



2024 REPORT

Global Health Community Engagement Field School



HEALTHY CHILD UGANDA



Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST)

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Nombe Senior Secondary School

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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
CUMMING SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

At a Glance

2024 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: JUNE 16 - JULY 11, 2024

16

Students

From MUST and UCalgary

02

Secondary Schools Engaged

to jointly implement health interventions to support adolescents and young people



Ugandan-Led Program

University faculty/staff, district health leaders, and secondary school staff sharing knowledge and practical experience

"The Global Health Uganda Field School 2024 was an eye-opening experience that solidified my future career path in governmental health work and expanded my passion for global health."
- UC 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 school/community members to identify key health challenges and solutions

Weeks 3 & 4

Field Work

Implementing school/community-level health interventions tailored to local context



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, for the third time, 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. 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 secondary school communities.

The Field School program offers Ugandan and Canadian students a unique immersive learning experience through which they learn about community engagement and practice using strengths-based and community-first approaches to address health problems with attention to context. The program views community members as experts in their own lives and social environments; student learning focuses on identifying and mobilizing community strengths for change through grassroots action. Rather than applying external solutions, field school students learn tools and strategies to support communities in self-identifying, exploring, and addressing challenges that impact their health and well-being. In collaboration with Field School students, secondary school leaders, staff, and students engage to create their own interventions, following a “use what you have” approach that draws from and builds on local resources and capacity. Ugandan and Canadian students also gain valuable interpersonal skills by working together with communities in a cross-cultural, interdisciplinary manner. Students navigate cultural, value, and belief differences, making use of each others’ strengths and lenses while seeking to uphold a collaborative dynamic and place communities’ needs, ideas, and agency at the centre of the action.

In 2024, the Field School was hosted in Mbarara from June 16th through July 11th. The 2024 content focus involved promoting health of adolescents and young people at two secondary school identified by Mbarara district health leaders. This Field School built on decades of lessons and experiences from MUST community-based immersive student training programming, from Healthy Child Uganda and Healthy Adolescents and Young People (HAY!) project experience, and feedback from past field schools in Uganda at MUST (2019 and 2023) and UCalgary experiential field schools in Tanzania, Nicaragua, and Ethiopia.

Field School Objectives

01

Support students in developing skills in community engagement and strength based approaches to health promotion.

02

Promote cross cultural competency and exchange opportunities including teamwork with communities and international students.

03

Increase understanding of global health and equity issues.

04

Appreciate the strengths of rural Ugandan communities and learn from community and school members.

05

Support schools in Southwest Uganda in their health promotion goals for young people (secondary school students).



Student Composition

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





Program & Field Activities

Preparation for Community Engagement- Week 1

In Class Training

Students initially underwent three days of training, equipping them with the necessary skills for effective community engagement. This preparation/orientation week comprised several themes.

The first theme was bias. Students confronted their tendencies to make assumptions about individuals despite limited knowledge. They then reflected on how their biases potentially impact their ability to effectively engage with communities during field work.

The second theme was community engagement. Students considered the importance of 'community entry', and explored strategies for undertaking successful community entry. They learned to formulate a 'community diagnosis' and engage with a community at multiple levels to develop a comprehensive understanding of inherent strengths and opportunities for growth. Stages of community readiness were reviewed emphasizing the importance of meeting communities where they are to facilitate change. A 'webbing' strategy was introduced, to support identification of root causes for complex health issues especially with intersecting underlying factors.

The third theme was adolescent and youth health. Students were exposed to major health issues faced by adolescents and young adults in Uganda, key messages important in health promotion and what it means to be a 'healthy adolescent'.

These themes were reviewed using an experiential and student-led approach. Rather than didactic sessions, students engaged in activities that allowed them to experience each concept first hand, developing a deeper understanding and the related skills.

Importantly, students participated in specific sessions to foster MUST-UCalgary student bonds, planting the seed for relationships that supported effective collaboration during subsequent weeks.

Program & Field Activities

Preparation for Community Engagement- Week 1 District Health Offices and Secondary School Visits

Following three days of in-class learning, students visited several community sites to be more deeply exposed to Ugandan health, healthcare, and secondary school contexts. Students visited a district health office, learning about levels of the Ugandan healthcare system and their integration to address various population health needs. A visit to a government health centre allowed an opportunity to see health service provision in a real-world setting. This site tour also gave insight into facility-driven interventions which have already strengthened health centres' friendliness in support for adolescent health.

