

## Save the Mothers leads UCU Health week

Save the Mothers in collaboration with Uganda Christian University (UCU) conducted the health awareness week for the Easter semester 2022. The theme was Your Neighbour's Health is also Your Responsibility with a hashtag Safe Love. This was one of the pre-conference activities for the STM Conference slated for 6 May 2022.

**Target audience: UCU community of staff and community of staff, students, alumni, STM students and alumni.**

#SafeLove. SafeLove journey is a cycle that starts with safe early years, safe teenage hood, safe motherhood within safe families and relationships.

The main key messages were **Safe love** is self-care, friendship, family, mental health, self-control, open communication, security, patient, ... safeLove is safe adolescence and safe motherhood. These messages featured on the e-frames, T-shirts and social media.

STM alumni and well-wishers actively participated in the health week through social media via the E-frames. The e-frames attracted over 700 participants.

**Health talks:** STM conducted five health dialogues with UCU students as well as the guild leadership. Participants shared their views on safe Love and sex, as a gift from God.



Saida Mukhi, MPH alumna, Tanzania



Dr Miriam Mutabazi (black T-shirt) gets a photo moment with UCU students during the health week

The talks were wrapped up by the facilitators who shared important facts of life such as the need to make safe choices that keep one safe from abortions, STDs/HIV, pregnancies.

Dr Miriam Mutabazi, STM Executive Director, alumni Medi Mukula, Dr Doreen Sekibombo, Teopista Agutu, Resty Kagguma and Zaituni Nabateregga were among the facilitators.



Dr. Miriam

**Health talk sessions**



Dr. Doreen



**Students share their views**



Medi

**Bravo STM network for getting involved in the health week activities in different forms. Robie Kakonge, your team rocked. Safe motherhood is a marathon for all of us. Keep running.**



# Alumni in Community Engagement

Kudos to STM alumni for serving your communities with skills and knowledge you acquired during the MPHL training to promote Safe Motherhood. Indeed No Mother or Child Should Die due to preventable pregnancy and childbirth related complications.

Between February and March 2022 three alumni shared stories of their work in preparation for the May 2022 STM conference.

Saida Mukhi a journalist from Tanzania, Reta Buma a midwife from Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Andrew Koolya a social worker from Uganda.

**Saida Mukhi from Tanzania conducted a workshop on the importance of involving faith leaders in health issues at a partners meeting in Bagamoyo, Coastal region.**

*Saida presenting on the importance of working with faith leaders to promote health.*



## Reta Buma, founded Le Rebatisseur teenage centre in DRC

**Reta Buma, MPHL Class 2015 from Democratic Republic of Congo has set up a teenage centre to deliver reproductive messages and life changing skills for young people.**

Reta is a midwife. She hails from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in Africa. Reta who works with Evangelical Medical Centre of Nyankunde, Bunia, eastern DRC wears many leadership hats that allow her to promote maternal and child health in her community: Head of midwives at the Evangelical Medical Centre, provincial president of midwives in Ituri province and an instructor at high Medical Technical Institute of Nyankunde. Inspired by the MPHL program at Save the Mothers, in 2017 Reta founded a teenage centre called Le Rebatisseur.

Reta says: *"I saw many teenage pregnancies and abortions in my community. Many of these girls were coming to the hospital when it was too late. However, my community did not have a place where youth would be welcomed and supported without discrimination."* This marked the birth of Le Rebatisseur.



"I started with 10 youth who included 8 girls and 2 boys. Currently the centre has registered 60 youths (43 girls and 17 boys). The centre provides health services to the youth and practical skills such as tailoring, driving, catering, hair dressing among others."

The centre also conducts community outreaches where Reta has trained the community leaders to provide health information for community members.

Reta's initiative has resulted into having previous jobless youth now self-employed after gaining practical skills. Reta also says that with the right adolescent reproductive health services, her work has contributed to prevention of early pregnancies,

and teenage mothers seeking Ante Natal Care services in time.

In mid-February 2022, Reta conducted health talks with 85 young people in her community addressing reproductive health issues. Of the 85 young people, 63 were girls and 22 were boys with the average age of 20 years. She also had health dialogues with 35 women.

During the talks, the young people asked many questions around Sexually Transmitted Diseases and early pregnancies. Reta says that these talks are an opportunity for her to sensitise the young people and the women about cervical and breast cancer.



## Andrew Koolya, MPHL class 2012 conducted two community outreaches, Kagadi district, western Uganda.



### Andrew works as the principal town Clerk, Mabaale Town, Kagadi district.

In February 2022 Andrew led a team of three health workers, two local council chairpersons to conduct two community outreaches in Kagadi districts.

The team reached out to pregnant women and mothers with newborns. These included Jackline Kesiime, who had just had delivered triplets.

