

# GLORIA AKELLO ABURA-MEERDINK, PhD, MSW, MSc.

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## EDUCATION

### **PhD**

*The University of Alabama School of Social Work,*  
Tuscaloosa, AL, USA.

**2024**

**Dissertation:** *A Community Engaged Approach to Exploring and Assessing Adolescent Mental Health and Psychosocial Needs for School Based Settings in Sub-Saharan Africa.*

Chair: Brenda. D. Smith, PhD.

### **Master of Social Work (GPA: 4.00)**

**2022**

*The University of Alabama School of Social Work,*  
Tuscaloosa, AL, USA.

**Concentration:** Children, Adolescents and Families.

### **Master of Science in Clinical Psychology**

**2015**

*Department of Mental Health and Community Psychology Makerere University,*  
Kampala, Uganda.

**Thesis:** *Psychosocial Stressors, Coping Styles and Depression among Adolescents in Secondary Schools in Kampala, Uganda.*

### **Bachelor of Community Psychology**

**2009**

*Department of Mental Health and Community Psychology Makerere University,*  
Kampala, Uganda.

## INTERESTS

**Research:** Child and Adolescent Mental & Psychosocial Health Needs| Health Disparities.  
Social Determinants of Health | Sustainable Development Goals| Systems of Care.  
Community Engaged Research | Mixed Methods | Implementation Science | User-Centered Designs.  
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Assessment and Intervention Development for Internalizing, Externalizing and Trauma-Related Mental Health Needs.

**Teaching:** Child and Adolescent Psychopathology | Mental Health Assessment and Interventions.  
Conceptual Foundations and Theories of Social Work Practice and Research.  
Community Engaged Scholarship | Mixed Methods | Dissemination and Implementation Science | Research Methods [including Systematic reviews].  
Global Mental Health Research, Practice and Policy.

## **CURRENT POSITION**

### **Assistant Professor (Tenure Track)**

State University of New York (SUNY) Stony Brook  
School of Social Welfare

**August 2025- Present**

## **RESEARCH EXPERIENCE**

### **NIH Fogarty (ACHIEVE) Postdoctoral Scholar**

Global Health Program for Scholars/ Launching Future Leaders  
in Global Health Research Training Program (LAUNCH).

**July 2024- June 2025**

Home Institution: Washington University in St. Louis, St. Louis, Missouri, USA

Global Institution: Makerere University, College of Health Sciences, Kampala, Uganda

**Project: *A Community Engaged Approach to Investigating the Transferability of Youth Readiness Intervention (YRI) for Adolescents facing Adversity in Post Conflict School Based Settings in Northern Uganda: Barriers and Strategies to Increase Adoptability, Acceptability and Usefulness.***

Mentorship Team: Mary McKay PhD., Theresa Betancourt ScD., Nhial Tutlum PhD., Janet Nakigudde PhD.

### **Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship**

#### **Assistant to the Editor**

The University of Alabama, School of Social Work,  
Tuscaloosa, Alabama, USA.

**January 2024- Aug 2024**

I worked closely with the journal editor and adhered to the editorial guidelines and responsibilities of the journal. I evaluated manuscripts and assigned them to the editorial board members for review. I attended editorial board meetings and monitored the progress of the peer review process, while considering the peer reviewers' comments and suggestions.

### **Graduate Council Fellow**

The University of Alabama, School of Social Work,  
Tuscaloosa, Alabama, USA.

**August 2023- May 2024**

This fellowship afforded me the protected time that I dedicated towards the completion of my dissertation project.

### **NIMHD Predoctoral Fellow**

LEAD Summer Global Mental Health Fellow #T37MD014218.

Home Institution: Washington University in St. Louis, St. Louis, Missouri, USA.

Global Institution: Makerere University, College of Health Sciences, Kampala, Uganda.

**June 2023- August 2023**

I leveraged an existing NIMH study- "*Implementing a Digital Adolescent Behavioral Health Screening Literacy, and Low Intensity Intervention for Common Adolescent Mental Health*

*Problems in Kenya.” (5R21MH124149-02) and developed a community-engaged proposal that applied implementation science strategies gleaned from insights on the PARENTCORP intervention in Ugandan school. Additionally, I also utilized data from the Youth Readiness Intervention that has been implemented in post conflict schools in Sierra Leone. PARENTCORP is a multi-level intervention designed for kindergarten and early primary school children living in low-income neighborhoods to create safe, nurturing and predictable environments at home and in the classroom and improve relationships and communication between parents and teachers. Additionally, the Youth Readiness Intervention utilizes cognitive, behavioral and interpersonal skills training to address externalizing and internalizing trauma related symptoms among youth in post conflict settings. During this predoctoral fellowship, I trained on Human Centered Design (HCD), conducted workshops with multiple community and mental health policy stakeholders and visited low resource schools in post conflict Northern Uganda. At the conclusion of this fellowship, I completed a manuscript, utilizing secondary data from the study team and developed a proposal that culminated into my current NIH Fogarty postdoctoral project.*

**Graduate Research Assistant**

**August 2022- August 2023**

The University of Alabama, School of Social Work,  
Tuscaloosa, Alabama, USA.

