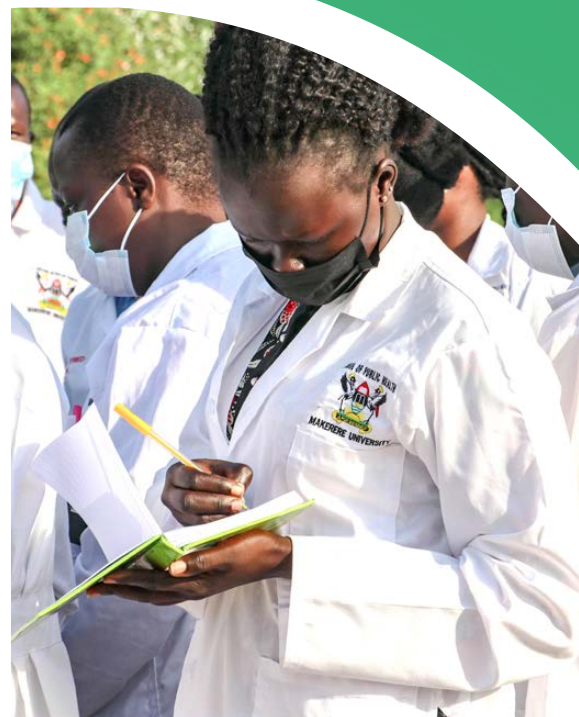


70
YEARS
ANNIVERSARY



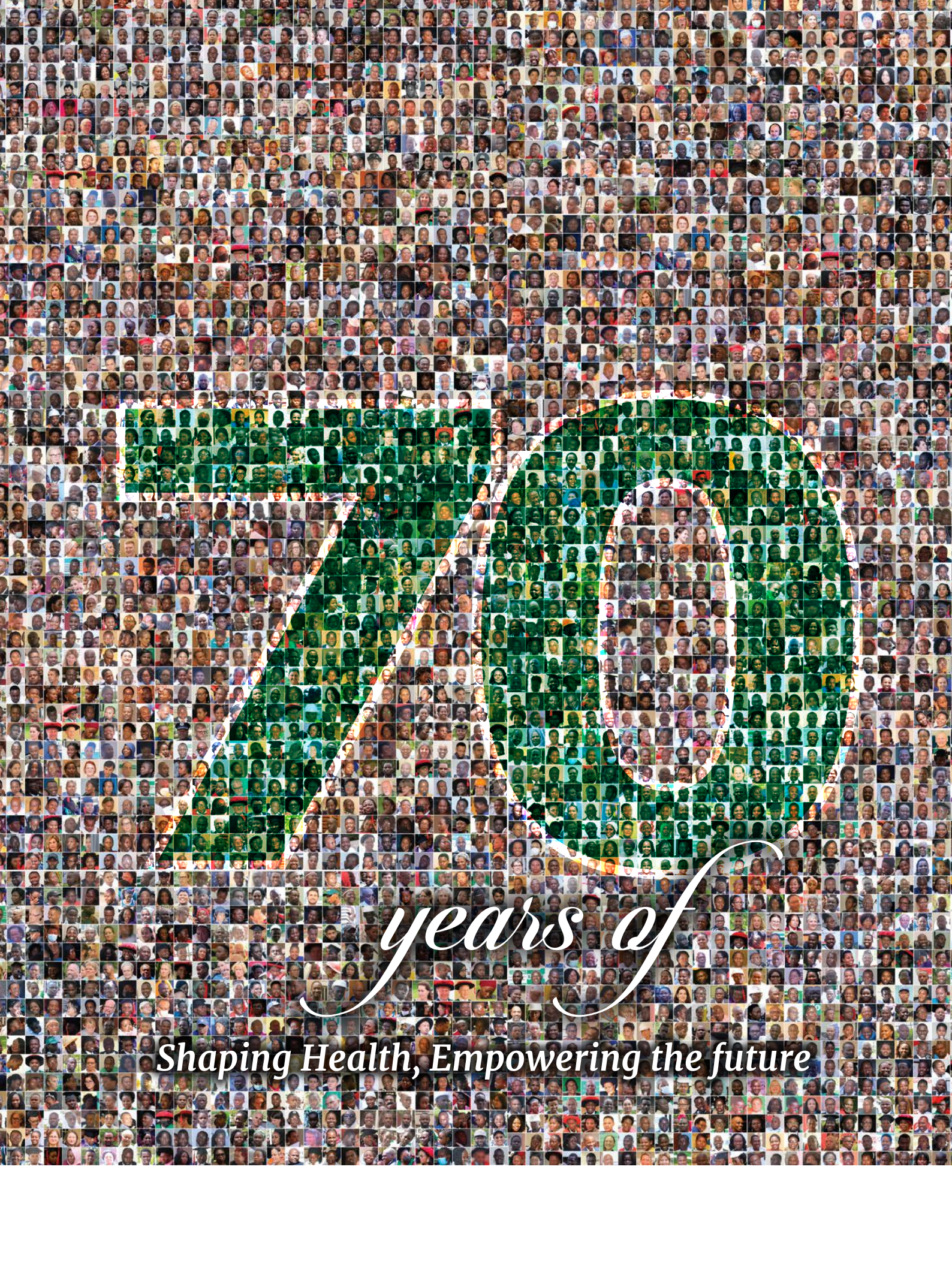
70 *years* OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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A Decade of NTU-Mak Partnership Transforming Community Health in Uganda

