

medcare newsletter

A lifeline for Ugandan children

Summer Edition | August 2018



Opening day

Tears of joy!

The Wellspring Home for Disabled Children - known in the UK as Noeline's Home - is now officially OPEN!

On June 23rd 2018 600 people attended a grand celebration at the new home. A dedication service, led by retired Bishop Samuel Kamya, gave praise to God for this wonderful provision for disabled children, and celebrations continued with speeches, dancing, acting and singing and food for all. Noeline looked beautiful and very happy and her children were very excited!

5 weeks later, on Friday 27th July, Noeline and her children moved into their new home. The children were far too happy to sleep that night and many were crying because they had never had a bed of their own before – they had always had to share.

Our thanks go to all who have contributed both financially and in donating time and expertise towards this project. Your generosity has shown the people of Uganda, and the world, how precious and special are disabled children and how they deserve the very best that we can give them.



Above: Playing on the playship at their new home. Left: Packing up to leave their old home.



Aidah - A story of suffering and compassion

Aidah was orphaned at a young age and lived with her older siblings. At around the age of 8 years she developed a serious illness and had to be admitted to hospital. As a result of this illness this beautiful 8 year old became blind and epileptic – and was immediately labeled as cursed. On discharge from hospital Aidah was abandoned by her family and left on her own to die. Aidah was found by a compassionate village woman who took her to the home of Noeline Nakaagwa, for assistance. Noeline immediately started caring for Aidah and she grew up alongside other disabled children knowing she was special and greatly loved. Aidah was admitted onto the Medicare COIN sponsorship scheme in 2009, which greatly assisted Noeline with her care.

Aidah experienced many set backs during her life. Her many falls due to her epilepsy and blindness resulted in broken bones and in 2016 she fractured her hip. Despite successful surgery Aidah never regained her mobility. She became increasingly bedridden and frail. Despite constant loving care from Noeline and the other children Aidah died in July 2018, at the age of 23 years. She will be greatly missed.

Poverty in the community

Poverty in the community is extremely complex. Most of the families in our community have family members missing. Mothers or fathers are missing, many having passed away because of HIV/AIDS and other illnesses, Others have abandoned their family for a variety of reasons.

Most families in the community are led by single mothers or grandmothers, who struggle to keep the family together because they have no source of income. Often they cannot pay for their children to attend school, so repeating the cycle of poverty. Even public schools are not free. Commonly guardians just send their children to school anyway.

However, children who have not paid their school fees will not be allowed to take exams and, therefore, cannot progress in the school, making it impossible for them to move beyond primary school. This is specifically prominent for a girl child as families often use the money available to pay for boys. This then leaves girls with no choice other than to get married as teenagers.

Teenage mothers are often not tested for HIV, which has increased the number of HIV infected children. Due to their poverty these girls rarely attend antenatal services during their pregnancy. Others use traditional birth attendants. All of this puts the teenage mother and their baby at risk and increases maternal and neonatal deaths.

We have a large number of disabled children who were not born with the disability but became disabled as a result of self medication. Mothers do not have a single coin to take their children to the hospital. The best they can do is to take herbs given by witch-doctors, other children need physiotherapy as early as possible, but, because parents cannot raise the small amount of money needed for transport to Wellspring, many children’s disabilities progress. For example, Esther Nansubuga (see her story on page 3) would be severely disabled by now if she hadn’t received help at a very young age.

Because children leave school at a very tender age, many of them have lost all hope of life and they resort to drugs as a source of happiness. It has been a challenge to me working with such people who don’t have any hope in life. However, we try as much as we can to restore hope, mostly to the children and youth.

Thanks very much Dr. Pauline and the team for the good work you are doing binding up the broken hearted and restoring hope among the children and their parents. At least we now have living testimonies of life and hope in the community.

Written by Allen Businje, Wellspring Social Worker and assistant to William (sponsorship manager) and Noeline (mother to the children living in the new Wellspring Home for Disabled Children).



From disability to wholeness

This is the story of little Esther Nansubuga, now nearly 6 years old...

