

April 2020

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**SMART Africa
Center**



**SECURING OUR
CHILDREN'S
FUTURE TODAY**

Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis

We thought we would take this strange moment in time, where much of our research in the field has been put on hold due to COVID-19, to share updates and experiences that our field teams are encountering in Uganda, Kenya and Ghana as well as our team here in the US. We are grateful that technology has enabled us to continue to meet virtually with our teams on the ground, and this month we were even able to utilize Zoom to conduct focus groups with our Suubi4STEM teachers and administrators in Uganda.

Thankfully, COVID-19 has not put an end to the baby boom that ICHAD and SMART Africa has experienced over the last several years, so please enjoy some photos of our latest team members! This includes a non-baby but nevertheless a much welcome addition, Laura Peer, who joins the ICHAD team as our new Training Program Manager!

As always, we hope that everyone is safe, healthy, and happy, and we wish you all the best!

Best regards,
The ICHAD and SMART Africa Teams

UPDATES FROM THE FIELD



The normally bustling main street of Masaka city, home to the ICHAD and SMART Africa Center Offices, is eerily empty due to COVID-19

Uganda COVID-19 Situation

In Uganda, the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed on March 22, 2020 and according to the Ministry of Health, as of April 24, 2020, the country had registered 74 coronavirus cases. We are grateful that 46 people have recovered and to date, we have no recorded deaths. As part of the measures to control and contain the spread of this deadly virus, the president of Uganda, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, addresses the country on a daily basis and urges people to take safety precautions. Uganda was one of the first African countries to take action, and even before the first confirmed case, the president ordered the closure of all schools including primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. The country is now on a total lockdown until May 5. The lockdown involves banning private vehicles, closure of all non-food stores, shops and malls, with only essential service providers allowed to remain open. These include the medics, telecommunication companies, banks, private security companies, electricity and water departments. This forced many organizations to suspend office operations and field activities, including SMART Africa and ICHAD. All social gatherings with more than 10 people have been banned, (which includes but not limited to communal weddings, church prayers, political rallies and burials). The borders entering the country are closed to passengers leaving and travelling back into the country except cargo vehicles and airplanes. Public transportation within the country is prohibited and no one is allowed to leave their homes after 7 PM. Some employees are working from home, but this is challenging due to the nature of employment and lack of internet in most households. During the lockdown, the government with help from other organizations, companies, and individuals, is continuing food production and other basic needs to give to the most vulnerable populations. Supplies include maize flour, rice, beans, masks and others. The ICHAD and SMART Africa teams are safe and healthy and much of our team is

able to have regular check-ins with each other - some even have helping hands. (See below!)



The ICHAD Uganda Team (and their families) check in on one another while the national lockdown remains in place



Streets in Kenya remain crowded, but handwashing stations have been set up to promote hygiene across the country

SMART Africa-Kenya COVID-19 Situation

In Kenya, the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed on March 12, 2020. After announcing the first case, the President of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta, directed all institutions including

primary, secondary, tertiary and boarding schools to be closed and there is no specific date for when schools may reopen. However, among the emerging issues in primary schools is the difference in the mode of learning between the public and private schools. Many private institutions following the national curriculum are teaching students through Zoom and Google classroom. Many other children are being sent schoolwork through their parents. This continues to widen the gap between the public and private school-going children. There are also concerns about lost time and whether thousands of children learn how to read and write. Will we have a generation of children not fluent in reading, writing, and arithmetic? Will this have an impact on their emotional and behavioral wellbeing as they get pressured to perform academically? Other concerns include domestic violence, which is affecting children in their homes. As the numbers of COVID-19 cases have been increasing, the government of Kenya has announced even more strict measures including a ban on congregations, a work from home policy, and closure of entertainment places, churches, and public rallies. A daily curfew from 7 PM to 5 AM is also being enforced. As of April 24, Kenya had about 336 confirmed cases, 95 fully recovered, and 14 deaths. The country is struggling between imposing stricter lockdown or full lockdown and the economic impact in a country where most people's livelihood is anchored in the informal sector. Other challenges include lack of equipment in hospitals, uncooperative people, and just days ago, the Mathari Teaching and Referral Hospital, which is also the National Hospital for mental illness, decided to discharge 500 patients and stop the follow-up clinics and admission of new patients because the health workers do not have any protective gear. Another challenge is the spread of rumors and fake news about treatment, herbal, nutritional "cures." We are grateful that the Kenya SMART Africa team remains healthy and hope the team remains safe during this uncertain period.



