



Empowering Communities to Live in Harmony with Nature through One Health Lessons and Leadership Training

Community Teach-up and Leadership Training Report

6 October 2020

St. Peter's Secondary School, Naalya, Kampala, Uganda

Contacts:

Aisha Nankanja

Founder and Executive Director
Rural Water Initiative for Climate Action (RWICA)
Kampala, Uganda
ashafaith16@gmail.com

Deborah Thomson, DVM

Founder and President of [One Health Lessons](http://OneHealthLessons.com)
OneHealthLessons.com
Washington, DC, USA
OneHealthLessons@gmail.com

RURAL WATER INITIATIVE FOR CLIMATE ACTION, UGANDA
P.O Box 1424 MPIGI-UGANDA



Acknowledgements

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I cannot begin to express the depths of my gratitude towards everyone who has motivated us. Mr. Alfred Okidi, Eng. Felix Twinomuchunguzi, Mr. Collins Oloya, and Ms. Betty Mbolanyi. From you, I have gained the desire to build into my own character the keen sense of justice, as well as the untiring spirit of patience, understanding, and community service, working dedicatedly, and the value of team work.

--Aisha Nankanja, Founder and Executive Director, RWICA

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Background and Need

Although the COVID-19 pandemic is the most recent infectious disease outbreak to emerge at the human-animal–environment interface, it is not the first time a new virus has developed from close contact between humans and wildlife. The pandemic has revealed a need for community members to better understand the mechanisms of disease and how to protect themselves, their families, and their animals.

The main goal of this community teach-up and leadership training event was to transform the mindset of youth and the community at large to conserve and live in harmony with nature. A second goal was to create awareness about One Health (the connection between human, environmental, and animal health) and its role in preventing COVID-19 and future pandemics. The aim was to accomplish these goals through purposeful training, mentoring, and action planning.

Event Planning

Empowering Communities to Live in Harmony with Nature was an intensive one-day event held on 6 October 2020 at the St. Peter's Secondary School in Naalya, Uganda.



Many helped to organize the event (See *Appendix A: Organizer*). Overall coordination was directed by Ms. Aisha Nankanja, Founder and Executive Director of the Rural Water Initiative for Climate Action Uganda (RWICA), and interns of One Health Lessons. RWICA is an indigenous, non-profit organization based in Mpigi Uganda. Its mission is to empower rural communities to take informed action to improve human, animal, and ecosystem health through equitable access to safe water and by building resilience to climate change. RWICA also aims to improve practices of hygiene and sanitation, especially in water stressed areas. A key to the success of the event was to leverage the opportunity to collaborate with the Youth Leadership Committee in Aisha's village, to which she was recently elected as a female youth representative. One Health Lessons, which trains interns to teach One Health lessons throughout the world, were key partners for providing educational materials and trained instructors.

The event was a convergence of stakeholders that included community dignitaries, youth leaders, One Health instructors from One Health Lessons, local non-profit organization, school teachers, law enforcers, and media representatives. The Youth Chairman and the Public Relations Secretary from the Naalya Youth Committee played a crucial role in organizing the event and mobilizing community members to attend the training. Village selection was based on Youth Leader's involvement in prior environment conservation activities to further build the relationship between Youth environmentalist and community members.

More than 70 people of different age groups participated:

- 85% Youths 18-35 years
- 10% Adults >35 years
- 5% Children 11-17 years

To align local activities with broader national goals, local leaders and national representatives from the Uganda Ministry of Water and Environment presented a talk about the different measures that central

and local government is doing to promote nature conservation. Ms. Betty Mbolanyi noted that every district has a One Health Task Force Group that is playing a major role in controlling the spread of the pandemic using a One Health Approach through connecting public health services that promote sanitation and hygiene with communities to reduce zoonotic diseases spread. She mentioned the community training as one that is highly-needed, especially in a time of Covid-19 era and thus she recommended that RWICA carries on similar training in different communities and that the Ministry of Water & Environment will offer technical support to the effort by providing facilitators.

One Health issue in the Community: Monkeys

Monkeys share the same open water source available to people in the area. Monkeys are also increasingly seen in peoples' homesteads. This is because of pressures to the monkeys because their natural habitats are being encroached upon through human-induced activities like deforestation for construction. Therefore, monkeys wander in the community looking for shelter and food; this action, subsequently, has stressed the community members and leads to increase risk of zoonotic diseases. Young people must be encouraged to be innovative and protect the environment to avoid a worsening situation.

