



| Hope for the future

ANNUAL REPORT

2024







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Acronyms:

ABYM	-	Adolescent Boys and Young men
AGYW	-	Adolescent Girls and Young Women
ART	-	Anti Retroviral Therapy
CDC	-	U. S Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CLHIV	-	Children Living with HIV
HC	-	Health Centre
HTS	-	HIV Testing and Counselling Services
KCCA	-	Kampala Capital City Authority
PEPFAR	-	U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PLHIV	-	People Living with HIV
ROM	-	Reach Out Mbuya Community Health Initiative
STI	-	Sexually Transmitted Infections
USAID	-	United States Agency for International Development
VMMC	-	Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision
VPT	-	Violence Prevention and Treatment
VSLA	-	Village savings and

Message from the Chairperson, Board of Directors



As we look ahead, we do so in faith. With God on our side, and with your continued partnership, we believe that the seeds we have planted will yield even greater harvests of healing, empowerment, and transformation in the years to come.



It is with deep joy and thanksgiving that I present to you the 2024 Annual Report of Reach Out Mbuya Community Health Initiative. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I welcome you into this reflection of a year marked by resilience, innovation, and God's abundant grace.

From humble beginnings, Reach Out Mbuya has grown into a beacon of hope for many—and 2024 was no exception. As a ministry and health initiative, our calling remains clear: to serve the vulnerable with love, dignity, and unwavering commitment.

This year, we witnessed the fruit of diligent leadership and faithful service. Guided by a strong partnership between the Board and Senior Management, ROM delivered impactful interventions that reached deep into communities. From preventing HIV infections and advancing maternal and child health, to empowering young mothers and supporting vulnerable children—our mission was alive in action.

Our reach grew beyond service delivery. 2024 was a year of deepened research engagement, increased proposal submissions, and stronger evidence-based programming. We saw our voice and influence extend—not just in the field, but in national dialogue around health systems and community care.

We are also proud of the bold steps taken in economic strengthening and psychosocial support—particularly for those often forgotten. Every vocational skill, every school fee paid, every clinic visit mattered. It meant a life restored, a dream reignited, a child protected.

To our donors, partners, and friends—thank you. Your support is a blessing that continues to multiply. Your faith in this vision fuels our passion and expands our impact. We do not take it for granted.

As we look ahead, we do so in faith. With God on our side, and with your continued partnership, we believe that the seeds we have planted will yield even greater harvests of healing, empowerment, and transformation in the years to come.

May this report not only inform but inspire. May it remind you that behind every number is a name, behind every program—a purpose. And behind every success—a story of faith and love in action.

With prayerful thanks and hope,

Fr. James Patrick Jumba
Chairperson, Board of Directors



Message from the Executive Director

“ *In the middle of every difficulty, lies an opportunity.*
— **Albert Einstein**

It is with great pride and heartfelt gratitude that I present the 2024 Annual Report of Reach Out Mbuya Community Health Initiative (ROM). This report is more than a reflection of progress—it is a narrative of resilience, innovation, and the collective will to uplift lives amidst evolving challenges.

In many ways, 2024 was a defining year. It was not just about milestones reached—it was about momentum built. We pushed boundaries, adjusted our strategies, and redefined what community health delivery looks like under pressure. We faced uncertainty with clarity of purpose and came through stronger, more focused, and deeply attuned to the realities of those we serve.

We didn't operate from a place of ease—we moved with urgency and intention.

Across the organization, our teams demonstrated what is possible when commitment meets compassion. With the strategic oversight of the Board and the tireless dedication of our Senior Management Team and staff, ROM responded to growing health demands and socio-economic strain with agility, empathy, and excellence.

We improved coordination between program areas, tailored our interventions to meet the shifting needs of our communities, and invested in systems that support integrated service delivery. We built on what was

working, rethought what wasn't, and prioritized quality care, youth engagement, economic empowerment, and evidence-based action.

The road was not without its challenges—but meaningful progress rarely is.

What drives us is not pressure—it is purpose. A purpose rooted in the belief that everyone deserves access to health and dignity. That young mothers should be empowered, not overlooked. That adolescents should be engaged, not ignored. That every intervention should be connected to real lives and lasting impact.

To our donors, partners, and supporters—thank you. Your trust fuels our mission. Your generosity is reflected in every community reached, every service delivered, and every life restored. We remain committed to using every resource responsibly, transparently, and for maximum impact.

As we look to the future, we do so with urgency, hope, and renewed determination. While the landscape may shift, our purpose remains unchanged: to reach out, uplift, and transform.

With gratitude and resolve,

Josephine Kaleebi
Executive Director

Who we are:

Reach Out Mbuya Community Health Initiative (ROM) is a community-based non-government organization working with the urban and rural poor communities all over Uganda. ROM provides a holistic model of care to People Living with HIV and where necessary their families, taking care of the medical, social, emotional, and economical aspects of their lives to foster dignified living. ROM was initiated in May 2001 at Our Lady of Africa Mbuya Catholic Parish to address the AIDS scourge in Kampala communities and has since experienced rapid growth, scaling up community health interventions across Uganda.



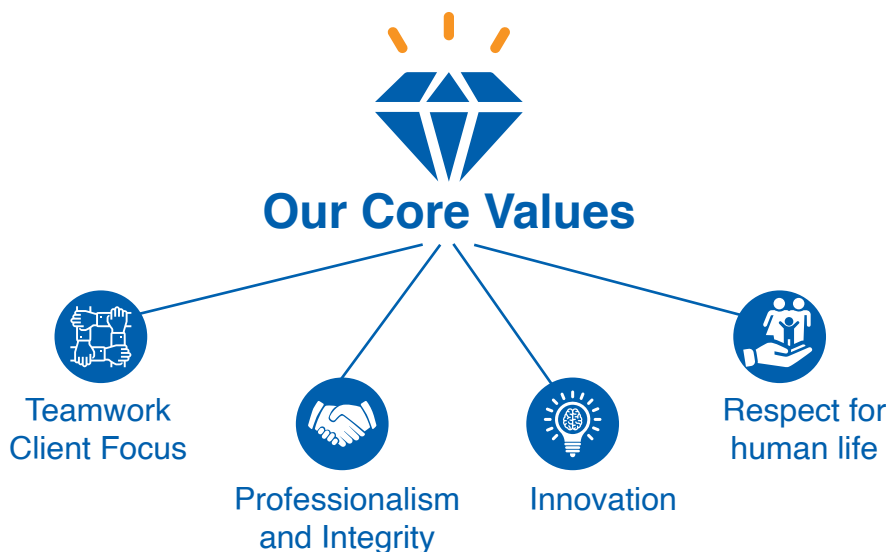
Vision:

ROM envisions a community free of the spread of HIV where persons already infected and affected by HIV and AIDS are living positively with an improved quality of life.



Mission:

ROM aims to curb the further spread of HIV among the less privileged members of the community it serves and enable those already living with HIV/AIDS to live a responsible and dignified life.



Strategic goal:

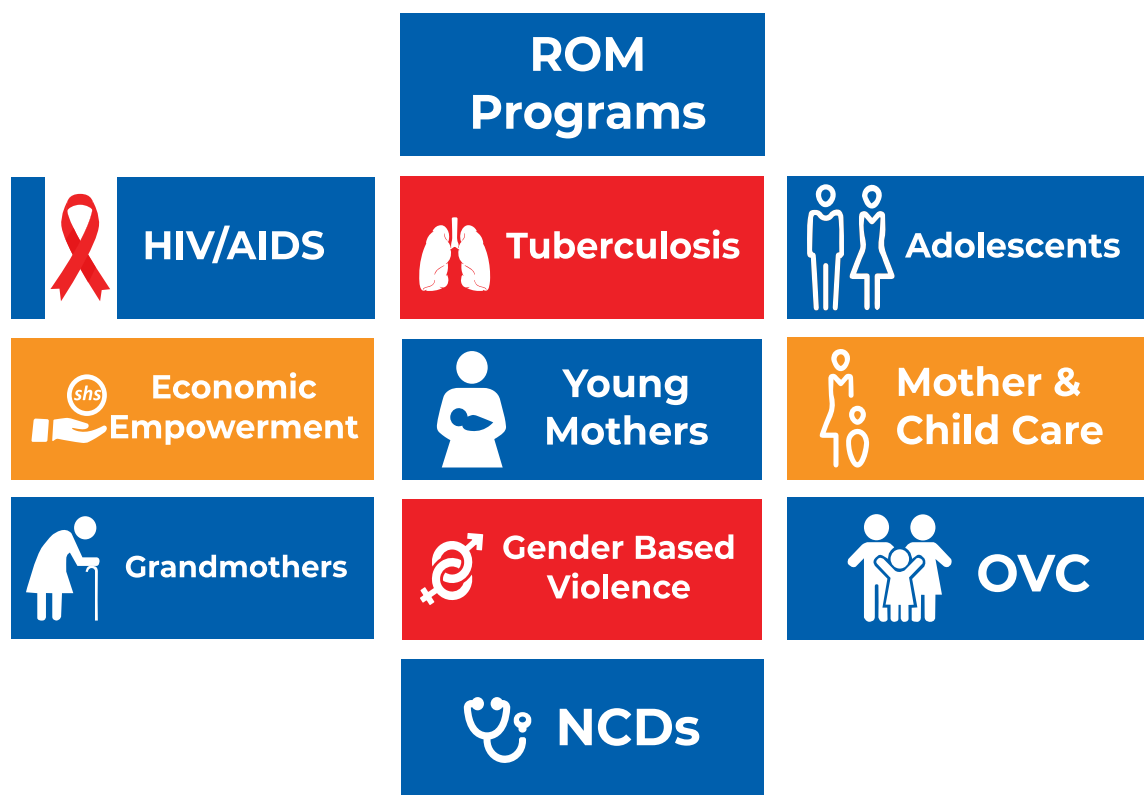
We aspire to be the preferred partner in transforming the quality of life of people in vulnerable communities, especially the HIV infected and affected through holistic interventions.



Introduction

This report presents a summary of all programs and activities implemented by Reach Out Mbuya Community Health Initiative in the Calendar/Financial year 2024. It highlights the achievements, challenges, lessons learned and way forward for the institution.

We bring you key program areas that include HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Adolescents, Orphans and Vulnerable Children, Non-Communicable Diseases, Economic Empowerment, Young Mothers, Mother and Child Care, Violence Prevention and of course something about dear Grandmothers.





| Hope for the future

ROM Projects

20
24

With support from different funders, ROM implemented the following Projects.

Kampala HIV Project (KHP)

The Kampala HIV Project is a five-year initiative aimed at reducing HIV and TB incidence in the Kampala region. In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the KHP supports comprehensive prevention, care and treatment services while strengthening the capacity of national referral hospitals, Kampala Capital City Authority supported health facilities, HIV Centres of excellence and Community Organizations.

USAID/ Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Kampala Activity

The USAID/OVC projects supports orphans and vulnerable children and their caregivers across Kampala's five divisions. The Activity focuses on preventing new HIV infections and reducing vulnerability through health, education, child protection, youth skills training, and household economic strengthening, while ensuring treatment continuity and viral load suppression among children and adolescents living with HIV.

The USAID Local Partner Health Services – TB Activity (LPHS-TB)

This is a five-year project (2023–2026) implemented by ROM in Nakawa Division, Kampala, aiming at reducing Uganda’s tuberculosis burden. Supported by USAID, the Activity focuses on increasing TB treatment through enhanced case detection, prevention, diagnosis and care.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)

This Maternal and Child Health project implemented by ROM in Nakawa Division, is a five-year initiative supported by the Mennonite Central Committee. It aims at improving maternal and child health among vulnerable mothers by increasing access to health services and promoting financial stability through improved household incomes.

SHE SOARS-Sexual Reproductive Health and Economic Empowerment Supporting Out of School Adolescent Girls and Boys’ Rights and Skills

SHE SOARS, supported by CARE Uganda and funded by Global Affairs Canada, is a ROM-led project promoting Health and economic empowerment for out-of-school adolescent girls and boys (ages 10-19) in Nakawa and Makindye Divisions, Kampala. The project collaborates with community stakeholders to increase equitable access to health services while supporting economic skills and rights for youth.

SidEcole

With funding from our friends of SidEcole, ROM provides education support, alternative skilling, health, nutrition and psychological support to vulnerable children and their families affected by HIV.



ROM's Top 5 Achievements in 2024



170,000
People served
in 2024

ROM Institution

The team worked tirelessly to achieve a community free of HIV, where persons already infected and affected by HIV are living positively with an improved quality of life.



150,000
People PLHIV
across 52 facilities
were supported

Kampala HIV Project

ROM Successfully implemented activities aimed at reducing HIV/ TB incidences in Kampala Region.

Between October 2023 and September 2024, **150,000** people PLHIV across **52** facilities were supported, making substantial progress toward the UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets. **93% (140,000/150,000)** of these were aware of their HIV status, **96% (135,000/140,000)** were maintained on ART, and **97% (130,950/135,000)** achieved viral suppression.



USAID Orphans & Vulnerable Children- Kampala Activity

Successfully impacted lives of **60,000** children & their caregivers.



Community Department

ROM achieved comprehensive Community development through community leadership structure and outreaches.



Human Resources Department

Enhanced ROM Staff skills through trainings.



Hon. Paul Mugambe, flanked by ROM Executive Director Josephine Kaleebi, CDC Project Officer Peter Sentongo, Community leaders and other participants during commemoration of World AIDS Day 2024 at PortBell Luzira Kampala.

Key Events in 2024

a) World AIDS Day 2024

On 2nd December 2024, ROM commemorated World AIDS Day to create awareness on HIV/AIDS, show love and solidarity to those living with HIV and remember our brothers and sisters lost to the pandemic. The event started with a Holly Mass at Our Lady of Africa Catholic Church Mbuya, continuing in the community with a march from our head office at Mbuya to Port Bell Luzira.

The event was graced by Hon. Paul Mugambe - the Mayor of Nakawa Division as the Chief

Walker and other dignitaries. The mayor emphasized that it is everyone's responsibility to end HIV. "To end HIV by 2030, we all have the responsibility to see that this is possible by playing our parts." He said.

He also urged Kampala Capital City Authority to withdraw licenses of all leisure facilities offering transactional sex as they form hotspots for new HIV infections in Kampala Region.

