Maya Dube
Bulawayo, Zimbabwe · maya.dube@example.com

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Selection Committee
Public Service Scholarship
Fernmere University

Application for the Public Service Scholarship – MSc in Applied Public Health

Dear Selection Committee,

When a blank entry in a clinic register was recorded as zero vaccinations, our district team could not tell whether children had missed their doses or whether the clinic had simply not reported them. Outreach teams were being sent out on numbers nobody could trust. For the past two years, I have volunteered as a data assistant with that team, fixing problems like this one clinic at a time. I am applying for the Public Service Scholarship to pursue the MSc in Applied Public Health at Fernmere University so that I can learn to fix them across a whole district.

My BSc in Statistics taught me how to analyse health data. Volunteering showed me how often the data itself is the problem. I helped nurses at four clinics agree on a common reporting template and checked eight weeks of their submissions against clinic registers. Over those eight weeks, the share of reports with every required field filled in rose from 61% to 89%. I also interviewed six staff members about the errors that kept recurring and used what they told me to write a one-page guide. The district team now gives that guide to every new volunteer.

That work also showed me the limits of my skills. A complete report is not the same as an accurate picture: when records are missing, I still cannot estimate how many children have actually been vaccinated. Fernmere's field epidemiology module teaches exactly that, and its supervised field project would let me test a solution. With clinic staff, I would trial a checklist that separates a confirmed zero from a missing report, and measure both its effect on accuracy and the time it adds to staff workloads. I also hope to learn from Dr Anika Rowe's research on the quality of routine health data, which tackles this problem in other settings.

After the degree, I will return to district health work and pilot the checklist in the four clinics I already know. I will track how quickly missing reports are resolved and ask outreach staff whether the corrected data changes where they send follow-up teams. I will share the results with neighbouring districts, including the limitations, so that they can judge for themselves whether the method is worth adopting.

The Public Service Scholarship exists for people who will put their training to work in public service, and that is the commitment I am making. Because my work so far has been unpaid, I could not cover the fees and living costs of a year of full-time study without this support.

Thank you for considering my application. I want to reach the point where a zero in a clinic register means exactly that, and where outreach teams go where children have actually been missed.

Yours sincerely,

Maya Dube