

INTEGRATED COMMUNITY BASED INITIATIVES- ICobi



**Accelerating better health and holistic human development in
Uganda**

ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024

ICOB Profile

ICOB has operated in Uganda since 1994 first as a small Community Based Organization to current national NGO covering over 35 Districts of Uganda. Since inception, COBI has implemented a number of community-based and family-centered programs that have empowered our community, improved their and wellbeing, especially those affected and infected with HIV/AIDS. Our work over the years further emphasizes our mission for improving the quality of life of people through holistic and sustainable programs that meet the essential human needs of families.

ICOB will in the coming years continue to focus on Promoting Healthy and prosperous families, with emphasis on Health Education and Promotion, Maternal and Child Health including Family Planning, Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases especially Malaria, Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS/STDs, and Nutrition and Food Security as well as Research and Innovation. These key areas form the core programs of ICOB. Having the countrywide positive influence in developing and implementing sustainable programs, ICOB is one of the few organizations that are positioned to successfully address rural and urban family and community problems.



ICOB team conducting outreaches with a mobile van in Kiryandongo district

Key results of focus

- A strong team of community health advocates, committed to better health and prosperity of people especially in rural areas.
- Applied technology and research for development; looking for appropriate simple technological and research solutions that can address human problems
- Self-sustaining community health programs; ensuring that communities are organized to take charge of their health needs.
- Disease prevention interventions

ICObI team sensitizing learners on road safety along Luwero Butalangu road



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List of Acronyms

AIDS:	Acquired Immune deficiency Syndrome
ART:	Antiretroviral Therapy
CHEWS:	Community Health Workers
CHI:	Community Health Insurance
DHT:	District Health Team
GBV:	Gender Based Violence
HIV:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICOBIs:	Integrated Community Based Initiatives
MoH:	Ministry of Health
NHIS:	National Health Insurance Scheme
PMTCT:	Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (of HIV)
VHTs:	Village Health Teams
McPR	Modern Contraceptive Prevalence Rate
UFPA	Uganda Family Planning Activity

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear all,

I take this opportunity to thank everybody who has worked with us in the past year i.e. 2023/2024. Special thanks to our development partners who have supported ICOBI programs focusing at achieving better health for the rural population. Getting out of the COVID-19 pandemic and associates effects has not been easy for our community service delivery interventions, we sincerely appreciate those who has stayed their support. The support you have extended to ICOBI has enabled us reach many Ugandans with essential services; we have saved millions of lives for men, women and children and also promoted positive health behaviors.

In the past year, we have worked with a number of partners like Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA), Pathfinder International, Uganda Protestant Medical Bureau (UPMB) among others. The above partners and others have greatly contributed towards ICOBI goals especially in the area of Child and Maternal Health, HIV/AIDS, implementation research and Behavioral change.

To promote sustainable and better health care system at community level, ICOBI has been able to set up a Health Cooperative Model for the surrounding community groups. This model will help ICOBI and affiliated institutions have their staff and relatives in addition to nearby communities access quality health care at low cost.

I therefore extend further appreciation to staff, communities, local leaders and District Health Teams for the great support we have received in this reporting period. Your support and contributions have not been in vain but critical to saving life. We hope for even better collaboration and partnerships in the coming year so that we reach more people and save more lives.

Let us continue to work hard, let us mobilize all possible resources to support these great initiatives. Am hopeful that this report will provide further insights into what ICOBI stands for and what we do in different communities across Uganda.

For God and my Country



Bosco Turyamureeba
Deputy Executive Director/Programs



ACHIEVEMENTS FOR THE YEAR 2023/2024

Social support and protection

BMC Health Cooperative (BMC-HC) and Savings Internal Lending Communities (SILC) model

Overview

To advance social support and protection at household and community levels, ICOBI has in the past year actively implemented key activities. These have mainly been around community mobilization and sensitization on Community Health Insurance concept and linking groups to CHI providers. We therefore take a close review of BMC HC and SILC model/livelihood improvement program in this reporting period;

BMC-HC is an ICOBI innovation to promote health coverage for the low-income earners and groups. The BMC-HC has been running for one year as a pilot and is now in its second year. It's registered with Ministry of Trade and Cooperatives and run on a prepayment arrangement where people in organized groups especially VSLAs/SILC groups, SACCOs, etc. pay a defined premium that is collected by ICOBI mobilizers and banked on the cooperative account. The BMC -HC is housed at ICOBI offices in Kabwohe Sheema District and mobilizes members willing to access health care at BMC Kabwohe and BMC Bushenyi hospitals.