Program Objectives

The objectives were designed to take maximum advantage of the community gathering at this critical time during the COVID-19 pandemic. They were

1. To train the community to understand that the health of people is dependent on the health of animals and the environment.
2. To train young people and community members to better understand the importance of protecting our environment through wildlife conservation education.
3. To help the community to better understand disease transmission and mutations and how to improve health by separating water for humans and animals use.
4. To train youth ambassadors with the aim of equipping them with information, knowledge, and skills on COVID-19 through learning material from One Health Lessons, One Health leadership skills, environmental education, Hygiene and Sanitation, and other skills to enable them to start One Health Leadership Clubs in their respectful communities.
5. To train community leaders, school teachers, and law enforcers as role models who will be mentors and overseers to the youth and monitor the One Health Leadership Clubs as a mechanism of project sustainability.

"For us to live in harmony with nature and the ecosystem, we need to have a healthy respect for natural boundaries between people and animals."

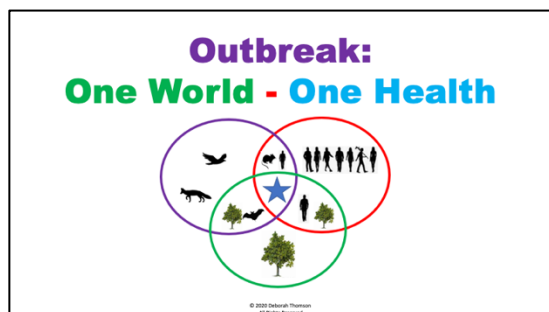
--Local Council Chairman

One Health Education and Community Engagement Approach

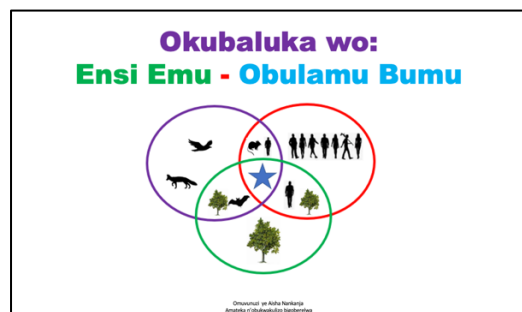
The implemented training approach allowed local people to view the pandemic from a new perspective which was from the center of all preparedness, response, and recovery strategies in case of an outbreak. This paradigm shift reframes the role of communities from victims to active managers of their response and reaffirms the strength of community-based One Health initiatives. We conclude that strategies should be aimed at educating and empowering, and not just engaging, communities.

The educational content was provided from One Health Lessons (OneHealthLessons.com) and focused on both One Health and COVID-19. One Health Lessons (OHL) is an organization working to educate children and adults around the world about One Health. The learning materials were recently translated to the Luganda language and, OHL was able to provide three trained and locally-based interns to deliver

the educational content in both English and Luganda. In addition, this socially distant both indoor and outdoor event had speeches by guests of honor and a cultural presentation.



English



Luganda

The multitude of training methodologies (e.g., case study discussions, question and answer, group discussions) were utilized in order to make sure the community gets the whole concept and can practice lessons learnt, because only listening to the trainers can be forgotten, but what the trainees are less likely to forget the actions that they, themselves, have taken- such as practicing best methods of hygiene and sanitation, planting trees. The event ended with a ceremonial tree planting to symbolize a new beginning. See Appendix B: “Agenda”.

COVID-19 Prevention Guidelines

In coordination with staff at the St. Peter’s Secondary School, all Standards of Practice (SOPs) for safe gatherings during COVID-19 were observed to the greatest extent possible. Access to the site was limited and everyone was required to wear a mask. The venue had portable hand washing facilities at the school and hall entry points. Lessons were conducted in small working groups in outdoor open spaces where participants were encouraged to sit 2 meters away from each other.

Note: Although there were signs indicating that masks were required and participants were urged to do so, many participants did not adhere to wearing masks correctly, and it was difficult for organizers to enforce the rule. However, all other control measures were observed including handwashing, body temperature measuring, etc. In Uganda there is a growing complacent culture on mask wearing. People are commonly seen not wearing masks correctly due to the common belief that the COVID-19 spread rate is very low.

