Child Health and Development Centre (CHDC), Makerere University

QUARTERLY

Newsletter

July - September 2026

CHILD HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTRE (CHDC), MAKERERE UNIVERSITY



Driving Excellence in Child Health and Development

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Message
from Director

Dear Readers

The third quarter of the year has been a period of reflection, learning, collaboration and renewed commitment to our mission at the Makerere University Child Health and Development Centre (CHDC).

In this edition of our newsletter, we share highlights of some of the key activities and achievements that have shaped our work over the past few months. These include the commendation of CHDC by the Makerere Internal Audit Team for our strong accountability practices, as well as our staff review of the five-year Strategic Plan for Families, Parenting and Child Health Programme, an important process that will guide our priorities and direction in the years ahead.

We also participated in the first Faculty Research Dialogue held by the Makerere University College of Health Sciences (MakCHS.

Evidence remains at the heart of what we do at CHDC. This quarter, we had the opportunity to share our experiences and lessons on “The Power of Generating and Using Evidence to Influence Policy Changes: Experiences and Lessons from Makerere University CHDC Parenting Programmes.

We also welcomed Prof. Benedikte Grenov, who visited Makerere University research facilities and CHDC to assess the progress of the Healthy Soy Project.

Another important milestone was the training of more than 70 practitioners in evidence-based parenting programmes. Building the capacity of practitioners to design, adapt and implement evidence-based interventions remains critical to ensuring that families and children benefit from approaches that are informed by research and responsive to their needs.

As we share these stories, I wish to appreciate all CHDC staff, researchers, partners, practitioners and other stakeholders whose commitment continues to drive our work forward.



Assoc. Prof Godfrey Siu, Director CHDC.

We invite you to explore this edition and learn more about our work, partnerships and the progress we continue to make.

Associate Prof. Godfrey Siu

Director, Makerere University CHDC

We trained over 70 practitioners in evidence-based parenting programmes.

Makerere Internal Audit Team Commends CHDC for Strong Accountability Practices



Denis Okuk senior Internal Auditor Directorate of Internal Audit Makerere University, Christopher Olinga and Prof. Godfrey Siu (center)pose for a picture with CHDC staff after a meeting on Project Fund Accountability.

CHDC was recognised by Makerere University's Directorate of Internal Audit as one of the institution's most compliant departments in project fund accountability.

Speaking during an engagement with CHDC staff on July 2, Senior Internal Auditor Denis Okuk commended the Department for its consistent and timely submission of project accountabilities.

"CHDC has a very good reputation at Makerere University as one of the best and most compliant departments. We have received one of the highest levels of accountability from CHDC, which demonstrates a high level of compliance," he said.

Okuk added that CHDC's commitment to accountability has made the department stand out within the University.



Denis Okuk senior Internal Auditor Directorate of Internal Audit Makerere University presenting during a meeting on Project Fund Accountability

"Because of that, we know this department by its accountability. This is a credit to the Director and the entire team because by submitting your accountabilities, you demonstrate compliance." he added

The remarks were made during a meeting between the Directorate of Internal Audit and CHDC staff aimed at strengthening project fund accountability and reinforcing best practices in financial management and donor compliance.

During the session, Okuk highlighted the importance of ensuring that project funds are used only for approved activities, donor conditions are met, fraud and misuse of funds are prevented, and transparency, good governance, and project performance are promoted. He also emphasised the principles of transparency, responsibility, accuracy, timeliness, and compliance in project management.

The Senior Internal Auditor further explained that the Directorate's role extends beyond auditing to strengthening internal controls, advising on governance, and supporting risk management to help the University achieve its objectives. He also urged staff to avoid unsupported expenditure by ensuring that

every financial transaction is backed by the required documentation.

CHDC Director Prof. Godfrey Siu reminded staff that all projects implemented by the Centre are undertaken on behalf of Makerere University and stressed the importance of maintaining strong financial accountability.

He explained that the meeting was organised to strengthen engagement between CHDC staff and the Directorate of Internal Audit, enabling staff to better understand accountability requirements and improve reporting practices.



Prof Siu giving opening remarks during a meeting on project Fund Accountability at CHDC

The engagement provided staff with valuable feedback on CHDC's performance in compliance, reporting, and financial accountability, while also equipping them with practical guidance to improve documentation and minimise audit queries in future project reporting.

CHDC Staff Review Five-Year Strategic Plan

On July 2, staff from CHDC convened to review the draft strategic plan for the Families, Parenting and Child Health Programme.

The meeting provided an opportunity for staff to examine the overall planning process, including the planning framework and the programme's situational and institutional context.

The five-year strategic plan (2026–2030) sets the long-term direction for the Families, Parenting and Child Health Programme, a specialised programme under CHDC. It outlines the programme's priorities and strategic focus for the next five years.

Presenting the strategic plan, Malcom highlighted the programme's mission: to innovate, test and support the implementation of evidence-based, data-driven and technology-supported parenting and early childhood development systems that enhance family wellbeing and improve children's lives.



Mr. Malcom Mpamizo presenting during the meeting

He also shared the programme's vision: to build a cohesive, violence-free society where every family thrives and contributes to economic development.

