



## MicroResearch Workshop Report Mildmay Uganda

*Building capacity for community focussed health research*

**May 20 - May 31, 2019**



## Executive Summary

In the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the founding of Mildmay Uganda (<https://mildmay.or.ug>), their 1<sup>st</sup> MicroResearch training workshop was held from May 20 to May 31, 2019 at the main Mildmay Uganda campus on the Entebbe to Kampala Road. Mildmay Uganda was established in 1998 as a Centre of Excellence for provision of comprehensive HIV & AIDS prevention, care, treatment, training services and research. They are committed to and have excelled at transforming communities for sustainable health. As part of their strategic plan, they are keen on growing their research capacity, especially community focused research.

There are three key objectives of a MicroResearch Workshop:

- 1) To develop skills needed for community focused research;
- 2) To develop skills needed to work in a multidisciplinary group and to become a team; and
- 3) To write a successful community focused research proposal overview.

There were 32 participants, divided into 4 teams each with a local coach who completed the workshop. Several of the coaches attended the entire workshop.

The three partners supporting this workshop included Mildmay Uganda, MicroResearch and Academics without Borders (AWB).

The regular MicroResearch Workshop program was conducted with 10 morning half day sessions. The lectures coincided with the participants needs as they moved from formulating an idea to the framing of a “FINER” MicroResearch question, to development of the methods, budget and knowledge translation plan for a proposal overview. The final event was a presentation of each of the four team’s separate research question/proposal overview to a distinguished panel of local judges who provided the first formal critique to each team.

In planning for future MicroResearch programs both in Mildmay Uganda and other sites, a review of administrative processes, curriculum and future needs were taken into consideration. A full list of recommendations can be found in section I of the report. A few highlighted recommendations and key findings are documented for wider consideration.

1. **Locally Driven Leadership:** The Mildmay team stepped up to strongly support the workshop with senior leaders, including 5 directors, at Mildmay Uganda attending and participating. The variety, quality and engagement of participants was outstanding. The expectation is that with this foundation, Mildmay Uganda will move forward as a strong MicroResearch site over time
2. **Sustainability:** Mildmay Uganda is supporting the MicroResearch small grants. They also have the strength of faculty to teach MicroResearch. The expectation is that next year at least 20 to 30% will be taught by local Mildmay Uganda faculty. Given that several senior faculty participated in this workshop, they are now ideally placed to teach / coach



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## A. Executive Director, Facilitators, Co-teachers, Team Coaches

**Mildmay Executive Director: Dr Barbara Mukasa MB.Ch.B (MUK), MPH**  
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### Co- Teacher:

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### Local Team Coaches:

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## **B. FUNDING PARTNERS**

This Mildmay Uganda MicroResearch Workshop was supported by funding partners including:

- Mildmay Uganda
- Academics Without Borders
- Dalhousie Medical Research Foundation, Dalhousie University
- IWK Health Centre
- Dalhousie University
- MicroResearch private donors
- Personal donations by R Borotolussi and N. MacDonald

