



This issue's theme: Focus on our Work in Uganda

In this edition of *Milestones*, our Uganda Programme Manager Jane Betts shares some recent highlights from our work there.

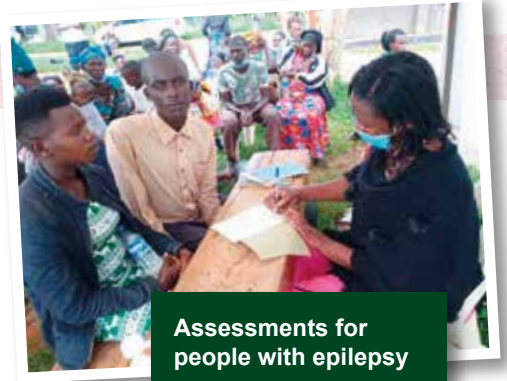
Hope for People with Epilepsy

A few years ago on a busy street in Kampala, I saw a young woman fall to the ground in a violent fit. I heard shouts of 'She's drunk!' and passers-by backed away in fear and confusion.

Recent research estimates that more than 850,000 Ugandans live with epilepsy and only a fraction access regular medication. The vast majority endure frequent seizures, fearful of leaving home, at risk of accidents and abuse, denied education or work and left feeling isolated, frustrated and powerless.

With donations from people like you, Advantage Africa is bringing hope to this bleak situation. With our long-term partner the Single Parents' Association of Uganda

(SPAU) and neurological experts from Butabika Hospital, we're supporting people with epilepsy in several rural communities. Hundreds of children and adults are now receiving tailored medication to prevent seizures. They, and their communities, have learnt the facts about epilepsy so there are no more shouts of 'Drunk!' or 'Bewitched!' We're also supporting families affected by epilepsy with small



Assessments for people with epilepsy

enterprises to improve their independence. Local authorities are taking note, amazed by the huge numbers of people with epilepsy coming out of the shadows, previously hidden away and forgotten. There's a long way to go, but we're determined to shine a light on the glaring neglect of people with epilepsy, help them overcome their challenges and turn their lives around.



Susan and Judith

Susan's Story

Susan is 20-years old, has epilepsy and lives in a lakeside community. Abandoned by her wider family after the death of her parents, she has lived a difficult life, malnourished and lonely. Recently she fell into scalding water during an epileptic seizure and severely burnt her right hand and chest. A local woman called Judith heard about Susan's desperate situation, treated her burns and now daily prepares nutritious food for her. Judith

accompanied Susan to our latest community training sessions so that she could be assessed for epilepsy medication, find friendship with others and learn how to manage her condition. Judith spoke powerfully to the gathered community during the training: *'Epilepsy is not contagious! People with epilepsy need our love, support and encouragement.'*



Trainer Eric demonstrates the post-seizure recovery position

Recent impact of our epilepsy programme

- 150 people with epilepsy trained and receiving medication
- 60 families affected by epilepsy started small enterprises

£15 could enable a person with epilepsy to be assessed for medication

£75 could help a family affected by epilepsy to start a small enterprise

Improved Health and Incomes for Vulnerable People

Advantage Africa's partnership with SPAU enables thousands of single parent families living in chronic poverty to improve their health and incomes. Our projects in villages across the country respond directly to communities' needs, also helping people with disabilities to improve their independence and overcome discrimination, isolated and depressed teenagers to learn skills and find friendship and older people to have safe shelter and improved nutrition. We get to know each village well and help make life better for the whole community through improved water, sanitation, malaria prevention, counselling and peer support groups.

The range of our work with SPAU is typified by our latest project in the village of Nsonga. This time last year their only water sources were

contaminated with human waste. Public latrines were overflowing and diarrhoeal disease widespread, particularly among young children. Working with local water engineers and public health experts, we've enabled the Nsonga community to be trained in sanitation, established two new boreholes to provide safe water, rehabilitated the existing public toilets and constructed more disability-accessible latrines. Community members have been joyfully involved throughout, unloading materials and providing snacks for the builders.



Opening the first borehole



Tailoring trainee Beatrice at work



Motorcycle mechanic trainee Tony

Tony's Story

In the same community, we've supported 79 young people to learn skills in motorcycle mechanics, welding, hairdressing, tailoring, brick-making and small business management. Tony is one of 20 young trainees in Nsonga learning skills in mechanics. Born without a left forearm, Tony is transforming attitudes to disability through his resourcefulness, hard work and determination. He and his fellow trainees are finding friendship,

new hope and purpose together as they learn new skills which will equip them to earn an income for life.