On the 12th December 2012, Esther was born in the home of a retired village midwife, after 7 days of labour. On delivering the baby, the midwife was shocked when she saw that Esther was seriously deformed and advised the father to take the child to Masaka Hospital to see whether there was a chance of correcting the deformity. It was discovered that she had been born with a condition called bilateral femoral bone dysplasia, which would prevent her from walking and developing normally.

Esther's mother spent days crying over her deformed little baby. She said, "I never wanted to expose or show my baby to any person. For I knew that I was going to be a laughing stock all around my village. After one week, we took our baby to Masaka Hospital, where she was put into casts but they kept falling off and so were useless.

Many people came to see our baby and started mocking us. And so I resorted to hiding our baby indoors, never letting anyone else look at her. When I was pregnant, I thought that having a baby was the greatest joy for every mother. But when I got mine, she became a source of grief and misery to me. Her father turned against me, claiming that it was my witchcraft that had deformed his daughter.

In confirmation of my witchcraft, Esther's father started visiting witch doctors. They told him that Esther was deformed by a god of disabilities (Wannema), whom I was serving. The only solution was to offer sacrifice to that god so that Esther could walk. He was given a walking stick saying that it belonged to that god which would help Esther walk. Other witch doctors told us that I was named after my great grandmother who was demanding sacrifices. We needed to appease her so that Esther could walk. We followed the advice of the witchdoctors but Esther's deformity stayed the same.

All around there were misunderstandings and mistreatment. We never had any peace at home. I talked to my grandmother who advised me to stop all that we were doing and resort to prayers. I took her advice seriously because I knew there was nothing remaining. I started accepting my daughter the way she was but still I never wanted anybody to see her.

One day, our Village Health Worker and chairman visited me after hearing that I had a child with disabilities. She referred me to Wellspring, saying that there were specialists working there on children with disabilities. She promised to take me there and indeed she fulfilled her promise. Wellspring is found in the village next to ours but I had never heard of these services.



Before surgery



Esther today

I thought that the medical persons at Wellspring would also mock but it was the opposite. They received me with compassion and they introduced me to the white doctors who have now saved my daughter from the disability she had.

After a few months, I was taken to CoRSU Hospital in Kampala where Esther was subjected to multiple surgeries. CoRSU is a first class hospital in Uganda but I could never have afforded to take her there without the help of Wellspring. All the medical bills, transport and feeding was catered for by Wellspring. When I told Esther's father that she was going to be operated on, he told me not to waste people's money and time, claiming that I knew what was wrong with my daughter and it could never be helped with western medicine.

After surgery, Esther was fitted with casts which she could stand on. The day she stood on her own, she shouted out to me to come and look. I was filled with joy and immediately I called her father to also see what the surgery had done! He couldn't believe what he saw. He finally started lamenting about all his money wasted paying witch doctors that had never helped us in any way, apart from distressing and dividing our family. We thank the almighty God who gave us financial support and doctors who have made our daughter stand up straight and walk.

All those who were laughing at me are now asking me how I connected with Wellspring for such amazing assistance and treatment.

I thank Esther's sponsor for coming to our rescue and giving me a reason to continually praise the living God. I thank Wellspring for employing well trained, kind and welcoming staff who give good services to our children, free of charge.

I greatly thank William and Ibrahim for working hard to save my daughter from becoming disabled, by introducing us to the white doctors who gave us financial support, taking us to CoRSU whenever required, giving us all the treatment we needed and providing physiotherapy."

A message from Ibrahim, Esther's physiotherapist at Wellspring:

"From walking like a 'frog' to a human being with a normal gait is the greatest miracle this girl will ever receive. 4 years treatment and final transformation has involved a great deal of work, finance, pain, perseverance and courage. All that was needed for her to eventually walk, Esther was ready and willing to undertake despite the pain she had after every surgery. She can now perform normal daily activities and is a delight to her family and friends. I am so grateful to Medcare for sponsoring this child to ensure that she is saved from becoming yet another disabled Ugandan."

