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# NGO Spotlight: Uganda Village Project connects US medical students to rural Uganda

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Malaka Gharib is the editor of ONE's US Stories page and ONE's social media manager. Before ONE, she was an interview producer at Al Jazeera English and a digital strategist at Virilion. She has a degree in journalism from the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University.

*Congratulations to **Uganda Village Project (UVP)** for [winning a feature on the ONE Blog](#) for ONE Act a Week. More than 2,000 members of the online community voted for UVP, so let's give them a warm welcome to the Blog!*

While big, multinational NGOs like CARE, the Red Cross, Oxfam, Save the Children are doing fantastic work in the world's most dire places, they are usually based in urban population centers and capital cities. Yet the need in rural, more remote areas is vast. In these rural areas, there are many smaller organizations that are cutting

down on global poverty in their own way, many of them run by local and international volunteers.



Of course, you knew that. That's why you nominated [more than 150 local nonprofits](#) for a spot on the ONE Blog this month for ONE Act a Week. And that's why more than 2,000 of you voted for a small NGO called the **Uganda Village Project** based in the rural Iganga District of eastern Uganda.

The Uganda Village Project is a nonprofit devoted to giving Ugandan communities the means to **create and implement their own health and development solutions**. Sustainability is the name of the game, and many of their workers on the ground are actually Ugandan. What's also cool about the UVP is that it connects [connects undergraduate and graduate students and professionals from the West with villages in Uganda](#), allowing the transfer of knowledge and skills over to rural health workers.

They work with both governmental and non-governmental partners in Iganga to ensure that the work that they're doing on the ground has the maximum impact, is relevant to the community, and keeps everyone on the same page. For example, safe water work is done in close collaboration with the Iganga District Water Office, and the target communities for the Healthy Villages Program were chosen with help from the District Health Office. UVP connects rural communities with nearby opportunities for access to advanced healthcare through partnerships with the

United Kingdom Childbirth Injuries Trust for [obstetric fistula repair](#), and with Sight Savers International for [eye health](#) and cataract repair.



UVP's [three main goals](#) are to increase health care access, improve community health education, and support disease prevention efforts amongst the communities they work with. These goals sound broad, but each goal has specific programs attached to it, based on rural village needs and priorities. The core program, called [Healthy Villages](#), addresses malaria, reproductive health and family planning, safe water, hygiene and sanitation. This program is targeted at the most needy communities in the district.

What makes UVP different than other NGOs? Mostly their emphasis on sustainability and community collaboration. **Dr. Alison Hayward**, co-founder and director of the UVP, emphasized their focus on helping communities build their own capacity to help themselves. UVP trains and works closely with a group of community health workers in each village called the [Village Health Teams](#) — these groups continue to work with local government and with the village health centers once the community has graduated from the Healthy Villages Program.

“Our programs have an end date,” she said to me in a phone interview last week. “There are no handouts.” Dr. Hayward also pointed out that UVP is run by an all-

volunteer executive board, which is able to cover the administrative costs of the charity. This means that 100 percent of donations can be sent to Uganda to be used on program costs.

Congratulations again to UVP and to Dr. Alison Hayward. Best of luck and keep up the fight against global poverty!

*To learn more about UVP, follow them on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#), and be sure to check out their [website](#).*

*Photo at top: Helping mothers with obstetric fistula*

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