Accomplishments so far



- A total of 231 members enrolled in 4 groups and already accessing health care services in Sheema and Bushenyi Districts.
- There is increased awareness about the need to save for health among organized community groups however; a lot more efforts are still needed.
- 10 radio talk shows conducted on benefits of joining a community health plan under BMC Health cooperative
- Over 100 brochures on BMC Health cooperative printed and shared with members and other community groups
- A team of 4 community mobilisers has been trained by Uganda Health Cooperative to support mobilization and recruitment of new

Integrated Community Livelihood Improvement Project (ICOLIP)

ICOLIP is a community economic empowerment initiative which has taken major steps to mobilize and organize caregivers into SILC groups. ICOLIP's SILC groups have self-selected members. The village-based groups are located in 30 parishes and 6 Sub-counties in Sheema district where ICobi South Western Regional Office is located. ICobi promoted and has been encouraging OVC households to save as individuals in their respective groups and in SACCO. The group concept emerged as an offshoot at the tail end of USAID funded EMPOWER through which OVC interventions were channeled.

Key achievements in the reporting period 2023/24

- Increased SILC groups from 372 to current 520 in 2022
- Increased SILC group's membership from 9,325 to over 13,000 currently i.e. 9,248 females and 3,752 males.
- Improved group savings from \$ 50,000 to \$72,000 in the last one year
- Reduced sell of property among OVC households to meet homestead basic needs
- Increased social support networks at community level
- Integration of health insurance into most SILC groups to prevent catastrophic health expenditures among the poor households at community level
- Total share out in FY 2023/2024 was UGX 3,345,208,114

Below are ICobi SILC group members in weekly meetings



Community Based HIV Prevention, Mitigation and Control

Integrated Health service delivery

ICOBH has worked with a number of partners in the last year to ensure continued community HIV response with focus on HIV prevention, mitigation and control. Under the USAID LSDA under UPMB in Bushenyi and Ibanda districts. ICOBI with funding from USAID through UPMB under the Local Service Delivery Activity (USAID/Local Service Delivery Activity) has during the reporting period implemented a Community Interventions Grant for Key and Priority Populations aimed at achieving the following objectives;

- Preventing new infections among Key and Priority Populations. This is being done through scaling up proven high impact social, behavioral, structural, and biomedical HIV prevention approaches in PNFP health facilities and scaling up proven high impact social and behavioral, structural, and biomedical HIV prevention approaches in communities.
- Ensuring that 95% of **Target Populations Living with HIV know their HIV Status. This is being done through providing** Quality, targeted, high yield, facility-based HTC services at scale, providing Quality, targeted, high yield, community-based HTC services at scale and improving Community and facility referrals and linkages.
- Ensuring that 95% of **Target populations living with HIV are on Treatment. This is being done through community approaches that ensure that** all diagnosed people living with HIV are promptly initiated on treatment, scaling up High quality, efficient, and effective TB prevention and treatment interventions in the PNFP sector.
- **95% of Target populations on Treatment Have Suppressed Viral Loads. We are aiming at having all** diagnosed PLHIV on treatment achieve and maintain viral suppression. This is being done through intensive adherence counseling sessions, follow-up of all KPs and PPs on treatment to ensure that they adhere to their treatment and sending reminders to KPs and PPs on ART to adhere to their drugs.

In addition to Key Populations, ICOBI also implemented the following activities in Ibanda and Bushenyi Districts under the USAID Local Service Delivery Activity (USAID LSDA). ICOBI has also during the period started a community HIV/AIDS, GV, Child protection and safety activity in Luwero and Nakaseke districts working with DOTT Services Limited supported by UNRA along Luwero-Butalangu road construction project.

- Referral of high-risk HIV negative Key and Priority Populations for PrEP.
- Follow up of all Key and Priority Populations on PrEP to re-initiate those that have stopped taking PrEP.
- Referral of Males aged 15+ for Voluntary Male Medical Circumcision (VMMC).
- Follow up to ensure that Males aged 15+ referred for VMMC receive the service.
- Referral of Gender Based Violence (GBV) Survivors for post GBV services and following them up to ensure that they receive the services.
- Referral of pregnant women for ANC/PMTCT.
- Follow up of exposed for Early Infant Diagnosis bleeding and following them up to ensure they are bled.

