



2023 REPORT

Global Health Community Engagement Field School



HEALTHY CHILD UGANDA



Healthy Child Uganda (HCU)

Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST)

University of Calgary (UCalgary)

*Bwizibwera, Rubaya, and Bukiro;
Mbarara District, Southwest Uganda*

*Medical Trainee Fund,
University of Calgary Medical Group, Calgary*

Contact

Indigenous Local & Global Health Office

University of Calgary
Health Sciences Centre
G802
3330 Hospital Dr NW
Calgary, Alberta
T2N 4N1
403 220 6143
csmengage@ucalgary.ca

Healthy Child Uganda

Mbarara University of
Science and Technology
Box 1410
Mbarara, Uganda
hcupmdcn@gmail.com



HEALTHY CHILD UGANDA



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
CUMMING SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

At a Glance

2023 Field School

Integrated within a **20-year institutional global health partnership between MUST and UCalgary**, the Field School aims to provide students with hands-on experiential and collaborative learning on community engagement in global health.



DATES: APRIL 22 - MAY 19, 2023

19
03

Students

From MUST and UCalgary

Communities Engaged

to jointly implement *health interventions* to support *adolescents and young people*

Ugandan-Led Program

University faculty and community health workers sharing knowledge and practical experience

"I got to interact with the Canadian students who have a different culture from our Ugandan culture, this gave me a unique opportunity to broaden my horizons and get a wider and deeper understanding of diverse perspectives."

- MUST Student

"The field school program was transformative and life-changing. I have grown in ways I did not think imaginable in just a month."

- UCalgary Student

Course Structure:

Week 1

In-Class Learning

Preparing for ethical community engagement using a strengths-based approach

Weeks 2 & 3

Field Work

Working with community members to identify key health challenges and solutions

Weeks 3 & 4

Field Work

Implementing community-level health interventions tailored to local contexts



What is the Field School?

Hosted by the Healthy Child Uganda (HCU) partnership at Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST), the Global Health Community Engagement Field School is a Ugandan-Canadian Partnership Initiative that brought together undergraduate students from MUST and the University of Calgary (UC) for a four-week global learning program centered on community engagement and health promotion. At base, the Field School is grounded in principles of equitable and reciprocal partnerships in global health, recognition of community members as active and insightful agents in change for health, and bi-directional learning – both between Ugandan and Canadian students, and between students and communities.

The Field School program offers Ugandan and Canadian students a unique hands-on experience through which they can learn about reciprocal community engagement, facilitate constructive reflection with community members about pressing health issues, and collaborate amongst themselves and with communities to implement strengths-based health promotion initiatives. Further, the field school offers students an opportunity to gain valuable interpersonal skills by learning and working together in cross-cultural, interdisciplinary teams.

In 2023, the Field School was held between April 22nd and May 19th, with a focus on promoting the health of adolescents and young people (ages 10-24) who were identified by Ugandan district leaders as an underserved population. The 2023 program was refined from a Pilot Field School that ran in June of 2019 with a focus on maternal and child health. The Field School brings together decades of lessons and experiences from MUST based on community-based immersive training experiences, from HCU based on participatory program implementation and engagement, and from UCalgary Cummings School of Medicine (CSM) based on field programs for experiential learning in global health in Tanzania, Nicaragua, and Ethiopia.



Field School Objectives

01

Support students in developing skills in community engagement, including use of strengths-based approaches.

02

Promote cross-cultural competency and facilitate bi-directional learning, encouraging mutual exchange of knowledge, experiences, and perspectives between Ugandan and Canadian students.

03

Raise student awareness of global health and equity issues, and potential for collaboration among national and international students.

04

Expose students to strengths, innovations, and dynamics of rural South-Western Ugandan communities.

05

Support South-Western Ugandan communities' capacity for health promotion, health messaging, and community strengthening, including through work with Village Health Teams, health facility staff, community leaders, community members, and District Health Officers.

06

Provide HCU and Ugandan district leaders with new and potentially valuable insights into community contexts, including opportunities for potential future community-engaged co-research, co-learning, and co-innovation.

Student Composition

Institution	Student Demographics	Undergraduate Programs Represented
MUST (10 Students)	Gender: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 Female • 1 Male Ages of 18-25: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 students Ages 25 and up: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 student 	Gender Studies and Applied Womens' Health (BSc) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 <i>students</i> Planning and Community Development (BSc) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 <i>students</i> Agricultural Livelihoods and Farm Production (BSc) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 <i>students</i>
UC (9 Students)	Gender: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 Female • 1 Male Ages of 18-25: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 students Ages 25 and up: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 students 	Health Sciences (BHSc) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 <i>students: Biomedical Sciences Stream</i> • 6 <i>students: Health and Society Stream</i> Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies (BCR) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 <i>student</i>



Program & Field Activities

Preparation for Community Engagement

In the first week of the Field School, students underwent a week of training to equip them with skills for community engagement. This included training on implementing strengths-based approaches in community engagement, facilitating reflection and bi-directional learning with community members, and working across a cultural divide. Students were further exposed to Ugandan health and healthcare contexts in the field, where they visited community health facilities and observed demonstrations of Village Health Teams (VHTs) implementing the Healthy Adolescents and Young People (HAY!) program. Additionally, interactive demonstrations from the Sim4Life program at MUST introduced students to the concept of effective low-cost health interventions such as Kangaroo Mother Care for preterm infants. Finally, through meetings with local District Health Officers (DHOs) and health teams, students gained insight into the various levels of the Ugandan healthcare system, and how these levels integrate with one another to address various care needs.

