



Alumni of the Month

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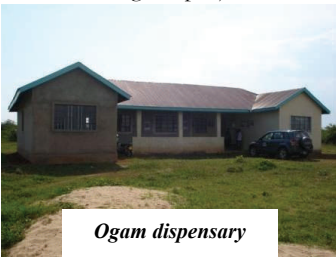
DR. JOHN ONG'ECH



Many of us may not know Dr. John Ong'ech; and even if we do, we may not know

him as an alumnus of a U.S. government sponsored program. He's humble, as a visit to his office demonstrates. It's a little office amongst others within the precincts of Kenyatta National Hospital, which would easily go unnoticed. However humble, Dr. John Ong'ech is proud of his exchange program experience. When I ask the doc; "What it was like as a Hubert H. Humphrey (HHH) Fellow in the U. S.?" he instantly has a glow on his face.

"Thanks for uplifting my spirit this morning," quips Dr. Ong'ech, "That was one of my favorite experiences in life... Not only did I have a wonderful time in the U.S., but I was also the first Kenyan recipient of the Hubert H. Humphrey Alumni Impact Award after my program." The award, which provides funding for projects that



Ogam dispensary

will impact an alumnus's country, enabled Dr. Ong'ech to build a dispensary in his home village. "It was for me a way of saying thank you to the commu-

nity that brought me up and also showing the HHH program that my experience was the entire community's gain." The dispensary has since been taken over by the government and gazetted as a community health center.

A 2001 HHH fellow, Dr. Ong'ech is economical with words about himself, and it takes two visits to his office for me to realize just how active he



Children having their meal on the feeding program

is in the community. An Obstetrician/Gynecologist, Dr. Ong'ech is the head of HIV training and research at Kenyatta National Hospital. With two masters degrees, he is also an honorary lecturer at the University of Nairobi's Obs-Gyn department where he is also the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) technical advisor.

The list of Dr. Ong'ech's publications is endless. He has published numerous books and papers on his research findings. A winner of the 2007 Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric Aids Foundation (EGPAF) award, Dr. Ong'ech is also the principal investigator in the Perinatal HIV transmission studies funded by the Bill Gates and EGPAF foundations. He is a member of several professional associations, including the Kenya

Country Team, which implements reproductive health best practices in Africa, a WHO initiative. Due to his rare expertise, Dr. Ong'ech is in demand from several local and international organizations. He is currently a consultant with EGPAF (USAID funding), Intra-health (USAID-CDC funding), IPAS, HLPSP (UNICEF funding), AB2000 (US department of state funding) in the area of HIV/AIDS and reproductive health project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluations.

Back in his community, he has initiated various projects for poverty alleviation and HIV/AIDS widows and orphans support. His organization AB2000 provides pediatric care, psychosocial support and counseling for the community through **Kaluoch Widows and Orphans Group**. It also supports an outreach VCT program, provides supplies for early childhood education, and



One of the dairy goats bought for the women's group

bought water tanks for the widows with which they harvest water and sell as an income generating activity. As a food security measure, AB2000 has trained the widows in farming skills and bought them dairy goats.

The orphans have benefited from an AB2000 run feeding program, while the widows have also received bicycles, which the community health workers use



for home visits for people living with HIV/AIDS

A community health worker ferries a sick child to hospital using a bicycle provided by AB2000

and taking the sick to hospital. "I do these projects because it makes me happy to help my community," says Ong'ech. "I am glad that my area MP recently saw the benefit and installed electricity at the health center through the rural electrification program." Dr. Ong'ech continues to say that one of his challenges is lack of funding to help this program. "I always have to pump in my own money. For every consultancy payment I get, I spend about 30% on the community projects."

Dr. Ong'ech's is yet another success story from Kenyan state alumni. More on his work with AB2000 is on the net. <http://www.ab-2000.org>



<https://www.alumni.state.gov>