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# Medical student who assisted with birth has baby named after him

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An internship at a clinic in Itibo, Kenya is providing student of the CU 3<sup>rd</sup> Faculty of Medicine Lukáš Malý with unexpected professional and life experiences. His patients suffer from typhus, malaria and HIV/AIDS, as well as injuries from machete attacks. One HIV-positive mother who he helped to give birth named her son after him.

**You are in your fourth year of medical studies and have years of experience in the intensive care department of the Hospital of the Merciful Sisters of St. Karel Boromejský under Petřín in Prague. What kind of diseases did you treat in Kenya?**

At the clinic we mainly performed minor surgery such as the stitching of wounds following machete attacks, plastic surgery following finger injuries etc. I worked in the clinic with a local nurse, Elizabeth and the clinical officer, Josef. Amongst the diseases that we frequently diagnosed and treated were abdominal typhus, malaria, brucella and infections of the breathing passages. HIV/AIDS and anti-retrovirus therapy were also part of our day-to-day work in the clinic. On my very first day there I assisted with a birth, which hadn't even happened once in Uganda, where I'd worked in previous years. The HIV-positive mother gave birth to a son and named him after me – Lukáš. That was one of my most powerful experiences this year.

**How did conditions in Kenya differ from those in Uganda, where you had been on internships in previous years?**

The internship at the clinic in Itibo was, for me, a unique opportunity. In Uganda, where I worked for the Shalom for Uganda ( [www.shalomforuganda.cz](http://www.shalomforuganda.cz) ) organisation, we were engaged in palliative medicine, and I was present when patients were dying. This summer I visited my friend Aleš Bárta, who runs the clinic in the town of Itibo in Kenya, which hosts students and doctors from, primarily, the 1<sup>st</sup> Faculty of Medicine on internships. This is, for the students, a valuable experience at both a professional and personal level; they are in a totally different environment, within a different culture, language, traditions, customs, and with somewhat limited options for diagnosis and treatment.

In Kenya the working day starts at eight o'clock in the morning and finishes at five. In the evening there is an accident and emergency room, where we treat acute illnesses, injuries and so on. The clinic is situated in a pleasant complex that includes a small park and accommodation for students and employees. The clinic consists of three buildings – the first one contains the maternity ward and paediatric department, the second the future operating theatre and intensive care unit and the third contains the dental clinic, a small theatre for minor surgery, a bed unit and a clinic with examination room.

**Communication with patients is necessary for correct diagnosis and treatment. How do you communicate?**

Itibo is located in a remote region in south-western Kenya, home to the Kisii tribe. Although the official language is English, many people, especially in the villages, don't speak it, you have to adapt and learn at least a few basic phrases of the local language, Kisii. I'm also studying Swahili, which helps me understand a lot, because the local language is based on Kiswahili. People appreciate it when you speak to them in their native language, even if you only use a few sentences.

**What do you like about Africa, that you keep coming back?**

What I like about Africa is the incredible authenticity, the realness of life. There's a quote attributed to Saint-Exupéry: "What would I be if I did not take part? To be, I must participate"; in Africa, it's really like that and the idea is very meaningful. I'd say that in Africa you maybe 'participate' a bit too much.

**Lukáš Malý** is a fourth-year student of general medicine at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Faculty of Medicine of Charles University in Prague. For six years he has worked as a general nurse at the department of anaesthesiology, resuscitation and intensive medicine at the Hospital of the Merciful Sisters of St. Karel Boromejský in Prague. In 2012 he spent three months working in an international team of medical staff in the south of Uganda, where he started providing palliative care. For three years now he has returned there every summer, together with one of the founders of the Shalom for Uganda organisation, MUDr. Veronika Jakubčiaková, to continue their work.