

SOCIAL INNOVATION IN HEALTH INITIATIVE



THE POWER PROJECT: PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH IN UGANDA

CONTINENT

Africa

COUNTRY

Uganda

HEALTH FOCUS

Sexual and Reproductive Health and
Family Planning

AREAS OF INTEREST

Young Women Business Leaders
Training and Mentorship

HEALTH SYSTEM FOCUS

Reproductive Health

THE POWER PROJECT: PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH IN UGANDA

The POWER project was established by Action 4 Health Uganda (a Ugandan non-governmental organisation) to support women business leaders who have developed innovative solutions to address unmet needs in family planning/sexual and reproductive health and rights services and information for young people in Uganda. The project involves training, coaching, and mentorship of young business leaders, and afterwards, the top business solutions are supported financially to be scaled up through the Multi-sectoral Investment Fund.

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CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS.....	3
CASE INTRODUCTION	4
1. INNOVATION PROFILE AT A GLANCE	5
2. CHALLENGES	7
3. INNOVATION IN INTERVENTION	7
3.1 Youth Empowerment	7
3.2 Women Social Entrepreneurship	8
3.3 Capacity Building, Mentorship, and Coaching.....	8
3.4 Investment Financing.....	8
4. IMPLEMENTATION	8
4.1 Innovation In Implementation.....	8
4.2 Organisation and People	9
4.3 Business Model	10
5. OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES	10
5.1 Impact On Healthcare Delivery	10
5.2 Organisational Milestones.....	11
5.3 Community Perceptions.....	11
6. SUSTAINABILITY	12
7. SCALABILITY	12
8. KEY LESSONS.....	13
9. CASE INSIGHTS.....	14
REFERENCE LIST	15

ABBREVIATIONS

A4HU	Action for Health Uganda
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DSW	Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung
FP	Family Planning
GBV	Gender-based violence
HIV/AIDS	Human immunodeficiency virus infection / Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
POWER	Providing Opportunities for Women in Entrepreneurship and Reproductive Health
RH	Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
UGX	Uganda Shillings

CASE INTRODUCTION

Uganda has one of the youngest populations globally, with nearly half of them aged below 15 years. Despite the high constant fertility rate of about 6.7 children per woman in Uganda (Vision 2040), about 17% of the women currently have unmet needs for family planning, with disparities between rural areas (37%) and urban areas (23%) (Uganda - Family Planning 2030, 2024). The modern contraceptive prevalence rate for all women was about 30.4% in 2020, and this low access to family planning and contraception is due to several barriers, which include the long distance required to reach health facilities, frequent stock-outs, inadequate contraceptive availability, and limited youth-friendly services (Kigongo et al., 2024; Nanvubya et al., 2020; Ouma et al., 2015). Women also face marginalization in accessing productive resources, decision-making platforms, healthcare, education, and employment, making them vulnerable to exploitation, including sexual harassment.

Therefore, the POWER (Providing Opportunities for Women in Entrepreneurship and Reproductive Health) project was conceived by Action 4 Health Uganda (A4HU) to support women business leaders who have developed innovation solutions to address unmet needs in family planning (FP)/sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services and information for young people in Uganda (A4HU, 2024).

“At the time before I joined the POWER project, I did not have clear mapping on who my target market was because I then had only one branch in Kampala at Pioneer mall. However, after joining the POWER project, I was able to disseminate my product and also open up a second branch in Kajjansi Town, and this was in a bid to get closer to my customers. So that’s what really the POWER project sort of helped me to achieve,” noted a 29-year-old female who runs a social enterprise project aimed at providing high quality baby and mother products as well as sexual reproductive health products and services.

The A4HU POWER Accelerator Program is a 3- to 6-month program that nurtures women entrepreneurs in the field of FP/SRHR. The program operates on a five-phase approach starting with onboarding of candidates into the 3- to 6-month Accelerator Program, followed by graduation and launch of the startups. This is then followed by the investment phase via the Multi-sectoral Investment Fund, provision of tailored business development services and coaching, certification and mentorship of business coaches, and onboarding of new candidates to be trained by alumni members and certified coaches.

