



MAKERERE UNIVERSITY LUNG INSTITUTE Newsletter

JULY–SEPTEMBER 2024

Word from the Director



Dear Readers,

Welcome to our July-September 2024 issue of the Makerere University Lung Institute (MLI) Newsletter. This quarter has been filled with impactful engagements, significant achievements, and strides towards our mission of advancing lung health.

As we look back, the highlights through our research projects and community outreach activities reflect our commitment to improving respiratory health for all.

We are proud of the milestones achieved, including our ongoing collaborations with global partners, which continue to strengthen our research capabilities. The success of our outreach programs and the selection of our team members for prestigious leadership initiatives underscore our efforts to empower the next generation of lung health experts.

I invite you to explore the stories in this issue, showcasing our relentless efforts, the spirit of collaboration, and the impact of our community engagement.

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PROF. BRUCE KIRENGA HONORED AT POST COVID-19 CONFERENCE IN TORONTO

Zahra Namuli, Communications Officer, MLI



In a momentous recognition of his contributions to health and research, Prof. Bruce Kirenga, the director of Makerere University Lung Institute, was honored at the 1st Post COVID-19 Conference held in Toronto, Canada, in July. This prestigious event also recognized the efforts of Uganda's President H. E Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, Minister of Health, Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng, the Director General of Health Services at the Ministry of Health, Dr. Henry Mwebesa, the COVID -19 Incident commander Dr Henry Kyobe Bbosa among others

The conference brought together global health leaders, **More on p.2**

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From p.1 researchers, and policymakers to discuss and share insights on the post-pandemic landscape. The awards were presented in acknowledgment of their outstanding work in managing the COVID-19 pandemic and advancing healthcare.

Upon returning to Uganda, Prof. Kirenga received a warm welcome from the staff at the Makerere University Lung Institute. In a heartfelt gesture, the team celebrated his achievement with a special cake, highlighting their pride and appreciation for his dedication and leadership.

Prof. Bruce Kirenga, alongside Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng and Dr. Henry

Mwebesa, was recognized for their exemplary leadership and contributions in these areas. Their work has significantly impacted the health sector, both in Uganda and internationally.

A Warm Welcome Home

The staff at Makerere University Lung Institute organized a celebratory event to honor Prof. Kirenga's achievement. The celebration included a cake-cutting ceremony, symbolizing their collective pride in his international recognition. The event was filled with joyous moments and heartfelt congratulations from colleagues and staff members.

Prof. Kirenga expressed his

gratitude for the warm reception and emphasized the importance of teamwork and collaboration in achieving such milestones. He dedicated the award to the entire team at the Lung Institute, acknowledging their hard work and commitment.

The recognition at the Post COVID-19 Conference underscores the critical role of Ugandan health leaders in the global fight against COVID-19 and other health challenges. As Makerere University Lung Institute continues its mission to improve lung health and research, the achievements of Prof. Kirenga and his colleagues serve as an inspiration to the entire team.

DR. PATRICIA ALUPO SELECTED FOR PRESTIGIOUS PATS/ATS MECOR AFRICA WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Zahra Namuli, Communications Officer, MLI

We are pleased to announce that Dr. Patricia Alupo, a dedicated physician at Makerere University Lung Institute, has been successfully selected to participate in the highly competitive PATS/ATS MECOR Africa Women's Leadership Program. This esteemed initiative is specifically designed to address the unique challenges faced by African women in the thoracic field, aiming to empower them through targeted coaching, mentorship, and support.

The PATS/ATS MECOR Africa Women's Leadership Program is renowned for its stringent selection process, which identifies candidates based on their professional accomplishments, leadership potential, and commitment to advancing lung health. Dr. Alupo's selection is a testament to her exceptional skills, dedication, and promise as a future leader in thoracic health.

Participants are equipped with the tools and mindset needed to thrive



in their professional endeavors, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for female leaders in lung health.