I conducted qualitative and quantitative data analysis. I conceptualized, developed, edited, and wrote manuscripts. Participated in the development of white papers for guiding agencies on best practices for risk assessments and screening procedures among children and adolescents in low resource contexts through the SMART-Pickens Rural County Schools, Tuscaloosa City Schools and University of Alabama collaboration. I conducted literature reviews, proposal development and Program Evaluation of ongoing projects for respective faculty I had been assigned to work with.

**Community Engagement Fellow**

**August 2021- August 2022.**

The University of Alabama, School of Social Work,  
SMART-Pickens County School Partnership,  
Pickens, Alabama, USA.

I conducted community engaged research through the University of Alabama, School of Social Work and Pickens rural schools Alabama Partnership geared towards providing behavioral health services to students in rural schools in Pickens County. I also worked with the SMART team, a local NGO that collaborates with the Pickens County school system and developed an online management system for resources for the behavioral health team. I developed teacher wellness modules focused on Self Care during the early years post the Covid-19 pandemic. I made recommendations for best practices for conducting mental health risk assessment for adolescents in rural schools and delivered subsequent workshops through several trainings and workshops conducted throughout the course of the school year.

**Graduate Research Assistant**

**August 2020- August 2021**

The University of Alabama, School of Social Work,  
Tuscaloosa, Alabama, USA.

I conducted qualitative and quantitative data analysis. I conceptualized, developed, edited, and wrote manuscripts. I conducted literature reviews, proposal development and program evaluations of ongoing projects for respective faculty I had been assigned to work with.

**Consultant**

**August 2019- August 2020**

Makerere University-Department of Psychiatry,  
New York University- School of Medicine (USA),  
Tuscaloosa, Alabama, USA.

I provided technical guidance on implementation of the NIH R01 study “*Effectiveness and Implementation of an Early Childhood School-Based Mental Health Intervention in Low-Resource Communities*” leveraging my experiences implementing prior NIMH grants in low resource contexts in Sub-Saharan Africa. (MPIs: Keng-Yen Huang & Janet Nakigudde NIMH- R01 R01MH122654-01).

**Technical Advisor**

**Nov 2018- June 2019**

Makerere University-Department of Psychiatry,  
New York University School of Medicine (USA),  
Kampala, Uganda.

I provided technical assistance on testing an integrated and potentially cost-effective digital health intervention approach- The pediatric mental health digital toolkit for the NIMHR21 study “*Implementing a Digital Child Mental Health Screening, Literacy, and Management Tool in Faith Based Settings.*” (MPIs: Keng-Yen Huang & Janet Nakigudde NIMH 1R21MH116692).

**Project Coordinator**

**March 2018 – July 2018**

RAND Corporation (USA), Mildmay Uganda,  
Infectious Diseases Institute,  
Central Uganda Districts (Kampala and Wakiso).

I worked to set up and coordinate the NIH-funded project, “*Supporting Adolescents to Adhere to Anti-Retroviral Treatment through use of Lottery Rewards: An Extension to Improving Treatment Adherence among Adolescents Living with HIV in Uganda.*” I oversaw the screening and enrollment of participants in the study in addition to preparing the necessary documentation as required by the Institutional Review Board and Uganda National Council of Science and Technology to enable the smooth implementation of the study. (PIs: Sebastian Linnemayr & Barbara Mukasa NICHD/NIH R01 HD074925).

**Project Coordinator**

**February 2014–Dec 2017**

RAND Corporation, Mildmay Uganda,  
Infectious Diseases Institute,  
Central Ugandan Districts (Kampala and Wakiso).

I coordinated a multi-site National Institute of Child Health and Human Development funded project R01, “*Improving Treatment Adherence among Adolescents Living with HIV/AIDS in Uganda using SMS Reminders.*” I oversaw the screening and enrollment of study participants.

Produced regular study progress reports, mid-term updates and evaluation of the study implementation. I delivered capacity building workshops and liaised with both local and international principal investigators to ensure the team remained current on study implementation. Ensured proper maintenance and documentation of all study developments. I channeled study findings into reports, led consultations and troubleshoot challenges especially while implementing the study. (PIs: Sebastian Linnemayr, Andrew Kambugu & Barbara Mukasa NICHD/NIH R01 HD074925).

**Project Coordinator/ Lead Clinical Trainer**

**August 2018–Nov 2018**

Makerere University-Department of Psychiatry,  
New York University School of Medicine (USA),  
Kampala, Uganda.

I coordinated National Institute of Mental Health R21-funded project related activities and provided technical support to the development of a preventative mental health digital toolkit to be utilized by community health workers within faith-based organizations to facilitate caregivers in accessing basic preventive mental health services for their young children. (PIs: Keng-Yen Huang & Janet Nakigudde NIMH 1R21MH116692).

