

Improving Health Commodity Security through Citizen-Led Advocacy: A Case of Regular Assessments in Uganda's Health Facilities

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Project Summary

Background

Advocacy for Better Health (ABH) is a five-year USAID project aimed at improving the accessibility, availability, and quality of health services in 35 districts in Western, Central, and Eastern Uganda. Implemented by PATH and Initiatives Inc, it engages communities in the planning and monitoring of health services and strengthens the capacity of local civil society organizations (CSOs) to represent citizen interests and conduct advocacy for health policies, budgets, and programs.

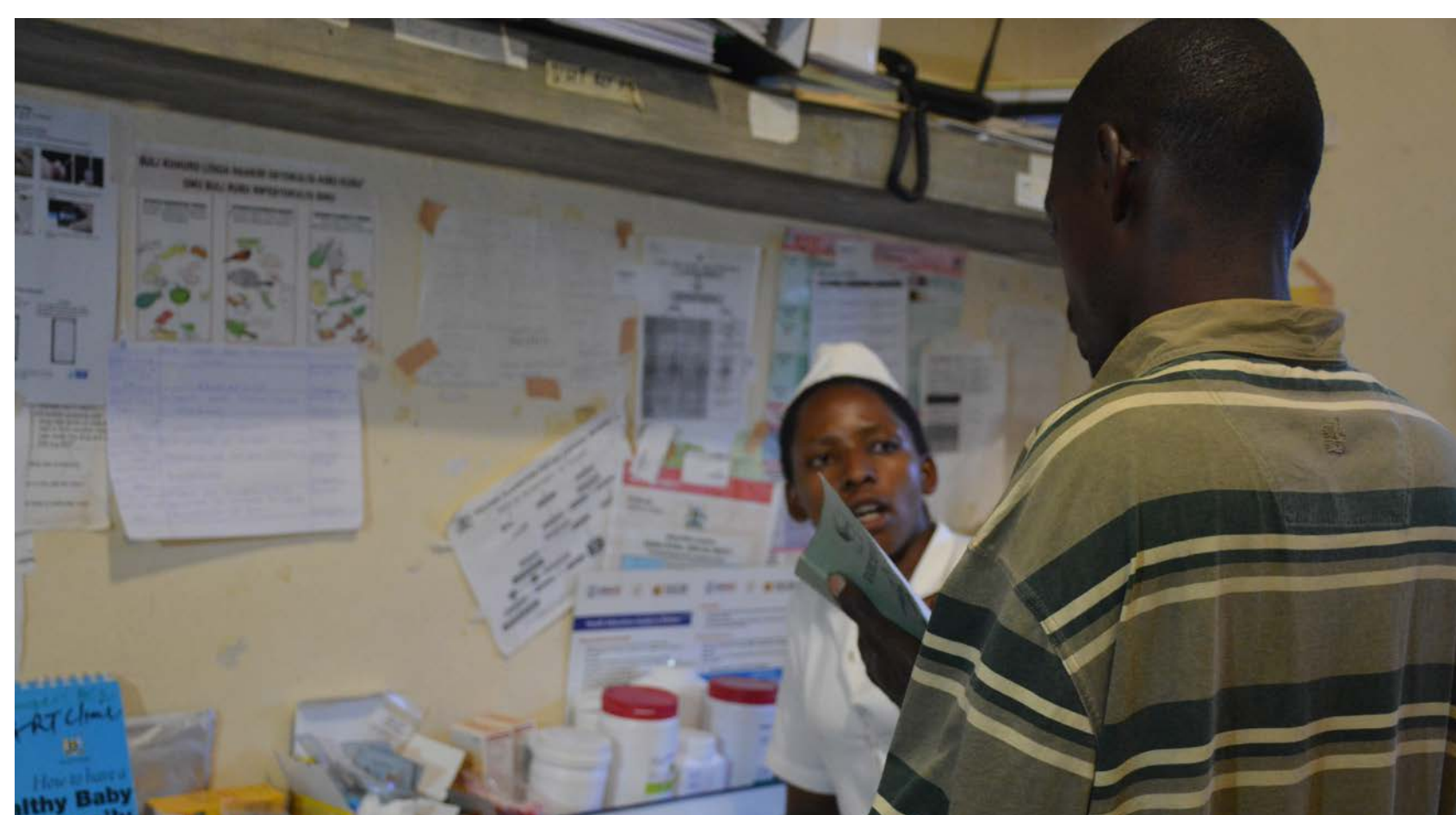
Objectives

Under ABH, Health Facility Assessments (HFAs) are conducted regularly by community members to analyze:

- Prevalence of absenteeism of service providers and stockouts of essential drugs and commodities in health centers.
- Consistency with Ministry of Health guidelines regarding facility hours.

Major Activities

- ABH and partner CSOs train community based organizations (CBOs) in 479 sub-counties across the 35 focus districts to conduct monthly health facility assessments.
- CBOs use assessment findings on the availability of essential drugs and commodities to engage duty-bearers at different levels. The engagements culminate in solutions to challenges facing the supply chain from the central level up to health facilities (last mile).



1. Communication and Empowerment Officer, 2. M&E Specialist, 3. Deputy Chief of Party, 4. Chief of Party, 5. Director, Advocacy and Public Policy, 6. Country Director

Approaches

Data Collection: On a monthly basis, 479 community groups collect data from health facilities using a standard health facility assessment tool. The data collected is analyzed and used as evidence to inform action planning during the monthly community group meetings.

