunity to voice their concerns and engage with decision-makers and leaders, fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment.

The Power to Youth programme in Uganda is paving the way for meaningful inclusive youth participation, enabling young people to drive change in their communities.



PtY TWG and YAG reps from different districts for a coordination meeting in Kampala

More than just a game

The thrill of winning feels good, but to know how to lose gracefully is important to enjoy what you are doing and not give so much importance to the result.

Through friendly competition, teamwork, and physical activity, young people have the opportunity to learn new skills, develop self-confidence, build character, and so much more. That's why Dorcas Nanyonga a community impact coach and vice president of the Power to Youth technical working group decided to hold weekly sessions with young people in Busia district, in eastern Uganda, to share sexual reproductive health information through sports.

When Dorcas assumed the position of vice president, she says she started attending several trainings on gender equality, ending sexual and gender-based violence and the rights of young people "Every time I would go for these meetings I would think of the girls in the village who don't make it to these conference rooms. My mind started running to figure out a way to share this information with them," Dorcas says.

This saw the birth of the weekend training sessions. During the sessions, young people converge at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Descent playground in Sofia, Kisenyi Eastern division where they have morning drills before friendly competitions in football and netball.

"We are using sports because this is a platform where young people find

pleasure and fun. So, they turn up in big numbers and use the opportunity to share with them various information on reproductive health services," she says

"Instead of them wandering in town, they come and we play together. The boys, the girls, the young, the old and sometimes their parents come to witness what they are doing. It is fun," she adds.

The community impact coach notes that what they have is beyond sports. She says this has become a safe space for young people to share stories, seek counsel and get information on sexual and reproductive health.

"After the games, we sit in one circle and start discussing. I allow them to tell me

COMMUNITY ACTORS ADVANCING YOUNG PEOPLE AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS ADVANCING YOUNG PEOPLE



Dorcas with some the young people discussing health after a game session

stories about girls who get pregnant and what they think about it and how they are protecting themselves from the same," Dorcas shares.

"We learn from each other. I usually tell them my story of how I got pregnant at 16 and how challenging it was. I use my example to teach them and make sure that they protect themselves. They ask so many questions which show that they understand what I teach them," she adds.

The twenty-eight-year-old says that the sessions have brought about change like

boosting confidence in the young girls and boys, the desire to stay in school and become better people and fostering safe spaces where young people can report any incidents or cases without fear.

"Young girls have remained in school because of peer-to-peer sharing, besides they also share the challenges they are facing with others and how to overcome. They also talk to their parents when we talk about violence in homes and how it

destabilises their families," Dorcus narrates.

For Dorcus, she hopes to scale it up next year by bringing in other life coaches and role models that these young people can draw inspiration from to become better versions of themselves.

"It's always good to bring in a new face. They get excited but we also want them to learn from other people who come from

other communities. We appreciate PtV because every time we want to do something new, they support us and most of the times they come and talk to these young people which makes a big difference," she says.

Like they say, sometimes it's not until you're given a challenge that you realise how strong you are. The community impact coach notes that her experience getting pregnant early changed her life forever and hopes that no other child gets to go through the same and with the weekly sports sessions, she hopes to achieve her goal.



Dorcus with some students of one of the secondary schools in the eastern Uganda district of Busia. She uses sports to raise awareness on harmful practices and SRHR

When change hits home

A major transformation in his life has just landed. This is how 76-year old Fred Mbarebaki, of Kabuyanda in Isingiro district, south-western Uganda describe the impact of his interaction with the Power to Youth programme. To Fred his engagements with the programme interventions have shaped him to “become a better man for himself and his family”.

The journey of change started at the beginning of 2023, when Fred participated in the Power to Youth male engagement forums hosted in Isingiro district. The forums are platforms where men met to converse on issues around gender equality, societal norms, solutions to attain a gender just society, etc. He also took part in the Gender Transformative Approach (GTA) trainings which he says were an eye opener for him. The GTA trainings are tailored to addressing issues of power (expressions and dimensions), norms and values, intersectionality, human rights-based approach, gender and diversity, engagement of men and boys, empowerment of women and girls so as to be able amplify their voices, make informed choice and participate in decisions that determines their future, etc.

