

Establishing the relevance and value of contraceptives to adolescents:

Lessons from aspirational ASRH program models

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BACKGROUND

- Evidence suggests supporting adolescents to develop positive aspirations increases their likelihood of using modern contraception.
- Similarly, approaches that frame contraception as a tool to help girls achieve their life aspirations are associated with increased modern contraceptive use.
- However, the evidence that exists doesn't address how adolescent girls or their influencers view use of these types of aspirational components.
- We use data from *Adolescents 360 (A360)*, a multi-country adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) project to provide evidence on the experiences of adolescent girls and their communities with ASRH programming that incorporates aspirational components.

PROGRAM INTERVENTION

A360 designed four interventions across Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Tanzania, which use aspirational program approaches to support girls to see the value and relevance of contraception as a tool to help them achieve their self-identified goals.

Figure 1. A360 'User Journey'

This figure shows how girls were intended to experience the program - from mobilization through to follow-up.



METHODS

A360 and Itad partnered to assess and describe how well (or not) A360 delivered this unique user journey to girls. As described in Chart 1. the Process Evaluation (PE) drew on a range of methods to assess how participants experienced the program, from mobilization through to follow up. Field work and observations were conducted in each geography, as well as with the global program management team. Chart 2. depicts the participants in Participatory Action Research (PAR) case studies. PARs were introduced to respond to critical project questions and support course correction and adaptive management.

Chart 1. The A360 Process Evaluation collected robust data across implementation contexts

