



# A Doctor's Journey: Dr. Denice Kamugumya's Impact on Public Health Initiatives for CDC Tanzania

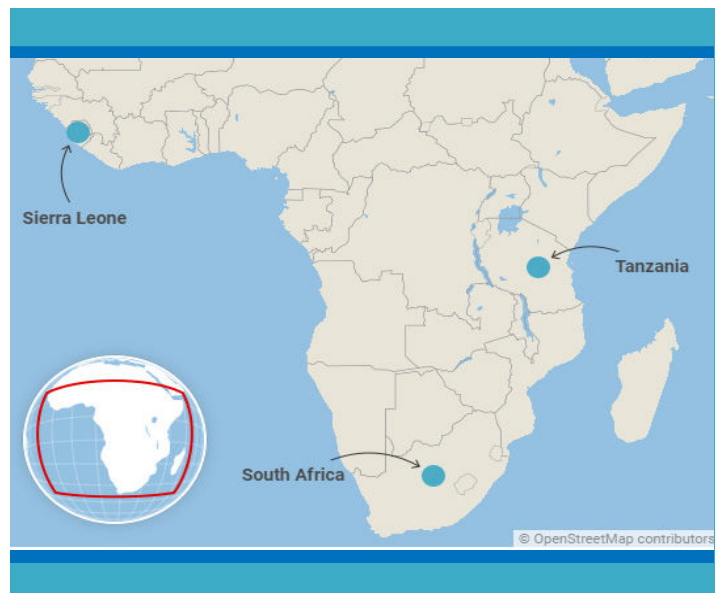
By: Whitney Hall, Administration & Communications Specialist

**Originally from Northwest Tanzania, Dr. Denice Kamugumya, MPH, is a medical doctor by training, whose career has taken him from Tanzania to Sierra Leone and South Africa, impacting public health policies and influencing corporate social responsibility initiatives.** After completing medical school, Dr. Kamugumya worked in the mining industry for eight years in Tanzania and Sierra Leone. For the first three years, his role was primarily focused in clinical work, which addressed larger public health issues. Dr. Kamugumya was tasked to improve productivity at the gold mine by reducing injuries and fatalities, while also working to improve overall health and safety for employees. He was soon promoted to a leadership role as an Occupational Health Superintendent, and oversaw a community health project. From there, he became a Medical Manager responsible for the health of mine workers in Sierra Leone (located in West Africa) in 2012. There, he was in charge of monitoring employees' health, wellness and preventive health programs.

## **ESTABLISHING A COMPREHENSIVE HIV WORKPLACE PROGRAM:**

Initially, when Dr. Kamugumya began his work at the gold mine, he observed that when workers were diagnosed as HIV positive, they would resign due to the fear of other workers eventually knowing their status. This drove him to establish a comprehensive HIV Workplace program to influence a change of Human Resources policies and protect the rights of workers living with HIV, along with helping workers access antiretroviral drugs. Dr. Kamugumya witnessed the positive effects of

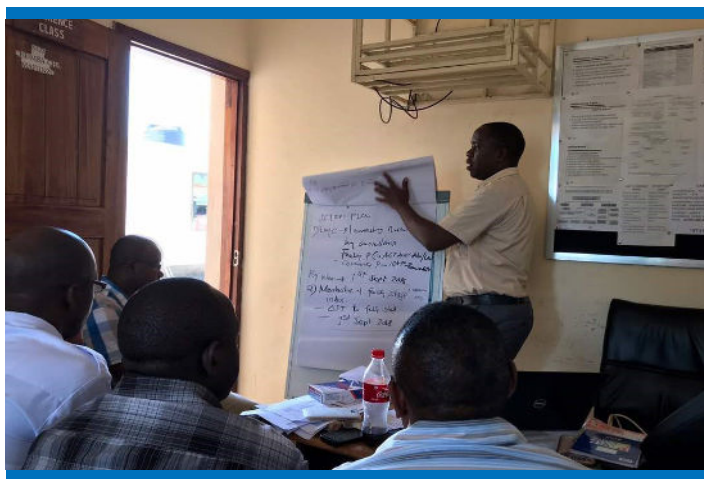
the policies that were created, and by the end of his time at the mine, no workers were resigning due to their HIV status, and stigma had notably decreased. Along with changes to HR policies and support accessing medication, Dr. Kamugumya created a strong peer education program, and an occupational hygiene program. These programs educated workers about the higher risk of contracting tuberculosis for individuals with HIV, as well as helping prevent exposure to silica due to the higher risk of contracting silicosis, a respiratory disease that can lead to inflammation and scarring of the lungs and can ultimately be fatal (Lung Institute, 2017). Fortunately, no cases of silicosis were reported among the mine workers. As large-scale mining occurs in rural areas, this emphasis on education and corporate social responsibility proved especially important, and helped Dr. Kamugumya realize he could make a big difference in public health.



## WORKING CROSS-CULTURALLY:

Working in Sierra Leone in the mining industry, Dr. Kamugumya learned that embracing diversity is key to working cross-culturally. As a Medical Manager there, none of the nurses who reported to him were Tanzanians, and the work environment was completely different than what he was used back home. Working together, accepting people's differences and unique skills contributed to his personal success abroad.

