Dear Reader,

Once again, we are glad to bring to you news from the Uganda Civil Society Immunization Platform (UCSIP) Secretariat hosted at MACIS offices. With support of MACIS, UCSIP continues to coordinate all CSOs that are involved in immunization programming and advocacy in Uganda, through the Gavi Civil Society Strengthening Project, which is financed by Gavi Alliance with technical advice from Catholic Relief Services (CRS).

In this bulletin, you will read about how the platform has enhanced capacity of CSO members, through training on information gathering, evidence based advocacy, network governance and resource mobilization. The bulletin also reports about how the platform joined hands with local governments to implement the recent door-to-door polio campaign in the country, and how different CSO have come up with different innovations to bridge immunization gaps in the country including; the motor-cycle ambulance scheme that improved immunization initiation and retention of children in the system, as well as the innovative community dialogues that improved immunization uptake during Supplementary Immunization Approaches (SIAs). Furthermore, the bulletin is reporting about platform members that have personally benefited from being part of the MACIS network.

We certainly hope that you will enjoy reading this edition of our newsletter, as it has been with the previous productions. In case of any questions, additions or inquiries, please do not hesitate to contact us on 0200 906 122 or email us, macisuganda@gmail.com or admin@macisuganda.org

Stay blessed

Dr. Patrobas Mufubenga
Executive Director/National Coordinator

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Uganda Civil Society Joins hands with Local Governments in a House to House Polio Campaign - First Phase 2015, by Eunice Busisa

With resurgence of polio in the Horn of Africa, Uganda saw itself as one of the countries that are at risk of polio spread because of its porous geographic borders. Uganda therefore embarked on a countrywide House-to-House Polio Campaign conducted in January 2015, aiming at achieving a coverage of above 95%, which is thought to keep the polio epidemic at bay. Unlike before, when Local Governments would single handedly conduct such campaigns, with technical support from development partners like UNICEF and WHO, this particular campaign saw CSOs, under the umbrella of the Uganda Civil Society Organizations, joining hands with Local Governments to reach out to their intended targets.

Given their diversity in operation, different civil society organizations participated in this immunization campaign at various levels of implementation including; resource mobilization; coordination of activities for harmonization; logistics management to ensure availability of vaccines at service points; micro-planning and training of service providers at different levels of service delivery; community sensitization and mobilization to promote acceptability and uptake; vaccination and data recording; as well as support supervision and activity monitoring.

As a result, several achievements were noted countrywide including; adequate coordination of actors; participatory planning and timely delivery of vaccines; satisfactory training of service providers; adequate supervision and monitoring of activities, as well as a national immunization coverage of 103% (MOH/UNEP, 2015). Therefore, joint efforts where Local Governments exploit capabilities of existing Civil Society Organizations can result into better achievement of set targets.

Nonetheless, some gaps were recorded in different aspects of the campaign, particularly the inadequate community social mobilization and sensitization owing to lack of budget for this item, the actual target population exceeding the planned population number which caused distortions in allocation, the unexpected influx of children from neighboring countries because of non-synchronization of campaigns; the over involvement of security agencies in seemingly resistant communities; the shortage of ice packs in some cases, and a few unreached homes owing to difficult terrain.

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Motor-bike Ambulance Initiative Improves Immunization Retention in Eastern Uganda, by Fred Chemuko

In 2011, Mbale CAP/PONT established a community referral system which utilizes motor bike ambulances to transport mothers in labor from their communities to appropriate health facilities for professional child delivery, particularly those that come from hard to reach areas. So far, a total of over 41 Motorbike ambulances have been placed at 41 health center III’s in Mbale region, and 9 others in districts of Luweero, Gulu and Tororo.

Although the initiative was aimed at reducing maternal and child deaths resulting from unforeseen emergencies, the initiative has also proven to be very vital in recruiting and retaining born children into the immunization system, starting with polio 0 and BCG before mothers are discharged from health facilities. This enables newborns to be integrated into the routine immunization schedule and follow up made, given that this initiative gives caretakers a feel or a sense of belonging.

Statistics from Bukhisa Health Center III alone, indicate that on average the attached motor bike ambulance transports about 8-10 laboring mothers per week.

This implies that additional 8-10 neonates get into the immunization schedule and retained, who otherwise would have missed if they had been left to be delivered at home. This initiative is coupled with a strengthened community health system, whereby community health workers are trained by district health teams, and later supervised by peers on immunization activities, emergency response, referral techniques, disease surveillance, reporting, as well as health education.