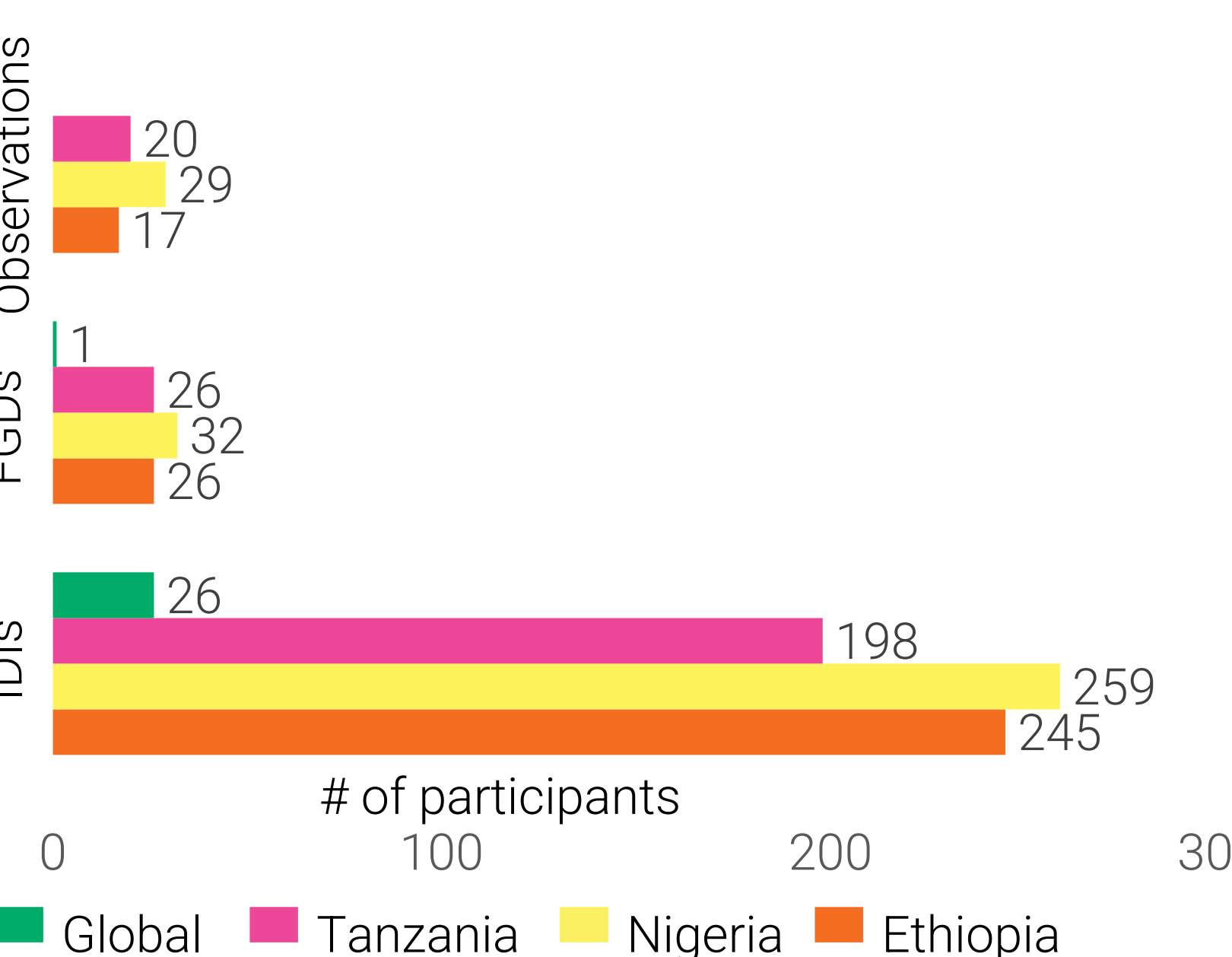
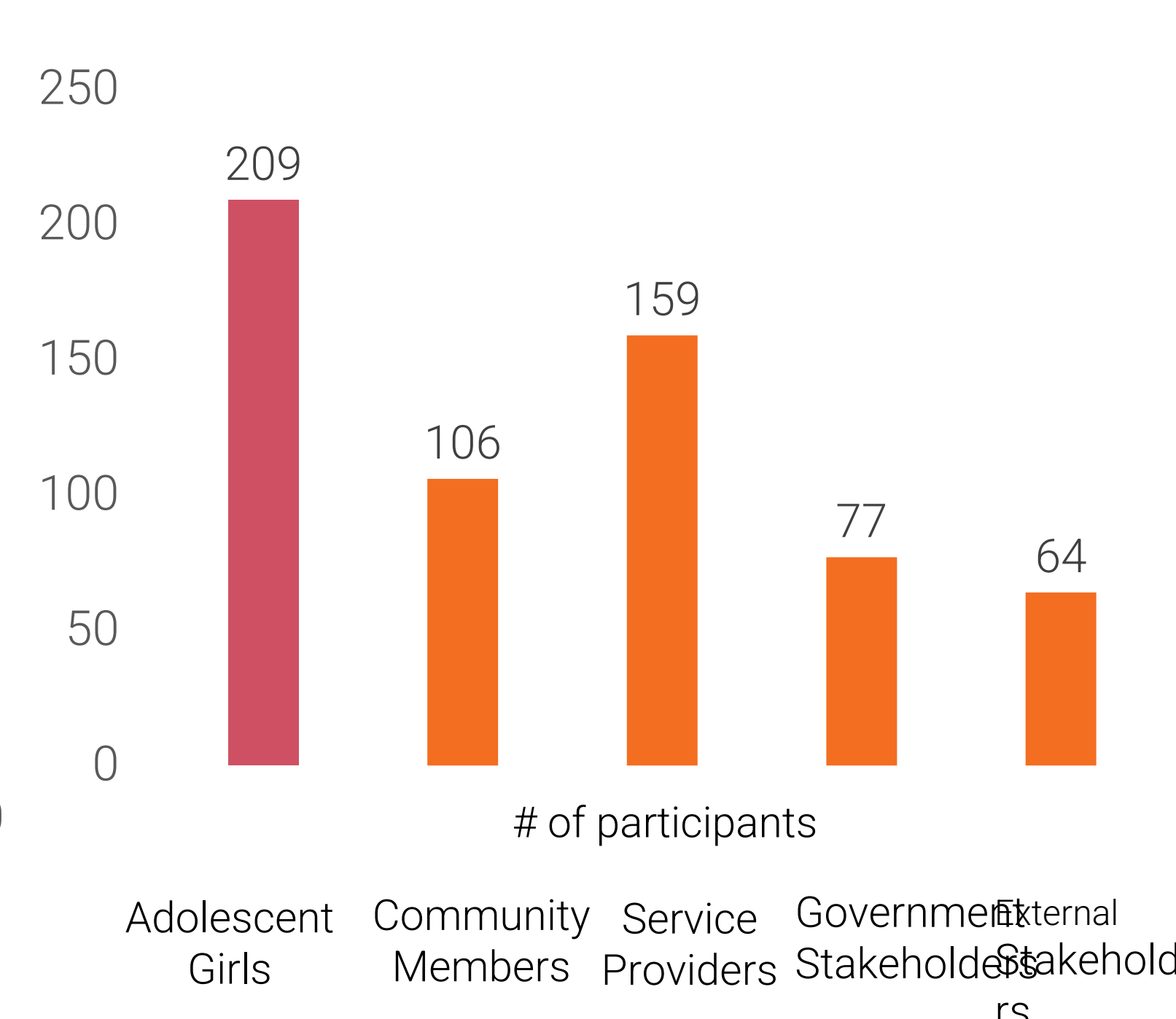
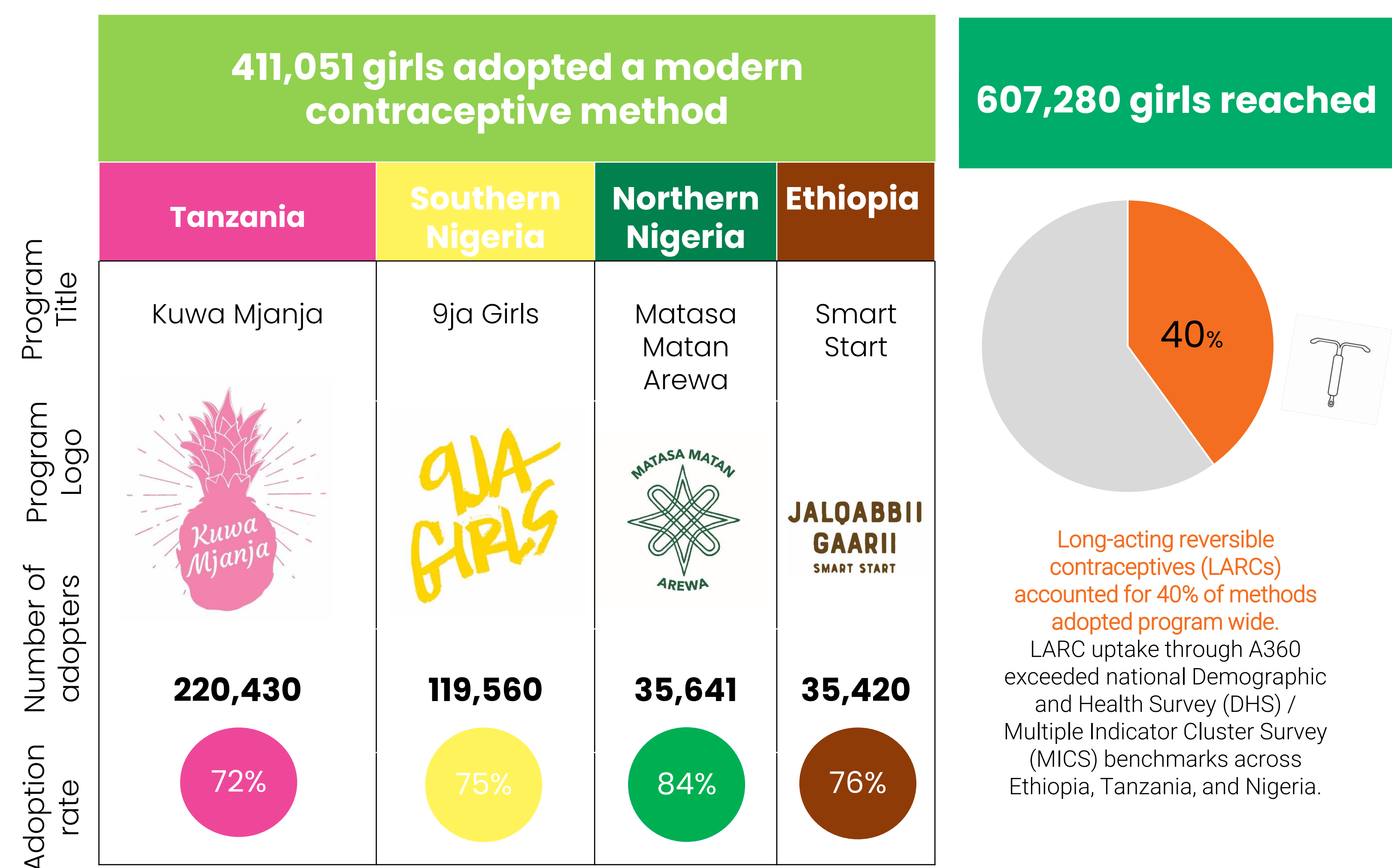


