



Bantwana Initiative Uganda (BIU)

Social Normative Behavior change innovation

**Final Report on the Social Normative Behavioral Change Pilot by
Community Based Change Agents**

September 2025

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Executive Summary

This executive summary provides a comprehensive overview of the Bantwana Initiative Uganda (BIU) Social Normative Behavior Change (SN-BCC) pilot, implemented in the Kyenjojo, Kabarole, and Bunyangabu districts of western Uganda. The pilot, a core component of the Safety At all times for Every child (SAFE) project, aims to combat sexual and other forms of violence against pre-adolescent and adolescent children by challenging harmful social norms. The intervention leverages a community-driven, sustainable approach by training and supporting local change agents—individuals with a deep, trusted presence in their communities. These change agents are tasked with facilitating dialogue and promoting positive behaviors through participatory discussions within existing social structures. This report summarizes the accomplishments, key learnings, and strategic insights gathered during the pilot's four-week implementation and monitoring phase.

Summary of Key Accomplishments

The pilot successfully achieved all planned deliverables, establishing a robust foundation for a larger rollout. Key accomplishments include:

- **Change agent selection and training:** A total of 24 change agents were meticulously identified from six school communities across the three districts. The selection process was guided by a replicable matrix that prioritized self-motivated individuals already embedded within local groups, such as the Positive Parenting Groups. This ensured that the agents possessed the intrinsic commitment and community trust essential for success. Following selection, a comprehensive capacity-building workshop was conducted to equip them with the necessary skills and refined messages to challenge harmful norms.
- **Normative message refinement and pictorial development:** The project team worked directly with change agents to refine normative messages, tailoring them to both children and caregivers. A critical innovation was the development of pictorial tools that overcame significant literacy barriers. These visuals, tested and refined in the field, proved to be highly effective, sparking organic discussions and enabling immediate understanding of complex concepts across diverse linguistic groups.
- **Tele-monitoring and data driven learning session:** A new tele-monitoring system was introduced to provide routine mentorship and support to change agents, supplementing in-person field visits. This system successfully reached an average of 80% of change agents weekly, serving as a powerful morale booster and enhancing their sense of validation and empowerment. This data-driven approach also allowed for a precise analysis of agent activity, revealing that an average of 70% of those contacted were consistently active in community engagement.
- **Alliance and Coalition Building:** The pilot facilitated the creation of village and parish-specific teams of change agents. This solidarity-building exercise was a vital strategy to

prevent social backlash against their work and to create a unified front for sustained community action.

Key Learnings and Insights

The pilot provided invaluable strategic and operational insights that will inform future program design and replication. These learnings are categorized into three main areas:

- **Sustainability and Community Ownership:** The data demonstrates that community-based, voluntary change agents are a highly sustainable and culturally authentic pathway to lasting social transformation. Consistent follow-up and support are not just operational necessities but powerful motivational tools. This support transforms agents' self-perception from simple volunteers to recognized community leaders, fostering a powerful feedback loop that boosts their confidence, innovation, and persistence. The pilot's findings indicate that a core group of 70% of agents are highly active and have the potential to attract others into action, creating a ripple effect of change.
- **Reach and Scaling Potential:** By using the pilot data, a scaling model was developed to forecast the potential reach of the approach. The analysis revealed that with 200 change agents, the program could potentially reach approximately 785 unique community members per week, 2,826 per month (accounting for attrition), and a staggering 32,677 per year. This projection highlights the immense potential of this model to scale impact and achieve the critical mass needed for sustainable social norm transformation. The data also underscored the need for intentional strategies to engage men and youth, who are currently underrepresented in the groups being reached.
- **Depth of Behavioral Change:** A new conceptual model, the "Causal Factor – Depth Continuum," was developed based on pilot observations. This framework provides a critical understanding of the effort required for behavioral change. It posits that change interventions must be tailored to the root cause of the behavior, which can exist at three levels:
 - **Knowledge Level (Surface):** Behaviors driven by a lack of information are the easiest to change, often requiring only simple awareness and training.
 - **Beliefs/Attitudes Level (Moderate):** Behaviors rooted in personal beliefs are more complex and require repeated, consistent engagement to shift.
 - **Norms and Values Level (Deep):** Behaviors perpetuated by deeply embedded social norms and cultural values are the most difficult to change, demanding comprehensive, long-term strategies that transform collective mental models.
- **Cultural Nuances and Strategic Engagement:** The pilot confirmed that working within existing cultural frameworks is more effective than direct confrontation. Change agents successfully leveraged traditional Rutooro proverbs, amplifying those that supported positive behaviors (e.g., "soft tongue softens bone" for positive communication) and reinterpreting harmful ones (e.g., those that reinforce patriarchal dominance) through

community dialogue. This demonstrated that sustainable social norm transformation requires cultural insider knowledge. The use of pictorials was particularly effective in overcoming language barriers and prompting rich, culture-specific discussions, further cementing the importance of contextually relevant tools.

Challenges and Recommendations

Despite its successes, the pilot faced several challenges:

- **Literacy Barriers:** The low literacy levels among change agents required tailored training and monitoring approaches.
- **Limited Connectivity:** Low telephone network penetration and lack of mobile phones in some areas hindered the tele-monitoring process, which was addressed by pairing agents.
- **Complex case management:** Change agents were at times overwhelmed by the complex and sensitive nature of child protection cases they encountered (e.g., incest, child marriage). A key recommendation is to clarify their role as referrers and reporters, rather than case managers, and to intentionally connect them to formal justice and social services systems during the expanded pilot.
- **Self-sustainability:** The challenge of sustaining the agents' motivation and work beyond the program's formal support was identified. It is recommended that BIU explore organizing these groups into more formal community-based structures that can attract independent support.
- **Data quality:** The need for dedicated data management expertise to listen, probe, and ensure the quality of data collected through tele-monitoring was identified.

Conclusion

The SN-BCC pilot has provided compelling evidence that a community-driven, agent-based approach is a powerful and sustainable model for social change. It has not only demonstrated the potential for significant reach and impact but has also yielded a deep understanding of the intricacies of behavioral change at the community level.

