

FAITH LEADERS SPEAK TO THE PEOPLE ABOUT HEALTH

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John Snow, Inc. (JSI) and Another Option

Impact Statement: Faith leaders lead community dialogues and planning meetings to address sensitive health issues and reduce the social and cultural barriers to change.

Problem Statement/Background: Religion is an essential part of life in Uganda. For many, a church or mosque is their social support system for life's challenges, and engagement through sermons and readings provide spiritual and emotional guidance for individuals and families.

Intervention: The USAID Regional Health Integration to Enhance Services - North, Lango (RHITES-N, Lango) project, implemented by John Snow, Inc. (JSI), designed a faith leaders' engagement program in 2018. The program built the skills of faith leaders to facilitate dialogues on reducing social and cultural barriers to improving health issues. Twenty faith leaders from five denominations participated in the program. They engaged their members through more than sixty structures within their communities, including women's groups, youth groups, community outreach groups, and Bible study meetings. RHITES-N, Lango used a co-design process to prioritize topics. Faith leaders led couple and family counseling sessions, dialogues, and sermons to address gender-based violence, teenage



pregnancies, family planning, and health-seeking behaviors. The project developed talking points and job aids to support the dialogues.

Results: Since 2018, the 20 faith leaders have organized more than 2,400 counseling sessions in the community, including during religious events. Faith leaders worked with families to develop more than 1,345 household improvement plans, establish monthly village meetings to promote male participation, and map 95 percent of pregnant women, leading to a 20 percent improvement in the number of pregnant women attending antenatal care (ANC) visits.

Photo Caption: Faith groups engage in a co-design process in Uganda's Lango sub-region. Credit: John Snow, Inc. (JSI)