

medcare newsletter

A lifeline for Ugandan children

Winter Edition | December 2023



Medcare wishes you a joyful Christmas

with thanksgiving for all that is past and hopeful anticipation for the coming year

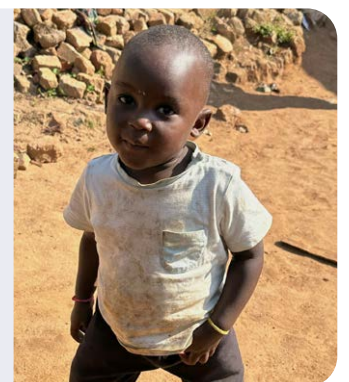
Hope is an optimistic state of mind that is based on an expectation of positive outcomes with respect to events and circumstances in one's life or the world at large. As a verb, its definitions include: "expect with confidence" and "to cherish a desire with anticipation." (Wikipedia)

According to the Holman Bible Dictionary, hope is a **"trustful expectation...the anticipation of a favourable outcome under God's guidance."** This is the basis of Medcare's hopeful anticipation for 2024.

For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. Jeremiah 29:11 (NLT)

2023 has been a year of progress, provision and hope for Medcare and the thousands of Ugandan children under our care. **Progress** in the development of the rehabilitation projects and other Wellspring services; **provision** through the support of MAG and many other Medcare supporters; leading to **hope for the future** with many more children's lives to be saved and transformed in 2024.

Hope
Outreach
Paediatric care
Empowerment



This end of year newsletter comes with reports from the various heads of departments at the Wellspring Children's Medical Centre and the Wellspring Home for Disabled Children. You will read of the developments, challenges and needs, with stories which will certainly touch your hearts and I hope provide us all with an even greater incentive to provide a new found hope for thousands more deprived, sick and needy Ugandan children, in the year ahead.

“Battling the Silent Epidemic”

Sickle Cell Disease is an important public health issue that is increasingly recognised as a substantial contributor to morbidity and early childhood mortality in sub-Saharan Africa.

Uganda is a country with one of the highest burdens of Sickle Cell Disease in the world. Over 20,000 babies are born each year with Sickle Cell Disease, it being a major cause of death in children under the age of 5 years.

The common symptoms of Sickle Cell Disease are pain, infections, acute chest syndrome, anaemia and sometimes strokes or sudden death. The children with Sickle Cell Disease cared for by the Wellspring Child Sponsorship Scheme have all been born into families experiencing serious poverty and discrimination.

In view of the prevalence in Uganda of this serious and often distressing and painful condition, seen amongst so many of the children in the Wellspring catchment area, Medcare and senior Wellspring staff are looking into the possibility of developing Sickle Cell Disease clinics at Wellspring. These clinics will assist in raising the awareness in the communities about this disease, ensuring early diagnosis and treatment, aiming to provide these children with as pain free and normal a childhood as possible, with hope for the future.

Maria Nabukeera's story...

Marrying and bearing children is the best thing any person would like to do. Children, in all situations, are the sweetest thing to have. When living in poverty, parents put all their hopes on their children, hoping that eventually they will earn money and save the family from the vicious circle of poverty.

However, all such dreams and hopes are shattered when a chronic illness invades the family. Poverty is a 'cousin' to diseases and in a poor family, diseases are very often present. The existence of disease often leads to the children's premature deaths, or leading challenging, hopeless lives.

Children bring happiness to the family but when chronic illness is present the very poor often cannot afford medical care, leading to despair and even break up of families. Sadly, and ignorantly, the child then innocently becomes a curse to his/her family. This is exactly what happen to Maria's family.

Here is her story, related by her mother.

