

# HIV positive man inspires Makerere University students

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“By P.6 proceeding to secondary school, I was well aware that I had the HIV virus which I knew was deadly and a disaster to human life,”



The Oklahoma Christian University Associate Dean, College of Natural and Health Sciences Dr Jennifer Gray (Left), Kaborot Emmanuel Otim(Centre), Adolescent peer supporter at The AIDs Support Organization (TASO) and the Country Representative Global Support Uganda John Okiror Odongo interacting during a training conducted at Makerere University on Thursday, May 09, 2019. Photos by Shamim Saad

## HEALTH

**KAMPALA - At the age of 6, Emmanuel Otim’s mother passed on leaving him with no choice but to live with his grandmother. Born in 1996, Otim started on HIV medication in**

**2005 after he was diagnosed with the virus.**

Otim said he was clueless about the virus because he was still very young at that time, however, the more he grew the more knowledge he got about the virus.

“By P.6 proceeding to secondary school, I was well aware that I had the HIV virus which I knew was deadly and a disaster to human life,” he said



*Dr. Gray speaking during training held*

Otim narrated that he was always sickly and every two weeks he would be diagnosed with a different disease.

“I was always scared to take medication because I didn’t want my fellow students and friends to know, so I kept on lying to them about what I was suffering from,” Otim said.

Otim added that during his S.4 vacation in 2013, he escaped the jaws of death narrowly after he was admitted to Soroti hospital for two weeks.

He said it was the will of God for him to stay alive because he had lost his eyesight and couldn't speak.

“That was my turning point because since then I adhered to taking my medication and I have never fallen sick again,” Otim revealed.

He emphasized that he is always frustrated to see a person with HIV stigmatized adding that those with the virus should come out and live their lives freely.

“We should learn to appreciate who we are by using our gifts and talents for the betterment of our lives,” Otim advised.

He requested students to regularly go for checkups to know their HIV status and live a responsible life adding that the government had put up the necessary facilities for checkups.

Currently, Otim volunteers with The Aids Support Organization (TASO) in Soroti as a peer educator for adolescents and also works with the Ministry of Health as a trainer's trainer.

Students who attended the workshop quietly listened to him and were thrilled by his story owing to the numerous questions they asked him.

The workshop was organized by Global Health and HIVAIDS Initiative Uganda (GHAIND Uganda) in partnership with Oklahoma Christian University at Makerere University to skill students in conducting research and leadership empowerment.

John Okiror the country representative of Global Health said the workshop was not to only empower Makerere students but also other students in other private and public Universities.

He said their programme was covering 32 universities and over 100 nursing and midwifery schools in the country.

“Students in higher institutions of learning require skills in conducting research, and leadership empowerment to meet the needs of the job environment in Uganda,” he said



He added that the youth in Uganda comprise over 60% of the population and by providing them with skills, they will move Uganda to economic independence and healthy living.

Dr. Jennifer Gray, a representative from Oklahoma Christian University who trained the students in research skills and leadership skills said she was thrilled to help out the youth.

She revealed that this was her 7th time coming to Uganda to help in skilling students of various higher institutions in various fields.

She said they had previously done training for nurses with Uganda Nurses and Midwifery Union, Makerere University, Clark University, Aga Khan University, and Mbarara University.

She advised students to search more about research and leadership adding that they should also think about their talents and God-given abilities to create a future for themselves.

Over 70 students were trained in research skills and leadership and were also awarded certificates as a token of appreciation.



*Makerere University students awarded certificates after completing two-day training on research and leadership empowerment*