

In a Place Like Rwanda

ORIGINALLY FROM CHICAGO, ASHWIN

Vasan entered the U-M Medical School in 2006 after a master's in epidemiology from Harvard. A leave in his third year allowed him to return to Rwanda and continue his work with Partners In Health — a non-profit dedicated to providing the highest quality health care in some of the poorest areas of the world. Vasan also is earning a Ph.D. from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and plans a career in global health and primary care.

INTERVIEW BY WHITLEY HILL

PHOTO BY J. ADRIAN WYLLIE

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ONE PATIENT NAMED FRANCOIS had HIV and was dying when he showed up at our clinic in 2006 and was started on treatment. I met him again last fall and he's doing better, but he's old and developing older people's problems. Now he has a growth on his parotid gland in his cheek. He has pain and can't close one eye to sleep. He usually sells his wood carvings in town, but couldn't on account of his fatigue.

“We made sure he was worked up in the clinic and got a surgical evaluation. We sent biopsy specimens to Kigali (Rwanda) and to Boston and he's on his way to recovery. Even though some would consider his condition not cost-effective to treat in a place like Rwanda, all it took was a group of us committed to seeing he got taken care of like we would want any of our loved ones — or ourselves — to be cared for.

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—ASHWIN VASAN