**Lead Clinical Trainer**

**April 2016- June 2017**

Makerere University-College of Health Sciences,  
Ministry of Health-Uganda,  
Northern Uganda Districts (Gulu, Kitgum, Pader).

During two separate year-long project cycles funded by Grand Challenges Canada, I trained over 75 mental health lay workers from Northern Uganda districts including Gulu, Pader and Kitgum districts on the study titled- “*Social Emotional and Economic Empowerment through knowledge of Group Support Psychotherapy*” to address the mental health issues of HIV positive patients and survivors of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) war in Northern Uganda. I ensured participant adherence to Group Support Psychotherapy standard operating procedures, implementation plans and followed up on the trained mental health workers to ensure progress in developing and applying a holistic treatment methodology in low resource settings. (PI: Ethel Nakimuli-Mpungu).

**Lead Clinical Trainer**

**August 2015–August 2016**

New York School of Medicine Bridge Grant Collaboration,  
University Department of Psychiatry,  
Central Uganda Districts (Kampala and Wakiso).

I provided technical support on the project “*Teacher Implemented Parenting Program in Ugandan Schools*” through testing of the implementation approach. The goal of the proposal was to test a task-shifting implementation approach by training schoolteachers to implement a parenting program. (MPIs: Keng-Yen Huang & Janet Nakigudde NYUSOM Bridging/Incentive Grant).

**Project Coordinator**

**August 2015–August 2016**

New York School of Medicine Bridge Grant Collaboration,  
Makerere University-Department of Psychiatry,

Kampala, Uganda.

I coordinated study related activities of the project “*Teacher Implemented Parenting Program in Ugandan Schools*” through testing an innovative implementation approach. The goal of the project was to assess a task-shifting implementation approach by training schoolteachers to implement a parenting program. Collectively, as a way of building a data set that would inform future PARENTCORP interventions, I coordinated study activities and personally interviewed over 700 families over the years and actively trained teachers and parents on the PARENTCORP intervention. (MPIs: Keng-Yen Huang & Janet Nakigudde NYUSOM Bridging/Incentive Grant).

**Project Coordinator & Lead Clinical Trainer**

**October 2013– Dec 2015.**

Makerere University Department of Psychiatry,  
New York University School of Medicine,  
New York, USA and Kampala, Uganda.

I traveled to New York University to receive training on the PARENTCORP intervention and returned to Uganda to build capacity in low resource schools. For the NIMH R21-funded project “*Implementing a School Based Child Mental Health Prevention Program in Uganda*”, utilizing task shifting strategies, I trained teachers as community health workers to implement evidence-based strategies (for addressing mild, moderate and moderately severe misbehavior in the classroom). This was to promote social, emotional and behavioral learning among students. Additionally, I participated in program evaluation that involved assessing the feasibility of the project with teachers and schools in low resource contexts in Uganda. I trained and conducted subsequent coaching sessions for over 60 teachers and 20 mental health workers on the PARENTCORP model in ten selected low-income schools across Kampala. I also provided technical support regarding project coordination and established links between the trained teachers and parents/ caretakers of children from the selected schools to provide a sustainable platform for coaching and supervision with an aim of improving utilization of the program, thus, improving child mental health outcomes. (MPIs: Keng-Yen Huang & Janet Nakigudde 1R21MH097115-01A1).

**Psychologist & Trainer**

**Aug 2013- August 2014.**

Makerere University Department of Psychiatry,  
Northern Uganda Districts (Pader & Pajule).

This was a collaboration between Ministry of Health in Uganda and Makerere University, Department of Psychiatry. The project “*Improving Mental Health of Caregivers of Children with Nodding Syndrome*” was conducted in Atanga sub county in Pader District (Northern Uganda rural setting). This project was funded by Grand Challenges Canada, and I was part of the team that trained the Village Health Teams on Interpersonal Therapy for addressing Depression. Through this task shifting model, we adapted the Group Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT-G) to this local setting and applied it to a targeted group and provided guidance to the village health teams on how to respond to the depressive symptoms (As screened with the PHQ-9) presented by the caregivers. (PI: Brian Mutamba, James Okello & Janet Nakigudde).

**Principal Investigator**

**Aug 2012- August 2013.**

Makerere University, Department of Psychology,  
Central Uganda Districts (Kampala).

Master of Science in Clinical Psychology Dissertation, Makerere University, Uganda. As a requirement for my degree, I conducted a cross-sectional quantitative study utilizing primary data collection procedures among adolescents in senior secondary schools in Kampala district. The main objectives of this study were to establish the prevalence of depression among adolescents, and to investigate the associations between coping styles, psychosocial stressors and depression among school going adolescents.

### **CLINICAL PRACTICE EXPERIENCE**

#### **School Social Worker**

**Nov 2022- March 2023**

Tuscaloosa City Schools,  
Tuscaloosa, Alabama, USA.

