

DUKEENGAGE IN KENYA-WISER

Empowering girls through education and health. *This program is organized by WISER International in collaboration with DukeEngage.*

Dates: June 2 - July 31, 2020

(Dates subject to change up until the point of departure.)

Service Themes

- Health
- Women's empowerment
- Education/literacy
- Community Health

Program Focus

Empowering underprivileged girls in rural Kenya through improvements in education and health; preventing teen pregnancies and child marriages by supporting adolescent girls in academic and sexual and reproductive health educational programs; providing opportunities to develop leadership skills so girls can drive change in their communities; creating opportunities for youth to practice English in preparation for national exams in English that determine access to further education; and assessing the impact of a clean water system serving 15,000 people.

Program Leader

Sherryl Broverman, Ph.D., Associate Professor of the Practice, Biology Department and Duke Global Health Institute; President, WISER International. Dr. Broverman studies the interplay of gender, health, and economic development in East Africa and teaches global health courses with a focus on HIV/AIDS.

Program Overview

While working for eight weeks in rural Kenya, students will assist WISER to create environments that produce exceptional young women that can drive change in their communities. WISER accomplishes this by a range of interventions that include health, education, and leadership development. Community partner interactions will include adolescent girls enrolled in the WISER secondary school, primary school communities, women's community development groups, youth church groups, community members accessing WISER's clean water system, and NGO staff. Opportunities for students may include expanding a sexual and reproductive health training program; working with youth STEM entrepreneurs; improving English essay writing skills; developing multimedia projects with youth to showcase their challenges and strengths; and researching the impact of clean water on health. Students will gain an in-depth understanding of global health challenges in a rural and underserved community.

Dr. Broverman has worked in Kenya for 18 years since she collaborated with Egerton University to develop the first HIV/AIDS course for incoming students. This led to a research interest in the role gender played in creating the elevated HIV infection rate in girls in East Africa and how educational systems could be used as powerful intervention points to reduce risk. To develop and assess interventions, Dr. Broverman started the NGO WISER in Kenya and WISER International in the US. Together these organizations have created a highly successful model for reducing HIV risk in girls and producing high achieving leaders from a poor, traditionally low-performing community.

Goals for Students

After being immersed in Muhuru Bay working at WISER, students will:

- Understand the complexity of social determinants that reduce health outcomes;

- Improve their skills in cross-cultural communication and learn the importance of culturally anchoring interventions;
- Learn to recognize the strengths that local communities bring to understanding and addressing their own challenges; and
- Understand how gender impacts HIV risk.

Partnership Opportunities

- The WISER School Community: working with the faculty, staff, and students to support and develop education, technology, and health initiatives. Specific projects could include expanding a sexual and reproductive health program and assessing its impact on the community. Also measuring mental health issues between girls at WISER and girls at other schools.
- The wider Muhuru Bay community: teaching primary school students to improve education for both boys and girls before critical national exams in English. Working at the local ministry of health center to help them summarize paper based data on HIV and other health challenges in the area and prepare for electronic records.
- Literacy Projects: using photography, writing, video, and art to increase English skills in adolescents and help them explain the complexities of their lives to others. Producing documentary work for the WISER NGO to assist with fundraising and educating about their mission.
- Community health project on the impact of a new clean water system serving 15,000 people.

Program Requirements

Language Requirements: None

Coursework Requirements: Specific courses are not required; however, students taking courses relevant to HIV/AIDS, global health, women's issues, engineering, entrepreneurship, English, or international development might be given priority.

Other Skills: Students involved in research will be given pre-departure training. Documentary and writing skills welcomed.

Personal Qualities:

- Ability to manage stress in novel environments and with little personal space. Students will be living communally in a bunkhouse and have limited opportunities to be alone. Introverts welcomed!
- Ability to see situations from different perspectives, even ones you disagree with. To be curious and open without judgement.
- Ability to work in a community in which the male-female dynamic can be very different from in the U.S.
- Strong problem-solving skills and flexibility. Being able to reach a goal even when the path keeps changing.
- Self-reliance and self-confidence. Understands and meets their own physical and emotional needs with an age-appropriate mixture of optimism and realism.

Program Details

Description of Community: Students will live in Muhuru Bay, Kenya, a rural village of about 25,000 spread out over a peninsula in Lake Victoria. The community relies predominantly on fishing and subsistence farming with some small businesses. Most of the community lacks electricity, clean water, or access to sanitation and has the highest HIV, malaria, and infant mortality rates in Kenya. There are very few cars and most people travel by foot. The community is deeply supportive of WISER and very welcoming to guests. The climate is warm, about 85-90F during the day, and going down to 70F at night. WISER is five minutes from Lake Victoria and has beautiful views of the surrounding land and sunsets.

