

In Uganda's Kyenjojo district, interfaith advocacy results in 7,029 new family planning clients between 2015 and 2017

Formed in 2012 by the Roman Catholic Church, Church of Uganda and other Christian organizations, Western Uganda FBO network (WUFBN) has 82 faith-based member organizations. Its advocacy has greatly improved access to family planning services in Kyenjojo district. Between 2015 and 2017, the district's total number of family planning clients increased by about 50% from 14,987 to 22,016 (HMIS data). As a member of Faith to Action Network, WUFBN benefited from capacity building in advocacy skills, and seed funds for its local level advocacy.



WUFBN's impact

Its engagement with district decision makers has led to

- the development of a district family planning costed implementation plan in 2017,
- the creation of a technical working group and
- for the first time, Kyenjojo district has allocated 10 million UGX (2,700 USD) for family planning awareness creation activities for the financial year 2018/19.



Kyenjojo District Planner briefs Religious leaders

WUFBON was a key driver of these wins. In order to convince district decision makers to prioritize family planning interventions, WUFBON held a briefing meeting with the assistant district health officer, district health educator and the district planner. It then provided technical assistance in drafting the district costed implementation plan, conducted a consultative meeting with government and stakeholders from the District Council, District Health Team (DHT), District Technical Planning Committee (DTPC), civil society representatives, and cultural and faith leaders, private sector representatives and community volunteers. All lower local governments were represented in the District Technical Planning Committee (DTPC) for their inputs. Later on, WUFBON was invited to continuously participate in District Health Teams meetings. WUFBON also participated in the district budget conference. Jointly with advocacy allies, it presented a civil society communiqué requesting the district to increase budget allocation for family planning and health, as well as human resources for health. During the district leaders' retreat in Kasese in March 2018, WUFBON convinced decision makers to integrate the Family Planning Costed Implementation Plan into the district action plan. This faced considerable resistance from several Heads of Departments who did not agree that family planning was a priority.

In particular the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer vehemently opposed Family Planning - “there is no need for FP, we cannot teach it to our adolescents. We cannot integrate FP into our schools”.



Moses Atuhaire, CEO, WUFBON, advocating for family planning

In particular the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer vehemently opposed Family Planning - “there is no need for FP, we cannot teach it to our adolescents. We cannot integrate FP into our schools”. WUFBON informed district leaders about the situation of adolescent health at district level, using facts and figures, complemented by an overview of existing national policies. This advocacy was strengthened, by the District Chairman LC 5 for Kyenjojo. He stood up for family planning, with arguments of demographic pressure, teenage pregnancies, the increase of cesarian births at Kyenjojo Hospital. Thereafter, within the framework of district budget framework discussions, WUFBON approached the district health management team, LC V, CAO, District Health Officer and District Planner, advocating for budget allocations. The argument was that if the district doesn't show commitment, other stakeholders will not provide their support. They decided to allocate 10 million UGX to family planning and asked for WUFBON's opinion on the priority activities which required funding. WUFBON advised to allocate it to enabling woman counsellors to raise awareness on family planning, with the expectation that this activity would trickle to the sub-county.

WUFBON monitors family planning standards and successfully holds local government accountable

WUFBON's secretariat regularly monitors six health facilities. Together with its technical assistance and advocacy, this has resulted in immediate action to respond to barriers to family planning services. What has changed:

- Kyenjojo Hospital now plans and carries out family planning outreaches.
- District officials have tackled family planning commodity shortages identified by WUFBON in Kyenjojo hospital and St Mary's health centre II.
- Bufunjo health centre III, serving 3 sub-counties, has addressed FP commodity stockouts: when WUFBON started monitoring this health facility, it had 2 months without commodities. By now, the facility orders contraceptives in time.
- In Bufunjo health centre III, the youth corner has been re-energized, and attends to about 200 family planning clients per month.
- Butunduzi sub county has allocated 200,000 UGX to family planning. Butunduzi health centre III now carries out outreaches integrating child health and family planning.
- Nyankwanzi Health Centre III has been allocated 150 million UGX for the construction of a maternity ward. At the moment, male clients share a ward with women. When a woman is in labor, men have to leave the room and wait outside.
- Kyarusozzi health centre IV has improved health worker motivation. After an interfaith meeting, the manager introduced incentives for best performing health workers.

