

CERVICAL CANCER ‘SCREEN AND TREAT’ CAMP | Namayingo District | May 2-4, 2019



In high-income countries, cervical cancer is a diminishing disease. But in Uganda, cervical cancer accounts for 20% of new cancers and 35% of female cancers – many presenting at advanced stages.

Beyond pain, these women have all the difficult and degrading symptoms of cervical cancer – fistulas, incontinence, heavy bleeding and offensive-smelling discharge. Too poor to afford treatment and diapers, these women get isolated in dark rooms, ashamed of the discharge and stains on their clothes and beddings. RHHJ helps those women we have contact with – **but there are many more out there, and many more will be doomed to the same fate, unless they are diagnosed and treated early for the cervical cancer.**

Experts believe the eradication of cervical cancer depends on strong screening and vaccination programs. The WHO recommends a screen and treat strategy where women are screened using VIA tests (Visual Inspection with Acetic Acid) and, if positive, receive immediate treatment to reduce the chance of being lost to follow-up.



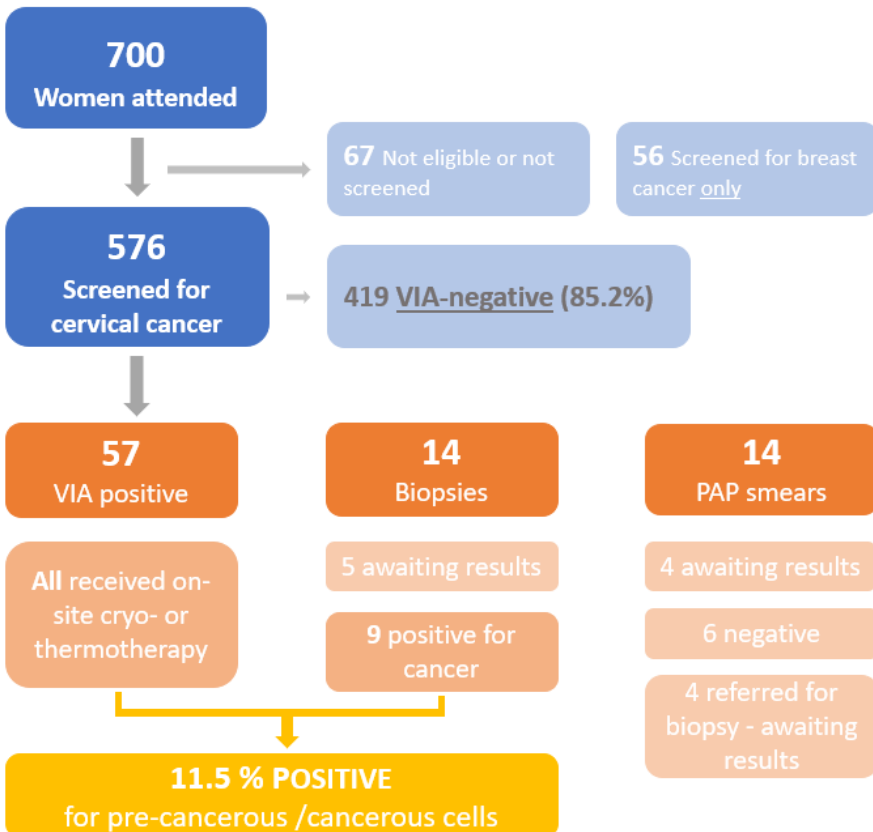
This camp would not have been possible without the community volunteers who mobilized women and supported us during the camp.



Each morning the RHHJ team arrived at 7:30AM and were met by a crowd of women waiting to be screened. While waiting, they heard a health talk on cervical and breast cancer and the screening process.



Special thanks goes to the **Ministry of Health – Namayingo** and **NAWEC** who provided technical support, a location, and clinicians to help with screenings.



Seeing the desperate need for these services in rural Busoga, Rays of Hope Hospice Jinja (RHHJ), hosted by **Banda Health Center III** and in partnership with the Ministry of Health and NAWEC, hosted a 3-day screening camp for cervical and breast cancer. **Treatment and biopsy support, when needed, were provided free of charge.**

MAIN LESSONS

RHHJ was forewarned that rural Ugandan women would not consent to a pelvic exam. We found that **women were interested in and grateful to be screened** and were also enthusiastically encouraging other women.

The high prevalence of VIA-positive results and cervical cancer calls for urgent action. In addition to bolstering screening and treatment programs, this includes sensitization for stakeholders, and continued HPV vaccination efforts.