Harnessing the power of partnerships, Andrew mobilised resources which included time, materials, skills, transport and money (about 180,000 UGX (46 USD) to support the community outreach and women. The cash was used to procure birth preparedness items for the pregnant women like birth kit and food for Jackline, mother of triplets who received 70,000 UGX (18 USD). Items delivered to Jackline included soap, sugar, porridge flour, gauze and cotton wool.

Five pregnant women were visited and supported with talks on the importance of birth preparedness, antenatal care, health facility deliveries, breastfeeding, family plan-

ning, how to keep newborn baby clean and warm.

The health workers on the team immunised 18 newborns.

Andrew used the outreaches, as an opportunity to introduce maternity basket fund to community members. As a result three new women groups adopted the culture of saving for child birth.

To spread the safe motherhood message further, Andrew partnered with Bishop Samuel of Bunyoro Kitara Diocese (Anglican) who also embraced the information during his summons in the community.

Andrew also received support from alumni in Kagadi who included Sadayo, Selevano Thembo and Theodora Kajumba.

**Great job STM network family and well wishers in Kagadi and Hoima. Together we can.**



*Andrew in a checkered yellow shirt with his team of health workers and community leaders promote safe motherhood.*





Save the Mothers implements Post Natal Care for all Uganda (PNC4U) project in Bulambuli, Manafwa and Namisindwa districts in hard to reach mountainous areas of the Elgon region, eastern Uganda. PNC4U offers post-natal care services in homes with the aim of reducing maternal & child morbidity through early screening and management of post-partum related conditions.

Faith, 45 years old, is one of the beneficiaries of the PNC4U. She is from Gamalongo, Bumalimba Sub-county, Sironko district, in the catchment area of Buhugu Health Centre one of the PNC4U sites. In mid March 2022, Save the Mothers conducted a field visit to Sironko and met Faith.

Looking frail, tired and weak Faith took small steady steps towards her father's house cuddling her new bundle of joy, baby Moses in her arms safely. She arrived at the house, sat at the verandah, and welcomed us to her father's home.

Moses was 4 weeks old when Save the Mother visited. He looked healthy and well taken care of. When Faith was 8 months pregnant, she left her husband's home. She returned home to live with her father and eldest son.

At nine months of pregnancy, Faith fell ill. She was taken to Buhunu Health Centre III. At the facility, Faith tested positive for HIV and TB. This was the first time she attended ANC during this pregnancy. The health workers put her on Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) and TB treatment. They encouraged Faith to deliver at the health facility.



STM team catch a photo moment with the midwives (Miria and Lovic) at Buhugu Health Centre

## Post Natal Care for all Uganda



STM programs officer Sarah Namee (3rd left) and the midwives of Buhugu Health Centre III listen to Faith's story. Inset: A midwife examines baby Moses.

Though she looked anaemic, when the midwives checked her eye membranes and palms, she looked well. The facility has no equipment to check blood levels.

Faith narrated that one night at about 3.00 am, she felt like urinating. Squatting to urinate in a basin, suddenly she felt something drop into the basin. When she checked, it was the baby.

Faith got the first help after delivery from a nine year old girl who shares a room with her. The girl picked the baby from the basin and wrapped her in warm clothes. Thereafter, she called Faith's grandmother who came and made further assessment. Mother and baby were well. She then tied a cloth around Faith's stomach, which is a common practice in communities in Uganda for women after delivery.

A neighbour, Aidah also joined them and examined Faith. She realized that the placenta had not come out yet. When she checked the baby, she noticed to her surprise that the baby had no cord. Aidah said; *I left everything to God and went away and waited until morning broke to get more help.*



Faith's neighbours, Aidah and Harriet

In the morning, Aidah called another neighbour Harriet, who is a member of the Village Health Team (VHT).

When they arrived to help, Faith was taking a birth. Harriet examined Faith. The placenta was protruding in the birth canal. She sought help from another VHT. She massaged Faith's stomach until the placenta came out.

Harriet went to Buhugu Health Centre III and informed the health workers that Faith had delivered. Implementing the PNC4U all project, the midwives visited Faith. They examined mother and baby and all was well. They administered the newborn vaccines to the baby.

Faith speaks out about her needs: *My life needs food. The ART medicines are very strong for my weak and breastfeeding body. My father and son are not able to take care of me. They usually leave for work in the morning and return in the evenings. Sometimes, my son brings for me sugar. My grandmother and my neighbours give me food, whenever they can. Some days, I go hungry. I am too weak to dig and grow my own food.*

Faith also gets support from the neighbours who offer treatment support to promote adherence to ART for her and nevirapine for the baby.

**STM is grateful to the alumni in the Elgon region for supporting PNC4U implementation.**