The Causal Factor – Depth Continuum model, along with insights on cultural navigation and the effectiveness of pictorial tools, offers a robust framework for future interventions. The pilot's success underscores the critical role of continuous support, data-driven adaptation, and a willingness to work within—and strategically transform—existing cultural norms. The next phase will build on these learnings, scaling the approach to achieve a widespread and lasting reduction in violence against children.

Section 1

1.1 Background

Bantwana initiative Uganda (BIU) is implementing SAFE (Safety At all times for Every child) project in the 3 districts of Kyenjojo, Kabarole and Bunyangabu in western Uganda. BIU is using a whole community approach that engages all stakeholders at different levels that include teachers, children, caregivers and local leaders to combat sexual and other forms of violence against pre-adolescent and adolescent ages 9-14, by integrating social norms change approach to prevention and response to sexual violence in schools and communities. The program operates in more than 54 schools in 3 districts.

1.2 Justification.

BIU's SAFE project delivers social norms change approach to address harmful attitudes and behaviors that perpetuate violence against children. Through SAFE, BIU delivers tailored trainings for key program participants including teachers, caregivers, and children with the goal of strengthening their capacity to identify, prevent, and respond to all forms of child abuse, including child sexual abuse.

BIU has been implementing Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) interventions through various media platforms. These interventions have enabled BIU to reach a wider audience with messages designed to challenge and transform negative norms that perpetuate violence against children, while promoting positive and protective behaviors.

To complete the cycle in this phase, BIU aims to strengthen BIU's visibility and community presence, particularly through documentation of community-level storytelling through testimonial audio recordings in line with BIU's broader communication strategy. BIU will also implement SBCC interventions through trained Community Change Agents and Teen Mentors embedded within local groups.

Bantwana adopts a sustainable, community-driven approach to address social norms and reduce child sexual abuse by empowering local influencers as agents of change. The initiative engages individuals within school catchment areas—such as Positive Parenting Group (PPG) members who are self-motivated and committed to mobilizing their communities. This approach is designed to foster community-level dialogue and promote behavior change through participatory and reflective discussions. This organic structure is self-led and self-regulated, ensuring local ownership and sustainability, thereby fostering lasting behavioral change at multiple societal levels. In addition, BIU prioritizes the documentation of both expected and unexpected outcomes, using compelling human stories to trace the change process.

Summarily, this multi-level and community-led approach ensures sustainable protection mechanisms by transforming attitudes and norms within both homes, schools, religious institutions and broader community structures, thereby creating safer environments where pre-adolescent and adolescent children can thrive without fear of violence.

Section 2

2.1 Overview of the SBCC implementation

This progress summary presents a comprehensive overview of the pilot Social Normative Behavior Change Communication (SN-BCC) intervention that has successfully completed community entry and moved into the implementation phase. The pilot program focuses on establishing a robust foundation for community-based behavior change through systematic change agent development, targeted messaging strategies, and ongoing capacity building. All community entry, capacity related deliverables and milestone activities are completed. We are beginning to have an idea and insights on how the future rollout of the approach will look like.

2.2 Overarching objective

This SN-BCC pilot is designed to test and refine a voluntary community-driven approach to sustaining positive parenting by local communities, and sustaining the spread of positive behavior change by integrating social normative behavior change activities in their routine work.

Following the conceptualization of the SBCC intervention and the inception reporting, Fidelitas Uganda team went ahead to accomplish the following.

2.3 Summary of accomplishments

2.3.1 Table one: Accomplishments as per plan and next steps

Planned Time-frame	Detailed description of technical tasks and activities	Status
July 2025	Conduct and/or validate the behavioral problem analysis, review documents, assess knowledge the distinction between social and gender normative behavior from other behaviors among potential change agents	Complete
July 2025	Conduct collective community visioning, normative prioritization, normative message development (visual) and planning for community-led action	Complete
July 2025	Conduct change agent mapping and selection, change agent social-normative influence mapping, and identification of leverage points for social normative change	Complete
August 2025	Conduct a change agent capacity sharing and enhancement (training) workshop(s) in target locations.	Complete
August 2025	Conduct a community solidarity and local alliance building of change agents. This includes creating village or parish specific teams and is vital to prevent social norms backlash	Complete
September 2025	Conduct a pre-test of the SBCC intervention in a similar locality, test the tools, and conduct a change agent feedback meeting to refine tools and materials	Complete
September 2025	Support supervise SBC interventions Implementation, monitor, document stories of change and learn	Complete

2.4 Working with community change agents

This section provides details on change agents' activities, our follow up processes, performance in integrating social norms change deliberation and reflection sessions, number and categorized of people engaged per week, the changes realized and lessons learnt that relate with replicating the approach to other geographies. Fidelitas supported BIU to select and train 24 change agents were identified from six school communities i.e. 2 school communities in Kyenjojo, 2 school communities in Kabarole and 2 school communities in Bunyangabu.

Summary of engagement period and change agent activities.

Over 4 weeks of weekly monitoring mentorship, the change agents have proved to be real change agents and advocates for child wellbeing at the community level. The change agents have been implementing activities through integrating norms and practice change sessions in their routine activities, engaging new groups and individuals, making referrals and mediating in Violence Against Children related challenges in at the community level. Fidelitas team worked with the change agents to refine change messages and test pictorials at the field level. We also conducted one data driven learning and reflection session with BIU and all the change agents.