ROM vows to continue partnering with other players to end HIV in the country.



Let each of us test for HIV to know your status, and if you do, please be an ambassador of HIV testing wherever you go. Ask a friend if tested, and if not, help them do so.

Mayor Paul Mugambe



Hon. Paul Mugambe addressing participants during World AIDS Day at Portbell Luzira

Beneficiaries testify to ROM's support in the HIV Struggle

At the event, Sarah and Prossy, two ROM beneficiaries shared their victory stories in the fight against HIV/AIDS amidst challenges. Their stories inspired many, giving hope on positive living and expressing gratitude for the support received that enabled them to have HIV negative children. It is possible, they both attested.



"I am grateful to ROM for enabling me overcome stigma, I am now healthy, happy and have no regrets enrolling at this health facility. With their support, I have been able to give birth to HIV negative children. I pray that this kind of support is extended to many other vulnerable people to enable them live happier positive lives." **Sarah**



"After being diagnosed with HIV, I felt hopeless and even considered ending my life. However, with support from Reach Out Mbuya (ROM) and my mother-in-law, things improved. ROM provided essential care, including medicine, food, and emotional support, helping me give birth to two HIV-negative children. Thanks to counsellors Susan and Sarah, I overcame stigma and stayed committed to treatment. Today, I'm healthy, self-reliant, and grateful for the second chance at life ROM gave me." **Prossy**



ROM staff taking teachers through an HIV management session during the event at Kiswa Primary School.

b) Pre-World AIDS Day Activities

Prior to the big day, ROM's Community Department organized a Pre-World AIDS Day School Program and Sports Gala to raise awareness on HIV/AIDS and promote healthy living. The event that attracted hundreds of school-going children and their teachers was dominated with activities such as training to build teachers' and other school staff's capacity on HIV/AIDS, particularly on HIV prevention, positive living and dangers of stigma. Children, teachers and ROM staff participated in games that included sack race, rope skipping and chair dance among others.





ROM staff, joined by community members and other players march through Nakawa Division communities on the climax day against Violence on Women and Girls.

c) ROM observes the 16 Days of Activism against Violence

From November 25th, 2024 (International Day for Elimination of Violence against Women) to December 10th, 2024 (Human Rights Day), ROM joined the rest of the world to observe the 16 Days of Activism against Violence on Women and Girls, a key global moment aimed at calling for an end to violence against women and girls. This year, all activities were run under the theme ***Unite to End Violence against Women and Girls.***

The Climax event was held on 10th December at Gisani Primary School Acholi Quarters Nakawa Division as an action to increase awareness, advocacy efforts and share knowledge and innovations to end all types of violence against women and girls in the communities served.



ROM supported violence survivors sharing testimonies at the 16 Days of Activism Climax event.



Participants flash the End Violence sign at the Climax event of the 16 Days of Activism against Violence at Gissani primary School in Nakawa Division.



Research at ROM:

Driving Innovation and Institutional Growth

At ROM, research has consistently been a cornerstone of our institutional growth. Over the years, we have prioritized evidence-based inquiry to guide our strategies, enhance our performance and remain adaptive in the face of evolving challenges, knowledge, and innovations.

As a recognized centre of excellence in community health, ROM continues to transform lives through research-driven solutions that respond directly to the needs of the communities we serve.



HIV CARE AND TREATMENT

Advanced HIV Disease (AHD) in Newly Diagnosed PLHIV:

Despite WHO strategies, 21% of newly diagnosed PLHIV in Nakawa Division present with AHD. We identified Key predictors including male gender, older age, marital status, and malnutrition. Early testing, male-friendly healthcare, and nutritional support are critical interventions.

Virologic Failure in HIV Treatment:

In a retrospective cohort of **756** participants (63.8% female, median age 39), virologic failure incidence was 4.24 per 1,000 person-months, with higher risk among those with viral loads >200 copies/mL at substitution. Longer PI duration and male sex were protective. Strengthening viral load monitoring and adherence support is crucial for sustaining HIV suppression and achieving the third “95.”

Treatment Interruption & Re-engagement

We retrospectively studied **84** young adults (20–24 years) in Kampala who interrupted ART from 2022 to 2024. The median RTTI was 38 days, with 59.5% returning within 31–90 days. Timely RTTI

was linked to higher baseline CD4 counts (≥ 200 cells/ μ L), employment, and HIV status disclosure, while students faced the longest delays. Psychosocial support and economic empowerment are crucial for improving treatment re-engagement among young PLHIV.

Improving Viral Suppression in CLHIV (USAID OVC Kampala activity):

A longitudinal study on CLHIV identified lack of treatment supporters, forgetfulness, and food insecurity as key barriers to viral suppression. Targeted interventions, including enhanced case management and community-facility coordination, led to 95% (222/234) achieving suppression within seven months. Addressing psychosocial and economic challenges is crucial for improving treatment outcomes.

Digital Tracking for CLHIV Treatment (The USAID OVC Kampala activity):

The electronic FACE Tracker, a real-time tool linking facility and community data, improved CLHIV case management, increasing timely viral load testing by 80%, appointment tracking by 98%, and re-engaging **23** children after treatment interruption. These findings highlight digital tools' role in enhancing HIV care adherence and continuity.



MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH

Cervical Cancer in Women Living with HIV:

A retrospective cohort study revealed high cervical cancer positivity rates among Women Living with HIV (WLHIV) three years after a negative screen. Positivity was significantly higher among women screened at Kiswa than at Kisenyi and among younger women (19–29 years) compared to those aged 40–49. These findings underscore the need for regular rescreening and integrating cervical cancer screening into HIV care to reduce morbidity and mortality.

Syphilis in Pregnancy:

We found a 5.9% syphilis prevalence among **1,168** pregnant women at Kawaala HCIV. Syphilis was strongly associated with HIV positivity (aOR: 4.13), high blood pressure (aOR: 2.84), and previous pregnancies (aOR: 0.21). These findings highlight the need for routine syphilis screening in antenatal care to improve maternal and child health outcomes.



COMMUNITY-BASED HIV PREVENTION

HIV Recency Testing & Partner Notification:

In Kampala facilities, assisted partner notification (APN) for recent HIV cases yielded a higher positivity rate (17.3%) than the national average. A narrow partner age between partner and index client predicted positivity among the partners suggests peer-to-peer transmission, particularly among young people.

PrEP Uptake Among Adolescent Girls:

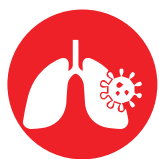
The study investigated low PrEP uptake among out-of-school adolescent girls (15-19) in Kampala, Uganda. Despite high-risk behaviours—irregular condom use (45.6%), multiple partners (10.4%), and transactional sex (32.0%)—only 2.9% initiated PrEP. Barriers included pill size, stigma, and side effects. The study highlights the urgent need for youth-friendly PrEP formulations, stigma reduction strategies, and enhanced community engagement. Targeted education and healthcare provider support are

HIV Counselling Attendance in Nakawa:

A study at ROM clinics found that long waiting times, counsellor attitudes, and privacy concerns as hindrances to counselling attendance, while adherence support and mental health benefits encourage it. Clients recommended more counsellors and improved privacy to enhance uptake.

Intensified HIV Case Finding (Munonye Campaign):

The Munonye campaign demonstrated the effectiveness of intensified HIV case finding, boosting testing among children of female sex workers (FSWs) with a 0.9% positivity yield and 100% linkage to care. Reducing stigma, strengthening provider-FSW relationships, and scaling up stigma-sensitive strategies will support progress toward the 95-95-95 targets.



TUBERCULOSIS (TB) & HIV CO-MANAGEMENT

TB Treatment Interruptions:

In a cohort of 268 TB patients (2020–2023), 51.87% (139/268) experienced treatment interruptions. All 13 deaths and 4 lost to follow-up had interruptions. Risk factors included age >50 years (aOR 3.73) and PBC-TB or EPTB (aOR 10.19), while relapsed TB patients had lower interruption risk (aOR 0.27). Targeted interventions and adherence support are needed.

TB related mortality

A retrospective study of 150 TB patients at Butabika NRMH (2020–2023) found a 36.67% mortality rate, with death occurring a median of 27 days post-diagnosis. Mortality was strongly linked to advanced age (>50 years, aOR 16.88) and HIV positivity (aOR 3.57). Early detection targeting elderly and HIV-positive patients could reduce TB-related deaths in this vulnerable group.

TB Case Detection & Contact Tracing:

ROM's systematic TB screening at Butabika National Mental Referral Hospital improved TB case detection, tracing, and TB preventive Therapy initiation. Community engagement and flexible service models enhance screening effectiveness.

Evaluation of TB-LAM Testing in PLHIV:

We observed at a peri-urban HIV clinic in Kampala, 19% of 114 participants tested TB-LAM positive, with 64% having CD4 \geq 200 cells/ μ L. Positivity was higher in females and those on ART for \geq 13 months. Expanding TB-LAM testing beyond WHO guidelines could improve TB detection in asymptomatic PLHIV.

TB Prevalence & ART Duration in PLHIV:

A study at six Kampala health facilities analyzed TB prevalence among PLHIV based on ART duration and TPT completion. Among 1,587 TB/HIV co-infections, 62% developed TB over a year after ART initiation, with an average TB diagnosis occurring five years after ART start and 2.5 years after TPT completion. Despite ART and TPT, the high TB burden suggests a need for improved TB screening, potential booster TPT doses, and further exploration of socio-demographic risk factors.

TB After TPT Completion:

This study examined PLHIV who developed TB after completing TPT at Kawaala Health Centre IV in Kampala, between January 2022 and December 2023. About 0.9% (87/9417) PLHIV who completed TPT, contracted TB, within an average of 2.5 years following TPT completion. Most were female (53%), Dolutegravir-based regimens (92%), were virologically suppressed (79%). The study emphasizes the need for routine TB screening, even among stable PLHIV in community and facility-based care programs.

TB Treatment Loss to Follow-Up:

A retrospective review of TB treatment records at Kawaala Health Centre III showed higher loss to follow-up among patients referred from facilities (aOR 2.86), without a cell phone (aOR 2.97), and those previously lost to follow-up (TL) compared to new patients (aOR 1.78). These findings highlight the need to focus on TL and improve coordination between healthcare facilities and community services to reduce attrition and enhance treatment outcomes.



HIV & VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

HIV among Older Women:

A study in rural Uganda found that 9.5% of vulnerable older women (\geq 50 years) were HIV-positive, surpassing the national average of 5.3%. Women aged 50-59 and those in severe economic hardship were at highest risk. Despite good HIV awareness, many faced poverty, limited resources, and social support. The findings highlight the need for targeted HIV prevention policies addressing the socioeconomic and behavioural factors driving vulnerability in this group.





Health

ROM has for 24 years stood the test of time in holistic healthcare for members in vulnerable communities. Through various approaches with support from our esteemed funders, free health care has been taken close to children, youths, adults, and the elderly through partnerships with community leadership, local government, private and public facilities plus other community Actors.

Public health issues like HIV, tuberculosis, Non-Communicable Diseases, breast and cervical cancer among others have been handled in the entire Kampala District in addition to other complimentary programs like the Mother & Childcare, Adolescents and Young Mothers' focused health interventions, Gender-based Violence and Economic Empowerment in line with the ROM unique holistic approach to transforming the vulnerable.

2024 equally marked a year since ROM became a Prime Implementing Partner of two US government PEPFAR funded interventions of the USAID OVC Activity and CDC Kampala HIV Project both covering the 5 Divisions of Kampala District. A great milestone indeed that saw ROM as both a Clinical partner and community partner in the region in the fight against the HIV epidemic.

Message from the Medical Team;



Making a difference in HIV Care and Treatment services in the Kampala Region through technical assistance and support; Nine months of progress.

Dr. Gertrude Namale, Kampala HIV Project Manager.

“As we work towards the global UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets, Kampala region remains a key focus in the fight against HIV/AIDS due to its diverse population. Funded by PEPFAR through the CDC, ROM has been leading the Kampala HIV Project (KHP) since October 2023 to contribute to the achievement of these targets.

Over the past nine months, our efforts in providing technical assistance have led to improvements in HIV care and treatment services in the Kampala region. Following national guidelines, we have supported clinical partners and Drop-in Centres to offer comprehensive, high-quality HIV/ TB prevention, care, and treatment services to adults, children, and families affected by HIV. Currently, we are supporting over 31 health facilities in the region, aiming to improve the quality of life for People Living with HIV/AIDS.

The key areas of focus include identifying HIV cases, linking and retaining patients in care, finding and treating TB cases, integrating care for Non-Communicable Diseases, eliminating mother-to-child transmission (eMTCT), exposed infant diagnosis (EID), HIV drug resistance (HIVDR), viral load coverage and suppression, as well as screening and treating cervical cancer.

Our goal is to ensure that 95% of clients on antiretroviral therapy (ART) achieve viral suppression and that all PLHIV with other infections, such as TB, cryptococcal meningitis, and cervical cancer receive proper management.

We are glad to inform you that our technical team has been deeply involved in enhancing HIV care and treatment services in the Kampala region and we have focused on strengthening health systems to ensure effectiveness and efficiency.

In this period, we conducted numerous training and mentorship sessions for healthcare providers such as NCD integration regional roll-out, C-reactive protein, chest X-ray training, Young people and Adolescents Peer Support Programme (YAPS), mental health for the Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYWs), viral load non-suppression, orientation on the new ART guidelines trainings and a lot more.

These sessions equipped healthcare providers with the latest knowledge and skills in HIV management. Regular virtual engagements and performance reviews have helped us fine-tune our strategies and ensure that the interventions have the desired impact.

Recognizing the importance of community support, we have also embarked on the Integrated Community Service Delivery Model (ICSDM) to create a more supportive environment for individuals living with HIV. This approach has enhanced a stronger community network making it easier for PLHIV to access care.

In addition, our technical assistance has led to significant achievements; Healthcare providers have shown improved efficiency in managing HIV patients- thanks to the targeted trainings, mentorships and support offered by the technical team. More patients are now receiving quality treatment leading to better health outcomes. Despite these achievements, resource constraints and logistical hurdles have continued to affect service delivery. Moving forward, we are committed to addressing these challenges by advocating for increased funding, exploring innovative approaches, and strengthening partnerships with stakeholders, so much dedicated to improving the lives of PLHIV in Kampala, than never before.