Speaking during the meeting,CHDC Director Prof. Godfrey Siu said the team was reaching the final stage of a process that began more than a year ago to develop a strategic direction for the Families, Parenting and Child Health Programme.

"We are getting to the climax of an exercise that began over a year ago. This process is meant to prepare a strategic direction for the Families, Parenting and Child Health Programme," he said.

He noted that the team had undertaken several activities and workshops, including a productive strategic planning workshop, which generated valuable feedback.

"We have done a number of activities and workshops together. I recall the workshop we had in Ntinda, which was very productive. It generated a lot of feedback, some of which is already being implemented, while most of it has been incorporated into

the strategy that has now been developed," he said.

Prof. Siu thanked Malcom for his dedication, expertise and commitment throughout the process, commending the quality of the strategic plan he had produced.

Carolyn Byekwaso encouraged staff to actively participate in the discussion and provide honest feedback.

"Please don't be quiet," she urged. "*This meeting will help shape what the department will do over the next five years. Be objective and sincere because this is the final opportunity to contribute to the strategy before it is finalised. At the same time, it marks the beginning of developing other key instruments that will be guided by this strategy."*



Mr. Malcom Mpamizo presenting during the meeting

MakCHS Holds First Faculty Research Dialogue to Strengthen Research Capacity

On 13 July, Makerere University College of Health Sciences (MakCHS) held its first Faculty Research Dialogue, bringing together lecturers, clinicians and researchers to discuss strategies for initiating and sustaining successful research programmes.

Held under the theme *"Initiating and Sustaining a Research Program,"* the dialogue provided a platform for junior, mid-level and senior faculty researchers to share their experiences, lessons and best practices in conducting research and securing competitive grants.

The event featured presentations from senior faculty members across the college. The Director of CHDC, Prof. Godfrey Siu, highlighted the department's research programmes and achievements, while Dr. Anthony Batte shared insights from several research projects he has led.

The keynote address was delivered by Prof. Moses Joloba, Professor of Molecular Biology, Immunology and Microbiology. Other presenters included Dr. Achilles Katamba and several senior researchers from the college.



Dr Anthony Batte presenting during the meeting

The Research dialogue was held at Mulago National Referral Hospital on July 13 under the theme, *"Initiating and Sustaining a Research Program."*

Opening the dialogue, Prof. Bruce *Kir*enga Principal MakCHS revealed that the College of Health Sciences has 214 academic staff and has implemented 92 research projects over the past two years. He expressed hope that every academic staff member would become involved in at least one research project.



(L-R) Dr. Anthony Batte, Assoc. Prof. Godfrey Siu and Dr Aggrey Dhabangi attending the Research Dialogue



Assoc. Prof. Bruce Kirenga , Prof Richard Idro interacting with another expert

He encouraged principal investigators to deliberately involve more colleagues in ongoing studies to strengthen research participation across the college.

"Our belief is that if we know the research programmes each member of staff is working on, we can ensure that everyone has an opportunity to participate in a research project," he said.

Prof. Kirenga emphasized the importance of mentorship in building successful research careers. He noted that while some researchers have consistently secured grants for decades, many others have struggled to obtain funding.

"We have colleagues at the College of Health Sciences who have secured research grants every year for nearly 30 years. We need to understand what has made them successful and create formal mentorship opportunities so they can guide colleagues who are yet to secure grants," he said.

Presenting the work of the CHDC, Prof. Godfrey Siu said the department applies evidence-based intervention research, implementation science and stakeholder engagement to develop solutions to major health challenges.

Over the past seven years, the department has implemented 45 research projects, attracting approximately US$14 million in funding. The programmes focus on non-communicable diseases, child development, parenting and child health, disability and technology, health systems with a focus on malaria, and capacity building.

Prof. Siu also emphasized that collaboration is central to producing high-quality research. *"Research collaborations allow scientists to bring together different areas of expertise. As a college, we have highly skilled researchers in different fields who can work together and with international partners to generate stronger evidence and greater impact,"* he said.

He encouraged researchers who have already established strong national and international research networks to use those partnerships to create more opportunities for colleagues and strengthen research across departments and the college.

The Deputy Principal of the College of Health Sciences, Associate Prof. Richard Idro, noted that more than 60 percent of Uganda's health research is conducted by the College of Health Sciences. He said much of the research is aimed at addressing the country's priority health challenges through evidence-based solutions.

He cited research on tuberculosis, malaria, mental health, non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, air quality and asthma, reducing childhood pneumonia, improving women's health, as well as parenting innovations developed by the Child Health and Development Centre (CHDC).

The dialogue also explored ways of strengthening mentorship by encouraging experienced researchers who consistently secure grants to work closely with colleagues who are still building their research careers. Participants agreed that such collaborations would help increase research productivity, expand funding opportunities and ultimately improve health outcomes for communities.

The Dean of the School of Medicine, Prof. Annette Nakimuli, reminded lecturers that research is not only essential for generating solutions to community health challenges but is also an important requirement for academic promotion.

The dialogue concluded with personal reflections from some senior researchers, including Dr. Anthony Batte a Senior Lecturer and Paediatric Nephrologist at, who shared his journey in securing competitive research grants and encouraged younger researchers to remain persistent, build collaborations and seek mentorship as they develop their research careers.