Dr. Patricia Alupo's selection for the PATS/ATS MECOR Africa Women's Leadership Program is a

significant milestone in her career. It reflects her dedication to advancing lung health and her potential to make a substantial impact in the field. Her journey through the program will inspire other women in thoracic health to pursue leadership roles and strive for excellence.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO ASTHMA CARE IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN UGANDA PROJECT (ACCA)

By Immaculate Akuguzibwe, ACCA Project Administrator

The ACCA project, aimed at improving asthma care for children and adolescents in Uganda, recently made significant strides with its activities in Jinja. Our team conducted a courtesy call on Dr. Stephen Banonya, the City Health Officer of Jinja City, to discuss the project's goals and secure the necessary clearances. This meeting was pivotal in aligning our efforts with local health authorities and ensuring smooth project implementation.

A vital part of our initiative involved a meeting with the Community Advisory Board (CAB). This session provided an excellent opportunity

to engage with community leaders, discuss the project's objectives, and demonstrate how asthma affects the airway. The demonstration helped enhance understanding and support for the project's activities among CAB members.

We also visited Bugembe Health Center, one of our study sites, to orient the health workers about the study. This orientation was essential to ensure that the healthcare providers are well-prepared to implement the project's interventions and support the children and adolescents with asthma symptoms effectively.

Asthma remains the most common non-communicable disease in children and adolescents, yet it is often underdiagnosed and poorly

managed, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. The ACCA project aims to address this gap by investigating the feasibility, acceptability, and effectiveness of routine symptom-based screening, healthcare worker training and mentorship, and community health worker-led asthma education.

The ACCA project is expected to provide critical evidence to support early diagnosis and care for children and adolescents with asthma symptoms. By identifying effective strategies and interventions, the project aims to improve health outcomes and inform future research to enhance access to medicines and diagnostics for asthma care.



The ACCA project is expected to provide critical evidence to support early diagnosis and care for children and adolescents with asthma symptoms.

UNCST VISITS

UNCST Conducts Routine Monitoring Visit to Makerere University Lung Institute

Solomon Ranga, Quality Control Officer, MLI

The Uganda National Council of Science and Technology (UNCST) recently conducted courtesy visits to the Makerere University Lung Institute as part of their ongoing monitoring roles. These visits are essential to ensure the quality and integrity of research projects conducted at the institute.

The UNCST team assessed various research projects, including the Solidarity Trial, Chest Africa, Clean Air Africa Hubs study, and Clean Air Africa Teach Box study. This routine visit is part of UNCST's commitment to maintaining high standards in scientific research and ensuring that studies adhere to established protocols and guidelines.

According to Grace Nyakoojo, the head of quality assurance at Makerere University Lung Institute, "This is a routine visit conducted to research bodies to monitor the quality of studies. Ensuring adherence to protocols

and maintaining high research standards is crucial for the success and credibility of our work."

The Makerere University Lung Institute remains committed to conducting high-quality research that addresses critical health challenges. The UNCST's support and oversight are invaluable in achieving this mission. We look forward to continued collaboration and sharing the outcomes of these important studies.

UNCST VISITS CLEAN-AIR AFRICA STUDY SITE IN JINJA

Solomon Ranga, Quality Control Officer, MLI

The Uganda National Council of Science and Technology (UNCST) conducted a significant monitoring visit to the CLEAN-Air Africa study site in Jinja. This visit was focused on assessing the innovative Teachbox, a crucial tool designed to enhance asthma care and education.

During the visit, Dr. Nantanda presented the Teachbox study to the UNCST team at Jinja Regional Referral Hospital (JinjaRRH). The Teachbox is an educational device developed to improve the understanding and management of asthma among healthcare workers and patients. It plays an integral role in the ongoing CLEAN-Air Africa study, which aims to

improve air quality and respiratory health outcomes across Africa.

According to Dr. Rebecca Nantanda the Co – Investigator told the team that the Teachbox is designed to deliver comprehensive asthma education through interactive and practical learning methods. This approach ensures better retention and application of knowledge in clinical settings.



Dr. Nantanda's presentation highlighted the functionality and importance of the Teachbox in

achieving these goals. The UNCST team's visit provided valuable insights and feedback, reinforcing

the tool's potential impact on asthma care in Uganda.