By working closely with our key stakeholders, leveraging resources, and continuously seeking improvements, we aim to make meaningful changes that enhance the well-being of the vulnerable communities and positively impact to the lives of those infected and affected by HIV.”



How ROM excelled in HIV care and treatment

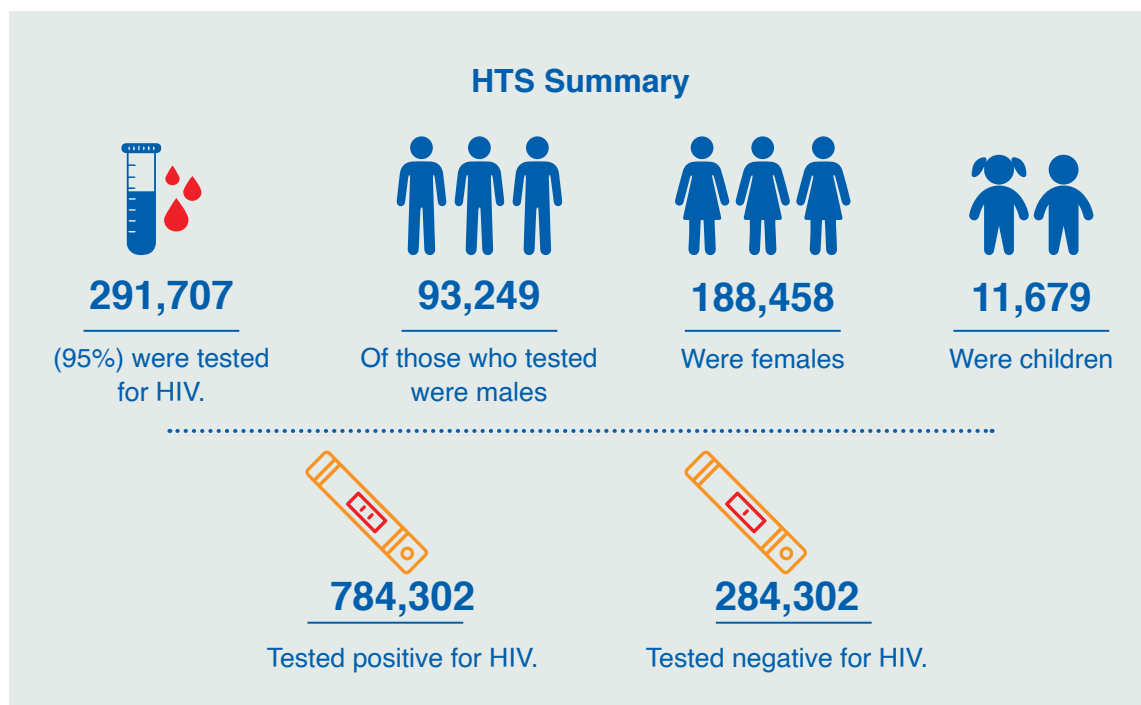
Popular for her holistic approach to HIV care and treatment, with emphasis on the wellbeing of an individual's body, mind, spirit and community, ROM staff are motivated to provide medical care to PLHIV to live dignified lives characterized by positivity and progress in every aspect.

a) HIV Testing and Counselling Services (HTS)

To achieve epidemic control, ROM provides HTS services to several people in Kampala at various points: ROM facilities (Mbuya, Kinnawataka & Banda as well as our outreaches (PortBell Wellness Center Luzira, Gayaza, Kiwatule, Kimwanyi and at all KCCA health facilities in Kampala.

In 2024, ROM provided HTS services to a total of **291,707** (95%) of the annual target of **298,991** clients in Kampala. Of these, **93,249** were males, **188,458** were females and **11,679** were children. Of the **291,707**, **74,057** tested positive for HIV and **284,302** tested negative for HIV and **7,057** were enrolled for treatment.

Self-testing was also possible with the support of the **326** Para-social workers, who were trained and placed at **7** seven high volume health facilities: Kisenyi HCIV, Kitebi HC III, Kawaala HC III, Komamboga HC III, Kiswa HC III, Kisugu HC III, and Banda HC III as access points for the blood-based HIV self-test kits, all aimed at increasing identification of HIV cases.



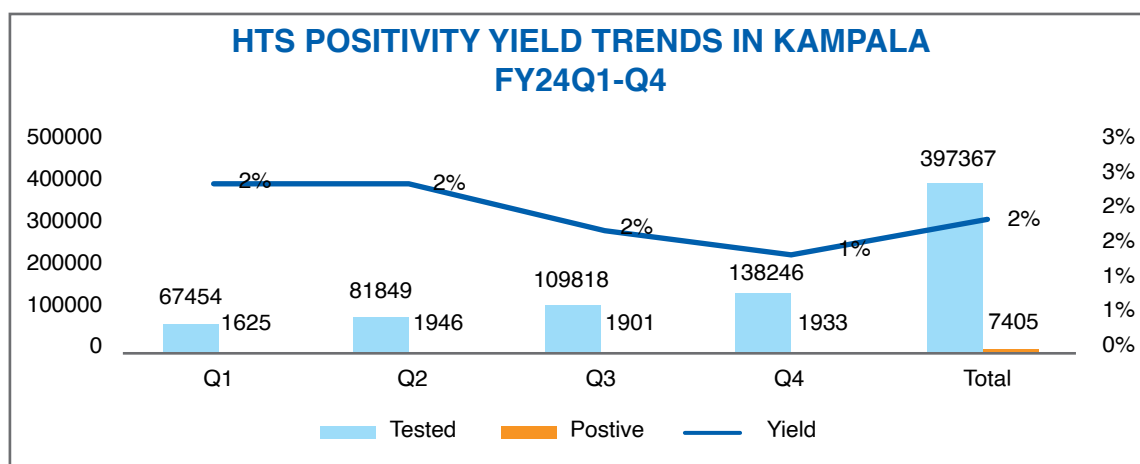


ROM's Flavia Nanteza, the Counselling Supervisor offering HTS services to a student during the Intersvarsity Public Lecture on Young People's Health at Kyambogo University in August 2024.

“

Let each of us test for HIV to know your status, and if you do, please be an ambassador of HIV testing wherever you go.

Mayor Paul Mugambe told participants at the commemoration of World AIDS Day 2014.



A graph showing HTS positivity trends in Kampala from October 2023 to October 2024

b) The Munonye Campaign; ROM intensifies HIV self-testing

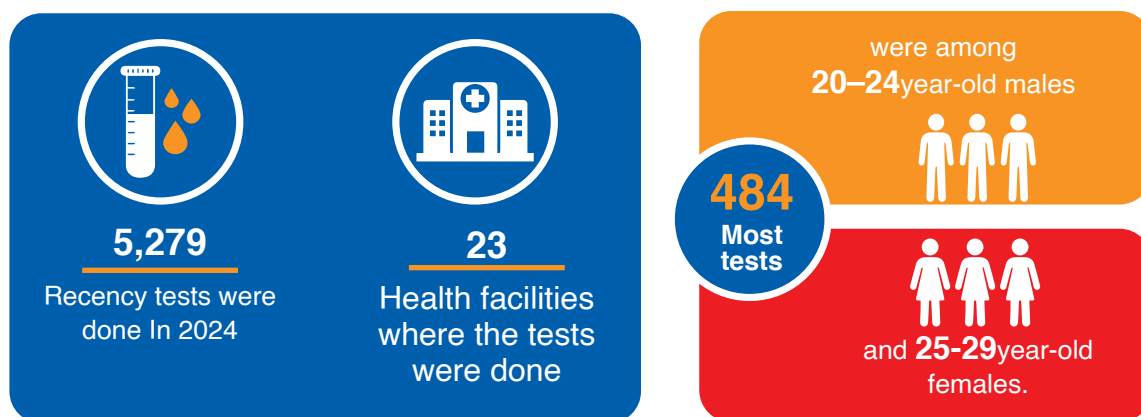
Through the Munonye Campaign run by ROM's the USAID Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Kampala Activity, **1,160** OVC beneficiaries participated in HIV Self-Testing, and they all tested negative. Munonye was run from 1st April 2024 to September 31st, 2024. OVC leveraged its collaboration with health facilities and the KHP team to enhance case identification through this campaign.

c) HIV Recency testing

This is the routine assessment of the HIV epidemic trends to determine if an individual's HIV infection is recent (within the past 6-12months) or long-standing. It is aimed at identifying newly acquired HIV infections to guide prevention efforts, monitor transmission patterns and evaluate program effectiveness, especially among populations at high risk of acquiring or transmitting HIV.

In 2024, a total of **5,279** recency tests were done at **23** health facilities as compared to the annual target of **4,622**.

484 of the recency tests conducted, most of which were among the 20–24-year-old males and the females aged 25-29 years.



ROM and Ministry of Health organize Regional Recency testing refresher training

ROM in partnership with the Ministry of Health carried out a five-day Recency training for over 55 facility-based HIV testing and counselling providers and laboratory staff to equip them with comprehensive knowledge and skills in counselling for recency testing procedures and clinical protocol and help them improve their performance regarding the best practices and the latest trends in HIV care and treatment programming.

Participants included laboratory personnel, counselors, nurses and Monitoring and Evaluation personnel from all ROM supported facilities in Kampala region. These were trained on HIV Recency Testing Basics, Counselling for Recency Testing, Testing procedures, Results interpretation, Quality assurance and control Counselling for Recency Testing, Introduction to HIV Recency Testing M&E, Data collection and management and HIV Recency Indicators among others. They appreciated ROM for organising the training which helped them understand recency training the more.

“This training has broadened my knowledge of why we always do recency tests. Previously, I thought it was just a study, but I now know it is a Ministry of Health program. With this, we can identify new HIV infections which help the Ministry of Health to know and tighten efforts in highly burdened communities. I am grateful to ROM and the Ministry of Health for this innovation and there is need to ensure that all employees in the laboratories go through such refresher trainings.”



Khalifa Malinga, Laboratory Technician at Kisugu Health Centre III.



Participants during the Recency testing training at ROM in 2024.



Care and Treatment; Working with Special Groups



In 2024, **115,991 (96%)** of the **120,431** annual target clients were successfully enrolled on Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) across all supported facilities in Kampala region and 99% of them were retained in care.

Note: **7,125** out of the **7,405 (96.2%)** newly identified HIV-positive clients were linked to care, with **1,933** cases identified later in the year, **1,831** of which were successfully initiated on ART.

a) Children & Adolescents Living with HIV.

Through the USAID OVC Activity, with support from Para Social Workers and facility-based Linkage Facilitators at **51** health facilities and 4 clinical partners, ROM ensured that **3,874** children and adolescents living with HIV continued treatment.



115,991

Clients were successfully
enrolled on ART in 2024



7,125

Newly identified HIV-positive
clients were linked to care

b) HIV Prevention

#end HIVby2030.

To ensure optimal control of HIV in the region, ROM implements various programs among different target groups of people. These include mothers and their un-born babies, Adolescent Girls/Boys and Young Women/Men and key populations among others.

i. Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis and Post exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP & PEP)

Contributing to the National HIV Prevention Strategy, ROM in 2024 provided PrEP (the use of ARV drugs by people who are HIV-negative

to prevent HIV acquisition before potential HIV exposure) and PEP (after potential HIV exposure) to various groups of people in Kampala region through integrated screening approach at various care entry points such as Antenatal Clinics, Out-patient services at health facilities, Adolescent/Youth Friendly Clinics and the Community.

To ensure PREP and PEP services were administered well, ROM supported and strengthened **10** sites in Kampala; Kisenyi, Kisugu, Komamboga, MARPI clinic, Kitebi, Kiswa, Kawaala Health Centres, AIC Kampala, Kiruddu National Referral Hospital and TASO Mulago clinic), with a total of **25,470 (101%)** against the annual target of **25,173**.



Participants during an Event-driven PrEP training session at ROM in September 2024. Event-driven PrEP improve PrEP uptake for both new and continuity, reduce on pill burden challenges especially among the Cisgender men.

ii. Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) of HIV & Early Infant Diagnosis (EID)

ROM has always prioritized PMTCT and EID for many years to achieve elimination of HIV by 2030. This year, a total of **65,551** pregnant women received Antenatal Care (ANC) services for the first time. **64,038 (97.6%)** of these new their HIV status, **13,971** of which were in their first trimester. We appreciate our health workers for continued education to all mothers in child-bearing age. With this we shall have a generation free from HIV.

Male Involvement in PMTCT

With over two-decades experience in PMTCT, ROM advocates for full participation of men for better outcomes. We partner with other health players like Ministry of Health to produce and disseminate health education messages and provide facility level Male friendly services.

In 2024, **7142 (10.8%)** men attended Antenatal Clinic with their pregnant wives and **35** of these were HIV positive.

ROM continues to encourage all men who make it a point to accompany their partners to health facilities as this significantly increases expectant mothers' utilization of PMTCT and facility-based delivery services.

Zero Mother-to-Child HIV Infections: Ambassador Popp applauds ROM for PMTCT excellence

During the launch of the Kampala HIV Project in August 2024, the U.S Ambassador to Uganda H.E William W. Popp appreciated ROM for excelling in the Prevention of mother to Child Transmission of HIV(PMTCT).



Ambassador William W. Popp speaking during the Kampala HIV project launch in August 2024.

ROM's efforts to achieve 100% PMTCT truly shows that provision of high quality services can be achieved. In the period of 2009 to 2023 ROM registered zero mother to child infections thus contributing to the 95-95-95 UN Strategy to end HIV by 2023.

Ambassador Popp said.

ROM equipped health Centre IIs to improve maternal and child health services

This year, with funding from PEPFAR through U.S Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), ROM equipped two health facilities; Kiganda Maternity Health Center II and Meeting Point Namuwongo in Kawempe and Makindye Divisions respectively, with hospital equipment that included a delivery bed, a stadiometer, pediatric and adult weighing scales, blood pressure monitoring machines, Maternity HIV-Retesting Algorithm-Information, Education and Communication materials to improve maternal and child health in Kampala region.



A health worker measuring a mother's blood pressure using the new BP machine.