- Distribution of HIV Self-Testing Kits.
- Follow up of HIV Clients on ART that experienced treatment interruption and bringing them back to care.
- Follow up of non-suppressed clients assigned by the PNFP facilities to the organization.
- Referral and Linkage of HIV Positive women of reproductive age for cervical cancer screening.
- Identification of new and relapse TB patients.

Key achievements for 2023/2024 include the following

◆ The key achievements included;

- 7,230 Key Populations Reached with standard HIV prevention services package designed for the category
- 560 KP initiated on ART in both Ibanda and Mbarara District
- 2,500 HIVST kits distributed by CSOs in the community
- 121 KP initiated on PrEP
- 3,680 clients received HIV prevention services at DICs
- 1,240 GBV survivors referred for Post GBV services
- 3,100 pregnant women referred for ANC/HTS
- 1,420 children and adolescents offered index testing
- 5,214 clients screened for TB
- 4900 children and adolescents that received community viral load bleeding
- In Luwero and Nakaseke Districts, the following has been achieved
- 14,300 condoms distributed to high-risk places
- 4,500 people sensitized on HIV/AIDS, GBV and child protection issues
- 1,230 IEC materials from World Vision SBA Project distributed
- 04 film shows on HIV/AIDS conducted in 4 urban centres along the road project
- 4 outreaches on HTS conducted
- 540 females condoms distributed to commercial sex workers along the road project
- 04 community education meetings held on red eyes outbreak with focus on prevention measures and treatment
- 04 radio talk shows held on integrated health care services on Senke FM in Luwero.

Below is ICOBI team sensitizing KP/PP peer leaders in Ibanda town and team on Senke FM in Luwero sharing Community health and safety messages