Section three

3.0 Overall performance

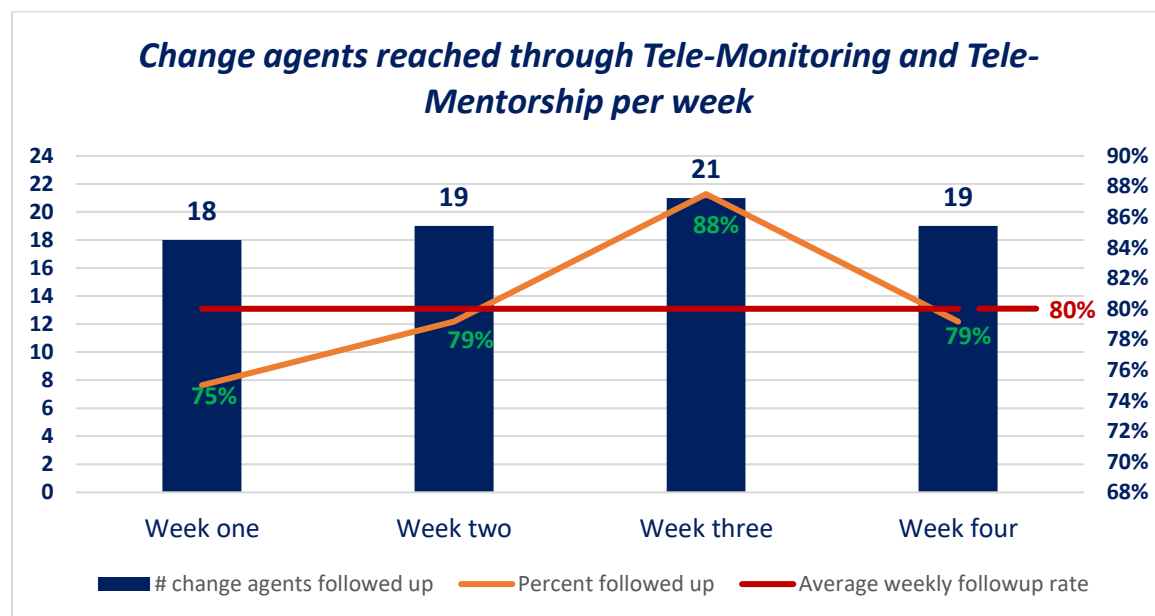
3.1 Overview of performance by change agents

Community-based voluntary change agents represent the most sustainable and culturally authentic pathway to lasting social transformation, as they possess deep community trust, intimate knowledge of local dynamics, and genuine commitment to their community's wellbeing. When these agents receive consistent follow-up and support, they experience a profound sense of validation and empowerment that transforms their self-perception from community volunteers to recognized leaders and change catalysts. This follow-up creates a powerful feedback loop where agents feel valued, heard, and professionally acknowledged, boosting their confidence and motivation to tackle complex social challenges. The emotional impact is transformative - agents report feeling **"seen"** and **"important,"** which translates into increased innovation, persistence through obstacles, and deeper community engagement. This support system not only enhances their effectiveness but also has the potential of attracting bystanders into action, which increases the chances of spreading the change community-wide.

3.2 Change agent implementation support and follow-up

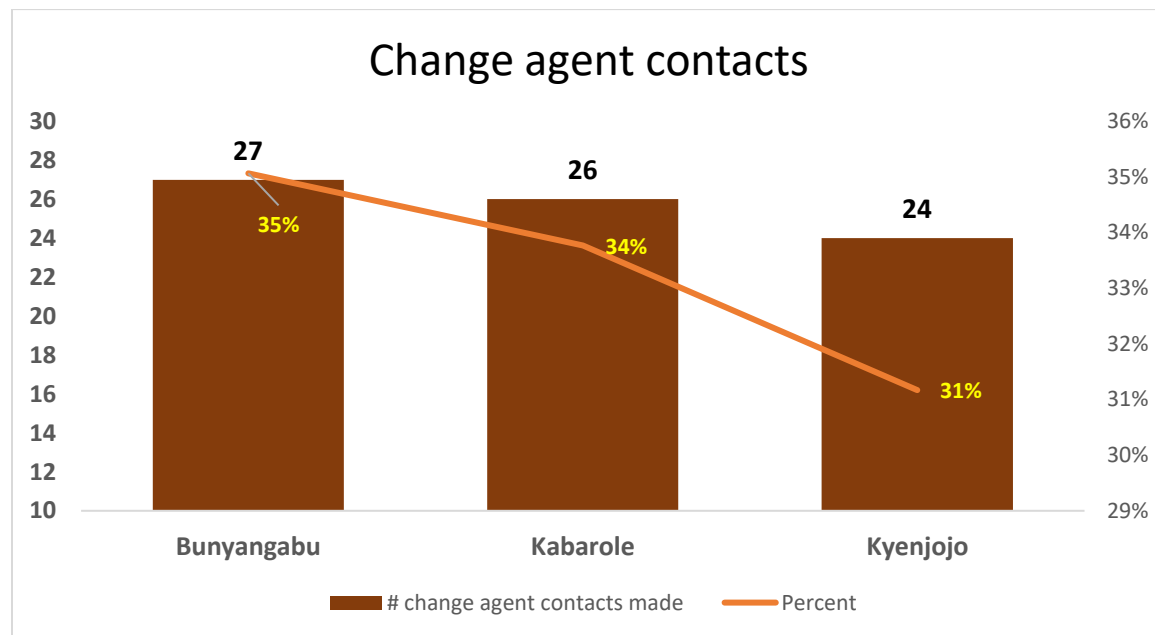
The data shows that on average, 80% of the change agents were followed-up weekly for tele monitoring and mentorship support. The reasons for not reaching the others were either technical (areas without telephone network) or personal as some change agents reported that they had travelled; others were engaged in other community responsibilities, notably burial ceremonies that they could not miss. Figure one below shows the number and percent of change agents reached per week.

Figure 1: Number and percent of change agents reached per week.



3.3 Change agent virtual and in-person contacts

Analysis of change agent data by district shows slight variations in the number and percentage of change agent contacts made, with Bunyangabu District having more contacts (35%, n=27), followed by Kabarole (34%, n=26) and Kyenjojo having the least number change agent contacts (31%, n=24) as shown in figure two below

