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# Teachers on a Mission

By Cara Ciullo    Shot@Life

Upon arriving at Nankandulo Primary School in the Kamuli District of Uganda, our Shot@Life team is warmly greeted by the school's head teacher, Patrick Mazinga. We quickly learn that Patrick and his fellow teachers are not only working to improve the lives of their students by teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic; but also important health and safety lessons to ensure their pupils have healthy, bright futures. Among the lessons, the teachers educate their students, parents, and the entire community about the power of lifesaving vaccines.

“Our students go home and tell their parents what they learned at school, so we know we are teaching the entire community in many ways. Many of our students’ parents never had the chance to go to school, so they learn about things like vaccination from their children now.”





Patrick has been a primary school teacher since 1996. He arrived in Nankandulo three years ago and his devotion to his students is apparent. Patrick lives at the school during the week and travels on deeply rutted dirt roads to see his family on the weekends. He and his wife have six children between 3 and 19 years old and Patrick proudly shares, “*all of*

*them are vaccinated.*” Unfortunately, Patrick still sees measles outbreaks at the school and this strengthens his resolve to teach his students that vaccines have the power to protect them.

“Being a teacher, I have to set an example – including the fact that vaccination is important to prevent childhood diseases.”

The team at the Nankandulo Primary School is small, with only eight teachers responsible for nearly 600 students. These masterful educators orchestrate productive school days full of academics, recreational activities, and health and safety lessons. It is a sight to behold! And, in addition to teaching the importance of vaccines, the teachers are asked to host vaccination days at the school so more children – including those who live far





from health clinics — may be reached by health workers and protected from infectious disease.

“Some parents in our community have a misconception about vaccines – that they will make their children sick or even sterile. We work to spread accurate information so parents know vaccines will protect their children.”



Patrick is optimistic that he and his fellow teachers are making a difference in their community, and they remain steadfast in their mission to spread the word about the importance of vaccines. We ask the primary school students, “now that you are vaccinated and receiving a good education, what do you dream for your future?” Many yell back, “I want to be a doctor!” and “I want to be a nurse!” Patrick proudly beams, knowing the health lessons have inspired them, but is quick to follow up:

“That is wonderful, but we will also need some of you to be teachers. Someone has to teach the doctors and nurses after all!”

