



Building a Feminist Youth-led Movement to Promote Youth-friendly SRH Services

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About NAWAD i

Acknowledgement ii

List of abbreviations iii

Background 1

The Issue 2

Project Objectives 3

Approach 4

Achievements 5

Stories Of Change 9

Abdul Kaweesa’s Story 11

Joyce’s Nambalirwa’s Story 12

Christine Akello’s Story 13

Esther Ayeerwot’s Story 14

References 16

ABOUT NAWAD

National Association for Women’s Action in Development (NAWAD), Registration number INDR 83662539NB, is a national Non-Governmental Organization that started in 2010. The organization was established with the aim of uplifting the status of women and young people especially girls in grassroots communities across Uganda through promotion of their fundamental human rights especially in relation to their economic security, freedom from violence, and the sustainable management of the environment and natural resources. Since its founding, NAWAD has uniquely focused on the family as a key institution for building sustainable communities, emphasizing the inclusion of men as strategic allies for attaining gender equality. The organization believes that “Putting Women at the Forefront” and encouraging men to work with them is the only way to develop stable families and communities. NAWAD has also been committed to promoting and protecting the rights of especially marginalized women affected by various challenges such as loss of their land and livelihoods by strengthening grassroots women led Eco-feminist movement to promotes stable and peaceful families where women and girls access equal rights in the different spheres of life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

NAWAD extends its heartfelt appreciation to Womankind Worldwide for their invaluable support in funding and facilitating the “Building a Feminist Youth-led Movement to Promote Youth-Friendly Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Services” project. Womankind Worldwide commitment to advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights for young people has been instrumental in enabling us to implement this critical work.

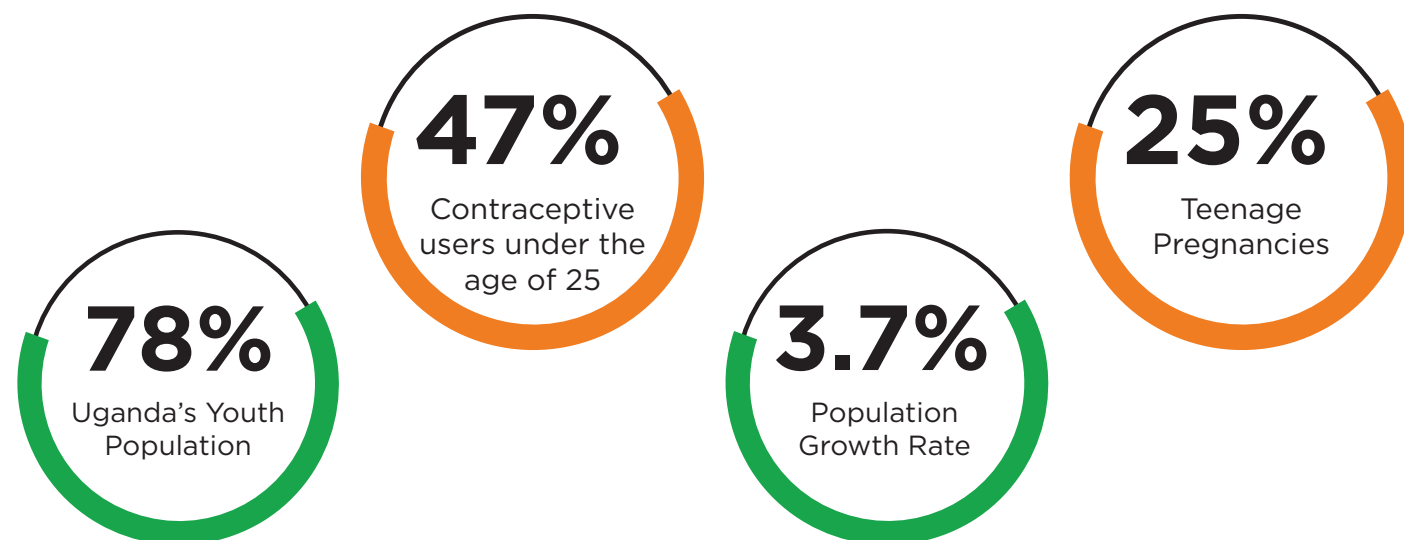
We also express our sincere gratitude to all stakeholders, including district officials from Wakiso and Nwoya, local organisations, and community members who actively engaged with us. Your collaboration and support have been essential in driving this initiative forward.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANSA	African Network for SRHR Alliances
CSW69	69th Commission on the Status of Women
DHO	District Health Officer
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FOWODE	Forum for Women in Democracy
IDI	In-Depth Interview
IEC	Information, Education, & Communication
NAWAD	National Association for Women’s Action In Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RHU	Reproductive Health Uganda
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
VHTs	Village Health Teams
WHO	World Health Organisation