“The young people really have limited access to sexual and reproductive services because they have no income or no socioeconomic capacity. They told us that they are not able to buy the commodities or products. Sometimes they do not have transport to go to the health centers because they are in rural settings. But also the fact that many of them are in school, and of course, really, they do not have money or resources. Therefore, there is a risk when these young people have sexual encounters. So we thought that there is a gap that we are bridging when we support and strengthen social enterprises that integrate sexual and reproductive health. That is why we created this POWER project, to bridge that gap, to be able to allow the young people to create access to reproductive health services in their social enterprises while also increasing their income.” (Mrs. Sarah Kintu, CEO, A4HU)

1. INNOVATION PROFILE AT A GLANCE

Organisation details

Organisation name	Action 4 Health Uganda (A4HU)
Founding year	October 17, 2017
Founders	Mr. Byomuhangi Fabian Katigi, Mrs. Ssinabulya Sylvia Namadidde, Mrs. Kavuma Ruth Nvumetta, Justice Tabalo John Patrick Mashongo, Mrs. Kintu Sarah Nankya, Mr. Musinguzi Hassan and Mrs. Sikyoya Naume.
Current head of organisation	Mrs. Sarah Kintu Nankya
Organisational structure	The Organisation is led by an experienced Board of Directors composed of 7 members supported by a Senior Management Team led by Mrs. Sarah Kintu the Chief Executive Officer, supported by Programme Manager, Finance and Admin Manager, Project managers, program officers, and support Staff. The organization was localized from Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW) or the Germany Foundation for World Population in 2017. DSW is now a close partner for technical guidance and funding opportunities.
Main value proposition	A4HU is dedicated to empowering Ugandan youth by fostering socio-economic development and championing SRHR. It envisions a future where young people are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and resources to thrive in a competitive economy while making informed choices about their health and well-being.
Organisational stage	Expanding organisation
Size	32 staff members (19 males and 13 females)
Main income streams	Grants and donations
Annual expenditure	UGX 3.997 billion

Operational Details

Country or countries of operation	Uganda
Local scope	National, based on the availability of resources. Currently active in Central, Eastern, and Northern Uganda; in Kampala, Wakiso, Mukono, Mityana, Kassanda, Busia, Tororo, and Kamuli districts.
Type of beneficiaries	Rural, urban, and peri-urban young people aged 15 to 35 years, adolescent girls and young women, reproductive health seekers, persons living with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS/ GBV survivors, youths looking for enhanced livelihood opportunities, youth-led community-based organisations, and youth- and women-inclusive micro, small, and medium enterprises
Number of beneficiaries (annually)	About 30,000 beneficiaries reached annually
Cost per client	About UGX 1,620,000
Local engagement	A4HU has established partnerships with various government departments, line ministries, district local governments, and the Kampala Capital City Authority, among others. It subscribes to the Uganda Family Planning

Consortium, Family Planning Budget Advocacy Group (FBAG), Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group, and Uganda National NGO Forum.

Scale and Transferability

Innovative Elements	Flying Nurse model, Youth Empowerment Centre model, POWER acceleration and incubation model for health innovations, multi-sectoral investment fund for social entrepreneurs, and youth mobile hub to reach end-mile beneficiaries with comprehensive health services.
Scaling considerations	• There should be a grown and expanded multi-sectoral investment fund, capable of supporting alumni members, the private sector, and other new social innovators in health, to support the growth of their health social enterprises in Uganda. The fund has to be structured around four key pillars: investment financing, credit financing, asset financing, and matching grants. • There should be an effective certified mentorship and coaching program with a team of credible, competent, and certified business coaches to support the growing network of social innovations in health in Uganda and Africa. • SRHR services should be digitalized through digital platforms, apps, and e-commerce platforms to bridge stigma and exclusion, which is key for scale up.
Sustainability considerations	The POWER project has established partnerships and collaborations with like-minded innovators in health such as social innovation in health, youth-focused organizations, social entrepreneurs, and youth-led community-based organisations to ensure sustainability. Furthermore, POWER has been integrated with various government programs at the community level, like the Parish Development Model, Women Entrepreneurship Program, GROW Project, and the Ministry of ICT's Presidential Initiative on ICT and Innovations. These linkages provide more support and resources to enhance sustainability and impact of the social innovations and service delivery. POWER has also established a multi-sectoral investment fund, where entrepreneurs save money and this has capacity to support the growth of new social innovators in health.
Health system lessons	• Leveraging local structures fosters trust and increases health service utilization through village health teams, peer education, community health workers, para-social workers, and peer facilitators, and builds their capacity to ensure sustainability of health service delivery. • Access to SRHR and family planning products and services in Uganda can be promoted by engaging young women business leaders, training and mentoring them in SRHR and entrepreneurship, to ensure the growth and sustainability of their social business enterprises. • Provision of startup funding and financing to trained young women business leaders is a key strategy for kick-starting their startups and ensuring their survival.

