

# Alienating TBAs from the health care system maybe counterproductive due to the communities' deeply entrenched positive experiences with them. Instead, recognizing, mentoring and integrating them into the health care system as referral agents can lead to a positive shift in ANC uptake.

Lydia Pedun Aisu<sup>1</sup>, Leonard Bufumbo<sup>1</sup>, Joyce Draru<sup>1</sup>, Prisca Uwera Kalenzi<sup>1</sup>, Edith Loy Kimuli<sup>1</sup>, Paul Odeke<sup>1</sup>, Emmanuel Kayongo<sup>1</sup>, Venansio Ahabwe<sup>1</sup>, Glory Mkwandire<sup>1</sup>, Judith Nalukwag<sup>2</sup>, Pallen Mugabe<sup>1</sup>, Siraji Masa<sup>3</sup>, Yousuf Twalfa Judith Chelimo<sup>3</sup>, Dison Cheptoyek<sup>3</sup>, Charity Cheptoris<sup>3</sup>, Lucky Chemuta<sup>4</sup>, Timothy Kiprotich, Sheila Nyakwez<sup>4</sup>

**Author Affiliations:**

<sup>1</sup>Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs

<sup>2</sup>USAID Uganda

<sup>3</sup>Kapchorwa District

<sup>4</sup>USAID / RHITES - E

## Leveraging Traditional Birth Attendants as Community Influencers to Enhance Early Antenatal Care Attendance: A Case Study of Kapchorwa District, Uganda

### INTRO AND OBJECTIVE

Available evidence indicates that in most parts of Uganda, early ANC rate is below 50%, the national average target, contributing to the poor pregnancy outcomes. The USAID Social and Behavior Change Activity (SBCA), in collaboration with Kapchorwa district and other implementing partners (IPs), implemented participatory methodologies to address this challenge. This approach involved engaging community influencers in identifying and designing local solutions to improve ANC attendance in the first trimester.

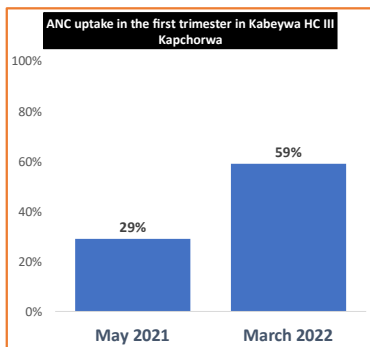
This study aims to empirically demonstrate the impact of leveraging community influencers on enhancing the uptake of early ANC services within rural communities.

### METHODS

Utilizing the Channels of Hope (CoH) and iDARE methodologies, a prominent Traditional Birth Attendant (TBA) was identified as a key community influencer in Kabeywa sub-county. CoH engaged faith leaders to recognize their role as influencers in addressing community-based barriers to health service uptake. Concurrently, iDARE, a Quality Improvement (QI) methodology for SBC, enabled priority audiences to identify community influencers and collaboratively design local solutions guided by health facility QI teams. Through CoH and iDARE platforms, the TBA underwent training in essential maternal and child health (MCH) actions, including promoting timely ANC attendance and facility deliveries. The TBA was subsequently linked with the MCH team at the Kabeywa sub-county main health facility and empowered to serve as a referral agent.

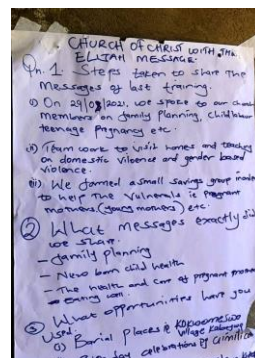
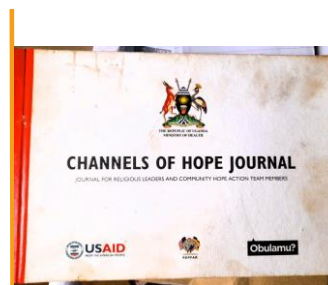
### RESULTS

Over an 11-month period, ANC attendance within the first trimester increased from 39% to 59% following the TBA's involvement as a referral agent. This outcome underscores the crucial role of TBAs in facilitating the timely linkage of pregnant women to health facilities, particularly in culturally entrenched rural communities facing healthcare access challenges.



### CONCLUSIONS

- Despite being underrecognized within the formal health system, TBAs demonstrate significant potential as influencers in improving maternal and child health (MCH) outcomes. Partnering with TBAs as referral agents for early ANC, coupled with mentorship to enhance their understanding of MCH burdens and actions, presents a promising strategy for improving ANC uptake and promoting community health.



*"I am now able to use relevant scriptures to deliver health messages. CoH has also given us an opportunity to unite and socialize with other religious leaders."* **Imam Chemonges- Kabeywa sub county.**

*"CoH has boosted my self-esteem as a leader because I know that I can influence and change things."* **Julius Woniala, SDA Bugimotwa**