I assisted the director for family and community engagement at the Tuscaloosa City Schools (TCS) in the following capacity: I served as a homeless prevention support worker to the TCS schools as needed. I completed home visits with the local school social worker, completed paperwork for homeless applicants, followed up on parents to ensure that they have the necessary resources and I shared with them access to community resources.

#### **Clinical School Social Work Intern**

**Aug 2019- August 2022**

Pickens County Schools and SMART Collaboration,  
Pickens County, Alabama, USA.

I provided interpersonal psychotherapy via telemedicine for treatment of adolescent depression in rural high schools in Alabama. I developed social, emotional, and clinical content for an online learning management system for behavioral health workers working for the SMART Clinics operating in low resource rural contexts (Pickens County) in the United States. I developed recommendations for best practices on implementing mental health risk assessments and screening procedures in low resource rural contexts in the United States. I developed recommendations for identifying evidence-based models for children and adolescents impacted by mental health in low resources communities. I assessed and intervened with low resource rural communities impacted by mental health challenges.

#### **Technical Advisor on Adolescent Mental Health**

**Dec 2018- August 2019**

Child and Adolescent Mental Health-Strong Minds USA,  
Kampala, Uganda.

I provided technical advisory support on adolescent mental health and spear headed the implementation of an adolescent mental health project in Ugandan schools geared towards assessing Major Depressive Disorders (MDD) among children and adolescents. I developed white papers and proposals on the symptoms and manifestations of depression among adolescents and adults in Sub-Saharan contexts that guided towards identification of appropriate and available

screening tools and interventions. Made recommendations on MDD screening tools to gauge their appropriateness and cultural relevancy in Ugandan contexts. I provided ongoing clinical support to the mental health facilitators on the project tasked with conducting therapeutic interventions for adolescent depression.

**Clinical Psychologist**

**Dec 2018- January 2020.**

Center for Children in Vulnerable Situations,  
CCVS Uganda and CCVS International,  
Northern Uganda (Lira District).

This was a collaboration with Ghent University, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, and University of Leuven. I served as the in-house staff psychologist for mental health facilitators conducting research, providing mental health trauma support to vulnerable communities in Northern Uganda. I also disseminated mental health practices to youth, adults, and communities in Northern Uganda. I provided therapeutic support to staff members to ensure overall health and wellness to promote effective service delivery as they worked in difficult humanitarian contexts in Northern Uganda.

**Clinical Psychologist**

**Jan 2013- January 2018.**

Children's Medical Centre Bugolobi,  
Kampala, Uganda.

I worked collaboratively with the lead Pediatric Neurologist and other consultants to assess and diagnose mental health conditions in children and adolescents by use of interviews, observational methods, and appropriate psychometric testing. I administered, analyzed, and responded to the results of intelligence and achievement tests using the Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC), Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) and Weschler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS) in addition to developing and administering individualized therapeutic interventions and psychoeducation to promote positive cognitive and behavioral change for patients who included children, adolescents, and their families. As needed, I provided referrals to other agencies, thus, contributing to holistic care approaches treating children and adolescents with mental health issues in Uganda.

**Clinical Psychologist Intern**

**Aug 2012- August 2013**

Butabika-East London Link,  
Butabika National Referral Hospital.

The Butabika-East London Link is a multi-disciplinary collaboration between East London National Health Service (NHS) Foundation Trust and Butabika Referral Hospital. I conducted evidence-based therapy including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Interpersonal Therapy, Brief Solution Focused Therapy and Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in children, Narrative Therapy in adults, Motivational Interviewing techniques for substance abuse disorder and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. I conducted group and individual sessions in the Alcohol and Drug unit in addition to group sessions for patients who were in-patient at their convalescent or outpatient stage.

**PEER REVIEWED JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS**

**Abura-Meerdink, G.**, Hopson, L. M., Carriaga-Lo, L., Jones, L., Perdomo, S., Hill, C., Crang, M., Carlson, C., Rincon, K., Rodriguez, J., Quick, R. (In-Press). Developing a Culturally Competent Health and Behavioral Health Assessment Tool for Rural Schools. *Children & Schools*.

Littleton, T., Luo, Y., **Abura-Meerdink, G.**, & Lee, H. Associations between the social determinants of health and risk for interpersonal violence among Black Americans in rural Alabama. (2025) to the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605241311616>.

**Abura-Meerdink, G.A.**, & Albright, D.L. A Systematic review on the effectiveness of school based digital mental health interventions for adolescents in Sub-Saharan Africa. (2023). *Journal of Research and Social Work Practice*, 1-10.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/10497315231201140>

Hopson, L. M., Lidbe, A., Jackson, M.S., Adanu, E., Li, X., Penmetsa, P., Lee, H., Anderson, A., Obuya, C., & **Abura-Meerdink, G.** (2022). Transportation to school and academic outcomes: A systematic review. *Educational Review*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2022.2034748>

Huang, K-Y., **Abura, G.**, Theise, R., & Nakigudde, J. (2017). Parental Depression and Associations with Parenting and Children's Physical and Mental Health in a Sub-Saharan African Setting. *Child Psychiatry and Human Development*, 48(4), 517.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5318298/pdf/nihms812053.pdf>.

