



REPORT ON

THE FOLLOW-UP/PRE-VISIT TO PAKWACH

WOMEN'S GROUPS

18th-21st MARCH 2020



Background

In 2014, Uganda Women's Trust (UWT) set out to contribute to the reduction of HIV transmission from mother to child by building the capacity of HIV positive mothers in income generating activities; this would enable them to access care and treatment.

The purpose of the project was also to support the HIV positive mothers in appreciating that household income contributes to a positive health seeking behavior hence sustenance in adherence to HIV care and treatment.

The main goal of the project was to contribute to the reduction of HIV transmission of mother to child through economic empowerment of the HIV positive women and girls to improve their income for easy access to HIV/AIDS treatment and care.

Objectives

1. To strengthen income generating activity skills of women with HIV, so that they have sustainable household income that will support adherence to Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) care and treatment.
2. To support linkage between the community and surrounding health facilities by building the capacity of the peer educators to counsel and follow up mothers, and encourage them to visit health facilities.

On 18-21 March, 2020, UWT made a pre-visit to six groups in Pakwach.

Pre-visit objectives:

- i. To map, establish existence of and update women's groups (addresses, actual number of members and group activities) in Pakwach.
- ii. To provide technical support and reassure women's groups of a continued relationship with UWT.
- iii. To establish any support the women's groups would require from UWT.

Group leaders and Community leaders contacted:

No	Name	Designation	Contact
1	Judith Fuathum	Health Inspector PTC	0777449192
2	Mr. Oromcan Geoffrey	Nursing Officer PHC IV In-charge ART clinic	0773484361
3	Afoyocan Agnes	Chairperson- Medo ngec	0777446864
4	Nano Margaret	Chairperson- Rwoth mio	0777364110
5	Omach Paska	Chairperson- Kuyesu Copere	0778896885

6	Arombo Jane	Chairperson- Wetegura	0772863753
7	Salira Aliasi	Chairperson- Mungu jimu	0782560094
8	Oroma Alice	Chairperson-Mungu Jakisa	0773981760

Offices visited during the visit:

1. The District Headquarters-
 - i) Resident District Commissioner's (RDC) office: The RDC was unavailable.
 - ii) Community Development Office (CDO): The senior CDO recommended a meeting with the Town Council Authorities and health facility.
2. Pakwach Town Council Offices-
 - i) The Town Clerk, Mayor and Health inspector's offices: The officers were excited to have UWT back and committed to work together for the benefit of the women in Pakwach.
3. Pakwach Health Centre IV (ART Clinic)-discussions were held with Ms. Florence Adiga, a nursing officer in the HV/AIDS Clinic and delegated by the health Centre in-charge.

Discussions Held

Pakwach Town Council and Pakwach Health Centre IV Leadership

Town Council

Ms. Judith Fauthum, the Health Inspector noted that UWT last visited Pakwach in February, 2016. She raised the following issues:

- i. There was a leadership and management gap across all the Women groups.
- ii. The groups had disbanded due to lack of proper leadership.
- iii. Four members from the groups have since passed on, including the Coordinator of the women's groups.
- iv. Poor leadership caused the women's saving plans to fail and consequently failure of Income Generating Activities.

Pakwach Health Centre

- i. The split in groups caused some ART clients to stop accessing treatment.
- ii. The Health Facility In-charge, Mr. Geoffrey Oromcan reported that some women were adhering well to their HIV and AIDS treatment and care. They encouraged those who are discouraged to adhere to the treatment as the only way to survive.
- iii. UWT beneficiaries work as the "Expert Clients", peer mothers and peer educators at Pakwach Health facility.
- iv. The women have gained self-confidence and are now empowered to seek family planning services, to manage their finances well and to participate in leadership positions at all levels. In addition, the women reported that they have overcome stigma and disclose their HIV status to the public.

The previous UWT training built self-confidence and empowerment that has enabled some women to participate in their election into positions of leadership.

Meeting with the women groups

The meeting was attended by three technical people: Ms. Judith Fuathum, the Health Inspector PTC; Ms. Florence Adiga, the Nursing Officer Pakwach Health Centre IV; Ms. Grace Arach from Community Affairs Office and 60 beneficiaries.

At the meeting, Ms. Fuathum, who was responsible for keeping the records of the women, appreciated UWT for maintaining the relationship with the women in Pakwach. She urged the women to adhere to their medication and to embrace their businesses which are their sole source of income. She further cautioned them to stay safe from Covid-19 by strictly following the Government guidelines and standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).



Ms. Judith Fuathum the Health Inspector Pakwach Town Council addressing the women

Ms. Adiga also called upon the women to adhere to their medication in order to keep healthy and alive. She also called upon the women to sensitize members of their households to follow the SOPs as directed by the Ministry of health (MoH) on COVID-19.



