Purity Mwendwa, *ENGAGE (dEvelopiNG A neiGhbourhood model for dEmentia)*

The health and well-being of people with dementia (PWD) and their families is a major concern for the global public health community. Dementia is a debilitating condition that causes progressive brain damage interfering with communication, functional abilities, thought processes and behaviours. The East African region including Kenya is expected to see an increase in the number of people with dementia by 2050, yet little effort has been made to promote or highlight dementia in policy or research agendas in the region. There is limited awareness and knowledge about dementia among the public including health care providers, which leads to stigmatisation and lack of support for PWD and their families and carers. This leads to social isolation, potentially leading to a further deterioration of the condition of the PWD and increased burden for carers.

This DOROTHY project examines how rural neighbourhoods can better support PWD and their families in rural Kenya. The main goal is to develop a dementia neighbourhood model (DNM) to improve the social connection, engagement and well-being of people affected by this condition, alongside their families and carers. The developed approach and the bespoke DNM can potentially be transferable or adaptable to other contexts and issues beyond dementia.

In 2023, Purity attended a conference in Nairobi, Kenya, ''Healing the brain-Bridging the gap in low- & middle-income countries'' to circulate the ideas and goals of her research project. The community engagement in Kenya allowed the fellow to also become involved with local community members and organisations, identifying partners, stakeholders and potential research participants, and to form a local advisory team who will contribute to the project by providing informed guidance. Among the other planned activities, the fellow will arrange meetings with representatives from the Ministry of Health.

For more information on Purity's project, visit the project blog ENGAGE.