

Cleaning at a health facility inspired him into profession

When Ben Habyarimana, 29, left Kihikihi village in Kanungu district to find work in Kampala after completing S6, he had nothing but faith. He landed a job as a cleaner at St Jordan Medical Centre in Mpererwe, Kampala. Today, he owns Bujulizi Medical Centre in Matugga, Wakiso district, estimated to be worth over sh20m. He employs five workers and makes sh4m per month. He told Reagan Ssempijja how he earned his fortune



Habyarimana in the pharmacy of his clinic

In figures
50,000
The amount of money Habyarimana was being paid as a cleaner at St Jordan Medical Centre, Mpererwe, Kampala
sh1.2m
The amount of money Habyarimana invested to start his clinic

First job in Kampala

After my A' level, my uncle, who was my guardian, died. After his death, my hopes for a bright future were dashed. That was when I went to live with an aunt in Mpererwe, Kampala, who advised me to look for a job. I got my first job as a cleaner at St. Jordan Medical Centre in Mpererwe town. The job was quite challenging because I started working during a rainy season when there is a lot of dirt. I had to clean the clinic many times.

My first salary was sh50,000 and a lunch allowance of sh2,000. At the end of my work day, I would not return home. I would instead spend my nights in the clinic to save on transport costs. At the end of every month, I would send a big portion of my earnings to the village to pay my siblings' school fees. Soon, my boss, Dr Esther Mbabazi, noticed my dedication and when I asked her to support me to advance my education, she agreed.

I asked her to sponsor me for a short course, while she deducts the tuition from my monthly pay.

I enrolled for a six-month certificate in CISCO and data computing at the College of Computing and Information Science, Makerere University at sh500,000. Upon graduation, my boss promoted me to cashier and records manager and raised my pay to sh150,000 in 2010. I did this job for three years, but my situation did not change because of the responsibilities I had back home. I also had a wife and child by that time.

Love with medical profession

Having worked in a medical facility and seen how the business was conducted, I fell in love with the vocation. I then started harbouring dreams of becoming a medical practitioner, with a dream of owning a medical facility one day. I discussed this with my boss.

One day in 2013, while I was in the village, Mbabazi called and asked me to go to Mayanja Memorial Medical Institute in Mbarara and submit my academic credentials to a certain gentleman there.

To my surprise, after presenting my academic papers, I was told to begin lectures the following week. I was to pursue a diploma in comprehensive nursing. My sponsor, who was

also my boss, paid the tuition of sh1.6m per semester.

Upon graduation in 2015, I returned to St Jordan Medical Centre and worked as a nurse. Mbabazi raised my salary to sh350,000.

Setting up Bujulizi Medical Centre

In 2015, I wedded my wife, but with that came more responsibilities. I felt that the job could no longer meet my financial needs. I needed to move to the next level. I then talked to my boss about my intention to open up a health facility and she gave me a go-ahead.

In 2015, I started looking for a place to set up the clinic. Fortunately, a friend of mine directed me to a place in Matugga, Wakiso district, along Bombo road.

The place had previously been occupied by a clinic, which made it easy for me since I was going to change just a few things.

Using my savings, I paid rent of sh750,000 for three months and used sh650,000 to furnish, paint and redesign the place. I also hired a cashier, whom I paid sh100,000 per month.

Since Allied Health Professionals'

Statute (AHPS) does not allow nurses to run health facilities, I had to hire a doctor, whom I paid sh500,000.

I named the clinic Bujulizi, which means testimony. To me, setting up a clinic was a testimony of what God had helped me achieve.

I then moved around the village informing the residents about the new 'hospital' in their community. The first month was not good because we did not get more than two patients per day.

I bought the drugs from the nearby pharmacies because I did not have a pharmacy at the clinic at the time.

Expanding the clinic

The second month was better as the number of patients increased. After about eight months, we got contracts from schools to provide health insurance to their students. I went to the schools and marketed our services there and fortunately, some approved our request. Currently, we are working with Chosen Junior Nursery and Primary School, Matugga.

A year later, we got an average of six patients per day. This compelled me to hire four more nurses. I pay each of them sh350,000 per month.

Who is Ben Habyarimana?

I was born in 1988 in Kihikihi village, Kanungu district, to John Nyangyezi and Justine Tumuhaise. I am the first-born in a family of six. My father did not have any source of income, while my mother, a subsistence farmer, often sold some of her produce to send us to school.

From 1995 to 2002, I attended Rushoroza Primary School in Kanungu, before my uncle took me to live with him in Kasese district, where, in 2003, I joined Kasese High School for both O' and A' level.

Unfortunately, after my secondary education in 2008, my uncle, lost his job due to illness and I had to return to Kanungu.

The clinic also got a contract to provide medical services to the staff of Connect Africa, a non-governmental organisation, and D's Motel.

Today, the clinic makes over sh4m per month.

We are certified by the Nursing AHPS. We are also recognised by the Nansana municipal council and pay an annual trading licence of sh350,000.

The clinic has expanded from one to four rooms — which have my office, the pharmacy and two patient wards. We also have a laboratory and a waiting area.

I have created a good relationship with the residents by treating them even when they have less money. I offer them services and they clear the bill in instalments. This helps me retain my clients and attract more, hence keeping my business afloat.

Risks involved

Some patients do not clear their outstanding medical bills.

There is also drug shortage. This usually leaves the clinic stranded, despite an influx of patients.

Mistakes

My biggest mistake has been delaying to further my education. I feel I can make more impact in this profession with higher academic qualifications since people believe in my work.

Challenges

There is limited access to drugs because there are few pharmacies in Matugga. Our pharmacy at the clinic does not have all the drugs. This makes some clients to go to other clinics.

Achievements

I have bought two pieces of land in Kanungu at sh1m each. This will help me venture into farming.

I have also been able to take my siblings to school and one of them is about to graduate from medical school so that he takes over the clinic as I go to further my studies.

I have employed youth at the clinic. It gives me joy seeing them putting food

What others say



Patience Ampaire, cashier
I joined the clinic in January with no experience. I have learnt a lot from my boss because he is an experienced business person, who has a lot to offer. Dealing with patients can sometimes be challenging because some of them think I am a doctor. They expect me to help them whenever they come, but I have learnt to handle everyone accordingly so that we maintain a good relationship.



Brain Mwanga, nurse
My boss loves creating opportunities for youth like him. He hates to see the youth desperate. He has a good relationship with us, as well as his patients. The clinic is growing and at this rate, we shall be a bigger health facility in the next few years.