Mbale CAP/PONT is a member of the Uganda Immunization Civil Society Platform that brings together different CSOs to participate in the country’s immunization agenda in a harmonized manner.

UCSIP Members skilled in Network Governance and Resource Mobilization , by Eunice Busisa

Between 25th May and 30th May 2015, a Governance and Resource Mobilization training workshop was held in Nairobi, Kenya organized and facilitated by the Catholic Relief Services East Africa Regional Office (CRS EARO). The workshop was attended by over 40 participants from 14 different Country CSO platforms including Uganda.

The Uganda Platform was represented by SABIN Vaccine Institute, Women and Child Protection Initiative (WACPI), Mbale Coalition Against Poverty (Mbale-CAP) and the MACIS Program Officer.

During the training it was recognized that, every CSO platform or network requires a sound governance system and a trained skilled resource mobilization team to achieve its broader goals and objectives.

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Participants at the workshop were equipped with network governance and resource mobilization skills that will promote sustainability of their different CSO platforms, with the aid of a resource mobilization plan aligned to the strategic plan. Different country CSO platform members interacted and shared experiences, including best practices, as members borrowed ideas from different CSOs in their areas of comparative advantages.

MACIS represents CSOs at Global Fund training, by Mr. Zacch Akinyemi and Ms. Faith Nakigudde

Global fund has been financially supporting Malaria, HIV/AIDS, and TB program activities in Uganda since 2002. In order to ensure that grants are well Coordinated, Global fund has a Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) which is governed by the CCM Board, whose primary role is oversight of Global Fund processes and program activities.

On 16th and 17th April 2015, the Malaria Constituency representatives attended a two day training retreat at Nile Resort Hotel - Jinja. The purpose of this training was to enhance participants’ understanding of the role of the CCM in the sustainability of its activities and operations, and to prepare the new CCM Board to better perform their oversight functions in light of the new funding model; new eligibility requirements, new minimum standards for CCMs; and the new Grant portfolio for Uganda. MACIS or the malaria constituency was represented by PACE Uganda, and Wentz Medical Centre.

As a result of the training, participants were equipped with knowledge and information on; the role of the CCM Board in the sustainability of the CCM’s oversight work; activities and operations; the role of CCM in the Global Fund New funding model processes and oversight of Grants under the New Funding Model; the function of the CCM and PR Management Dash boards, as well as the engagement of Key Affected Populations (KAPs) and People living with the disease (PLWDS) in the Global Fund new funding model, among others.
MACIS gets new team player

We would like to welcome Ms Eunice Busisa (left) who joined MACIS this year as a Project and Communications Officer. Eunice replaces Ms Elizabeth Kasujja (right) who is now the MACIS Business Advisor.

Eunice is responsible for the management of network projects, and leads the communication function with our members and partners. She is responsible for developing new development channels and innovative ideas to engage MACIS members in network activities as well as health policy development processes in Uganda. Eunice also plays a strong role in advocating for MACIS and its members at the strategic level. She holds an MSc in Globalization and Development from the University of Antwerp – Belgium, an MA in Population and Development from Makerere University, as well as a Bachelor’s degree in Urban Planning.

A leader in public health advocacy initiatives, Eunice worked for International Hospital Kampala (IHK) as the Project Operations Manager, before joining MACIS, where she engaged with a network of private clinics to offer the Safe Male Circumcision services to the general public in and around Kampala city.

Midwives as a bridge to reach every child with Immunization, by David Snyder

Having run Saint Martha Maternity Home since 1995, a small clinic serving expectant mothers in Kachumbara, eastern Uganda, and Florence Okia has forged a bond with many women in the community – a bond she now uses to advocate for immunization.

“Because of my role as a midwife, mothers are very open with me, and that allows me to connect more easily with them” Okia said. “So when I tell them they need to have their babies immunized, they listen to me.”

For Okia, the opportunity to expand her role as a voice for immunization came in 2013, when she was trained as one of 103 District Immunization Champions (DICs) in Uganda through the Gavi Civil Society Strengthening Project, the goal of which is to expand the reach of Uganda’s national immunization program through a network of 291 grassroots civil society organizations (CSO) nationwide. Through this capillary network of local health organizations, Gavi is reaching into the farthest corners of the country, spreading the word about immunization and helping to inform the national immunization policy.

“I think CSOs have been a great help,” Okia said.