L-R: A health worker measuring the height of a mother at Kiganda Health Center-Kawempe Division using the new machine, and A health worker supporting a mother to measure her baby on the new

iii. Preventing new HIV Infections through DREAMS

(Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS free, Mentored and Safe)

Through DREAMS, ROM aims to reduce HIV infections among heavily burdened vulnerable Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) and violence prevention among Adolescent Boys and Young Men (ABYM) of ages 10-24 years in Rubaga, Kawempe and Nakawa Divisions, Kampala.

With a comprehensive package of tailored evidence-based services that included HIV and Violence prevention interventions, self-defense skills, economic strengthening, screening and other services, participants (must be HIV negative) were categorized into groups; *No means No*, *Journeys Plus* and *Steppingstones* to achieve desired objectives. These meet at Safe Spaces where they learn self-reliance skills.

In 2024, **14,512 (96%)** AGYW of the annual target were identified, screened and enrolled.

2300 vulnerable ABYM were enrolled.

6,708 (99%) AGYW had completed the *Journeys Plus*, **11,276 (99%)** had completed *No Means No* and **7,653 (99%)** had completed the *Steppingstones* Curricula.

14290 AGYW were screened for HTS, of which **11822** were eligible for HIV testing. **11275 (95%)** were tested for HIV, **11252** of them tested HIV negative while **23** tested

HIV positive and were all linked to care in Kawaala and Kiswa Health Centre IIIs through escorted referrals.

14317 AGYW were screened for Sexual Violence, of which **4,528** survivors were identified to have experienced different forms of violence. **89** of these had suffered physical violence, **4,202** suffered emotional violence, and **215** experienced sexual violence.

4,515 survivors received psycho-social counselling, **6** were offered emergency contraceptive pills, **11** were referred to police for legal support, **3,850** were tested HIV negative, **34** linked to GBV shelter for counselling, shelter and social support, **6** were initiated on Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP), and **6** were screened and received treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

However, 209 survivors of sexual violence did not receive PEP or Emergency contraceptives because they were identified late.

7,576 AGYW were screened for PrEP, of which **1113** were found eligible.

14345 AGYW were screened for mental health related illnesses, of which **251** presented with signs of depression and anxiety and were all assessed for suicidal tendencies.

7463 AGYW aged 15-24 years had been screened for STIs, **1148** of which were diagnosed with STIs and were all referred for treatment.



14,512

AGYW of the annual target were identified, screened and enrolled



14317

AGYW were screened for Sexual Violence



Adolescent Girls and Young Women during a session during a CDC support visit at Kiswa Health Center in 2024.

Violence Prevention services provided to prevent HIV.



20,667

ROM provided violence services to a total of 20,667 individuals



63,334

Orphans and Vulnerable Children and their caregivers were provided with care

To further reduce HIV infections, ROM has continued to integrate Violence Prevention (VP) services for targeted adults and children who suffer from violence related issues that like sexual, emotional and psychological violence that in return contribute to the rising new HIV infections.

Together with key stakeholders, police, the legal steam, Bwaise Violence Prev shelter, gender focal persons at Ministry of Health and district levels, ROM provided violence services to a total of **20,667** individuals, a **214%** achievement against the annual target of **9,642** in 2024.

7840 of **6606 (119%)** individuals received post violence care services across all ROM supported health facilities.

Through intensified on-site coaching, mentorship, and weekly performance reviews, the USAID OVC Kampala Activity provided evidence-based HIV/Violence comprehensive and prevention services to **63,334** Orphans and Vulnerable Children and their caregivers.

The girls and women find it challenging to disclose their Violence experiences due to fear, especially when the perpetrators were family members or individuals in positions of authority.

Harriet Nakuya-Violence Prevention Technical Officer, ROM.



Community members listening to the ROM Violence Prevention Technical Officer-Harriet Nakuya during a Violence prevention session at Acholi Quarters- Nakawa division in October 2024.

Every Hour Matters! An Innovation to help Violence survivors

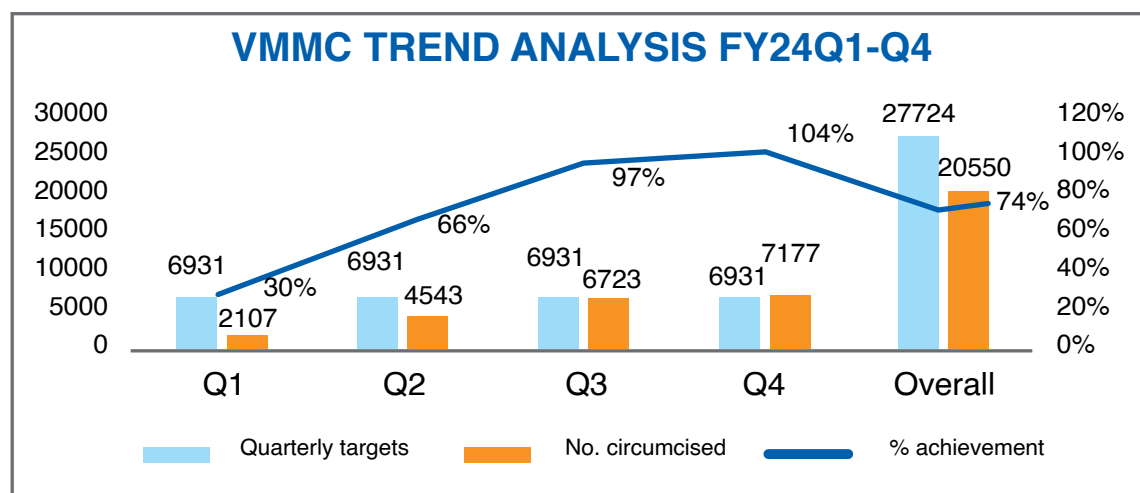
ROM runs *Every Hour Matters*, a Violence Prevention campaign through which violence survivors especially rape and defilement cases are encouraged to immediately report cases for assistance like Post Exposure Prophylaxis medicine among others that help to prevent them from possible HIV infections.

A Toll-Free Helpline was designed to respond to community inquiries on violence, OVC Support, TB and other health related issues. Concerns are received by a Psychosocial Support Officer who initially provides counselling and referral to partner organizations like Human Rights Awareness and promotion Forum (HRAPF), Uganda Network on Law, Ethics and HIV (UGANET), Action AID Uganda and Center for Health, Human Rights and Development (CEHURD for interventions that require further support.

iv. Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision (VMMC)-A healthy way to reduce HIV infections

In 2024, ROM continued to strengthen efforts aiming at reducing new HIV infections in Kampala region, through Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision achieved through a mix of models that included roving camps at open spaces, community outreaches, and static operations among males 15-29 years old because these are at risk of acquiring HIV through sexual intercourse.

In 2024, **20,550 (74%)** males ROM were circumcised compared to the annual target of **27,724** males. These were reached through outreaches conducted in markets, open spaces, learning institutions, taxi parks, Boda-boda stages, landing sites and the general community.



Viral Load Suppression

In 2024, ROM strived to achieve the third UNAIDS **95** target (ensuring that 95% of all people receiving antiretroviral therapy have viral suppression) for all her clients in HIV care and treatment.

Under the USAID Kampala Orphans and Vulnerable Children Project (OVC Kampala Activity), **3,383 (94%)** of the **3,617** Children Living with HIV were virally suppressed and **4,118 (97%)** of the **4,245** Adults living with HIV and with known Viral Load Results had their viral load suppressed.

ROM was able to achieve this through various community-based approaches that included the staff attachment strategy, the Directly Observed Therapy model, detection and

management of early warning signs, and the Beep Model, all supported with the Electronic Medical Records system.

At ROM, Managing non-suppression among Children and Adolescents is a priority

This year, **3,874** Children and Adolescents living with HIV (C/ALHIV) whose viral load was not suppressed were provided with a mix of age-appropriate and tailored services to overcome the challenge. Through various strategies and innovations such as Know Your Non-Suppressor Model, Directly Observed Treatment (DOTs), Beep Model (Modified DOTs) and Mental Health Integration among others, **94%** of the children's Viral load was suppressed.

Success story

Directly Observed Therapy and Beep Model made a difference in David's life.

"I can't imagine that my son's Viral Load reduced from 500 to 79 copies because of daily visits and phone call reminders by Para-Social Workers to take drugs." said Elizabeth.

"Raising my son was challenging. He often asked why he had to take medicine when others did not, and I would explain that his heart was unwell. This deeply bothered him. One day, he asked the doctor when he would ever stop taking medication. David (not real name) had just turned twelve (12) years and when they disclosed his status to him and counseled him, he never questioned me again.

With support from the USAID/OVC Kampala Activity, I connected with Lwanga- a para-

social worker who has been a lifeline for our family. Lwanga provided counseling to my son when he had withdrawn from treatment and was severely underweight. His persistent visits, phone beeps, and calls reminding us to take medicine helped restore my son's health; he would come home to witness my son taking his medication. Now, at 18 years, David is now virally suppressed, healthy and doing his day today activities with ease. I cannot thank ROM enough for helping my child appreciate the reason he swallows medicine on a daily basis and for consistently following up his well-being." **Elizabeth, David's mother.**



Lwanga counting pills while Elizabeth looks on.

Lwanga Charles, a Para-Social Worker, shares his journey with Elizabeth's household

“In 2023, I was allocated this household by Baylor Uganda because the child’s viral load was not suppressed; at that time, he had around 500 copies of the virus in his blood.

I started visiting the household once a month, but later, I felt touched by their situation and visited more often to ensure the virus was suppressed. I explained to the mother the causes of non-suppression, and she shared that her son had started withdrawing from treatment during adolescence.



Lwanga Charles, a Para Social Worker under the USAID/OVC Kampala Activity.

Whenever it was time to take his medication, he would disappear or be with adolescent friends with whom he was not comfortable knowing his status. I sat with him and explained the benefits of taking his medication on time. The good news was that he was still on first-line medication. I explained that if he were inconsistent, he would need to take medication day and night, and it would become more burdensome. I urged him to stay patient and continue taking only a few pills once a day, which he agreed to. I placed him on Directly Observed Therapy (DOT), whereby I would go to his home, had him take the medicine in my presence to make sure he did not hide or throw away the pills. This approach has worked well, and upon retesting, his viral load had dropped from 500 to 79 copies. As a post-monitoring intervention, I keep beeping his phone daily to remind him to take his medication.” **Lwanga narrated.**

Tuberculosis (TB)

Uganda stands among the world's 30 high-burden countries for TB and TB/HIV co-infection, with **91,000** cases identified each year. **32%** of these are HIV positive, while **15%** are children under 15 years old.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, ROM has continued to fight Tuberculosis in Kampala through a tailored approach that includes sustained active case-finding strategies at all facility entry points including in-patient wards, community activities in targeted hotspots, extended contact tracing activities, and school programs targeting children under 15 years.

Referral and treatment is done at health facilities including all ROM Sites (Mbuya, Kinnawataka and Banda), Butabika National Referral Hospital and all other ROM supported facilities.

Under the 5-year Kampala HIV Project, one of the program objectives and priorities is ending TB pandemic by 2030.

In 2024, out of the **765,883** clients that attended the Outpatient Department in ROM

supported facilities, **539,520** were screened for TB. **40,231 (8%)** of these we likely to have TB (presumptive TB) of which **4,834 (12%)** were diagnosed with TB.

Among the PLHIV, **440,342** were screened for TB. **13,421 (3%)** of them were presumed to have TB and **1,491 (11%)** of them were diagnosed with TB. Of the TB/HIV co-infected clients, **62%** were Known HIV positives at the point of TB diagnosis (K Positive) and **38%** newly were diagnosed with HIV and TB.

74% of all presumptive TB cases accessed a GeneXpert test and **70% (3,383)** of all incident TB cases were bacteriologically diagnosed (using sputum) with a Molecular WHO-Recommended Diagnostic Test(mWRD); GeneXpert test.



In 2024, out of the **765,883** clients that attended the Outpatient Department in ROM supported facilities, **539,520** were screened for TB. **40,231 (8%)** of these we likely to have TB (presumptive TB) of which **4,834 (12%)** were diagnosed with TB.

USAID Local Partner Health Services – TB Activity (LPHS-TB)

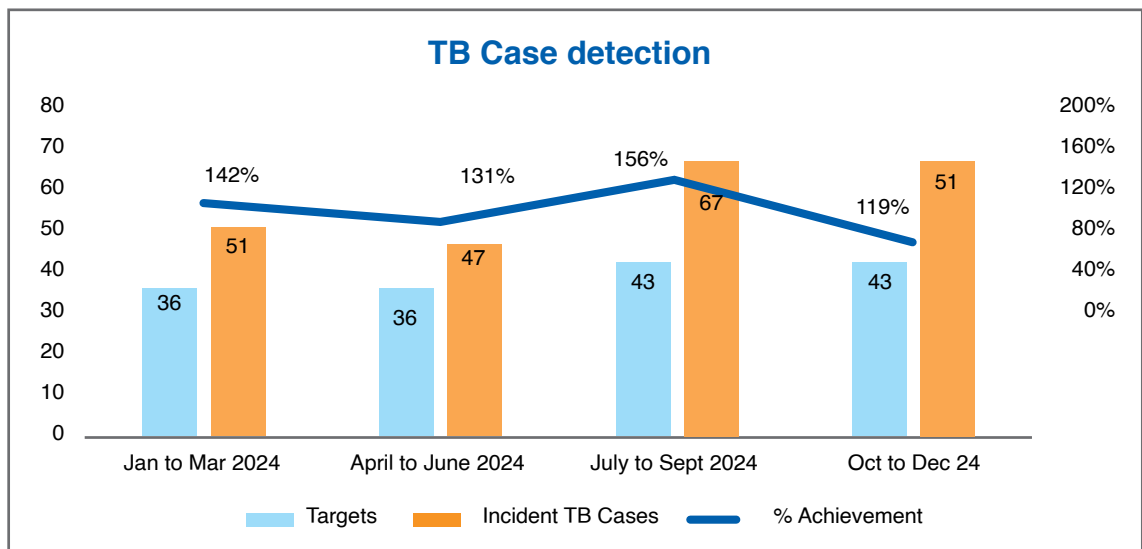
ROM, with support from USAID is implementing the LPHS-TB Activity in Nakawa Division, Kampala district, a five-year project (2023-2026) that aims at substantially reducing Uganda's TB burden by scaling up evidence-based and high impact interventions to achieve **90%** TB treatment through improved TB case detection, prevention, screening, diagnosis and care and treatment.

