



# SUCCESS STORY

## Community Volunteers: Making a Difference in NTD Control in Uganda



*Iganga District Focal Person for NTDs Anthony Ochola Owor, (center) with Moses Mugabi and Lovisa Gukiin, community volunteers, from Iganga District*

**Photo: Scott Torres, RTI**

In September 2007, the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD) Control Program began working with Uganda Ministry of Health (MOH) to integrate and scale up mass drug administration (MDA), targeting five NTDs—lymphatic filariasis (elephantiasis), schistosomiasis (bilharzia or snail fever), blinding trachoma, onchocerciasis (river blindness) and soil-transmitted helminthiasis (intestinal worms)—and nearly 11 million people.

Uganda receives large drug donations in support of its national NTD control program. To distribute the medicines, local residents are selected by their communities to volunteer as community medicine distributors (CMDs). "Without these volunteers we could not reach all the people who need these medicines," said Anthony Ochola Owori, the Iganga District focal person for NTDs, who supervises hundreds of CMD volunteers in the southeastern district.

Moses Mugabi, a local businessman, father, and CMD in Iganga District explained, "I feel obligated to help and volunteer for my community. They are my neighbors, my family, and the people I love." His sister-in-law, Lovisa Gukiina, also supports the NTD Control Program by mobilizing the community to participate in Child Health Days, a national, school-based program that combines immunizations with MDA for NTD control. "I'm proud of the work I do," said Lovisa, "Volunteering gives me a chance to be closer to my neighbors and [be] more involved in my community."

Dedicated volunteers such as Moses and Lovisa have made a difference in their communities' health and well-being by working to ensure community participation in the MDAs. Their continued efforts will help the MOH achieve its goal of eliminating NTDs as a public health problem in Uganda.

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