2. CHALLENGES

Globally, Uganda has one of the youngest populations with nearly half of them aged below 15 years, and this is due to a historically high and constant fertility rate of about 6.7 children per woman, according to the Uganda Vision 2040 (Vision 2040). Likewise, 73.2% of Uganda's young population is below 30 years and this presents both opportunities and challenges in meeting the demand for family planning and sexual and reproductive health services (UBOS, 2024). Important to note is that 17% of the women in Uganda currently have unmet needs for family planning, with disparities between rural areas (37%) and urban areas (23%) (Uganda - Family Planning 2030, 2024). Similarly, the modern contraceptive prevalence rate for all women was about 30.4% in 2020. This low access to family planning and contraception is due to several barriers which include long travel distances to health facilities, frequent stock-outs, inadequate contraceptive availability, and limited youth-friendly services (Kigongo et al., 2024; Nanvubya et al., 2020; Ouma et al., 2015). These barriers are worsened by limited health facilities that are youth-friendly (only 5%), and limited economic opportunities for the youth (Hasaba, 2014; SRHR Alliance Advocacy Uganda, 2024).

Furthermore, women face marginalization in accessing productive resources, decision-making platforms, and healthcare. Limited access to education, jobs, and training hinders their transition to meaningful employment, leaving many engaged in low-paid or unpaid work. This makes them vulnerable to exploitation without social protection and to sexual and reproductive complications.

The Uganda government committed to reduce the unmet need for modern family planning services for all women of reproductive age to 15% and increase the

modern contraceptive prevalence rate (mCPR) for all women to 39.6% by 2025 in the 2030 Family Planning Agenda. But limited or no progress has been made.

Therefore, the POWER Project was established to address two critical challenges, the unmet need for family planning services and the high unemployment among women. The Project aims to bridge these gaps by empowering women to become business leaders. By fostering business ownership and independence, the project equips women with the skills and resources needed to address challenges in healthcare, family planning, and socio-economic wellbeing, ultimately driving innovation, productivity, and job creation in their communities.

The National Policy Guidelines and Service Standards for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights 2006 highlight different components of SRHR, including safe motherhood; family planning; adolescent health; prevention and management of adolescent ill-health; RH tract infections, including STI/HIV/AIDS, infertility, and reproductive organ cancers; menopause; obstetric fistulae; and gender issues (gender-based violence and female genital mutilation). Hence the POWER project also puts emphasis on these SRHR components.

3. INNOVATION IN INTERVENTION

3.1 YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Since its establishment, A4HU focuses on youth empowerment through dedicated mainstreaming of youth in socio-economic development and promoting sexual and reproductive health (SRH). A4HU advocates for the prioritization and provision of health services for young

people at the national and subnational level by supporting the establishment of a supportive socio-cultural, political, and legal environment that protects young people's rights, and enables them to access health information, education, and services that are gender-sensitive and youth-friendly.

3.2 WOMEN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In line with its mission of providing young people with the resources that they need to access SRH services, and live free from violence and improve their livelihoods, A4HU established the POWER project. This project is an accelerator programme that nurtures and grows women social entrepreneurs towards the development of sustainable businesses in the fields of family planning and sexual reproductive health and rights (FP/SRHR). Women business leaders are nurtured to increase and expand innovative solutions that expand access to FP/SRHR services in Uganda through the social entrepreneurship approach.