LIGHT in Nairobi

Mucyo Jesca – Trainee



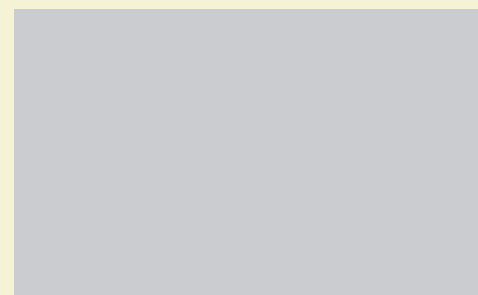
I was thrilled when I received the email confirming my start as a trainee at this institution. This is a significant opportunity for my personal and professional growth, and I do not take it for granted. I am eager to learn new skills and take on new challenges. I am also inspired by the institution's mission and values and fully believe in its efforts to make a positive impact. I aim to gain valuable knowledge and expertise throughout this experience.

Achola Christine – Nurse



This place has been amazing so far. There's something new to learn every day, and my colleagues have been incredibly helpful, always willing to teach me anything I'm unfamiliar with. As a new nurse, I feel supported and encouraged to ask questions and seek guidance whenever needed. The team here values collaboration and continuous learning, making it a great environment to develop my skills and gain confidence in my role. I'm excited to continue growing alongside such a dedicated and knowledgeable group of professionals.

Dr. Kuteesa Mary Goretty – Research Fellow



GSK VISITS

GSK New Leaders Visit Makerere University Lung Institute

Zahra Namuli, Communications Officer, MLI

In a significant move to strengthen partnerships in global health,

the new leadership team of GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) visited the Makerere University Lung Institute (MLI) to engage with researchers and discuss ongoing collaborations.

The visit marked a renewed commitment from GSK to support lung health initiatives in Uganda and further afield.



The new leadership team of GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) visited the Makerere University Lung Institute (MLI)...



During their visit, GSK's leaders were given an in-depth tour of the Lung Institute's facilities, where they had the opportunity to learn about the various research projects and clinical trials currently being undertaken. Of particular interest was the COPA-COPD attack study, one of the many research initiatives funded by GSK. This study focuses on understanding the causes and prevention of exacerbations in patients with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), a major health concern in Uganda and many other low- and middle-income countries.



The GSK delegation expressed their admiration for the Lung Institute's commitment to addressing respiratory diseases through innovative research and community outreach. They also engaged in discussions with the Institute's leadership and researchers, exploring ways to further support the Institute's work, especially in the areas of capacity building and the development of new treatment protocols.

The visit underscored the importance of partnerships between global pharmaceutical companies and local research institutions in tackling complex health challenges. GSK's ongoing support for studies like the COPA-COPD attack study is vital in advancing the understanding and treatment of lung diseases, ultimately contributing to better health outcomes for patients in Uganda and beyond.

As the visit concluded, both GSK and the Makerere University Lung Institute reaffirmed their shared commitment to advancing respiratory health through research, innovation, and collaboration. The continued partnership between these two institutions promises to yield further breakthroughs in the fight against lung diseases, benefiting countless individuals across the region.



The GSK delegation expressed their admiration for the Lung Institute's commitment to addressing respiratory diseases through innovative research and community outreach.

MAKRUN

Makerere University Lung Institute Champions Health at Makerere Run 2024

Michael Agaba, Project Administrator, MLI

On August 18, 2024, the Makerere University Lung Institute (MLI) proudly participated in the Makerere Run 2024, an event themed "Run for Students with Disabilities." This annual run, organized by Makerere University, brought together thousands of participants from various walks of life, all united in their commitment to supporting students with disabilities and

promoting a healthier society.

Throughout the event, the Lung Institute's presence was marked by a blend of enthusiasm and advocacy. Participants from the Institute not only took part in the run but also engaged with the community, sharing vital information about lung health, prevention of respiratory diseases, and the importance of early detection. The team emphasized how maintaining a healthy lifestyle, including regular physical activity, can contribute to

better lung function and overall well-being.

The Makerere Run 2024 provided an excellent platform for the Lung Institute to further its mission of enhancing respiratory health through research, education, and community engagement. By participating in the run, the Institute demonstrated its ongoing commitment to supporting inclusive initiatives that align with its core values of promoting health for all, regardless of physical ability.