Dr Arthur Mpimbaza with Dr Harriet Babikako interacting after the first session of the meeting.

The power of evidence in shaping parenting policies

On August 20, the Director of CHDC, Prof Godfrey Siu, attended a World Vision workshop on Sexual Violence Against Children (SVAC) in Jinja, where he highlighted the importance of generating and using evidence to influence policy changes.

Prof. Siu made a presentation titled *"The Power of Generating and Using Evidence to Influence Policy Changes: Experiences and Lessons from Makerere University Child Health and Development Centre Parenting Programmes."*

During the presentation, Prof Siu took participants through CHDC's mission of promoting the wellbeing of children and women in Uganda through multidisciplinary and multisectoral research, teaching and training, as well as strengthening partnerships between the university, communities and government.

He also explained the work of CHDC, including its focus on research and the development and implementation of evidence-based parenting interventions.

Prof Siu highlighted the importance of investing in the design of evidence-based parenting interventions and how such interventions can contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Uganda's national development priorities.

He also discussed approaches to designing evidence-based parenting interventions, monitoring and rigorous evaluation research, and generating evidence on the effectiveness of interventions.

Prof Siu further took participants through the development of the Parenting for Respectability (PfR) programme, sharing experiences and lessons from the programme and how evidence generated through its implementation can inform policy and practice.

Ms Irene Kagoya World Vision Event coordinator said *'' the presentation was very informative and generated a lot of interest among the participants. I believe the information shared including the call for applications will be valuable to many of us,''*



Assoc. Prof. Godfrey Siu presenting during the World Vision workshop on SVAC

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Some of the Participants attending SVAC Workshop

Prof. Benedikte Visits Makerere Research Facilities, CHDC to Assess Progress of Healthy Soy Project



Dr Tony Obua, a soybean breeder and lecturer at Makerere University, shows different varieties of soybean seedlings at the Makerere University Agricultural Research Institute facilities as Prof Benedikte Grenov (second Left), Prudence Ainomugisha PhD student, Dr Harriet Babikako, Senior Lecturer at Makerere University's Child Health and Development Centre (CHDC), Prof Phinehas Tukamuhabwa look on.

On August 31, Principal Investigator (PI) of the Healthy Soy Project, Prof. Benedikte Grenov, visited Makerere University Agriculture Research Institute facilities at Kabanyolo and Kasangati to assess the progress of the project. Her visit included the screenhouse at Kabanyolo , laboratory facilities at Kasangati and CHDC.

Prof. Grenov was accompanied by Senior Lecturer Dr Harriet Babikako and PhD student Prudence Ainomugisha. During the visit, Prof. Phinehas Tukamuhabwa, a plant breeding expert in the Department of Crop Science and Horticulture, and Dr Tony Obua, a soybean breeder and lecturer at Makerere University, showcased different soybean varieties being studied under the project.

The work is being undertaken under the Healthy Soy Project, a multidisciplinary research initiative that brings together experts in agriculture, nutrition and health to develop soybean-based solutions to address nutritional challenges.

The initiative is organised into three work packages. The agricultural team is developing climate-resilient soybean varieties with high productivity and reduced anti-nutrient content, while the food science team will process the soybean to improve its nutritional bioavailability.

The health team will then test the soybean processed by the food science team with the aim of developing a lipid-based nutrient supplement for children.



Prof Benedikte Grenov, Dr Harriet Babikako, PhD student Prudence Ainomugisha touring Makerere University Laboratory in Kasangati

Prof. Grenov said the different work packages have continued to make progress. *"We have started planting soybeans. The first season has been completed with sowing and harvesting,"* she said.

As part of the agricultural research, the team has planted 200 soybean genotypes to identify varieties that are more resilient to climate-related challenges.

Prof. Ezekiel Mupere, an Associate Professor in the Department of Paediatrics and a researcher at CHDC, is the site Principal Investigator supporting the health component of the project.

He said the health component is particularly focused on childhood stunting, a form of chronic undernutrition in which children are shorter than expected for their age.

Prof. Mupere said Uganda continues to face a significant burden of stunting, making the search for locally available and affordable nutritional interventions important.

The supplement will eventually be used as an intervention to assess whether it can improve the nutritional status, growth and development of young children.

For Nashim Nassanga, a PhD student working on the agriculture component of the Healthy Soy Project, the research goes beyond what farmers see in the field.

"We are looking at coming up with drought-resilient soybean varieties that are high in protein and low in anti-nutritional factors," she said.

Nassanga said researchers are conducting trials in Kabanyolo, Kasese and Serere, where several soybean lines have been planted and are being carefully monitored.

Researchers record their growth and other agronomic characteristics before harvesting the seeds and taking them to the laboratory for further analysis.

The laboratory tests help determine the protein content of each soybean line.

The process will be repeated over three seasons to ensure that researchers identify varieties that consistently perform well.

Nassanga said the researchers are looking for soybean lines that can combine three critical characteristics: drought tolerance, high protein content and reduced anti-nutritional factors.

By 2028, she expects to have completed the analysis and identified soybean lines with these characteristics.

