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**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
Office of the Dean**

Your Ref:

Our Ref:

PhD PUBLIC DEFENCE

The Dean, School of Social Sciences cordially invites you to a PhD Public Defence of the following candidate:

Candidate: Mr. NTEGE Jerome

Thesis Title: *"The Construction of Ebola and the Struggle against the Epidemic in Bundibugyo District"*

Date: Wednesday September 30, 2020

Time: starting at 9:30 am

Venue: School of Social Sciences Lecture Room 2.

**Supervisors: Dr. Eria Olowo Onyango
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Makerere University**

**Dr. Wotsuna Khamalwa, Associate Professor
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Makerere University**

Note: MOH Guidelines and SoPs will strictly be observed and a Zoom link will be shared later

PhD Abstract

The Constructions of Ebola and the Struggle Against the Epidemic in Bundibugyo District
By

JEROME NTEGE

Abstract

This research investigates the constructions of Ebola and the struggle against the epidemic in the Bundibugyo border district. Fieldwork was done for 12 months between 2016 -2017 at the border communities of Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Data was collected and analyzed using a qualitative and phenomenological approach, together with ethnographic methodology and research methods including ethnographic interviews, and participant observations in the community, in-depth interviews with cultural leaders, epidemic survivors, caregivers, and relatives who lost their loved ones during the outbreak. The findings reveal the contributions of the community responses using the indigenous health-seeking knowledge to mitigate the epidemic. Local people used their indigenous knowledge to interpret the epidemic and to create meaning of the outbreak events. The local people's efforts demonstrate that culturally based responses can contribute effectively to an epidemic control response. However, while findings reveal a continued divide between the local people and the biomedical teams, it also discloses that conflicts during an outbreak are not only between natives and public health experts but also among the local people within the different ethnicities on the ground. This research also challenges the traditional perceptions of culture by medical experts as a problem that needs to be avoided. Instead, it suggests culture to be considered as knowledge which should be cohabited within the response to an epidemic. The research also gives insight into the politics of epidemics naming showing that the names given to an epidemic greatly influence the response and the after-effects of the outbreak. In addition, the research suggests preconditions to health experts on how to respond to Ebola in the most effective and sustainable means. Findings also inform the local leaders how they can be an alert in case of another outbreak. For an effective response to Ebola, public health experts must seek to not only understand the local constructions but also in co-operating local health-seeking knowledge on outbreaks in a locale.