3.3 CAPACITY BUILDING, MENTORSHIP, AND COACHING

The POWER project provides capacity building, mentorship, and coaching to women business entrepreneurs. These women are then empowered to play a vital role in distributing modern contraceptives, family planning commodities, sharing accurate information, and supplying safe pleasure kits and other SRHR products. This fosters accessibility and ensures the well-being and the power of choice for young people in matters regarding SRHR.

"We provide information to the young people. We train peer facilitators, encourage peer-to-peer exchange of information and interaction. So we have trained over 1,200 peer educators to support fellow young people to access information on SRHR. When young people are provided with the right SRHR information, they are empowered to make right health SRHR choices. Their negotiation skills are also

enhanced. We use our training center to train the peers, who then cascade the knowledge to the communities." (Ms. Miriam Cherukut, Program Manager, A4HU)

3.4 INVESTMENT FINANCING

A4HU has a multi-sectoral fund which assesses the investment readiness of the women business entrepreneurs and offers them investment financing to enhance and grow their social enterprises.

"When we were starting, you know, we had no capital and it was a challenge. But many of us got funding from the POWER project. We got support to kick-start us, and it was really so great. Like, it gave us the energy to start and scale up our innovations." (POWER Project Beneficiary)

4. IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 INNOVATION IN IMPLEMENTATION

The POWER accelerator program is a 3–6-month program which nurtures women entrepreneurs in the field of family planning and SRHR. It operates on a five-phased approach starting with: a) onboarding of the candidates into the 3–6-month accelerator program, b) graduation and launch of the startups, c) investment phase via multi-sectoral investment fund, d) provision of tailored business development services and coaching, and e) certification and mentorship of business coaches, and onboarding of new candidates to be trained by alumni members and certified coaches.

Onboarding of the candidates into the 3–6-month accelerator program

The POWER project sources and recruits promising Ugandan women (18–30 years) candidates with the potential for social entrepreneurship. This will include sourcing candidates from the A4HU network, projects, and the networks of A4HU's partners.

This process involves sending out a call for applications, receiving, reviewing, and selecting the best applications, holding inception project meetings, and finally launching the oriented trainees on the programme. The selected women entrepreneurs are trained through tailor-made monthly sessions to develop ideas in FP/SRHR using a well-developed curriculum at the DSW training centre. The tailor-made monthly sessions include modules on: a) business ideation, planning and development, b) sales and marketing, c) online branding, d) modern ICT for development, and e) financial literacy and management.

Business financing through the multi-sectoral investment fund

Following training and mentorship, the top-performing startups are given seed funding from the multi-sectoral investment fund to boost their startups. The women business entrepreneurs also save money in the multi-sectoral investment fund, and can also access start-up loans from it.

“Okay, we have the multi-sectoral investment fund for us. We save money and we can borrow money from it. We invite people who are not members but are investors to come and put in money there and then members can borrow it. We also have clear terms and conditions for borrowing money.” (POWER Project Beneficiary)

Business development coaching, mentorship, and certification

The women business entrepreneurs are then given tailored business development services and coaching. Those who complete this training are certified and they become business coaches who train and mentor the new candidates.

“We also now do entrepreneurship training, through helping young people to come up with ideas that are innovative to help them because jobs are not there. So we help them to use their experiences, knowledge and skills to identify a problem, and see how they can package it into

a solution.” (POWER project beneficiary who has now become a coach)

4.2 ORGANISATION AND PEOPLE

A4HU, formerly Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW), is an indigenous non-governmental organisation focused on empowering Ugandan youth through socio-economic development and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Localized in 2018, A4HU established its own strategic and governance structures to drive national and community-level impact, expanding Youth Empowerment Centres (youth-led community-based organisations) from five to eighteen across eight districts.

A4HU's 2023-2027 strategic plan outlines five key objectives which include: a) improving youth SRHR access, b) fostering economic empowerment, c) strengthening youth governance, d) promoting research and innovation, and e) enhancing organisational efficiency.