The Government of Ghana swiftly reacted to the COVID-19 situation by placing "Veronica Buckets," innovative handwashing stations, throughout the country

SMART Africa-Ghana COVID-19 Situation

Like Kenya, Ghana recorded its first two cases of COVID-19 on March 12, 2020. As of April 24, there have been 1,279 confirmed cases, with 134 persons recovered and 10 deaths. As

part of measures to curb the spread of the disease, the Government of Ghana first directed the closure of all schools from the basic to the tertiary levels. Subsequently, public health officials and the government encouraged people to observe measures suggested by the World Health Organization (WHO) which included regular handwashing and avoiding crowded places. These measures quickly prompted the use of Veronica buckets as shown in the photo, an innovation to facilitate handwashing. On March 29, the President of the Republic of Ghana announced a two-week partial lockdown in parts of the country (Accra and Kumasi) and surrounding towns considered to be the hotspots of the disease. This, however, has been extended for one more week. Personnel from the security services, notably the Police and Military, have been deployed to ensure adherence to the lockdown. Essential service workers are exempted and are allowed to go to work, while all other service providers have been directed to work from home. The city of Accra and some suburbs which are usually crowded and busy, have suddenly become quiet and deserted. The Government and some benevolent organizations have taken it upon themselves to provide free meals to people within certain communities. For some of us on the SMART Africa Team, working from home has been a daunting challenge especially with very unreliable internet service and having to take care of the children who are all home due to the closure of schools. Since no cure has been found yet to address COVID-19, we ask everybody to continue to social distance and stay home if there is nothing very important to do in town. We are thankful to the Ghana team for your ongoing commitment to health and safety during this unprecedented time.



Suubi4STEM Study Coordinator Robert Kasumba facilitating a Zoom focus group with primary school officials

Suubi4STEM

Suubi4STEM is a signature program focused on advancing STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education in Africa. The overall goal of this project is to increase the number of children who transition from primary school to secondary school, and increase the STEM-related knowledge and skills of all students who make this transition. Despite restrictions on gatherings put in place by the Ugandan government, the

Suubi4STEM research team was able to hold focus group discussions with 16 select primary school officials (including head teachers, Mathematics, and Science teachers) from the greater Masaka region online, over the Zoom platform. The team introduced the study to these teachers and together, they discussed the existing school curriculum and how the research team can help strengthen the delivery of science and math subjects in primary schools. These sessions yielded valuable insights that are being used by the team to adapt the study intervention to suit the Ugandan context. The teachers were excited to use Zoom and are very enthusiastic about the study. We are thankful that the team is able to utilize technology (and show the benefits of technology!) during the early stages of this program.

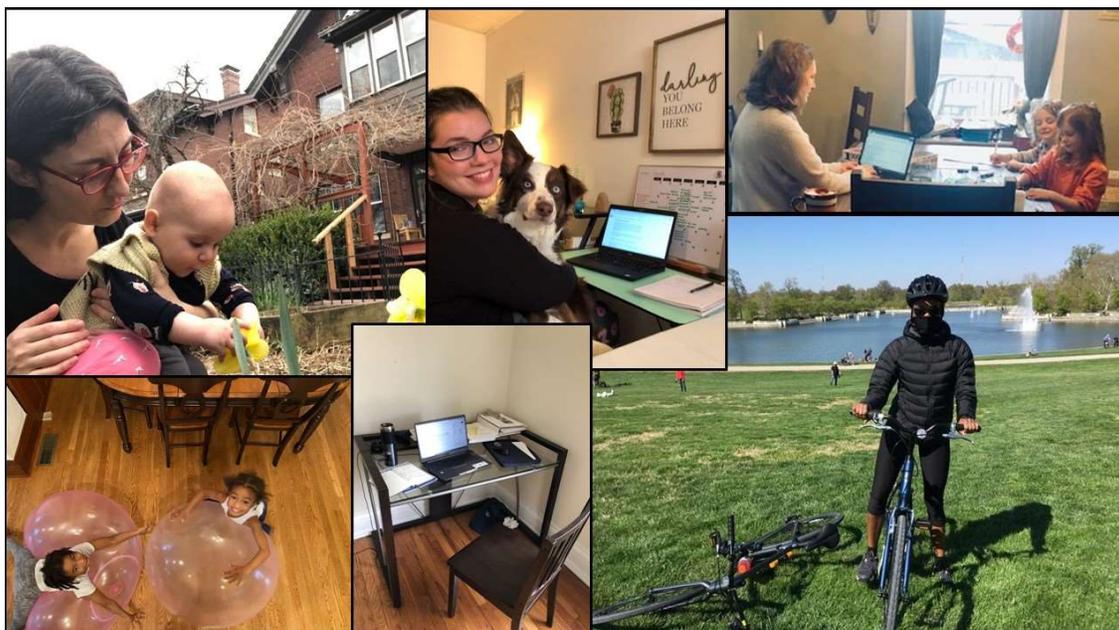
UPDATES FROM ICHAD AND SMART AFRICA TEAMS



Welcome Laura Peer, Our New Training Program Manager!