UGANDA FIELD SCHOOL COURSE SCHEDULE, 2023.		
DM 1	SESSIONS	DM 2
Time		SESSIONS
8:30-8:45am	Arrival and Registration	- Re-cap of the Previous Day- STUDENT
8:45-10:00am	- Welcome & Introductions - Introduction to MINCH DEAN FIS - Official Opening - Expectations, fears and rules - Introductions to course objectives	- Principles of Adult Learning FRIDA BARBRA
10:00-10:30am	BREAK TEA	BREAK TEA
10:30-11:45	- Cultural Assumptions & Values - Johari's Window and Feedback BARBRA	- Team Building (Blind Fold Walk) - Kneeling WILFRED - Root causes of ill- Health KAT & FRIDA - Jasmine's Story - Knotty Problem - Low Hanging Fruit
12:30-1:30pm	LUNCH	LUNCH
3:00-5:00pm	- Active Listening - Methods and Techniques of Community Engagement - SIM LAB TOUR EVALUATION	- Gender Needs VIOLA - Teachable Moments FRIDA - Perspectives & Perception BARBRA - Cooperation - Field visits Prep WILFRED STUDENT EVALUATION



Field Work in Communities

In the latter two weeks of the program, students worked collaboratively to engage local communities and create context-relevant health promotion strategies targeting adolescents and young people. Students first met with the local DHO to gain approval for community entry, and to help situate plans for community engagement within the context of the Ugandan health system, which features multiple service levels. Students then split into three groups, each accompanied by Ugandan staff from MUST and HCU. Groups contained an equal balance of Ugandan and Canadian students and aimed to maximize the diversity of academic programs represented by students. Each group was then assigned to a different community in Mbarara District (Bwizibwera, Rubaya, or Bukiro), where students facilitated meetings and discussions with community members to identify and understand key health challenges faced by AYs. Following this, students worked closely with the communities to implement health interventions based on existing community strengths and capacities, and the desired areas of health improvement.



Language barriers during community engagement meant that trust and collaboration between Canadian and Ugandan students were essential for success. Community members largely spoke Runyankole, a language shared by a smaller portion of the Ugandan students, who took key roles acting as translators and cultural interpreters.

Final Presentations

On the last day of the Field School, a symposium was held at MUST in Mbarara. Here, students prepared and delivered presentations of their work in communities to MUST staff, District Health Officers, policymakers, and key community leaders. Presentations were followed by open questions to student groups, allowing for reflection on strengths and areas for improvement in each community health intervention. Additionally, student presenters and attendees discussed how each intervention could be sustained over time, and, in some cases, implemented in additional communities for greater impact. Finally, students and attendees reflected on the 2023 Field School and how future Field School programs could build on its' success.



Community Interventions For Health Promotion

Community and Facility Engaged	Community Members Engaged With	Priority Health Challenge(s) Identified	Health Promotion Materials Created
Bwizibwera <i>Health Centre IV</i>	Parents of AY, key community leaders, health centre staff.	Need for effective parenting of AY through key challenges (e.g., puberty, developing healthy behaviours in adolescence).	An illustrated parenting manual with translation in the local language. An income-generating basket weaving group for ongoing support and discussion among parents.
Rubaya <i>Health Centre III</i>	AY, key community leaders, health centre staff.	Drug and alcohol abuse among AY as a coping mechanism and social activity.	A safe indoor-outdoor space for AY to take part in sports, games, and other alternative social activities, and to receive counselling and basic healthcare services from VHTs. AY-targeted health promotion murals and messaging near the new AY space.
Bukiro <i>Health Centre III</i>	AY, Parents of AY, key community leaders, health centre staff.	Early marriage and sexual activity, drug and alcohol abuse, gender-based violence, parenting challenges.	A safe indoor-outdoor space for AY to take part in sports, games, and other alternative social activities, and to receive counselling and basic healthcare services from VHTs. AY-targeted health promotion murals and messaging near the new AY space.

Communities Engaged



Bwizibwera



Bwizibwera parents weaving baskets and participating in a parent support group.



Rubaya



Health promotion messages targeted at preventing drug and alcohol abuse for adolescents and young people in Rubaya.



Bukiro



Health promotion mural in Bukiro; encouraging "everyoneeness" in tackling community health issues.

Reflections from Communities



District Health Officers

"This engagement put us a step ahead as a district into thinking about the health of the young people in the community and thinking about their challenges as well as their needs. But also putting up those pictures in the facility walls was something that was so good, because they communicate with the young people when they come around and there is some kind of attachment that was created."