“In the training they told us about duties at home. We learnt that everyone in the family can do the same duties, that I can help in the kitchen, in washing clothes and other things,” Fred says.

“I am learning everyday but there is already change in my life. I stopped drinking alcohol and this has helped me so much. We save money and plan for it together with my wife and children,” he adds.

“You know we have started meetings as a family to plan how to use our money. Some of these things that look small have changed a lot in our family,” he concludes.

Fred embraced change and because of the information from the training and the male engagement forums, his family has become better.

“You know I would go to drink and return to beat my wife if I found small mistakes and if she delayed food for me,” he says.

“My children also feared me because I would beat them and their mother. I was always looking for reasons to beat people,” he adds.

These negative and harmful practices are history at the Mbarebaki household. They are now happier family.

“I help my wife in so many things. When she washes, I rinse and hang the clothes, we garden together and I ride her to the market every time

there is a market day. All I can say is we are happy,” he shares.

Dinna Mbarebaki, Fred’s wife says that she is now at peace and not worried of anything like she was in the past.

“I would get scared by just hearing his [Fred’s] voice. We knew that when he comes back home he will quarrel, abuse me and beat me. Even our children were always scared,” she says, before adding: “He is now a different man. He takes and picks me on his *boda* [motorcycle] to the market where I work every Wednesday. For once in our home we sit and talk about different things, discuss and agree. We are now happy,” she rejoinders.



Seventy-six-year old Fred Mbarebaki at his home in Kabuyanda, Isingiro district

Growing up in Kabuyanda in Isingiro district all Fred knew and exposed to was grazing cattle and helping his parents in their coffee plantation.

His mother, he says, was the “manager” of the household who ensured that food was available, children and the “head of the home” were taken care of. He notes that their mother would go to the garden early in the morning to dig and be back to make sure that by the time their father returned from the garden there was something for him to eat.

“For us the boys we would graze, fetch firewood and water sometimes. We would never go to the kitchen because that was the role of our sisters,” he says.

From his memory, Fred shares that his view of women and chores were influenced by the community in which he grew up. For him, what his father did and how he treated his mother shaped his perception of women when he grew up.

At 18, just like many of his agetates in the village at the time, Fred left his father’s house to start his own family and in 1968 he married his first wife and together they had five children. “For us at the time, we would marry girls we knew in the community. My first wife got pregnant and her family insisted that I marry her and that’s how I had a family,” he says.

He intimates that he treated his wife the same way his father treated his mother, where women were supposed to cook everyday apart from days when

meat was prepared. Even when they prepared it they were not supposed to eat it.

“Sometimes I would tie strings in the meat before its prepared to make sure that they did not eat a piece. If a piece was missing, I would beat her,” he adds.

No wonder he separated with his first wife. Fred says that after his first relationship failed, he married his second wife who would later divorce.

Today, Fred is married to Dinna Mbarebaki whom he says they have two sets of twins together. Dinna is grateful for the change in his husband influenced by the Power to Youth programme through the male engagement forums.



Participants in one of the male engagement forums in the Uganda central district of Kalangala , Kasekulo Island

Former FGM mobiliser turns to change agent to stop the harmful practice in her community



Betty Chemtai, during one of the intergenerational dialogues held in Bukwo district

Through the Power to Youth programme, Betty Chemtai 56, a former mobiliser for female genital mutilation (FGM) surgeons has turned into an active anti FGM advocates in Bukwo district.

Growing up in her village, Betty was brought up to understand that FGM was an integral part of her life as a Sabiny woman. She vividly remembers the day she was cut and “transitioned” to womanhood. Once “she was an adult”, Betty continued to uphold this practiced

and mobilised over 20 girls to be cut every year.

As a renown mobiliser of FGM, Betty ensured that more and more girls from the Sebei community underwent this practice. For her, she was just a Sabiny woman promoting and ensuring more women went through the right cultural path.