L: Ms. Florence Adiga the Nursing Officer from the ART clinic; and R: Ms Grace CDO's Office.

Discussions with the Pakwach women's groups

- i. The women were excited about revamping the UWT programme.
- ii. The women groups are still functional and in existence though some members abandoned the groups due to lack of guidance and technical support from UWT.
- iii. Some women are still involved in their small income Generating Activities (IGAs) like selling tomatoes, greens, matooke, silver fish, onions, charcoal, fish, beans, running beverage shops, small retail shops, restaurants among other activities.
- iv. Four (4) group members passed on; two from Mungu Jakisa group and two from Rwoth omio and Ku Mungu groups. In addition one group Chairperson was ill and admitted at the Pakwach health center IV.
- v. Some of the groups saving schemes have stalled due to little incomes from members, which is not enough to balance family needs and weekly saving.
- vi. It was reported that most women's businesses are not growing as expected.



The women cheering the District, Health Centre and Town Council leadership at the meeting



The Programme Officer, Mr. Daniel Matovu with the group Chairpersons



Excited participants clapping during the meeting

Beneficiary Voices

*“I am very proud of Women Trust for training me, unleashing my potential and opening my eyes to start my own business. Right now, I have three different Income Generating Activities (IGAs) that I run on different days of the week; in the morning I go to the market in corner Kamdini (Oyam district) to buy chicken that I sell to people operating restaurants. In the evening, I make chips and fish; and on Saturdays I go to Paidha to buy Matooke that people come and buy at home.”***Amia Vicky, a member of Rwoth-mio Women’s Group.**

*“Before UWT invited us for trainings, I used to stay home with no plans of starting my own business. I was very sickly with my son but after the training I started small. Right now, I sell my fish and get money. I save every Monday and Thursday and above all my son is studying.”***Tuwape Teddy, a member of Mungu Jakisa Women’s Group.**

*“I have improved my skills in budgeting and planning for household income. This has resulted in reduced expenditure and increased savings. I no longer just wake up and spend but first make plans and budget before spending.”***Nano Margaret, a Chairperson Rwoth-mio Women’s group.**

“From the time UWT trained us, I started understanding the importance of having an income generating activity. I am very grateful to UWT for training us and the money they gave us to start a business. I sell fish as you can see and get money. From that time, I have benefited so much from my business, bought land for my children; I pay school fees, we eat well and I am

able to pay medical bills in case one falls sick.” Ocu Harriet, a member of Kuyesu copere Women’s group.



The Health Inspector Pakwach Town Council, the Nursing Officer at PHC IV and UWT beneficiaries of Pakwach Parish Catholic Church

Challenges by the Women

1. Limited capital to run their business ventures. Some members need startup capital to start running IGAs.
2. Limited access to information and markets for their products affects their business and hence low level of profitability.
3. Inadequate skills in financial management, record keeping, saving and borrowing by the women groups.
4. Most of the businesses are operating on loans where the women have to pay back the loans on a weekly basis while taking on family responsibilities and needs.
5. Low literacy levels and family responsibilities which affect their attendance for Economic empowerment training, this would necessitate continuous training.
6. The participants expressed interest in a detailed training on group dynamics and governance.
7. They expressed a desire to be supported in mobilizing their communities into Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs).
8. There is need for skills in effective communication to enable them to strengthen their interventions in economic empowerment.

9. There is need to support the women to graduate from informal to formal businesses, something that remains a challenge and makes it difficult for women to start a formal business in Uganda.
10. The limited knowledge and skills among women is yet another challenge while men's perception and attitude continue to affect the level of entrepreneurship among women.

Way forward;

Engage women to embrace entrepreneurship skills training.

- i. Women need to undergo practical skills training.
- ii. Need for seed capital to enable the women start-up new businesses.
- iii. Refresher training in VSLAs, business skills and group dynamics are needed.
- iv. There is need for training on financial literacy for women groups.
- v. Need for training in group dynamics and governance.
- vi. Provide regular support supervision, mentorship and technical assistance to the groups to be able to support their initiatives in order to consolidate and strengthen the efforts at hand for good progress.
- vii. Plan to review the refresher training sessions on self-empowerment periodically.
- viii. Roll out the entrepreneurship training to other women who have not been trained and organize practical skills training including; making candles, counter books, liquid soap, tailoring, baking, mushroom growing etc.
- ix. Organize exchange visits for the active beneficiary groups.

Conclusion

The pre-visit to Pakwach was a success and highlighted the challenges and opportunities available for UWT to continue with her interventions in Pakwach.

UWT continues to strengthen economic empowerment of women as a pillar for societal transformation and development, especially at the grassroots level. There is urgent need to fundraise for UWT programme activities.