Huang, K-Y., Nakigudde, J., Rhule, D., Gumikiriza-Onoria, J. L., **Abura, G.**, Kolawole, B., Ndyabangi, S., Kim, S., Seidman, E., Ogedegbe, G., & Brotman, L. M. (2017). Transportability of an Evidence-Based Early Childhood Intervention in a Low-Income African Country: Results of a Cluster Randomized Controlled Study. *Prevention Science*, 18(8), 964.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5693774/pdf/nihms894715.pdf>.

### **MANUSCRIPTS IN PROGRESS**

**Abura-Meerdink, G.**, Smith, B., Awori, E, M., Carlson, C., Hopson, L & Omalla, A. (In progress). A Systematic review of the effectiveness of mental health programs and interventions for treating depression and anxiety among adolescents in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Plos One*.

**Abura-Meerdink, G.**, Awori, E, M., Egessa, D., Smith, B., Mehra, B., & Nelson-Gardell, D. (In-Progress). Digital Storytelling as a data collection tool to explore adolescent mental health and psychosocial needs in low resource school-based settings in Uganda. (Plos One Digital Health).

**Abura-Meerdink, G.**, Nakigudde, J., Kasirye, E., Tinka, E., Hyung, P., Kamya, S., Mayatsa, J., Kyaterekera, M., Cheng, S., Akunzirwe, R., Muyomba, H., Tozan, Y., & Huang, K-Y. (In

Progress). Impacts of financial strain on Ugandan families' wellbeing, parenting, and primary school children's learning and behavioral health: A mediation model testing in the COVID-19 pandemic context. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*.

**Abura-Meerdink, G et al.** (In-progress). Adolescent mental health and psychosocial needs in Ugandan school-based settings: Using local voices to adapt the Social Determinant of Health Framework to reflect the socio-cultural context.

Sebenzile, Nkosi., **Abura-Meerdink, G.**, & Yandisa Sikweyiya. (In- Progress). A scoping review on the status of knowledge in “conflict”-related trauma and its impact on violence (perpetration or experience) among Black youth in South Africa and the USA.

### **PUBLISHED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS**

**Abura-Meerdink, G.** (2022, December 21). The adolescent Mental Health Gap: A Community Engaged Portfolio (CE-eP) on the role of the library as a potential mental health hub for exploring adolescent community strengths and needs in low resource contexts in Alabama. <http://cis650communityengagedscholarship-fall2022.ua.edu/>.

### **SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS PUBLISHED REGISTRY**

**Abura-Meerdink, G.**, Smith, B. D, Carlson, C., Hopson, L., Wood, F., & Mehra, B. (2023). A systematic review of the effectiveness of mental health programs and interventions for treating depression and anxiety among adolescents in Sub-Saharan Africa. PROSPERO 2023 CRD42023412343 Available from: [https://www.crd.york.ac.uk/prospERO/display\\_record.php?ID=CRD42023412343](https://www.crd.york.ac.uk/prospERO/display_record.php?ID=CRD42023412343)

### **REPORTS/OTHER PUBLICATIONS**

**Abura-Meerdink, G.**, & Hopson, L. (2022). Review and recommendations for effective practices in developing and implementing culturally competent mental health risk assessment for rural Alabama schools. Presentation to the SMART Team Behavioral Health Meeting 2022, Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

**Abura, G.** (2013). Psychosocial stressors, coping styles, and depression among senior secondary school students in Kampala district. Makerere University, Department of Psychology (2013). MSc, Dissertation.

### **OTHER MEDIA**

**Abura-Meerdink, G.A.** (2023). “There and Back Again” A journey through Ugandan schools- Part One. LEAD Global Training Program. WASH-U Sites. <https://sites.wustl.edu/lead/there-and-back-again-a-journey-through-ugandan-schools-part-one/>

**Abura-Meerdink, G.A.** (2023). “There and Back Again” A journey through Ugandan schools- Part Two LEAD Global Training Program. WASH-U Sites.