A4HU currently operates in 12 districts across Uganda, and its mission is to inspire youth to reach their potential through access to essential services, violence prevention, and livelihood support, guided by values of accountability, integrity, inclusivity, well-being, and safety.

“What motivates us is our belief in the power of unity and transformation. We believe in a society that is inspired by young people involved in decision making on matters that affect them, especially the women. We are motivated if women are inspired and involved because we believe that we can do nothing without them. So, we need to work with them to transform our community, and that's our motivation.” (Mr. Hassan Wasswa, POWER Program Manager)

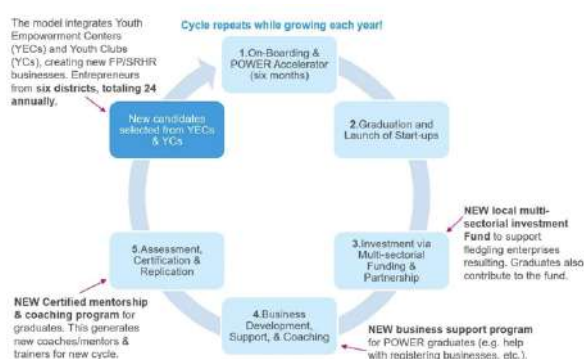
A4HU's current projects include: TeamUp Uganda project (focusing on health, agriculture, and WASH), Flying Nurses

(family planning in remote areas), Empower Youth Project (strengthening community SRHR structures), Youth Truck Project (mobilising underserved youth), and the POWER project (promoting female entrepreneurship). A4HU has an experienced Board of Directors, supported by a Senior Management Team with 32 staff members.

“For me, I think, when I came in as a leader, really what motivates me is to see the best coming out of my team. Because I know each and every one of their capabilities. I have one-on-one with them, and then I try to develop them based on what they can deliver more. You find that there are some staff who are introverts. They will not speak out in meetings, but then they are doing their thing on paper, and you have a nail on it. So those ones, you need to engage them and then encourage them to, you know, to do more. And they will be happy because they know when you engage them and you know their value.” (Mrs. Sarah Kintu, CEO, A4HU)

4.3 BUSINESS MODEL

A4HU adopted the POWER (Providing Opportunities for Women in Entrepreneurship and Reproductive Health) model as a project to empower and strengthen women business leaders to develop and scale up their innovations and solutions to address the unmet needs in FP/SRHR services and information for young People in Uganda. The project uses a Socio-Entrepreneurship Model, as illustrated in the figure below;



The project uses a blended approach of both physical and virtual training sessions.

“They thought of what could be flexible because we have people that are studying. So they gave us a number of virtual and physical training, but they still consulted us on how we wanted the training to be done.” (POWER Project Beneficiary)

In the implementation, POWER is facing different challenges including limited resources for more prolonged mentorship and limited financing of the young women leaders.

5. OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

5.1 IMPACT ON HEALTHCARE DELIVERY

Young women-led innovative business enterprises in SRHR have been established and these have increased access to the SRHR services and products such as contraceptives, menstrual health products, educational resources, and youth-friendly health services. For instance, the “Us For Girls” start-up produces menstrual kits for young girls and has enabled about 350 young girls to access these kits in Western Uganda, while the Little Winnie Foundation, another start-up, has trained over 1,000 health workers in delivery of sexual reproductive health information and linked them to access SRHR products from other POWER start-ups.

To date, the POWER project has so far trained, mentored, and launched 12 women business start-ups. The project has equipped 10,275 young people with FP/SRHR information and products to make informed choices about their sexual reproductive health choices since 2022.

“The other second issue we apply under the POWER is gainful employment for the young people. We recognise that women are being left behind in terms of accessing gainful

employment that is being unified. So through POWER, we employ social entrepreneurship where we innovate together the ideas and those ideas should be able to address sexual reproductive health and family planning to create social impact but also at the end of the day, they are able to make money and support their basic needs.” (Mr. Hassan Wasswa, POWER Program Manager)

The POWER project has improved financial literacy and service utilisation among women-led social health entrepreneurs in SRHR. This has enabled better financial management and growth. Women and girls have gained the confidence, knowledge skills, and support to develop impactful social enterprises that are addressing pressing needs of young women in their communities.

