

## PCAU PARTNERSHIP NEWSLETTER

### The PCAU Annual Dinner

On December 15, PCAU will host their **6th annual fundraising and award dinner** – this year in southwestern Uganda as PCAU extends its reach throughout the country with PCAU branch offices. The Mbarara PCAU Branch will host the event with the fundraising theme “*Supporting transportation needs of children with cancer from rural communities to continue and complete their treatment.*” Several palliative care workers who have been honored with various national awards in the past two years will be recognized at this event.

The PCAU Annual Dinner recognizes individuals and organizations for their contribution to palliative care development in Uganda. During an exchange visit to CHC several years ago, PCAU staff attended our Helping Hands Award Dinner and loved the idea so much that they created their own fundraising and award dinner.

### Supporting Children Through Regional Road to Hope Retreats

During CHC’s initial visit to Uganda in 2008 to understand PCAU’s work, the team realized that children play a significant role in the delivery of palliative care throughout the country. They are often the primary caregivers for their terminally ill parents and/or family members. They were performing extraordinary feats for their young ages including trekking long distances to secure medicine, assuming the caregiver role to their sick loved ones and younger siblings, and providing food and other basic needs for their home life.

This difficult role of caregiving not only deprives children of the opportunity to simply be children but also, on many occasions, prevents them from attending school. In addition to supporting their education, the Road to Hope (RTH) program also provides them with social and psychological support through group retreats, parent/guardian support and continuous staff mentoring. This support is vital in offsetting the psychosocial distress these children experience from assuming adult roles too early in life.

In 2014, PCAU organized the first children’s camp, bringing together all RTH children for two days. They engaged counselors and other resource organizations to bring rich content to nurture the well-being of the whole child. Their sessions focused on topics such as personal reflection and self-awareness, coping with emotions, making good friends, relating with the opposite sex, and financial management. Children found the camp meaningful and PCAU has continued it every year. In 2018, they implemented an additional retreat for the older children to specifically focus on the challenges they face as young adults.



The COVID-19 pandemic unfortunately interrupted these gatherings. PCAU scaled back its field work and was unable to bring the children together due to lockdown measures. The pandemic exacerbated the many challenges the children and their families face for their daily basic as well as psychosocial needs. Though they could not meet in large groups due to the pandemic, PCAU has done a wonderful job to keep up on new developments with all the children on the program. Even so, it remains difficult to connect with the children.

As Uganda gradually eases its lockdown, PCAU is rethinking operations in the “new normal.” They have re-imagined the camp retreat approach – instead of bringing all children from 14+ districts to meet in one central place in Kampala, they are now holding regional retreats, bringing together a smaller number of children in their respective regions. The goal is still to provide social and psychological support to the children. The hope for these retreats is that PCAU can identify specific ways to best support each child as an individual and in their home. There have been many concerns about the psychosocial issues the children are facing due to the pandemic and the extended school closures.



The first regional retreat was held in the eastern region in September. All 23 children (12 girls and 11 boys) from the region participated in the two-day activity. During the retreat, they met PCAU’S newest employee, Anita Balikobaku, who will oversee the RTH program. She wanted to meet the children right away, so they could begin to know and feel comfortable with her. Anita led the children’s discussion and engagement activities noting that “we all come from different families and backgrounds but what brings us together is palliative care, and we need to move forward as a family.” The children were able to reflect and share experiences encountered during the pandemic and lockdown. The emphasis on unity and family is not new to the children but is an important reminder while they have been separated during this pandemic. The older children are encouraged to set a good example and be mentors to the younger children.

In addition to discussing their achievements, challenges and expectations, the children really enjoyed being together with their RTH family.

### PCAU Staff Highlight: Fiona Siima Karakire

**Fiona is the membership and partnership officer at PCAU.** She joined PCAU in May 2021 as a volunteer, and three months later she became a full-time employee. Her role at PCAU includes managing the PCAU membership database and partnership engagements. She coordinates the current members engagement with PCAU and recruits new organizations and individuals. In her role, Fiona supports the growth of PCAU partnership engagements and resource mobilization.



Fiona Siima Karakire

She holds a bachelor’s degree in commerce from Makerere University with marketing as an elective. Prior to joining PCAU, Fiona worked for Patient Relief Mission (PRM) as a finance and administration officer. PRM offers support to cancer patients.

Fiona loves working for PCAU because several activities and programs are community-based which is her passion. Working for PCAU members has given her an opportunity to interface with people from all walks of life and seeing members willingly come onboard to support the cause is so fulfilling.

She also appreciates that PCAU is a great organization to work for and that it provides an environment that is conducive to staff growth and development.

### Support the Road to Hope Program

You can help orphaned or deprived child caregivers in Uganda receive an education and other life skills necessary for them to become flourishing young adults.

- The Road to Hope program currently has 22 unsponsored children. If you are interested in sponsoring a child, please contact Denis Kidde, international programs coordinator at [KiddeD@cfhcare.org](mailto:KiddeD@cfhcare.org).
- General support for the Road to Hope program is always welcome – no amount is too small. Your contribution will help the PCAU staff provide the resources necessary to promote the physical and emotional well-being and personal growth of all the children.

[Donate to the Road to Hope program](#)



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