When Power to Youth first started in Bukwo district in 2021, she was still

preaching the gospel of mutilating girls. With the constant engagements which PtY has ensured in the border district, Betty has since reformed to a change agent speaking against FGM. She has been a beneficiary of trainings like the Gender Transformative Approaches (GTA) and intergenerational dialogues which have empowered her to discourage the continuation of this harmful practice.

Betty says she upheld the FGM culture and she would mobilise girls from different families and communities, sneak them into Kenya where surgeons were readily waiting in the bush to circumcise them.

“It is not the case today. I teach my group and community members about the dangers of FGM. People listen to me because of my cultural position in the community and being a cutter in my old life, I was highly respected. Some have now accepted to stop the practice while others are hesitant but it is a process and I will continue until everyone has denounced the practice,” asserts

Betty is one of the several female FGM practitioners who have abandoned the practice after engaging in the Power to youth programme. Though globally recognised as a human rights violation, FGM is performed on at least 200 million girls and women, largely due to generations upon generations of gender inequality.

When power to youth programme was introduced in Bukwo district, the programme engaged various actors including those who were directly involved in the FGM practice, like the surgeons, traditional and religious leaders, district officials, youth champions and young people to take an active role in contributing towards the elimination of the vice.

These were and continue to be involved in community dialogues and sensitisation, cross border dialogues, intergenerational dialogues to highlight the dangers of the practice on human rights and health of the adolescent girls and also position them as agents of change.

“I am now an agent of change because of the different trainings which have opened my eyes about the dangers of

cutting girls and women in Sebei region,” Betty notes.

Betty advocates for collective effort in ending a practice deep rooted in the Sabiny culture committing to continue raising awareness about the practice even beyond the power to youth program implementation

My Journey as a GTA facilitator

My name is Priscilla Nabatanzi Kirwana, a project coordinator with Reproductive Health Uganda, leading on the Power to Youth project. I have been a passionate social worker since 2012, with now more than 10 years' experience in SRHR for marginalised groups of people across the country. Over the years, one of the stuff I have enjoyed doing is training and sharing information.

I have used several approaches to deliver comprehensive and age-appropriate information to young people, girls and young women, men and boys among others with special interest in Gender Transformative Approaches (GTA) as the game changer.

My journey began with a fervent desire to create positive change and challenging harmful traditional gender norms and power inequalities entrenched in society.

Working with the Power to You(th) project, GTA is one of the approaches we push to create change. The approach



Priscilla facilitating one of the GTA trainings

seeks to examine and question the harmful gender norms and power imbalances in society of all context. It focuses on six principles that include; gender norms, power, human rights-based approach, involving men and boys, empowerment of women and girls and diversity.

My training sessions aren't just about conveying information; I try to ensure that they are interactive spaces where individuals explore their perceptions, biases, and societal conditioning related to gender norms/roles as well as all the other principles.

water for his husband but also make her money to support the family.

The gender box helps men and women, boys and girls to get out of the "box" which is the roles and responsibilities they were told to do as they were growing up.

The **power walk** exercise triggered conversations during one of the PtY male engagement forums in Bufumbo sub-county, in Mbale district. One of the men said that he had "all the power to do anything to the wife including beating whenever she was disrespectful because he paid for her."

Today after the sessions Abudul no longer beats the wife. He says they discuss issues and decide as a couple, their children are also happier because there is peace at home.

The exercise only indicates that we have different power based on several factors

With patience and understanding, I encouraging participants to reflect on their own experiences, inviting them to reconsider preconceived notions about what it means to be masculine or feminine and the use of power to promote equality and equity.

One memorable workshop took place in a community, where I gathered a diverse group of men from various age groups and backgrounds. Through storytelling, group discussions, and thought-provoking activities including the gender box and power walk, I facilitated conversations that encouraged but what is important is the rights of others.

