



Social Work and Mental Health in Uganda

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Bugoye, Uganda

Bugoye is a subcounty in Kasese District, Rwenzururu Kingdom. It is located at the base of the Rwenzori Mountains, which are a popular hike and tourist destination. The subcounty is near the Ugandan border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Food: A Rolex

Rolex, not the one you wear on your wrist, but the one you can eat. Rolled eggs (rolex for short) is both a play on words and the product of rolling chapati and an omelette together. You can find it deep in the streets of any town that you visit. Made by hardworking Ugandans, this simple meal brings comfort to the stomach and joy to the soul. It will cost you less than \$1. A rolex is a must have when in Uganda.



Social Work

The social work profession exists in a very different way than in the United States. In Uganda, based on the information obtained from members in the health center and in the community, there is no masters degree in social work. Instead, one can pursue a masters degree in development studies, counseling and guidance, gender and applied women health, public administration and management, and planning and community development. Social work acts as an umbrella under which many professions related to social work fall under.



Lesson Learned

On our first day in the field, I was expected to work with Dr. Milton, the psychiatrist. However, Dr. Milton was unable to come in that day and Nurse Clovice and I had to take on the responsibilities of a Clinical Officer. This included diagnosing patients, ordering lab tests, and prescribing medications. Additionally, Nurse Clovice was not the only nurse we observed assuming this role. It was noted that whenever staff came in with a conflict in terms of diagnosing or treatment, they utilized the Ugandan Ministry of Health Guidelines book to diagnose, treat, and prescribe medication.

Mental Health

Mental Health problems in Uganda are part of the everyday life. However, it can be stated that mental health is not addressed to the same degree as it is in the United States. As described by Jimmy, the subcounty health officer, there is a great need for personnel that can address mental health in the communities. Jimmy said that the cases exist and the people with mental illnesses are out in the community. Due to a lack of professionals that can treat mental health, people in the communities do not come forward to talk about their mental health. Instead, it was discussed that if there was a trained professional in every health center that would address such issues and people knew of the services, they would come forward and seek help.

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