

# Young people at forefront of contraception provision in the fragile post-conflict northern Uganda

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## BACKGROUND

Approximately 53% of Uganda's population is under 15 years. One in every four Ugandans (23%) is an adolescent (10-19yrs) and one in every three (37.4%) is a young person (15-24yrs). Approximately 2.5 million people live in the post-conflict Lango sub-region. (UBOS 2021)

Adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) in the Lango sub-region lack specific knowledge on family planning (FP), and sexual and reproductive health. There is low uptake of contraceptives (only 19,083 of 36,377 total FP users were AGYW aged < 24 years [DHIS2, January to March 2020]), which may have led to unintended pregnancies (25% are teenage pregnancies), unsafe abortions and high-risk of sexually transmitted infections.

While it is easy for adolescents to seek services for common illnesses such as malaria, they are less likely to use services for sexual and reproductive health complaints. Reasons cited for the low contraceptive use were: negative attitudes and practices of service providers; long wait times; lack of privacy; long distances to access contraceptives; and costs associated with accessing services. These barriers have direct consequences on health outcomes for youth and adolescents living in northern Uganda.

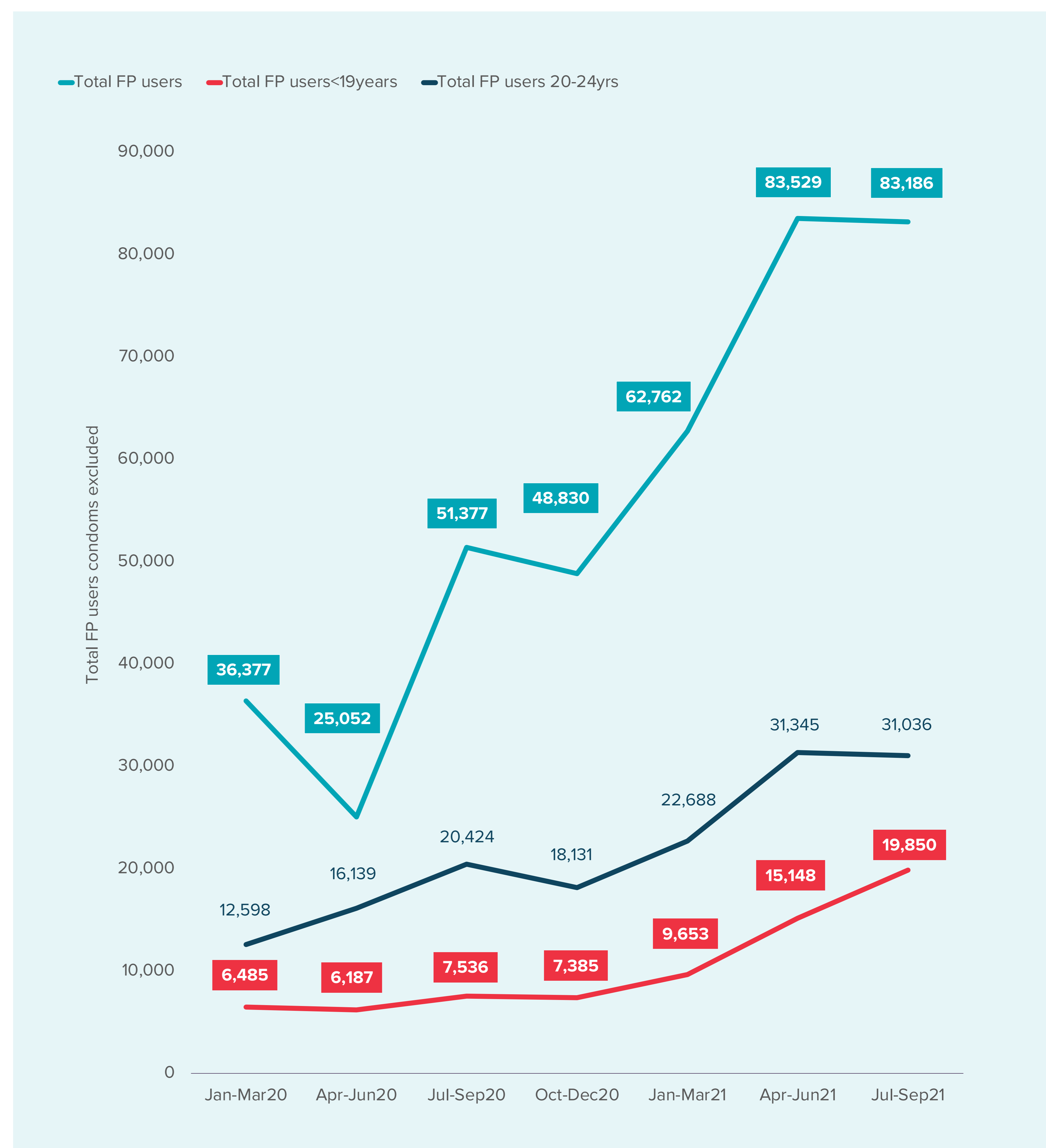
## RESPONSE

The USAID-funded RHITES-North, Lango project, implemented by JSI, trained a total of 123 youth peers on FP provision in June 2020. These peers are linked with (supported by) 52 health facilities in Lango sub-region. They were provided Depo-medroxyprogesterone acetate (DMPA) Subcutaneous, DMPA Intramuscular, pills, and condoms to distribute at the community-level daily, targeting common places young people gather, including markets and water stations. Peers referred clients that needed long-acting family planning methods, such as implants or Intrauterine devices to the nearest health facility. Each peer was attached to a midwife for ongoing mentorship, training, receiving FP health information (e.g. self-care), and resupplying FP commodities.

Tracking the total number of FP users served was done using a simplified reporting tool that fed into the Ministry of Health's integrated FP register. On a quarterly basis, youth peers worked with interpersonal change communication agents to conduct home visits, targeting areas with high teenage pregnancy proportions and hard-to-reach sub-counties to provide health messages and referral services.

## RESULTS

A total of 58,349 FP users aged 24 years and below were reached by the youth peers during community FP provision, accounting for 33% of the total FP users (177,564 - excluding condoms) less than 24 years of age (DHIS2, April 2020 - September 2021). There was a noted increase in the number of AGYW reached with contraceptives in Lango from 22,326 at the end of April- June 2020 to 50,886 at the end of July- September 2021 (DHIS2 data, condoms excluded). The graph below shows FP users disaggregated by age in Lango sub region.



## CONCLUSION/NEXT STEPS

- Contraceptive distribution by youth peers increases access and utilization of contraceptives by AGYW. It helps to eliminate identified barriers, such as negative attitudes of health workers, long distances to facilities, long waiting time, and lack of privacy.
- Accountability and availability of a wide range of contraceptives for distribution by the youth peers is key to the implementation of the program.
- The use of a simplified reporting tool that communicates with the MOH HMIS reporting tools, is key to monitoring the total number of contraceptive users reached by the peers.
- The ongoing support from midwives to youth peers created opportunities for continuous learning and mentorship and helped ensure quality of FP services provided.



Adolescent peers are trained and supported by the USAID RHITES-North, Lango project to offer short term family planning methods to adolescent girls and young women in the community safe spaces where the AGWYs feel safe and comfortable.