Other than impacting on the individuals in the community, GTA empowered me to appreciate the power within me and the



power to do as I wish. As a young woman I pride in communication and shared roles for both men and women, like one song goes "what a man can do a woman can do".

This started when I was teenager where we were reported to our parents for

everyone to challenge stereotypes and embrace inclusivity. With the gender box, one of the elder men who had conflicts with some of his children and wife managed to create peace and love in his home after him attending several sessions organised in Kabuyanda subcounty, in Isingiro district.

Fred can now testify that he is able to prepare himself bathing water whenever the wife is engaged, driver her to the market place to make money and later pick her up; unlike before where he thought it's the woman's role to prepare

noting cooking food for the boys of the house. I used to ask my brother whether he will lose his hands if he cooked his own food or even become a girl.

Today, I recognise the benefits of the concepts such as questioning the many things we were socialised to do and their value addition to me as a woman.

I am grateful that my partner believes in the same and we are nurturing our children to be able to do everything no matter their gender including conversations on seating properly for both girls and boys, wearing all colours and playing with all sorts of toys without stereotyping that these are for girls or boys only.

GTA is one of the best approaches that not only transforms societies but also individuals on several aspects including, but not limited to, religious, social and economic.

Inspiring Teenage Girls in the Eastern District of Busia

In senior three of her secondary school at Zaana High School, 16-year-old Alice Sanyu hit a hiccup in her life's journey. In 2007, while staying with her maternal aunt in Kampala, Alice was approached by her male classmate, whom she attended holiday studies with, about a relationship. Alice accepted her classmate as her boyfriend. Two months into the relationship, she noticed that she had not received her monthly periods.

"I wondered why I was not getting my periods and feeling sick at the same time. I told my aunt I was not feeling well, and she gave me money to go to the nearby clinic for tests. It's there that I found out I was pregnant," Alice recalls.

Once she found out that she was pregnant, Alice informed the father of her unborn child about her laboratory results.

"I told him, but he did not know what to do. We were both young and confused. I knew his parents, but I was scared of telling them what had happened. What if they said I was lying? What if they told my parents? I was so scared," she narrates. When she realised that her aunt would notice and ask the person responsible

for the pregnancy, she decided to run away.

"My parents were living in Busia district [in eastern Uganda]. They were peasants who had sacrificed everything for me to study at a good school. I had already disappointed them by being pregnant. I decided to run away from my aunt's home because she would tell them," Alice says.

"I ran to a friend's home but running away did not help because once people found out that I had given birth, they started ridiculing, shaming and calling me the one who loves sex. I felt so small and unwanted in the community," she adds.

Alice was not able to go back to school after giving birth to

PRIORITISING YOUNG PEOPLE'S SRHR

achieve her dream of being a nurse. She now runs a mobile money business, sells fish from across the Kenyan border and a food stall in Alubaine Market in Busia District where she's able to raise money to take care of her 14-year-old son.

In 2021, Alice was among those identified as youth advocates and youth champions under the Power to Youth Programme in the district.



Thirty-two-year old Alice Sanyu in front of her kiosk at Alubaine Market in Busia District, Eastern Uganda

Shares her story to encourages teenage girls to stay in school and teenage mothers to return to school once they have given birth.

Alice says: "Teenage pregnancy cases and early marriages are very common because we are a border district. Truck drivers sleep with young girls, make them pregnant, and disappear. The burden is then left on the young mothers to take care of the children.

"The truck drivers are a problem. They spend the night in Busia town, convince girls with money, and sleep with them. They get pregnant, STDs [sexually transmitted diseases], and in some scenarios, girls are married off because

truck drivers offer the girl's family money."

Alice works with the Power to Youth project focal person in Busia to visit schools where they talk to girls and boys about the importance of staying in school.

"Those who have given birth need someone who has experienced what they are going through to reassure them there's life after giving birth. If you have an opportunity, go back to school," she notes.

The 32-year old says that most teenage mothers move in with their partners because they're not economically empowered. This, she says, has

exacerbated gender-based violence in homes.

