

POSTER ABSTRACT

Tackling the Burden of Non-Communicable Diseases Through Community-Based Engagement: The Butaro Community NCD Program, Rwanda

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Background: Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as hypertension, diabetes, and cancer are an increasing health burden in rural Rwanda, where limited access to preventive services and health education contributes to late diagnosis and poor outcomes. To address this gap, the University of Global Health Equity (UGHE) launched the Butaro Community NCD Program in 2022 with partners including Butaro Health Center, Partners In Health, Butaro Levell II Teaching Hospital, and local leadership. The program promotes community awareness, early detection, and wellbeing in Butaro through health days combining medical screening, sports, and social connection.

Approach: The program aims to reinforce community-based NCD prevention and management through annual community health days integrating education, screening, and social mobilization. Participants – community members of all ages – are mobilized through local leaders, community health workers, and church announcements.

Key stakeholders include UGHE students and staff, health institutions and local authorities. Activities encompass NCD screening, health promotion sessions, blood donation drives, and sport events. Sustainability is ensured through student-led clubs, strong partnerships for follow-up care, and integration of screened individuals into existing health systems.

Results: Since 2022, the program has reached over 3,500 community members across three major events – October 2022, October 2023, and February 2025 with more than 600 people screened and referred for care. The 2025 event, aligned with World Cancer Day under the theme “United by Unique,” distributed 200 breast cancer awareness leaflets promoting breast self-examination and early detection. Fundraising during the event financed Community-Based Health Insurance (CBHI) for vulnerable families and covered partial medical costs for patients.

INTERPRETATION The Butaro Community NCD Program illustrates an effective model for integrating health promotion, service delivery, and social support in rural settings. Persistent challenges include limited screening capacity and funding constraints. In October 2025, the program inspired the launch of Breast Cancer Awareness and Early Detection Project, a five-year

student-engaged and community centered, promoting cancer awareness through sports (football , cycling, & running) and community engagement. This scalable, community-driven model strengthens data collection and referral linkages, offering potential for replication in other low-resource contexts NCD prevention.