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ZAMBIA

FIRST PERSON

Better Education Brings Better Health

Volunteer health workers reach out to their communities



Photo: ZIHP

“More parents are taking their children into the clinics for growth monitoring,” said Mwenya. “We see education working.”

Under the shade of a tin roof, the small concrete room of the rural health center is cool against the mid-morning heat in Mubende, a village in northern Zambia’s Mwense District. Mwenya Mulela, a volunteer facilitator for his neighborhood health committee, is at the health center this morning collecting stationery and pencils. He will give these materials to volunteer health workers in his village as part of the center’s commitment to give back ten percent of their treatment fees directly to the villagers they serve.

Because of the training and informational materials he received from USAID, Mwenya is now a popular community leader. Using village headmen and religious leaders to mobilize residents, Mwenya and his fellow volunteers teach more than 500 family members, friends and neighbors about better health practices.

“With better education and this training program, we have seen a reduction in the number of diseases in our community, such as malaria and tuberculosis,” explains Mwenya. “More women are aware of the complications with pregnancy and seek out help at the clinic or from a traditional birth attendant. More parents are taking their children into the clinics for growth monitoring. We see education working.”

After seeing the health workers in action and the community benefits that resulted, more Mubende residents began to contribute what they could to the effort, such as making bricks for new health posts in the community.

But there is still work to do, Mwenya explains. “We’d like to reach everyone here. Only by acquiring knowledge will we prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and protect ourselves.”

Mwenya is happy to see his neighbors pass along what they have learned to their children and grandchildren, ensuring better health for Mubende’s next generation of volunteers.

Telling Our Story

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