



SUCCESS STORY

Reinforcing a Cadre of Health Workers

Medical students increase their skills and knowledge while providing needed health care.



A nurse counsels a patient at Gulu district's Bobi Health Center, where Alex Bakenga was an intern.

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– Alex Bakenga

Northern Uganda needs more health workers. Conflict, poor living conditions, high levels of HIV and AIDS, and weak infrastructure contribute to high levels of population migration as skilled workers seek better opportunities in other parts of the country. This health worker shortage disproportionately impacts vulnerable groups, such as women, children, and the rural poor.

To alleviate staff shortages, the Northern Uganda Malaria HIV/AIDS and TB Program (NUMAT) builds strategic internships for undergraduate university students with support from the U.S. Agency for International Development through the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. Students from health training institutions, including Makerere University and Gulu School of Medicine, are paired with remote health facilities in district local governments, which aim to increase access to quality health services. One such student, Alex Bakenga, narrates his experience.

“As a fourth year medical student at Gulu University, I worked at a NUMAT-supported health center during my internship,” he says. “The internship provided me with the opportunity to practice much of my undergraduate training. I was engaged in clerking patients in the clinics and laboratories, conducting community outreach, supporting the health management information system, and carrying out HIV prevention activities. Through this experience, I was able to develop my medical skills and gain practical skills to supplement and reflect on the information I learned in the classroom.”

Through its work, NUMAT is able to reach HIV-positive infants and other vulnerable people with services that keep them healthy, such as examinations for opportunistic infections, provision of antiretroviral treatment (ART), and monitoring of ART adherence.

Reflecting further on his internship at the health center, Alex adds, “Working with vulnerable HIV-positive infants has been quite a life changing experience and a turning point in my life.”