BACKGROUND

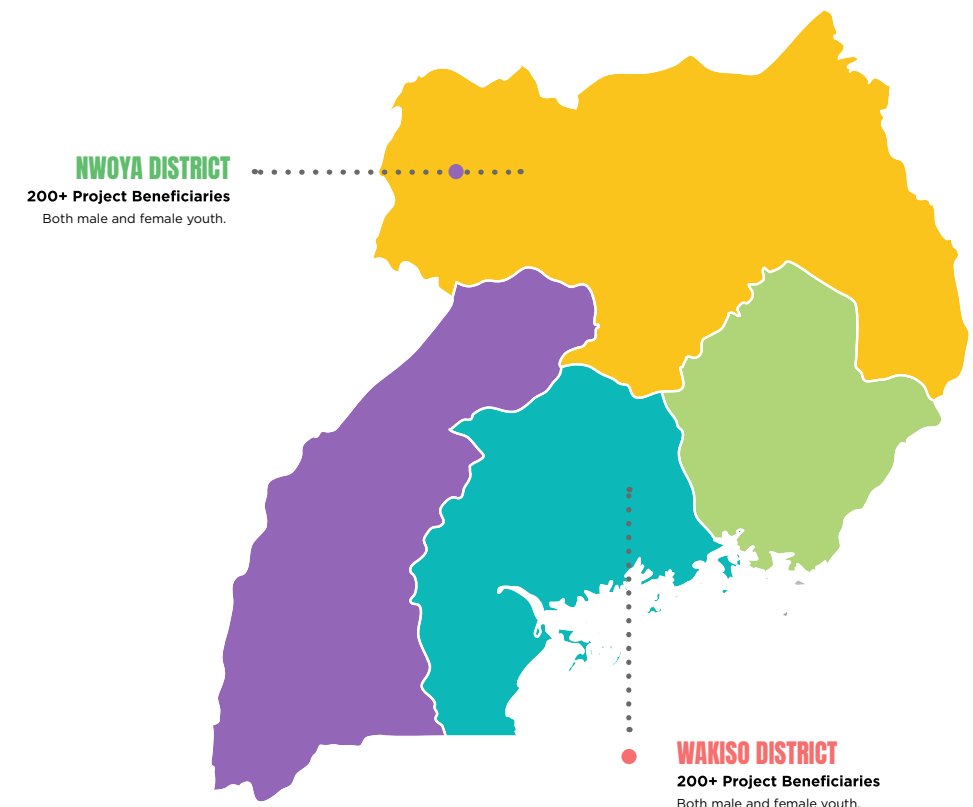
Uganda has one of the fastest growing young populations in the world, with a population growth rate of **3.7%**. Approximately **78%** of Uganda's population is under the age of 30 (UNDP, 2021), and many of these young people face significant challenges in accessing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services (WHO, 2023). These challenges are compounded by societal norms, structural barriers, and the limited availability of youth-friendly services (Aker et al., 2016). The median age of sexual debut in Uganda is 16.4 years (UNFPA, 2021), yet many young people struggle to access the necessary SRHR services. Around **47%** of contraceptive users under the age of 25 obtain their services from the private sector (Guttmacher Institute, 2021). In 2021, Uganda recorded approximately 31,565 teenage pregnancies per month, according to data collected from health facilities and a national average of **25%** of teenage pregnancies (Ministry of Health, 2021)



THE ISSUE

Despite Uganda's progressive policies on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) such as the National Adolescent Health Policy (2004), young people continue to face significant barriers in accessing youth-friendly SRH services. Weak policy implementation, socio-cultural stigma, gender inequalities, and misconceptions about youth sexuality limit access to essential information and services. With support from Womankind Worldwide, NAWAD implemented a one-year project titled "Building a Feminist Youth-led Movement to Promote Youth-friendly SRH services".