The promising lines will then undergo the necessary evaluation and approval before they can be released to farmers.

Prof. Grenov also visited CHDC, where she met the Director, Prof. Godfrey Siu, and staff.

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Prof. Benedikte Grenov (third right), Assoc. Prof. Godfrey Siu (third left), Dr Harriet Babikako (left), Assoc. Prof. Ezekiel Mupere (Right) and CHDC staff pose for a group photo after a meeting at CHDC

70 Practitioners Trained on Evidence-Based Parenting Programmes



Lucy Otto, Assistant Commissioner for Family Affairs at the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) (in purple and white), and Prof. Godfrey Siu (right) pose for a group photo with participants of the fourth cohort of the Science of Designing, Implementation and Adaptation of Evidence-Based Parenting Interventions course.

At least 70 practitioners drawn from government, civil society and research institutions attended the fourth cohort of a training aimed at strengthening the design, implementation and adaptation of evidence-based parenting interventions.

The 12-week course, titled "The Science of Designing, Implementation and Adaptation of Evidence-Based Parenting Interventions," is organised by the Makerere University CHDC in partnership with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) and members of the Parenting Agenda Consortium.

The training, which started on September 14, is delivered through a blended format, combining physical and online sessions.

Participants in the fourth cohort included government officials, Community Development Officers, police officers, prison officers, representatives of non-governmental organisations and researchers, among others.

The training was officiated by Lucy Otto, the Assistant Commissioner of Family Affairs in the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.

Ms Otto reminded participants that the ministry, in partnership with CHDC, had developed eight National Standards that organisations are required to meet before developing or implementing parenting programmes.

She said organisations implementing parenting programmes at district level have a responsibility to ensure that only evidence-based interventions are implemented.

"Globally and in Uganda, there is a growing policy interest in optimising the influence of parenting," Ms Otto said.

Prof Godfrey Siu, said parenting has become an important public health issue and a key contributor to national development.

"There are many arguments today that if you want to achieve full human capital development, you must invest in parenting. The Government is aware of this and has made commitments to improve this sector," Prof Siu said.

He said the Government had developed the National Parenting Guidelines, which provide direction on how parenting programmes should be designed and implemented.

"These guidelines are very important. They can help you to appreciate what the Government is thinking about in terms of parenting," he said.

Prof Siu said that in 2017, CHDC, in partnership with MGLSD, started discussions aimed at bringing together stakeholders involved in parenting work after recognising that many organisations were working in isolation.

"We wanted a dialogue to bring people into a consensus about parenting work," he said.

The discussions led to the creation of the National Parenting Agenda Initiative, which later resulted in the establishment of the National Parenting Agenda Consortium.

The consortium now brings together more than 80 organisations and

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Prof Siu encouraged organisations involved in parenting, violence prevention and family strengthening to work with the ministry and join the National Parenting Agenda Consortium.

"If you are doing parenting work, violence prevention or family strengthening work, look for the ministry and get registered as a member of the National Parenting Agenda Consortium," he told participants.

During the training, Family Life Network Executive Director Eng. Stephen Langa called for greater national attention to marriage, family and parenting.

He said the three issues should be treated as a national priority and emergency because of their implications for children and society.

Eng. Langa said marriage, family and parenting are governed by principles that should not be ignored or left entirely to individual preferences.

He described marriage as the foundation of family and parenting and said it should be treated as a lifelong commitment.

"Marriage is not, 'Let me experiment with this' or 'If this man is disturbing my head, I am out of here.' People are playing with marriage," he said.

Eng. Langa said the increasing breakdown of marriages has consequences that extend beyond couples to children and the wider community.

He argued that many social problems can be linked to broken families and poor parenting.



Eng. Stephen Langa, Executive Director of Family Life Network, speaking during a training session for the fourth cohort of the Science of Designing, Implementation and Adaptation of Evidence-Based Parenting Interventions course.

CHDC Attends Olutindo Research Project Dissemination Conference

CHDC attended the dissemination conference for the Olutindo Research Project Launch, held on 4 September at Uganda Christian University (UCU) in Mukono.

Joselyn Racheal Kiwanuka represented CHDC at the conference, which brought together stakeholders to share findings and messages from the research project aimed at addressing teenage pregnancy among adolescents in Mukono District.

The research project was led by Prof. Tondo Kiwanuka in collaboration with other staff at UCU. Its major objective was to promote positive sexual and reproductive health behaviour among teenage girls in Mukono District through a strategic communication intervention using a participatory community approach.



Racheal Kiwanuka CHDC staff interacting with Principal Investigator, Prof. Tondo Kiwanuka after the meeting

The project was implemented in two phases. The first phase involved conducting research to examine and analyse the underlying causes of teenage pregnancy. The second phase focused on designing an innovative, evidence-based strategic communication intervention to reduce teenage pregnancies.

As part of the intervention, the research team developed an Olutindo card game and video, which were designed and pre-tested and have potential to be scaled up across the country.

The conference attracted a wide range of stakeholders, including parents, teenage girls and boys, religious leaders, mothers' and fathers' unions, cultural leaders, health officials, education officers, probation officers, police officers, non-governmental organisations, gender officers and local council leaders.

