

## POLICY BRIEF

### Revolutionizing Rural Health in Uganda: Strategic Actions to Address Health Inequities.

#### Background

Rural health systems in Uganda face chronic underinvestment, understaffing, and infrastructure gaps, leading to significant health inequities. Over 70% of Ugandans live in rural areas, yet they experience limited access to quality health services. This policy brief outlines strategic actions to revolutionize rural health and advance equity.

#### Policy Problem

Despite reforms and donor investments, Uganda's rural populations continue to face:

- Inadequate and understaffed health facilities
- Weak community health systems
- Fragmented service delivery and poor inter-sectoral collaboration
- Low health financing and centralized decision-making

#### Strategic Policy Actions

##### A. Strengthen Community Health Systems

Action: Formalize, train, and pay Community Health Workers (CHWs).

Implementation:

- Integrate CHWs into district health systems
- Provide regular training, digital tools, and performance-based incentives

##### B. Decentralize Health Governance and Financing

Action: Empower districts with decision-making authority and flexible budgets.

Implementation:

- Reform budget allocation frameworks
- Introduce participatory budgeting at district and sub-county levels

##### C. Invest in Rural Health Infrastructure

Action: Build and equip modern, solar-powered primary care facilities.

Implementation:

- Use public-private partnerships (PPPs) for financing
- Prioritize underserved parishes using geospatial equity mapping

##### D. Leverage Digital Health Innovation

Action: Scale up mobile health (mHealth) and telemedicine.

Implementation:

- Establish a national rural digital health framework
- Integrate digital platforms with HMIS (Health Management Information System)

##### E. Localize Health Workforce Development

Action: Train and deploy rural-based health professionals.

Implementation:

- Offer rural scholarships with service return clauses
- Establish rural training hubs linked to district hospitals

##### F. Address Social Determinants of Health

Action: Embed health into multisectoral rural development programs.

Implementation:

- Link health services with WASH, agriculture, and education initiatives
- Strengthen inter-ministerial coordination at district level

##### G. Strengthen Data for Equity

Action: Use disaggregated and geospatial data to drive rural health planning.

Implementation:

- Invest in local data systems with real-time dashboards
- Use predictive analytics to prioritize underserved areas

##### H. Promote Citizens Participation and Accountability

Action: Enable communities to co-design and monitor health services

Implementation:

- Institutionalize village health committees
- Use citizen scorecards and community barazas



### Recommendations for Policymakers

- Allocate at least 15% of district budgets to primary health care and community systems.
- Develop a National Rural Health Equity Strategy, led by the Ministry of Health and local governments.
- Incentivize local innovations and partnerships that improve rural health access and outcomes.
- Establish a multi-sectoral rural health taskforce to guide implementation.

### Conclusion

Uganda cannot achieve universal health coverage without transforming rural health. A bold, integrated, and community-driven approach is required to close the equity gap and deliver health for all.