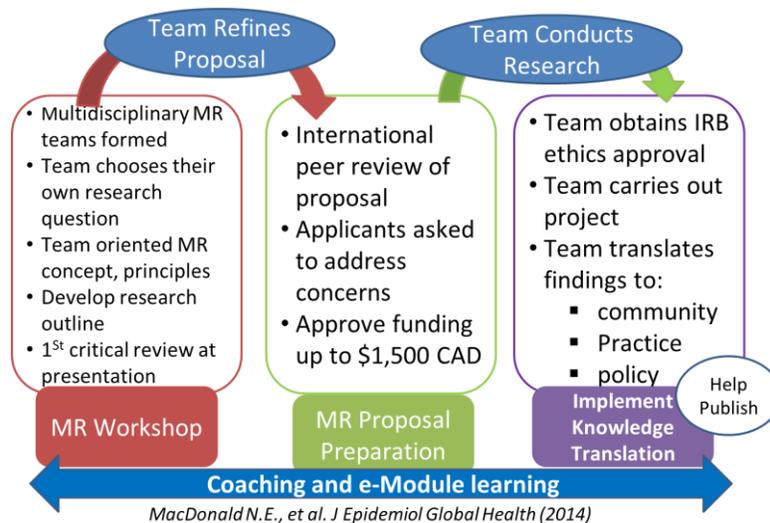
## C. INTRODUCTION

In 2015, the United Nations approved the *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) building on the achievements of the *Millennium Development Goals* (MDG). Developing local capacity continues to be a priority in the SDGs including a focus on health. Resource limited countries bear 25% of the globe's disease burden yet the healthcare professional workforce is less than 1%. Furthermore, with only 2% of the research funds, much of this is outsourced research from industrialized countries with the developing country providing the patients and the data collection. While the SDGs encourage national or regional strategies and collaborations to address complex health problems, local health problems need local, sustainable, culturally appropriate community-based solutions.

MicroResearch (<http://microresearch.ca>) is an innovative strategy aimed at building the capacity of local health care professionals to better address community health care problems by finding local solutions for local problems.

The program was founded in partnership between Mbarara University of Science and Technology (Jerome Kabakyenga) and Dalhousie University (Robert Bortolussi and Noni MacDonald) in 2008.

*See reference:* MacDonald et al., (2014). MicroResearch: Finding sustainable local health solutions in East Africa through small local research studies. *Journal of Epidemiology and Global Health*, 4,185-193. <http://download.journals.elsevierhealth.com/pdfs/journals/2210-6006/PIIS2210600614000161.pdf>



## **D. PROGRAM AND PARTICIPANTS**

Mildmay Uganda was established in 1998 as a Centre of Excellence for provision of comprehensive HIV&AIDS prevention, care, treatment, and training services. They are committed to and have excelled at transforming communities for sustainable health. As part of their strategic plan, Mildmay Uganda is keen on growing their research capacity, especially community focused research. In support of this, in January 2019, two faculty members from Mildmay Uganda attended the MicroResearch workshop held at the Maternal Newborn Child Health Institute (MNCHI) site at MUST in Mbarara (Uganda) to learn more about MicroResearch and the infrastructure and planning needed for a MicroResearch workshop. Mildmay Uganda then developed a formal MOU with MicroResearch and Academics without Borders to underpin the beginning of MicroResearch program for Mildmay Uganda.

This in the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the founding of Mildmay Uganda (<https://mildmay.or.ug>), their 1<sup>st</sup> MicroResearch training workshop was held from May 20 to May 31, 2019 at the main Mildmay Uganda campus on the Entebbe to Kampala Road.

There are three key objectives of a MicroResearch Workshop:

- 1) To develop skills needed for community focused research;
- 2) To develop skills needed to work in a multidisciplinary group and to become a team; and
- 3) To write a successful community focused research proposal overview.

Participants were recruited through word-of-mouth and by personal invitation. There were 32 participants who registered (two joined on Day 2) plus 4 local coaches who also wished to fully participate in the workshop for a total of 34 as most coaches attended all sessions too. The participants came from a wide range of disciplines including medicine, nursing, psychology, social work, public health, information technology, lab technician, nutritionist and community development (see Appendix 1). Each participant paid 200,000 UGS (approximately \$71 CAD) to attend. These monies were collected by Mildmay Uganda and used to support the local infrastructure for the program. Of note, the Executive Director, Mildmay Uganda Group, Dr. Barbara Mukasa will be sending these participants a note to offer congratulations on completing the workshop. Payment to attend ensures that people do not sign up and not come.

The pre-workshop assessment was completed by 31 of the 36 participants available on Day 1 (includes 3 of 4 local coaches). As noted in Appendix 2 (Pre-Workshop assessment), 24 participants/coaches had previous research experience (11 as study participants, 19 as study research assistants and 6 as local site investigators with 5 as principal investigators). The majority had had experience with the health care services in some role in previous year either formally or informally (see Appendix 2).

