Gift L.F. Kamanga, MSc

Doctor of Public Health student
Health Policy and Management,
Executive Leadership Program

Gift Kamanga believes in his potential to contribute to the well-being of his society. He remembers having that goal as early as age 10, and having it clarified when his grandmother died of antepartum hemorrhage in a place where there was no hospital. Many of his relatives — some of them family bread winners — also have died from preventable infectious diseases, including HIV/AIDS.

“When I joined the Malawi College of Health Sciences,” he says, “I saw a way to contribute. I am particularly passionate about advancing interventions with vulnerable groups in the areas of sexual and reproductive health. Public health requires multi-sectional collaboration and good leadership. I am aspiring to be one of the top leaders to bring about this effective coordination.”

Caitlin Kleiboer

Master’s student
Health Behavior and Health Education

“I have a long-standing passion for two things: public health and photojournalism,” says Caitlin Kleiboer, Master of Public Health candidate in health behavior and health education at UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health. “At Carolina, I am exploring the intersection of these two disciplines.”

Kleiboer, an Americorps VISTA volunteer in 2009–2010, earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Michigan. It was there she became interested in social justice and began to use photography as a tool for change. “Through domestic and international work, I kept returning to the nagging questions in my head about the links between poverty and disease,” she says.

She credits her public health class in qualitative research methods with teaching her how to develop interview questions that get to the heart of individuals’ experiences with their health. In her photojournalism class, she gains firsthand experience in long-term documentary projects. As a research assistant in the dean’s office, she has explored how social media can help students and educators, artists and scientists across the globe connect on important issues.

“Photography is not going to end war or poverty,” Kleiboer says. “It will not cure disease. But time and time again, it has made a difference. I want to make a difference in the field of global health through my photographs.”

This mother and child took part in a UNC malaria vaccine trial in Lilongwe, Malawi, in August 2011. One child in Africa dies every minute from malaria, according to the WHO.
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—Caitlin Kleiboer

Layla Lavasani, who received her master’s degree in international health at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, works to reduce maternal and child morbidity and mortality in resource-poor settings. Her areas of technical expertise are in monitoring and evaluation of maternal and newborn health programs, survey design and implementation, and quantitative methods and analyses.

Lavasani’s work has taken her to Afghanistan, where she supported the design and implementation of a national disability assessment and later developed facility and household-level surveys for assessing maternal and neonatal care services in two provinces. Recently, she traveled to Senegal and Indonesia on a UNC-ChildFund project aimed at improving maternal child health and nutrition.

“At UNC, I continue to be inspired by my mentors, Dr. Peggy Bentley and Dr. Cyril Engmann, who have worked tirelessly to improve the lives of vulnerable populations through innovative solutions,” Lavasani says.

Bentley is professor of nutrition and associate dean for global health at UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health. Engmann is clinical assistant professor of pediatrics in the UNC medical school and adjunct assistant professor of maternal and child health in the public health school.

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