After working for the mine, Dr. Kamugumya pursued his Master of Public Health specializing in Health Systems at the University of Cape Town in South Africa, where he adjusted once again to a different environment, and expanded his critical thinking skills. At the university, he learned how to approach complex public health problems by breaking them down into manageable pieces. This tactic of breaking down complexities and devising a framework to address them from a key systems perspective remains key to his approach in addressing public health challenges today.



## QUALITY IMPROVEMENT MANAGEMENT & CDC TANZANIA:

Broadening his scope of work, Dr. Kamugumya applied quality improvement methodologies to improve performance by redesigning care to ensure it was safe, timely, efficient and effective as the Quality and Safety Manager for Comprehensive

Community Based Rehabilitation in Tanzania (CCBRT) for three years.

In 2017, he joined CDC Tanzania as a Quality Improvement Advisor in the Human and Institutional Capacity Building Branch, implementing HIV services at a larger scale through the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). The majority of Dr. Kamugumya's current focus is HIV, with a primary focus on identification of people living with HIV (PLHIV), obtaining access to antiretroviral drugs, which are crucial for PLHIV, retaining PLHIV into care and ensuring they are virally suppressed.

In Tanzania, CDC works across 12 regions, several of which are far apart. Dr. Kamugumya has helped create regional teams and he is a lead of one of those teams. CDC works with the Government of Tanzania and several implementing partners. Some of the Implementing Partners work with the local government to support service delivery at the facility level (dispensaries, health centers, and hospitals). Other implementing partners support community services while others provide technical support at different levels of the health system. This intricate network of people working together requires focus on improving quality of care, and ensuring services are safe, convenient, responsive, timely and effective. A primary goal remains moving toward client centered care, particularly for people living with HIV. Dr. Kamugumya has learned that creating a positive change does not happen overnight or over one month; it is a continuous process.

## BECOMING A MENTOR:

Prior to becoming a mentor for the PHI/CDC Global Health Fellowship Program, Dr. Kamugumya had an influential mentor at CCBRT. His mentor was not a medical professional, but was experienced in performance improvement in manufacturing and healthcare. This experience helped Dr. Kamugumya to understand current concepts related to quality improvement, and gain knowledge in using granular

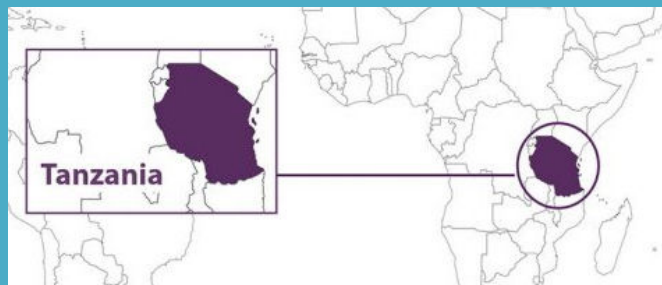
level data to improve performance. As a result, it was easy for him to link what he experienced working in the mining industry to what he observed in healthcare.

At CDC Tanzania, Dr. Kamugumya is a current mentor to two PHI/CDC Global Health Fellowship Program Fellows. Having assistance from Fellows is particularly helpful in an environment that often has a rapidly changing context. Through sharing experiences with the Fellows, he has improved his facilitation methods and learned new skills.

### ADVICE FOR FELLOWS & MENTORS:

Dr. Kamugumya's key advice for Fellows is to "remain humble" and "lead with humility" as they have valuable skills to contribute and make a large impact at CDC. Fellows assist frequently with traveling for site visits in country and contribute substantially in driving forward the continuous quality improvement agenda. Their skillsets in data analysis provide both qualitative and quantitative results when looking at the bigger picture.

Dr. Kamugumya encourages other CDC leadership staff to take on mentoring fellows, as they provide assistance and learning opportunities, and bring a new perspective to their work. **Fellows, he comments, can "drive change" and "sharing their ideas can result in remarkable outcomes"**.



Map courtesy of CDC Tanzania.

### ABOUT TANZANIA:

Tanzania is located in East Africa and home to approximately 57.3 million people. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) established an in country office in Dar Es Salaam in 2001. Neonatal disorders, lower respiratory infections, HIV/AIDS, ischemic heart disease and tuberculosis are currently the top five most pressing public health challenges in Tanzania. CDC has achieved several successful initiatives, including providing "antiretroviral therapy to 500,000 adults and children in 2018" along with training "nearly 70 laboratory scientists and technologists in microbiology and quality assurance." (CDC Tanzania, 2019). For more information about CDC's work in Tanzania, visit [cdc.gov/globalhealth/countries/tanzania](https://cdc.gov/globalhealth/countries/tanzania).

Adapted from the CDC Tanzania's website.

The PHI/CDC Global Health Fellowship Program is a U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-funded program that offers recent global public health graduates from Council on Education in Public Health accredited schools and programs the exciting opportunity to participate in yearlong fellowships with guidance from leading global health experts from the CDC. Fellows work on the front lines of global health while developing the technical and professional skills needed to make meaningful contributions to today's global health challenges. For more information about the fellowship, visit [phi-cdcfellows.org](https://phi-cdcfellows.org).

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