"I was still a student when I fell in love with Maria's father. I told my mother about it, but she wouldn't give her consent, saying that I was too young to differentiate between a liar and a true lover. At that moment I was sure that he was the true love of my heart. I continued keeping it as a secret and joined a vocation school where I had to train for two years. During my second year in training, I conceived with Maria and that is when I told my mother who was responsible. Towards the end of that year, I gave birth to a bouncing baby girl whom I believed to be the uniting angel between me and my family. My husband was very excited and from that time we started living together. Because I was still happy in



Maria after her TB diagnosis

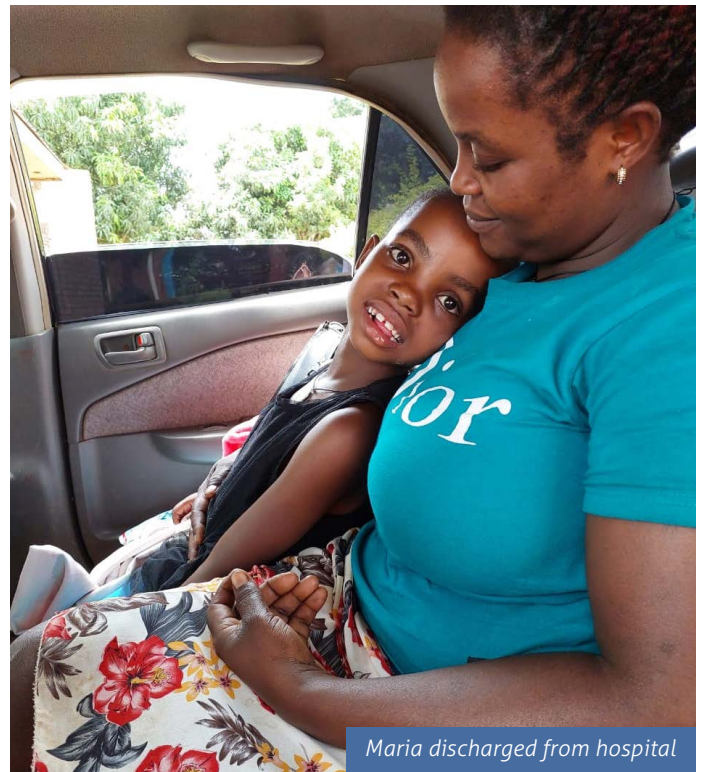
my marriage, none of my relatives talked ill of my husband. Maria was so entertaining and active during her early stages. I started planning on how I wanted to raise her and wished for her to train as a nurse when she grew up. On the 20th March 2018 when she was nearly 3 years old, Maria had the first stroke. We rushed her to the hospital thinking that it was something simple that the doctors would treat and then discharge us. Little did we know that this was to be the cause of the breakup of my little family. Maria was diagnosed with Sickle Cell Disease. She was given medication and doctors told us to keep her on regular folic acid. Her father and I treated Maria and she recovered from that stroke. However, Maria's health began to deteriorate. On the 28th May 2022, she had another stroke.

Her father then turned against us. He claimed that no one in his family ever had Sickle Cell Disease and said that Maria was therefore not his child. Eventually he left us, saying he was looking for jobs. Days became weeks, weeks became months and now months became years when he has not returned home. At first he continued to pay for our house rent but over the last 6 months these payments have stopped. I am now struggling to feed my two children and yet Maria needs a great deal of support. On the 12th September 2022 Maria had a 3rd stroke and was again admitted to hospital. This is when God provided us with a caring 'father', a father who never abandons his children when they are in need. This 'father' is Medicare, working through Wellspring Children's Sponsorship Scheme. All the medical bills we needed were provided, together with Maria's special feeding.

On the 22nd February 2023, Maria woke up very well. She dressed and I took her to Wellspring for Physiotherapy for her routine treatment programme. She appeared well during physiotherapy but shortly after the treatment, she became weak, started vomiting and began convulsing. The Wellspring medical staff gave her first aid and then referred her urgently to Masaka Hospital. In hospital Maria continued convulsing and had to be sedated. For over a week, Maria was lying in a non-responsive state, feeding was through a feeding tube and she was on oxygen therapy. At this time, I gave up. All I could do was pray for my daughter, who I had had such high hopes for as a nurse. Eventually Maria was discharged from hospital. She could recognise me but had lost her speech and could not sit on her own. I was so happy she was home again with me but once again matters became worse. She immediately developed a high fever and again began convulsing. After further investigations it was discovered that Maria had contracted TB which was in her brain.

