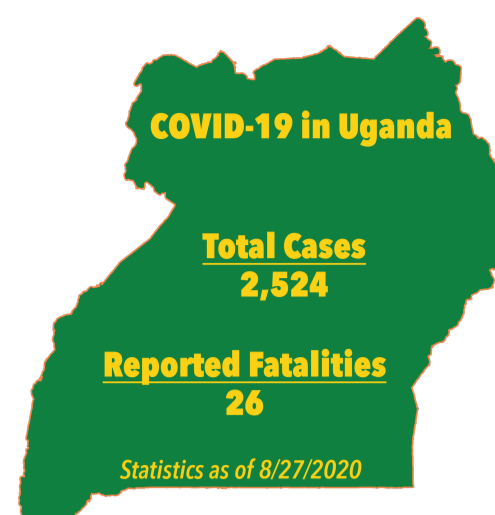


## How Children are Coping During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 situation in Uganda is rapidly changing. Since July 23rd when the country registered its first COVID-19 death, the country's Minister of Health announced that Uganda is in phase three of the pandemic. This is evidenced by clusters of community transmission and the rising number of COVID-19-related deaths in the country.

The government is already projecting tough times ahead and is appealing to the general population to adhere to safety measures. Despite increasing COVID-19 cases and deaths, the country's inner districts are gradually relaxing the lockdown terms; there is concern that some people are returning to work and socialization without attention to social distancing and other safety measures.



Click to follow [Uganda Ministry of Health COVID-19 updates](#).

Schools remain closed with no signs that they will open this year. Some of the children on the Road to Hope (RTH) program, particularly the older ones, are taking this time to engage in other productive activities. Here are a few examples:

- Morris has been with the RTH program since 2013, and three years ago he began a vocational course in motor vehicle mechanics. He recently completed a one-year internship and was scheduled to graduate this year. The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted this so he must wait until school resumes to receive his official trade certificate. In the meantime, motor car garages have recently been allowed to reopen

and Morris was invited to return to the garage where he did his internship. In order to work there, he had to purchase his driver's permit, which he did not have the money to purchase.



Fortunately, PCAU has an entrepreneurship fund for qualifying RTH children. They can borrow money to support start-up projects. Morris applied and was granted an advance to help process his driver's permit. He will begin to repay the loan in February 2021 in small monthly payments. PCAU offers this benefit to keep the children focused on their initiatives and nurture ownership.

- Ronald was excited to start a vocational course in electrical engineering earlier this year. But this course requires him to physically be in a classroom setting and with schools closed that is not possible. In the meantime, he has started a tomato garden to help his family generate some income during the lockdown. Ronald received an advance from PCAU's entrepreneurship fund to support the purchase of seedlings, fertilizer, pesticides, and garden tools to start this initiative. He will begin repayment after harvesting and selling his produce.
- Tony is in his first year of college pursuing a degree in development studies. During the lockdown he became interested in tailoring after being influenced by a relative. PCAU has identified a tailor in Tony's neighborhood to train him in the field of tailoring and designs.

Additionally, Tony and his younger brother Crispus (also on the RTH program), are raising pigs at home. They had started this micro-business venture before COVID-19, and currently their farm has grown to nine pigs.

- Mary is in secondary school and looking forward to returning. In the meantime, she is plating hair for children in the neighborhood and learning to make bags using fiber from sisal plants. This is meticulous work which involves crafting intricate color patterns into each bag. She may eventually have to take a course in master tailoring in order to complete her bag-making venture, or she may pursue a vocation as a beautician. This is a trade that her deceased mother used to do, and Mary would love to carry on that legacy. Mary lives with her granny.

During the lockdown, most children on the program are in some way involved in helping around the home and garden with chores, though to varying degrees. Some children have also resumed their caregiving roles for sick parents or guardians during the lockdown. PCAU continues to help them balance these important activities with educational activities.

### PCAU Staff Highlight: Mark Donald Mwesiga

**Mark Donald Mwesiga** is the country director at [The Palliative Care Association of Uganda \(PCAU\)](#), the national organization tasked with supporting palliative care professionals and promoting the development of palliative care in Uganda.



**Mark Mwesiga, PCAU  
Country Director**

Prior to leading PCAU, Mark spent nearly five years as the Programs Manager at PCAU. The RTH children know him well as he has been deeply involved with the program since starting at PCAU. Even in his new leadership role, he is in frequent contact with the children, offering them guidance and support.

As PCAU country director, Mark coordinates with multiple partner organizations and individuals nationally and globally to advance advocacy, programming, and access and availability of palliative care services in Uganda. He is

responsible for the overall execution of PCAU's mission and vision. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Mark has continued to ensure that PCAU's voice is heard; the organization has been included in national conversations and committees on managing the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mark is finalizing his Master of Public Health degree, holds a Master of Management Science as well as a post-graduate diploma in human resources management and a degree in social sciences. He has attained various short course qualifications in project planning and management, drug policy, and diplomacy and public health from The Graduate Institute in Geneva. Having started his employment work as a volunteer with health programs at the rural Uganda community level, he appreciates the need for palliative care services and is inspired by the vision of PCAU.

### You Can Support Mark and the PCAU Team as They Care for the RTH Children

1. Help provide basic needs for children
  - a. Monthly supply of food for a family of five – \$30
  - b. Monthly supply of sanitary pads for 15 girls – \$15
3. Enable children to learn at home
  - a. Monthly cost of newspapers for a child (2x/week) – \$5
  - b. Solar-powered radio for a child – \$10
  - c. Other reading materials (novels, textbooks) – \$3 - \$20
4. Support PCAU's outreach to the children
  - a. Daily delivery cost of food/supplies to children – \$15
  - b. 100 minutes of airtime for daily check-ins – \$6

You may make an [online donation](#) or send a check to the address below. For more details about the Road to Hope program, please contact Lacey Ahern, international programs manager at [ahernl@cfhcare.org](mailto:ahernl@cfhcare.org) or 574.367.2455.

**Thank you for supporting the partnership between Center for Hospice Care and the Palliative Care Association of Uganda!**



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