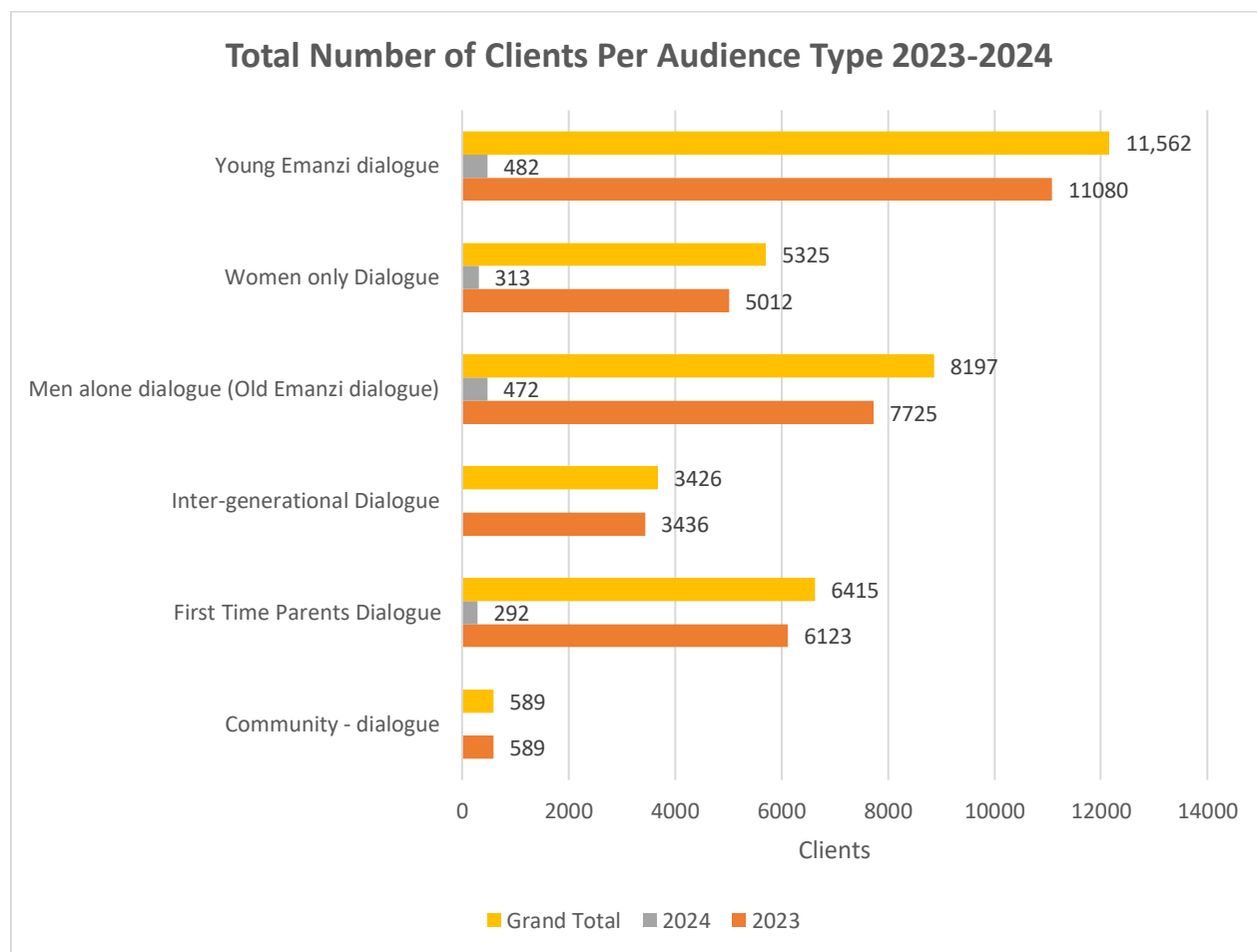
Sexual Reproductive Health

Integrated Community Based Initiatives-ICOBI has been working as a sub grantee under the USAID/Uganda Family Planning Activity-FPA under Pathfinder international as the Prime. ICOBI has been implementing community demand creation as well as creating positive social norms towards modern contraceptive methods in Kiryandongo District in the Albertine region.

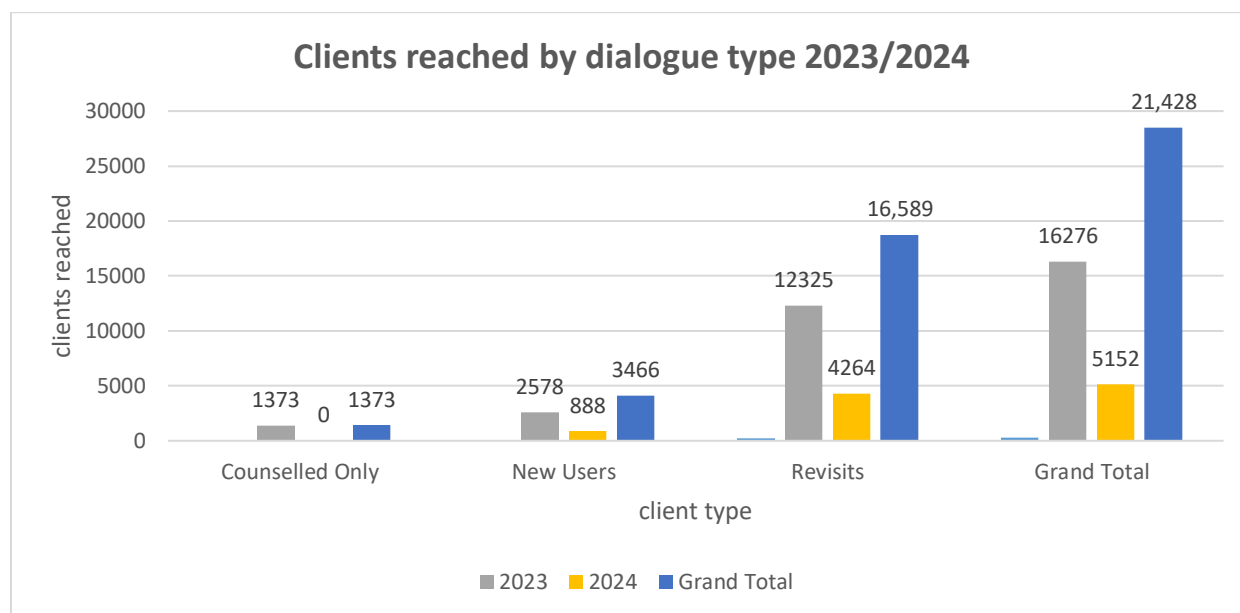
The goal of USAID/Uganda FPA was to support Government of Uganda to increase adoption of positive reproductive health (RH) behaviors among Ugandan women, men, and young people and contribute to long-term shifts in Uganda's modern contraceptive prevalence rate (mCPR) and fertility rate by 2025 in 11 focus districts of Buliisa, Bundibugyo Butambala, Gomba, Kibaale, Kiryandongo, Kyankwanzi, Kyegegwa, Kyenjojo, Ntoroko, and Rakai. The USAID/Uganda FPA sought to create a favorable policy and financing environment to increase access to family planning by strengthening leadership and coordination that will result in a strong health system with accountable leadership, sustainable financing and innovations for demand generation, service delivery, capable health workforce, functional supply chains and information system management.