I began to regret having ignored my mother's advice when I was younger. Through Medicare the hospital bills were paid for but what about my feelings? It is so painful for a mother seeing her child suffering and in pain, and even more difficult when you are a single mother with no income or means of support.

My daughter continues to feed through a tube and now she has completed 7 months on TB treatment. She continues to attend physiotherapy at Wellspring and her feeding, medication and travel costs are all met through the kindness of her sponsors. All I have gone through with my daughter is so painful but I have a reason to praise my God, for he has continually provided for my daughter every step of the way. I pray the He continues blessing Medicare and Maria's sponsors so that they will be able to continue supporting Maria until the day she recovers."



Maria discharged from hospital



Maria after second stroke



Maria today

Wellspring Home for Disabled Children

The Wellspring Home for Disabled Children has been developed and funded through Medicare, supporting disabled and vulnerable children, in order to realize their potential under the care of a loving home.

We have been running this home since June 2018 across Kalungu and other districts that make up Greater Masaka, in collaboration with the District Probation Officers, Police, Local Councils, and other partners.

At first we thought this would be our catchment area but the Wellspring Home for Disabled Children is the only home for disabled children in southern Uganda. Consequently, we have managed to save many abandoned children from outlying areas as well.

Many people in our communities see disabled children as a curse and, unfortunately, our government is not committed in addressing the plight of children with disabilities. However, the Wellspring Home is committed to ensure that children with disabilities lead dignified lives and enjoy all the benefits that any other normal children receive. This commitment is seen in our efforts to save and protect such children, aiming to ensure their developmental rights which are the rights of all children worldwide. We wish to see children with disabilities reaching their fullest potential, through loving care, medical assistance and education. We have 25 children in full time education, with three girls provided this year with vocational training, which they will complete in December.



Stories from the Wellspring Home for Disabled Children

This year we also managed to save five disabled children who were totally abandoned...



Mathias Dwamukama

Mathias is 5 years old. He has severe cerebral palsy. He doesn't talk and has delayed milestones. He was abandoned at Ruharo Mission Hospital in Mbarara district by an adult woman at around 2pm one day. She entered the hospital, put the child on a bed, excused herself and has not been seen since. All efforts to find his family were in vain. The hospital had no capacity to care for this child and eventually we received a call from the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development on 6th February 2023 seeking help to place Mathias in the home for further management. On 8th February we went to Mbarara municipal court for a court order which allows us to take care of Mathias. He is now settled in the Home, doing well and attends physiotherapy at Wellspring daily.

Anitah Nassuna

Anitah is 2 years old. She was abandoned in a house, on her own, by an unknown person. The community heard a child crying and found a disabled child alone in the house. They took her to the police, who referred them to the Probation Officer, who brought her to the Wellspring Home for help. She was severely malnourished, very sick and disabled. After spending 2 weeks in hospital, she settled into the Home with Noeline and the other children. She is now doing well and has started daily physiotherapy.



Isaac Kabaru

Isaac is 10 years old and physically disabled. He was abandoned in a wheelchair near Wakiso police station at night, and found by a police officer on duty early in the morning. No one recognized Isaac or knew who his family were. He had a document on him with his name written on it. On 5th July we received a call from the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development asking for Isaac's placement at the home, as they continue with their further investigations. Isaac is now doing well, he is safe and secure and attends Wellspring physiotherapy daily.

Mukisa Abdu Malik

Abdu is 6 months old. He was abandoned on the road near a trading centre. Very early in the morning, as people were going by, they saw a baby sleeping on the pavement. It appeared that he had spent the night there and had cried so much he could no longer cry. He was taken to the police but all efforts to find his family, through radio announcements, were in vain. He was referred to the Probation Office, who took him to the Wellspring Home for help. At this time Abdu was very sick and had to spend a month in hospital. He is now living with Noeline but he is still often unwell with regular fevers. Wellspring continues to monitor his progress.