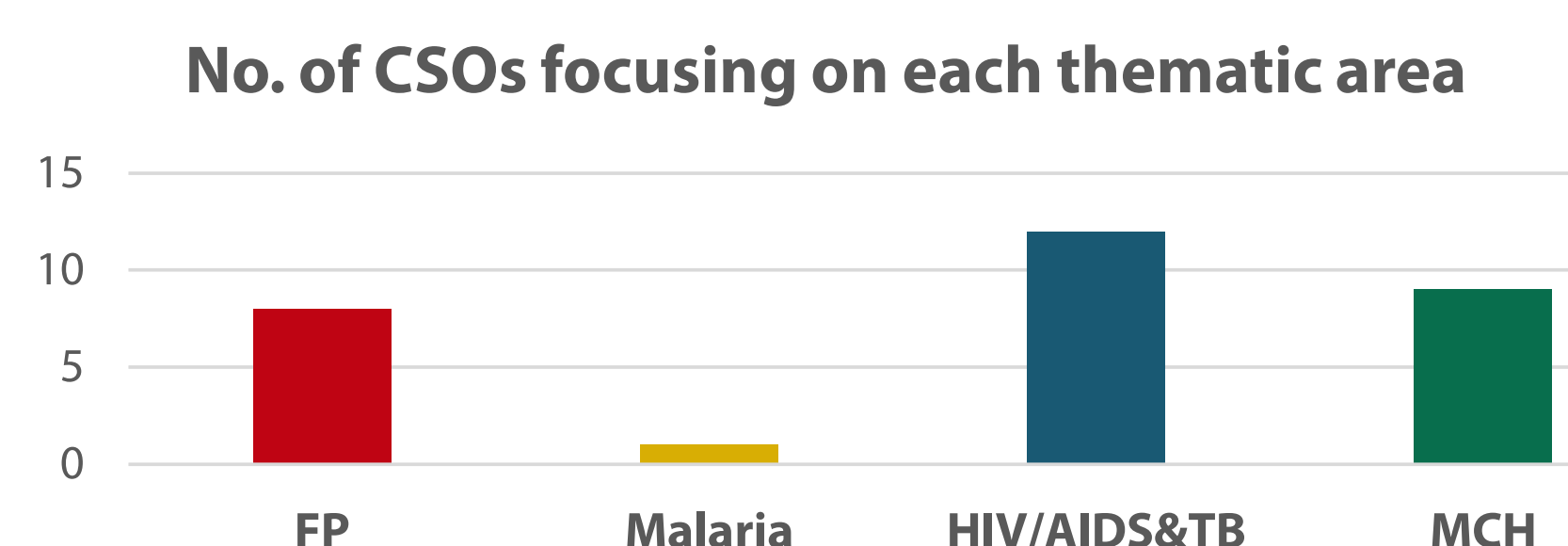
Action Planning: Community groups prioritize advocacy for the availability of the most essential drugs and commodities that are stocked out or those that will soon be out of stock. Such drugs and commodities relate to common diseases and conditions such as HIV/AIDS, TB, malaria, family planning, and maternal and child health (MCH).

Advocacy Forums: The community groups organize quarterly sub-county level interface meetings where sub-county and districts leaders are invited to explain why some health facilities continue to experience stockouts of essential drugs and commodities.

Foster Commitments: The forums conclude with resolutions by the duty-bearers, usually pledging to be more accountable and responsive to citizen demands and needs regarding the quality of health services. Timelines are set and responsible persons are identified to follow up on the duty-bearer's commitments and resolutions.

Participation in Sub-County Planning Meetings: Community members participate in sub-county planning and budgeting meetings to follow up on commitments made by the duty-bearers during advocacy forums.

Evidence Dossier Development: Community members present on missing drugs and commodities in health facilities at the planning meetings. These meetings are also leveraged as avenues for ensuring that the identified issues affecting the quality of health services are prioritized in local government plans and budgets.



Results

- HFAs conducted across the 35 project districts reveal progress resulting from citizen-led advocacy, including display of duty rosters and adherence to working hours.



- Some local governments in the 35 districts have resolved to upgrade health facilities to be able to provide a range of health services related to HIV/AIDS, TB, and MCH.
- There has been a notable reduction in stockouts of essential commodities such as those used for the treatment of HIV/AIDS, TB, malaria, pneumonia, vaccines for immunization, and oxytocin used to stop bleeding in women during child birth.



Lessons Learned

Linking Citizen Empowerment to a National Policy Strategy

- Although some supply chain challenges can be addressed at the community level, others must be solved through district- or national-level policy change or budget allocation.
- Amplifying the voices of citizens and using evidence gathered through community monitoring can bolster accountability efforts at the national level and better ensure that community identified needs are addressed.

Strengthening Citizen's Awareness of Their Rights and Responsibilities

- It is critical for community members to understand the rights afforded to them by national policies and legal frameworks. This provides a foundation for citizen demand and spurs communities to hold their duty-bearers accountable on issues of supply chain.

Conclusions

- Combining citizen demand with supporting evidence on supply chains is critical in addressing supply chain gaps.
- Simultaneous strengthening of the capacity of community-based organizations and civil society organizations to guide community data collection, evidence synthesizing and packaging for policymaking audiences bolsters community monitoring efforts.

For More Information

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