Some of the promising women-led social health enterprises in Uganda have accessed and utilised tailored financial services and business development services from the POWER project to enhance their business operations and sustainability. These tailored financial services include loans, grants, insurance, or coaching support, which are crafted with a deep understanding of the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the social health sector.

So far EUR 300,000 (UGX 1.2 billion) has been raised in grant financing to support the 12 POWER startups in Uganda since 2023, and this has created 96 employment opportunities for the young people in the POWER startups since 2022.

“The POWER project did not leave me hanging as an entrepreneur right from the time I joined. They introduced me to different mentors and I am now able to disseminate the knowledge that I have acquired to my fellow female entrepreneurs. That’s one of the unique advantages that POWER has.” (POWER Project Beneficiary)

5.2 ORGANISATIONAL MILESTONES

A4HU is dedicated to empower young people in Uganda to effectively address

issues related to sexual and reproductive health, including high rates of teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and limited access to sexual and reproductive health services and rights; economic status; and poverty alleviation through delivering holistic youth empowerment interventions. Through this work, A4HU has expanded to now operate in eight districts of Uganda, including Kampala, Wakiso, Mukono, Mityana, Kassanda, Kamuli, Busia, and Tororo. In its work, A4HU has adopted a youth empowerment model, where young people within their communities are organised in youth-led structures to champion interventions through youth groups, Youth Empowerment Centres (YECs), and a national youth network.

“A4HU has been able to handle challenges affecting young people’s access to SRHR services like youth-friendly services. A4HU has refurbished a youth-friendly health corner in Kitebi HC III through the POWER project. Under the T-map project, A4HU has installed a sanitary pads production station called MACK-PAD, and this produces eco-friendly and affordable sanitary pads, enabling young people to attain menstrual hygiene.” (Ms. Miriam Cherukut, Program Manager, A4HU)

A4HU has complemented its efforts with the new service delivery model called the Bees (Flying Nurses), where a team of well-trained community-based nurses provide SRHR services in underserved and hard-to-reach areas.

5.3 COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

Since 2017, A4HU has successfully implemented projects in various regions of Uganda, including the West, North, Central, East, and Karamoja sub-regions. The organisation is perceived as a youth-focused entity, concentrating on empowering youth, mainly young girls, in the areas of sexual and reproductive health and financial empowerment. A4HU

also empowers the youth in community mobilisation to impact their communities positively.

“In health and sexual and reproductive health, we have acquired the knowledge, career mentorship and guidance. Then for the community, we do a number of medical camps where people come in to check, do holistic medical checkups, and get consultations, counseling, and guidance. Then in advocacy, we also started working and partnering with some hospitals and health care facilities to help them to provide capacity building training in areas of soft skills for the nurses, midwives and doctors, or the whole health care system to help them perform better, improve their communication skills.” (POWER Project Beneficiary)

The organisation aims to collaborate with community opinion leaders to successfully mobilise and empower the youth and young girls.

“We are looking at the community, and probably targeting the opinion and religious leaders, culture or whatever it is. Because they are sometimes closer to the groups that we want to target or interest to get on board.” (Mrs. Sarah Kintu, CEO, A4HU)

6. SUSTAINABILITY

To ensure sustainability, A4HU established a multi-sectoral investment fund (MIS) for the POWER project. The trained women business leaders contribute savings and also get support from this fund. Furthermore, alumni members, the private sector, and other partners also contribute funds to MIS to support the growth of social enterprises in Uganda. MIS is structured around four key pillars: investment financing, credit financing, asset financing, and matching grants. As more entrepreneurs graduate and contribute, the fund continues to grow, ensuring continuous access to

financing for these health-focused startup innovations and sustainability.

Additionally, the startups are integrated with various government programs at the community level, such as the Parish Development Model, Women Entrepreneurship Program, GROW Project, and the Ministry of ICT's Presidential Initiative on ICT and Innovations. These linkages provide further support and resources to enhance the sustainability and impact of the enterprises.

