

Primary Care links

We now have a total of 60 community volunteers trained and equipped to the level of Operational Level Health worker (OPL2).

The first 20 qualified after an intensive course of training funded by PONT at Salem in November 2006, and members of the visiting PONT team were delighted to be present at the graduation ceremony where Dr Francis Abwaimo, DDHS awarded the certificates.

A further 40 volunteers were trained over an intensive 4 week period in March / April 2007, many having to sacrifice their labour at planting time to attend the course, working long hours and only having a very brief break at Easter. Their number included PONT's own Man in Mbale, Rob Rowlands, and his participation on the course has earned him the respect and friendship of his fellow trainees, giving huge insight into the role of the volunteer health worker through Welsh eyes.

The training of this second cohort has been funded through a generous grant from the Welsh Assembly Government NHS Division as part of the Wales for Africa initiative, which has also supported a visit by Alwyn Pugh, a Senior Lecturer from the University of Glamorgan Faculty of Health, Sport & Science (HESAS) to assess and advise on future course developments.

*[**link here to Alwyn's report](#)*

The overall aim of OPL courses is to equip health workers with skills, knowledge and attitudes with a view to improving their performance and consequently the delivery of health services in their respective catchment areas.

At the end of the course the OPL health workers will be able to:

1. Manage target diseases
2. Provide immunization
3. Give health advice and counselling
4. Collect, analyse, compile, utilize and disseminate health information.
5. Identify and manager common nutritional problems
6. Manage equipment and supplies
7. Manage essential drugs
8. Provide family planning services
9. Integrate services and support intersectoral collaboration.
10. Initiate and support community participation for health promotion
11. Follow-up patients / clients
12. Evaluate health services through surveys
13. Initiate growth monitoring, oral dehydration, breast-feeding and immunization (GOBI) in the community.
14. Support all primary health care strategies within their catchment areas and beyond
15. Provide support supervision to peers and community health workers

Volunteers have all been equipped with a bicycle, wet weather gear and stationery to enable them to carry out their role through the seasons.

PONT is committed to fund the supply of mosquito bednets to families throughout the communities in which these volunteers work. A hundred nets per volunteer will be delivered over the next 12 months as communities are introduced to an understanding of the importance of preventing malarial disease and death through a number of measures including using the bednets on a regular basis. Families are encouraged to ensure all children under 5 years old and pregnant mothers (who are those at the highest risk) sleep under the nets. Volunteers at follow up visits check whether the nets are being used and remind and encourage their communities in healthy living. Most PONT donations this year are going to support the purchase and distribution of these 6000 bednets, and working through this committed well trained group of volunteers enables the nets to reach those who need them most.

Data being reported back to us through our partner organisations indicates that the nets are being used well, and there is a major reduction in the number of cases of malaria in children.

We are also receiving reports of other benefits of the good work of the volunteers. More mothers are attending for antenatal care and safer delivery in childbirth at the local Government health centres, encouraged and supported by OPLs and traditional birth attendants. This is a heartening example of non-government and government health carers working together for better community health, and mirrors the cooperative relationship that continues to grow between Mbale PONT and the District Directors of Health Services in Mbale and Manafwa.

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