The 10 half-day workshop combined lectures and daily small group interdisciplinary, interactive working session. The topics covered and the teacher/facilitator for each session are noted in Appendix 3. Session lectures started at 9:00 am, followed by interactive small group discussions and planning until approximately 1:30 pm each day. The interactive small groups continued until 4:00pm on some days, as groups worked hard to prepare their presentations for the final day. The

lectures, exercises, and group work over the 9 half-days lead step by step through to the development of a research proposal overview for presentation to the panel of local judges on the final day. The lectures, support materials and tool kits were updated and refreshed since the January 2019 workshop.

The lectures coincided with the participants needs as they moved from formulating an idea to framing a “FINER” MicroResearch question through development of the methods, budget and knowledge translation and a proposal overview. The final event on Day 10 was a 10-minute presentation of the proposal to a distinguished panel of local judges, who then provided the first formal critique to each team.

Daily attendance was 90% to 100%. Those few who missed had scheduled meetings with an external visitor (Professor Janice Graham from Dalhousie University) who had come for a preliminary review of data to date on a Canada Grand Challenges project that was developed by Mildmay in collaboration with Dalhousie University.

The workshop was held in the “Suubi” building (means hope) on the Mildmay campus. This building has a large hall for the lectures, and space for the four groups to meet. Internet access was provided via a router in the training room

## E. TEAM PROPOSALS

As in previous MicroResearch workshops, the major learning was centred on the proposal overview development in the interdisciplinary groups. On Day 1, each participant developed their own idea for a research question based on their own experience. Many bounced ideas off each other. They also started by looking at background information to see if a question had been asked before and other elements of the topic in order to provide a stronger argument for group topic discussion on Day 2. On Day 2 the collaboration started when participants were divided into 4 groups (7 to 9 per group) with a focus on respecting diversity of background and gender as much as possible. Each group then discussed each member’s question and then applied the FINER criteria (including I for *innovation* as well as for *interesting*) selected the “best” one to develop into a research proposal overview during the rest of the workshop. On Day 3, a spokesperson for each group presented the topics to the class and noted the one selected by the group and the rationale for its selection (see Appendix 4). The four questions initially selected on Day 3 of the workshop were:

- Group 1:** What is the prevalence and what factors influence Hepatitis B infection amongst women of child bearing age in the Bidi- Bidi refugee settlement in Kampala?
- Group 2:** What are the determinants of hypertension management among HIV positive patients attending care for HIV care at Mildmay Uganda?
- Group 3:** Can Assisted Partner Notification (APN) improve HIV testing among men in Wakito District?

**Group 4:** How can community engagement be used to decrease prolonged stay in intensive adherence counseling clinics for adolescents attending for HIV care at Mildmay Uganda?

A discussion followed each group's presentation with emphasis on importance of narrowing and refining each question.

The series of lectures that followed provided knowledge and skills needed to develop these questions into research proposal overviews including knowledge translation, ethical issues, community engagement and budget development. All core elements to the MicroResearch concept and essential for the presentation on the final day (May 31, 2019).

Each group became a team shaping their proposal during the workshop and guided by coaches:

Team 1: Susan Nakubulwa

Team 2: Christopher Mukama Semei

Team 3: Christopher Ddamulira

Team 4: Jane Frank Nalubega

## **F. FINAL DAY**

On the final morning of the workshop (May 31, 2019), each team presented the 10 minute overview of their proposal to a panel of five judges followed by comments and questions from the judges. The panel of judges adjudicated each Team's presentation (Appendix 5) and suggested how the proposals might be further strengthened.

The Panel included:

- Richard Wanyama, Director of Grants & Sustainability, Mildmay Uganda Group
- Ms. Edith Akankwasa, Director, Mildmay Institute of Health Sciences (Nursing Public Health Specialist)
- Dr. Yvonne Karamagi Director of Medical Services & Hospital Director, Mildmay, Uganda
- Ms. Pheona Businge, Public Health Specialist and Regional Manager at Mildmay Uganda PEPFAR funded projects.
- Dr. Barbara Mukasa Executive Director, Mildmay Uganda Group

Each judge was familiarized with the MicroResearch proposal adjudication process. The judges were informed of the marking process, importance of constructive criticism and their important role in deciding if all or only some of the proposal overviews merit recommendations to go forward for full proposal development.

