



POWERFULMINDS

Schools as Communities of Care

December 2025

Why and How?

YouBelong Uganda, is helping to build a future for children and adolescents that is filled with emotional wellbeing and joy-filled hope. School life can be both a source of human flourishing or places where children can suffer much school-based trauma, that can stay with them for life and limit their ability to have a happy and productive life in the community.

The work of YouBelong Uganda with its partners, engages schools, their teachers and learners, families, local communities, and local health care facilities, in building a nexus of care for the mental health care, safeguarding, and wellbeing of school children/adolescents.

This is the reason for POWERFULMINDS. It is an interactive and collaborative mental health care innovation for children and adolescents in school communities. It is focused on prevention of and early intervention for, mental health concerns, forms of trauma or abuse, as well as damage to matters such as self-image, self-confidence.

The POWERFUL MINDS innovation invites schools into becoming safe and nurturing communities that place the wellbeing of children and their human development as the foundation for their education role. To achieve this, schools become highly engaged with families, local communities, and health care centers. And children/adolescents themselves become important drivers of this dynamic work, in dialogue with the YBU team.

Vision

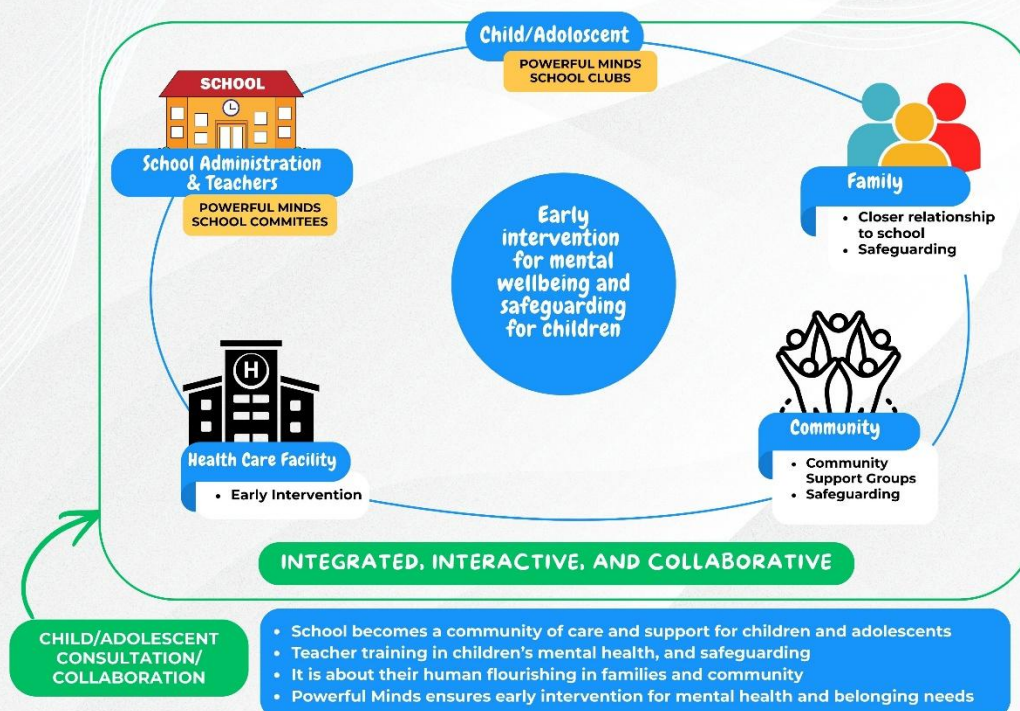
To see every school child and adolescent thrive in a nurturing, respectful and safe education environment that enables human flourishing and enhances school completion. To achieve this by creating a new pathway for dialogue and collaboration amongst school children, their families, their local community, and their local health centre, to enhance children's mental health, self-esteem and their wellbeing, as valued people who will go on to participate actively in the cultural, social, and economic life of Uganda.

Goal

- To implement a collaborative approach of mental health care and safeguarding among children, teachers, families and local community in school community settings in JET supported schools in Jinja, Uganda

POWERFUL MINDS

A 'whole of community' approach to education & mental wellbeing, for children & adolescents



With children

Objectives: To empower children to be active agents of their own wellbeing and safety in their interactions with teachers, parents and local community.

Strategy:

- ✓ Consultative interactions with children re issues that affect their mental wellbeing in the school environment.
- ✓ Involving children in teacher guided discussions and short plays that enhance their self-esteem and enhance their knowledge on risk factors for mental wellbeing, stimulate expression of emotions and enable them to express their mental health needs.
- ✓ Formation of peer engagement clubs among children to enable consultation with children.
- ✓ Use of IEC materials to educate children about risk factors for mental wellbeing and stimulate expression of emotions, worries, concerns, as well as their joys and hopes.



