

## How I came to SALEM-Uganda

It was 1993 that my Mum told me that SALEM was training nursing assistants and that it would be a good opportunity to acquire skills as I wait for my A level results. My Mum had relocated from Soroti due to insecurity in Teso to stay with her brother - a German trained Dentist who had also relocated to Uganda, the Doctor had tried to set up a clinic in Soroti but due to insecurity he could not settle in Soroti and relocated to Mbale Town. Teso by then was inaccessible except by Military escort, literary it was described as a war-ravaged area, I recall that in the same year 1993 my uncle Dr Isamat Damuria (the dentist) died in a motor accident in Nairobi.

I wrote all application to be trained as a Nursing Aid and handed it to Sr Gertrud who by then was the nursing officer at the health center, soon after I was in class and 9 months later obtained a certificate of attendance in nursing and child welfare. I practiced a short while and 1994, with the guidance from Denis Medeyi and Sr Gertrud, I was sponsored for a laboratory assistants' course in Mengo Hospital School of Laboratory Technology.



In 1997 I was awarded both a certificate and a diploma in Medical laboratory. I returned to SALEM and worked with a team of laboratory technicians; Sam Masolo (RIP), Lyadda, Omoding Robert and Kadooli Lawrence. This was a bonded 3-year contract.

In the year 2000 I got a part time job with TASO (The Aids Support Organization) Mbale as a head of Laboratory services, but at the same time maintained my commitments to my parent job at Kolonyi Health centre. In the quest for further Education I applied to Makerere University Kampala to study a Bachelor of Biomedical Laboratory Technology (BBLT) under private sponsorship, I realized that it was not affordable, I approached the Human resource Department in TASO and was not considered because TASO policy did not fund under-graduate programs, later I got a call from The HR department that I had been considered under special circumstances due to my exceptional work ethics. I completed in 2007. I was relocated to Mbale from TASO Entebbe to head the laboratory department in the HIV Partners PrEP study in partnership with University of Washington, TASO and Centers for Disease control and prevention (CDC).

Fortunately, I had been moved back closer to SALEM, where I still supported the laboratory department.

In 2014 we wound up the clinical Trial and I made up my mind to concentrate on the diagnostic capacity of the Kolonyi Hospital Laboratory, Over the last 5 years the organization has been able to



acquire hema-tology and clinical Chemistry machines, placing the organization at a competitive advantage with potential partners and I still look forward to a quality diagnostic capacity despite my changing roles.

In 2017, I was requested by the Director Denis Medeyi to enroll for management course, which I did in Uganda management Institute (UMI). I graduated in 2018 with a post graduate Diploma in Management and Administration. Since then I have been appointed to the position of a deputy Director SALEM-Uganda.



My sincere gratitude goes to Mr Denis Medeyi for having mentored and seen me through the ranks, Mrs Gertrud Schweizer-Ehrler and Mr Samuel Müller the ED SALEM International for the Financial and Moral Support in my career.

Andrew Epenyu