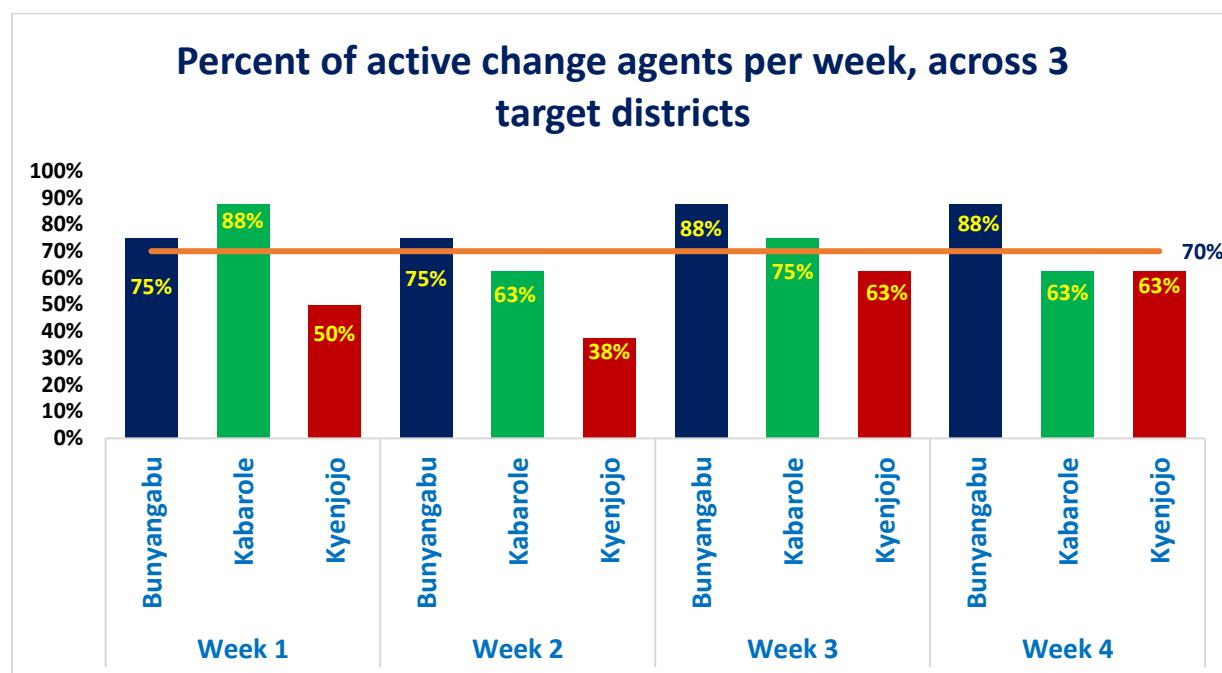


As noted above, keeping in contact and in touch with the change agents by anyone in a supervisory capacity is very attractive to the change agents; it is a morale booster and increases commitment. For sustainability, it is important to connect them to existing line structures, duty bearers and systems.

3.4 Active change agents

Tracking change agent activity levels is crucial for distinguishing between passive contact and genuine community engagement, as this differentiation determines program effectiveness. BIU needs to take this into when replicating the approach. Change agent contacts simply represent the total number of agents reached and maintained in communication networks, indicating program breadth but not depth of impact. Active change agents, conversely, are those demonstrably facilitating sessions, cascading information, mobilizing communities, and driving behavioral transformations at grassroots level. Figure 3 below shows the change agents who were reached and found to be active.

Figure 3: Percent of active change agents, per week.



From figure 3 above, the average weekly rate of active change agents is 70%. Results indicate that Kyenjojo change agents were less involved, scoring below the overall average. Bunyangabu has the most active change agents scoring above the average percentage mark for each of the 4 weeks. Therefore, while the average percentage score for change agents reached was 80%, those that were active throughout the 4 data points are about 70%. This could be explained by the voluntarism-oriented requirement for these change agents – but still, if a sustainability test is done on the 70% active change agents, it has potential of influencing program design.

Active tracking of change agents enables BIU and other interested program teams/organizations to identify high-performing change agents for mentoring roles, reallocate tele-mentoring time from no potential or completely inactive change agents/school communities to high-potential change agents/communities, and/or finding ways of converting passive contacts into dynamic community change catalysts, ultimately maximizing intervention impact and sustainability.

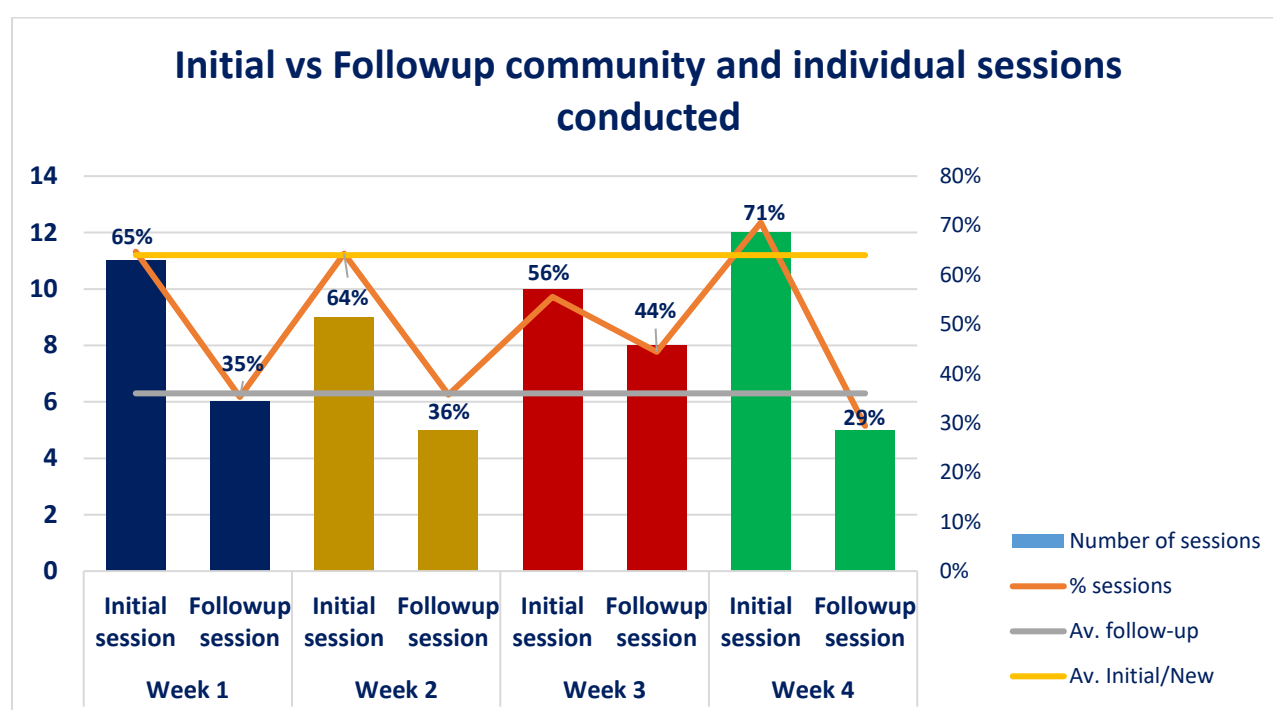
3.5 Enrolment of new groups while doing follow-up in existing/initial groups.