Recent impact of our work with SPAU:

- 2,000 people accessing safe water
- 79 teenagers learning vocational skills
- 120 people received substance abuse counselling and support
- 750 people protected from malaria

£20 could protect a family of four from malaria

£50 could provide vocational training for a young person who has dropped out of school

£5,500 could provide safe water in a rural community

SNUPA Director Peter welcomes skin clinic participants



Dr. Ngobi (right) trains a health worker in cryotherapy



● Location of Advantage Africa's current projects in Uganda.

Recent impact of our work with SNUPA:

- 44 skin clinics held in 17 districts
- 15 lives saved through skin cancer operations
- 264 radio announcements made about preventing skin cancer
- 2,000+ bottles of high SPF sunscreen distributed

Long and Fulfilling Lives for People with Albinism

Advantage Africa and the Source of the Nile Union of Persons with Albinism (SNUPA) work together to help people with albinism overcome discrimination and improve their lives and prospects.

Lacking melanin pigment in their skin, and living on the Equator in Uganda, people with the genetic condition of albinism are extremely vulnerable to skin cancer. Without sun protection, their average life expectancy is just 30 years. However, with regular skin checks, protective clothing and high SPF sunscreen, deaths from skin cancer among people with albinism are completely avoidable.

People like you enable Advantage Africa and SNUPA to run 50 skin clinics every year so that 1,000 children and adults with albinism can keep safe from skin cancer. During each clinic our dermatologist Dr. Ngobi provides rigorous skin checks and, if needed, cryotherapy to

remove pre-cancerous lesions. Every participant also receives two bottles of sunscreen (donated by Ultrasun UK), a wide-brimmed hat and training in skin protection. Since we started running these clinics in 2016, skin cancer among people with albinism has dropped by 80 per cent. We're now also training local health workers, persistently sharing evidence about skin cancer and lobbying the Ugandan Government to recognise, and provide for, the healthcare needs of people with albinism. Sadly, the epidemic of severe skin cancer in other regions of Uganda is all too evident as increasing numbers of people with albinism, from young teenagers upwards, are desperately seeking our help. With donations from generous supporters, and working with committed local surgeons, we provide life-saving treatment for as many as possible.



Ali tells his story

Ali's Story

Ali is one such person supported with skin cancer surgery. Now cancer free, Ali is a powerful role model at our skin clinics, helping raise awareness about sun safety. He recently told attendees: *'This is a miracle. I didn't expect to completely heal like this. Protect yourselves with sunscreen - if you get skin*

cancer and fail to get good Samaritans like SNUPA, your life is in serious danger. Right now, I'm a very happy man and a living testimony that people with albinism can live long lives'.

£22 could provide liquid nitrogen for cryotherapy to remove pre-cancerous lesions

£250 could fund a district skin clinic for 50 children and adults with albinism

£850 could provide life-saving surgery and follow-up care for a person with advanced skin cancer

Refugees with Albinism Supported

Uganda is home to 1.7 million refugees, many fleeing conflict in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Since 2019, Advantage Africa and SNUPA have supported refugees with albinism in the Nakivale and Rwamwanja settlements,

where they face severe stigma and lack essential resources like skin cancer prevention, nutritious food and stable incomes. Many live in poor health and despair.

Your donations help provide relief through skin clinics and sun protection, small enterprises, food and hygiene supplies, as well as long-sleeved uniforms and prescription spectacles for children so they can study at school. We're also urging settlement authorities to address these gaps in care - efforts that were highlighted at the United Nations General Assembly by the Independent Expert on the Rights of Persons with Albinism.



Eye tests for young refugees



Refugee children with albinism gather for a skin clinic with their siblings

Eva's Story

Eva, 19, fled persecution in the DRC and developed aggressive skin cancer on her back and arm while in a refugee settlement. With our support she received life-saving surgery and now uses sunscreen and hats to stay safe. Eva has since developed skills in tailoring and hairdressing and enthusiastically helps others with albinism in her settlement.



Fazira from SNUPA with Eva

Being Part of our Team

We've only just scratched the surface here. There are countless more stories of challenges overcome, hope renewed, and lives transformed in Uganda - all thanks to people like you. Your donations, encouragement and prayers sustain this work with our dedicated colleagues in SPAU (Paul, Sarah, Juliet and Alex) and SNUPA (Peter, Fazira, Faruk, Iman, Sharifa, Phoebe and Edmond). Thank you for being part of our team, changing lives every day!



Jane with Alex and Sarah from SPAU (above) and the SNUPA team (below)

£40 could provide one month's supply of nutritious beans for 10 families

£120 could provide an eye test and light-adaptive spectacles for a child with albinism

Recent impact of our work with refugees with albinism

- 5 skin clinics held in two settlements
- 25 refugee children with albinism back in education
- 880 kg of maize flour, 440 kg of beans and 330 kg of soap distributed

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