Esther, Cathy and Gift

These three girls were abandoned in a restaurant by persons unknown. They are very loving, innocent girls, and are all deaf and mute. We are uncertain if they are sisters or just friends. The restaurant attendant took them to the Probation Officer in Mubende district, who came to the Wellspring Home for Disabled Children pleading for help. We discovered that they were also all epileptic. They are now happy and content in the home, receive daily medication for their epilepsy and are learning sign language so they can communicate with others. Three young lives saved and transformed.

Immaculate Ahimbisibwe



Immaculate was 6 months old with hydrocephalus when she first came to the Wellspring Home. She was abandoned by her biological mother in Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital immediately after birth, when she realized that the baby had a big head. She excused herself and disappeared. The nurses took care of her for six months but eventually took her to court. The court handed her to us on 6th July. On 8th July Immaculate developed high fevers and started vomiting. We took her to Villa Maria hospital for further management. She was diagnosed with severe acute malnutrition and pneumonia. Sadly, after 2 days she died. May her soul rest in internal peace.

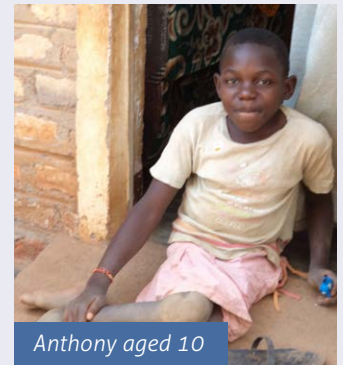
Children with disabilities face a lot of serious challenges - stigmatization and rejection and an inability to meet basic needs such as medical care and education. These day-to-day struggles affect their ability to reintegrate into society and enjoy peace like any other normal children. Without doubt, there is much still to be done by us all to ensure that such children are loved, care for and accepted into local communities.

Anthony's story...

"I feel I am still dreaming about my life today. God has brought me a long way. My own family discriminated against me. They hated and abandoned me thinking I was totally hopeless because of my disability. I began hating myself and asking a lot of questions about why among all my siblings I was the only one disabled.

But God is good! He brought people who believed in me, empowered me, raised me and encouraged me to take up a career. I can now make books and all kinds of clothes; I am loved and valued in my community because of what am doing. I can now see a bright future ahead of me. I promise I will attempt to empower all discriminated disabled children and stand and support women such as Mummy Noeline, in whatever way I can, to raise children like me."

(Anthony was taken to Noeline's home at the age of 7 years, suffering from TB spine. In 2018 she, together with the other children living with Noeline, moved into the Wellspring Home for Disabled Children. Despite spinal surgery Anthony never regained the use of her legs and is now wheelchair bound. Despite all her troubles, Anthony has developed into a beautiful, gentle young lady, content and fully trusting God for her future. She is a shining example to us all.)



Anthony aged 10



Anthony today

Businje Allen Wellspring Social Worker and Home Warden

Wellspring Laboratory Update 2023

It is a blessing to have a laboratory at Wellspring and we thank all the effort put in by Medcare to ensure the smooth running of this department throughout the year.



Yusuf and John Mary working in the lab

Originally, the catchment area for Wellspring laboratory services was the Kalungu District only. However, the area has now expanded to include Masaka and Mpigi Districts.

From January to October this year the Wellspring laboratory has served 10,766 clients, the majority tested for malaria. We also have an increasing number of clients on ARTs (HIV drugs), following testing for HIV/AIDS. Such diagnoses are essential in fighting the spread of this disease and reducing the morbidity and mortality rates in Ugandan children with HIV/AIDS.