To improve service delivery and simplified documentation of TB, ROM introduced **eCBSS** with which TB data is recorded from the community, fed into the system, analyzed within and made available for users to support real-time patient data capture and reporting at facility level.

In 2024, the project scored above **100%** in detecting TB cases: **210 (137%)** cases of TB were identified compared to **158** that had been anticipated for the year. **70 (32.4%)** of the registered incident TB cases were identified during community activities.



TB testing in one of the communities in Nakawa Division Kampala.



A graph showing trends in TB case detection for the year 2024.



R-R: ROM's LHPS Project Lead-Isiah Aryatuha showing Erasmus University students the TB treatment meds at Butabika Hospital and, the students on a home visit to a TB patient in Butabika Community.

TB among children (0-14 years) on the rise in 2024

TB remains a significant health challenge for children globally. The World Health Organization estimates that each year, approximately **1.1 million** children under 15 years of age fall ill with TB, representing about **11%** of all TB cases worldwide. Tragically, every year, over **225,000** children lose their lives to this preventable and curable disease, with many deaths related to missed opportunities for diagnosis and treatment, particularly among the most vulnerable, such as children under five and those living with HIV.

This year, ROM registered rampant TB among children, which calls for early detection and treatment for proper growth of the infected youngsters. Children are commonly infected by their parents/care givers who fail to treat TB early.

Under LPHS-TB Activity in 2024, a total of **21** children were diagnosed with TB and were initiated on treatment. This was possible through intensified school health programs, evening and weekend children activities aimed at improving access to TB services, active follow-up of those who test negative on GeneXpert to ensure comprehensive assessment and evaluation as well as increased access to chest X-ray services that boosted TB diagnosis.

For the Kampala HIV Project, **677 (14%)** of the **4,834**-incident new (newly diagnosed TB) and relapse TB (diagnosed with TB for the 2nd time) cases notified were children 0-14 years. Most of the TB cases in children were identified through chest x-ray screening.

Contact tracing, followed by screening was also done for **2774 (82%)** of the cases identified through use of sputum.

A successful treatment outcome was achieved with **89%** recovering from TB, **3%** could not be traced and **7%** died of TB related illnesses.

We appreciate our TB medical and community focal teams who ensured easy access to X-ray services, intensified in-school programs, evening and weekend activities aimed at improving access to TB services by children as well as active follow-up of children enrolled on treatment.

ROM is grateful to all caregivers who have been committed to supporting their children diagnosed with and treated for TB.



Despite the efforts, HIV-positive status, especially Advanced HIV disease, Malnutrition coupled with unavailability of therapeutic foods and late diagnosis have been identified as the leading cause of mortality. Isaiah Aryatuha, Project Lead.



21

Children who were diagnosed with TB and were initiated on treatment Under LPHS-TB Activity in 2024.



ROM and Butabika Hospital teams on a home visit to one of the children undergoing TB treatment.



ROM staff talking to a client about TB during World AIDS Day 2024

Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD)

Every year, ROM increases efforts to identify and treat NCDs as these have continued to affect PLHIV. At all our supported facilities, we screen and treat/refer for treatment of **Diabetes, Hypertension, Cervical and Breast cancer.**



This year,



Diabetes:

49,149 clients were screened for Diabetes, of which **1,149** were found to have Diabetes Mellitus and **1,110 (94%)** were on medication, **310 (37%)** of these were controlled.

Hypertension:

50,859 clients were screened for Hypertension, **7275** of them had hypertension and **90% 6,555 (90%)** of these were on medication, and **28%** of which were controlled.

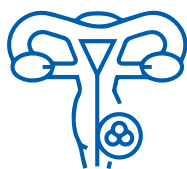
Challenge



High costs of NCD medications affect effective treatment because most of the patients cannot afford the drugs as prescribed by their doctors.

Solution

ROM has started NCD support groups where Patients contribute money to buy drugs at designated Ministry of Health retail Pharmacy at subsidized costs.



Cervical Cancer

ROM provided cervical cancer screening and treatment services at **25** ART sites across Kampala. A total of **3,966** women living with HIV were screened, of which **681** were found to have positive cervical cancer lesions, and **561 (82%)** received treatment.

Opioid Agonist Treatment (OAT)

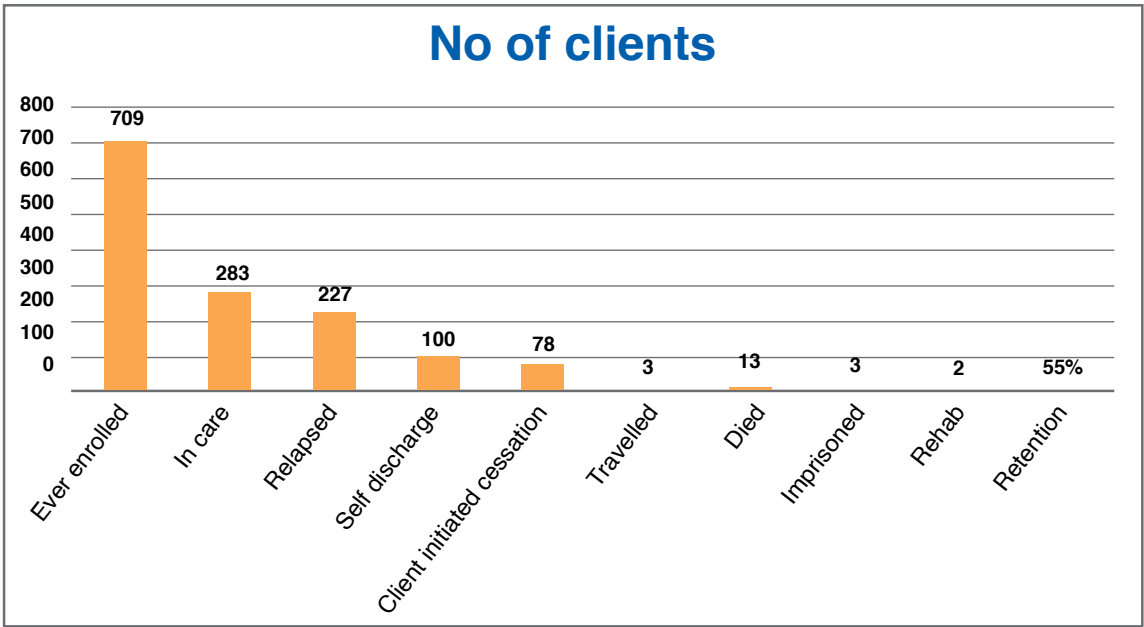
According to UNAIDS, it is estimated that **13.1%** of the **11.8 million** PLHIV World over inject drugs for various reasons, and Uganda takes a significant share of these numbers. To prevent HIV prevalence in Kampala communities, ROM provides OAT services to people who use/inject drugs to reduce HIV spread and harm through counselling, referrals, and linkages and other forms of psychosocial support to targeted individuals, groups, and families.

Based at the OAT centre in Butabika National Referral Hospital, Clients are enrolled and initiated on OAT, educated on the dangers of drug abuse, are given motivation enhancement sessions, behaviour change sessions, financial literacy, talent enhancement and adherence.

educated on the dangers of drug abuse, are given motivation enhancement sessions, behaviour change sessions, financial literacy, talent enhancement and adherence.

In 2024, **227** new clients were initiated on OAT. However, there were increasing cases of poor retention, missed appointments, and drop-out of clients from the referral sites.

A total of **57** clients were followed up on ART, OAT, and PrEP through both phone calls and home visits. Out of the **46** clients reached, **24** returned to care, **20** were still being followed up, and **02** could not be traced/reached physically or on phone after relocating from the known hot spots.



A graph showing ROM performance in providing Opioid Agonist Treatment in 2024.



Community-Based Health care

In all the communities we serve, ROM provides a range of health care services to different groups of vulnerable people; Children, Adolescent Girls and Young Women, and Young Mothers to prevent illnesses, treat acute conditions, and manage long-term conditions that our people suffer from.



Nicholas Ochoko- ROM's Mr. Young Positive (Y+) 2024 shares with Nakawa Mayor Paul Mugambe during Commemoration of World AIDS Day in Dec 2024.

Young People and Adolescent Peer Supporters (YAPS)



This is a forum of Young People Living with HIV, who work to support their peers on positive living to achieve viral load suppression (UNAIDS third 95) through tailored approaches to care and treatment, given that people in this age group face unique life challenges that can affect drug adherence. The YAPS provide psychological support, peer counselling and a lot more through sport, home visits and get-togethers among others.

This year, YAPS supported **191** caregivers of Children Living with HIV and **1,486** peers through care and psychosocial sessions where they shared experiences on drug adherence and viral load suppression to encourage caregivers on adherence and HIV positive status-disclosure to younger adolescents.



Maternal and Child Health (MCH)

With Funding from Mennonite Central Committee, ROM ensures Healthy Mothers and Babies in Communities.

ROM, with support from the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) implements a five-year project to improve Maternal and Child health Care among vulnerable mothers in Nakawa Division.

To achieve this, ROM directly reaches communities to enroll vulnerable pregnant and breastfeeding mothers and their children below two years of age for increased accessibility and utilization of maternal and child health services, as well as financial stability through sustained/increased household incomes.





Key achievements



81924 people (**1154** females and **770** males) were sensitized about Mother and Child Health.



04 Community Dialogues were held to strengthen the collaboration and visibility of Mother and Child Health services in the community.



128 pregnant young mothers were enrolled for antenatal care.



68 children and **84** mothers were supported with nutrition supplements.



120 mothers were supported to deliver from health facilities.



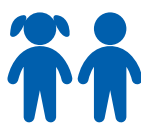
437 children (196 males and **241** females) were immunized.



4375 Were screened for breast cancer out of which **1894** were screened for cervical cancer out of which **139** mothers tested HPV + and were treated for precancerous cervical lesions.



2638 (**1053** males and **1584** females) we sensitized about violence prevention.



323 children (**137** females and **136** males) were sensitized about child rights. This also included **35** teachers and **5** parents.



118 were registered and received short term birth certificates.



108 young mothers were enrolled for economic empowerment.



74 male partners were involved in supporting their women to access maternal child health services across all ROM sites.



Silas Masari, ROM's MCH Project Lead sharing ROM's performance during the Stakeholder's meeting in August 2024.



Key lessons learned

- Empowering vulnerable young mothers with knowledge about their health increases their confidence and demand for healthcare services such as antenatal, immunization, post-natal, HIV testing and childbirth registration.
- Creating awareness of the rights of women in families and communities is important in reducing Violence, in addition to increasing the communities' trust and ownership of project activities.
- Male engagement in Maternal and Child Health initiatives improves support for mothers and children, promotes gender equality, improves health knowledge and practices, prevents Violence, and enhances health services accessibility.
- The timely provision of Antenatal Care and Ultrasound scan services to pregnant mothers improves mothers' and the fetus' well-being, thereby reducing complications faced during pregnancy.

Anita's Story With MCC Project



Growing up in a humble background was no excuse for Anita, 24 to trace her path to success with the help of Reach Out Mbuya Community Health Initiative (ROM) in partnership with Mennonite Central Committee, through a Maternal and Child Health Care Project that aims at improving Maternal and Child Health in slum areas of Nakawa Division, Kampala District for Dignified Livelihoods.

Anita, a resident of Banda B1, shares that her journey to success started in 2023 when she enrolled on ROM's MCC program at a time she was expecting her first child but could barely afford to access health care services. That time, she was also mentally distressed given the negative attitude from her family for conceiving at an early age: Anita had just concluded her senior six examinations and her mother had high hopes of her daughter joining university for higher education. She proudly remembers how ROM supported her.

"ROM provided me with antenatal care; counselling, Fancidar, a mosquito net, a mama kit and a lot more. Towards delivery, ROM referred me to Naguru Hospital and gave me transport fare to the hospital when labour struck." **Anita narrates.**



“After delivery, I continued to visit ROM to immunize my baby and postnatal care.

ROM also provided me with stuff including milk, soya flour and others for my baby. In addition to that, I and other young mothers were taken through training on how to prepare nutritious but cheap food for our babies and as I talk now, my baby is healthy and growing well without any sickness.” She added.

Anita continues to count her blessings at ROM for the skilling program that has seen her start a business with which she is able to care for herself and the baby. *“I am so blessed that ROM also trained me on how to save money and start a small business. Through my 20-person savings group called God’s Will, created with ROM’s support, we acquired various skills like baking which I seriously took on and currently practicing.” She explains.*

Anita bakes samosas and prepares tea which she sells to adults and children in her community and neighboring schools. She says the business is so far progressing and from the profits made, she can meet her needs, buy nutritious foods for her baby and save some money with God’s Will.

Her business was welcomed in the community

because with it came quality and affordable breakfast services closer to the people unlike before when they would have to go to the trading center for breakfast accompaniments, something they detested.

Full of pride and confidence, Anita said, *“Joining ROM has changed me; given me life skills and boosted me to think beyond my interests. With this experience, I have also garnered the courage to render services to other people in need, including young mothers like me who do not know what to do in the face of hard times.”*

She encourages young mothers never to think that becoming pregnant is criminal. Instead, it is an eye-opener for one to think hard and come up with something through which you can thrive and care for your baby.

Anita is grateful to Mennonite Central committee for all the services provided to young mothers, especially those from humble backgrounds who are never able to pay for those services. *“Thank you for empowering us to become something in life.” She said.*

Her story is one of the more than **600** vulnerable young mothers whose lives have been improved through MCC.



ROM hosts Elizabethtown College, Erasmus University students on learning visits

In 2024, ROM hosted students from Elizabethtown College-United States of America at different ROM sites and the communities where the Maternal and Child Health Care Project (MCC) is implemented. Students got a one-on-one experience of how Maternal and childcare services are conducted and utilized; the different services offered to pregnant mothers. These included vocational skilling like hairdressing, and cosmetology learned by young mothers.



They interacted with the MCC beneficiaries and learned about the challenges faced by young mothers living in slums regarding access to maternal child health services and the effects of early motherhood.

“Access to healthcare services is important for young mothers as witnessed in the community. We’re excited that their lives are improving, and you can hear this in their testimonies.” Said one of the visiting students.