Faith-based social accountability

WUFBON's monitoring visits are guided by a monitoring tool developed by WUFBON. The tool helps monitor stockouts, assess the FP method mix, check whether health facilities conduct outreach activities and identify underlying reasons for problems. In addition, the network has formed community interfaith advocacy fora comprising local council leaders, health management team and community members. They participate in activities voluntarily, which increases the sustainability. To increase trust and confidence, one faith leader is appointed "faith budget advisor". This person represents the community during health facility assessments carried out by WUFBON. The faith leader's presence, reduces health facility management's objections, who reviews the assessment report and acknowledges its truthfulness by putting a stamp on it.



Outcomes: Construction of Nyankwanzi HC III new maternity ward



WUFBON sensitizing congregants on family planning

WUFBON advocates towards its member organizations to offer family planning services and information

WUFBON supports its member organizations to accept and offer the full family planning method mix. This is a journey. While some members readily accept and promote family planning information and services, other members take their time to understand and adjust their organizational culture.

- WUFBON gained commitments for family planning from pastors from the disciple's network and nation fellowship of born again and evangelicals from six districts of Rwenzori region.
- For Promise Faith Centre and TEAM Church has integrated family planning information into their married seminars. So far, TEAM Church has counselled 200 couples in better parenting including family planning.
- Kamu-kamu women group sensitizes the community on family planning methods and HIV/AIDs preventive measures using its active drama group.
- BHTF offers family planning services at its medical centre.
- C-BIRD advocates and raises awareness for family planning on its radio station.
- Combined Effort for Quality and Development has integrated family planning in community sensitization meetings in Kyenjojo Town council
- JESE disseminates information on family planning through radio talk shows on Unique FM and K FM.
- Kyenjojo Islamic Community and Doha Health Centre preaches and teaches people about family planning using the Holy Quran
- Mwenge Rural Information Centre uses the power of ICT to reach young people with reproductive health and family planning information in Kyenjojo District.



WUFBON consultative meeting for faith leaders

It is worthwhile singling out, two more complex cases...

One Catholic health facility (name edited out) now offers the full FP method mix and carries out FP outreaches. A signpost on the main street clearly signals that all family planning services are available. The priest in charge, introduced incentives through his pastoral work “if you embrace family planning and you have 3 children, and don’t want to have more children for 3 years, the Church will pay school fees for a child”. WUFBN convinced the facility’s management. The manager was already very committed to maternal health but opposed modern family planning methods. During a consultative meeting, facts and figures were showed that family planning enhances the wellbeing of both mother and child and the manager became a family planning champion. Several follow up meetings made sure that the person honours her commitments. At first, the facility only informed about all FP methods, but offered only natural FP methods,



Outcomes: Family Planning Services available at Catholic Facility

and referred clients to other facilities for modern methods. However, clients were very satisfied with the quality of services in the faith based facility, and demanded for the full method mix. Slowly, the management encouraged health workers to offer all methods.



In progress: Tumushabe Alex from Faith of Unity talks during interfaith meeting

In Butunduzi sub-county, the journey has just started within the Faith of Unity cult. Faith of Unity does neither accept immunization nor family planning services. Its founder and leader is also the chairman of the local council 3. By now, he has become a Family Planning champion. He appointed a priest to manage its new health programme. A health facility was built with the contribution of the community. By now, women give birth at the facility. This is a great shift. Believing that health workers might intentionally kill their babies, they had refused births attended by health workers. However, this facility still does not offer family planning services.

CONTACTING US:



Peter K. Munene | Faith to Action Network
P.O Box 2438 – 00202 | Nairobi | Kenya
PeterMunene@faithtoactionnetwork.org



Moses Atuhaire | Western Uganda FBO Network
utopiauganda@gmail.com