But in this article allow me to elaborate about the Haemoglobin Estimation Test. This test, used commonly at Wellspring, measures the haemoglobin in a child's blood circulation. Haemoglobin, found in red blood cells, is an essential component of blood, which is responsible for transportation of oxygen from the lungs into the tissues and other organs, as well as transporting carbon dioxide from the tissues to the lungs. A significant reduction in haemoglobin

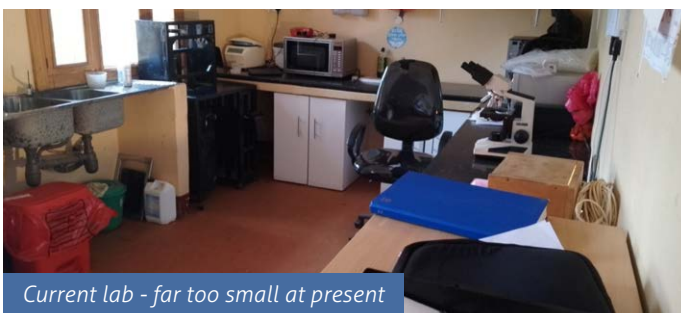
can be life threatening. At the Wellspring laboratory we carry out a significant number of Haemoglobin Tests, particularly with children suffering from Sickle Cell Disease, children with high malaria parasitaemia and pregnant mothers. It is a test which has saved many children's lives. Although this is a simple test, it is rarely carried out in local health facilities, both private and government-aided facilities, and is more expensive than an average Ugandan can afford.

In 2024 we anticipate the expansion of the laboratory, equipping it with the relevant machines to carry out many different but essential tests. All over the world there has been an increase in non-communicable diseases, both in adults and in children. Further development of the Wellspring laboratory will help in the management of these diseases, as well as a reduction in referral of the Wellspring patients to other laboratory facilities, whose fees are often unaffordable to many families living in our local communities. Development of the laboratory will also continue to help in the monitoring of children being treated for HIV/AIDS, Sickle Cell Disease and various non-communicable diseases.

God willing, funds will be made available in the New Year to enable the expansion of this essential medical service to sick children in Uganda.

Kawooya Yusuf

Laboratory Technician; Wellspring Children's Medical Centre, Kamutuuza



Current lab - far too small at present

The Wellspring Welfare Fund Project

The Welfare Fund Project has saved the lives of several children in 2023. Many parents bring their children to Wellspring when they have lost all hope to save their child's life.

Many parents bring their children to Wellspring when they have lost all hope to save their child's life. However, through providing them with the right treatment, necessary referrals and constant follow up, together with financial support, so many children have been saved.

The most challenging conditions this year have been severe anaemia, severe malnutrition, HIV and social constraints, congenital abnormalities, among others. Most of these conditions require maximum attention and rehabilitation for the children to save their lives. Here are four examples of children helped through the Wellspring Welfare Project:



Joelia Nalinya was neglected by her mother. She then lived with her father who couldn't feed her properly. She was brought to Wellspring by a relative who is now taking good care of her. She is now able to crawl and stand. The Welfare project continues to support Joelia with hospital upkeep, transport and nutritional support.



Evelyn Najjumba Babirye and her twin brother were diagnosed with Sickle Cell Disease at the age of 7 years when they attended school. Evelyn developed a severe crisis, resulting in a stroke. As a result of the stroke, Evelyn became disabled and was referred to Wellspring for physiotherapy. Further assessment revealed she was also seriously anaemic. Evelyn was provided with upkeep on referring her to the Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital in Kampala.



Nalugo Stella presented with swelling of the back protruding from the spine and an inability to use her lower limbs. An x-ray was done, and TB of the spine was diagnosed. She is now on Anti TB medication and is progressing very well.



Before

After

Sam Kyagaba was brought into Wellspring in August 2022. After he had been to different hospitals seeking medical help. Due to social problems at his grandparent's home, his grandfather denied Sam the drugs he so urgently required to survive. He was often denied food and was seriously neglected. On being seen at Wellspring he was immediately enrolled onto the Welfare Fund Project and given the drugs and food he needed. His mother was encouraged to take good care of him, and was provided with constant monitoring and social support. The challenge is that the mother is a teenager with two children and no source of income. After being cared for through the Wellspring Welfare Fund Project Sam is now able to walk on his own, is beginning to develop normally and achieving his developmental milestones.

