

# Profile

## Schola Besemeria

Volunteer Drug Distributor, Hakitenya Village, Bundibugyo District

### Bringing Us Closer:

#### Community-Based Service Delivery through a Community Volunteer

Schola Besemeria says that she is 46 years old, but her experiences and level of respect in her community suggest that she is much older. Elected as a Drug Distributor by her village, Hakitenya, in Bundibugyo District in 2004, Schola began providing home-based management of fever services for children under 5 on September 28, 2004. In the past 9 months, she has treated children 98 times. Sometimes she treats children in her home, but more often she walks to their homes very long distances up the mountains. People in her village appreciate her work so much that they come to any meeting that she calls without complaint and follow her advice on all health matters.

In response to mothers' pleas to prevent malaria, she has organized a revolving fund among women in the village to buy insecticide treated mosquito nets.

Schola also volunteers as a functional adult literacy teacher. She has 55 adults in her class which meets twice a week on Saturday and Sunday. 45 of her students are women and 15 are men. She shared that the work is rewarding because 'even old women cry with joy when they write their names since they no longer have to sign with a thumbprint.'

These volunteer positions are not Schola's first foray into public service. In 1994, she was General Secretary of a parish level women's group and was elected as an immunisation mobiliser, which she did for 5 years.

When asked about her motivation to do so much volunteer work, Schola simply says, 'When I am needed I go with great spirit because I am assisting people in my community; I am ready to do the work.'

Schola also serves as a role model and supporter of girls' education through words and practice. To encourage her daughter, Harriet, to return to school after having her baby, Schola herself is taking classes. She will sit for Senior 4 exams this year! As a result of her encouragement, two other girls in her village who left school early because of having babies, now 15 and 16 years old, are also planning to return to finish school.

Schola, an ordinary woman with an extraordinary life, demonstrates what a powerful force community volunteers can be in bringing services to marginalized groups. These services increase options and choices related to social sector services that can positively contribute to better health and more productive lives.



Schola, left, with women in her community