GPI Webinar Highlight Collective Action for Parenting Programmes Scale-up



Partners of the Global Parenting Initiative (GPI) have participated in a webinar exploring how existing networks can be leveraged to strengthen government engagement and support the scaling up and sustainability of evidence-based parenting programmes.

The webinar, held on November 29, explored how regional and global networks, communities of practice, technical alliances and learning collaborative can support governments to adopt, adapt and sustain evidence-based programmes for children and families.

The discussions emphasised that no organisation can achieve scale alone and that programmes cannot remain at scale without sustained collective effort.

Speakers discussed how networks and partnerships can support governments beyond the initial scale-up phase by creating mechanisms for continuous learning, adaptation and improvement; strengthening advocacy and maintaining political commitment and investment; facilitating peer learning across countries and contexts; reducing duplication and making better use of existing resources and expertise; and building the collective capacity required to sustain systems-level change.

The webinar was moderated by Facilitate Lead at GPI Genevieve Haupt Ronnie.

Investing in systems for scale-up

Speaking during the webinar, Asoc. Prof. Godfrey Siu, Director Makerere University CHDC emphasised that scaling up goes beyond making a programme available to as many people as possible. He said it also requires investment in the systems and structures that support scaling up at both local and national levels.

"Scaling up is not just about availing the programme to people as widely as possible. It is also about investing in the architecture and systems that support that scaling up. And this also means that we have to invest at the national level.

"So you scale up at the ground, but you must also create systems at the national level that will support that. And often, I think the mistake we make is that we think about scaling up our own programme, but also alongside your programme, there could be others being scaled up. So investing at the national level to strengthen capacity at that level for everybody is

critical," Prof. Siu said.

Prof. Siu also highlighted the importance of strengthening systems for collecting and tracking data on parenting interventions at the national level.

He said a national database for parenting interventions had been established in Uganda to enable the government to track what is happening and support scale-up.

Sustaining networks and partnerships

On sustaining networks, Prof. Siu said they need to remain active for longer, particularly because parenting remains a relatively marginalised area.

He noted that for networks that are still young and developing, sustained engagement would enable them to provide greater support to parenting programmes being scaled up at lower levels.

Beatrice Ogutu Executive Director of ICS-SP, shared the experience of using existing government programmes as entry points for integrating parenting interventions.

She said one advantage they have had in scaling parenting programmes has been identifying programmes that the government is already implementing and finding opportunities to integrate parenting into them.

"So, you're always keeping an eye out as a network. What are the opportunities? What is the government doing? And within these existing programmes or programmes that the government is negotiating on, the differences are multilateral or bilateral. How do we anchor the parenting programme there? So, you keep on learning.

"When you see an opportunity, you approach the right ministry. And again, you continue implementing and supporting the government based on the new model," Ogutu said.

Co-creating with government

Prof. Siu also stressed the importance of involving government in the development and implementation of programmes, rather than treating government as an external stakeholder.

He said Makerere University continues to recognise its role as a generator of evidence and innovations, while also acknowledging that innovations and ideas can come from other sources, including government.

"As Makerere University, we have not forgotten our role as generators of evidence and generators of innovations, but we also recognise that innovations and ideas are not only coming from universities.

"So what we have done is to appreciate co-development of everything with the government. So for example, our own Parenting for Respectability (PfR), when we initiated it at the very start, we had the government sitting in the advisory capacity and bringing in government input all the time just to ensure that we do not miss what the government priority is like," he said.

He further noted that the government has skilled professionals with considerable experience who understand the country's priorities and direction.

"The other thing relatedly is to acknowledge that the government actually has very skilled people who have been employed in government, they have so much experience, and they know where the direction is.

"So listening to the government even as a researcher and then of course availing the evidence. So we have seen that our government offices now are able to talk about evidence-based interventions with a lot of confidence because they know that they have technical people backing them," Prof. Siu said.

Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children

The webinar also provided an opportunity to announce the second Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children, which will take place in Manila, Philippines, on November 18th and 19th.

Dr. Isang Awah, Head of Advocacy GPI, announced that the conference will be hosted by the Government of the Philippines in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF.

The first Global Ministerial Conference was organised by WHO and UNICEF and held in Bogota, Colombia, in November 2024. It was described as a historic milestone in the global movement to end violence against children and generated more than 400 pledges from over 110 Member States.

The second conference will provide an opportunity to build on the achievements made by governments and translate political momentum into action.

The conference will also include side events independently organised by key stakeholders on November 16 and 17.

Several of these side events will specifically focus on parenting and will take place on November 17.

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Mak-BSSR strengthens research capacity through specialised training



Trainees with the Program Director Prof. Anne Katahoire (third from left) during the Social Determinants of Health course, held in the MakCHS-Conference Room from 13–17 July 2026.

The Makerere University Behavioural and Social Science Research (Mak-BSSR) Programme conducted specialised training courses between July and September 2026 to strengthen trainees' knowledge and skills in behavioural and social science research.

From July 13 to 17, the programme conducted a five-day course on Social Determinants of Health, designed to strengthen trainees' understanding of how social and structural factors influence health outcomes, particularly HIV prevention, treatment and care, and how these factors can be incorporated into behavioural and social science research.