### **FUNDED PROJECTS**

#### **NIH Fogarty Pilot Study**

**2024-2025**

Project: *A Community Engaged Approach to Investigating the Transferability of Youth Readiness Intervention (YRI) for Adolescents facing Adversity in Post Conflict School Based Settings in Northern Uganda: Barriers and Strategies to Increase Adoptability, Acceptability and Usefulness.*

My Role: Principal Investigator

\$10,000

#### **PhD Dissertation Project**

**2023-2024**

The Graduate School and School of Social Work at The University of Alabama

Title: *A Community Engaged Approach to Exploring and Assessing Adolescent Mental Health and Psychosocial Needs for School Based Settings in Sub-Saharan Africa*

My Role: Principal Investigator

\$7,400

### **GRANTS UNDER REVIEW**

#### **FOA: Wellcome Trust**

PI: Allan Olwenyi Omalla, PhD

Title: *MAP-AD: "Mechanisms and Prediction of Multimorbidity-Driven Anxiety and Depression" – Generalizable Insights from Longitudinal Cohorts from Uganda and Germany.*

My Role: Co-Investigator

#### **FOA: Wellcome Trust**

PI: Allan Olwenyi Omalla, PhD

Title: *Integration of Machine Learning Approaches to Evaluate the Impact of the Gut Microbiome on Mental Health in HIV infected Ugandans.*

My Role: Research Consultant on Mental Health

### **GRANTS UNDER REVISE & RESUBMIT**

#### **FOA: National Institute of Mental Health (R01)**

PI: Allan Olwenyi Omalla, PhD; Co-PI: Noeline Nakasujja, PhD

Title: *Effect of Gut/Brain Viral Persistence on Mental Health Landscape of HIV Infected Ugandans (HIV- GBA Study)*

My Role: Research Consultant on Mental Health

### **GRANTS IN PREPARATION**

#### **FOA: National Institute of Mental Health (R21)**

Title: *A Community Engaged Approach to developing, a Trauma Informed Mental Health Intervention for Adolescents facing Adversity in Post Conflict School Based Settings: Barriers and Strategies to Increase Adoptability, Acceptability and Usefulness.*

My Role: Principal Investigator

**FOA Sponsor: National Institute of Health (Career Development Award for 2026 Submission)**

Title: *Community Engagement through Digital Storytelling: An Arts Based Mental Health Intervention targeting Depressive and Anxiety Symptoms among Adolescents in Low Resource School Based Settings.*

My Role: Principal Investigator

**ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION  
DEVELOPMENT IN PROGRESS**

**Interventions**

**The Mindset Intervention-** A Combined Trauma Focused Mental Health Intervention for Adolescents in Low Resource Post Conflict School Based Settings.

Team: Gloria Abura-Meerdink, PhD

**The Digital Storytelling Intervention-** An Arts-Based Mental Health Intervention targeting Internalizing Mental Health Challenges for Adolescents in School Based Settings.

Team: Gloria Abura-Meerdink, PhD.

**Assessments**

**The Digital Storytelling as a Assessment Tool-** An Arts-Based Mental Health Intervention targeting Internalizing Mental Health Challenges for Adolescents in School Based Settings.

Team: Gloria Abura-Meerdink, PhD.

**Assessment Tool for Social Determinants of Health** Among Adolescents in Resource Constrictive School Based Settings.

Team: Gloria Abura-Meerdink, PhD.

**FELLOWSHIPS AND SCHOLARSHIPS**

**NIH Fogarty Postdoctoral Research Fellowship**

**2024-2025**

Brown School Washington University in St. Louis.

Makerere University, College of Health Sciences.

\$61,428

**Graduate Council Fellowship**

**2023-2024**

The University of Alabama, Graduate School.

\$54,592

**NIMHD Pre-Doctoral Summer Fellowship #T37MD014218**

**2023**

Brown School-Washington University in St. Louis.

\$10,000

<b>Community Engaged Graduate Fellowship</b> The University of Alabama, Center for Community Based Partnerships. \$52,326	<b>2021 -2022</b>
<b>Ben Avis Orcutt Doctoral Fellowship Fund</b> The University of Alabama, School of Social Work. \$2,000	<b>2021</b>
<b>Summer Research Scholarship</b> The University of Alabama, School of Social Work. \$1,000	<b>2022</b>
<b>Graduate Council Fellowship</b> The University of Alabama, Graduate School. \$58,977	<b>2019- 2020</b>
<b>Society for Social Work Researchers (SSWR)</b> Travel Award. \$500	<b>2024</b>

#### **AWARDS**

<b>Finalist- Outstanding Dissertation Award</b> The University of Alabama	<b>2024</b>
<b>The Leadership Award-LEAD Global Training Program</b> <b>NIMHD#T37MD014218</b> Brown School, Washington University in St. Louis.	<b>2023</b>
<b>Outstanding Contributions to Service Award</b> School of Social Work PhD. Program, The University of Alabama.	<b>2022</b>

#### **PEER REVIEWED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS**

##### **Oral Paper Presentations**

Mwima, S., & **Abura-Meerdink, G.** (May 2024). Implementation Strategies to Enhance Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis Delivery for HIV Prevention Among Adolescent Girls Engaged in Transactional Sex and Drug Use in Uganda: A Qualitative Study. SPR 32nd ANNUAL MEETING: Advancing Partnerships and Collaborative Approaches in Prevention Science.