Please join us in welcoming Laura Peer to the International Center for Child Health and Development Team! Laura will be managing our two NIH training programs, [the LEAD Global Training Program \(LEAD\)](#) and [the Researcher Resiliency Training Program \(RRT\)](#). Laura is happy to return to the Brown School after a two-year stint at the School of Medicine where she has been managing the graduate program in Applied Health Behavior Research. Laura is a higher education professional with roots in global and maternal/child health. She has worked at Washington University for over four years, first as an admissions specialist at the Brown School, then as project manager at the School of Medicine. She continues to work seasonally with the Office of Admissions in support of their application cycle, and with Open Society Foundations in support of their Civil Society Leadership Awards program. She has been a certified birth doula and childbirth educator, an undergraduate instructor, a women's health policy advocate, and she has worked on

USAID-funded community and maternal/child health programs. Laura has lived in Vermont, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, and Spain. She holds an MPH from Boston University in Maternal and Child Health and a bachelor's degree in Spanish and Anthropology from WashU. Welcome Laura!



From left to right: ICHAD Co-Director Ozge Sensoy Bahar enjoys an early spring with baby Derrin; Masters Research Fellow Lexa Stoppel is enjoying her new co-worker; Betsy Abente multi-tasks in her new role as teacher/ICHAD Associate Director; ICHAD Director Fred Ssewamala's daughters enjoy their new workout routine while they are off from school; ICHAD Study Coordinator Wilberforce Tumwesige's new "office"; and Postdoctoral Fellow Rachel Brathwaite enjoys a protected bike ride in Forest Park.

Our New Normal..

As we all continue to adapt to our new working environments, here's a few snapshots of how the ICHAD-U.S. team is spending their days!

CAPACITY BUILDING

LEAD Training Program
Training LEADers to Accelerate Global Mental Health Disparities Research

LEAD Program 2020 Cohort

Name	Title	Institution	Depart	Primary (Site) Mentor	Secondary Mentor
Villodas, Melissa	Doctoral Student	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	Social Work	Von Nebbitt	George Iyeyi
Kamel, Lojine	Psychiatry Resident	Washington University	Psychiatry	Fred Ssewamala (Kyaterekera Study)	Cynthia Rogers
Lee, Lesleigh	Doctoral Student	Texas A&M	Psychiatry	Thomas Crea	Patricia Cavazos
Schriger, Simone	Doctoral Student	University of Pennsylvania	Psychology	Fred Ssewamala (SMART Africa)	Janet Nakigudde
Parchment, Tyrone	Assistant Professor	Boston College	Social Work	Theresa Betancourt	Mary McKay
Tutlam, Nhlal	Chronic Disease Epidemiology Manager	St. Louis County Government	Department of Public Health	Theresa Betancourt	Fred Ssewamala
Howell, Tyriasa	Assistant Professor	Washington University	Social Work	Fred Ssewamala (Kyaterekera Study)	Patricia Cavazos

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LEAD Co-Director Dr. Patricia Cavazos (upper right corner) gives an overview of the LEAD trainees and mentorship teams on our first Zoom Orientation call

NIH Training Programs

Due to the situation surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, both [the Global LEAD Training Program \(LEAD\)](#) and [the Researcher Resilience Training Program \(RRT\)](#) have had to redesign their original formats as both involved travel over this summer. After consulting with our Advisory Board and Program Officers at the National Institutes of Health, we have decided to move all didactic training online and instead of traveling to research sites, trainees will be working with their mentors remotely on data analysis, manuscript development and/or grant writing. Some are even planning to apply for COVID-19 related NIH supplements as we tackle this global pandemic from all sides! More to follow, but we are enjoying our early calls with each Cohort. Pictured above is our first Zoom orientation call with our nine LEAD trainees, researchers from under-represented backgrounds interested in global mental health. We are looking forward to working with all of our trainees over the coming months and beyond!

SOCIAL CORNER



Congratulations to the Byansi Family on your Big Addition!

Please join us in congratulating ICHAD and SMART Africa Research Associate and Brown School PhD student William Byansi and wife Anett on the birth of their son, Evalet Byansi. Evalet was born on March 31 at 1:12 AM at St. Mary's Hospital in St. Louis and weighed 9.4 lbs and was 22 inches long. Our team cannot wait for social distancing to end so we can give that boy a big hug!