Sponsorship, through the Medcare sponsorship schemes, of less than £1 a day, can totally transform and even save a child's life. Many children are waiting for a sponsor and the chance of life, health and hope.

Details of these sponsorship schemes are found on our website www.medcare.org.uk.

Please contact the Medcare office if you would like to save a child's life today.

Email: admin.medcare@icloud.com; telephone 01928 739214.

From small beginnings to great miracles

It was November 2009 when Dr. Pauline and the team from UK thought of a great idea. It sounded great but none of us knew how it was to run but we were sure that funds could be securely obtained.

This idea was the development of a sponsorship scheme for the sick, disabled and less privileged children. I was put in charge of this sponsorship scheme, which I accepted willingly. However, I had no experience at the time of working with such children and didn't know how I was going to run the scheme and handle these children. What I was sure of was the funds because Dr. Pauline had assured me that she was to find sponsors for these very needy children.

At first, I had to call meetings involving all Wellspring staff members and I showed them how big was the task I was given. Despite my misgivings, they all believed in me and told me that I was very capable of managing such a scheme, which greatly encouraged me.

Beginning with one child, the task started...

Reaching different homes, I realised that there are truly many diseases which kill many children. However, I also saw that other factors also contributed to childhood sicknesses and deaths. All the families we work with are extremely poor, and are commonly invaded by many diseases. Imagine a very poor family, lacking all the essentials of life, having repeated illnesses.

Often such a family have no love for family members. Parents will run away from their responsibilities and end up hating their own children. As a result a chronically ill child is considered a curse to this family. The only prayers for such a child is for death so that the family is relieved of such a burden.

All the information I found about such families I shared with the other Wellspring staff. This helped us find a proper way of handling and improving these children's lives. Despite the availability of money, LOVE is the key in transforming these children's lives. This has been a very big tool in working with these children and it has helped us register very many success stories. Love is not only given to the child but also to the entire family. Through this, they all learn to trust you and start opening up to you, so giving you an avenue for solving their problems.

Imagine a child found on his/ her death bed, waiting for the last minute of her/his breath, and then you come with love. It looks awkward but trust me, it works and I have lived to testify to this. Where there is love and money is provided, we can make miracles as seen below.



Before



Now

Patricia was identified by a nurse who at one time worked with Wellspring. Patricia was dying of malnutrition, pneumonia, pulmonary tuberculosis, and advanced AIDS. She was 18 months old. When showed love and care, she recovered her health and has grown into a very happy little girl, ready for school once she finds her school fees.

Mahad

being abandoned by his own people and left in a rental house by his father, had AIDS including TB arthritis. At the age of 13 years he had no one to care for him. However, Mahad, through sponsorship and the support of Wellspring, has courageously defeated all the odds against him and this year has completed a medical laboratory course, ready to work on fellow children as a laboratory assistant.



Now



Before



Now

Emmanuel presented with hydrocephalus, cerebral palsy and severe malnutrition. He miraculously recovered from his malnutrition and is now slowly improving with regular physiotherapy.

These are just a few examples of children cared for under our sponsorship schemes. Over 154 families can testify true love and care from Wellspring through these schemes.

We are now confident that the Wellspring sponsorship schemes will continue to grow and develop and many more children will receive the life giving love and compassion provided by Wellspring and their sponsors.

In conclusion, money and love have to be employed for us to save more lives and enable children to be happy and filled with hope despite the presence of disease. Death can occur at any time in the communities but we continue struggle to prevent premature deaths of children living in poverty in Ugandan villages.

William Lubyayi

Clinical Officer and Sponsorship Manager



Now

Elizabeth developed a terrible windswept disability (a form of congenital rickets), her mother and brother having the same disabilities. Elizabeth has experienced both hatred from the community and love from Wellspring. The latter has enabled her to gain confidence, attending school, winning a home for her family and finally receiving treatment for her disability. Another courageous Ugandan child.

Elizabeth is pictured with her mother and brother Obed outside their new home.