By participating in the run, the Institute demonstrated its ongoing commitment to supporting inclusive initiatives



MAKERERE UNIVERSITY LUNG INSTITUTE

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Science For Healthy Lungs



ROTARY CANCER RUN

MLI Lung Cancer Research Group Leads in Rotary Cancer Run 2024 and Advances Lung Cancer Research



Dr. Joan Nakacwa, Medical Officer, LCH project

The Makerere University Lung Institute (MLI) Lung Cancer Research Group took a leading role in the 2024 Rotary Cancer Run at the Kololo Ceremonial Grounds. The event, which raised funds to complete the bunker at Nsambya Hospital, underscores the group's commitment to improving cancer care in Uganda.

In one of the recent studies, titled "Factors Associated with Diagnostic Delays in Lung Cancer in East Africa: The Role of Symptoms and Passive Smoking," the group explored the causes of delayed lung cancer diagnosis in Uganda and Tanzania, where lung cancer remains a major health threat.

According to Irene Najjingo one of the researchers, the study enrolled adults with biopsy-confirmed lung cancer from cancer clinics in both countries and found that 30% of

patients experienced significant delays in seeking care, often presenting with advanced-stage disease.

Key factors contributing to these delays included non-specific symptoms like cough and hemoptysis, as well as passive smoking and a history of chest radiation. The study emphasizes the urgent need for increased public awareness of lung cancer symptoms and the risks associated with

passive smoking to promote earlier diagnosis and improve outcomes.

The Lung Cancer Research Group collaborates with the National Institute for Medical Research, Muhimbili University, Case Western Reserve University, the Joint Clinical Research Centre, and Makerere University College of Health Sciences to advance lung cancer research and care in the region.



KTBAIR

MLI Hosts Esteemed Guests from Rutgers University for KTBAir Project Inception

Sharon Namiiro
Research Fellow, MLI

The Makerere University Lung Institute (MLI) had the honor of hosting distinguished guests from Rutgers University, USA. Among the visitors were Professors Meng Qingyu, Mike Barer, and Stephan Schwander. The purpose of their visit was to oversee the inception activities of the KTBAir project.



The KTBAir project, to be implemented in the Namuwongo informal settlement, aims to investigate the association between air pollution and

tuberculosis (TB) transmission. This critical research seeks to deepen our understanding of how environmental factors contribute to the spread of TB in densely populated areas.

During their visit, the guests shared their extensive knowledge and expertise in public health, air pollution, air monitoring, and advanced tuberculosis testing methods. Their insights will be invaluable as the KTBAir project progresses, and their collaboration underscores the importance of international partnerships in tackling global health challenges.



Car free day Event

Kuteesa Gorrety, Research Fellow, MLI

As part of ongoing research at the Makerere University Lung Institute, the Clean Air Africa team and the KTB Study team recently participated in the Car-Free Day event organized by the Kampala Capital City Authority. This engagement provided a unique platform to emphasize the critical need for clean air in Uganda's urban areas.

Dr. Rebecca Nantanda, a research scientist and pediatrician at the





institute, highlighted the significant risks associated with air pollution for maternal and child health. Exposure to polluted air has been linked to serious health issues for pregnant women and their unborn babies, including low birth weight, preterm birth, and developmental delays. Dr. Nantanda stressed the importance of proactive efforts to minimize pollution to safeguard both current and future generations.

Joanita Nalunjogi, a PhD candidate with the Clean Air Africa study, noted that the initiative also aims to promote cleaner cooking alternatives, recognizing the dangers posed by household energy fuels. Her research investigates the link between fuel choices and burn injuries, aiming to encourage safer cooking practices that reduce health risks and environmental impact in Ugandan homes.

Dr. Rebecca Nantanda, a research scientist and pediatrician at the institute, highlighted the significant risks associated with air pollution for maternal and child health.



Dr. Sharon Namiro also demonstrated personal air monitoring tools developed under the #KTBAir project. These tools play a vital role in tracking air quality and raising awareness about individual exposure levels. However, Dr. Namiro pointed out that the high costs of these devices make them inaccessible to many in the community. She emphasized that local manufacturing could be a game-changing solution, making these tools more affordable and accessible to the public.

Together, these efforts underscore the urgent need for cleaner air and healthier household practices across Uganda, reinforcing the Makerere University Lung Institute's commitment to community health and sustainability.



Dr. Sharon Namiro also demonstrated personal air monitoring tools developed under the #KTBAir project.

