

SUCCESS STORY

Record of milestones with volunteers-in-charge



Sengerema. Across an inlet of Lake Victoria, lies Kamanga Health Centre, where a team of volunteering Healthcare Workers (HCWs) have taken over the leadership of the facility; with a transformative approach.

From curbing shortage of staff to pioneering new clinic services, the roles and impact of the volunteering HCWs are felt at the facility where people in Nyamatongo Ward seek medical care, avoiding the one hour journey on a dusty road to Sengerema Town Council or aboard a ferry to Mwanza across Lake Victoria.

Although the facility is indispensable—serving more than 1,000 patients every month—a critical shortage of staff meant that communities were missing out on quality healthcare at the facility, prompting the deployment of volunteers to bridge the shortage and improve provision of healthcare services.

Steven Godwin, is the Medical Officer-in-Charge of the Health Centre. Despite being a volunteer, Godwin says he feels more trusted to lead the facility, alongside four other volunteers with support from the Benjamin Mkapa Foundation, under USAID Afya Endelevu Activity. The volunteers have collaborated with the existing staff (who are fully employed) to support the provision of healthcare, with focus on of Reproductive, Maternal, and Child Health (RMCH) services and other essential health services.

Godwin, a clinical officer, attributes the facility's current achievements to the volunteers' commitment to provision of quality healthcare and their innovative spirit.

"I, personally proposed to the Council Management Team that we introduce clinics for Non-Communicable Diseases at this facility. I am proud that this initiative has helped communities to be screened for NCDs, a service that didn't exist before," explains Godwin.

Leading another key section of the Health Centre is Ms. Irene Tilubuza, a nurse and one of the volunteers who has been appointed as matron for the Maternity Unit. Through her leadership and teamwork, quarterly reports availed by the HC show that facility deliveries have risen from a range of 30-40 per month in 2022 to a range of 60-70 per month in early months of 2023.

"I realized that many women lacked health education. And many were not aware of the importance of male involvement in maternal healthcare. There was also a need to educate them on the importance of clinic schedules, which I spearheaded through collaborations with the team. Currently, a good number of women know their clinic schedules very well and that has improved how they are managed," says Ms. Tilubuza.

Through the USAID Afya Endelevu Activity, 8 volunteering healthcare workers have been deployed in Sengerema District Council. The move has contributed to reduction of maternal deaths following improvement of the quality of health services in RMCH.

The Council's Health Secretary Mr. Laurent Mtilike, says the maternal deaths were 16 in the first quarter of 2022 but following deployment of volunteers, only 8 maternal deaths have been recorded in 2023 during the same period.

"We are grateful to these volunteers that have contributed to the reduction of the maternal deaths we are now seeing today," says Mtilike.

Through USAID Afya Endelevu Activity, 120 HCWs have been allocated in four Regions of the Lake Zone, with the goal of addressing maternal and child health challenges through sustainable approaches.