Over a decade ago, a meeting between Dr. David Musoke of Makerere University School of Public Health (MakSPH) and Prof. Linda Gibson of Nottingham Trent University (NTU) during a Makerere University Environmental Health Students' Association (MUEHSA) conference sparked a partnership that has since revolutionized community health practice in Uganda. What began as an informal engagement in 2010 has evolved into a transformative programme impacting health systems, research, and service delivery in Wakiso District, Uganda.

Dr. Musoke, the Uganda Lead of the NTU-Mak Partnership, highlights the decade-long collaboration's success in building the capacity of community health workers, also known as the Village Health Teams, and strengthening Wakiso district's community health system. Through focused initiatives, over 900 Village Health Teams have been equipped with critical skills such as non-communicable diseases, antimicrobial stewardship, and pandemic preparedness, boosting their confidence and effectiveness in serving communities within the district.

This impact is echoed by those directly involved. Ms. Bonny Natukunda, Wakiso District Senior Health Educator, and Mr. Henry Bugembe, a Community Health Worker in Nakawuka Cell B, Kajansi Town Council, commend the partnership for addressing key challenges faced by community health workers. Bugembe recalls how initial baseline surveys exposed gaps in training, leading to practical interventions. "Before the trainings, we had misconceptions, for instance, believing epilepsy was communicable. The sessions



Dr. David Musoke (middle) and Prof. Linda Gibson, the Co-Leads of the NTU-Mak Partnership.

corrected this and also equipped us with knowledge on antimicrobial resistance and proper drug usage, significantly improving how we educate communities," he shares.

Beyond training, the partnership has provided essential tools, including t-shirts, gumboots, and umbrellas, which have greatly motivated the community health workforce. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the partnership played a pivotal role in training community health workers on preventative measures, including proper hygiene, use of personal protective equipment and community mobilization.

"Incentives like ID cards allowed our village health teams to move freely during lockdowns, while motorcycles improved outreach and immunization campaigns," Natukunda adds, emphasizing the tangible benefits to both morale of the community health workers and service delivery.

Evaluations affirm the effectiveness of these efforts, with the community health workers in

supported sub-counties within the district outperforming their peers in reporting, health education, and community mobilization for interventions such as mosquito net distribution and disease screening. These achievements through the collaborative initiative, represent the partnership's flagship contribution to community health in Wakiso.

However and important to note, the partnership's impact extends beyond grassroots health systems. Makerere became NTU's fourth Strategic International Partner in 2020, a designation recognizing its significant contributions. The collaboration has secured over 20 grants, totalling more than £1.4 million, including €716,004 from the Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility programme, and £50,000 from the Tropical Health and Education Trust (THET) for leadership development among health managers in Wakiso.

This funding has enabled diverse initiatives, ranging from the training of over 350 health

practitioners in antimicrobial stewardship to creating online Communities of Practice involving over 800 professionals and 250 students. The partnership has also sensitized 300 primary school pupils in Uganda and the UK on antimicrobial resistance, and supported exchange visits for over 220 students and faculty between the NTU and Mak.

Still, on the academic front, the NTU-Mak collaboration has published over 30 peer-reviewed articles in high-impact journals, hosted international conferences, and supervised doctoral and master's students. It organized the first International Community Health Workers Symposium in Uganda in 2017, a global biennial event that continues to shape community health systems worldwide. Other accolades of the partnership include the Best Poster Award at the 2016 Tropical Health and Education Trust (THET) conference in London and the Public's Choice Award at the 2022 International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE) World Conference.

To further enhance mobility and outreach, the partnership provided nine motorcycles for community health worker coordinators, and facilitated international conference presentations by Ugandan



A group photo at the Nottingham University Hospitals Trust Headquarters, During NTU-Mak Partnership exchange in the UK.

community health workers including in the UK and Colombia. These efforts go to show the NTU-Mak partnership's influence on community health, education, and research in Uganda, the UK and beyond.

Looking ahead, Dr. Musoke envisions the establishment of a dedicated community health centre to sustain and expand the partnership's impact, noting

that: "Our goal is to create a hub for continuous engagement, where students, researchers, and communities can collaborate."

As MakSPH celebrates 70 years of service, the NTU-Mak partnership stands as one of the key collaborative initiatives creating a real impact in extending community service and outreach programmes to enhance positive health outcomes.

Health Managers from Wakiso District after receiving certificates following weeklong training on Leadership and Management in June 2024.



