

## **A Collaborative Approach to Poverty Reduction and Health Improvement: Kibungo School of Nursing and Midwifery Project**

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### **Background**

A community needs assessment by 3<sup>rd</sup> year student nurses at KSNM identified an area of particular need. Students and staff prepared a programme of health improvement. Objectives included: Enhancing student's understanding of health needs; Promoting health through social mobilisation; developing a collaborative approach to health improvement, and augmenting student's communication and organisational skills

### **Description**

A key activity for student nurses is assessing the needs of local communities and creating effective responses. During their community placement 3<sup>rd</sup> year student nurses from KSNM carried out a health needs assessment in a rural community in Eastern Rwanda. Students learnt to prioritise needs and to act on one particular issue. Students decided to help build the capacity of a local vulnerable family by collaborating on a project to build a house and provide furnishings and materials. Funding was provided by the student nurses, staff from KSNM and HRH personnel. The schedule for completion coincided with the Genocide Memorial day. The project was completed within the time frame and the house and materials were officially inaugurated. KSNM was presented with a Certificate of Merit by the Mayor of the district in appreciation for the collaborative approach to community cohesion. This initiative was directly related to the Rwandan government's task of poverty reduction and health promotion.

### **Lessons Learnt**

Students learnt how to prioritise health needs. They recognised the wider implications of advocacy and poverty alleviation. Planning and implementing the project augmented their communication and time management skills.

### **Conclusions**

Active participation in a community initiative enabled students to become more reflective and responsive in their own practice. It also created a learning environment which empowered them to act collaboratively in order to improve the broader determinants of health.

**Key words:** health improvement, collaborative working, nurse education