This project aimed at advocating for youth-friendly SRH services targeting 400 youth (male and female) aged 13-30 years in Wakiso and Nwoya districts, engaging communities in shifting harmful norms, and enhancing collaboration among key stakeholders. Through advocacy, sensitization, peer educator training, and multi-stakeholder engagement, the project sought to empower young people and promote policy implementation for inclusive SRH access in Uganda.



PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Main Objective

To build a feminist youth-led movement to promote access to youth-friendly SRH services.

Specific Objectives

1. To facilitate advocacy for a youth-led feminist movement for in and out of school youth through workshops.
2. To facilitate awareness creation through community outreaches, multi-stakeholder collaboration meetings and community conversations with parents, care givers, social cultural leaders to raise awareness of their role in promoting access to youth-led SRH services.
3. To train and deploy peer educators as volunteers to cascade the information on youth friendly SRH services in the community.
4. To develop and disseminate user friendly Information Education, and Communication (IEC) materials with messages on access to SRH services like talking compounds in schools, stickers and banners.

APPROACH

NAWAD has been at the forefront of empowering youth and promoting their sexual and reproductive health (SRH) rights through a comprehensive, feminist, and youth-led movement. With a focus on advocating for accessible, youth-friendly SRH services, NAWAD has worked tirelessly to ensure that the voices of young people especially young women—are central to decision-making processes regarding their health and well-being.

The initiative recognizes the importance of youth leadership and aims to create sustainable change by involving young people in every aspect of advocacy, from community engagement to policy dialogue.

At the heart of the movement is the belief that young people, particularly youth who are out of school, must be equipped with the knowledge, resources, and support to advocate for their own SRH rights and to challenge cultural and systemic barriers to accessing vital services.

NAWAD's approach combines grassroots efforts with national and international advocacy to create an environment where youth can thrive in terms of health, rights, and opportunities. Through strategic workshops, participatory surveys, and multi-stakeholder collaboration, the initiative is laying the groundwork for long-lasting improvements in the access and quality of youth-friendly SRH services.

ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Rapid Participatory Baseline Survey

A baseline study was conducted in the two project districts, Nwoya and Wakiso. The primary objective was to assess the level of knowledge, beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, and norms regarding sexual and reproductive health (SRH) among key stakeholders and beneficiaries. Additionally, the survey aimed to evaluate the level of commitment among key structures toward SRH service delivery for both in-school and out-of-school youth as well as establish the existing youth friendly SRH services in the two districts. A total of 50 interviews were conducted

and these were, 14 FGDs (7 from each district), 16 IDIs (8 from each district) and 20 key informants (10 from each district). The participants included: District Health Officials (DHOs), healthcare workers, and Village Health Teams (VHTs) representatives from religious institutions (Catholic, Anglican, and Muslim) representatives from women-led NGOs, youth-led organizations focused on SRHR, parents/caregivers, socio-cultural leaders, and teachers.

2. Workshops with Youth in and Out of School on Advocacy and Feminist Movement Building

These workshop brought together both in-school and out-of-school youth to strengthen their capacity in advocacy and feminist movement building. One Youth-led group was



formed in each of the two districts to champion improved access to SRHR services. The youth groups comprise of 15 female and male youth who willingly committed to be part of the movement. These groups play a crucial role in influencing change and advocating for youth-friendly SRHR services

3. Training Peer Educators on SRHR and Community Sensitization

NAWAD joined the global commemoration of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence in Nwoya district under the global theme: “Towards Beijing +30: UNiTE to End Violence Against Women and Girls.”

As part of the event, NAWAD conducted two key activities: Training peer educators on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). And Community sensitization to raise awareness about SRHR.

4. Engagement Meetings with Social, Political, Religious Leaders, and Parents/Caregivers

These meetings were conducted in both Wakiso and Nwoya districts to address misconceptions and myths surrounding young people's access to SRHR services. The engagement aimed to foster a supportive environment for youth-friendly SRHR services.

5. Development and Dissemination of User-Friendly IEC Materials on SRHR

In bid to raise awareness among young people about SRHR services and garner support for provision of youth friendly SRHR services from duty bearers in Nwoya and Wakiso districts, Information Education and Communication materials were produced and these included project banner, T-shirts and cloth posters given to the youth in and out of school and Talking compounds which were distributed in the schools.

