



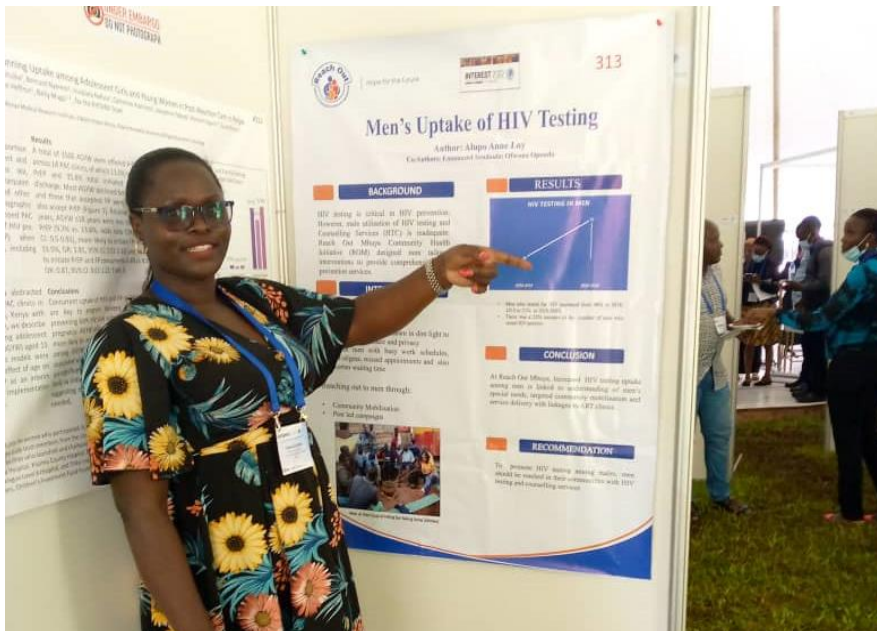
Hope for the future

Reach Out Mbuya Community Health Initiative Newsletter

Issue 2-June 2022.

Overjoyed to share with you highlights of our 2nd Quarter Interventions. In whatever we do, we strive to restore hope.

ROM at the *Interest 2022 International Conference*



ROM's Research Officer - Anne Alupo at the Abstracts Exhibition.

Almost 600 attendees joined the conference and took part in the discussions around HIV care and prevention, COVID-19 and HIV medicines, key populations programming, and many other important and diverse topics.

ROM's '*Men's Uptake of HIV Testing*' abstract was one of the unique elements during the Interest 2022 International Conference held in Uganda recently. ROM abstract revealed that despite HIV testing being critical in HIV prevention, male utilization of HIV testing and counselling services is inadequate. For this reason, ROM designed men tailored interventions such as the evening Men's Clinic to appeal to male in care management. Operating once a week, provides convenience and privacy; serves men with busy work schedules, self-stigma, missed appointments and reduces waiting time. Community mobilization and campaigns led by male peers supporting the reachout to men.

The abstract pointed at understanding of men's special needs; targeted community mobilization and adapting of service delivery to identified motivators like the clinic time. Citing outcomes before the Pandemic Curfews, men who tested for HIV increased from 48% (2018-2019) to 53% (2019-2020). A 22% increase in the number of men that tested HIV positive among these is a clear indication of the need to devise more means of seeking them out to test and link to care.

Psychosocial Efforts for Grandmothers



A section of grandmothers dancing at the ceremony

An annual Grandmothers' Day is one of the much sought-after joy filled events for Grand Mothers in the ROM Project that restores hope, brings back many happy memories, offers company at the lone stage of life building tenacity among the extremely vulnerable elderly.

A very big percentage heading their households and burdened with taking care of their orphaned or abandoned grandchildren, with support from the Stephen Lewis Foundation ROM has continued to improve the well-being of this extremely vulnerable category both in Kampala and Kasaala in Luwero district. General Medical care, psycho-social support and economic empowerment are given for the well-being of humanity.

Nursery like music dance and drama by grandmother village groups, matching and dancing joyfully led by a band and later open dancing to randomly chosen tunes and crowning the day with a sumptuous meal, exhibiting income generating activities on which they thrive is a wonderful psychosocial support. Over 200 grandmothers attended after 2 years of missing out due to the pandemic scare.

An opportunity for sales too for the exhibitors, a number of guests support the elderly and yes, they go back home happy as many get little opportunity to meet such big market opportunities in one place.