Wellspring HIV and AIDS Clinics

For 6 years Wellspring has provided antenatal and postnatal services to pregnant mothers. Mothers infected with HIV have been identified and treated. As a result more than 80 children have been born without the disease despite their mothers being HIV+ve.

In December 2017, Wellspring was accredited to operate an ART clinic, caring for all sorts of clients infected with HIV and suffering from AIDS. All ages and sexes are seen in the clinics. Full operation and drug supply was in January 2018. We strongly believe that more and more lives are going to be saved.



Zainah

One example of a patient seen in these clinics is Zainah. She is 18 years old and is the mother of one child aged 1 year 8 months. She discovered she was infected with HIV when attending the Wellspring Children's Medical Centre where she had been taken by her father because she was falling sick very regularly. Ever since she was enrolled on ARTs she has remained very well and can now do her work normally. She gives great thanks to the Wellspring staff for the care and support they give her and her child.

Florence is 25 years old, married with 4 children. She discovered her HIV status 5 years ago when attending the Wellspring antenatal services. Her husband didn't believe the result of her blood test and took her to a number of other agencies for confirmation. Finally, they had to accept that the diagnosis was correct. The father has proved to be HIV-ve but, unlike many other fathers in Uganda, he decided to support his wife. They now have 4 healthy children, all HIV-ve.

Martin is 28 years old, HIV negative, married to Florence who is HIV+ve and a patient at the Wellspring HIV/AIDS clinic. When she discovered her HIV status Florence was very afraid because she thought Martin would abandon her. However, because she was pregnant with his child and he loved her he decided to support her and the child. The baby was born HIV-ve and they are now a happy, well adjusted family.

This report was written by Patrick Ssemanda, Wellspring SEN and midwife and leading clinician at the Wellspring HIV/AIDS clinics.



Martin



Florence, her husband and 3 of their children.

Medcare wants to thank the Wellspring staff for assisting in saving so many lives and acknowledge all their hard work and dedication which has enabled this.



A message from Canada!



My name is Claire West and I am a recent Bachelor of Science graduate of Mount Allison University in New Brunswick, Canada. I recently had the opportunity of a lifetime to travel to Uganda with Dr. Pauline Hutchison and Medcare UK.

I have always been interested in health care and I wanted to broaden my perspective about health care around the world. After arriving in Uganda, it was clear that the Ugandan children are in great need and that Medcare makes an incredible difference in the lives of many sick children.

Events to come

Up Everest without a hamstring 2018

Tough Mudder North West 8th - 9th September 2018

Team members: Jamie Partridge, Andrew Moulding, Beccy Hough, Chris & Josie Jordan, Danielle Roberts, Dave Ankers, Hannah+Richard Robinson, Matt Webster, Nicki Rogers, Richard Halliday, Rick Hutchinson, Siobhan Woods, Stuart Moon and Tim Powell. We have all signed up to do Tough Mudder North West, an 11-12 mile run through mud and other delights with many interesting obstacles along the way! Every penny donated to Medcare goes directly to Uganda to help save lives. Visit [Medcare's Just Giving](#) page to support this great team.

10k Muddy Marathon

Cameron and his aunty Hannah are running a 10k muddy marathon in September to raise funds for Medcare. See [Medcare's Just Giving](#) page to support this wonderful couple!

Medcare Charity Fair

To be held on Friday 16th November, 2-5pm, at the Frodsham Parish Hall. Details to follow.

Allo! Allo! A repeat of the very successful performance of Allo Allo by the Kingsley Players on behalf of Medcare. A cheese and wine evening with a difference. To be held at the Frodsham Parish Hall on Friday 16th November. Doors open at 7pm. Further details to follow.

Please contact Hannah or Pauline at the Medcare office for more information 01928 739214 or email admin.medcare@icloud.com

We visited the Wellspring Children's Medical Centre where we saw the extraordinary work done by the compassionate staff, notably in the physiotherapy clinic. I was struck by the impact that physiotherapy has on the quality of life of children with disabilities such as cerebral palsy. I was unaware of how crucial regular physiotherapy treatment is for children with muscular disabilities, but it is clear that the work done in the clinic is life changing for these children and their families. The costs associated with travelling to the clinic regularly is often too much for these families to afford, but sponsorship assures that these costs are covered so that these children can get the treatment they need and deserve.