6. Consultative Multi-Stakeholder Meetings at the Local Level (Wakiso and Nwoya Districts)

NAWAD organized multi-stakeholder meetings in both Wakiso and Nwoya districts, each attended by approximately 50 stakeholders. These meetings provided a platform to discuss the unique challenges young people face in accessing SRHR services. A key outcome was a petition paper on SRHR, which was presented to the Ministry of

Health.

7. Collaborative Multi-Stakeholder Meeting at the National Level

A national-level collaborative multi-stakeholder meeting was held in Kampala, bringing together 30 stakeholders, including officials from the Ministry of Health, and representatives from organizations like Reproductive Health Uganda (RHU), Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE), Us for Girls Initiative, SRHR Alliance among others. The meeting aimed to discuss youth-specific SRHR challenges and formally present the petition paper to the Ministry of Health.

8. Radio Talk Show in Nwoya District

NAWAD organized a radio talk show on Voice of Nwoya FM in celebration of International Women's Day. The show featured three panelists representing youth advocates and district health officials to discuss the status of access to youth SHR service.

9. CSW69 Participation

NAWAD organized an online side event for the 69th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69), bringing together key stakeholders to discuss youth access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). The event featured three panelists from the Ministry of Health, Reproductive Health Uganda (RHU), and the African Network for SRHR Alliances (ANSA). Attended by approximately 50 youth, the discussion focused on raising awareness, highlighting key milestones achieved, and exploring strategies to further improve access to youth-friendly SRHR services



STORIES OF CHANGE

Young people in Uganda continue to grapple with hinderances to SRHR. With this project, NAWAD has been able to impact on lives of over 400 youth in Wakiso and Nwoya districts with regard to raising awareness on why, where and how they can access SRH Services. Notable project achievements among the beneficiaries is reduced fear of judgement, confidence and self-belief, increased intimate partner relationships among the youth and overall better sexual lives.



Abdul Kaweesa's Story:

Transforming Family Planning Perceptions,

My wife and I used to have frequent disagreements about childbirth and family planning. While my wife had advocated for spacing children, I had insisted that we should have all our children at once so that we “close that chapter.” After attending a NAWAD-led session on SRHR, I realized that unplanned pregnancies place a significant financial burden on families, making it difficult to provide for children’s education, nutrition, and healthcare. Learning about reproductive health prepared us for the future and helped us plan for our family better.



Joyce's Nambalirwa's Story: **From Darkness to Light,**

As a youth on the Village Health Team (VHT) for Nampunge Subcounty in Wakiso, misconceptions and myths shaped our understanding, and many believed that even common illnesses like malaria could be caused by family planning. We had severe problems of unsafe abortions, gender-based violence, and unprotected sex among us the youth and this put our health and futures at risk. Many of us had not known that several SRHR services at health facilities were free of charge, aside from some family planning methods, which remained costly. With the right information, youth in Wakiso district are now making informed choices about their reproductive health, reducing unintended pregnancies, and addressing misconceptions that had once discouraged them from seeking these services.



Christine Akello's Story:

Youth Demanding Their Rights

As a Community Development Officer (CDO) of Purongo Subcounty, Nwoya district had one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates, and many young people were unaware of their rights regarding sexual and reproductive health. Young women frequently engaged in unprotected sex without fully understanding the consequences, which led to a high prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unintended pregnancies. After NAWAD's project in Purongo subcounty, our adolescents have learned the importance of getting tested for STIs before engaging in sexual activity and of using protection to prevent infections and unintended pregnancies. Youth now understand the importance of mutual consent in sexual relationships something that had previously been overlooked in many households.



Esther Ayeerwot's Story:

A Journey from Uncertainty to Empowerment

We thought the Village Health Teams (VHTs) couldn't help us with these services, and this left us feeling lost and unsure of where to turn. Some of the married youth faced challenges in their relationships, especially with Gender-Based Violence (GBV), which made accessing help even harder. But after NAWAD came and provided training in Purongo Subcounty, I now know where to access SRHR services, and most importantly, I understand that the VHTs can support me. The training has opened my eyes to the services available, and I feel more empowered to take control of my sexual and reproductive health. I suggest that NAWAD expands these trainings beyond Purongo Subcounty to other areas in our community because so many young people are facing similar challenges and don't know where to seek help.



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A society where women and girls enjoy social,
economic and environmental justice.