

Fidelitas Scientific Execution Facility
Annual report: 2023/24





Translating indigenous knowledge into scientific evidence



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Fidelitas Scientific Execution Facility (Fidelitas)

**MAIDEN
ANNUAL
REPORT**

Email us at info@fidelitasscientific.org

Contact the CEO: jodolon@fidelitasscientific.org

Fidelitas website <https://fidelitasscientific.org/>

Message from the Executive Director

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of Fidelitas Scientific Execution Facility (Fidelitas), Uganda and on my own behalf, I appreciate the good work done by, the Board, the Management and voluntary staff members to kickstart and sustain the organization in its first year. We are indeed poised for significant growth in the years to come.

The year 2023 was a landmark year for Fidelitas Uganda. It is when we officially got registered and licensed to operate as a National Indigenous Non-Government Organization, we developed a catch-up plan and revised our strategic goals leading us to 2025 and we welcomed partnerships local, regional and global.

Uganda is currently facing complex challenges related to its fast-growing population, corruption, violence against children and girls, youth unemployment and the dangers that come with these ills. In addition, many organizations are interested in implementing programs, but most if not all of them are facing the implementation challenge. At Fidelitas, we think we have the solution to support not only communities, but also organizations in achieving impactful implementation and sustainable results.

Through its newly introduced programs and approaches like the REAL Fathers program under the Let Girls Thrive Intervention, the Scale and Spread framework, the social normative innovation for Non-Communicable diseases like Type-2 Diabetes and Gender based violence, Fidelitas is now directly contributing to the reduction of injustices, inequalities, impactful implementation approaches, Scaling and spreading impact and catalyzing national development by empowering vulnerable girls, women and children.

Even when we are new in the NGO field, we recognize that the ever-dwindling donor funding, increasing government demand for civil society accountability and increased focus on impact creates new challenges in the operating environment – but a lot of opportunities for innovative and impact-oriented organizations like Fidelitas. We are designed and established as an agile entity, ready to adjust to these new realities without compromising its founding values, including holding ourselves, government and other actors accountable – and supporting quality improvement and impact orientation.

***“We believe that Indigenous knowledge is not ancient, it is in-fact real living knowledge and co-creation of knowledge is the future of science. That is why we translate indigenous knowledge into scientific evidence”
(John King Odolon, 2024)***

Major accomplishments in the year ending June 2024

National accreditation and registration

“Fidelitas fully registered as a Ugandan Indigenous NGO”. We finalized the process of registering as an indigenous NGO with the National Bureau for Non-Government Organizations. This now allows Fidelitas to invent, innovate and roll out implementation science projects in Uganda. We opened up two offices in Amuria and Wakiso districts, appointed and trained technical staff to run the day to day operations of the organization.

Appointment of the Board of trustees and approval of policies

Five Board members were appointed to guide the strategic direction of Fidelitas Scientific Execution Facility. We therefore have a structure that helps in overseeing the organization, provides strategic foresight and advisory to the management. During the year, the board co-developed, reviewed and approved Fidelitas organizational policies and these include the Human resource policy; financial management policy; Diversity, Equity, Justice and inclusion policy; safeguarding policy; anti-bribery policy; whistle blower policy; travel policy; anti-sexual harassment policy and child protection policy. The board elected to further standardize the policies in the coming year.

Joining the East and Southern Africa Male caregiving agenda

In African society, the traditional roles and expectations surrounding child caregiving have begun to shift, some are changing while others are completely transformed. In some parts of Africa, caregiving has traditionally been associated with women and girls, but of recent, there is an acknowledgement and need to encourage more men to take on child caregiving roles thus challenging gender and social norms, systemic barriers and the wrong long-held community beliefs, stereotypes and biases towards men who do caregiving.

Fidelitas is part of the male- caregiving movement established by like-minded organizations in East and Southern Africa. For long, the child caregiving role has been designated to women, which is an injustice. Under our equity, justice and inclusion pillar, Fidelitas joined other actors from East and Southern Africa to develop a roadmap in Nairobi. This roadmap shows the aspiration of the organizations in creating a just and fair society where men and women are equal providers of child care giving.

Social norms intervention co-design with religio-cultural institutions

Based on an initial study on exploration of social norms around T2D in the districts of Busia (Samia cultural region) and Bugiri (Busoga cultural region), Fidelitas in collaboration with a team of researchers at Makerere University conducted a learning harvest and co-design workshop and developed a type-2-diabetes innovation. Norms are influenced by cultural and religious institutions; thus, our innovation targeted these institutions as key leverage points.

The PI Dr Juliet Kiguli noted that this evidence-based innovation and cross-cultural learning was intended to change the implementation landscape for NCD programs, especially type-2-diabetes programs. It is important to point out that the norms that were discovered and validated promote gender-based violence – and are strongly linked to gender roles and inequality. It is very vital to collaborate and connecting research outputs with indigenous local knowledge translation organizations like Fidelitas Scientific Execution Facility (Fidelitas), who can support research utilization at community level, do resource mobilization and support organic spread of the innovations. While the cultures are diverse, there is convergence on most social and gender norms, and to Fidelitas, this suggests that the norms around type 2 diabetes risky behaviors are cross-cultural, linked to gender-based violence and inequality, and thus the social norms change “innovation” can be tested across the four cultures to learn more about its cross-cultural effectiveness. Fidelitas together with Makerere University will pilot test the innovation in Busoga, Lango, Samia and Teso cultures – and plan cross country adaptation.