The training aimed to equip participants with knowledge of the World Health Organization (WHO) Commission on Social Determinants of Health framework, the influence of material and social determinants on health outcomes, and the application of structural thinking in research.

Participants also explored the design of multi-level interventions to address structural barriers and the development of research questions informed by the Social Determinants of Health framework.

A total of nine trainees attended the course, comprising four PhD trainees, three postdoctoral fellows, one master's trainee and one non-degree fellow.

The course was facilitated by Prof. Anne R. Katahoire, Co-Programme Director; Dr. James Wasike and Prof. Stella Neema, both from Makerere University College of Humanities and Social Sciences (Mak-CHUSS); and Dr. Joseph Rujumba from Makerere University College of Health Sciences (MakCHS).

The learner-centred training approach combined lectures, case discussions, group work, interactive learning activities and participant presentations. Trainees also engaged in a cumulative exercise using a common patient case, "Amina", which enabled them to progressively apply concepts learned throughout the week to their research interests.

Topics covered included the foundations of social determinants of health and the WHO framework; material determinants, including poverty, food insecurity and education; social determinants, including stigma, gender and social support; and designing structural interventions and developing research questions. The course concluded with participant presentations and a synthesis of the learning.

Applying social and behavioural theories in HIV research

From August 3 to 7, Mak-BSSR conducted a five-day course on Social and Behavioural Theories in HIV Research, attended by three PhD trainees and one postdoctoral trainee.

The course aimed to strengthen trainees' ability to identify, assess, select and apply social and behavioural theories to HIV research. It emphasised purposeful theory selection, encouraging trainees to choose theories based on their relevance to the research problem, question, outcomes, population and context, rather than familiarity or the accumulation of multiple theories without clear justification.

The training covered the distinctions between theories, models and frameworks; theory selection and application; and the identification of constructs and mechanisms operating at individual, interpersonal, community and structural levels. Trainees also explored how stigma operates across these levels, when combining theories is justified, and how to develop conceptual frameworks or logic models for research studies.



Facilitators of the Social and Behavioral Theories in HIV Research Course, Mr. Samuel Ouma, Dr. Herbert Muyinda, Dr. David Kyaddondo, Dr. Deborah Ojiambo and Prof. Anne Katahoire pose with participants for a group photograph at the Child Health and Development Centre.

The course combined presentations, HIV-focused examples, coached exercises, group share-backs and summative presentations. It also equipped trainees with skills to justify and defend their choice and application of theory in HIV research.

Facilitation was provided by Prof. Anne Katahoire, Dr. Samuel Ouma, Dr. Herbert Muyinda, Dr. Deborah Ojiambo, Dr. David Kyaddondo and Prof. Stella Neema.

Feedback from the course was highly positive. All four trainees who completed the evaluation rated the course as excellent, said they would recommend it to another trainee and reported being fully prepared to apply theory in their research.

The course received mean scores of 4.98 out of 5 for learning and relevance, 4.75 for daily themes and practical work, 5.00 for facilitation, and 4.92 for organisation and materials.

Trainees particularly appreciated the theory-selection rubric, practical exercises, case studies, combining theories and the progressive structure of the course.

They, however, recommended allocating more time to practical application of the theory-selection rubric, appropriate integration of theories, and translating theory into conceptual frameworks or logic models.

From September 7 to 11, Mak-BSSR conducted a five-day BSS Research Methods course, providing trainees with a structured introduction to designing and conducting mixed methods research.

The training focused on developing research questions and conceptual frameworks, selecting and justifying mixed methods designs, developing quantitative and qualitative research strands, integrating findings, and preparing and defending feasible research protocols.

The course approach, as outlined combined facilitated sessions, application workshops, learning activities, peer piloting, an integration clinic and final protocol presentations.

The lead facilitators included Dr. Joseph Rujumba, Dr. Samuel Ouma, Assoc. Prof. Godfrey Siu, Assoc. Prof. Joseph Matovu and Prof. Lynn Atuyambe.

Six trainees completed the course evaluation, representing 67 percent of those trained.

Through these training initiatives, Mak-BSSR continues to strengthen research capacity by equipping trainees with theoretical and methodological skills to conduct rigorous, relevant and context-responsive behavioural and social science research.

The programme's training approach supports researchers to develop sound research questions, apply appropriate frameworks and methods, and generate evidence that can inform programmes, policies and interventions across different areas of health and social development.



Assoc. Prof. Godfrey E. Siu, the Director of Child Health and Development Centre. facilitates a session on developing qualitative research questions, study design and sampling on 9 September 2026.

CHDC PhD student presents Parenting Research at World Safety Conference

From September 1 to 4 Onesmus Kamacooko a PhD student, presented research findings showing that positive parenting may help improve caregivers' mental health over time.

Onesmus presented the findings from his PhD research on the longitudinal relationship between caregiver mental health and positive parenting in Uganda at the 16th World Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion held in Cape Town, South Africa.

The study found that caregivers who practised more positive parenting than they usually did subsequently reported lower levels of depressive symptoms and parenting stress.