Chart 2. Participatory Action Research ensured participant perspectives were captured



RESULTS

Figure 2. A360's aspirational messaging approach resulted in over 400,000 girls adopting a modern method of contraception



The process evaluation noted that A360's overall strong performance was underpinned by its aspirational messaging which helped provide a 'hook' encouraging girls to participate in the program; made contraception feel more relevant and valuable; and built girls' knowledge, confidence, and ability to plan for the future.

- Aspirational components helped secure the support of government, service providers, and community members.
- Aspirational programming even enabled unmarried girls to access services by framing the program as about more than contraception.

"If I simply have 10 children without any plan...my family will face many challenges, they won't get a balanced diet, they can't get education and all basics needed for life. If I use family planning, I can manage my family size as per my resources." (Husband, Ethiopia, 2019)

"You'll see girls coming to us telling us about their crushes, telling us about heart breaks, you know. It's somewhere they can lay everything bare without being judged. My phone is always ringing, I'm like an adopted mother." (Service provider, Southern Nigeria, 2017)

- However, aspirational program components came with high expectations that the project would meaningfully contribute to girls' economic empowerment.
- Few participants reported being able to apply the skills they learned to generate income due to limitations such as a lack of capital, insufficient time to learn and practice skills, and a mismatch between the skills provided and the available market.

CONCLUSION

- Aspirational approaches can be used to support girls' understanding of contraceptive relevance and build demand for services.
- For programs that decide to use these types of aspirational program approaches, there is a need to monitor the outcome of these components. Programs should work to ensure such components are meaningful to end users and not simply a means to improve SRH outcomes.
- Where feasible the global ASRH sector should aim to break down siloes and work towards integrated, holistic programming addressing both health and non-health needs.

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