

Mapping UNSW Impact Global Development

Primary SDG	3: GOOD HEALTH AND WELLBEING
Broad theme	Cancer screening, research in health
Research	Screening for cervical and breast cancer and training of nurses; and surveying women about domestic violence and reproductive health
Impact region	Uganda
Faculty	Medicine
School/Institute	School of Public Health and Community Medicine
Academic	Professor Robyn Richmond
Project partners	Gulu University (Uganda), Ugandan Ministry of Health, Uganda Women's Health Institute
	UNSW Institute for Global Development
Related SDGs	16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Elevator pitch

Robyn and her team have launched a cervical and breast cancer screening service for women in northern Uganda, helping to curb alarmingly high rates of deaths from both. They are also surveying women about domestic violence and reproductive health to inform policy and services that improve women's health.

The Challenge: High rates of cancer, domestic violence and reproductive health

Cervical cancer is the leading cause of cancer-related deaths among women in Uganda. It causes 47.5 deaths per 100,000 women each year, one of the highest rates in the world. The five year survival rate is 13%, compared to 72% in Australia. Breast cancer is the second most common cancer among women in Uganda at 45 deaths per 100,000 people every year. The five year survival rate is 52%, compared to 90% in Australia.

Uganda is recovering from years of war and civil unrest during which women suffered from domestic violence – physical, psychological and sexual. Robyn and her team are conducting a survey to compare the rates of domestic violence between women living in urban and rural regions of northern Uganda.

UNSW's solution: Screen and survey women, develop national policy with government

In April 2017 Robyn visited Uganda to examine the feasibility of establishing screening clinics for women living in rural settlements in northern Uganda. This was the first stage of the Transforming Community Health Project, which was launched in November 2017. The Uganda Women's Health Institute, established by UNSW Vice Chancellor Professor Ian Jacobs more than 20 years ago, was involved in the screening project. They trained 30 nurses and midwives working in five health centres in Northern Uganda to screen women for cervical and breast cancer. In the first six months over 1,000 women were screened. Two cryotherapy machines were donated for the removal of pre-cancerous lesions. Robyn is returning to Uganda in November 2018 to lead the

next round of training for nurses and midwives including the monitoring and quality control of health centres every two months.

Robyn and her team undertook a survey of 409 women in November 2017 on domestic violence and reproductive health in rural Northern Uganda. They found more than one third of women suffered physical abuse by their partners and 29% were hit or beaten during pregnancy. Many husbands did not approve of their wives using contraception, and more than 40% of the women had a child who died in infancy or childhood. This survey will be repeated in an urban setting in Gulu Town in November 2018 to compare results. Results will provide valuable information that will inform Robyn's vision for a mobile health clinic that will travel around communities in northern Uganda educating about important health matters such as cervical and breast cancers, intimate partner violence and reproductive health.

Together with Dr Felix Kaducu (Faculty of Medicine at Gulu University) and Dr Joyce Moriku Kaducu (Uganda Ministry of Health), Robyn is helping to develop national policy on cervical cancer. Senior nurses, doctors, local nurses, midwives and other key stakeholders will be interviewed by Robyn's PhD student, James Obol, (Head of the Department of Public Health at Gulu University). It will be the first policy on screening for cervical cancer in sub-Saharan Africa. Development of policy is part of the five year plan of Transforming Community Health for women and children's health. The first stage of this plan focusses on women (years 1-5), the second on children (years 2-5), and the third on non-communicable diseases and mental health (years 3-5).

The Impact: Fewer cases of illness and death, raising awareness of violence

The cancer screening program cancer is designed to reduce cervical and breast cancer rates among women and to raise awareness among women about both cancers. Currently women only seek help when the cancer is at a late stage. Robyn's work will see more women get checked earlier and more regularly.

Robyn's survey work is painting a picture of the extent of domestic violence in Northern Uganda and the kind of responses required to limit violence. Her work with government on a national cervical cancer policy and five year health plan for women and children will result in more services being implemented that will raise awareness of cancer, violence and reproductive health and ultimately lead to lower rates of illness and death.

Researcher

For over 35 years, Professor Robyn Richmond has carried out research to reduce smoking prevalence and risky alcohol consumption in the Australian community. She has worked with disadvantaged and marginalised people, including Indigenous persons, prison inmates and people with mental illness. She has trained several thousand general practitioners and other health professionals, such as practice nurses and pharmacists to delivery tobacco treatments to smokers and controlled drinking programs to heavy alcohol users. As part of an expert panel, she has developed smoking cessation guidelines for Australian general practice which commenced in 2004 and is ongoing in 2018. In 2016 she was awarded a Doctor of Science for her research work and its transformation on communities and health professionals. Robyn has turned her expertise in public health research, teaching and training to work in high risk communities in northern Uganda.

Ben Falkenmire 07.08.18