In response, in the upcoming proposed training i.e. 3rd to 4th December 2020, we shall have an innovative way to support participants to wear masks correctly. The plan is to have at least 3 participants assigned to monitor and encourage fellow training participants to wear masks correctly throughout the training session.

Short-term Outcomes

1. Stakeholders representing many sectors, including the Uganda Ministry of Water & Environment, convened to discuss how to align community health issues with multifaceted One Health solutions that are in harmony with changing social, cultural, and physical environments during the pandemic.
2. 70 youth ambassadors were trained during the community teach-up in the following topics:
 - Covid-19
 - One Health leadership
 - Water and sanitation management
 - Environment education
 - Life skills and personal development skills.

3. Participant feedback indicated they felt the training content was relevant to their community; the topic of One Health was in line with the learner's expectations; and the training was relevant to current Covid-19 pandemic era.
4. 15 community leaders, law enforcers, and school teachers were trained in mentoring the One Health Leadership Clubs.
5. At the end of the community teach-up, we launched One Health Leadership Clubs in Naalya village, Namugongo division with the stakeholders including school authorities, line government ministry, i.e. MWE, civil society from international media i.e. Global Investigative Journalism Network (GIJN), religious leaders and the community.
6. Youth leadership committees and Women small business community association were able to show case and teach environment conservation, sanitation & hygiene to their fellow members in the communities.





Photo credits: Cristo Media Pictures

Challenges and lessons learned

Operational factors

Operational barriers included pressures related to other demands on people's time, volunteer availability, and limited financial resources. We were also subject to the availability of the venue, which had other events going on. Initially, the idea was to present One Health to the visiting President. Although the President could not attend, the group took advantage of the opportunity to bring the community together anyway. Consequently, the 3-day training was condensed into one 10-hour day in which the excellent instructors from One Health Lessons were able to improvise and cover all topics of the Covid-19 lesson.

Weather changes and physical activity

Due to the rainfall patterns, we experienced a relatively heavy downpour on the training day, hence participants were unable to take part in open house games and sport as earlier scheduled. However, following Covid-19 SOPs like, social distancing, handwashing, mask wearing etc, there was a cultural troupe that entertained the learners during a short break. In addition, body energizing and stretching exercise during small group discussions were aimed at keeping the learners involved and active during the lessons.

Budget

The community training was a grass-roots event made possible by the commitment and dedication of the project organizers, support of local leaders, volunteer services of the instructors and presenters, and financial donations from Mr. Alfred Okidi, Eng. Felix Twinomuchungunzi, friends, and well-wishers. The approximately 3.7 million UGX (~\$1000 USD) covered travel expenses for volunteer instructors, audiovisual materials, public address system, publicity posters and banners, moderator, photographer, instructional supplies, lunch for participants, cultural performers, and incidental expenses. The in-kind donations demonstrated the community support for the project and included:

- Lead organizer Ms. Aisha Nankanja volunteered 5 hours per day for 35 days i.e. 1st September to 5th October and 10 hours on the training day 6th October 2020 numerous hours of her time.
- St. Peter's Secondary School in Naalya kindly provided the venue and assisted with maintaining COVID-19 prevention guidelines.
- Mr. David Monday, Social Innovation Academy –Mpigi, served as the moderator for the event
- Three One Health Lessons interns (Mr. Oscar Arac, Mr. James Baguma, Ms. Natasha Nakkazi) provided over 50 hours of volunteer effort.
- The Young African Leadership Initiative, through REMI East Africa, provided tangible incentives, such as YALI branded t-shirts to participants, a YALI branded flash disk, and badge to the organizer, as a motivation to reward community-based leadership.
- Technical advice was provided by Dr. Deborah Thomson (One Health Lessons), Dr. Laura Streichert (One Health Social Sciences Initiative), and Dr. Cheryl Stroud (One Health Commission).

Next Steps

This event demonstrated what can be done when people, ideas, organizations, and opportunities from around the world converge to take a big step toward positive change. Together, the community can tackle Covid-19, climate change, and the need for access to clean water. This event served as a successful pilot for training that can be replicated in other areas around the country, especially in low-resource/high-risk communities and those that depend on nature and animals for the livelihood of the community members. It is critical to have continued support, both by decision-makers and donors, for projects like this event which supports the message of One Health and empowers communities to take action.