Nabasirye Caroline Wellspring In Charge

Help with no expectations in return

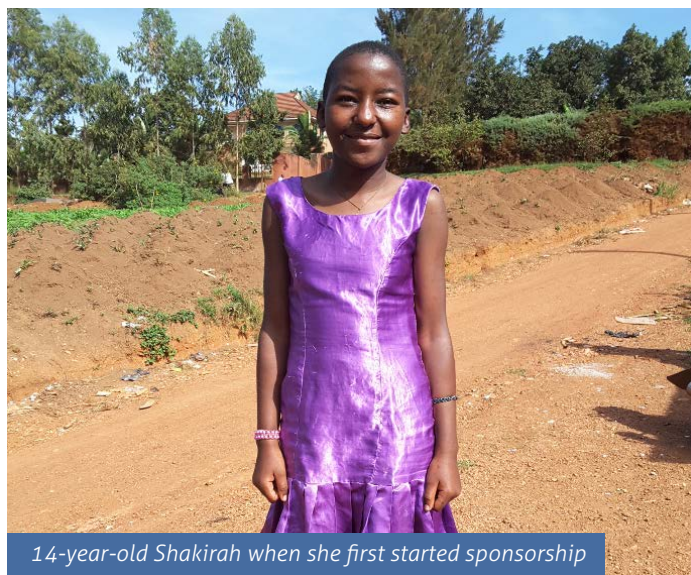
It can be disappointing when you do well but receive no praise. Some people who give help to others can be disappointed when they receive no thanks – and many may vow never to help again.

Here at the Wellspring Children's Medical Centre, many lives have been saved and seen to prosper without hearing anybody asking for a reward for saving children's lives.

This is particularly the case with the Wellspring Child Sponsorship Scheme. It is our practice that a sponsor for a sick, poor and less privileged child becomes directly connected to his/her child and are informed of their progress. This is especially the case when sponsors come to Uganda and are taken straight to child's home, or a representative from Medcare visits a child on the sponsors' behalf. For 14 years now, lives have been saved and changed for good.

Many children, who the world had neglected and sentenced to death, have been saved through the Wellspring Child Sponsorship scheme. All who work on this scheme, both sponsors, Medcare and Wellspring staff, expect no reward. A young life saved and transformed is reward enough for us all.

Since January 2023, over 200 lives have been cared for through this scheme and we have seen some graduate to a better life. In the world, it is not common to see someone saving a child's life, educating it and finally give him/her a vocation for continued sustainability. But this is what we strive towards for all the children registered on the Wellspring Sponsorship Scheme.



14-year-old Shakirah when she first started sponsorship



Shakirah at her graduation

In 2023 we have seen Shakirah Namwanje graduating as a Medical Laboratory Assistant. She graduated as the best academic student in her year.

When she was 14 years old she was taken on by us after seeing how she was struggling with her health after her father abandoned her family. He left following Shakirah's diagnosis with HIV, and denied she was his daughter. With support from Wellspring, Shakira managed to initiate her mother on to ARVs which she had refused many years before. Our first task was to stabilize Shakirah's life and then send her to school. After secondary school, Shakirah had a dream to save other lives and she opted to do so by joining a college for health professionals. With our support, she graduated this year and now, herself a health professional, is saving the lives of others, as a medical laboratory assistant.

This year, 15 children were given a vocation and then graduated from the scheme at the age of 18 years. A total of 182 children are continuing with their sponsorship to date and the health of all is now stable despite their chronic illnesses and/or disabilities.

We are more than willing to rescue more lives if more people come forward to support our cause. There are many children who are dying due to poverty and a chronic illness or a disability. Born with such a condition, in our communities, is a direct passport to stigma and abandonment, and even death.

There are presently 27 children on the sponsorship waiting list and hundreds more we are yet to meet, desperate for help. **PLEASE HELP US TO SAVE MORE LIVES IN THE YEAR AHEAD. THANK YOU.**

William Lubyayi

Wellspring Medical Coordinator & Sponsorship Founder

Amazing work in the Physiotherapy Clinic

Throughout this year, we have been aiming at starting our Community Based Rehabilitation Programme (CBR) in the Kalungu District of Uganda, as well as to continue serving the precious special needs children visiting the clinic.



