When Sulite Kanyegezi, a community health volunteer in Lumuli village of Eastern Uganda, offered to introduce us to families in the area who have been impacted by vaccine-preventable disease, we jumped at the chance. Community health workers like Sulite are neighborhood volunteers who connect families in remote locations with healthcare, including the lifesaving vaccines their children need to stay healthy. He is a trusted, vital resource in his village as he informs families when children should be vaccinated, when a new vaccine is available, when there is an infectious disease outbreak in the area, and helps them get to the health clinic when they need that assistance.

“It makes me happy to see the children so much healthier than they were before vaccines arrived in the village.”
– Sulite Kanyegezi
Now, all seven of their children are up-to-date on vaccines and protected from infectious diseases.

In fact, their 7-month-old, Michael, was just vaccinated against measles and rotavirus (which causes severe diarrheal disease) because Sulite warned the family that there was a measles outbreak in the area.

Throughout our time in Uganda, I would ask children, “Now that you are vaccinated against diseases and will stay healthy, what are your dreams for your future? What do you think you might want to do when you grow up?” Not surprisingly, the children almost always answered, “doctor,” “nurse,” or “teacher” as these are the respected people they encounter in their villages on a regular basis.

John and Jennifer’s children answered similarly. Betty, a very studious young lady who has already reached 10th grade, said, “I want to be a nurse.” Her mother added, “If it wasn’t for the nurses who treated her when she contracted polio, she would not have fared so well.” Prossy (pictured sitting in a red shirt) explained, “I want to be a doctor
because I want to treat people so they stay in good health.” Ronnie (pictured in a white-and-green striped shirt) reported, “I love my teacher and want to be like him.” When I got to 5-year-old, Erisa (pictured in a white shirt and black shorts), however, the answer was different.

**Erisa thought for a minute and responded, “I want to be a pilot.”**

Because the family lives in a small, remote village in Uganda, with dirt roads and no vehicle to take them very far from the village, we were all quite surprised at his answer! I inquired further, “Erisa, may I ask if you’ve ever been near an airport or airplane?” He quickly said, “no.” “Then how is it you have this dream of wanting to be a pilot?” I will never forget his answer:

**“Sometimes, I see planes in the sky and I want to be up there.”**

I want nothing more than for Erisa to fulfill his dream and, now that he is protected from infectious diseases and will likely grow up to become a healthy man, he has that chance.

Oh, and Daddy wants Michael, the 7-month old, to become a lawyer.