A4HU also has partnerships and collaboration with like-minded innovators in health such as the Social Innovation in Health program at Makerere University, youth focused organizations, social entrepreneurs, and youth-led community-based organisations. These partnerships and collaborations not only provide opportunities for funding, but also share peer-to-peer knowledge on ensuring sustainability.

“Grants are the current source for funding. However we have also created the multi-sectoral investment fund, where the entrepreneurs save, to ensure sustainability.” (Ms. Miriam Cherukut, Program Manager, A4HU)

7. SCALABILITY

A4HU is currently a national youth-based organisation operating in the Central, Eastern, and Northern regions of Uganda. It has projects in Kampala, Wakiso, Mukono, Mityana, Kassanda, Busia, Tororo, and Kamuli districts of the country.

Currently, A4HU is devoting effort to scale up and expand scope of the POWER project to 120 new self-sustaining social health enterprises in Uganda annually while creating 600 direct employment opportunities for young people. The organisation is also scaling up the Multi-sectoral Investment fund, to support women business leaders, Alumni members, the private sector, and other

social innovators in health, to foster the growth of their social enterprises.

Finally, A4HU is scaling up the certified mentorship and coaching program to launch a team of credible, competent and certified business coaches who can support a growing network of social innovations in health in Uganda and Africa, and they are also scaling up digitalization of SRHR services through digital platforms, apps, and e-commerce platforms to bridge stigma and exclusion.

8. KEY LESSONS

Uganda has one of the youngest populations in the world, and 73.2% of Uganda's young population is below 30 years. Hence, this presents challenges in accessing SRHR and family planning services, as evidenced by the 17% of Ugandan women with unmet needs for family planning.

Despite this, A4HU's model of empowering young women business leaders in both SRHR and entrepreneurship is showing promising results in solving the challenges of both unemployment and limited access and knowledge for SRHR services in Uganda.

In these efforts, A4HU has further demonstrated that training and coaching of promising business leaders and later on, giving them startup funds to enhance their business ideas and enterprises is the springboard to stimulating business growth among young women in Uganda. This strategy works well and can be strengthened by establishing linkages and learning networks within the young women business leaders themselves. In addition, the use of already trained and mentored young business leaders to train and coach their fellow young women in business is also very key in ensuring cascading of the knowledge and skills to many other young women business leaders.

“After going through a vast coaching program for one year, the POWER project made us coaches. We are now coaching fellow female entrepreneurs into sexual reproductive health. So the process of coaching is still ongoing.” (POWER Project Beneficiary)

Furthermore, community engagement and involvement in promoting access to SRHR services has been shown to be vital to its success. Leveraging local structures has also been shown to foster trust and increases health service utilisation through village health teams, peer educators, community health workers, parasocial workers, and peer facilitators.

A4HU has also demonstrated that building the local capacity by strengthening community-based organisations ensures sustainable health service delivery, as evidenced by the different community-based startups of young women business leaders that are now promoting access to SRHR services and products. Finally, implementing a holistic approach to social innovation is key, starting right from the households and addressing poverty and poor health systems as key drivers to poor health outcomes.

“But we shall start small and probably we'll get there. That's the kind of work in progress for us, but we want to be known as Action for Health and make our marks. We want to leave our marks at the appropriate time.” (Mrs. Sarah Kintu, CEO, A4HU)

9. CASE INSIGHTS

- Access to SRHR and family planning products and services in Uganda can be promoted by use of young women business leaders, and the different line ministries in Uganda and other countries should establish policies and strategies to replicate this innovation.
- Training, mentoring, and coaching of young women business leaders in SRHR and entrepreneurship is very key in ensuring growth and sustainability of their social business enterprises. This can be adopted in the different wealth-creation programs and policies in Uganda and beyond to enable sustainability of such programs.
- Provision of startup funding and financing to trained young women business leaders is a key strategy for kick-starting their startups and ensuring their survival, and should be adopted in different government policies and programs in Uganda and beyond.
- Engaging already trained young women business leaders to train and coach their fellow young women is key in ensuring knowledge dissemination. This could be leveraged in other government wealth-creation programs.

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