Cognizant of the fact that the change agents were trained and belonged to some parenting groups, we envisaged that they would target both their groups (where they were still giving parenting talks/tips), but also explore reaching new groups. Therefore, we developed the tele-monitoring tool to track whether the group reported in the week is receiving an initial/first visit, or a follow-up visit. This variable helps to track whether the intervention is starting to spread and diffuse in the community.

An analysis of change agent data indicated that right from week one, as we had envisaged, some change agents continued the messaging (but this time with more intentionality), while others started off with new groups. Thus, 65% of the sessions in week one were initial while 35% of the sessions were follow-up sessions.

However, based on the data supplied, we noted a gap between the initial sessions and follow-up sessions. For example, after week one, with 65% sessions being initial, we expected that in week two, the follow-up would be either equivalent or greater than 65%. Below, figure 4 shows the proportion of initial and follow-up visits conducted by the change agents – and the inconsistency that needs to be tracked intentionally.

Figure 4: Initial and Follow-up community-based social norms and behavior change sessions



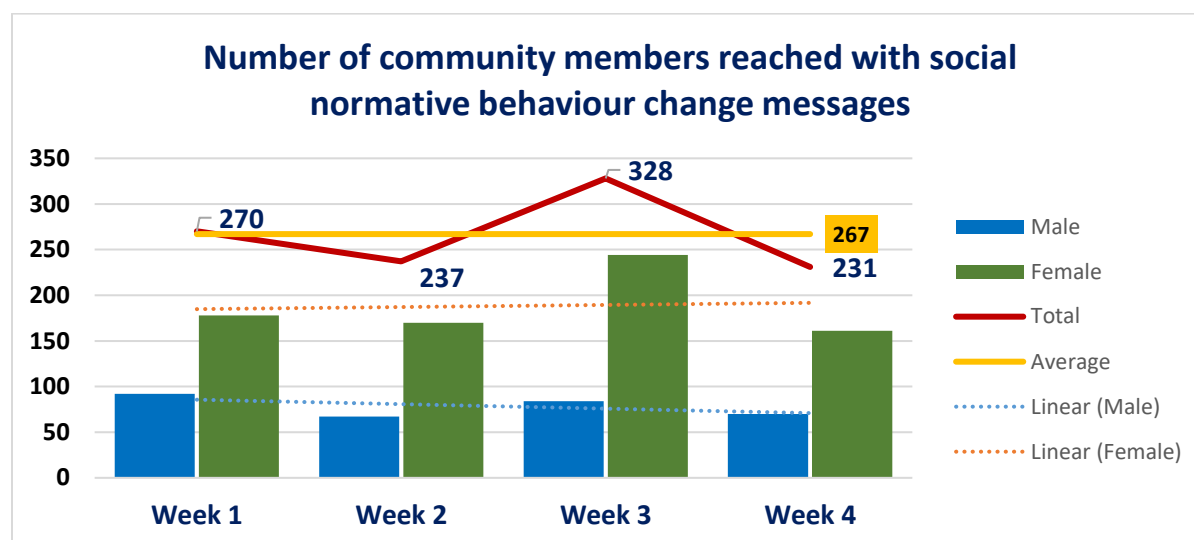
From the above, the data suggests that the change agents have the zeal to go out and reach more groups, which is a good sign, but going forward, we advised them that the quality, dose and frequency of the messaging is equally important. The beauty is that the data suggests around 36% of sessions as follow-up on average, but this needs close monitoring for quality results.

3.6 Community reach

Ultimately, our focus was to support the change agents to reach more community members and impact them positively – bearing in mind that behavior change, more so social normative behavioral change is a process. Change agent data shows that change agents managed to reach an average of 267 people per week, with the highest being in week three (328 people) and the lowest reach happening in week 4 (231 people).

An analysis by gender shows that more females (188 on average per week) were reached compared to men (78 per week on average). During the learning sessions, we interrogated this variation and it was reported by the change agents that women dominate most community-based groups, as well as parenting groups. This demand for intentionality in reaching out to men. Figure 5 below illustrates the number of people reached by gender.

Figure 5: Number of community members reached by Gender



3.7 Daring to be bold: Change agents as agents a scaling and spreading impact pathway!

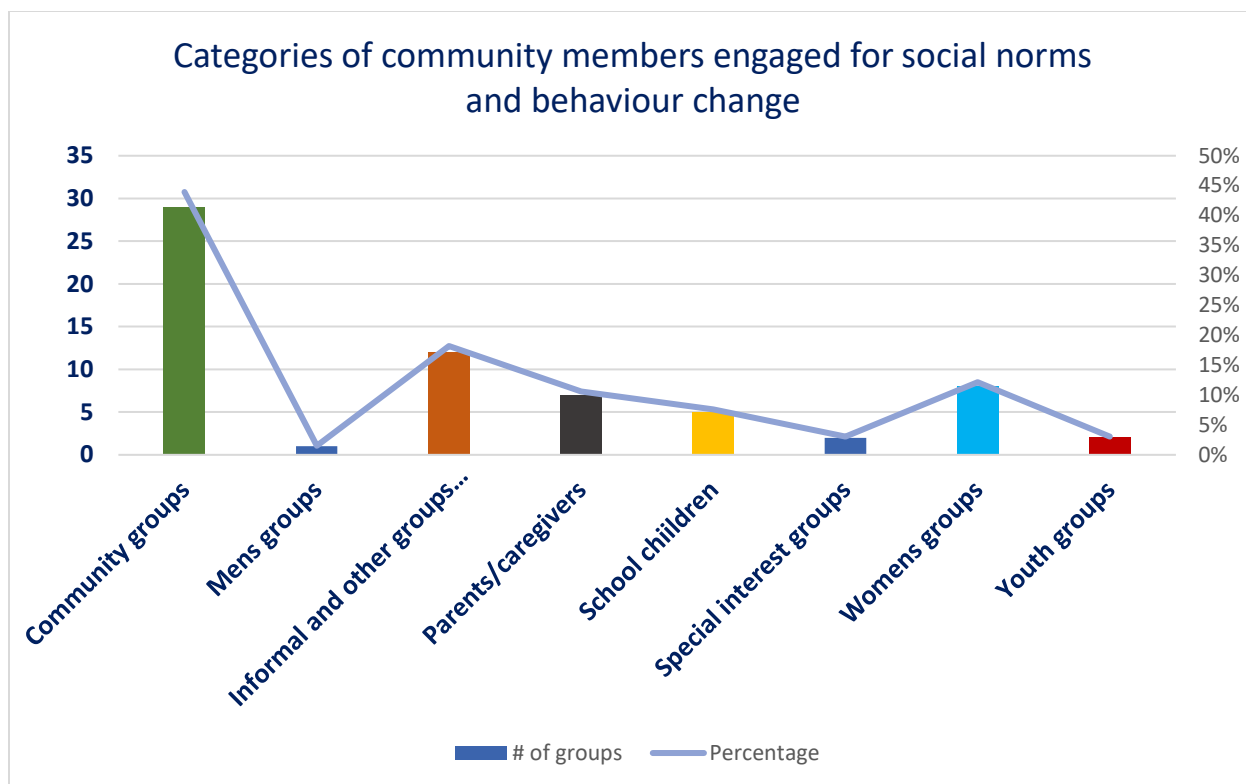
Based on the data supplied by change agents, and assuming a directly proportional relationship between the number of change agents and the community members reached, we have attempted to model and analyze the potential for the change agents to scale and spread impact.