It also established a link between positive parenting and better mental health at the same point in time. However, caregivers' depression and stress did not predict subsequent changes in their parenting practices.



Onesmus Kamacooko a PhD student giving a speech at the 16th World Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion held in Cape Town, South Africa

The findings suggest that strengthening positive parenting practices could help improve caregivers' emotional wellbeing over time, in addition to benefiting children.

The research highlights the potential of positive parenting interventions to support both children's development and the mental health of their caregivers.

The conference brought together experts and researchers working in injury prevention and safety promotion to share research findings and discuss approaches to improving safety and wellbeing.

CHDC Staff Attend Modern Executive Assistant Training in Nairobi

Priscillah R. Ainebyoona and Martha Atuhaire of the Child Health and Development Centre (CHDC) attended a five-day training course titled The Modern Executive Assistant Training at Trainingcred Institute - Nairobi, Kenya, from September 7 to 11 .

Ainebyoona is an Administrative Assistant at CHDC, while Atuhaire serves as the Executive Assistant. The training was timely and relevant to their respective roles, equipping them with knowledge and practical skills to enhance their professional



Priscillah R. Ainebyoona and Martha Atuhaire (second and third from right, respectively) pose for a group photo with fellow participants while displaying their certificates after completing the training in Nairobi.

competencies and improve the quality and effectiveness of administrative and executive support at the Centre.

The training provided an opportunity for the participants to acquire new knowledge and practical skills in modern administrative practices in response to the changing demands of the workplace and the growing expectations of administrative professionals in supporting institutional leadership and performance.

The course covered several areas, including strategic executive partnership foundations, advanced calendar and priority management, meetings, executive level communication excellence, technology integration and workflow optimisation, stakeholder relationship management, project coordination and strategic support, information management and confidentiality, and diplomatic conflict resolution.

Under strategic executive partnership foundations, participants explored the evolving role of executive assistants and the expectations of modern executive partnerships. Emphasis was placed on strategic thinking, business development, understanding organisational dynamics, stakeholder influence mapping and building professional credibility.

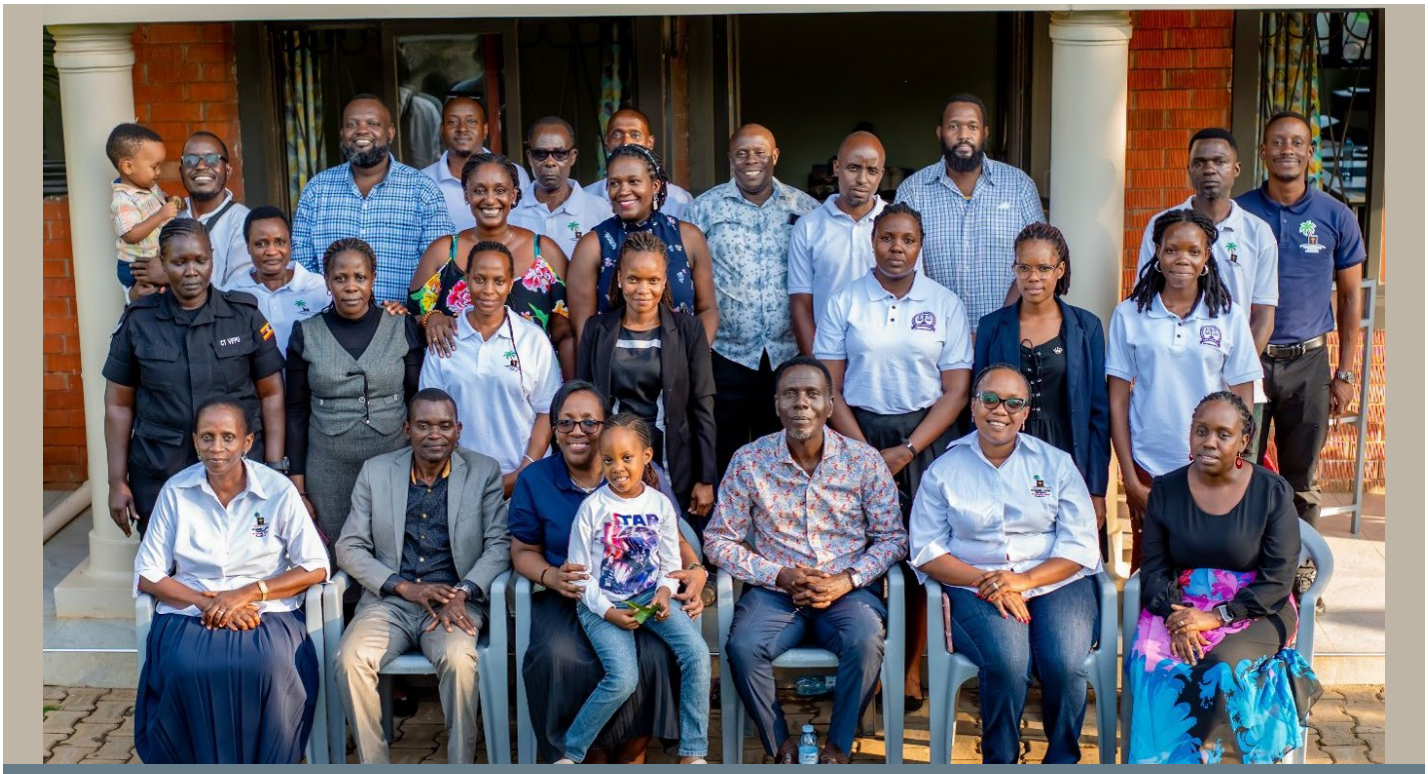
The session highlighted the shift from traditional, reactive administrative support to a proactive, strategic partnership in which executive assistants contribute to organisational efficiency, informed decision-making, effective stakeholder engagement and overall institutional performance.

