

KALONGO NEWS



Translation of “Kalongo News” Magazine,
November 2021

“My mother was the oldest of seven sisters. In that context, I immediately felt the weight of gender inequalities. They gave me the strength to face that situation: the seven strong women who raised and inspired me.”

Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional
Director for Africa

DEAR FRIENDS,

in the last year and a half we have all faced a challenge that we never would have imagined, from which we are finally emerging with great strength and resilience. In Italy 83% of the population is vaccinated against Covid19. A precious goal for the good of all, especially for those who cannot receive the vaccine. Unfortunately, this is not the case everywhere.

In Uganda this challenge is still in its infancy. Out of a population of 44 million inhabitants, **only 0.9% have received both doses of the vaccine, while the side effects of the pandemic are driving to the limit the poorest population, living in rural areas.**

Today more than ever, every action implemented by our hospital in Kalongo wants to contribute concretely to the **elimination of the gap between poverty and the right to health**. This gap has dramatically widened during the pandemic and today **threatens the health of women and children in particular.**

The data speaks for itself and is of enormous concern. Since the beginning of the pandemic, immunization rates for children have decreased by 29%, antenatal visits by 26%, while the number of premature babies has increased (+ 122%). Maternity hospitalizations fell by 56%, while the number of assisted deliveries fell by 44% and the percentage of caesarean deliveries performed in emergency increased (+ 4%).

Faithful to its maternal-child vocation, the hospital is investing resources and energy to protect the health of women and their children. Because **women are the backbone of Ugandan society**. Taking care of them, training new midwives, educating women on the main health issues is today even more urgent and necessary if we want to save the greatest number of women and children not only from Covid19 but even more from the main preventable diseases, that because of misinformation and poverty are often fatal.

In this context, mothers are not only passive subjects. When informed and involved they become part of the solution to saving lives and promoting healthy behaviors.

Collecting the legacy of Father Giuseppe also means this: **supporting the commitment of the hospital and the obstetrician school for and alongside Ugandan women**. For a sustainable and lasting progress.

The right to health can no longer be the privilege of a few, we have now understood it well too, we took it for granted. If anyone falls behind, we all fall behind. Today, to really leave Covid behind us, we need to take care of those who cannot do it alone.

The work we carry out every day aims not only to support the hospital, but also to make it grow; first of all by training health personnel and actively involving and sensitizing local communities.

All this alone, however, would be impossible.

A big thank you to our small and large supporters, partner companies, institutions and friendly organizations who have chosen to support us even in this difficult year and a half. Your generosity allows us to carry out our plans for a more equitable, safer and healthier tomorrow for all.

From the heart, our best wishes

Giovanna Ambrosoli

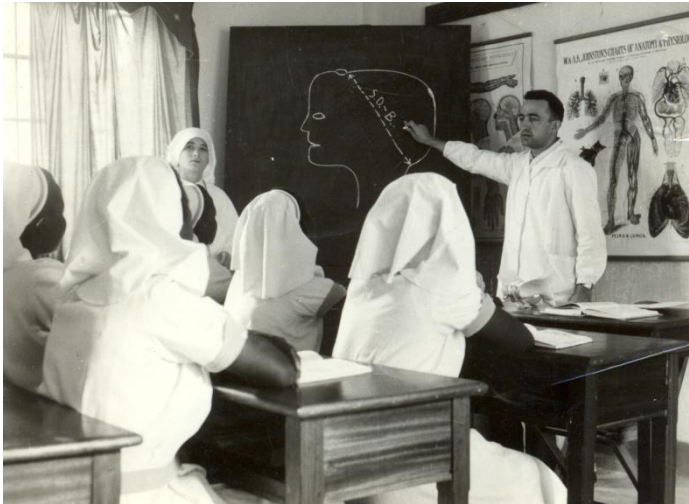
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A LEGACY OF LOVE

Our father had the opportunity to meet Father Giuseppe Ambrosoli during one of his short stays in Italy. He immediately accepted his invitation to go to Kalongo and for a few years, during the summer holidays, he spent a month in Uganda working alongside Father Giuseppe. He repeatedly stated that in Kalongo he had the opportunity to really do his job. **The experience in Kalongo and his friendship with Father Ambrosoli were for him an experience of great value.** We can say that the months spent in Kalongo were for our father one of the periods of greatest satisfaction and fulfillment in his life, not just his professional one.

He admired Father Ambrosoli's professionalism, commitment, respect for people's dignity, passion. He esteemed him very much. He admired what he had managed to do in Kalongo. Not only the hospital but also the obstetrics school: his commitment to the training of local staff. **He brought help from the outside but he also helped the local population to achieve autonomy also in the health field.**

Cristina, Monica and Valentina Belloni
September 24th, 2021

Doctor Giuseppe Belloni was an Italian doctor who worked alongside Father Giuseppe Ambrosoli in the 1970s. A few weeks ago his daughters wrote this touching letter that we wanted to share with you.

