STRENGTHENING UGANDA'S SYSTEMS FOR TREATING AIDS NATIONALLY

~ SUCCESS STORY ~

Engaging Youths in the Provision of Adolescent Friendly Healthcare Services

Adolescents make a window in programming that has been neglected for some time. Many times services are available for the children (pediatric services) and adults, but not for adolescents—a missed age bracket, between 10 and 19 years of age. The USAID-funded Strengthening Uganda's Systems for Treating AIDS Nationally (USAID/SUSTAIN) project targets this age group, providing social services and empowering them to become actors for social change.

At the USAID/SUSTAIN-supported Lira Regional Referral Hospital, two youth volunteers (ages 24 and 22) have demonstrated their capabilities by supporting the newly established adolescent center to expand its services. From offering health education and registration to managing client flow, the two youth volunteers have made the provision of adolescent-friendly services possible within a context of staff shortages.

Perhaps their greatest contribution has been mitigating adolescents' various health-compromising behaviors, risks and conditions—through sharing their own experiences with adolescents during daily health education sessions at the adolescent center. According to Sr. Susan Achiro, the adolescent services focal person at Lira hospital, the use of volunteers are an effective approach particularly because adolescents easily identify with fellow young people.

Youth volunteers Gloria *(left)* and Dorcus *(right)*

> *"They share their experiences during the health education talks. They also talk about the dangers of unsafe sex, substance use, and violence. My role has been to empower the youth volunteers with the necessary knowledge and skills and to supervise them for efficiency." Said Sr. Achiro Their contributions have led to increased demand for the adolescent healthcare services.*

The HIV clinic team recognized two youth volunteers' (Dorcus and Gloria- both HIV Positive) potential because of their active participation in peer-support activities for adolescents organized by the HIV clinic. These youth, after receiving mentoring in HIV treatment and care, supported the decentralization of HIV counseling and testing to all service delivery areas in the hospital. They then received training on adolescent-friendly healthcare services and are now supporting the adolescent center.

Lira Hospital is one among six pilot regional referral hospitals benefitting from the USAID/SUSTAIN project's support for adolescent-friendly healthcare services. The project has built healthcare worker (including volunteers) capacity at the six hospitals to provide these services. The project continues to provide coaching and mentoring for efficient service delivery. For more details about the USAID/SUSTAIN support to Lira hospital, please visit our website: www.sustainuganda.org

November 2016

The USAID Strengthening Uganda's Systems for Treating AIDS Nationally (SUSTAIN) project supports the Uganda Ministry of Health to strengthen sustainable and innovative approaches for HIV and TB service delivery at selected healthcare facilities. This project is made possible by the support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.