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Appendix A: Event Organizers

NAME	AFFILIATION	PRESENTATION	CONTACT
Aisha Nankanja	One Health Social Science Initiative/ Rural Water Initiative for Climate Action	Organizer and One Health Lessons volunteer and instructor	ashafaith16@gmail.com
Mr. Kayanja Kevas Gasuza	Local Council Chairman	Youth engagement in innovative green enterprises	kayanjabrian200@gmail.com
David Monday	Social Innovation Academy -Mpigi	Moderator	Mondaydavid7@gmail.com
Kevin Akwero	Young African Leadership Initiative and REMI East Africa	Youth in community service and organization of public health	acellam.kevin@gmail.com
Kayanja Brian	Youth local council chairperson.	Moderator/ organizer	kayanjabrian200@gmail.com
Isaac Ssemulondo	Youth Publicity Secretary	Organizer	ssemuisaac02@gmail.com
Ms Betty Mbolanyi	Ministry of Water and Environment	Environment conservation	bmbolanyi@yahoo.com
Dr. Deborah Thomson	One Health Lessons Initiative	Developed One Health Lessons and COVID-19 training manual; trained One Health Lessons interns	OneHealthLessons@gmail.com
Natasha Nakazi	One Health Lessons Initiative	One Health Lessons intern and instructor	natashaonehealthlessons@gmail.com
Oscar Arac	One Health Lessons Initiative	One Health Lessons intern and instructor	oscararac.onehealth@gmail.com
James Baguma	One Health Lessons Initiative	One Health Lessons intern and instructor	jamesbagumaonehealth@gmail.com
Benon Herbert Oluka	Global Investigative Journalism Network	Role of media in environment conservation and mitigating risks of zoonotic diseases spread	hobenon@gmail.com
Dr. Cheryl Stroud	One Health Commission	Advisor	cstroud@onehealthcommission.org
Dr. Laura Streichert	One Health Social Science Initiative	Financial donation and Advisor	lcstreichert@gmail.com

Appendix B Community Training Agenda

Morning Session	Activity
Registration	<i>Sign-in:</i> Participants and delegates
Welcome	<i>Performance:</i> Kuza cultural troupe dance group
Opening by Ms. Betty Mbolanyi – Guest of Honor Focal point person of One Health concept, Uganda Ministry of Water and Environment	<i>Official Opening:</i> The importance of One Health
Dr. Laura Streichert, One Health Commission Dr. Deborah Thomson, One Health Lessons	<i>Welcome videos:</i> One Health is about living in harmony with nature and a way to learn more about COVID-19. Youth play an important role as One Health Champions in their communities.
Local council chairman	<i>Speech:</i> current state of environment conservation in the community
Host institution, St. Peter's Secondary School representative	<i>Speech:</i> Importance of educating young people at school the importance of conserving nature, protecting environment through active One Health leadership clubs
Mr. Oluka Benon Herbert Africa Editor, Global Investigative Journalism Network	<i>Speech:</i> The role of media in environment conservation; how the youth can use media to advance the cause of conserving nature and promoting One Health
Ms. Betty Mbolanyi Uganda Ministry of Water and Environment	<i>Speech:</i> Call to Action for One Health to be proactive at conserving the environment through taking good care of animal health, ensuring hygiene and sanitation starting at household level.
Afternoon Session	Activity
Break	Lunch break (lunch provided)
One Health Lessons in English and Luganda "Outbreak-One World-One Health" "Okubaluka wo- Ensi Emu-Obulamu Bumu"	<i>Lessons</i> in session, participant small group discussions; Questions and Answers about One Health Lessons with instructors
Community health-based leadership presentation from REMI East and Africa and YALI representative	REMI East Africa exists to increase access to quality healthcare for the most impoverished families with rural and urban poor setting. YALI is an initiative that supports young African leaders as they spur growth and prosperity, strengthen democratic governance and enhance peace and security across Sub-Saharan Africa. The representative's delivery of YALI donation
Community Tree Planting	Planted by Ms. Betty Mbolanyi with the community and participants - symbolizes new beginnings for the community
Closing	Giving out certificates to program participants