Therefore, "We encourage these young mothers to find work; sometimes we connect them to skills training institutions to enable them to get a skill that they can eventually utilise make money.

In the programme, we encourage them to report cases to the police. They know their rights. Alice says.

We hope that with the knowledge, awareness and sensitisation that the programme has created in the area will empower people to report to the authorities the perpetrators of GBV to be held accountable.

Empowering teenage mothers to utilise the school re-entry strategy to resume their education

Community Initiative to Transform Lives (CITRAL), in collaboration with Power to Youth, is making significant strides to ensure that girls remain in school after giving birth, as per the school re-entry strategy for teenage mothers.

CITRAL has made remarkable strides in empowering teenage mothers. With the support of small grants from Power to Youth, they have implemented the Ministry of Education guidelines on how female learners who have given birth return to school.

CITRAL has taken proactive steps to address the issue of teenage mothers

returning to school by establishing a task team in collaboration with the Isingiro district local government. The task team comprises key stakeholders, including the district community development officer, head teachers, and young people representatives. The primary objective of this team is to raise awareness about the significance of school re-entry for teenage mothers and involve them in livelihood activities.

This collaboration offers a more comprehensive approach to tackling the challenges faced by teenage mothers

and creates a platform for meaningful dialogue and decision-making.

CITRAL is a community-based organisation in Isingiro district that aims to increase access to health services, empowering women and girls, promoting sustainable energy solutions, enhancing livelihood conditions for vulnerable groups, and improving access to clean water and sanitation.

Recognising the significance of supporting teenage mothers, Power to Youth provided CITRAL with a small grant of over ten million shillings, as well as capacity-building opportunities.

This support has had made a difference on CITRAL's efforts, allowing them to enhance their empowerment initiatives for teenage mothers and facilitate their successful re-entry into school.

CITRAL established comprehensive support systems for teenage mothers. This entails extending financial assistance, such as scholarships or grants specifically tailored to their needs. Additionally, they have supported schools to establish dedicated support networks that provide counselling, mentorship, and resources to help teenage mothers.

Besides, CITRAL is actively involving both teenage boys and girls in solution-building, by making boys community champions for the school re-entry strategy and speak against harmful practices like child marriage, and encourage girls to continue their education. The organisation is also

conducting sensitisation programmes for parents and the community, highlighting the benefits of supporting students and creating a conducive environment for teenage mothers.

CITRAL, using the small grant, has also facilitated free family planning services and HIV testing for over 30 teenage mothers and

adolescent girls and young women in Ruhimbo village. Furthermore, CITRAL linked sixteen mothers from Kikusi landing site to one of their implementing partners, AVISI, where

they receive free hands-on skill development.

The collaboration between CITRAL, Power to Youth, educational institutions, parents, and the community is a significant step towards ensuring the successful school re-entry of teenage mothers. By addressing the specific needs and challenges faced by these young mothers,



CITRAL and Power to Youth are actively working towards breaking the cycle of generational poverty and promoting sustainable development in Isingiro district.

Bridging the SRHR information and services gap in the Kalangala Islands

For most islanders, accessing basic health services in Kalangala district is a challenge let alone SRHR services for young people. Making trips from different islands to Bugala Island where Kalangala Health Centre IV is located has proven to be expensive and impossible for most young people.

Through the youth advocates and champions under the Power to Youth programme, peer groups have been formed in different Islands who have

played an essential role in bridging the information gap and referring them to receive SRHR services among their peers in the island district.

Benon Brian Kyakuwa a clinical officer at Kalangala Health Centre IV and a Power to Youth advocate says this strategy was born when they realised that they couldn't reach everyone especially young people in hard to reach islands.

"For young people on the main Island it's relatively easy to receive information because they can walk to the health centre but for those in Islands far from here it's hard to access information. Through peers, we teach them and they in turn teach others in those far islands," Benon says.

He says that they have also organised outreaches in schools and communities where they target young people to

receive crucial SRHR services and information.