**Abura-Meerdink, G.**, Kubanga, K., & Adanu, E. (January 2024). The association of self-Disclosure, social support and depression among Young People Living With HIV/AIDS (YPLWHA). Abstract for oral paper submitted at Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR) 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. Recentring and democratizing knowledge: The next 30 years of social work science. Washington DC, United States.

Hopson, L., **Abura-Meerdink, G.**, & Carlson, C. (January 2024). Developing a culturally

relevant integrated health assessment for school-based clinics in the Rural South. Abstract for oral paper submitted at society for Social Work and Research (SSWR) 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. Recentring and democratizing knowledge: The next 30 years of social work science. Washington DC, United States.

Carlson, C., **Abura-Meerdink, G.**, Anton-Erxleben, K., Namy, S., Nkwanzu, V., Mufson, L., Nakuti, J., Naker, D., & Wainberg, M. (November 2019). Adapting Interpersonal Psychotherapy for depressed adolescents (IPT-A) for Ugandan primary schools. 53rd Annual Convention of the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies, Atlanta, GA.

Carlson, C., Tanner, L., Lovero, K., **Abura-Meerdink, G.**, Frame, K., Antoine, E., Mufson, L., & Wainberg, M. (December 2020). Piloting the implementation of depression treatment in Ugandan primary schools. 13th Annual Conference on the Science of Dissemination and Implementation in Health, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, MD (Virtual).

### **Panelists**

**Abura-Meerdink, G.**, Omah, O., Pitts, L., Salazar, M., Taylor, L., & Williams, R. (March 2023). 14th Annual Discerning Diverse Voices Symposium, University of Alabama. Moderator (2023) Bharat Mehra. Diverse Voices of Graduate Students in Community-Engaged Scholarship.

**Abura-Meerdink, G.**, McDougald, J., Russell, B., Bode, K., Hendricks, A., & Friday, A.S. (2022). Social work field instructor workshop student panel. Field experiences and recommendations for best practices. University of Alabama, School of Social Work Field Instructor Conference 2022.

### **Poster Presentations**

Smith, B.D, **Abura-Meerdink, G.**, & Abshire, A. (November 2023). Opportunities and risks in the use of simulation labs for child welfare education. CSWE 69<sup>th</sup> Annual Program Meeting. It's Time to Act: Defining and Reckoning with Anti-Racist Social Work Education. Atlanta, Georgia.

**Abura-Meerdink, G.**, & Mehra, B. (October 2023). Mapping a taxonomic framework for developing mental health literacies for educators, librarians and other helping professions. Abstract for poster submitted to Association for Library and Information Science Education. ALISE 2023 Annual Conference. Bridge the Gap: Teaching, Learning, Practice and Competencies. Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

### **PEER CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS ACCEPTED**

**Abura-Meerdink, G.**, & Smith, B. D (Accepted)- *Flash Talk*. A Systematic Review of the Effectiveness of Mental Health Programs and Interventions for Treating Depression and Anxiety among Adolescents in Sub-Saharan Africa. Abstract for oral paper submitted at Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR) 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. Seattle, United States.

Mwima, S., Chipalo, E., & **Abura-Meerdink, G.** (Accepted). A Systematic Review of

Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) Intervention Studies Implemented Targeting Adolescents and Young Adults Aged 15-29 in Sub-Saharan Africa: RE-AIM-Ing 4 PrEP. Abstract for poster submitted at Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR) 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. Seattle, United States.

## **GUEST LECTURES, INVITED TALKS AND TRAINING WORKSHOPS**

### **Guest Lectures for Academic Audiences**

**Abura-Meerdink, G.** (April 2022). Community Based Participatory Approaches in clinical and research settings (Global): Recommendations for best practices based on personal and professional experiences. SW 425 Research for Practice Honors. University of Alabama, School of Social Work

**Abura-Meerdink, G.** (November 2021). Evaluation Research: Application of Community Based Participatory Approaches in qualitative and quantitative research in global contexts among low resource communities. SW525- Evaluation Research. University of Alabama, School of Social Work.

### **Training Workshops for Practitioner Audiences**

Hopson, L., **Abura-Meerdink, G.**, & Cariaga-Lo, L. (2022). New approaches to mental health risk assessment: Review and recommendations for effective practices SMART Student Health PC3 Alabama Professional Development Seminar. Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Hopson, L., **Abura-Meerdink, G.**, & Cariaga-Lo, L. (2022). Developing culturally competent mental health risk assessment survey for Rural Alabama communities. SMART Student Health PC3 Alabama Professional Development Seminar. Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Hopson, L., **Abura-Meerdink, G.**, & Cariaga-Lo, L. (2022). Prioritizing students' health needs. The SMART snapshot pre-risk assessment tool. SMART Student Health PC3. Alabama Professional Development Seminar. Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Hopson, L., **Abura-Meerdink, G.**, & Cariaga-Lo, L. (2022). Developing procedures and guidelines for administering the Alabama SMART health risk assessment tool. SMART Student Health PC3. Alabama Professional Development Seminar. Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Hopson, L., & **Abura-Meerdink, G.** (2022). SMART self-care training for behavioral health and primary health care professionals. Pickens county primary care SMART teams. Tuscaloosa, Alabama

**Abura, G.**, & Nakigudde, J. (2015). Teacher implemented parenting program in Ugandan Schools through testing of the task shifting implementation approach. Training workshop for parents of primary school children in low resource public schools in Uganda.

