

# AB016. Understanding drowning and water safety interventions in Uganda: results of a youth-led community health assessment in rural lakeside communities

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**Background:** Drowning is a major cause of death in Uganda, especially among young adults whose livelihoods depend on water activities. Information about drowning and other water-related deaths and injuries is limited. To address this gap, youth community-based research assistants in the Mayuge district of eastern Uganda assessed knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about drowning and drowning prevention interventions within their respective communities.

**Methods:** This study consisted of a mixed-methods, cross-sectional community health assessment. Research was conducted in 10 landing sites of 6 sub-counties within Mayuge district located on Lake Victoria and included 50 head of household interviews, 15 key informant interviews, landing site observations, and focus group discussions with 30 youth to assess community knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs. Participants were sampled by convenience from residents who offered written informed consent. Local youth participation in the education of community members and data collection and dissemination processes was encouraged. Data were collected using paper questionnaires and audio recorders.

**Results:** Less than one-third (30.9%) of households

reported that at least one family member can swim. According to key informants, access to drowning prevention services differed slightly among sub-counties, though 95.8% of households were not aware of any aquatic emergency response system in their community. 64.2% of all respondents reported no knowledge of any safety measures around the lake and observation data reinforced the lack of standard drowning prevention infrastructure. The majority of households (85.7%) have experienced a drowning incident in their area.

**Conclusions:** The data highlight a need for water safety services and interventions in lakeside communities in eastern Uganda. As one of the first major studies and data collection efforts of drowning prevention in the country, the results reveal gaps in drowning prevention services, access, and knowledge which should be addressed in future interventions.

**Keywords:** Drowning; injury; drowning prevention; community health; climate change

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## Footnote

*Conflicts of Interest:* All authors have completed the ICMJE uniform disclosure form (available at <https://jphe.amegroups.com/article/view/10.21037/jphe-2023-apru-ab016/coif>). The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

*Ethical Statement:* The authors are accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved. The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki (as revised in 2013). The study was approved by the Ethics Board of University of Southern California (No. UP-22-00133) and Gulu University Institutional Review Boards (No. GUREC-2022-261) and informed consent was obtained from all individual participants.

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