We also had the privilege of seeing the opening of the Wellspring Home for Disabled Children, an orphanage run by an exceptional woman called Noeline. The love that Noeline has for all of her children can be seen in the bright smiles on the children's faces and in their vibrant personalities. It was amazing to watch the community come together to celebrate the opening of the safe and loving home for disabled children in Uganda.

One of the biggest impacts of this trip on my life is the realisation that a little can go a long way. It is unbelievable how much you can impact the life of a sick child by sponsoring them for only £25 a month. I look forward to sharing this experience with those around me and encouraging them to invest in the life of a sick Ugandan child.

Many thanks to all our wonderful supporters who have raised funds for the work of Medcare this year. A special thanks to Charlie de Nobriga...

Charlie's Race to the Stones

In 2014 I started running as a way to keep a bit fitter as I hurtled past being 30. It is fair to say that I caught the bug and in the following years I raced both a half-marathon (Bath 2015) and a marathon (Chester 2016).

At the Chester marathon I ran with a friend of mine and we decided to raise money for a charity close to his heart and his family, Medcare. I managed to raise £735, which helped support the great work they do in providing love, care and support for poverty stricken children in Uganda.

In the summer of 2017 another friend cajoled me into an even bigger challenge, running an ultra-marathon. I couldn't resist the bait and signed up to the 2018 Race to the Stones, a 100 km ultra-marathon from Lewknor to Avebury along Britain's oldest path, the Ridgeway, on 14th July.

We decided to make it particularly hard for ourselves and sign up for the non-stop running option. Whilst the physical challenge of running the race is my main motivation, it is also a fantastic opportunity to raise more money to support the work of Medcare.

Charlie has raised another £750 for Medcare. Well done on such an amazing achievement and MANY thanks.

Chairman's Letter

“From little acorns great oak trees grow.”

An oak tree can grow to be 80 feet tall and 80 feet wide, can live for well over 100 years and have extensive root systems. All of this from an acorn 1-6cm long and 0.8-4cm broad!

On observing the amazing transformations, which have taken place in the lives of many of our Ugandan children, I think the work of Medcare in Uganda over the past 14 years is rather like an acorn and an oak tree. In 2004 the idea of building a medical facility in Kamutuuzza was just that – an idea. But once that idea was voiced it began to become a reality. By 2008 the Wellspring Children's Medical Centre was first opened for clinical work, with 4 staff and approximately 6,000 children attending within the first 12 months.

But like a small 'oak tree' which had arisen out of a small 'acorn' of an idea, the work grew and flourished every year until now, 14 years later, we have a medical centre greatly commended by the Ugandan health services and the local communities, with 20,000 children coming for assistance each year. Our staffing levels have inevitably grown and many additional services have been added, such as sponsorship schemes, immunisation clinics, maternity care, AIDS clinics, physiotherapy and, more recently, the provision of a wonderful new home for 42 disabled children. Amazing! All of this has happened as a result of the amazing generosity of the Medcare supporters – for which we thank you.

As with the oak tree, I believe Medcare and Wellspring will continue to grow as the years advance; as we seek to assist more suffering children and continue to aim to provide world class paediatric healthcare for many, many years to come. This of course will only come about with sufficient funds and the Medcare Board of Trustees are working hard to seek out greater sources of income for the future work with the children. I look forward with great anticipation to seeing the continuing development of Medcare's work in Uganda in the years to come!

Meanwhile, Medcare continues to care for each individual child as they come to Wellspring for assistance, whatever their problems, backgrounds, race, religion or beliefs. Our aims have always been and will continue to be, to provide the children in the area of Uganda in which we work, with the rights of every child worldwide and to show them all how much they are loved.

May God bless you as you have blessed the children.

Pauline Hutchinson Chairman of Medcare

