

PCAU PARTNERSHIP NEWSLETTER

Lockdown and COVID-19 Updates

On July 30, Uganda partially eased the national lockdown due to the worsening economic conditions and lower hospital admissions. Some markets and shopping centers have been allowed to open, private and public vehicles can now operate at 50% capacity, the inter-district travel ban has been lifted, and workplaces can now have 30% of staff on site. Notably, schools remain closed "until sufficient vaccination of the eligible population and children aged 12-18 years old has taken place." We don't know exactly what this means, but we do know that teachers are being prioritized for vaccine access. Still, Uganda doesn't have adequate supply of vaccines, and just over 1.1 million people have received at least one dose of the vaccine. With a population of 44.3 million people, this means that less than 1% of Uganda residents have been fully vaccinated. The Ministry of Health is expecting nine million doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine from the African Union to begin arriving in September.

You can follow updates from the Ministry of Health here: <https://www.health.go.ug/covid/>

You Can Participate in Uganda's First Virtual Cancer and Palliative Care Conference

One of PCAU's strategic objectives is to support advocacy and awareness of palliative care issues throughout the country. This includes engaging with all stakeholders to enable a supportive environment for providers and the services they offer. To help meet this objective, PCAU hosts a biennial conference on palliative care. Center for Hospice Care has co-sponsored this conference since 2013. This year, for the third time, the conference will also be co-hosted by the Uganda Cancer Institute (UCI).



There has been significant growth since the inaugural conference in 2003 which brought together Uganda-based hospice and palliative care practitioners to share experiences and learn from each other. It now involves policy makers, eminent researchers, practitioners from other medical disciplines, patients and other regional and international stakeholders.

The conference collaboration with UCI, Uganda's premier cancer treatment, research and teaching center, began in 2017. This joint effort was seen as a good step toward accelerating the integration of palliative care into the national healthcare system.



It also offers an enhanced conference with an expanded scope, enriching experiences and unique opportunities to discuss research, and improve delivery of palliative and cancer care. The past two joint conferences drew several hundred attendees from multiple countries.

Each time the conference occurs, the theme is developed by the scientific committee, which is comprised of professionals in the cancer and palliative care fields. The committee also determines the tracks for which authors can submit their abstracts. After abstracts are submitted, the scientific committee reviews them to determine which are appropriate to be shared as an oral presentation, poster presentation or held as a workshop.

This year's theme is "Cancer and Palliative Care in COVID-19 and Other Challenging Situations," which reflects the current pandemic challenge and its impact on palliative and cancer care. The conference was initially planned to be hybrid – with some virtual and some in-person sessions. But given the recent wave of COVID-19 in the country and restrictions currently in place, the conference will now be entirely virtual. There are four conference tracks:

1. Innovation and creativity
2. Providing care to vulnerable populations
3. Sustainability of cancer and palliative care services
4. Resilience and caring for the caregivers



There are several rich plenary sessions with keynote speakers and panels covering a broad range of topics. The Director General of World Health Organization (WHO) has been invited to give the welcoming address, and Uganda's Prime Minister and Minister of Health will make remarks as well as provide updates on the government's efforts to advance cancer and palliative care in the country.

Four Center for Hospice Care employees will be among the presenters at this conference. Normally, CHC would be in Uganda for the conference as part of our partnership exchange visit, but given the pandemic, that is not possible this year. Anyone with an interest in cancer or palliative care is welcome to join! You can take advantage of the opportunity to join this virtual experience and [register](#) to attend.

Learn more at: <https://conference.uci.or.ug/>

PCAU Staff Highlights: Tom Echodu and Ismail Kyagulanyi

Tom Echodu

Tom heads security at PCAU, ensuring both the safety of staff while on duty and the security of PCAU's office and property. He permits access to the facility and guides visitors to offices or personnel as required, and he regularly patrols and monitors activities on the premises. Tom has worked with PCAU since 2015, and over this time has earned the responsibility of supervising the other security guards and performing other special duties as assigned.



He loves the role PCAU plays in advocating for palliative care at all levels, in education, trainings and setting standards for palliative care in Uganda. He is especially proud of PCAU's Road to Hope program that supports and transforms the lives of child caregivers.



Ismail Kyagulanyi

Ismail is a security guard at PCAU who has worked with the team since 2013. He often supports the general assistant, maintaining the organization and cleanliness of the PCAU premises. He helps prepare the premises for events such as the quarterly PCAU meetings and is a handy person to have on the team.

Ismail's admiration of PCAU's work centers on the Road to Hope program. He loves how this program has helped children acquire education as well as a happy life.

A Return to Homeschooling

Since March of last year, when all schools first closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, PCAU has worked to support the children on the Road to Hope (RTH) program while at home. They have not only provide food relief and basic needs, but have also attended to the students' medical and psychosocial needs as well as ensuring they continue to learn while at home.

The Ugandan government encouraged e-learning (where possible) and provided lessons in the local newspapers and through radio and television. In complementing this effort, PCAU provided scholastic materials such as newspapers, textbooks, and small radios for the 54 children on the RTH program (34 in primary, 16 in secondary and 4 in vocational institutions).

Of the 54 RTH children, 13 were in candidate classes – 9 in their final year of primary education (primary seven – P.7) and 4 in senior four (S.4). Their homeschooling support focused on preparing for the national school exams. These students took their exams in October and the national exam results were released at the end of July. **All 13 candidate students on the program passed their national exams!** These are bright children and with the additional support provided by PCAU, they were able to perform well.

During the first several months of 2021, schools reopened on a staggered schedule for students to complete the 2020 academic year. PCAU worked with each child's family and school to arrange the best approach for the child. Ahead of the June lockdown, nearly all children had returned to school. Only a few hadn't returned by the time schools shut down again. With the stricter June 2021 lockdown, children were sent home from school. Inter-district movements and interaction between people outside of family members or individuals living in the same homestead was difficult. Given this, PCAU could not immediately resume the homeschooling arrangement. However, with the slight easing of restrictions announced July 30, PCAU has resumed a more structured support for the children's learning at home. They are exploring the possibility of providing some children with tablets to access e-learning options and will continue providing other reading materials and tutor support. With the government's goal of reaching sufficient vaccination before children return to schools, children may be at home for another extended period of time. Global accessibility of vaccines is still very unequal, and Uganda has not yet fully vaccinated as noted above. Working with partners, PCAU will continue to ensure children on the RTH program (and their families) receive the necessary support.



Stephen visits RTH child George who is staying at his aunt's home in Bombo during the lockdown.



RTH children Margret and Akbar at the PCAU secretariat after being picked up from school during the second lockdown.

If you would like to write a note of encouragement to a child on the RTH program, please contact Denis Kidde at kidded@cfcare.org. They love to receive notes from their friends and supporters in the U.S.!

Help PCAU Stay Safe

Your gift to our **COVID-19 Safety Appeal for PCAU** will help the team stay safe with PPE, testing and other crucial supplies as they continue to support the delivery of palliative care in the country.

[Donate to the COVID-19 Safety Appeal](#)



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