Connect by Cayuse Global Virtual Conference

Zahra Namuli, Communications Officer, MLI

Jackline Nakabira, the Makerere University Lung Institute (MLI) Administrator and Acting Human Resources Manager, recently represented the institute at the Connect by Cayuse Global Virtual Conference 2024 event. As a dedicated professional in research administration within a low-income country (LIC) setting,

Jackline shared valuable insights on navigating the unique challenges and opportunities in this field. During her session, she highlighted the critical role of resourcefulness, adaptability, and strong organizational skills in managing research projects in LIC contexts, where resources can be limited, and logistical challenges frequent.



She emphasized the importance of streamlined processes, robust teamwork, and clear communication in supporting research that addresses pressing public health issues. Jackline's insights offered attendees a comprehensive view of the integral work done behind the scenes to make impactful research possible at institutions like MLI,

contributing to sustainable health solutions across Uganda.

Her participation reflects MLI's commitment not only to advancing lung health research but also to strengthening the administrative and human resources capacities essential for sustainable growth in LIC research environments.

TB Marathon (Light TB project)

LIGHT TB Team Shines at Annual TB Marathon, Highlights Innovative Research in TB Care

Zahra Namuli, Communications Officer, MLI

On September 1, 2024, the LIGHT team, alongside the broader Makerere University Lung Institute (MLI) staff, participated

in the annual TB marathon aimed at raising community awareness about tuberculosis. The event attracted a diverse audience,

including representatives from various ministries, implementing partners, and members of the general public.





During the event, Dr. Jasper Nidoi, an Early Career Researcher with the LIGHT initiative, presented insights from the IGNITE study. Conducted by Makerere University Lung Institute in collaboration with national and international partners, the IGNITE project is a groundbreaking effort to “Find the Missing Men” with TB in Uganda. Dr. Nidoi highlighted significant findings revealing critical gaps in TB diagnosis and treatment, particularly among men. In parallel, the LIGHT TB Program Manager, Dr. Winters Muttamba, underscored the importance of community engagements like the TB marathon in disseminating information about interventions and gathering feedback to better understand existing challenges in the TB care pathway.

The IGNITE study was conducted in four general hospitals located in Buikwe, Nakaseke, Mityana, and Butambala districts of Uganda. These regions were strategically selected due to their high TB

burden and diverse demographic characteristics. Using a participatory approach, the research team engaged a broad range of stakeholders, including community members, healthcare workers, TB survivors, and policymakers, to identify barriers to TB care and co-design gender-specific interventions aimed at improving access to TB services for men.

Similar dissemination exercises were shared with stakeholders with the ministry of health and the national Tuberculosis and leprosy program and the affected districts.



According to the LIGHT TB Program Manager Dr Winters Muttamba, the marathon provided an excellent platform for sharing ongoing TB interventions and understanding the existing gaps in TB care services.

Key findings from the study indicated that men face numerous obstacles in accessing timely TB care. Men are disproportionately affected by TB but often delay seeking diagnosis and treatment due to societal norms, economic pressures, and stigma. Traditional masculine norms discourage men from acknowledging vulnerability or seeking medical help, leading to missed diagnoses

and increased transmission of TB within communities. Additionally, systemic issues within healthcare, such as long waiting times and rigid operating hours, further limit men's access to essential TB services.

The study proposed several interventions to address these challenges. Establishing male-friendly clinics with flexible hours aims to cater to working men's needs and encourage their engagement with healthcare services. Integrated TB screening at all healthcare entry points, including the use of X-ray services, is recommended to ensure early and accurate detection of TB. Increasing awareness through targeted health education

campaigns can help reduce stigma and promote early health-seeking behaviors among men. Engaging private healthcare providers is also vital in enhancing TB screening and referrals, thereby bridging gaps in service delivery. Additionally, comprehensive training for healthcare workers on gender-sensitive approaches and effective TB management is essential to improve the quality of care.

The IGNITE project is part of the broader LIGHT Research Programme, funded by UK aid under the "Leaving no one behind; transforming Gendered pathways to Health for TB" consortium.

PhD Student Joanitah Nalunjogi Defends Proposal on Household Energy-Related Burns in Uganda

Zahra Namuli, Communications Officer, MLI

We are excited to share that Joanitah Nalunjogi, a PhD student at the University of Cape Town (UCT), recently traveled to Cape Town to defend her proposal on a critical public health issue: the proportion of household energy-related burns, their severity, outcomes, and associated factors in selected health facilities in Uganda.

