



# *Obuntu bulamu*, a peer to peer support school intervention to improve inclusion of children with disabilities in primary schools in Uganda

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# Disclosure of speaker's interests



**I declare I have no conflict of interest**

# Background

- International conventions are initiated and dominated by organizations and persons from high income countries.
- We need to value diverse understandings and establish an African discourse when studying disability in low and middle income countries (Grech, 2009; Mutua & Swadener, 2011; Meekosha, 2011; Miles & Singal, 2010; Seligman & Darling, 2009; Whyte, 1995).
- Participate in ‘intellectual decolonization’, stop imposing frameworks which are often culturally inappropriate, misplaced, and unaffordable (Stubbs, 1999, Meekosha, 2011; Owusa & Mji, 2013; ).
- Look at family, poverty, cultural conceptions of disability, and the notion of *ubuntu* (‘I am because we are’ or ‘humanity to others’) (Chataika & McKenzie, 2013; Oppenheim, 2010; Lwanga-Ntale, 2003; Singal & Muthukrishna, 2014).

# *Obuntu bulamu*

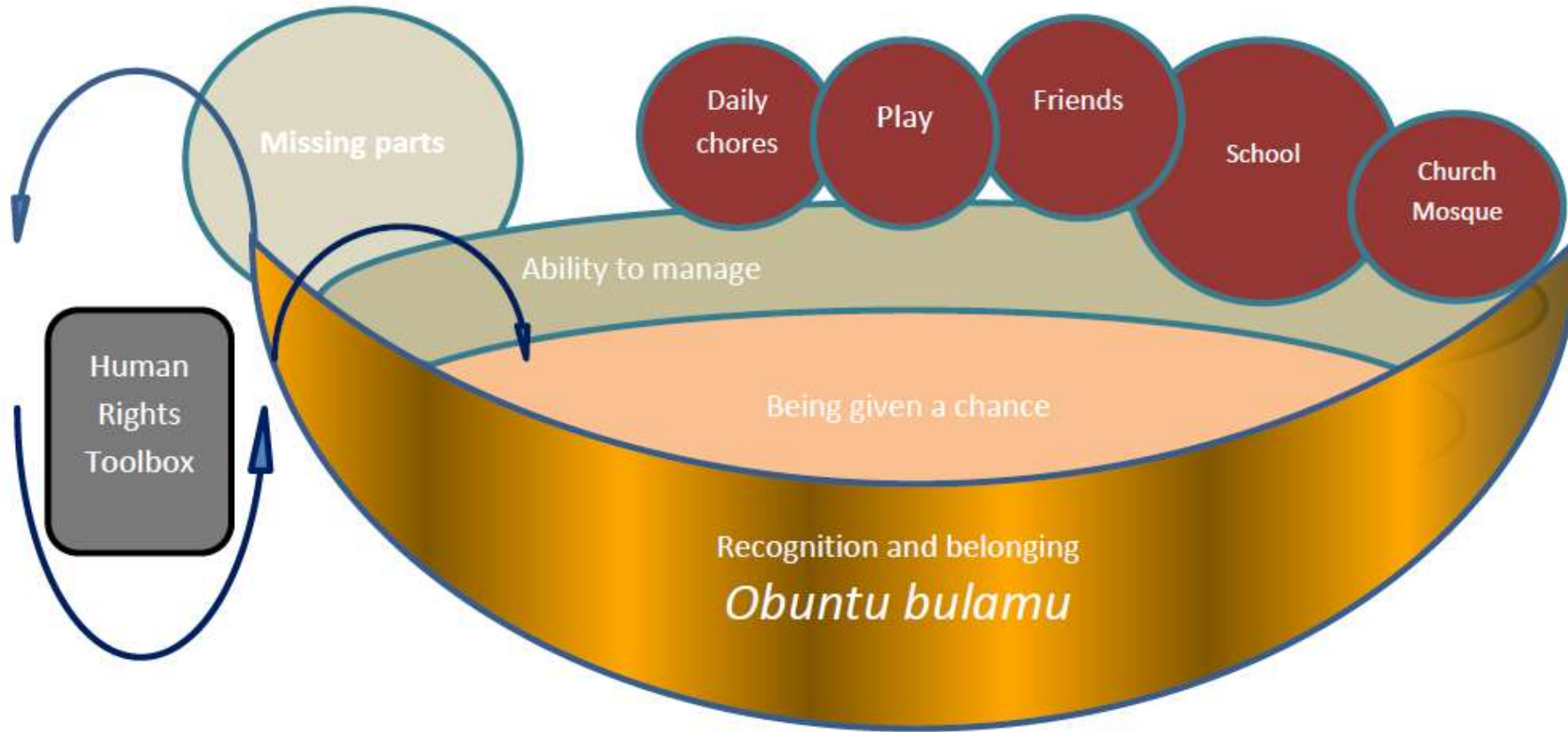
accepted and consistent behaviour  
that signifies a shared set of values,  
which promote well-being,  
togetherness and unity

(Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013; Muwanga - Zake, 2009)



# Belonging & 'obuntu bulamu'

- Belonging to a family and clan goes beyond the recognition of a person as an individual, as it has social and financial implications (Roscoe, 1965).
- Being (considered disabled) is closely attached to daily tasks and mutual obligations in the family and community (Mutua & Swadener, 2011).
- Becoming: by valuing mutual obligations between family members, and community members 'all are given a chance'. This 'chance' has a sense of reciprocity and duty to all (Bannink, Nalugya & Van Hove, 2019).
- When using *Obuntu bulamu* (or *Ubuntu*) as a model:  
“we can ask why the social responsibilities of ethical actions are enabled or disabled individually, socially, by the state or structurally” (Berghs, 2019, p.6).



From: Bannink, F., Nalugya, R., van Hove, G. (2019) 'They give him a chance' - Parents' perspectives on disability and inclusive primary education in Uganda. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1034912X.2019.1593326>.

# *Obuntu bulamu* study

## **Phase I 2017 – 2019**

Development and testing intervention

## **Phase II 2020 – 2024**

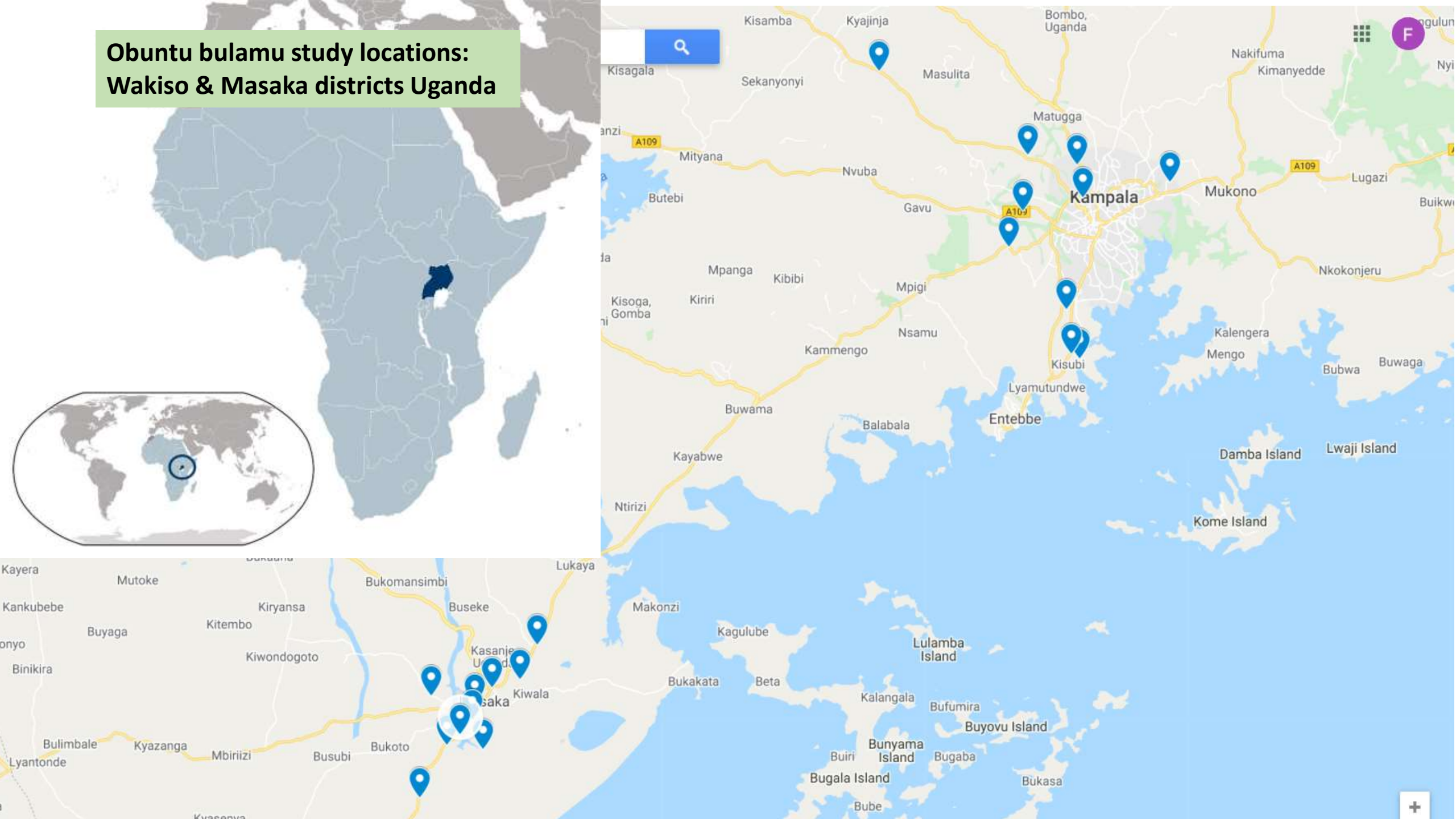
Randomized control trial, can the *Obuntu bulamu* intervention improve

