Yesterday we visited the rural health clinic for the first time far away in the mountains. We met the village health team (VHT), and the director, Shem. I learned that Ugandan culture is quite formal. As the team gathered, there was little chit chat. The meeting began, there were formal introductions and comments first from the Ugandans and then from the "visitors." We toured the health center and the staff does amazing things with extremely limited resources. 25 mothers were sitting close together on a bench, all in beautiful, brightly colored clothes, waiting to have their babies immunized. We met two mothers and their babies who had been born the night before. Despite all the resource limitations, there were flow charts on the wall in the administrative offices!

Then the VHTs led us on an incredibly vigorous hike up a mountain where we made "home visits." Looking from the outside, I felt like people were living under extremely poor conditions. But I learned on the visits - to mud houses without electricity or running water - that the VHTs were all about improving sanitation, promoting hand-washing, encouraging people to board their chickens in cages a foot or two off the ground on a downward slope (figure it out!), and using more "modern" cooking methods in the cook house that are better for the environment and reduce the respiratory problems experienced by the women who cook. The VHTs have also been trained to diagnose and treat diarrhea, pneumonia and decide when people needed to make the arduous journey down the mountain to the health center.

I have not yet mentioned the stunning physical beauty of the lush, green mountains surrounding these homes. As we walked down the village, our party talked about the trade off. Of course we would never opt to bear the burden of disease and hardship of the Ugandan people in the village, but we realized that there is a peace and serenity to life surrounded by such beauty and without our hectic pace.