During the year 2023/2024, ICOBI continued implementation of SRH activities with support from USAID through Pathfinder International. This Project has been ongoing smoothly in all the 17 sub counties of Kiryandongo District in Albertine region. Below is a summary of the key indicators and achievements during the reporting period.

Key achievements under SRH in Albertine region during the reporting period



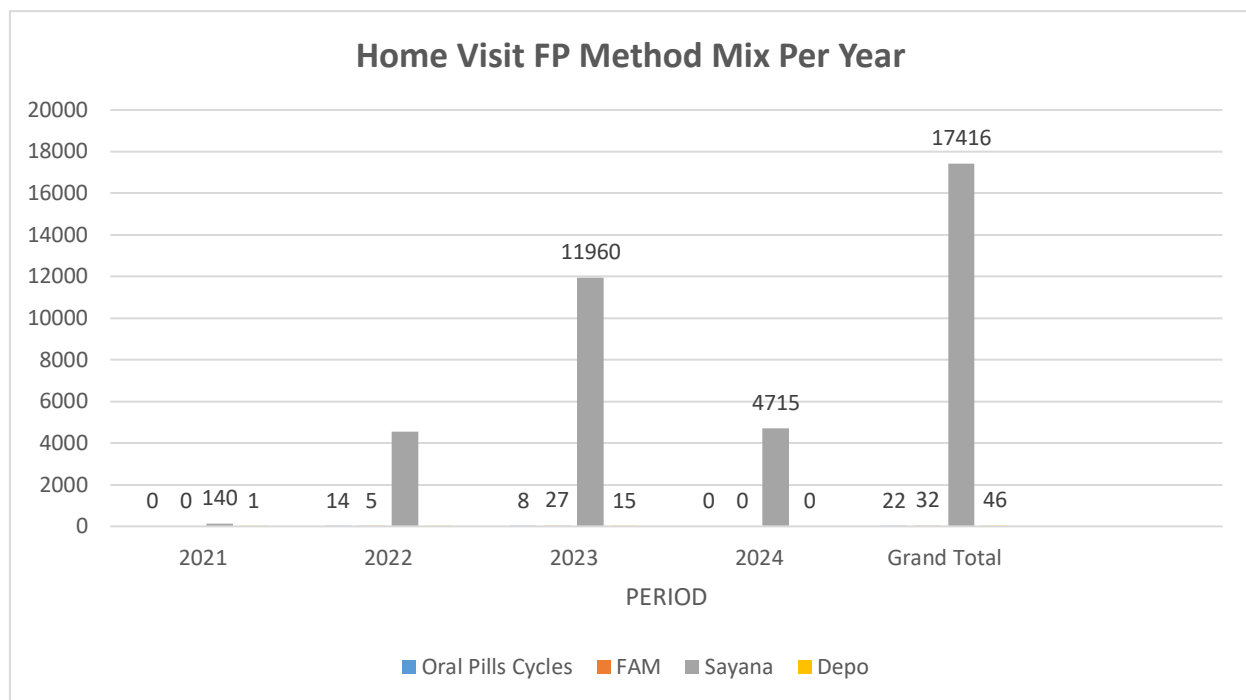
As illustrated in the graph, Majority people reached with sexual reproductive health messages were young people under Emanzi curriculum, a total of 11,562 young people were reached through dialogue sessions of 13 Emanzi sessions.



ICOBH has worked with VHTs to offer household education and sensitization of sexual reproductive health with focus on family planning in Kiryandongo district. During the period, ICOBH was able to reach 21,428 clients through VHT home visits. These offered messages as well as short term FP methods and referrals for FP related services.

FP Uptake and method mix

During the reporting period, ICOBH working with VHTs supported the provision of short-term FP services and methods during home visits. The VHTs mainly had in stock sayana and condoms which were provided to both new and revisit clients as seen in the graph below.