“With Gavi there is a continuous presence of immunization and mobilization in the community. Before, that did not happen.”

Skilling CSO District Immunization Champions in Immunization Engagement, by Eunice Busisa

From May to July 2015, UCSIP conducted a series of training programs in which CSO District Immunization Champions (DICs) were skilled in different spheres of immunization programming. Participants came from the Rwenzori, Bunyoro, Ankole and Kigezi sub-regions, and were facilitated by the MACIS secretariat. The main objective of these workshops was to equip participants with skills on data collection and analysis, as well as evidence based advocacy on immunization for efficient and effective performance.

This training is part of the GAVI Civil Society Strengthening Project, which is funded by Gavi Alliance, with technical support from Catholic Relief Services. This project brings together Civil Society organizations of different backgrounds to work with government and other partners on the Immunization Systems Strengthening (ISS) and Health Systems Strengthening (HSS) Processes.

The training was administered in form of lectures (power point presentations), group discussions and field work. A participatory learning approach was adopted to enable interaction between participants and facilitators, as well as their fellow participants. This was done to allow sharing of experiences, learnings and contributions towards different discussions. The workshops had total output of 39 participants that were equipped with relevant skills. Evidence from participants’ post test evaluations highlighted that over 85% had acquired new skills and knowledge by the end of the workshops.

District Immunization Champions from Rwenzori and Tooro Sub-regions during a field work session
RICE-WN supports Community Dialogues on Immunization uptake in parts of Koboko District during the Africa Immunization week, by Comfort Yikuri

During the Africa Immunization week that ran from 24th to 30th August 2015, The Rural Initiative for Community Empowerment (RICE-WN) made her contribution towards this cause by supporting two community dialogues in Koboko district covering parts of Ludara and Midia sub counties. These two sub counties were selected by the district EPI focal person based on immunization coverage rating as indicated by the HMIS data from the health facilities. A total of 49 (23 males, 26 females) and 37 (25 males, 12 females) community members participated in the community dialogues in sub counties of Ludara and Midia respectively.

The key objectives of the dialogue were to identify barriers responsible for low uptake of immunization and non-completion of immunization schedules, as well as possible solutions to address these hindrances. The facilitators took advantage to create awareness on available immunization services within their locations, as well as on benefits of having their children fully immunized.

The discussions were led by focal persons for immunization in the respective health facilities. Key issues expressed by the communities as barriers included; few Immunization posts that were far apart, poor communication of immunization schedules by health workers, shortage of vaccines where mothers have to keep on checking at facilities, rude health workers who shout at the mothers or caretakers, absenteeism of health workers on appointment dates, poor time management either by health workers or mothers, inadequate mobilization for outreach services, missing link between health workers and communities, persistent fear of vaccines by the communities because of lack of education on side effects, as well as poor injection management which causes abscess at injection sites.

The dialogue saw the birth of a new outreach post created for Lurunu parish, at Anyakalio Primary School to ease access in addition to the earlier location at Kingaba post which is far away.

A health worker listening to the men in Ludara sub-county during the community dialogue on Immunization uptake

CSO Member scoops a scholarship through MACIS Networking

In March 2015, USEP and GIZ shared a training opportunity through the MACIS Network on Project and Program Evaluation with full scholarships in the country. The training was an intensive training program organized by Makerere University in partnership with GIZ and AFRISA offered at the College of Veterinary Medicine, Makerere University. MACIS recommended Ms Faith Nakigudde a MACIS member working with Wentz Medical Center, Kampala to undertake the training who shares her joy as a result of a realized dream.

“When I applied for the course, I was offered a scholarship opportunity on the MACIS CSO ticket”, Ms. Faith explains with excitement. She also mentioned that the training was very fruitful and rewarding.

She did not only acquire more knowledge on participatory M & E but also gained skills and adequate understanding on concepts such as the theory of change, gender mainstreaming in evaluation, designing of evaluation tools, communication of evaluation results, as well as the difference between evaluation and monitoring, which she is now comfortably applying in her day today work, as well as in the MACIS network.

A vote of thanks goes to Mr. Peter Kiwumulo of GIZ/USEP, for sharing this great opportunity with the MACIS fraternity, which turned out to be beneficial to one of our very own. As part of the platform, such and many more opportunities are presented because of the networking advantage and alliances built with stakeholders from different spheres in the development arena.

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Ms. Faith Nakigudde at Wentz Medical Center

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Together for a Healthy Tomorrow!