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International
Development
Programme



A Lab Technician Who Renewed Hope for Migato Village



John Mayunga, (right) a lab technician at Migato Health Centre who was deployed through Mkapa Fellows Program III PHOTO| BMF

Itilima. Migato village, located 16 kilometers away from Itilima District headquarters in Simiyu Region, grappled with a crisis of human resources for health, making it difficult to deliver quality Antenatal care (ANC) to expectant mothers who often thronged the facility. A crucial healthcare professional was missing: A laboratory technician who could have offered essential diagnostic services.

Imani Magoti, who had given birth to all her four children at the Centre, can vividly recall the past ordeal when she had to leave without getting the care she needed. *"I would only have my health checked, but no tests. This often left me with anxiety. Much as the doctor suggested I must undergo urine and blood tests; I could not get it done here. I was required to travel about 16 kilometers from here. At times I could ignore."*

In early February 2024, as Imani was seeking ANC services for her 5th pregnancy, the health services at Migato Health Centre had taken a transformative turn. This follows the deployment of a lab technician at the centre in 2017, as part of the intervention by the Benjamin Mkapa Foundation (BMF) through Mkapa Fellows Program III, with support from Irish Aid.

Women like Imani could finally receive blood and urine tests which are crucial for identifying potential complications. And now the tests were available at the centre, close to their homes. This not only ensured timely diagnoses but also saved the women's precious time and resources that would have otherwise been spent on traveling to distant facilities.

However, this progress faced a setback in 2022 when the lab technician left Migato Health Centre after being mainstreamed to another health facility by the Government. Dr. Aneth Kasimbazi, the Medical-Officer-In charge, recalls the difficulties: *"Those needing ANC had to revert to the difficult process of accessing tests elsewhere. There were delays and complications due to the lack of this service."*

Through the Mkapa Fellows Program III, the BMF re-deployed another dedicated professional: John Mayunga, a 30-year-old lab technician whose arrival brought renewed hope to the facility.

"I was volunteering at Malampaka Health Centre (located in another Simiyu district)," John recalls. "On January 4, 2023, I began providing testing services at Migato HC."

BMF has been working in collaboration with other stakeholders at all levels (National, Region, District, and Community levels) to complement Government efforts to address the national challenges facing the health systems with a major focus on the provision of maternal health services in Tanzania.



Antenatal Care (ANC) at Migato Health Centre has improved significantly following deployment of a lab technician PHOTO|BMF

The five-year project, MFP III, aimed at improving Health and Community Systems for addressing Maternal health challenges in 13 Districts of Tanzania by October 2023. To achieve this goal, strategically MFP III has helped in strengthening facility-community linkages for the improvement of Reproductive Maternal Newborn Child Health and HIV services at Primary Health care levels in thirteen (13) rural districts.

With the support of Irish Aid, the project has also worked to generate innovative and evidence-based approaches and results in improving and scaling up of Human Resources for Health and Community Health Worker deployment and planning from the national level to the district level by June 2023.

In Itilima District, Dr. Kasimbazi says, "Having timely access to tests improves how we monitor and support our expectant mothers." The deployment, she says, has helped the facility to extend services beyond conducting tests, going into providing health education, and counseling. Dr. Kasimbazi proudly states, *"Since John arrived, we have seen a decrease in patient complaints and increased confidence in our services."*

In Migato, Dr. Kasimabazi says, the community believes in undergoing laboratory tests at a government facility, and if they are treated without any lab tests, they can tell that the quality of healthcare is not adequate.

According to Kasimbazi, the absence of a qualified laboratory professional in the past gave rise to rogue diagnostic clinics that were manned by unqualified people in the streets of Migato.

"But after we improved our services here, and especially after the BMF brought us a laboratory technician, those clinics have found themselves losing clients. Everyone is coming to our health center."