Grandmothers still got it; the dancing strokes got all out of their seats - indeed the healing power of joy was evident.

Skilling of Young Mothers & Adolescents



Some of the Adolescents and Young Mothers Celebrating the Second Chance Schooling at ROM

55 adolescents and young mothers under the care of the ROM supported grandmothers received certificates of completion in hair dressing and tailoring infused with life skilling and practical entrepreneurship from ROM.

Cutting extreme vulnerabilities starts with one owning of their success. At ROM we offer second chance schooling that works as a springboard for multiple transition pathways beneficiaries aspire for and with the confidence developed, they are propelled to better livelihoods.



A Grandmothers Group clad in their African Kitenge Designed by their Trained granddaughters

ROM's support for OVC yields at COWA: Patience and Bildard credit ROM for agribusiness skills

As a first-time visitor at Companionship of Works Association (COWA) Banda, you will be taken up by the astonishing beauty of the institution's compound. Never will you miss to ask who is behind all this, so nice that it is hard to tell whether these amazing plants, are for food or decoration. Most of them are leafy vegetables of different species; onions, collard greens (commonly known as *Sukuma Wiki*) and many more. By the time you get to know that Patience Mirembe and Bildard Ekinu, a pair of 2022 final agribusiness students at COWA are behind this scientific art, you will be surprised at seeing the duo, so young, brilliant and entrepreneurial.

Reach Out Mbuya, under the Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) program has been sponsoring the two at COWA, an institution that gives agribusiness, welding and hair and beauty skills to young people. Amidst their busy schedules, Patience and Bildard find time to tend to their plants, with a lot of passion as though caring to little humans. The duo also manages a green house in which they grow cucumber and green pepper.

ROM fosters purposeful careers for her OVC and on identifying careers of interest tries to enroll them where the desired trades can be learnt.



Patience tending to her plants

Having completed senior four, Patience could not afford tuition to continue with secondary education, until ROM gave her a chance to enroll at COWA. Hers is a unique but an inspiring story, of a girl who has passion in agribusiness, a male dominated career. She however attributes her success to ROM, which paid up all her fees at COWA to gain skills in the trade. Her dream is to continue with it so as to improve her life and also help others learn. She hopes to start up a farm on which she will be growing vegetables for sale. It will also act as a demonstration farmstead. She learnt poultry keeping as well, a skill she does with a lot of love. This is demonstrated in the chicken house, where she carries chicks with a lot of love and professionalism. Currently, Patience has enrolled for a National Diploma in Agriculture at COWA and is steadily progressing.



Bildard with his former Principal at the demonstration garden at Mukono during the follow up visit

As for Bildard, he is so thankful to ROM for giving him an opportunity to study agribusiness. *“To me, this is a dream come true. I can never stop thanking Reach Out Mbuya for such love and help given to me.”* He said in an interview with a Reach Out staff recently. Like Patience, Bildard’s dream is to start a farm on which he can grow these crops for sale and also train other children like him.

ROM followed Bildard to find out how he is fairing in life after graduation at COWA, we got him at Mukono district local government headquarters where he was contracted by the Ministry of Agriculture to raise a cabbage and tomato demonstration garden.

Chispine Wanyahoro, the Principle at COWA says that Reach Out Mbuya supports a number of students at the institution, and all of them complete when they can sustain themselves. When asked about Bildard and Patience, Chispine, shouts all praises for the duo, who have lived an exemplary lifestyle at the institute. She adds that there is no doubt that these two will emerge successful agriculturalists in Uganda.



Bildard and Patience caring for their plants at COWA

Improved Service Delivery Site Improvement Through Monitoring (SIMS) visit at ROM



CDC and ROM teams during a debrief at ROM



ROM's Medical Services Manager Dr. Gertrude Namale sharing with one of the CDC officials.

The US Centre for Disease Control officials in June were at ROM on a Site Improvement through Monitoring (SIMS) support visit. The periodic visit is aimed at offering site support to the facility with the overall objective of offering improved services during implementation. Through this continued support, ROM scores high in providing quality services in HIV treatment and care.

It is wonderful to have a donor support visit and rate your service systems excellent. HIV programming evolves by the day, all the learning, unlearning and relearning necessary is always treasured at ROM.