A YBU Community Mental Health Nurse interacts with children during a school visit

Activities

- ✓ Formation of clubs
- ✓ Consultative club meetings
- ✓ Sensitization of children through themed teacher guided discussions and short plays.

With teachers

Objective 1: To foster usage of a systematic process by teachers to address mental health needs of children in JET supported schools.

Strategy

Active involvement of teachers in developing a process to aid recognizing and addressing children's mental health needs (PowerfulMinds helping process) and processes to sensitize children and parents about risk factors for the mental wellbeing of children.

Activities

- ✓ Conduct PowerfulMinds helping process development feedback workshops
- ✓ Composing school mental health committees to give particular attention to mental health needs of children
- ✓ Develop IEC material to guide teachers in implementing activities to sensitize the school community about the risk factors for mental wellbeing of children.
- ✓ IEC development feedback workshops

Objective 2: To empower teachers with tools to identify children with mental health needs and offer supportive guidance within systematic processes of mental health care.

Strategy:

- ✓ Identifying key skills required for teachers to identify children with mental health needs and offering supportive guidance for mental health care
- ✓ Collaborate with teachers to develop the training manual to enhance teachers' knowledge and skills in identifying children with mental health needs and offering supportive guidance within systematic processes of mental health care. Field support supervision for teachers to enable continuous capacity building.

Activities

- ✓ Develop a training manual
- ✓ Conduct trainings in knowledge and skills required for teachers to identify children with mental health needs and offering supportive guidance within systematic processes of mental health care
- ✓ Conduct support supervision sessions with trained teachers



A YBU Social worker and JET teacher attend a supervise a trained teacher during a school visit

Objective 3: To enhance a culture of safeguarding among teachers and staff in primary education settings.

Strategy:

- Involvement of teachers as active participants in developing safeguarding policies and procedures
- Preliminary safeguarding education for all school staff

Activities

- ✓ Safeguarding policies and procedures development workshops.
- ✓ Monitoring of safeguarding policy implementation in schools.

With Families

Objective: To develop and implement tools that enables parents to participate in addressing the mental health needs of their children who are in the school community.

Strategy:

- Leverage on school-parent platforms e.g. parents' meetings, visitation days and class days to create awareness about risk factors that impact on the mental wellbeing of children
- Involving parents in addressing issues that affect the mental wellbeing of their children
- Consult parents on the design of processes that enable them to participate in addressing the mental health needs of their children.

Activities

- ✓ Sensitization of parents about risk factors for mental wellbeing of children
- ✓ Involvement of parents in the helping process

With local community

Objective: To enable community participation in addressing the mental health needs of children in the school system.

Strategy:

- Enhance an active connection of care and support between the school and the local community
- Formation of community groups composed of key community and school leaders to safeguard children from abuse and address issues that affect their wellbeing.

Activities

- ✓ Formation of community groups composed of key community leaders and school leaders to safeguard children from abuse and address issues that affect the well-being of children.
- ✓ Hold community dialogue to discuss issues of safeguarding and issues that affect the well-being of children.
- ✓ Emergency response to issues of abuse of children in the local community.

Health facilities

- To establish a systematic referral mechanism between schools and health facilities

Strategy: Strengthen the capacity of health workers in screening, diagnosing and treating childhood mental health condition.

Activities

- ✓ Training of primary health workers in screening, diagnosing, treating and providing psychosocial support to children with mental health conditions
- ✓ Developing referral forms to refer children affected by mental health conditions from school to the health facilities for mental health care.
- ✓ Conducting support supervisions to enhance the health workers' capacity to screen, diagnose, treat and provide psychosocial support to children with mental health problems.

With police and child protection

We collaborate with police and child protection units to use their legal power to protect the rights of children, especially vulnerable children from abuse, neglect or exploitation. The child protection unit provides support for handling identified cases of abuse among children.

The POWERFULMINDS team brings these SIX parts of the POWERFULMINDS plan together, and it is being professionally evaluated as we roll it out in the City of Jinja, not far from the capital, Kampala. This is a very powerful innovation in a low-income country, and an early intervention model in the lives of children, to overcome many obstacles in their path to good mental health, and a life of active participation in community.



YBU Social worker interacts with female learners of the PowerfulMinds club during supervision

Written by Edith Kebirungi
Senior Social worker, YouBelong Uganda