Implementation Science and Adaptation of REAL Fathers Model to prevent teenage pregnancy and Child marriage

Uganda is struggling with teenage pregnancy, child marriage and high fertility all of which are linked to harmful social and gender norms. We worked with Makerere University, Public Health Ambassadors of Uganda and FAWE Uganda to design an intervention called “Let-Girls-Thrive (LeGIT) collaborative” that transforms conditions which enable teenage-pregnancy and child-marriage to exist. We build health and social system capacity to transform social and gender norms, father-daughter relations, and increase access to sexual-reproductive health services and contraception. Applying implementation science principles, we adapted REAL Fathers model and tailored the curriculum to the context of Uganda. This is one of the gender transformative models that Fidelitas intends to further build, scale and spread across geographies.

Refining the EAST Scale and Spread framework

For decades, and even centuries, people have debated the problem of the slow spread of innovations in social and health care. Many development programmes and interventions are struggling with creating impact at scale. In Africa and specifically Uganda, there are so many successful and impactful programs/innovations, all of which stop at pilot or proof of concept stage. It is important to understand the barriers to spreading these programs by innovators, implementers and governments so as to realize expanded impact.

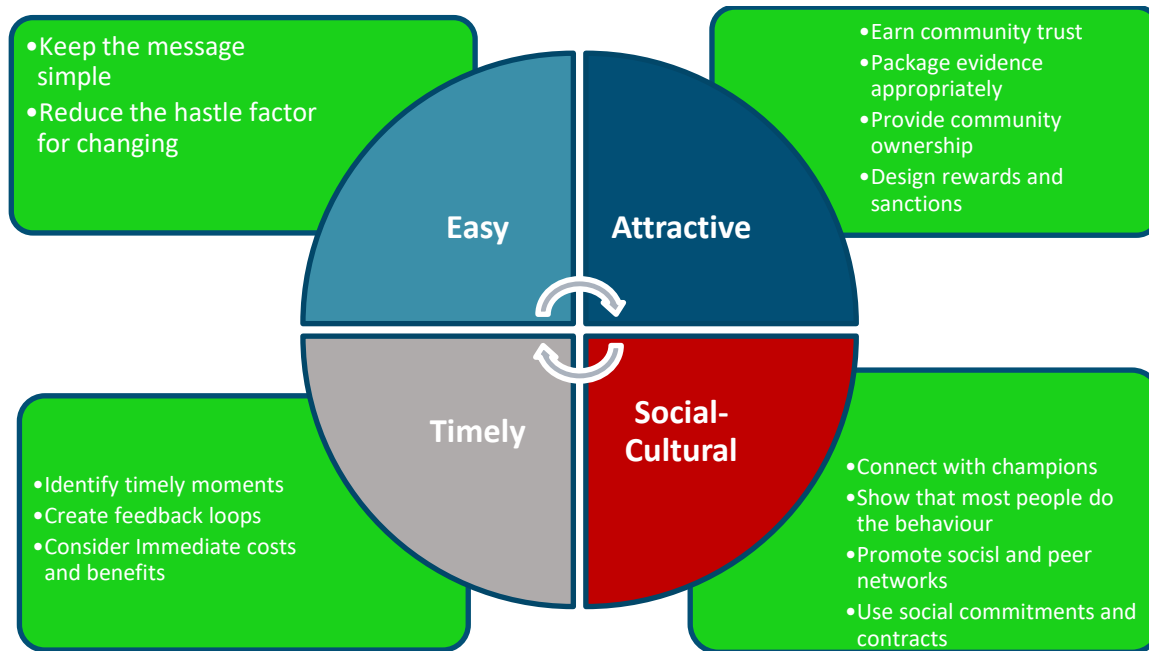
There is a great realization that almost all community issues and challenges need behavioural change strategies if they are to be squarely addressed. While that is true, there is another barrier of limited appreciation of the role of agency in implementation as a way of creating and/or catalysing social and behavioural change.

At Fidelitas, we believe that we can address the misconception that social norms and beliefs need a long time to change. We are adapting the EAST framework to guide the spread of community-based interventions. There is growing interest in applying behavioural insights in simple, inexpensive ways to enhance the spread of social care and wellbeing programmes in resource constrained settings.

The EAST framework highlights the power of making things Easy, Attractive, Social-cultural and Timely in spreading change. We recommend that champions and leaders use this framework when thinking about how behaviours may spread through the social and health system.

Ultimately, reproducing complex interventions is not easy, but attempts to support spread and diffusion will stand the greatest chance of success when the innovations are Easy, Attractive, Social-cultural and Timely. Below is the illustration of the framework.

Fidelitas EAST Scale and Spread Framework



Moving forward into our second year

- In the coming years, strategic collaboration, pilot project implementation, implementation science and technical assistance are going to be key.
- Resource mobilization for the establishment of the “Fidelitas Afri-feminist wellness, mental health and selfcare center/program
- Amplify our work in gender, justice, social norms and collaborative improvement collaboratives for deep impact

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