Kiiza Augustine Welcomed a Baby!

Congratulations to ICHAD Research Assistant, Kiiza Augustine and his family on the recent birth of their son. Both mother and child are in good condition and have a great opportunity to get acquainted as quarantine measures remain in place. We look forward to meeting this little guy!

OPPORTUNITIES



T37 LEAD Global Training Program

The [T37 LEAD Global Training Program \(LEAD\)](#) is accepting applications for a 1 to 2 year postdoctoral fellow. The LEAD Global Fellowship supports trainees from underrepresented groups committed to conducting health disparities research, with a

specific focus on global mental health prevention, intervention, services, and implementation research within resource-constrained settings. Eligible candidates should be a U.S. citizen, non-citizen national, or permanent resident, and be from a [disadvantaged](#) or [underrepresented population](#) in biomedical, behavioral, clinical & social science research as outlined by the NIH.

The postdoctoral trainee will be in-residence at Washington University in St. Louis. Over the 1-2 year period, the postdoc trainee will be engaged with a current NIH-funded study and assist with data analysis, manuscript development and proposal development to explore new opportunities related to HIV/AIDS or global mental health disparities. The postdoc will also participate in the LEAD summer training program at Washington University and will have the opportunity to travel and engage in mentored research at a Sub-Saharan Africa study site. Research will be conducted remotely in 2020 and until COVID-related travel restrictions are no longer in effect, after which travel to the study site will be arranged.

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis and can be completed on the [T37 LEAD Global Training Program](#) website at <https://sites.wustl.edu/lead/apply/>. For more information, contact Laura Peer at lpeer@wustl.edu.



Call for COVID-19 Related Articles

SARS-CoV-2 is a new virus responsible for an outbreak of respiratory illness known as COVID-19, which has spread to several countries around the world causing immense challenges to the lives of people. In response to COVID-19 impact on individuals, families and their communities globally, the Global Social Welfare Journal is inviting our global community to contribute research articles sharing stories and experiences (both positive and negative) with our readers who can use this information to inform the development and implementation of future programs. We encourage the submission of both original science and conceptual pieces—that would inform the practice and policy frameworks across the global community.

The Global Social Welfare Journal brings together research that informs the fields of global social work, social development, and social welfare policy and practice. It serves as an outlet for manuscripts and brief reports of interdisciplinary applied research that advance knowledge about global threats to the well-being of individuals, groups, families, and communities.

Submissions will be accepted on a rolling basis and reviewed by experts in the field. Rapid peer review and prompt editorial decisions will ensure that quality manuscripts are published in a timely manner and disseminated widely to inform additional research and policymaking on COVID-19-related issues. Read more about the [Global Social Welfare Journal](#) or submit a manuscript now through the [Manuscript Submission Portal](#). Questions can be sent to [Fred M. Ssewamala, PhD](#).

Other Opportunities

[Research Program on Children and Adversity - multiple positions in Rwanda and Sierra Leone](#)

[Supervisory Health Scientist Administrator Opportunity at NIMH Center for Global Mental Health](#)

[Assistant, Associate or Full Professor in Global Mental Health - Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health](#)

[Research Associate \(Implementation Science\) at Boston College School of Social Work](#)

[Research Associate \(Gender\) at Boston College School of Social Work](#)

[Post-Doctoral Fellow for Research Program on Children and Adversity at Boston College School of Social Work](#)

[Post-Doctoral Diversity Supplement - Evidence-based Mental Health Interventions, Sierra Leone](#)

COVID-19 Related Funding Opportunities

[ICTS COVID-19 Research Funding Program](#)

[NIH Long-Term Effects of Disasters on Health Care Systems Serving Health Disparity Populations](#)

[Notice of Special Interest \(NOSI\) regarding the Availability of Administrative Supplements and Urgent Competitive Revisions for Research on the 2019 Novel Coronavirus and the Behavioral and Social Sciences](#)

[AHRQ Notice of Intent: New Funding Opportunity Announcement to Support Novel, High-Impact Studies Evaluating Health System and Healthcare Professional Responsiveness to COVID-19](#)

[Rapid Response to Novel Coronavirus \(SARS-CoV-2\) Impacts Across Food and Agricultural Systems](#)

[AXA Research Fund: Mitigating Risk in the Wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

[Facebook Research – Economic Impact of Digital Technologies Request for Proposals](#)

[American Psychological Foundation – APF COVID-19 Rapid Response Grant](#)

[Elrha – RESEARCH TO SUPPORT COVID-19 RESPONSE IN HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS](#)

[Mozilla – Mozilla Open Source Support Program \(MOSS\) COVID-19 Solutions Fund](#)

**SMART Africa Center
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