A further testimony of the legacy of love that Father Giuseppe Ambrosoli left us.





NEWS FROM KALONGO

THE KEY ROLE OF WOMEN FOR A HEALTHY AFRICA

“When a patient comes to his clinic, first of all **Father Giuseppe stands up and makes her sit in his chair.** A way of being very distant from the culture of that people who always wanted women sitting on the ground”

Father Tarcisio Pazzaglia,
from the book *Call me Giuseppe*



Father Giuseppe, with his concrete example and his lucid awareness, taught us that if we want to save Africa with Africans, **the first steps to take are to recognize the very important role that women play within their communities and to protect their health.**

Women are the most powerful engine for health in Africa, working for and with them is essential in order to save the greatest number of people by promoting health education even in the most remote villages. Because it is the women who work in the fields to support the family, procure water for drinking, cooking and washing, care for the children and the elderly. And they do so with a careful eye on the well-being of their community.

In Uganda, women are the main victims of treatable and preventable diseases that often become fatal for misinformation. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 60% of mothers in sub-Saharan Africa do not have a health worker to assist them during childbirth with a greater chance of dying or becoming permanently disabled. This is due to the high costs of health services, insufficient information, the lack of qualified personnel and adequate transport to reach the health centers. And the pandemic from Covid19 has done nothing but exacerbate this dramatic situation.

In this scenario, the maternity ward of the Kalongo hospital plays a fundamental role in the fight against maternal and neonatal mortality in Uganda. With its 75 beds and 17 dedicated human resources, it is the largest ward in the hospital and welcomes an average of 8 births per day, a number that in Italy can only be compared to the largest hospitals. Despite this, resources are often insufficient even to satisfy the most elementary needs of the ward.



NEWS FROM KALONGO

“We were all there because a man with an eye to the future was concerned with preparing a group of women capable of working for women and for their most precious asset: their children. **During the civil war Father Giuseppe decided not to leave Uganda: he did it to save the school for midwives**, so that the work of training of such an important figure, but also a new civil conscience, would not be interrupted.”

Dr. Tito Squillaci,
Pediatrician - Kalongo 2021

“Today the most important challenge we are facing is managing the emergency deliveries that have increased due to COVID. We are seeing a significant increase in the rate of asphyxia and sepsis at birth because mothers are late in arriving at the hospital ”, Dr Mwanga, doctor in charge of maternity, tells us.

For this reason, **every month the hospital organizes from 14 to 16 visits to the area (outreach)** with the aim of informing mothers on the main health issues and on the prevention rules of the most common diseases. But that's not all: visits offer mothers who have to give birth the opportunity to be examined, to have the state of well-being of newborns assessed, to have younger children vaccinated.



This important task is entrusted to the midwives who go to the villages four or five times a week.

“Unfortunately, mothers are not always available to meet us. Most of them, even when pregnant, work in the fields and there are those who give up participating in the moments of sensitization in order not to quit their jobs, which no one else would carry on. They also skip prenatal screening appointments or nutritional assessments of their babies. Added to this is the poor road network which, especially during the rainy season, makes it difficult for us to reach the most distant communities. And when we manage to do it, it often happens that there is not a reserved and adequate space for a correct evaluation of the patients” the head nurse Paska Lalam tells us.

RESULTS OF THE OUTREACH ACTIVITIES IN 2020-21:

- ✓ **1.508** paediatric vaccinations given to children 0-5 years of age
- ✓ **8.228** children treated with deworming
- ✓ **3.043** malnourished children treated with Vitamin A

Despite the objective difficulties and the real risk of contracting Covid19, the midwives have never stopped, aware that the needs are becoming more acute day by day and only by dedicating care, time and listening to mothers will they be able to trigger a capable multiplier mechanism to save thousands of other lives, because each of them will be able to share what they have learned with other women.

THE WORD TO... GIULIANO RIZZARDINI

Dr. Rizzardini, you were lucky enough to know Father Giuseppe and to work alongside him in Kalongo. What is the memory you are most attached to and which you would like to share with us?

We have many memories with Beatrice, my wife. But what still accompanies us today is his ability to always be present: with my wife and me, and then with Barbara, our daughter who was born in Kalongo in his arms, with all the other doctors and Italian expatriates, with his brothers and sisters, with all the hospital staff and, above all, with HIS patient. **Father Giuseppe was there every day at every hour.** Anyone who has read the books on his history can remember how Father Giuseppe, during the evacuation from the hospital, accompanied us every step of the way and how, for this reason, **he offered his life.** But the sweetest memory was when he came to our house, to keep us company, to drink coffee, which he did not drink but he did get the cup and spoon.