- attitudes of peers and teachers towards children with disabilities
- participation of children with disabilities at home and in school
- quality of life in children with disabilities in Uganda





**Obuntu bulamu study locations:  
Wakiso & Masaka districts Uganda**





# *Obuntu bulamu* intervention


- The *obuntu bulamu* intervention promotes inclusion through peer to peer support at the child, parent, and teacher's level in school.
  - It consists of a peer to peer training and support package over 2 school years (3 terms each) and includes the following activities:
  - Trainings:
    - Peer to peer support trainings CWD & peers
    - Peer to peer support parents training
    - Peer to peer support teachers training
  - Peer support:
    - Awareness raising and support actions by children
    - Parent teachers meeting and support actions
    - On job mentoring of class teachers
- on a termly basis led by the trained peers: children, parents, and teachers.



# Video

<https://www.ugent.be/pp/orthopedagogiek/en/research/ongoingresearch/obuntubulamu.htm>





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## Ubuntu bulamu


In Uganda approximately 2.5 million children have a disability. The decision to include a child with a disability in the family, school, and community is affected by beliefs about its cause, opinions of relatives, poverty, and the changing social fabric. In especially in urban areas.

The *Ubuntu bulamu* research project aims to improve participation, inclusion, and quality of life of children with disabilities in Uganda through the *Ubuntu bulamu* intervention. *Ubuntu bulamu* refers to the human characteristics of generosity, consideration and humanness towards others in the community, and is closely related to the South African *Ubuntu* philosophy. The *Ubuntu bulamu* intervention consists of peer to peer support of children, parents, and teachers, on job mentoring, infrastructural changes, development of learning materials using locally available materials, and awareness raising activities.

In Phase I (2017 - 2019) the project (also referred to as the Evidence Based Inclusive Education project) developed and tested the feasibility, cultural appropriateness and acceptability of the community based low-cost *Ubuntu bulamu* intervention in 10 primary schools in Wakiso district, Uganda. The intervention was developed by a team of Ugandan researchers together with parents, children with disabilities, rehabilitation workers, psychologists, and education specialists. Results showed the intervention was feasible and acceptable and has the potential to improve participation and inclusion of children with disabilities.

In Phase II (2020-2024) the research team led by Dr Femke Bannink Mbazzi conducts a 4 year randomized control trial in 20 primary schools in Wakiso and Masaka districts to study the impact of the *Ubuntu bulamu* intervention on participation, inclusion, and quality of life of 200 children with disabilities in Uganda.

As part of the data collection in Phase I of the project, photo and video voice was used with the children to document their experiences of inclusion. The video narratives made to date consist of an Introduction (*Ubuntu bulamu*) and 3 video narratives of children with a disability: Mercy, Josephine, and James. It shows daily experiences of children with disabilities in their home and school lives, and gives them and the main actors involved in their lives a voice. Children, parents, and teachers developed scripts together with a professional documentary maker. The narratives emphasize the importance of belonging and caring for each other to make inclusion possible. The videos were launched with the makers and key stakeholders in Uganda on April 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> 2019 and are available below. The videos invite scholars and students to embrace African descriptions and models of belonging when studying inclusion, critically reflect on postcolonial research, and build bridges between academic institutions in the North and South. In 2020 a documentary describing *Ubuntu bulamu* will be shown at the Africa Film and Documentary Festival organized by the Ghent Africa Platform.



***‘The project has promoted unity and togetherness’***

***‘Our children are now recognized and participate’***

# Considerations

- Historical and cultural concepts of disability and education
- What is the expectation? Responsibility towards others: we versus I.
- Who develops and conducts the study or the intervention?
- Which tools and methods are used? Who interprets the data?
- Inextricable influence of poverty on access to services for all
- The politics and economics of aid and aid agencies in a neo-colonial world: what is development, disability and inclusion?
- Globalization and media influence: people in the Global North are better off? Turn around the camera: what have we lost?

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Implementing partners:



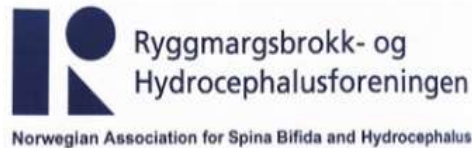
MRC/UVRI and LSHTM Uganda Research Unit



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MEDICINE



Funders:



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Web-links to videos: <https://www.ugent.be/pp/orthopedagogiek/en/research/ongoingresearch/obuntubulamu.htm>



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