Sayana was commonest short term FP method provided to mothers and the majority users are women aged 25-34 years of age in the district. Sayana has proved to be the most preferred short term FP method among mothers for child spacing in Kiryandongo district during the implementation period. A total of 17,416 mothers accessed Sayana FP method from VHTs under the ICOBI FPA support during the project period.



VHTs receiving bicycles to conduct home visits and referrals in Kiryandongo

Challenges, lessons learnt and recommendations

Challenges

- Limited ability to reach all target populations and district areas with HIV/AIDS interventions especially prevention services due to resource constraints
- Lack of adequate resources for staff capacity building efforts to strengthen service delivery
- Loss of some critical staff in the organization due to phase out of projects and the impact of COVID -19 pandemic
- Stiff competition for funding with international organizations
- Depreciating old equipment to support community health service delivery
- Staff turn over due to limited funding and phase out of key program activities hence affecting organizational capacity

Lessons learnt

During this reporting period 2023/24, a number of good practices and lessons were identified. The following are among the key;

- Collaboration and partnerships are a good practice to address service gaps and leverage resources to serve the target population

- Community leadership engagement in activity implementation ease mobilization and improves trust among the beneficiary communities
- Regular review meetings with key stakeholders engaged in service provision helps to share work plans timely and avoid duplication of services as well as conflicts
- Where possible home and family centres are more appropriate to increase uptake and address barriers
- Working with community resource persons like peer leaders, VHTs etc. increases mobilization and community awareness about the projects under implementation.
- High levels of transparency and accountability for donor funds improves organizational reputation for further collaboration

Recommendations

From experience and evidence obtained from the program implementation in the period 2023/24, the management team recommends that a number of strategic actions be adopted to further enhance implementation in the coming years;

- ICOBI should ensure resource diversification and this might need developing a business plan to ensure continuity in case of any project phase out. This will retain core team members and ease further capacity for service delivery.
- ICOBI should ensure further strengthening adherence to current management and financial practices for transparency and accountability. This will improve donor confidence and hence increase funding opportunities
- ICOBI should form strategic partnerships with national, regional and international bodies and agencies for resource mobilization efforts.
- Systems and departmental strengthening for effective reporting and accountability is also needed. This applies to especially M&E and Finance department where the organization is facing staff turn over
- There is need to reactivate senior management and board teams in resource mobilization for the organization to keep running programs as per the strategic plan

SUCCESS STORY FORM FPA PROJECT

Innovative targeting of males for Family Planning health education and uptake in Kiryandongo District

Male engagement in Family planning and general health care services remains a challenge in Kiryandongo District. Under the Uganda Family Planning Activity in Kiryandongo District, the project team has since February, 2021 been trying ways of reaching men with Family Planning information and services but all in vain. Males have been failing to attend outreach Family Planning events for health education and even

not turning up for males only dialogue meetings. Out of the 2 men only dialogue organized in March, 2021, out of the planned 60 men in dialogues, only 35 turned up yet men are key decision makers at household level in regard to utilization of Family Planning services at household and community levels.

When an outreach activity was organized in Mutunda Sub County in March, 2023, the men refused to attend the health education sessions even when the event was nearby. Some men started labeling the event as women business and that they have no interest or role to play in Family planning issues. Others said it affects their wives sexuality/sexual feelings and performance and focused on side effects of Family Planning methods.

The ICOBI program team led by social behaviors Change and Communications Officer decided to approach them from their drinking joints and deliver FP messages. At the start of discussions, men shouted at the team and expressed unwillingness to support any FP method citing a number of side effects on their women and being against their desire to have many family members.



In the picture above, ICOBI team engages Men in an FP dialogue form their joint in Mutunda

The team addressed a number of issues like the need to plan for families looking at resources available and how to plan/methods of FP, benefits of Family planning, side effects of Family planning and roles men can play to support FP.

“Let me go home and pick my wife to come and access family planning services now” a male member responded and acted immediately.

The ICOBI FPA team left the men group encouraged to continue searching for men from their hideouts and common places like drinking joints and talk to them about FP services.

Story compiled by Kintu Joachim

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Key Development Partners during the year 2023/2024

PATHFINDER



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
INTERNATIONAL CLINICAL RESEARCH CENTER



Sida



Investing in our future

The Global Fund
To Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria





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