Using the reach ratio (community members reached per change agent) based on data provided by BIU's change agents, i.e. 17 change agents : 267 community members = 15.71 community members per change agent per week. Therefore, 200 Change Agents will reach 3142 community members per week. We know that effective Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) for social norms require repeated exposure and engagement of a 4:1 follow-up to new member ratio over time to achieve collective change.

With just 200 change agents (piloting), BIU can reach 785, 2826 and 32677 Parents/influencers per week, month and year respectively if this approach is designed and modelled appropriately.

A further analysis of the categories of people being reached shows that change agents are reaching diverse categories of people at the community level. These include children, caregivers, community groups, men only groups among others as shown in figure 6 below.

Figure 6: Categories of people reached by change agents



We see that mens groups account to only 2%, special interest 3%, youths groups 3% and school children 8%. This points to a need to be intentional at the time of enrolling caregivers into the SAFE program. We suggest that teachers be enrolled as dual-rolled stakeholders i.e. parents/caregivers as well as being teachers. Through them, children champions can be identified in school to spread the new beliefs, practices and norms school-wide.

Men should also be targeted intentionally through mapping areas where they spend most of their time, but also making sessions more male friendly. Innovation around this area is needed to reach more men – given that some of the normative changes targeted relate to negative masculinity.

Youth groups can also be targeted intentionally through the existing entry points. For example, the teen mothers belong to some groups or even cliques. This can be an entry point for out of school adolescent girls – and engagement for skilling and school re-entry can be initiated.

On a positive note, and consistent with findings related to new/initial sessions vs follow-up sessions, community groups take up 44% while informal groups account for 18% of the categories reached. Most of these are groups outside of the parenting groups, speaking to the outward looking nature of the change agents – which is positive but must be controlled for quality.

Section four

Implementation and technical challenges

- Change agents are composed of low or no literacy, yet they are influential and have wide community connections and change making ability. This meant tailoring the training and monitoring to suit them. In addition, many took long to understand what social norms are conventionally and could only understand them through storytelling and use of proverbs.
- Low telephone penetration and network in some locations: We introduced tele monitoring and tele mentoring to supplement our field level in-person monitoring, with the aim of efficiently and more routinely provide support to the change agents. However, we soon realized that some areas were not well connected to telephone network while on the other hand; some change agents did not have mobile telephones and were unreachable. Through alliance building, we paired such change agents with those who had telephone and stayed either in the same village or in the neighboring village – this has proved successful.
- To ensure data quality, there is need to have data management experts to be able to listen, ask questions relating to the data and identify areas of data quality assessment. We found that our combined expertise in MEL, program quality and community engagement gave us higher pedigree in questioning, probing and harvesting data from the change agents through tele monitoring.
- The number, complex nature and community expectation in handling cases overwhelmed change agents – yet this was not and is still not an area where we expect them to play a significant role. The cases related to incest, school dropout, stepchild deprivation, child marriage among others – which need special skills in documenting before reporting. We advised them during the learning session that their role in these cases can be to identify, refer or report but not interfere in the management of the cases. In addition, during the expanded pilot, BIU needs to intentionally connect the change agents to their respective sectors, i.e. Health, local government, community services, Justice and Education among others. At Fidelitas, have supported other programs to do this successfully.
- Self-sustainability was also identified as a big issue. Change agents have the determination to keep on doing their change agency at community level, but they need to be supported beyond the VSLAs and parenting groups that they belong to. We suggest that if feasible, BIU can intentionally organize these groups into different community organizations that are not as formal as community based organization but have structures that can attract government and other CSO support.

Section five

5.1 Lessons learnt to inform expansion and/or replication

Community engagement through existing social structures is effective: The change agents strategically leveraged established community networks and platforms for example PTA meetings, church fellowships (Karambi St. Peter Church), and other social groups to amplify their behavior change messages. This approach demonstrates that working within existing social structures can be a sustainable pathway for change. We specifically highlight one change agent's plan to address parents during PTA meetings and engagement with Christian fellowship groups shows an understanding that lasting behavior change occurs when it is embedded in structures where reference group members sit. This should be included in the expansion plans by BIU.