## **Judges' General Comments**

The judges noted that all teams had clearly worked hard and presented their proposal overviews well and on time. The judges were impressed by the professional presentation within the PowerPoints. The judges commented on the wide range of backgrounds amongst the participants. Each research question was seen as very relevant, but also needs refining. The judges noted major comments for all teams was how important their topics were in terms of eventual policy implications when the work is completed. All groups need to dive deeper into the literature to help ensure a targeted focus for their questions. As well as - aptly said by one judge – make the money fit the question. Do not envision a big diffused project, but rather a tight focused “micro” project that can be done with the money. This will help the teams focus on the priority issues and narrow their research question. The third issue was that two projects deal with vulnerable populations (adolescents, pregnant women/ refugees) and the other two with adults with HIV. In the methods section for each project there needs to be discussion of ethical issues such as privacy, justice, community engagement etc.

The judges commented on the wide range of backgrounds amongst the participants.

Specific comments for each team can be found in **Appendix 5**.

Dr. Olaro Charles, Director of Clinical Services, Ministry of Health came as a distinguished guest to the final day. He attentively listened to the team presentations, made closing remarks and handed out the MicroResearch certificates. In his remarks he noted the valuable role of Mildmay Uganda and the increasing importance of turning out health care workers who can step up to carry out work needed even if not in a referral setting. He was deeply appreciative of the quality of trainees that Mildmay Uganda produces and the care Mildmay Uganda gives for HIV patients. He also noted that all too often when he is at an international meeting, he will hear research from Uganda that the Ministry does not know about and the presentations are not given by Ugandans. He is keen on the MicroResearch concept – local solutions for local problems that fit the culture, context and resources and lead by local Ugandans. He is very positive about growing research capacity from micro to macro across Uganda.

## **G. WORKSHOP EVALUATION**

An assessment of the workshop by participants as well as how well their team functioned was obtained using structured evaluation forms submitted anonymously with 89% (32/36) of participants and coaches completing the form. The scores and summary of comments from the workshop evaluation and from the team evaluation are presented in Appendix 6 and 7.

Overall the workshop was highly rated and the teams functioned well. The program was well accepted. About half the respondents noted that a longer program i.e. beyond half days, would be helpful for the teams to do more work together. Of particular note, the value of the methods sessions, community engagement, knowledge translation, developing a research question, applying for a grant, career planning and research to policy were highlighted by many participants. In the comments, several noted that they had had research training before but never in such a practical and clear cut manner (i.e. the style of the MicroResearch program) and that the facilitators and the team work were much valued.

Most participants responded in their evaluation that this training stimulated their interest in research, and several indicated planning to do additional training at the graduate and postgraduate level.

One participant who is in an area not usually seen as related at all to research – noted that not only was he keen to keep on with the team project but he was also going to apply the thinking to the area he works in – he already saw questions that need answering that may improve effectiveness. Several others noted that they will use MicroResearch in teaching others about research i.e. cascade training.

## H. ADDITIONAL MEETINGS

### **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Family Planning amongst refugees to Uganda. Grand Challenge Canada.**

Professor Janice Graham, a medical anthropologist at Dalhousie University and a co-principle investigator on this project, travelled with the MicroResearch team to Mildmay Uganda, the principle investigator site. Over the first week while she was at Mildmay Uganda, a number of discussions were held to support this project including how to develop the end report due in October 2019. Of note, two of the MicroResearch projects are loosely related to the Grand Challenge project (Team 1 project and Team 3 project). The teaching on how to write a report in the MicroResearch workshop was also well received. Mildmay Uganda leadership very much sees the MicroResearch training and route as a way forward for Mildmay Uganda to grow their local research program i.e. go beyond working for others in research

