

## SUCCESS STORY

# Community Based Family Planning: Empowering Women with the Ability to Administer their Contraceptive of Choice

USAID'S REGIONAL HEALTH INTEGRATION TO ENHANCE SERVICES IN EAST CENTRAL UGANDA (USAID RHITES-EC)

Florence, 25 years, is a mother of five children (four boys and one girl) from Iganga District. She got married at 17 years and had never used any family planning method because she feared the possible side effects.

*"I used to hear other women complaining about over bleeding and irregular menstruation periods, and barrenness, (so) I was afraid," said Florence. "I also wanted to ask the health workers if this was true, but I found long queues of waiting patients every time I visited the health centre to address my concerns, so I gave up," Florence added.*

In June 2020, Elizabeth, a community health worker/village health team (VHT) member, visited Florence at her home. Elizabeth is one of 15 VHTs in Nambale Subcounty in Iganga District. She was trained by USAID Regional Health Integration to Enhance Services in East Central Uganda (USAID RHITES-EC) to provide short-term family planning methods, counsel and refer clients that require long and permanent methods to nearby healthcare facilities. When Florence saw Elizabeth, whom she had known for five years, she felt comfortable and agreed to receive family planning



A nurse provides family planning education and counseling to women at Nambale HC III in Iganga District. Photo by Andrew Katende

services from her. Her preference was for Sayana® Press as she would be able to self-administer it in future. "I was so confident that she would not give me something that she did not believe in," Florence explained. Sayana® Press is a safe and easy-to-use injectable contraception. The injectable can be administered by any trained (non-medical) person, including community health workers, pharmacists, and the women seeking family planning services themselves. Florence received her first dose of Sayana® Press from Elizabeth.

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A nurse trains and observes a young woman administering Sayana® Press, an injectable family planning method, at Nambale HC III, Iganga District. Photo © USAID RHITES-EC 2020

Three months later, Florence took her sick baby to Nambale HC III for treatment. While awaiting treatment, a health worker provided health education about family planning. She was excited to hear the healthcare worker reaffirm that Sayana® Press can be self-administered. After the baby received medication, the health worker counselled and taught Florence how to inject herself.

*“Following the healthcare worker’s demonstration of how to self-administer Sayana® Press, I no longer go to the healthcare facility or VHT for family planning services. The VHT delivers it home and I conveniently inject myself every three months. I have not experienced any major side effects since I started using the Sayana® Press self-injection,” says Florence.*

Overall, the various FP interventions implemented by USAID RHITES-EC have contributed to an improvement in new family planning users in East Central region Uganda from 76,417 in FY20 Q1 (October–December 2019) to 91,789 in FY20 Q4 (July– September 2020). Out of 5,336,416 contraceptives dispensed during period FY20 (October 2019 to September 2020): 868,832 (16%) were distributed at household level by VHTs, 638,814 (12%) were dispensed during outreaches, and 3,790,093 (71%) were dispensed at health facilities and 38,677 (1%) dispensed at pharmacies in the community. During the period when COVID restrictions were instituted, there was remarkable increase noted in family planning commodities dispensed by VHTs: 31% (53,607) from 172,592 in Jan–Mar 2020 to 226,199 in Apr–June 2020. This was attributed to availability of FP commodities and sensitization of clients in communities for family planning services by VHTs amidst limited movements of clients to health facilities due to COVID 19 pandemic lockdown.