Despite the challenges, the teams appreciated ROM staff for their practical approach to improving the health and livelihoods of vulnerable young mothers and their children living in informal settlements.



ROM Mother-to-Mother staff share with Erasmus Univ. Students at ROM Kinnawataka and ROM supported young mothers meet with Erasmus Univ. students at a Safe space in Kinnawataka-Nakawa Division.



ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN (OVC)

Home visits and Psychosocial support.

As part of the standard practice in ROM's Community and Social Support department, all OVC households are visited on a quarterly basis. In 2024, **7,156** routine and targeted home visits were carried out by our Community Health Workers.

With guidance from ROM Social Workers, the visits were conducted by the Teenage and Adolescents' Supporters (TAS), Community ART and TB Treatment Supporters (CATTs) and Mother-to-Mother (M2M) groups, who also provided the households with one or more peer-to-peer support and counselling, health education, nutrition assessments, education, gender-based violence screening, referrals to other service providers, spiritual and moral guidance among others.

SHE SOARS - Sexual Reproductive Health and Economic Empowerment Supporting Out of School Adolescent Girls and Boys' Rights and Skills

Through **SHE SOARS**, with support from CARE Uganda and funding from Global Affairs Canada, ROM promotes Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights among Adolescent girls and Boys (10-19 years) in Nakawa and Makindye Divisions in Kampala district.

Working with key stakeholders in the said communities to transform lives of the target beneficiaries, ROM's main goal is to increase equitable use of SRHR services such as information on sexually transmitted infections (STIs), access to family planning, and menstrual hygiene management by diverse groups of women, adolescent girls and children's rights holders, particularly out of school adolescent girls.

We also work with Health facilities Naguru Hospital, Kiswa Health Center IV, Wentzy Medical Center and Kisugu Health Centers, all in Kampala.

Key achievements

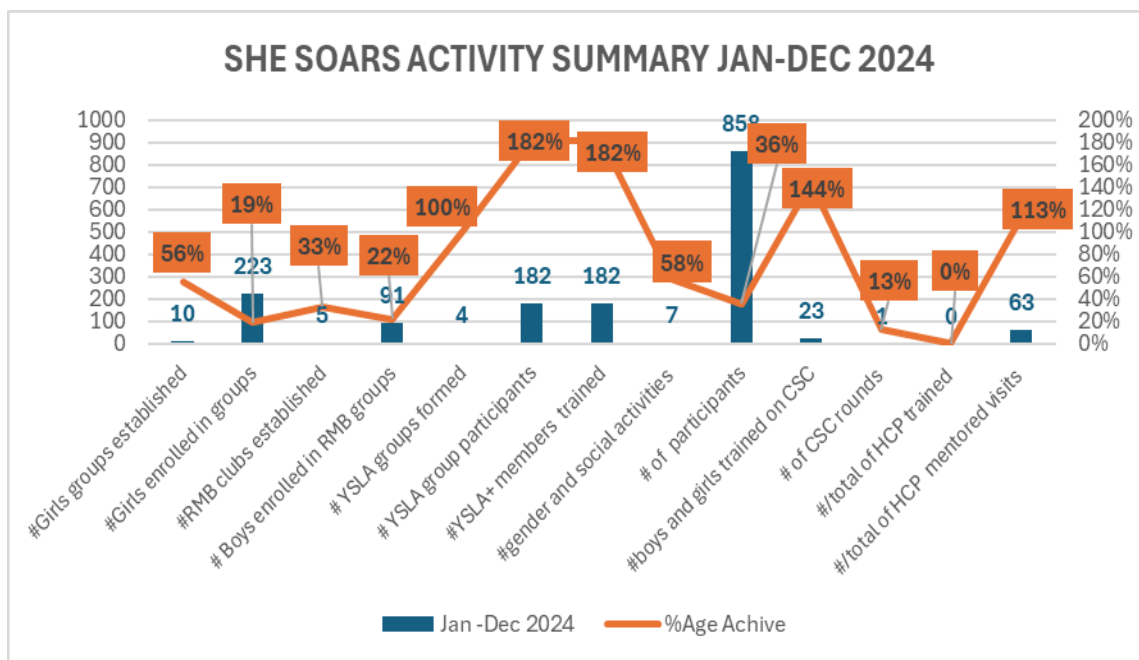
11 girls' and **4** boys' Sexual and Reproduction Health Rights groups for out-of-school adolescent girls and boys were established and received the curriculum.

4 Youth Savings and Loans Association groups were formed by members of the above groups.

15 girls were trained for vocational skills /apprenticeship/IGAs.

858 adolescent boys and girls were supported to implement gender responsive and inclusive CSC with HCP's and community members, mentoring trained boys and girls.

92 participated in the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence.



A graph showing SHE SOARS 2024 impact in the implementation area.

Story of Change



...For instance, imagine where SHE SOARS picked me; from a stone quarry where I would earn Ugsh200/ to a business lady! I used to walk on foot to and from home for my tailoring classes at ROM Banda and that is the resilience that led to my nomination for better opportunities....

Matha Namatovu.

How ROM changed Martha's story from a 'quarryman' to an entrepreneur

Martha's is a unique story of a girl whose life took an unexpected twist when she joined SHE SOARS. Before, 18-year-old Martha, a resident of Banda 1 (Acholi Quarters) in Kampala District worked as a casual laborer in one of the stone quarries in her neighborhood, after failing to join senior one due to financial constraints. The fourth child in her family, Martha is one of the seven siblings who depended on their jobless mother. "I recall a time when my mother could barely provide basic needs for us, when life got so tough that I was not even able to continue with school, I decided to join my mother in the stone quarry so that we would join efforts to

increase her income. Unfortunately, my days were characterized by hard work, long working hours and little income; filling a 20litre jerrican with stones would earn me only Ug shs200/." **Martha narrated.**

When Martha was enrolled on SHE SOARS program, her life never remained the same; ROM ensured she realized her life dreams. "While working at the stone quarry, I got the opportunity to join ROM through SHE SOARS.

With a group of other girls, we were taught to understand our own bodies, how to protect

ourselves from infections; how to protect ourselves and other life skills like being confident and assertive. We were also taught how to produce hand-made sanitary pads.” **She added.**

Martha says that the money saving culture we were taught by ROM changed her financial perspective. With her colleagues, they created Challengers savings group where she got a Ugx 20,000/ loan with which she started a vegetable stall in her community. Currently, her stall’s capital has grown from 20,000/ to 80,000/ and she is determined to see it reaches 300,000/ and more.

When she completed all her reproductive health sessions, Martha was selected to join vocational skilling in tailoring for six months. “During this time, my mother supported me to run the vegetable stall and I would ensure adequate at all times.” **Martha said.**

Of all the girls in her tailoring class, Martha

was one of the few who were gifted with sewing machines from SHE SOARS during her graduation at ROM Social Enterprise (ROMSE) for her outstanding efforts to improving own life.

Today, Martha works at a tailoring shop in her community, where she can earn and acquire more skills in the business. Mr. Alex Mubereza, the security personnel uniforms business owner counts his blessings for having Martha as one of his employees. He said, “Martha is a very disciplined girl who easily learns and does her work well. So far, I have not found any problem with her and as a team, we hope to stay with her even longer.”

Whenever not at the tailoring shop, Martha, now a Peer Educator at a SHE SOARS Sky Group based at Skate Park safe space in Kitintale town Nakawa Division, spends her time with the 30 Adolescent Girls and Young Mothers.



Martha excitedly receives the sewing machine from SHE SOARS Senior Initiative Manager-Frances Evelyn Aguti during the graduation ceremony in 2024.



Martha sharing with her peers during one of the sessions at SkatePark safe space Kitintale in Sept. 2024.

“Every Friday, we collect here and share our life experience regarding assertiveness in all aspects of life; how to communicate with our parents, choosing good friends, making decisions and so much more.” She said. She says personal contact with her colleagues in whatever she is does. *“It is a rewarding experience when you know most of what happens in the lives of the people you are teaching; knowing where their pain comes from makes you not to feel bored, because this pain was also once part of your life.”*

She explained.

Martha is a darling teacher among her peers. Nabuuma Prossy, a 19-year-old beneficiary of The Sky group describes Martha as a loving teacher with a listening ear. *“We love her behaviours and we learn a lot from her. She always comes on time, and she is always ready to listen to us whenever we face challenges.*

Martha goes ahead to check on us at home, especially when one misses classes.”

Her energy to face life with perseverance and determination is grounded in the wise counsel of ROM’s SHE SOARS Project Lead-Rebecca Nantondo, whom Martha says takes responsibility to motivate the girls whenever they feel demoralized on the way. *“Madam Rebecca Nantondo told me to always be determined and resilient to achieve anything I want in life, never to allow anything to interrupt me in the process. For instance, see where*



Martha with peers and safe space management team in September 2024.

SHE SOARS picked me; from a stone quarry where I would earn Ugsh200/ to a business lady! I used to walk on foot to and from home for my tailoring classes at ROM Banda and that is the resilience that led to my nomination for better opportunities.” Martha shared.

Surprisingly, from Martha’s savings from the tailoring workshop and stipend from ROM paid for Peer Education, she contributes to her young sister Monica’s school fees who is currently in Senior three.

“I do not want her to drop out of school like me. Martha explains.

To her fellow girls out of school, Martha advises then to be patient, not to rush into early marriage but first secure economic empowerment skills to be able to provide for themselves the way she currently does.

“Nowadays, I feel complete because ROM gave me the opportunity to gain experience in my heart’s desire -fashion and design, for the sky is now the limit. In the next few years, I hope to be one of the leading fashion designers in my community and beyond. Thank you CARE International, thank you Government of Canada.” **Martha happily said.**

Martha is one of the **540** adolescent and young girls ROM has supported in Nakawa and Makindye Divisions through **SHE SOARS project**. They are now productive members in their communities and the nation at large.



Kassim-An international Student's experience of a community-based approach to quality health care services.

“My name is Kassim Elmi Ibrahim, a student at the university of Waterloo in Canada and a resident of Kenya. I came to ROM to serve communities, especially those with People Living with HIV and other opportunistic infections. For the three months I have been here, I have been blessed to serve in the community, the counselling department and the laboratory where I have acquired tremendous knowledge in providing first-class healthcare services to vulnerable people, making my stay here so fulfilling.

ROM's ability to serve vulnerable people and the fact that I share in the history of growing up in a refugee camp gave me reason to choose the organization as my training ground; I am well versed with all the challenges of living in a disadvantaged community, so working with them was a pleasure. Also, ROM's culture of inclusion and truth to their word attracted me to the institution, because I have shared with people from different backgrounds, which has given me a rich exposure.

ROM works for the people. I have worked with HIV positive staff who serve their peers with utmost passion. I observed clients comfortably connecting with these staff thereby reducing stigma. With this, I am in position to apply and secure a place in Medical School. I am so grateful to ROM for this Student Exchange program with St. Jerome University. I pray that the program continues to give other students an opportunity to serve in areas of their interest.” Kassim shared.

Education and Skilling programs



With support from our donors, ROM has continued to provide formal, vocation and other forms of education to her vulnerable beneficiaries. We are grateful to all our individual and group donors who sacrifice to see that vulnerable children attain education just like others.

Through USAID OVC Kampala Activity, a total of **3,019 (1,676 Females, 1,343 Males)** beneficiaries received both primary and secondary levels education support that included enrolment, orientation and progress, in addition to scholastic materials like books and pens provided to **598 (199 Males, 399 Females)**.

DREAMS (Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored and Safe) fostering education for Adolescent Girls and Boys in Kampala.

DREAMS Program focuses on the reduction of HIV incidence among Adolescent Girls and Young Women and violence prevention among Adolescent Boys and Young Men of ages 10-24 years.

In 2024, DREAMS supported **1514 (91%)** of the **1656** identified adolescent girls across the 3 divisions to be supported with education subsidies.

1001 of them were in primary school, **500** in secondary school and **13** in tertiary institutions, and were provided with subsidies that included school fees support and scholastic materials such as books, pens, pencils, mathematical sets and rulers.



In 2024, DREAMS supported **1514 (91%)** of the **1656** identified adolescent girls across the 3 divisions to be supported with education subsidies.

As part of comprehensive services aimed at preventing HIV acquisition among vulnerable HIV negative young people in Rubaga, Kawempe, and Nakawa Divisions of Kampala, DREAMS also provided vocational training to heavily burdened vulnerable adolescent Girls/Boys and Young Women/Men to economically strengthen them.

Through the Unique Enrolment Technique, Adolescent Boys and Young men were enrolled from Spots betting points, taxi parks, local brews, and drug smoking points and given specialized training for a better life.

In 2024, out of the **1,936** that were critically vulnerable, **1,674 (86%)** girls and young women were enrolled into different long-term skilling programs of their choice.



All girls under long term skilling were able to sit for Directorate of Industrial Training Assessments, after which they received individual start-up kits and Completion of Training Certificates.



Hairdressing and welding class sessions respectively going on at Kawempe Safe Space.

“SidÉcole helps children find hope in the future through education

ROM supported pupils of St. Matia Mulumba after a school verification exercise in October 2024. With funding from our friends of SidEcole, ROM provides education support, alternative skilling, health, home visits and psychological support to children in our supported communities. Beneficiaries acquire education at different levels; primary, secondary and tertiary institutions.

In 2024, **75** children from nine primary schools and one tertiary institution- Companionship of Works Association (COWA) at Kireka in Kampala District received school fees support.






17 of these **75** children are living with HIV and receive ART services from the three ROM clinics in Banda, Kinawataka, and Mbuya.

All the **17** CLHIV are adhering well to their medication, with no reported complications.

3 school verification exercises were successfully conducted.

2 students attended the apprenticeship (welding and hairdressing).

All **75** children received food/nutrition support; the food basket comprised of:

				
10kg	30kg	25kg	5kg	5 liters
Rice	Maize floor	Beans	Soya porridge (CSD)	Cooking oil

In addition, learners from different schools were given complete school uniforms.



A school verification exercise going on at St. Matia Primary School in Nakawa Division, Kampala.

Primary Leaving Examinations (P.L.E) and Uganda Certificate of Education (U.C.E)

In 2024, **20** of the Sidecole funded children supported in primary school level sat for their primary Living Examinations.

Of these, **3** children passed in Divion 1, **15** were in Division 2 and **2** were in Division 4.