The new physiotherapy van on its first journey into the villages on the CBR project

We are pleased to announce that the CBR programme began on 17th November with our introductory outreaches to 4 station centres.

Wellspring Paediatric Physiotherapy Centre

Wellspring physiotherapists work with children and their families to identify movement and functional difficulties. We aim to help the child to manage their physical symptoms and achieve functional mobility. We assess, treat and advise on exercises and activities which the child can do with their family and in their community.

We help children to achieve optimal physical development with our specialist knowledge in movement, development, and conditions that are likely to affect the baby and growing child and treat from one day old babies to adolescents.

Physiotherapy workload

With our highly developed hands-on skills, which we use with a big dash of fun, creativity, and playfulness, we continue to develop individualised therapy programmes for each of our clients. Throughout 2023 we have seen a variety of cases ranging from:

- Babies and children who are slower to achieve their motor milestones e.g. babies who are late to learn to sit, crawl or walk.

- Babies and children who are using unusual patterns to move their bottom shuffling or toe walking.
- Children who are having difficulty with motor skills, such as jumping/hopping or ball skills.
- Toddlers and babies who are clumsy or uncoordinated.
- Children following an injury or trauma who requires rehabilitation to get back to their best.
- Children with rumination (negative thinking resulting in emotional distress).
- Children with spina bifida, Down's syndrome, clubbed feet and limb deficiencies, respiratory conditions, acute injuries, brachial plexus injuries, torticollis.

Our recent developments

We have extended our physiotherapy service deliveries to the villages of Kalungu District. Outreach programmes run every week to 4 different health centres, with emphasis on early detection/screening of disability, preventative care, nutritional rehabilitation, rehabilitation gadgets, and stigma reduction through mass sensitisation. Working with parents and carers, teachers, nurses, social workers, speech and language therapists, psychologists, orthotics and dieticians.

Examples of children attending the Wellspring physiotherapy department in 2023



Kiiza won the battle of 'clubfoot'!

Kiiza Ibrahim was brought to us at the age of 4 months with neglected clubbed feet. He has gone through an amazing journey of development and correction of his clubbed feet. After a series of serial casting, tenotomy and boot wear, Kizza's feet now look very good and he is beginning to develop normally.

Today Kizza wears his "boots and bar" (an apparatus that keeps the feet turned out and prevents reoccurrence) at night time and nap time and will continue to do so until around the age of 5 years. He returns to the orthopaedic team for periodic checks to be sure he is maintaining the amazing changes in his fast growing feet.

At one year of age he now weighs 12kg and his Mum describes him as a "little pistol" She says, "He loves to figure out how things work, so we call him our little engineer!"

Nakato is a motivation for her mother because of the amazing things she does despite her hydrocephalus and spina bifida

"My daughter was born with hydrocephalus and spina bifida. She received surgery at CURE (neurosurgical hospital) and was advised to begin physiotherapy rehabilitation. We have been here at Wellspring for over 3 years and it is of late that she now starts to control her head and sit without support for a short time. However, she still has poor bowel and bladder control which the physiotherapists try to address during the sessions she attends every week.

I am optimistic that my child will be able to sit, crawl and at least walk with crutches and go to school with her twin. I am very grateful to the physios and the "mzungus" (white people) who enable the work of the clinic to run." Nakato's mother.



Ethan wants to become a medical doctor and treat the physiotherapists who made him walk!

Ethan is a brilliant, very motivated 5 year old school boy who has attended the physiotherapy clinics and Wellspring since he was 9 months old.

At around 4 months of age, Ethan's mother noticed that he wasn't meeting his developmental milestones. By the time he was 6 months old he was diagnosed with cerebral palsy and his muscular development was impaired.