**Abura, G.**, & Onoria, J. (2014). Implementing a school-based child mental health prevention program in Uganda utilizing task shifting strategies. Training workshop for primary school teachers and headteachers in Uganda. Kampala, Uganda.

## **TEACHING AND TRAINING EXPERIENCE**

<b>Course Instructor and Teaching Assistant</b> University of Alabama, School of Social Work, SW525 Evaluation Research.	<b>Fall 2023</b>
<b>Course Instructor -MSc. Clinical Psychology</b> CLN7205 Child Assessment Makerere University, Department of Psychology. Kampala, Uganda.	<b>August 2014- August 2015</b>
<b>Teaching Assistant and Lead Clinical Trainer</b> <b>PARENTCORP Intervention</b> New York School of Medicine Bridge Grant, Makerere University Department of Psychiatry. College of Health Sciences	<b>August 2015–August 2018</b>
<b>Teaching Assistant and Lead Clinical Trainer</b> <b>SEEK-GAP Psychosocial Intervention</b> Makerere University, Department of Psychiatry, Ministry of Health Uganda.	<b>May 2016- May 2017</b>

## **SERVICE**

<b>Service to the Profession</b> Reviewer South Africa’s National Research Foundation (NRF), South Africa Medical Research Council, Soutpansberg Road, Pretoria, South Africa.	<b>2024- Present</b>
<b>Service to the University</b> Reviewer Buford Peace Award Selection Committee, School of Social Work, University of Alabama.	<b>2020</b>
PhD Student Organization Representative School of Social Work, University of Alabama.	<b>2021- 2022</b>
Member African Student Association, University of Alabama.	<b>2019 - 2024</b>
<b>Service to the Community</b> Community Engagement with Tuscaloosa Public Library.	<b>2022-2023</b>
Community Engagement in the Tuscaloosa and Pickens County School System.	<b>2021-2023</b>

I-HUG International, Kampala, Uganda. Conducting Psychosocial Group Sessions for Female Sex Workers in Kampala Hotspots, Kampala District, Uganda. **2012- 2013**

Student School Volunteer at St. Joseph's Church, Mulago Parish, Kampala- Uganda. **1996- 2006**

### **CONTINUING EDUCATION**

Global Mental Health Summer Institute (Global Health Mental Health Gap), Teachers College Columbia University **(2020)**.

Interpersonal Psychotherapy for Adolescents (IPT-A) Training, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, U.S.A **(2019)**.

Qualitative Data Analysis with (ATLAS.ti Version 8), African Doctoral Academy, Stellenbosch University, Cape Town, South Africa **(2017)**.

Preparing for a Ph.D., African Doctoral Academy, Stellenbosch University, Cape Town South Africa **(2017)**.

Global Perspectives on Mental Wellbeing Knowledge Exchange, Institute of Health and Wellbeing, University of Glasgow College of Medicine, and Health Sciences **(2015)**.

Parent Corp Professional Development Leadership Training, New York University, New York, U.S.A. **(2013-2014)**.

Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Children and Adolescents, Medical University of South Carolina, Columbia, U.S.A. **(2012)**.

### **MENTEES**

Terrell Richardson, MSW, Ph.D. Candidate  
The University of Alabama **Since 2024**

Mercy Erina Awori., MSc. Clinical Psychology,  
Makerere University, Kampala Uganda. **Since 2022**

Tom Elamu., BA. Environmental Health Sciences,  
Cavendish University, Kampala, Uganda. **Since 2023**

Jackie Osuna., Dip. in Law LDC, LLB (Hons) MUK.  
Advocate/Legal Consultant  
FIDA Uganda (Uganda Association of Women Lawyers). **Since 2022**

Dervin Egessa., Visual Artist Master of Art in Fine Art. Makerere University.	<b>Since 2023</b>
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### **CERTIFICATIONS**

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Program Record ID: 36061239.	<b>2023-2026</b>
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Go The Distance: Online Teaching Best Practices-Advanced. The University of Alabama, Teaching Innovation and Digital Education.	<b>2022</b>
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License Master of Social Work.	<b>Pending</b>
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### **PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR)	<b>Since 2023</b>
Uganda Clinical Psychology Association	<b>Since 2011</b>
Uganda Psychiatric Association	<b>Since 2011</b>
Uganda Women Writers Association (FEMRITE)	<b>Since 2011</b>
Uganda Mental Health Film Club	<b>Since 2011</b>

### **ANALYSIS/ SOFTWARE**

Quantitative Analysis-SPSS Qualitative Analysis-Atlas.ti, and Nvivo
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