Special thanks to **Byogero Patience** form St. Matia Mulumba Primary School who scored Aggregate **9**, **Papa Samsom** from Uganda Youth Aid (Aggregate **11**), **Kugonza Erick**, also from St. Matia primary School (Aggregate **11**).

Also, **11** of the ROM Charity Fund supported children supported at Ordinary secondary Level, sat for their Uganda Certificate of Education examinations, the first lot to be examined under Uganda's debated new education curriculum. We are glad to share with you that all learners scored Result **1**, and the best performer was Rwothomio Daniel from St. Kizito S.S, Bugolobi.

Testimony from a SidÉcole beneficiary

Martin on the day he received food support at ROM.

"My name is Okeny Martin. I am 13 years old and in Primary Six at Uganda Youth Aid Primary School, Mbuya. I live with my mother, father and siblings.



I am thankful to Reach Out Mbuya Community Health Initiative and SidEcole for providing me with school fees, scholastic materials, uniforms and shoes. More appreciation for the nutritious food support we receive from Sidecole that enables us to grow well. This support has enabled me to stay in school and allowed my parents to take good care of me since they no longer struggle to pay school fees. I pray that God blesses you all." **Martin said.**

Nakato Natasha, ROM's second-best U.C.E Candidate to become Doctor



Delighted Natasha Nakato counts her blessings at ROM after excelling in her Uganda Certificate of Education examinations. The former student at St. John Paul 11 College Gulu, Natasha scored AAABBBBBC and an A in Project Work (Result 1). She is grateful to ROM for standing with her in the academic journey.

She recounts the early days during her Primary school when her parents would struggle to make ends meet; barely able to pay her school fees. While in Primary three in 2015 at Mbuya C/U Primary School, Natasha was lucky to join Reach Out Mbuya Community Health Initiative (ROM) Education program, through which she received school fees and other scholastic materials.

“In Primary Seven, I scored Aggregate 9 and joined St. John Paul 11 where I have been for four years. At school, ROM has always readily provided me with school fees and other scholastic materials, which contributed to my good performance because I was always settled in school. My plan is to offer Biology, Chemistry and mathematics at Advanced Level, work hard and excel in Uganda Advanced certificate of Education to study medicine at university.” She said.

The second of five siblings, Natasha aspires to be a doctor, a field through which she will be in a better position to help the elderly; her heart always beats for the wellbeing of grandmothers.

“Sometimes I sit down and reflect about my life, thinking through where I would be without ROM's support: I wouldn't have attended a better school like St John, nor would I know other places like Gulu where y school is.” Natasha added.

“If all goes well, I also have plans of starting a home for the elderly because it hurts me to see them live a difficult life characterised by lack. Personally, I have grown up surviving on other people's support, so I am more than ready to give back to others.” She said.

“I thank all ROM donors for being generous. May God grant them lifetime blessings and the Grace to continue helping other children in need. As for the ROM staff, thank you for making things work out, always coordinating the children, school, parents and the donors.” Natasha delightedly shared.

To her parents, Natasha is grateful that they have been able to stand with her, struggling to provide all that she needs. Her only prayer is that God gives them life to see her and the siblings grow into responsible people who will be able to return the love to their parents.

Natasha's mother, a market vendor is all praises for her daughter, and ROM for reducing the burden off her shoulder. "ROM has supported me all through. Unlike before, my daughter now settles in school, the reason she even excelled. Also, it is now easier for me to cater for my other children, with Natasha sorted by ROM." She explained.

Natasha like all the other ROM supported children who sat U.C.E exams, will be returning to school to pursue her dream, and the sky will be the limit.

As ROM Family, we say...Good Luck in all your endeavours!



Nakato shaking hands with her mother on the day she received her U.C.E results.

**Congratulations to all our 2024
P.L.E and U.C.E candidates!**

Special thanks go to Sidecole, all ROM Charity Drive participants, Corporate Security Services Ltd, ROM staff, Best Western Hotel Bugolobi (The Athena), Centenary Bank, Jubilee Insurance, Ceva Logistics, Our Lady of Africa Catholic Church, Limonne Medical Centre and many others for contributing to keeping these children in school .



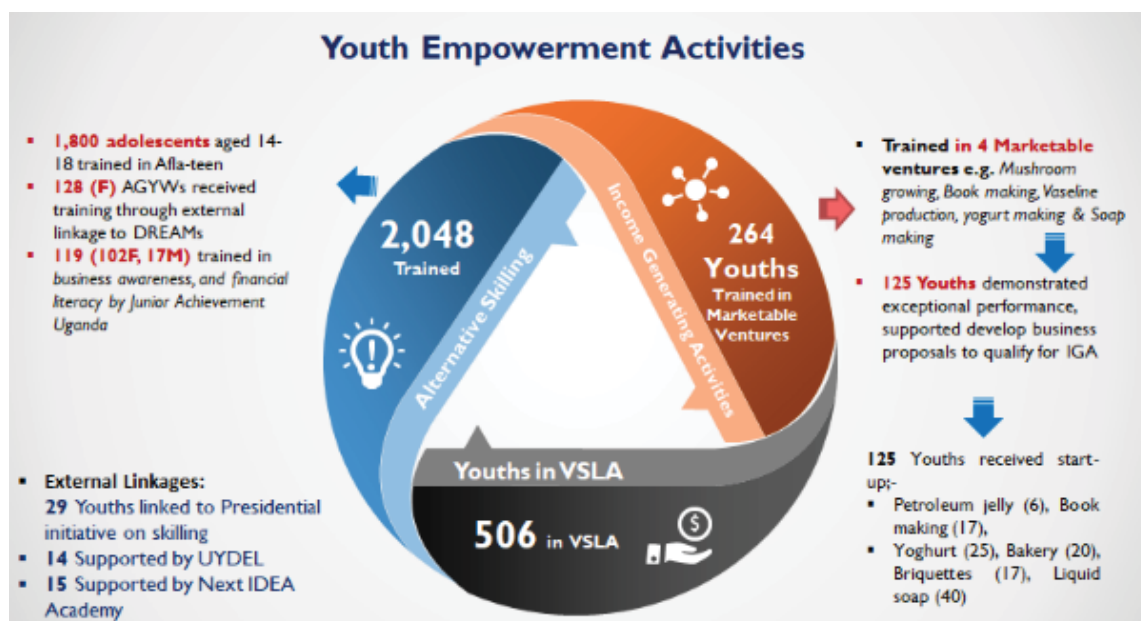
ROM USAID OVC with Maama Aggrey who transformed her life through vegetable farming for food security and financial stability.

Livelihoods

Through economic empowerment, ROM has positively impacted the lives of young people, making them productive and responsible citizens of the country for many years.

USAID OVC Kampala Activity promotes Youth Economic might in Kampala.

To address the socio-economic needs of vulnerable children, adolescents, and families affected by HIV, ROM enhanced their access to essential health services and sustainable employment opportunities through various activities such as trainings in alternative skilling, agriculture and saving through Youth-led village Savings and Loans Associations.



Youth Economic Empowerment Interventions for the year 2024.

DREAMS for social economic prowess for Adolescents and Young People



U.S Ambassador H.E William W. Popp receives a pack of confectionery baked by Adolescent Girls and Young Women supported by ROM through DREAMS.

Through the DREAMS project, ROM in 2024 offered Basic Social Economic Strengthening (short term skilling) to **5,161** AGYW out of school in various aspects; bakery (**2,111**), cosmetology (**1,001**), bookmaking (**645**), soap making (**788**) and **344** in basic photography.

2270 of the **5,161** received group start up kits and End of Training Certificates; **442** AGYW received soap making equipment and materials, **418** received make-up kits, **1201** received charcoal ovens & baking materials and **209** received book making materials.



Dreams Officers guiding the Erasmus University students through the AGYWs tailoring and soap making classes respectively

Success story

Turning Setbacks into Success: Nutrition and Profit Gardens Helped Agaba Save and Provide for His Family

Agaba, a resident of Makerere Kivulu, Central division used to sell greens in Kampala as his full-time venture to feed his family of seven **(7)** members.

Faced with multiple vulnerabilities, his four **(4)** children, because of poor nutrition and financial instability in the household, were not adhering to ART and therefore not suppressing.

Agaba suffered a setback when KCCA confiscated his business, and he had nowhere to turn to.

“That is when I turned back to our Tweekembe savings group where I was a for advice and support. The members advised me to opt for a stall at my rented house in Kivulu and set up my business again,” he notes.

The group supported him with a loan of 100,000/= from that he added to what he used to save from the business before the incident.

The USAID/Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Kampala Activity supported him with an Income Generating Activity (IGA) booster of tomatoes and onions to boost his small new business and supported him with seeds to set up a backyard garden at his home. The products from his business and backyard garden have helped him support his family as he sells some of it and the rest supports at home.



Agaba picking up plants in his backyard Nutrition and Profit Garden

Agaba transforms from reckless spending to smart saving

Through the occasional Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) meetings, the members of Tweekembe Savings Group were equipped with saving skills by a Charles Lwanga, a Community-Based Trainer (CBT) under the Activity.

“Since I started saving with the Tweekembe Savings group, I can save at least 6,000 Shs every Sunday. This is a huge improvement compared to the 2,000 Shs I used to save only occasionally. Charles educated me on Nutrition and Profit Gardening, and I am excited about how this will not only supplement my meals but also help me earn extra income by selling what I grow at my vegetable stall,” Agaba notes.



Agaba organizing vegetables at his stall.

“The four Agaba’s children living with HIV receive art from Nsambya Home care and were all enrolled on the Activity for support. Because of this, there has been improvement in terms of adherence because they can have a meal on time. The structures have continuously reminded the caregiver to take the children for appointments, with monthly Intensive Adhesive Counselling (IACs). We hope the non-suppressors get to suppress soon.” Charles remarks.



U.S Ambassador H.E William W. Popp addresses participants during the HIV TB Stakeholders meeting.

Health Systems Strengthening

Governance, Partnership and Collaboration

1.0 The Kampala HIV/TB Stakeholders' Meeting

Theame: *Performance Review: Identifying Key Gaps and redefining Stakeholder Roles in Combating HIV Epidemic.*

In August 2024, ROM partnered with KCCA to conduct the Kampala HIV/TB stakeholders' meeting at Hotel Africana in Kampala, aimed at advancing epidemic control, align efforts, and address bottlenecks in HIV management.

U.S. Ambassador to Uganda, **H.E. William W. Popp** graced the occasion as the Guest of Honour, in company of other dignitaries from KCCA's technical and political leadership, U.S Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Ministry of Health, Kam[pala Divisional and facility health workers, and representatives from other HIV/TB implementing organizations.

In his speech during the meeting, Ambassador Popp affirmed the U.S. government's support to ROM to end HIV for the region to achieve economic and social progress. He also appreciated ROM for excelling at PMTCT, emphasizing **a decade of Zero Mother to Child Transmission of HIV** at the health facility.

2.0 Technical Support

For effective implementation of programs, ROM partners with other stakeholders in and outside the implementation area to establish teams of skilled personnel focused on continuous program review and technical advice on fixing gaps. Key stakeholders include Ministry of Health, KCCA, Joint Medical Services, and others.

KCCA Led technical support supervision and mentorship focused on prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV (PMTCT) across eight high-volume sites, including seven public and one private Health Center (HC III and HC IV) within Kampala's five divisions, using the Ministry of Health PMTCT coaching guide.

ROM & KCCA Functionalized the technical working groups.

a) The HIV/TB Technical Working Group

This comprises of the HIV/TB technical teams from KCCA divisions, the Ministry of Health (MoH), the Uganda AIDS Commission (UAC), and various implementing partners and it is dedicated to conducting in-depth analyses of program progress and achievements toward epidemic control.

b) KCCA city wide Maternal & Child Health Technical Working Group

This group aims to enhance coordination, strengthen service delivery, and address key challenges within Maternal and Child Health across Kampala and it comprises of a diverse range of stakeholders, including agencies supporting HIV and Maternal and Child health initiatives, KCCA teams, focal persons from high-volume health facilities, and representatives from the Ministry of Health.



PMTCT mentorship session at SDA Medical Centre - Kampala Central Division

c) Disease Surveillance and Response Technical Working Group comprising of KCCA, CDC, MOH, World Health Organization and other health implementing partners in the region to oversee and manage disease outbreaks with guidance from the Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response (IDSR) guidelines.

Laboratory Systems Strengthening

ROM supports **31** laboratories across Kampala Region. These include labs at Kiruddu, Kawempe and Butabika National Referral Hospitals among others.

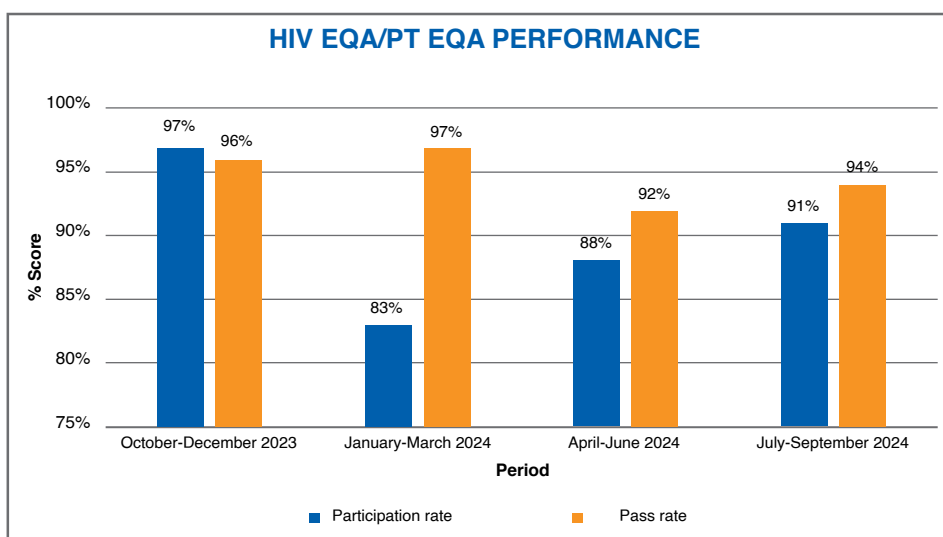


Key Achievements

91%

In 2024, a total of **147792** rapid HIV tests were performed at all ROM-supported sites in the Kampala Region.