“We do our outreaches in a fun way where we organise matches like soccer galas and inter village games and we have a corner for young people to receive services. For now, we have been taking condoms and teaching them how to use them, HIV testing and counselling and gender-based violence treatment,” Benon says.

He adds that “Since I am the focal person for sexual and gender-based violence at the health centre, I take them through the different forms of violence and how it affects them. I also urge them to report these cases to police.”

Benon notes that he has ensured that young people are prioritised to receive services especially at the health centre IV.

“We identified three days in a week (Monday, Wednesday and Thursday) where I make sure that young people are given ample time when receiving services. They at least know that they can come to Musawo [Doctor] Kyakuwa and tell me all their SRHR issues and we find solutions. They know they have an agemate and a trusted doctor in me which makes it easy for them to communicate,” he adds.

At the health centre, a youth corner was erected following the Power to Youth advocates and champions who showed the relevance and importance of the



Benon Brian Kyakuwa at his desk at Kalangala Health Centre IV

corner in ensuring that young people receive services without discrimination and fear.

“When we first talked about the youth corner, most people said that young people can also receive services with the rest of the people but after we helped them understand the privacy that young people require to receive SRHR services without being scared of who is going to see them,” Benon says.

He adds that through Power to Youth, the youth corner is always stocked with

condoms which young people access without any worry.

For the new year, Benon hopes that more youth friendly corners are set up in different islands and manned to attend to the needs of young people.

“The island is different from other places. If we teach as many people, may be young girls will wait to have sex and even when they have it they will do it in a protected way which will reduce teenage pregnancy significantly,” Benon says.

Power to Youth Festival 2023



The Power to Youth Festival 2023 took place on December 2 in Isingiro district, Western Uganda. Organised under the theme "16 Days of Activism: Invest to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls," the festival aimed to raise awareness among adolescent girls and young people about the socioeconomic impact of teenage pregnancy, child marriages, and sexual violence.

The Power to Youth Sports Galas

The Sports Galas took place in Kalangala and Busia districts, aiming to challenge gender stereotypes and address myths and misconceptions surrounding harmful practices, teenage pregnancies, child marriage, and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV); raise awareness among young people about their roles in influencing their sexual and reproductive health decisions at all levels; and to strengthen engagement with national youth leaders and Power To Youth advocates on key issues affecting youth development and propose actions to improve coordination among youth leaders and movements in Uganda.

A SNAPSHOT OF EVENTS PTY UGANDA WAS PART



Power to Youth Inter School and Community MDD Competition

The Power to Youth Inter-School and Community Music, Dance, and Drama event on ending harmful practices took place at Mbale School of Hygiene on December 13, 2023. More than 100 young people from schools and communities gathered to compete in various categories, including poems, traditional dance, original compositions, and drama, all centred around themes related to sexual reproductive health. The event's overarching theme was "**Empowering Adolescents and Young People to Make Informed and Responsible Reproductive Health Choices.**"



Youth day celebration 2023



Power to Youth participated in the Youth Day celebrations held in Kabale district. The event, themed "**Accelerating Recovery from COVID-19 and Full Implementation of the 2023 Agenda**," showcased the government's remarkable progress in enhancing youth development. Notably, the development of the National Action Plan on Youth, Peace, and Security and the comprehensive out-of-school youth sexuality education were highlighted as significant achievements.

Vice Versa Festival 2023



Power to Youth participated in the Vice Versa Global Festival, an event aimed at raising awareness about critical sexual and reproductive health issues in Uganda. Hosted by the Netherlands Embassy, the festival centred around the theme "**Creating Awareness and Solutions Around Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Embracing Equity**." This festival served as a valuable platform for learning and sharing among all projects in Uganda funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), fostering collaboration and collective efforts in addressing these pressing issues.

International Women's Day celebrations 2023

Power to Youth took part in the Post International Women's Day Celebrations 2023, which revolved around the theme "**Cracking the Code: Innovation for a Gender Equal Future**." The primary objective of the celebrations was to foster discussions, collaborations, and innovative approaches towards achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls. Power to Youth, along with other participants, engaged in insightful conversations, shared ideas, and

explored innovative solutions to address the challenges faced by women and girls in Uganda.