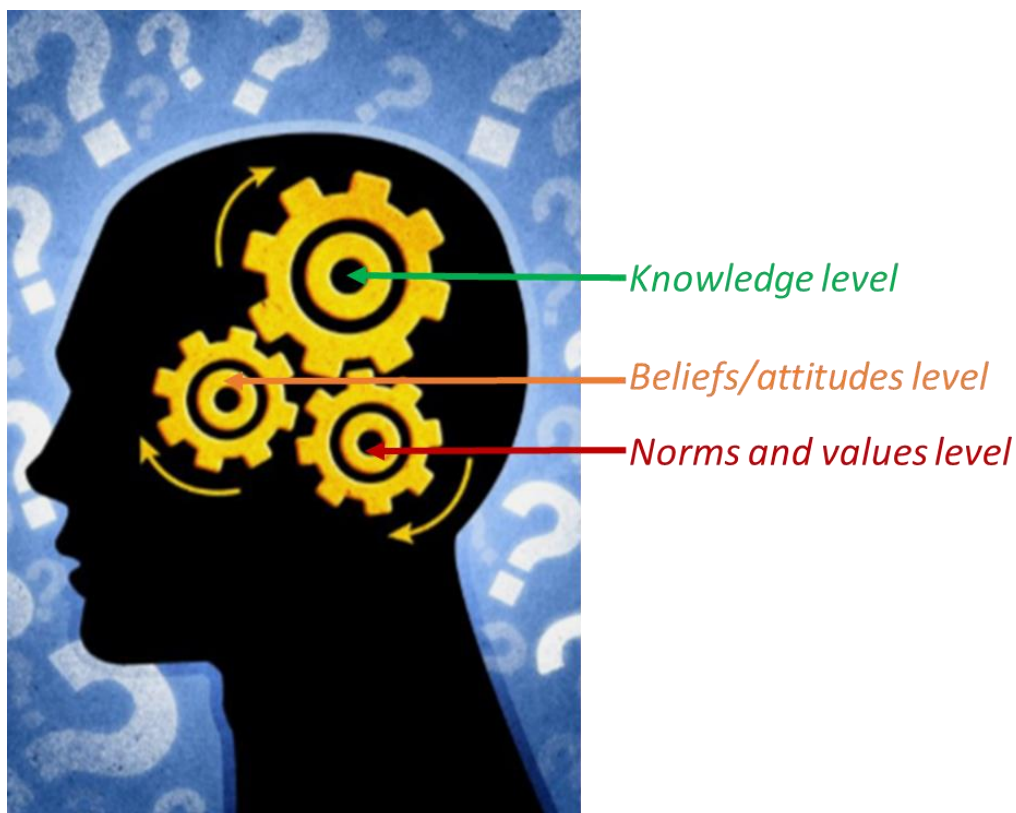
Male Engagement by change is critical for addressing gender-based issues: While the number of men reached were few, a significant breakthrough occurred when one change agent's husband became actively involved, not only supporting his daughter's education financially but also engaging other men in the community. The change agent reported that he visited 3 families and had conversations with other men, including those who he knew that were sleeping with young girls. This action represents a crucial shift, where men become advocates for adolescent girls and their education, challenging harmful behaviors within their peer networks. This is in line with existing evidence confirming that addressing gender and sexual violence social norms requires male allies who can influence other men's attitudes and behaviors.

Direct intervention by change agents is risky but at the same time addresses both symptoms and root causes: In their work, a group of change agent tackled immediate challenges for some vulnerable girls like school fees through community contributions, while simultaneously addressing underlying behavioral patterns. The engagement with one mother Becky (not real name) on just how her tongue was problematic, i.e. she was calling men "muko wange" (attracting inappropriate male attention to her daughter), demonstrates how specific behavioral changes can reduce vulnerability. She was engaged in a conversation and that stopped, and her daughter is safer. Similarly, reflecting on preventing children from engaging in casual labor directly addressed school absenteeism while targeting the economic pressures that drive such decisions. Therefore, change agents need to use the symptoms as an entry point to understanding and discussing solutions to the underlying issues.

Community ownership and collective action is emerging: Change agents work is starting to trigger communities to collectively act. For example, a group of community members after a deliberation and reflection session decided to support a boy with disabilities through financial contributions. This represents a shift toward community ownership of social issues. This demonstrates transformative collective agency communities evolving from passive recipients to active problem-solvers, indicating sustainable social norm change where community ownership replaces external dependency, creating self-perpetuating systems for addressing local challenges.

Peer-to-Peer learning creates faster trust-based multiplier effects: It was reported that some quick transformation is happening – quite faster than expected. Some change agents note that the community members that attended their sessions are also starting to spread the messages and starting conversations on their own. This represents a shift from dependence on the change agent to community members becoming change agents themselves. The ripple effect extends beyond formal sessions as one member after the session went and "sat down her son in P.6 and they have discussed their school plans," showing how participants can internalize and apply learnings within their own families. This peer-led approach creates sustainable change mechanisms that don't rely solely on external facilitation

The emergence of the “Causal factor – Depth” continuum of change: We have learnt that the nature of change that happens is linked to the depth of the causal factor along what we have called the behavior change “Causal Factor – Depth Continuum” for social normative behavioral change. We have developed this concept based on learning that causes and reasons why people behave the way they do, and the time and/or effort needed to change that behavior depends on how deep the cause is on an individual or community collective mental models. For example if a caregiver practices harsh punishment, we interrogate whether it is because that caregiver lacks knowledge, has a negative belief system or is influenced by social cultural and gender norms. These three levels constitute the three levels of our “Causal Factor – Depth Continuum” as illustrated below.



If the behavior is influenced by a knowledge gap (**surface level factor**), the change process is most likely faster and easy. Therefore, change in this case can be achieved much quickly and the change process is not complicated.

If the behavior is influenced by negative beliefs and attitudes (**Moderate depth factor**), the change process can be complicated, but with repeated engagements, it can be achieved.

If the behavior or practice is influenced by norms and traditions (**High depth factor**), then the change process can be complex and change may take a long time.

Our definition: *The Causal Factor – Depth Continuum is a comprehensive behavioral change framework that maps the hierarchical layers of factors driving human behavior along a spectrum from surface-level influences to deeply embedded psychological and cultural determinants within individual and collective mental models. This systematic tool enables practitioners to analyze how deeply behavioral causes are rooted in people's thinking patterns and social structures, directly determining the complexity, intensity, and duration of change interventions required. Operating as both a diagnostic model and intervention planning approach, the continuum recognizes that surface-level causes such as knowledge deficits can be addressed through simple awareness, training, mentorship and educational approaches, **while** deep-rooted causes including belief systems, cultural traditions and social norms require comprehensive, long-term strategies involving sustained community engagement and norm transformation processes. By revealing whether behavioral change requires days of awareness, information sharing or years of cultural transformation, this framework guides timeline planning, resource allocation and intervention design to match the true depth of causation, ensuring that change efforts address root causes rather than merely symptoms of behavior.*

Gender Role Transformation Faces Deep Cultural Resistance: There is still a profound challenge of shifting entrenched gender norms. When the change agent spoke to four men about supporting wives when pregnant, one man acknowledged, when he supports the wife the neighbors talk and laugh at him because this is not accepted in the community. This highlights how individual willingness to change can be undermined by broader community enforcement of traditional gender roles. The systemic nature of male privilege is also evident in men's control over economic resources. It was reported that some men will sell the harvests and do not share with their wives, and men claim that they are household heads and therefore have all the rights to decide for their homes. This demonstrates that economic empowerment and decision-making authority remain significant barriers to gender equality.