ROM also participated in the HIV **External Quality Assessment** and achieved **91%** performance rate.



A graph showing HIV External Quality Assurance (EQA) performance from Project supported sites from OCT 2023 to September 2024.

- **5** Hub coordination meetings were held in partnership with the Central Public Health Laboratories.

TB Microscopy External Quality Assurance (EQA)

- All the **31(100%)** project-supported laboratories successfully submitted slides for TB smear.
- ROM supported **03** accredited laboratories (at Kiruddu, Kawempe and Butabika National Referral Hospitals, all of which maintained their accreditation status.
- **03** laboratories were supported under the Strengthening Laboratory Management towards Accreditation Program; Kiswa Health Center III obtained 4-star status while both Kisenyi Health Center IV and Kisugu Health Center III scored 2-star status.



Trainees pose for a photo with trainers for ISO 15189:2022 training at Ridar Hotel Mukono on 23rd Feb 2024 supported by ROM and MUWRP and organized by CPHL / UNHLDS.

Laboratory Training and Capacity Building.

This year, **16** Laboratory Managers and Quality Officers from selected LQMS (Laboratory Quality Management System) sites in the New ISO 15189:2022 were trained, and **12** Internal Laboratory Auditors were trained to help laboratories identify nonconformities.

Of the **33** project-supported laboratories, **10** in Kampala have a functional lab information system:



Kiruddu National Referral Hospital staff pose for the photo with ROM Lab technical team and the SANAS Auditors after the assessment on July 19th, 2024.



HIV Tester Certification

28 lay testers for HIV testing were trained, **23** of which were eligible for certification assessment. **15** of the **23** lay testers were certified by Uganda Virus Research Institute from the selected testing sites and Drop-in Centers.

A Biosafety Cabinet was also provided for Komamboga Health Center III. This has improved staff safety and TB diagnosis at the facility.

Supply Chain Management

To ensure uninterrupted flow of HIV/TB commodities and build sustainable supply chain practices at the supported health facilities, ROM through Supply Chain Management provides services technical assistance in supply chain systems strengthening and capacity building for logistics management at all health facilities supported under the CDC funded Kampala HIV Project (KHP).

In 2024, ROM strengthened supply chain management systems and utilization of data for decision making by employing the SPARS model, RASS reporting, training and on-site mentorships to strengthen the skills and performances of health workers.

In addition, through supporting the NMS (National medical Store), CSSP and the Joint Medical Stores (JMS) online ordering platform, to ensure accurate data capture, utilization and timely submission of routine orders at the health facility level.



USAID Kenya team at an itinerary visit to ROM to learn about the Community Pharmacy Model.

2024 Achievements

- ROM supported all private and public health facilities to place orders to their warehouses (JMS/NMS) via the JMS online ordering platform and NMS Client Self Service Portal (CSSP).
- We also registered improved utilization of Electronic Logistics Management Systems (e-LMIS) through mentoring and training of health workers. This has resulted in better stock data visibility (RASS and Rx Solution) and better decision making to inform accurate and timely redistribution, emergency ordering and expiry aversion.
- There was increased utilization of the Supervision Performance Assessment and recognition Strategy (SPARS) model to inform capacity building and on-site mentorships to enhance the supply chain performance of the health facilities.
- Overall improvement in the availability of HIV/TB commodities to ensure uninterrupted treatment plans and avoid treatment failures among patients.
- ROM supported the successful implementation of the Community Pharmacy model that enables patients to collect their medicines at the nearby selected local community pharmacy. ROM has become a center of excellence in the country and has been visited by players in the region for learning and benchmarking purposes.



Innovations

A. Digital Innovations

Global OpenMRS Implementers' Conference 2024 in Nairobi-Kenya.

Digitizing Health Facilities: A Leap Forward in Healthcare Delivery

ROM has advanced the digitization of health facilities in Kampala City, leveraging innovative technologies to enhance healthcare delivery and ensure real-time data informs better health outcomes.

In 2024, ROM took a major step in transforming healthcare delivery in Kampala City by expanding and upgrading Local Area Networks (LANs) and internet in 32 health facilities. With the integration of wired and Mesh Wi-Fi, healthcare teams can now seamlessly share data across consultation rooms, laboratories, and pharmacies, enhancing coordination and efficiency.

To support this digital shift, facilities were equipped with computers, servers, tablets and power backup solutions enabling healthcare workers to capture patient information instantly at the point of care.



ROM representatives, Joseph and Emmanuel during sharing the Uganda EMR+ with participants experience during the Global OpenMRS Implementers' Conference 2024 in Nairobi-Kenya.

The successful pilot of Uganda EMR Plus at Kisenyi Health Centre IV was a major milestone in our digital transformation journey as it marked a significant shift toward a **paperless healthcare system**. Developed with support from the Ministry of Health (MOH), U.S Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Uganda, and the Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Support (METS) Program, **the cutting-edge electronic medical records (EMR) system has transformed patient data management, giving clinicians instant access to comprehensive medical records**. From HIV testing to viral load monitoring, UgandaEMR Plus ensures that data is captured, analyzed, and acted upon in real time, a critical factor in achieving viral suppression and improving clinical outcomes.

B. Economic Empowerment

Roses of Mbuya Social Enterprise (ROMSE): Empowering Vulnerable Communities for a Brighter Future

The Roses of Mbuya Social Enterprise (ROMSE) is an economic empowerment arm committed to driving social change and economic empowerment for marginalized communities through tackling challenges faced by vulnerable populations such as Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC), young mothers and youth who are not engaged in education, employment, or training (NEET), thus creating sustainable livelihoods and opportunities for long-term prosperity.

Through a combination of vocational training, financial literacy, and psychosocial support, ROMSE is transforming the lives of individuals, empowering them to rise above poverty and contribute to their communities' development.

A Vision of Empowerment and Self-Sufficiency

ROMSE vision is to comprehensively lift individuals from extreme vulnerability and dependency to self-sufficiency through vocational skills development, practical life skills, and psychosocial support strategies.

Through its holistic programming, ROMSE equips over 700 individuals with valuable skills that open doors to employment and entrepreneurship, helping them build a brighter future and break free from the cycle of poverty. This enables them to overcome vulnerability which perpetuates poor health, risky behaviors, and economic instability.

ROMSE's Comprehensive, Multi-Faceted Impact Approach

ROMSE's impact is built upon several key areas of focus, each designed to develop participant's skills and capabilities to either transition into formal employment or start their own businesses for financial independence.

Participants learn how to manage their money, save and invest wisely to achieve stability, growth, and independence in addition to learning life skills and soft skills training like effective communication, time management, conflict resolution, and leadership which help them identify their strengths and develop necessary personal attributes both at the workplace and their daily lives.

In addition, ROMSE provides proactive health education and support through which participants are equipped with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions that lead to healthier long-term outcomes.

Strategic Alignment with Broader Goals

ROMSE aligns seamlessly with ROM's mission of social and economic empowerment for marginalized communities through entrepreneurship, skills development, and financial inclusion for everyone to live a dignified and prosperous life, regardless of their background.

Strengthening Communities and Creating Lasting Impact

The impact of ROMSE extends far beyond individual participants. By fostering community engagement, ROMSE helps to strengthen local involvement in sustainable development, supporting the organization's wider public health goals and creating a more cohesive and resilient community.

ROMSE's empowered individuals become agents of positive change who inspire others in their communities, vulnerable children in school, young people attain vocational training and practical skills development needed for future careers.

Join Us in Empowering Change

By supporting ROMSE, donors and partners are playing a critical role in helping ROM transform lives. Together, we can provide the resources, training and opportunities that will empower marginalized individuals to overcome their challenges, break the cycle of poverty, and create brighter futures for themselves and their communities.

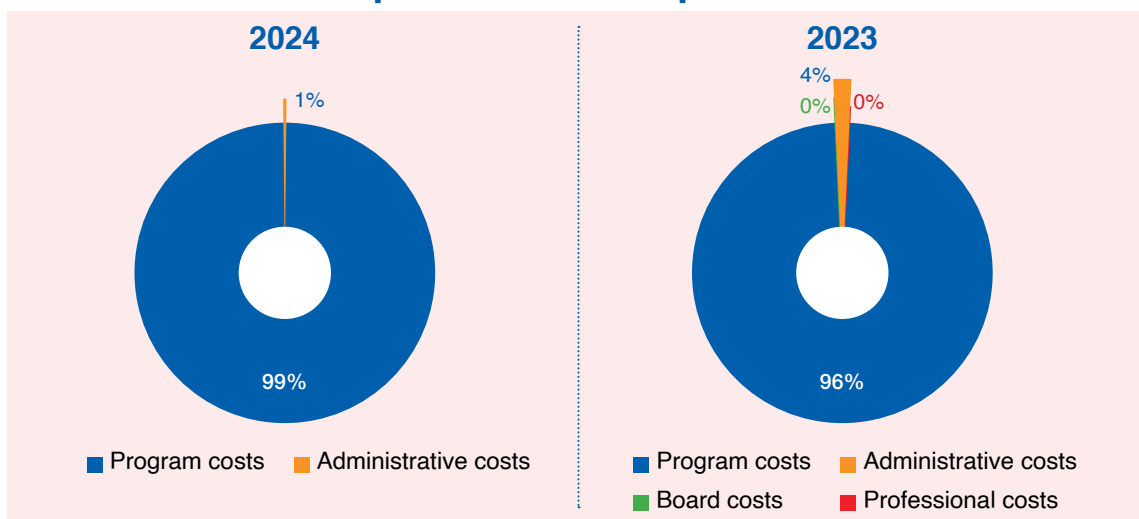
Your involvement in ROMSE's Mission is not just a contribution but an investment in lasting positive change.

Finance

Income Components



Expenditures Components



The detailed Financial Report can be availed on request.



To support ROM's holistic Model, kindly deposit on our Centenary Bank Account **No. 3100004656UGX**. Titled: **Reach Out Mbuya Community Health Initiative**. You can also pay at our Head office at Mbuya, next to Our Lady of Africa Catholic Church-Mbuya.



| Hope for the future



U.S Ambassador with ROM staff, CDC, KCCA and other participants after the Kampala HIV Stakeholders' Meeting in August 2024.

ROM 2024



Some of the 55 facility-based HIV testing and counselling providers and laboratory staff in a practical session During the five-day Recency testing training at ROM in 2024.



Participants during the Climax Event of 16 the 16 Days of Activism on December 10th

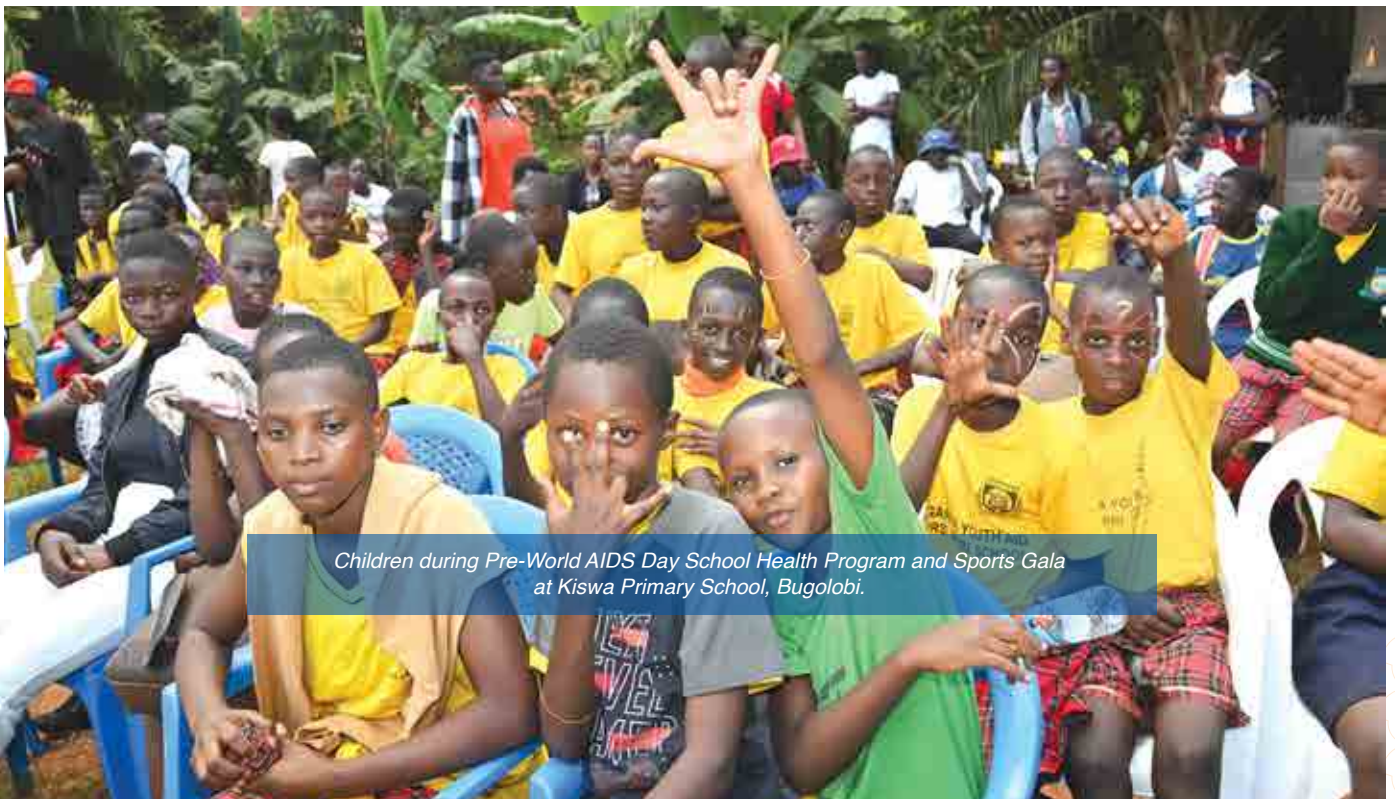


SRM staff presenting to the participants during the Kampala HIV/TB Stakeholder's Meeting in August 2024.

in Pictures



ROM team sharing the Uganda EMR Plus experience during Global OpenMRS Implementers' Conference 2024 in Nairobi-Kenya.



Children during Pre-World AIDS Day School Health Program and Sports Gala at Kiswa Primary School, Bugolobi.

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