

TERVE AFRIKKA / HEALTH AFRICA

Coordinator: Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences

Partners: Maseno University, Kenya; Public Health Nurses' College / Makerere University, Uganda; Central Ostrobothnia University of Applied Sciences, Finland; Helsinki Polytechnic Stadia, Finland; Häme University of Applied Sciences, Finland; Kajaani University of Applied Sciences, Finland; Kemi – Tornio University of Applied Sciences, Finland; Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences, Finland; Oulu University of Applied Sciences, Finland; Pirkanmaa University of Applied Sciences, Finland; Vaasa University of Applied Sciences, Finland

Study areas: Medical Sciences, Social Sciences

What are the main aims of your network?

The overall objective of the joint activities is to maintain, support and develop cooperation in the fields of Social Services, Health Care and Food Management education between Uganda, Kenya and Finland. The project aims at raising the standards and improving the quality of Social Care, Primary Health Care and Nutrition utilizing the educational collaboration. The main purpose is to decrease poor living conditions in Uganda and Kenya and to increase the awareness of the aims of the development policy.

In accordance with Uganda's Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan, the project considers its recent initiatives in the field of school health, nutrition education and in providing healthy meals during schooldays as effective tools in improving learning achievement. The project activities aim also to promote sanitation and hygienic practices among the members of the whole community, which ultimately has favorable impact on higher life expectancy of children and well-being of the local population. The goal is to increase knowledge concerning the UN Millennium Declaration, and with this information, the knowledge and awareness will be increased in the following areas:

- challenges in primary education focusing in health aspects
- poverty and hunger
- gender equality and empowerment of women
- reduction of child mortality
- global partnership for development.

What kind of activities are there in your network?

The Health Africa Network had an eight-year-long history of the cooperation before starting the North–South Health Africa project in 2004. The partners knew each other very well, were committed to collaboration and had functioning relations already before the North–South project. The main channels of communication have been telephone meetings once a month and partner meetings twice a year in Finland, as well as e-mail, fax and telephone. The main activities of the project are student exchange and academic exchange, intensive courses, joint curriculum development, network meetings and research activities during the visits. The project objectives and activities have been planned in such a way as to enable full participation of all the partners.



The curricula of the students coming from Africa to Finland include both theoretical studies and supervised practical training. Furthermore, several study visits are made. Finnish students' studies in Kenya and Uganda include both theoretical studies and supervised practical training. In Uganda they work also as voluntary workers in the project called "Well-being in the Village Community".

Teachers from Kenya and Uganda visit some of the Health Africa Network Universities of Applied Sciences. They give guest lectures which are also broadcasted to other Health Africa Universities of Applied Sciences through VCR. Health Africa Seminars are held during Kenyan and Ugandan teachers' stay in Finland. The visitors are keynote speakers and those seminars are also broadcasted. Furthermore, several official negotiations and study visits are made.

During their exchange period in Kenya and Uganda teachers from Finland have the necessary negotiations on future joint activities. They give lessons to Kenyan and Ugandan students and tutor Finnish exchange students. During each exchange period Finnish teachers participate also in the official meetings and seminars as representatives of Health Africa Development Co-operation Organisation (HADCO).

The first intensive course and network meeting with southern partners were planned to be held at Maseno University in February 2008, but due to the violence and riots caused by the presidential election in Kenya, we had to postpone them.

What sort of successes and challenges have you encountered during your project?

The objectives of the project have been achieved. There has been a great deal of mobility between the countries. The amount of public health nurse students in Uganda has increased and the PBL method has been applied in teaching. The partners have concentrated on supporting the family health and wellbeing in the villages in Uganda and Kenya by the means of education and training. In Finland the partner health education institutions and their students and academic staff as well as working life in Finland have acquired new knowledge and skills from the partners in Uganda and Kenya.

Among the exchange students and teachers and also in home internationalisation the awareness of cultural differences and global security, respect of human being, human rights, democracy and cultural sensitivity have increased.

One of the challenges has been the circular versus linear time conception. Although we have over ten years' history of the collaboration with Ugandan partners, we still sometimes face difficulties. There may sometimes be rapid changes in the partner country's political climate, which can affect the ongoing collaborative activities. Also health hazards in the African partner country can sometimes develop unexpectedly in the form of severe epidemics. That is why continuous, confidential exchange of information between HADCO and the African partners have proved to be some of the prerequisites for the long history of successful cooperation.

Your advice to forthcoming networks

e-Learning !