Increased community-driven demand for deliberation and reflection sessions: In a very short time, communities that are engaged request for more interfaces with change agents. The change agents reported that some people were inviting them to other groups where they are members. This organic demand and expansion of the impact scope demonstrates authentic community ownership. In addition, in some groups, members suggested that the messages be discussed with

bigger groups, specifically requesting discussions on messages every Thursday when they meet. The suggestion to "use radios to share these messages about social norms change" shows participants recognizing the need for mass change that is society wide, thus needing mass communication approaches in their opinion. However, the approach of small groups is more effective.

Use of pictorials has made change agents work easier and more comprehensible: Pictorial materials have proved transformative for change agents especially in Bunyangabu, overcoming literacy barriers and cultural communication gaps that traditional text-based approaches could not address. Visual storytelling resonated deeply with community members, enabling immediate understanding of complex social norms concepts regardless of education level. Change agents reported that pictures sparked organic discussions, with community members relating images to their lived experiences and sharing personal stories. The visual approach transcended language barriers in this multilingual district, allowing Rutooro, Rukiga, and other language speakers to engage equally. Most significantly, pictorials enabled community members to become co-facilitators, pointing to images and explaining concepts

Finally, Traditional Rutooro proverbs function as powerful cultural transmission mechanisms for both harmful and beneficial social norms: We have learnt that proverbs play a critical role in social norms and behavior change and need strategic cultural navigation rather than direct confrontation. Analysis revealed that proverbs like "Ebifera omunda nibyo ebisemeza amalembo" (family issues should not be discussed publicly) actively perpetuate domestic violence by creating cultural silence around abuse, while "Ateeza nyineeka empaka aziragira" (the husband is family head, everyone must bow even when he's wrong) reinforces patriarchal dominance that undermines women's agency and democratic family decision-making.

However, change agents also identified culturally embedded wisdom that supported positive behavior change. Proverbs such as "Kuteera tinukwo kugunjuura" (beating is not the only way to punish) provided cultural foundation for promoting positive discipline, while "Orulimi orhehire, ruhenda igufa" (soft tongue softens bone) endorsed gentle communication approaches. The revelation was transformative: rather than opposing cultural wisdom, successful change agents learned to amplify positive proverbs while contextually reinterpreting harmful ones through community dialogue, demonstrating that sustainable social norm transformation requires cultural insider knowledge and strategic engagement with traditional wisdom systems.

Section six

6.1 Conclusions

Scaling and spreading impact through community-driven pathways: The BIU Social Normative Behavior Change pilot has provided compelling case that a community-driven, agent-based approach is not only effective but has high potential for scalability. This test and promising success we have seen lies in its ability to harness the power of local influencers and existing social structures, creating a self-perpetuating system for change that transcends external interventions. By identifying and nurturing a dedicated core of active change agents, the program has demonstrated that it can achieve a significant multiplier effect. The data shows that the work of a small group of change agents is already triggering a ripple effect, with community members who attended initial sessions beginning to spread the messages and initiate conversations on their own. This organic, peer-to-peer learning is a critical mechanism for sustained impact, as it builds trust-based networks that can accelerate the diffusion of new norms. The pilot's intervention which estimates a potential reach of over 3142 community influencers and caregivers per month, and 32,677 per year per year with just 200 change agents—is a powerful testament to the model's potential.

To realize this full potential, future program design must be intentional about converting passive contacts into active catalysts, systematically engaging underrepresented groups such as men and youth, and formally integrating the approach into school systems and other community platforms where it can achieve widespread, society-wide change. The model's effectiveness is not merely in its reach but in its ability to foster genuine community ownership, transforming communities from passive recipients to active problem-solvers. This collective agency is the ultimate indicator of sustainable social norm transformation, and it is the key to achieving a widespread and lasting reduction in violence against children.

The need for technical support and model refinement: While the pilot has yielded remarkable insights and moved towards validating its core approach, it has also highlighted the critical need for technical support to further refine and institutionalize the model. First, there is an immediate need to profile and document the "Causal Factor – Depth Continuum" model as a technical approach for social normative behavioral change. This conceptual framework, which links the depth of a behavioral cause to the required intensity and duration of an intervention, is a foundational learning from the pilot. Profiling this as part of a well-structured implementable, testable and scalable approach will enable BIU and other organizations to systematically diagnose behavioral challenges and design more targeted and effective interventions. It provides a strategic lens for moving beyond surface-level symptoms to address deep-rooted beliefs and cultural norms, thereby ensuring that resources are allocated appropriately and that realistic timelines are set.

Invaluable but simple data management system: The current tele-monitoring approach, while successful, relies heavily on the combined expertise of a few individuals. To scale the program and ensure data quality, a formal system with skilled data management teams is necessary. These would be responsible for listening, probing, and assessing data quality to ensure that the reported progress accurately reflects on-the-ground realities.

Intentionally connect change agents with existing formal systems and duty bearers: There is no doubt that this approach has potential to be ground breaking. The change agents need validation, and a sense that they are part of something big that the government and experts are trying to solve – but cannot without them, which is a fact. They need connections to departments such as health, justice, education, and local government officials. The pilot demonstrated that change agents are often overwhelmed by the complexity of child protection cases they encounter. By clarifying their role as referrers and reporters, and building formal alliances between them and these existing structures, the program can create a more effective and sustainable ecosystem for child protection. This will not only empower the change agents but also ensure that complex cases receive the specialized support they require, preventing them from becoming a barrier to the agents' core mission of social norm transformation. These technical refinements are essential for transitioning the pilot from a promising innovation to a sustainable, institutionalized model for change.