Drake University commend ROM for Community empowerment

On 19th of May 2022, Reach Out Mbuya Community Health Initiative in collaboration with Makerere Business School was pleased to host students from Drake University, USA. The 13 students were on a study abroad program under the theme “Sustainable Development in Sub-Saharan Africa”. ROM has over the years always participated in this program and is gratified to teach the members about her work.

Accompanied by Professor Debra Bishop, the students visited the Mbuya clinic; triage, pharmacy and laboratory to understand ROM’s system in care and treatment of HIV/Aids, TB and Non- Communicable diseases. other health issues in Uganda.

The team also visited three of ROM’s Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) groups that were started by ROM beneficiaries in Nakawa Division. Students experienced the uniqueness of ROM’s Community-based approach, through which the most vulnerable people are impacted.

During the visit, 22 Stars VSLA group showcased different handcrafts and also explained how they operate. Drake students bought some of the items to support these amazing groups.



The Drake team with members of two VSLA groups at Acholi Quarters in Nakawa division.

Right; Listening to Dr. Abraham at ROM Mbuya Clinic

SHE-SOARS- ROM strives to improve lives of out of school girls



ROM team during a SHE SOARS inception meeting at Nakawa Division Headquarters.

ROM has launched yet another intervention to support adolescents' life skilling. The Sexual, Reproductive Health and Economic Empowerment Supporting Out of School Adolescent girls' Rights and Skills (SHE-SOARS) project aims at increasing equitable use of ASRHR services by diverse groups of adolescent girls particularly those out of school and children's rights holders. ROM will be implementing the SHE SOARS project in Nakawa and Makindye divisions, Kampala District.

Increasing equitable use of ASRHR services+ Economically Empower diverse groups of adolescent girls particularly those out of school

ROM On Track In Building Resilience Among Vulnerable Children

ROM is implementing the Integrated Child and Youth Development Activity (ICYD) Project in Kampala District. The intervention strives to ensure Uganda's children especially girls and the most vulnerable lead resilient and productive livelihoods.

Justine Amera (not real name) is one of the mothers who had lost hope after her sixteen-year-old daughter conceived the during Covid-19 lock down that left schools closed for two years. It was a tough time for her, being a single mother who had recently separated with her husband due to domestic violence.

News of her daughter's pregnancy did not leave her the same. "I did not expect Angelina to do this to me. As a single mother, it was too much for me. Nevertheless, I counselled myself and now I am coping well. I am grateful to Shamim and the entire Reach Out Mbuya team for finding a school for my child to complete school." Amera explained. Shamim is a para social worker at ROM, who talked to the headteacher to allow the girl start school even when she was pregnant and there was no money for fees. Noted how she was happily surprised at her daughter's demand to go back to school even when she was pregnant.

At ROM, such is the resilience we instill in the young people to lead productive lives. Today, Angelina is properly attending her Senior Four classes and is hopeful that she will pass well.

The headteacher of the school is such an amazing soul. He has given her inspiration to complete school. He has talked to the teachers and all the learners through counselling sessions not to bully other children who have different challenges at school in addition to improving school meals. "I used to add milk to the children's porridge for only two days, but now I do it daily because I know this girl needs more nutrients in her food. I do the same with other meals." He said.

Lactating Mothers learn care for infants at Postnatal Care training



Josephine Ssekintule, a nursing Officer at ROM sharing with the mothers during the training.

Reach Out Mbuya organized a postnatal Care training on 21st May, targeting 80 lactating mothers and their partners from the three Reach Out Mbuya sites; Kinawataka, Banda and Mbuya.

Clinicians took the mothers through a number of important pointers including Antenatal Care, its importance to pregnant mothers and when to enroll at health facility in order to have a safe delivery. The practical bit of how new born babies are cared for was a rich experience for the mothers who attended, more so including child mothers.

The exercise aims at fostering appreciation of the parenting responsibility regardless of circumstances faced by the parent(s) for healthy and happy children.

Nutrition for infants and mothers was also top in the discussion taking mothers through the importance and nutrient benefits for common foodstuffs plus inspiring them to start income generating activities however small to support the nutrition needs to begin with.

Gender-based violence and its negative effects on the development of children and the well-being of the mother as always was discussed, participants were screened and appropriate counseling done for mothers identified and referral and linkage to other services made.

Male engagement is starting to gain traction as more men accompanied their spouses at the training. A very big positive step forward in Maternal and Child Care.