Northwestern Research Project

NGO: Omni Med, Uganda

Research Question: Can a Ugandan based NGO improve the health of local villagers by its "Home Visiting/ Educational Program"?

Child Family Health International is a UN-recognized nonprofit organization offering global health education programs since 1992. Our model is predicated on fair-trade, reciprocal partnerships and embodies an asset-based approach with our global partners. CFHI supports long-term relationships with partners in the 10 countries where we offer programs, allowing students the opportunity to complete short and medium-term global health experiences ethically and responsibly. Through CFHI, students will access a 5-module Pre-Departure Training (PDT) that provides essential information and preparation for the global opportunity. CFHI provides 24/7, US-based emergency support for students during their program and maintains medical and evacuation insurance for students during the time of their project.

Background: Omni Med has been working in the Mukono District of Uganda since 2009 in a service oriented program that we call Community Empowerment in Health. Following a directive from the Brookings Institution’s International Volunteering and Service Initiative, Omni Med built a program that utilizes international health volunteers who work with our staff of 6 within the Ugandan Ministry of Health’s VHT (Village Health Team) Program to make a measurable impact on the health of local villagers.

Since the outset, we have partnered closely with both the Ugandan Ministry of Health in Kampala and the District Health Office in Mukono, helping them to achieve their mission of training and maintaining VHTs. Our staff works closely with US health volunteers, well over 100 thus far, who facilitate trainings, conduct home visits with VHTs, teach during our quarterly meetings, and assist in all aspects of our research trials. During 2017, we will send over 30 volunteers to Uganda, with more annually in 2018 and beyond.

We have developed close relationships with many in the Ugandan Ministry of Health. Dr Paul Kagwa, national director of the VHT program in Kampala has been a long-time friend and supporter. Dr Deo Sekimpi, the director of UNESCO, Uganda, has advised and partnered with us for years. Dr Ely Tumashabe, the Director of Health Services for the Mukono District Health Office, and Hakim Kalungi, the District Health Educator, have been friends and supporters for nearly a decade.

In addition to the staple work of training and maintaining over 1250 VHTs thus far, we have also constructed 33 protected water sources, constructed close to 6,000 cookstoves with our partners in the Cookstove Project, and handed out hundreds of ITNs. We also bring a strong research focus to
our work. As of 2017, Omni Med has completed three studies, with additional studies planned and ongoing:

Research Question: For the past 7 years, Omni Med staff and volunteers have gone door to door with our VHTs distributing "prompts" at every household in an effort to bring preventive and therapeutic health measures to each household. However, despite thousands of household visits and prompts distributed, we do not have a strong sense of the impact of these visits or materials. We would like to enlist a student to work with our staff to evaluate the efficacy of these home visits. What do local villagers take out of these visits? Do they learn from the visits and the distributed materials? Do they apply what they have learned? How long do they keep these prompts after they receive them? Can we develop a better system to distribute and educate people in their homes? We encourage the student to develop further questions and to help us improve the program.

We have a staff of six in Uganda, with a physician, four administrators (all trained VHTs themselves), and a strategic/ research coordinator who will advise and guide the student in this process. Dr O'Neil, based in the US, will also be involved in the project design and execution.

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