During this tour, students also visited two secondary schools (St. Michael High School and Mwengura Secondary School) that had been engaged in health promotion activities during recent Healthy Adolescents and Young People (HAY!) project implementation. At these schools, they were exposed to school-led adolescent health promotion interventions and had opportunities to gain familiarity with the Ugandan government secondary school environment, in preparation for upcoming fieldwork.



Program & Field Activities

Field Work in Secondary Schools - Weeks 2 and 3

During the following two weeks, students collaboratively engaged with two new secondary schools (Nombe and St. Andrews) with an overarching goal of promoting adolescent health through the introduction of similar concepts that had been taught in the HAY! secondary schools visited in week 1. Field school faculty pre-identified **three project areas** to guide students' interactions.

Essay Competition	AY Friendly Spaces	Mural
Create an essay writing contest encouraging students to reflect on their health and unique experiences as adolescents, while practicing writing skills.	Create and/or improve spaces to increase friendliness and comfortability to support adolescents and their health needs.	Create a mural to visually communicate ways that adolescents experience health or to communicate important health messages.

Field school students were split into two groups, each assigned to a different school. Groups were balanced for Ugandan and Canadian students, aiming for diversity of academic programs represented.

At both schools, the way that these projects were approached differed in content, process, and specific nature of the intervention based on the unique needs, perspectives and goals of each school community, which varied considerably. Unique content, processes, and outcomes are summarized in tabular format later in the report.

Program & Field Activities

Field Work in Secondary Schools - Weeks 2 and 3

Prior to community entry, students met with the district health office (DHO) where they engaged to understand the DHO goals and review DHO perspectives on major adolescent health challenges. Students also performed stakeholder mapping and analysis to identify all of the major stakeholders within the school community.

When starting their field work, students facilitated discussions with identified stakeholders to understand their priority AY health challenges, and communicated student perspectives to the school administration and vice versa. They then worked closely with the school communities to implement health interventions based on existing community strengths and capacities, and the desired areas of health improvement. Throughout the engagement, a 'community-directed' approach was utilized. The choice of health issues and activities were directed by the school community. Health messaging followed government guidelines and drew from training resources developed in the HAY! project. Moreover, resources and actions necessary to implement interventions were largely initiated and mobilized by the school communities.



Cultural barriers encountered required trust and collaboration between Canadian and Ugandan students. Though both secondary schools were English-medium schools, many school students were more comfortable with Runyankole, the local dialect spoken by most of the MUST students. These MUST participants played key roles as translators and cultural interpreters.

Program & Field Activities




Community Exit and Final Presentations - Week 4

During the final week, a community exit celebration was hosted at each secondary school. The initiatives implemented were unveiled to the entire school by MUST, UCalgary and secondary school representatives.




On the Field School day, a symposium at MUST involved presentations of work from the Field School students to MUST staff, District Health Officers, policymakers, and key community leaders. Presentations were followed by open questions to participating students, promoting reflection on strengths and areas for improvement in each community health intervention. Students provided input reflecting on their experiences overall with the 2024 Field School and suggestions to build on its' success.



Nombe Secondary School Overview

Project	Methods of Community Engagement (Process)	Health Issues Identified	Tangible and Intangible Outcomes
Essay Writing Contest  <p>Left to right: Marin Anderson, Godwin Rukara</p>	<p>Develop assessment criteria with English department.</p> <p>Facilitation of four student workshops about the essay contest.</p> <p>Involvement of students in the judging process</p>	<p>Essay topics included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying • Relationships • Menstrual Health • Alcoholism and Drug Abuse • Domestic Violence • Child Neglect • Peer Pressure 	<p>Highlighted areas needing school follow-up.</p> <p>Created Writers' Club</p> <p>Encouraged student reflection on what adolescent health means to them.</p>
Friendly AY spaces  <p>Left to right: Janessa Walker, Isabella Amutuhaire, Immaculate Nasasira</p>	<p>Identified health needs through facilitating student conversations and transect walk.</p> <p>Engagement with students to brainstorm strength based solutions to address their identified problems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congestion, limited operating hours, and lack of hand-washing and other facilities in sick bay • Lack of privacy for students to discuss sensitive health topics 	<p>Improved Sick Bay (added handwashing stations, mosquito nets)</p> <p>Created an 'AY friendly space' for adolescents that included health posters with student selected messages from the Healthy Child Uganda approved public health messaging.</p> <p>Created a 'HAY! Club'</p>
Mural Project  <p>Left to right: Lane Begalke, Deborah Yawe, Desire Tushabe</p>	<p>Student-led discussion to understand students' 'ideal vision' of adolescent health and problem identification.</p> <p>Student-led sketching and selection of government-approved health messages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleanliness • Menstrual Health • Respect • Nutrition 	<p>Created murals to promote healthy messaging and reduce stigma.</p> <p>Mobilized students' creativity and leadership abilities.</p> <p>Enhanced understanding of adolescent experiences of health.</p>