Ainebyoona and Atuhaire said the training had positively impacted their professional development and that they intended to apply and share the knowledge and skills acquired to improve executive support, enhance coordination, strengthen communication and promote the efficient management of institutional activities at CHDC.

They described the training as an important professional development opportunity that broadened their understanding of the strategic role of executive assistants and administrative officers in contemporary organisations.

"The knowledge gained is expected to contribute to improved administrative efficiency, stronger working relationships, better time and information management, and more effective support to executive leadership," they said.

CHDC Shares Parenting Interventions at Rev. Laban Tibekinga Discipleship Centre's Third Anniversary



Justice Olive Mukwaya Kazaarwe, carrying a child, poses for a photo with guests, including Racheal Kayaga, Project Officer at CHDC (seated right).

On September 30, CHDC shared its evidence-based parenting interventions with the Rev. Laban Tibekinga Discipleship Centre, as the Centre celebrated three years of service and growth.

Racheal Kayaga, a Project Officer at CHDC, represented the Centre at the thanksgiving anniversary. The event,

organised by Justice Olive Mukwaya Kazaarwe, the Director who owns the Discipleship Centre, brought together staff, friends and family members to thank God for the Centre's journey and achievements over the past three years.

The celebration featured prayers, worship, testimonies, messages of appreciation and fellowship. Participants reflected on the Centre's progress, celebrated its milestones and recognised the contributions of people who have supported its work since its establishment.

In her remarks, Justice Kazaarwe, thanked God for the Centre's growth and continued ministry, while appreciating the support and relationships built among staff, family members, friends and other stakeholders.

She also outlined the Centre's next steps and areas of focus, which she said had been revealed to her by God. These include the Hope and Healing Course for Families, designed to help families address emotional and other challenges, and Swahili language classes to equip participants with basic communication skills.

Other planned initiatives are the Rev. Laban Tibekinga Fellowship, which seeks to strengthen fellowship, spiritual growth and community among members; a Compassion Ministry to support widows, orphans and other vulnerable people; and conflict management classes to equip individuals and families with skills to prevent and manage conflicts constructively.

Interest in PfR

During the engagement, Mrs Kayaga presented CHDC's parenting interventions, particularly the Parenting for Respectability (PfR) programme, which supports positive parenting and family wellbeing.

Justice Olive expressed interest in both the in-person PfR programme and the PfR Digital App, noting their potential to support families. She indicated that she would follow up with Prof. Godfrey Siu, Director of CHDC, to explore opportunities for training the Discipleship Centre's team to implement the programme.

Mrs Kayaga encouraged the Centre's staff to consider applying for the PfR training course to strengthen their knowledge and capacity to deliver evidence-based parenting interventions within their communities.

CHDC Secures District Support for Parenting Programme Expansion



Hosea Katende Sempa Scale and Capacity Building Specialist Families, Parenting and Child Health Programme at Makerere University CHDC and Rachael Kayaga take a photo moment with the DCDO and Probation officer of Pallisa district

From September 21 to 25 CHDC secured support from local government officials in seven districts and city areas across Central, Eastern and Northern Uganda to facilitate the expansion of its PfR programme.

The district entry and inception meetings were held in Kayunga, Pallisa, Sironko, Kumi, Amuria, Kitgum and Gulu

City.

The meetings, conducted by CHDC project staff Hosea Katende and Joselyn Racheal K., aimed to introduce the PfR programme to district and city officials, outline its objectives and implementation approach, and secure local government buy-in and formal clearance for its scale-up.

The engagement also sought to identify and nominate district focal persons to coordinate and support programme implementation at the local government level.

The focal persons are expected to facilitate preparations for mobilisation at sub-county and community levels, support the recruitment of parents and caregivers, and coordinate the identification, selection and training of PfR facilitators.

During the visits, the CHDC team engaged 19 district and city officials, comprising eight women and 11 men, in discussions on the proposed expansion and the role of local governments in supporting implementation.

Key areas of discussion included the programme's objectives, target groups, implementation approach and expected benefits to children, parents, caregivers and communities.

The team also explored opportunities to integrate the programme into existing district and city structures and initiatives, while presenting the projected number of parents and caregivers to be reached in each area during the implementation period.

The meetings provided a platform for local government officials to understand the programme and discuss possible areas of collaboration with CHDC and other stakeholders.

The engagements mark an important step towards strengthening local government collaboration and establishing the structures needed to support the expansion of PfR in the seven districts and city areas.



Published by:
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Makerere University (CHDC-Mak)

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