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LAUNCHING A FAMILY PLANNING PROJECT DURING A PANDEMIC: DISC Project COVID-19 Adaptations Brief



Adaptation:

Any modification made to a planned program's activities, interventions, approach or funding due to COVID-19.



NUMBER OF ADAPTATIONS IN UGANDA

- 5 Social Behavior Change
- 4 Self-Injection Study Design

As COVID-19 spread across Uganda, PSI's Delivering Innovation in Self-Care (DISC) project, funded by the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF), rapidly adapted their approaches to launch their family planning (FP) programs, which was in the start-up phase. To document and share crucial lessons learned, from May–November 2020, Research for Scalable Solutions (R4S) had supported the monitoring of DISC's COVID-19 program adaptations in Uganda, which started while the DISC project was still in its pilot phase. This brief highlights key insights of DISC's COVID-19 adaptations, across two major activity categories: social behavior change, and activities related to the self-injection study design. Though COVID-19 continues to impact FP programs, the DISC team in Uganda has identified adaptations that will be maintained in a post-pandemic setting.

ABOUT DISC

Launched in January 2020, this CIFF-funded project utilizes consumer insights to support women in voluntarily choosing their own pathway to FP. This includes supporting informed demand efforts and capacity for self-care, such as self-injectable FP products.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR CHANGE

COVID-19 CHALLENGE
Social Media Engagement

During the COVID-19 lockdown, DISC depended on social media posts (Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram) for program engagement and FP method continuation promotion. However, the social media engagement posts had initially had very little engagement.

ADAPTATION

#Ndisteady FP Promotion Campaign

- Paid advertisement on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram platforms greatly boosted engagement with targeted audience.
- Collaboration with influencers across social media platforms brought higher content engagement.
- Linked 161 hotline (an interactive voice/SMS response messaging system) to existing e-referral platform to maintain engagement with those already present in the system.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR CHANGE IMPACT



#NdiSteady Campaign hashtag has been seen **over 540,000 times.**

Power of Tailored Digital Messaging: Tailored communication **doubled the original answer rate of audio push messages to 33%.**

[Click here to Access YoSpace Facebook Page](#), used by PSI-Uganda to promote the #NdiSteady campaign.

Facebook Advertisement linking young women to 161 FP hotline

COVID-19 CHALLENGE

Low Initial Content Engagement

Digital campaign saw initial low engagement rates, especially for audio messages.

ADAPTATION

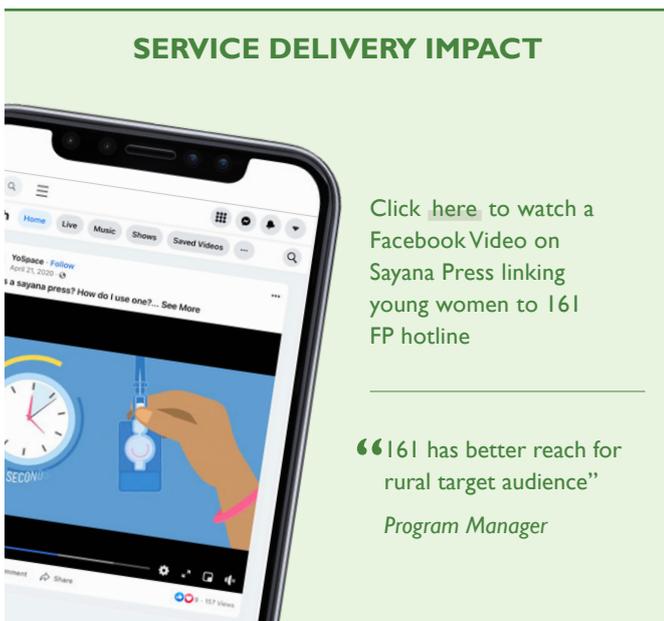
Online, SMS, & Audio FP push-messaging to 161

- Market research and engagement data was leveraged to tailor campaign approach in an attempt to meet audience on platforms they were already using.
- Timing of messaging pushes were altered to send during periods when clients were more likely to pick up, such as after work hours and weekends.

Key Lesson

Closing the Service Delivery Loop

- Important to track client's digital journey and user experience to FP service delivery and understand barriers that prevent clients from moving from online platforms to facilities.



SERVICE DELIVERY IMPACT

Click [here](#) to watch a Facebook Video on Sayana Press linking young women to 161 FP hotline

“161 has better reach for rural target audience”
Program Manager

SELF-INJECTION STUDY DESIGN

COVID-19 CHALLENGE
National prohibition of in-person data collection activities halted research to inform design of self-injection intervention.

ADAPTATION

Remote Phone-Based Data Collection

- For both consumer and provider research, protocols and methods were amended to include a phone-based data collection approach.
- Collected phone-based “quick research” to inform study design.
- Implemented a WhatsApp “digital companion” to allow for any follow-up questions and/or feedback to be shared via group messaging.

ADAPTATION

Virtual Data Collection Training

- The planned in-person training workshop was adjusted to an online setting, which incorporated multiple 2-hour long sessions, and the ability for the trainees to submit follow up questions/feedback via a WhatsApp group.

Key Lesson

Remote Data Collection & Remote Training

- Training success was dependent on network connectivity and it proved to be difficult to recruit respondents in rural areas with weaker cellular connectivity.
- Study organizers must consider selection bias (since all participants must have phones) and the lack of potential non-verbal feedback.
- Shorter, multi-session trainings are more effective at maintaining trainee engagement than longer single sessions.

SELF-INJECTION STUDY DESIGN IMPACT

By January 2021, **94 provider interviews** had been conducted.

INTEGRATION OF ADAPTATIONS BEYOND COVID-19

Guided by insights on cost-effectiveness and potential increase in reaching young women, DISC will be integrating a number of adaptations into their routine FP programs, even beyond COVID-19.

Those adaptations include:

Demand Creation for FP Services:

- The use of popular social media platforms.
- The use of video content and collaboration with influencers.

Self-Injection Study Design:

- Virtual data collection trainings: continuing short, multi-session format, with opportunities for participants to follow up with feedback over WhatsApp.

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For more information about the DISC COVID-19 adaptations

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