The last year and a half has represented a real challenge for everyone, and especially for you doctors. Now things seem to be going better in Italy but the Covid19 emergency remains a global emergency, the only answer to which remains the vaccine. However, only 6% of the population in Africa has been fully vaccinated to date. What do you think of this situation which is so unfair and potentially dangerous for everyone?

It is the same story: the poor come later ... if they come. You said so, it is an unfair and short-term situation. This and other future pandemics can be defeated by offering access to treatment and prevention to both rich and poor countries.

Why is it important for everyone to get vaccinated?

A premise: current vaccines protect against Covid19 and prevent the development of serious forms of disease, saving lives and reducing pressure on regional health services, thus allowing other diseases to be adequately treated: **vaccinating is therefore a civil duty.** Then, we cannot think of getting out of the COVID19 pandemic except in a collective and global perspective: the more people we vaccinate, the more we prevent the virus from circulating and creating new variants that can potentially escape the vaccine itself. Two of the most worrying variants today arose in countries with fewer resources and, therefore, it is essential to vaccinate and share vaccines even with the "southern hemisphere". Providing vaccines to other countries does not mean taking them away from your own, but **it is a global health strategy.**

As a member of the board of the Ambrosoli Foundation, what do you wish for the future of the Foundation and for that of Kalongo hospital and obstetrics school?

The truest and simplest wish is that both the Foundation, the hospital and the school can continue to guarantee the missionary work for which Father Giuseppe spent his life.



Giuliano Rizzardini, member of the Board of Directors of the Ambrosoli Foundation and Head of Infectious Diseases at Sacco Hospital in Milan, he arrived in Kalongo with his wife Beatrice Giordani in 1985.

"The year before, while he was having an aperitif, the aunt of one of his friends taunted, "Have you ever thought of going to Africa to work as a doctor?" Obviously, Giuliano had never thought about it. He was finishing his medical studies and there were many hospitals in the area between Milan and Varese, where he could do his internship. On top of that, he had a girlfriend, Beatrice, who lived in Lausanne and held a prominent position in a disability rehabilitation center. The plan, if anything, was to move closer to her and he had already made a few contacts for a job interview. Africa wasn't exactly part of his plan. Those words started to creep into Giuliano's head and found their way into his heart [...]."

Less than two years later, with a degree in hand, some work experience in the ward and a month spent in England to learn the language, they landed at the Entebbe airport, where Sister Caterina Marchetti was waiting for them. After a ten-hour drive, they arrived in Kalongo. The memory of that moment is vividly impressed on Giuliano's mind, "Father Ambrosoli came to meet us, unloaded our luggage and took us to our accommodation. Initially I thought he was one of his collaborators, but he introduced himself while he was already holding our bags. I stared at him in amazement. Until then, I had had a completely different idea of what a chief physician looked like..."



RESULT BASED FINANCING (RBF)

**A loan based on results:
for an effective improvement of pediatric services**



29 October, University of Naples Federico II. The conference "Result Base Financing. A sustainable approach for international partnership" was an important occasion to present the results of the RBF (Result Based Financing) project and the study of the effectiveness of the project (2018-2021) on improving the quality of paediatric services at Kalongo hospital and Lacor Hospital in Gulu, in Northern Uganda.

The RBF AID 11495 project created by the Corti Foundation in partnership with the Ambrosoli Foundation and the University of Naples Federico II was funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS).

The objectives that the project has set itself are:

- Ensure better access to medical care for the most vulnerable ones, in particular for children admitted to Lacor Hospital and Kalongo hospital.
- Improve the quality and effectiveness of pediatric health services
- Increase the empowerment of health personnel, thanks to compliance with quality standards and monitoring of performances in the management of services
- Promote innovative models of health management in development contexts, capable of improving the quality, effectiveness and sustainability of health services.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH TO...



FONDAZIONE
MUSEKE ONLUS

A big thank you to the Museke Foundation for its contribution to the project supporting malnourished children, to reduce mortality and severe acute malnutrition in children of the

The project specifically intends to:

- Improve clinical outcomes of hospitalized children for acute malnutrition.
- Strengthen the abilities of mothers in accompanying malnourished children towards full rehabilitation, providing them with the tools and skills necessary to take care of children.
- Involve the entire community in the process of rehabilitation, monitoring and prevention of malnutrition.

The contribution will guarantee the hospital: health personnel, therapeutic food, drugs, medical devices essential to ensure adequate care for malnourished children. It will also allow the creation of training courses to ensure adequate coverage of the program throughout the district.

BACK TOGETHER TO OUR CHARITY DINNER

Two years after the last edition, on November 9th we finally returned to Villa d'Este for our traditional Charity Dinner. Heartfelt thanks to all the friends who participated and to ISPI Executive Vice President, Paolo Magri, to the Head of Infectious Diseases at Sacco Hospital in Milan, Giuliano Rizzardini, and to the pianist Alessandro Martire, special guests of the evening.

We thank all the companies who generously supported us in the realization of our dinner.