St. Andrews Secondary School Overview

Project	Methods of Community Engagement Employed (Process)	Health Issues Identified (Issues)	Tangible and Intangible Outcomes (Outcome)
Essay Writing Contest  <p>Left to right: Schein Chingozho, Adella Alinda</p>	<p>Creation of assessment criteria in collaboration with teaching staff.</p> <p>Student workshops about essay contest.</p> <p>Anonymous submission of essays</p> <p>Student collaboration on advertisement and judging criteria.</p>	<p>Topics found in Essay review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boy-Girl Relationships • Drug abuse • Peer pressure • First experience in secondary school • Roles at home • Alcoholism • Passing exams 	<p>Provided students with a platform to express their experiences of adolescence.</p> <p>Enabled belief in writing skills.</p> <p>Created a structure for future essay competitions.</p> <p>Created follow up resources for administration.</p>
Friendly AY Spaces  <p>Left to right: Anthony Musinguzi, Parnika Sakthivel, Annah Dalrymple</p>	<p>Several open-ended discussions and transect walks with students.</p> <p>Emphasis on the importance of students as the experts in their health and strength based approach to solutions.</p> <p>Student-led design and execution of interventions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diet and Nutrition • Sick Bay • Emotional Health • Space to Discuss Personal / Intimate Health Concerns 	<p>Garden redesign for sustainability and increased meal variation.</p> <p>Hand washing area and bed nets in sick bay.</p> <p>Creation of 'Talking Compound' and 'Tricky Question Box'</p> <p>Creation of student led HAY! club.</p>
Mural Project  <p>Left to right: Emma Mierau, Daizy Amutuhaire, Josaline Mikaye</p>	<p>Student-led problem identification for health themes and selection of government-approved health messaging.</p> <p>Student-led drafting of sketches and visual format.</p> <p>Collaborate with local artist to create finalized product.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcoholism, Drugs, and Gambling • Healthy Relationships 	<p>Created murals which will initiate conversations about what it means to be a healthy adolescent.</p> <p>Student artistic skill development.</p> <p>Platform for students voices.</p>

Communities Engaged - 2024

Nombe Secondary School

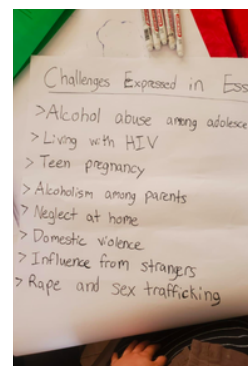
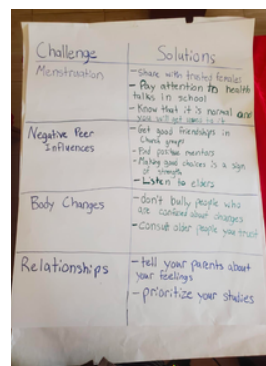
AY Friendly Spaces



Brainstorming solutions for identified health concerns

Creation of AY Friendly Space

Essay Writing Competition



Student Team for Essay Group

Student-Made Flyers

Drafted Competition Guidelines

Mural



Cleanliness & Nutrition Clock, Menstrual Health Flower, Respect Tree

Student-Led Identification of Health Themes

Communities Engaged - 2024

St. Andrews Secondary School

AY Friendly Spaces



Renovation of school garden

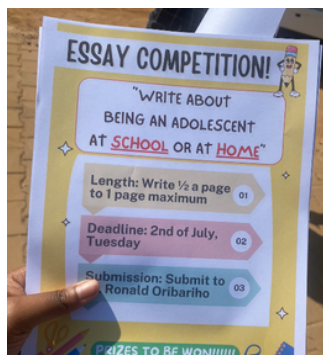


Creation of health messaging posters



Formation of the 'HAY! club

Essay Writing Competition



Flyers



Teachers and students working together



Students developing topic list

Mural



'Alcohol, Drugs, and Gambling' Wheel



Healthy Relationships Tree



Students sketching

Reflections from Communities



District Health Officers

"I have been working with the Field School team since the beginning of the planning for this year's activities because I am very interested in activities to improve adolescent health. The DHO is very pleased with the results we have seen from the Field School group and we are committed to help support the projects that have been started in the secondary schools. We will create more health programs focused on schools and provide resources to the sick bays; previous health initiatives were just focused on communities."