Safe Motherhood Conference 2023



Power to Youth participated in the Safe Motherhood Pre-Youth Conference on October 20, 2023. The conference, held under the theme "**End Teenage Pregnancy - Reach every adolescent with quality Sexual Reproductive Health Services**," aimed to address the pressing issue of teenage pregnancy and ensuring access to SRH services for all adolescents. PtY provided a platform for young champions from various implementing districts to come together and contribute their valuable insights.

Women Deliver Conference 2023



PtY Uganda joined over 4,500 attendees at the Women Deliver conference in Kigali, Rwanda, in July 2023. During the conference, PtY participated in discussions, exchanging ideas, strategies, and best practices for sexual reproductive health programming. Additionally, PtY Uganda participated in a side event hosted by Power to Youth Global under the theme, "**No More Excuse: Effective Accountability Mechanisms for Adolescent Girls and Young Women**," further emphasising their dedication to empowering and advocating for these groups.

Power to Youth Global Annual Meeting 2023



PtY Uganda was part of the Power to Youth Global annual face to face meeting 2023 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The meeting reviewed programme results, validated the midterm evaluation report, and identified areas for improvement. Partners shared innovative approaches, addressed challenges collaboratively, and discussed strategies for sustainability.

PtY Global Communications Workshop 2023

PtY Uganda participated in the Power to Youth Global Communications Workshop, a gathering of communication professionals from seven



countries implementing the PtY programme, along with consortium partners. The workshop aimed to enhance skills, share experiences, and develop effective strategies for empowering youth through impactful communication and advocacy support. The workshop was held in Dakar, Senegal, in November/December 2023.

The Third Men Engage Africa Symposium



Power to Youth Uganda participated in the Third Men Engage Africa Symposium held in Kigali, Rwanda, in August 2023. The symposium centred around the themes of accountability and transformation, with a specific focus on gender-equitable, evidence-based programming.

The Men Engage Africa SRHR Learning and Exchange Symposium

The Symposium was a collaborative event organised by Men Engage Africa and Sonke Gender Justice. It united organisations and programmes from across Africa, including the Power to Youth Uganda programme, to discuss strategies for accelerating coordinated and effective efforts in promoting the health and well-being of young

people, with a specific emphasis on women and girls. The event was held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in October 2023



Second International Conference on Female Genital Mutilation



Power to Youth Uganda participated in the 2nd International Conference on Female Genital Mutilation held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The event took place in October 2023. This conference aimed to drive the transformation of FGM eradication through legal frameworks, gender perspectives, and community engagement.

Commission on Status of Women



Power to Youth Uganda was represented at CSW67, where they hosted a side event under the theme "Women and Girls' Empowerment: A Pathway to Gaining Control over their Sexual Reproductive Health Rights." This event took place in March 2023, in New York and featured a panel that included influential Ugandan decision-makers such as Hon. Babirye Milly Babalanda, Minister of the Office of the President, Hon. Sarah Opendi, Chairperson of UWOPA, and Woman Member of Parliament for Tororo District

Gender Transformative Approaches Linking and Learning Event

In April 2023, Power to Youth Uganda hosted a Gender Transformative Approaches Linking and Learning webinar, bringing together Power to Youth Uganda and Power to Youth Malawi. This unique platform provided an opportunity for both teams to share their best practices and exchange knowledge, fostering a collaborative environment for growth and learning. The event attracted more than 1,000 participants.



In 2024, the PtY programme will focus so much on sustainability, to see to it that our results live post PtY. As a country programme, we believe a lot has been done on ground, so we need to continue strengthening the capacity of local structures and CSOs to carry forward the efforts of PtY.

As a youth advocacy programme, we will also focus on more youth friendly innovations and documenting all the best practices that can act as a guide for future projects.

Joyce Nakato, the team leader, UYAHF, who doubles as the chairperson of PtY Uganda country management team





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