Housing and Meals: All students will live together on the six-acre gated WISER campus overlooking Lake Victoria. Electricity can be unreliable, but there should be several hours a day with access. If there are long-term power outages, students may not have access to hot showers and may have to use heated buckets of water as most traditional Kenyans

do. Housing on campus will be bunk beds in a common mixed-gender dormitory. Local women can be hired to do laundry if you do not wish to wash your own clothes.

Meals will be provided by the WISER cafeteria. Protein is very rare in the local diet and most food is based on corn meal, rice, and beans. Students can enrich their diet by buying protein, fruits, and vegetables in town and cooking for themselves in the visitor's kitchen using a propane burner. It becomes fun to see what favorite foods one can assemble!

Health Note: Peanuts are a common ingredient in the local cuisine. Easily accessed treatment for travelers experiencing a severe allergic reaction to this and other food(s) is limited at this program site. Students who are considering DukeEngage Kenya-WISER should review these facts with their families and medical providers before applying.

Most transportation within Muhuru Bay will be by motorcycle taxi with vetted drivers. Transportation outside of Muhuru will be provided by a trusted company that has worked with WISER for twelve years or by another chartered service approved by our community partner.

Wireless internet is available on campus.

Local Safety, Security, and Cultural Norms: If you have special needs related to health, cultural, or religious practices, please contact the DukeEngage office, dukeengage@duke.edu, to discuss whether or not your needs can be reasonably accommodated in this program.

For information related to how your religion, race, sexual/gender identity, ability or other aspects of your identity might impact your travels, we recommend starting with the [Diversity, Identity and Global Travel](#) section of the DukeEngage website.

We encourage students who have questions or concerns about health or safety in international programs to check Duke's [International SOS \(ISOS\) portal](#) for relevant information.

Reflection and Enrichment: Your site coordinator and fellow students will lead regular reflection sessions in which you'll be expected to participate. We normally have one day a week when we all cook dinner together and reflect, as well as on Sunday nights we have a dessert party and check in with each other before the week starts. Reflection topics often include feeling too small to make a big change; trying to understand how the community views you; dealing with different value systems that don't give the same status to women or children that you are used to; and how to handle your departure after making close relationships.

Despite this being a "group site," you may not be involved in a group project. Most students spend the day apart involved with their projects and return to the WISER campus in the evening. Most projects end at 5pm and students find they enjoy interacting with community partners in the evening for dinner, playing sports, or just hanging out with the WISER girls studying or dancing. (See the music videos!) Muhuru Bay is very safe and students enjoy jogging or walking along Lake Victoria during the day, visiting local caves, or spending time in town to get a cold soda. Living quarters are tight, and finding personal space can be a challenge, but you can always go for a walk. In the past on weekends, students have traveled to Kakamega Forest or Migori Town to have a weekend "away." Other regions of Kenya may be explored to learn about conservation issues and land management.

Curricular Connections

While all students are welcome to apply, this program may be of particular interest to students studying global health, education, biology, English, women/gender studies, public policy, cultural anthropology, engineering, computer programming, and ICS.

Suggested courses have included:

AIDS and Other Emerging Diseases, Global Health 101, Global Health Ethics, Global Mental Health, Development and Africa, Medical Anthropology, Global Health Focus Program, Women's Studies, BME 290 Women's Health and Technologies, Computer Science, Global Reproductive Health.

More Information

Videos about WISER:

- WISER overview: <https://vimeo.com/233382910>
- WISER video on overcoming poverty: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1lAbJG4Tevg>
- Watch Dr. Broverman's TEDx talk: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BLZ-8Kh6_n8
- Health and STEM education at WISER: <https://www.wisergirls.org/media/>
- Meet a WISER student: <https://vimeo.com/224341187>

Videos of and by WISER Girls:

- WISER girls Flash Mob: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BIDD-7aP068>
- A day in the life of a WISER Girl: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wnJvu724o_0

Websites:

- Blog from former student: <http://www.tiki-toki.com/timeline/entry/323990/My-DukeEngage-Experience/>
- WISER Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/WISERGirlsKenya/>
- www.wisergirls.org

Books:

- *Half the Sky: turning oppression into opportunity for women worldwide.*
- *It's Our Turn to Eat: the story of a Kenyan Whistleblower.* This book provides an in-depth introduction to the role of tribalism in Kenya and is valuable in understanding the dynamics of Kenyan relationships.

Journal Article:

- "Education and vulnerability: the role of schools in protecting young women and girls from HIV in southern Africa" Jukes et al. *AIDS* 2008, 22 (suppl 4) S41-S56.