- District Health Officer - Mbarara

District Education Officers

"I was initially worried about the sustainability of these activities in the secondary schools because of the short time frame for Field School, but now I am very encouraged to hear from the head teachers that they are committed to continue the activities that have started. Secondary school students have acquired self-reliance skills and have confidence of confidentiality to talk about their health issues with counsellors or nurses."

- Mr. Deo, District Education Officer - Mbarara



Secondary School Head Teachers

"I give my sincere appreciation for all that the Field School students have achieved with Nombe Secondary School in the last two weeks. Our students do not want the Field School team to leave. They are already frequently using the AY friendly space. Our compound is now 'talking' with all the HAY! signs around the campus."

Mr. Emmanuel, Nombe SS Head Teacher

Reflections from Leaders



Commissioner for Basic Education, Ministry of Health - Government of Uganda

“Innovation and creativity are key skills needed today for our young people. This project has given important space for adolescents to manage their health and their wellbeing. There are so many challenges out there facing young people, and this project has helped address some of those big issues. Young people: continue learning to help improve your life - especially girls - so that you can reduce the female drop-out rate.”

Mr. Mugenyi Cleophus

Deputy Chief Research Officer - Department of Maternal, Newborn & Child Health, MUST

“AY friendly space is both a physical space and also within our mindsets of giving AYs space to talk about their health and issues that affect them. One of the greatest strengths of your achievements in Field School is that you helped secondary students learn how to create change themselves using the resources that were already available around them, and through giving them space to talk about their health issues.

Dr. Hamson Kanyesigye



Student Reflections



Being Flexible

I learned diverging from the plan is inevitable, we have different rules that we need to follow, we had to adapt and have an open mind when we approach the field. Each day it is difficult to be consistent, but it is okay to be inconsistent. When we had to change our plans with the images, we were honest with the students why we had to change the plan and then this was positive.

-UC Student 2024

Community Empowerment

"I learned that the community has the ability to bring about change with what resources they have around them, they need only to be empowered to come to that realisation. Also, that it's better owned and sustained if they are the ones pushing for that change."

- MUST Student 2024



Cross-Cultural Communication

"One of the biggest skills I gained is learning how to effectively communicate with individuals across different cultures, especially when hierarchies or authority are involved, or when discussing challenging and sensitive topics. The skills I have gained in this arena will profoundly support my future career aspirations."

- UC Student 2024



Reflections from Faculty



“I was particularly impressed by the university students' level of creativity, innovation, organisation, and decision-making abilities as they embraced the three thematic areas around which their school engagement revolved. Their capacity and willingness to serve in the two different school communities were proven by their ability to mobilise and facilitate secondary students in identifying gaps, developing engagement processes, and determining what could be done differently within their means to promote adolescent health in their settings.”

-Barbara Naggayi, Lecturer and Field School Lead, MUST

“The field school experience provides an opportunity to our young generation to face the realities of rural school life and interestingly the cultural shock was to both international and local students. Participation in this program cannot leave these students the same; their perceptions about the needs of adolescents and young people have changed. It was so exciting to see how young people came up with strategies to clarify expectations from both students and administration, this was so fascinating to me.

Small scale as it is, the global field school program attracted policy discussions both at district and national level!

**-Teddy Kyomuhangi,
Program Manager HCU**



Next Steps:

Supporting Project Sustainability

As the 2024 field school came to a close, students and facilitators identified a clear need to support ongoing function of the newly created adolescent and young people's health promotion initiatives in each of the secondary schools. Healthy Child Uganda staff will conduct follow-up visits with the secondary schools to provide additional support, training, and education resources to the HAY! clubs, the AY friendly spaces, and the sick bays to ensure that the students can establish these initiatives as long term programs rather than brief exercises for the Field School.

Another priority identified for project sustainability and long term impact for improving adolescent health is investing in leadership development in Mbarara at the District government level to get buy-in from government leaders to push for more support to the schools and communities engaged in HAY! and Field school initiatives. HCU wants to build up champions and enablers within the District leadership to ensure government resources and priorities are backing adolescent and young people's health in Mbarara. This process was already started with the final presentation during Field School to government leaders where they learned about the changes the Field School students were able to initiate in the secondary schools in just two weeks. After hearing the presentations and visiting the schools, the Commissioner for Basic Education in Mbarara wished that the Field School group could bring the same training to the other 26 schools in the district.







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HEALTHY CHILD UGANDA