## I. RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS

### **General**

1. **Locally Driven Leadership:** The Mildmay Uganda team stepped up to strongly support the workshop with senior leaders at Mildmay attending and participating. The variety, quality and engagement of participants was outstanding. The expectation is that with this foundation, Mildmay Uganda will move forward as a strong MicroResearch site over time
2. **Sustainability:** Mildmay Uganda is supporting the MicroResearch grants. They also have the strength of faculty to teach MicroResearch. The expectation is that next year at least 20 to 30% will be taught by local Mildmay Uganda faculty. Given that several senior faculty participated in this workshop, they are now ideally placed to teach/coach. The concept to give back a bursary post workshop that covers registration fee is unique and interesting. This needs to be followed up on to see how this is received
3. **Schedule:** The half full-day program was a hard push for some and also several had conflicts with site visits for the Grand Challenge project. Consideration needs to be given to looking to see what timing makes most sense next year and if the program could be stretched possibly from 9 am to 3 pm as suggested by several participants.

4. **Collaborations:** The collaboration with Academics without Borders has been a successful venture for MicroResearch in the promotion of the work and demonstrating the importance of local capacity building. There are potentially other ways AWB might collaborate with Mildmay Uganda.
5. **Links to Ministry of Health for MiroResearch Projects:** Having Dr. Olaro Charles attend the final day was gratifying for the participants given his emphasis that these projects could lead to evidence for policy. Hopefully this relationship can be fostered over time.

## **Administration**

1. **Physical Space:** The Suubi proved to be an excellent site for the program – airy and comfortable, good internet, easy access for serving the tea and for groups to work
2. **Internet:** Having internet access was a valuable feature and should be maintained.
3. **Diversity:** The diversity of background of participants was an excellent feature
4. **Program support:** Mildmay Uganda administrators provide excellent support for the workshop and should be commended
5. **Program Logistics:**
  - a. Time Sheets – the coaches attended to the time sheets – this was a helpful innovation and worked because most attended every day.
  - b. Care to ensure the registration names are correct needs some more thinking. Having the list distributed on the first day of second week for corrections was helpful

## **Education**

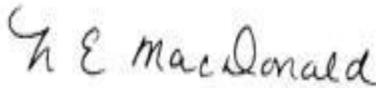
1. **Curriculum Revisions:** Revise and update PPTs based upon suggestions from Mildmay Uganda workshop
  - a. The revised order proved very helpful as prepared sooner for KT and links well to community engagement
  - b. Writing manuscript – add slide on cover letter to editor, add slide on enquire about waving page charge for LIC, add slide on how to include figures and tables
  - c. Budget correct slide #5 – re \$\$
  - d. Ethics session – consider revisions to decrease emphasis on history
  - e. More detailed explanation and demonstration on how to register for the online curriculum

2. **Group Work:** The half-day session does mean compressed group work which several teams found hard but given clinical and research project responsibilities a full day is not feasible
3. **Feedback:**
  - a) As local faculty from Mildmay take on more teaching responsibilities MicroResearch should develop a formalized teacher and coach feedback process on a daily basis to help all faculty grow
  - b) The evaluation form needs to explain CAN Meds so better understood so not need to explain verbally. However, it was just discovered that this section is no longer required by RCPS for accreditation, so it will be removed from subsequent evaluations.

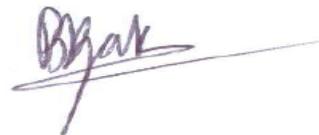
## J. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In closing the Canadian facilitators would like to express their gratitude for the interest, energy and excellent organization of Harriet Chemusto and Mary Odiit. Their enthusiasm for MicroResearch was contagious. Barbara Mukasa's leadership and Mildmay Uganda's support for MicroResearch augers well for the future. Lastly, the participants, coaches and judges were a joy to work with- such interest and enthusiasm.

Respectfully submitted



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