- Assistant District Health Officer,

District Health Team

"The approaches that really impressed me were how community problems were being addressed by solutions from community members... which made the program a participatory engagement, because people would think of their problems and find solutions for them. The students were actually hands-off but eyes-on, because community people had to critically think of solutions to their problems. So, I liked that approach."

- District Health Team Member,



Community Health Workers

"In my experience, I was able to learn that both the youth and parents need a platform of expressing the different challenges that they go through. In that engagement, it was discovered that the youth hide a lot of things from their parents but in that engagement, they got an opportunity that was so conducive to express themselves."

-Local Community Health Worker,

Student Reflections



Participatory Methods

"I now better understand how participatory methods can form a process of empowerment for communities; when people come together to reflect on circumstances impacting their health, they can gain a deeper understanding of these circumstances and be motivated to act upon them collectively."

- UC Student

Value of Community Knowledge

"I was able to appreciate that community members have the knowledge and capacity to discover their own challenges and brainstorm possible solutions to the challenges or problems. We only need to guide them through the process."

- MUST Student



Community-Level Interventions

"I adopted a new perspective that good solutions to health problems do not necessarily have to rely on broad government interventions or funding from higher levels. Community-level interventions using and innovating from local capacity can be effective too."

- UC Student

Student Highlights



Intercultural Exchange

"I was able to learn about and respect the Canadian culture and also was free to share how the culture is here in some of the Ugandan communities, just like how the University of Calgary students were sharing with us the culture in their communities in Canada."

- MUST Student

Celebrating Adolescents

"A highlight was during our final Adolescent and Young People Celebration. We anticipated 50 attendees, prepared for 150, and close to 200 youth showed up. When we arrived on the bus, they were all dancing and welcomed us to their community!"

-UC Student



Reflections from Facilitators



“The greatest achievement of this partnership so far has been strengthening community action and ownership of initiatives through the empowerment of communities to establish their priorities, implement interventions and create systems for maintaining the change by leveraging the support of existing partners in their networks.”

**-Barbara Naggayi,
Lecturer, MUST**

“I am lucky to work with people who are energised to make a difference in people's lives. This is what keeps me going. Together we can build a better generation of leaders.”

**- Teddy Kyomuhangi,
Program Manager HCU**





Next Steps:

Supporting Project Sustainability

As the 2023 field school came to a close, students and facilitators identified a clear need to support ongoing function of the newly created health promotion initiatives in each community. Physical products (health promotion messaging, murals, and the Bwizibwera parenting guide) can offer ongoing benefits in each community after field school students have left. However, it has been suggested that in order to maximise benefits to community members, the field school should prioritise building longer-term relationships with the communities it has engaged so far. By doing so, future field school students can build on the work of their predecessors and create greater continuity of health promotion initiatives.

Refining the Model for Student-Community Engagement in the Field School

Starting in 2019, field school facilitators and participating students started constructing a conceptual model for bi-directional learning and reciprocity between students and engaged communities. The model describes a three-way process of meaningful knowledge exchange between MUST students, UC students, and community members, where each group offers knowledge and experience to the other two, while also receiving them in kind. The model was used in planning and course design for the 2023 field school.

Following the 2023 field school, this model will be further refined, and will incorporate additional new insights. Specifically, the model will be examined in detail to better understand its potential in fostering transformative learning and community empowerment. The research study discussed on the following page is one part of pursuing these actions.



Evaluation Study on the 2023 Global Health Community Engagement Field School

Involving personnel at MUST, HCU, and UC, an evaluation study on the 2023 field school program is currently underway. This study will more deeply examine and evaluate the extent to which the existing model for student-community engagement in the field school has been realised, using qualitative data collected from:

- Participating students at MUST and UC
- Field school facilitators at MUST
- Community health workers in Mbarara District
- The Mbarara District Health Team
- The Mbarara District Health Office

The study will also use this data to identify opportunities for improvement in future field schools, including program design, processes for community engagement, and student experiences. The findings will guide and enable a refined model for student-community engagement in the field school will be constructed and applied to planning for future programs.

To promote further discussion and reflection, all findings and reports will be shared with key partners and stakeholders and submitted for publication in peer-reviewed academic journals.



Program Recommendations for Future Field Schools

01

Refine the field school program, class curriculum, and model for reciprocal student-community engagement based on findings from the field school evaluation study.

02

Carefully consider future community field sites and health promotion initiatives within the field school context and make efforts to support the sustainability of existing initiatives from field schools in 2019 and 2023.

03

Continue field school engagement across a variety of community settings, including both rural and semi-urban settings, in order to offer students a more comprehensive understanding of the diversity of local community contexts.

04

Refine and update student orientation activities and pre-course learning packages to prepare students more effectively for cross-cultural exchange, reciprocal community engagement, and international travel.

05

Align the timing of future field schools with the core rotation of Interdisciplinary Studies at MUST to better accommodate mandatory placements of outgoing students and student schedules in general.





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