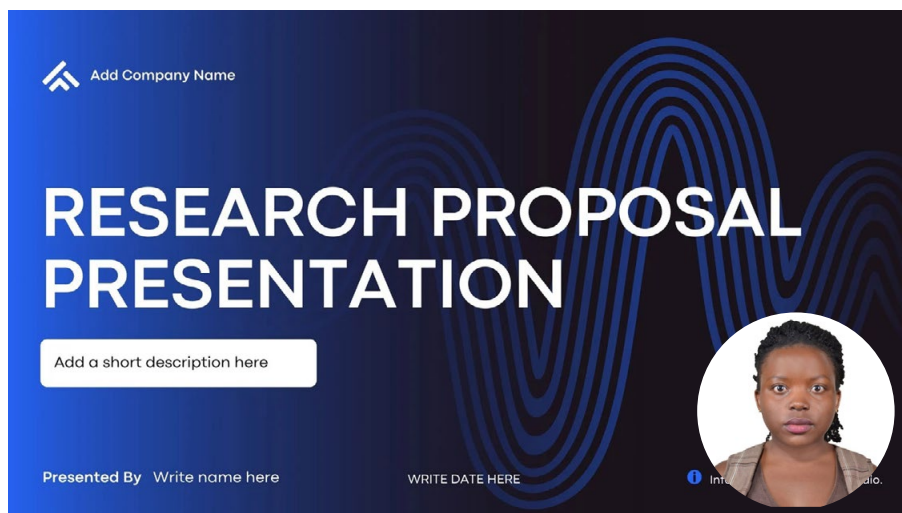
Joanitah's research aims to shed light on the health and social impacts of burns caused by household energy use, particularly in Uganda, where traditional cooking methods, such as the use of firewood and kerosene, remain prevalent. Her study will examine the burden of energy-related burns on health systems, exploring factors such as socio-economic status, geographic location, and access to safer cooking alternatives.

During her defense, Joanitah presented a detailed analysis of the data collection methods, study design, and expected outcomes of her research. The defense was well-received by the academic panel, and Joanitah received valuable feedback to refine her approach further.

Her research promises to make a significant contribution to

understanding the health risks associated with household energy use in Uganda and to inform policy and interventions aimed at reducing burn injuries and improving public health outcomes.

We wish Joanitah all the best as she progresses with her study and look forward to the impact her work will have on the field of public health.



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Lung health awareness in Kibuli Senior secondary school

Zahra Namuli, Communications Officer, MLI

The Makerere University Lung Institute (MLI) recently held a lung health awareness session at Kibuli Senior Secondary School, aimed at educating students about the importance of respiratory health and empowering them to make informed lifestyle choices. The event was part of MLI's ongoing community outreach initiative to address the growing impact of lung diseases in Uganda, particularly among young people.

During the session, MLI experts engaged with students in an interactive discussion on the basics of lung health, the causes and prevention of common respiratory diseases, and the importance of early diagnosis and treatment.

Topics covered included asthma, tuberculosis, and the health risks associated with environmental pollution and smoking. Students

were encouraged to ask questions and share their experiences, fostering an open and engaging learning environment.



A highlight of the event was the demonstration of proper breathing exercises, designed to enhance lung capacity and overall respiratory health. The team also shared valuable information on avoiding second-hand smoke, understanding air quality, and promoting clean air practices within their communities.

One of the session's focal points was raising awareness about air pollution's impact on lung health. Students were introduced to simple, practical steps they can take to reduce air pollution, such as planting trees, reducing waste, and promoting cleaner cooking options at home. MLI representatives underscored the importance of taking proactive steps to protect lung health, especially given the

rise of respiratory diseases linked to environmental factors.

The students and staff at Kibuli Senior Secondary School expressed enthusiasm for the program and the opportunity to learn about maintaining healthy lungs. By reaching out to young audiences, MLI aims to inspire a generation that is not only informed about lung health but also committed to

promoting healthy practices within their communities.

MLI's outreach program at Kibuli Senior Secondary School reflects the institute's commitment to preventive health education and community engagement. Through such initiatives, MLI hopes to create lasting awareness about lung health and foster a healthier, more informed society.



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