Physiotherapy, Ethan's own determination and that of his parents, brought quality of life beyond what his mother had previously thought possible. He has fully attained independent walking, performs most of the ADLs (activities of daily living) such as dressing, and he is doing very well at school. He continues to visit the clinic during his holidays to continue to improve his core strength and have a better gait.



Erick is an inspiration to most of our clients who visit the clinic

Erick's walking came much earlier than we expected. Following therapy, with an emphasis on improving his hip abductor and adductor length and strength, he has been able to pull himself to standing and walk with independence for as long as he wants. His knees however still knock which has affected his dynamic balance.

We continue taking him through regular therapy to reinforce the milestone he has so far gained. Erick is a motivated child and his future is promising.

A bright future for the Wellspring Physiotherapy Unit

Such successes within the framework of the physiotherapy programme will not only increase the self-reliance and mobility of children, but also play an important role in the formation of right attitudes and perceptions of them in society. Disability should not hide anyone's talent and isolate them from society.

Overall, paediatric physiotherapy focuses on maximising a child's physical potential, enhancing their independence and participation in daily activities, and supporting their overall development. Many thanks to the rehabilitation team and Wellspring staff.

Ibrahim Ssengendo & Pascal Muhindo

Wellspring Senior Physiotherapists



More Medcare news...

Our thanks to the wonderful Medcare team who went to visit the Medical Centre in July. Food, bedding and clothing were distributed to desperately needy village homes, medical advice was provided in the clinics, including physiotherapy, games were played with the disabled children at the Wellspring Home for Disabled Children and many useful administrative meetings were held, giving us guidance for the future. Thanks to Mike (Medcare Chairman), Becca, Amelia (age 14 years) and Pauline.



We are very saddened to have to report the death of **Rogers Tabula** following a serious road traffic accident. Rogers attended Bexhill High School in Kamutuza. On leaving school he studied to be a laboratory assistant. When he qualified he was employed by Wellspring and was responsible for setting up the new Wellspring laboratory in 2008. He was a dedicated, hard working member of staff during the time he worked at Wellspring and was much loved and respected. The Medcare Board of Trustees, together with all those from the UK who knew Rogers, send their sincere condolences to Roger's wife and family. May he rest in peace.



William Lubyayi

Congratulations to **William Lubyayi** who has been appointed to Wellspring's new post as Medical Coordinator. May God richly bless you in this important role, as you lead the Wellspring Children's Medical Centre into new developments in 2024.

Medcare welcomes two new members of Wellspring staff: **Doreen Shida**, Wellspring's Finance Assistant and **Florence Nantuuwa**, Wellspring Triage Assistant.



Doreen Shida



Florence Nantuuwa

Our grateful thanks



The Medcare Tough Mudder team

The Medcare Board of Trustees wish to send our grateful thanks to our 2023 partners, Samaritan's Purse and Manchester Airports Group.

- Samaritan's Purse have continued to support Medcare's work with disabled Ugandan children, living with Noeline Nakaagwa at the Wellspring Home for Disabled Children; providing them with additional food, clothing, school and medical requirements. As a result of this support the children at the Home are thriving and many more abandoned, disabled children have received help this year.
- MAG has, once again, partnered with Medcare and in 2023 has provided funds to assist Medcare in maintaining sustainability. With the rising costs of all medicines, a gradually increasing number of children coming to Wellspring for assistance, the need to add new members of staff and ensure all salaries are fair and appropriate - particularly considering the seriously rising costs of living in Uganda this year - these funds have been invaluable to Medcare.
- The wonderful gift of over £500,000 from the Emmanuel Cohen Legacy has enabled the proposed development of the new Wellspring Rehabilitation Unit to cater for the many needs of hundreds of children suffering from cerebral palsy and similar disabilities. This will be a lifesaving project for many children. Tenders are to be received before Christmas, provided by four local Ugandan

building firms and it is anticipated that the building of this unit will begin early in the New Year. Our thanks go to Roman Strzala and his colleagues, who have prepared all the architectural drawings and Mark Bradley and Thomas Hoogendoorn, who are acting as project managers on behalf of Medcare in the UK.

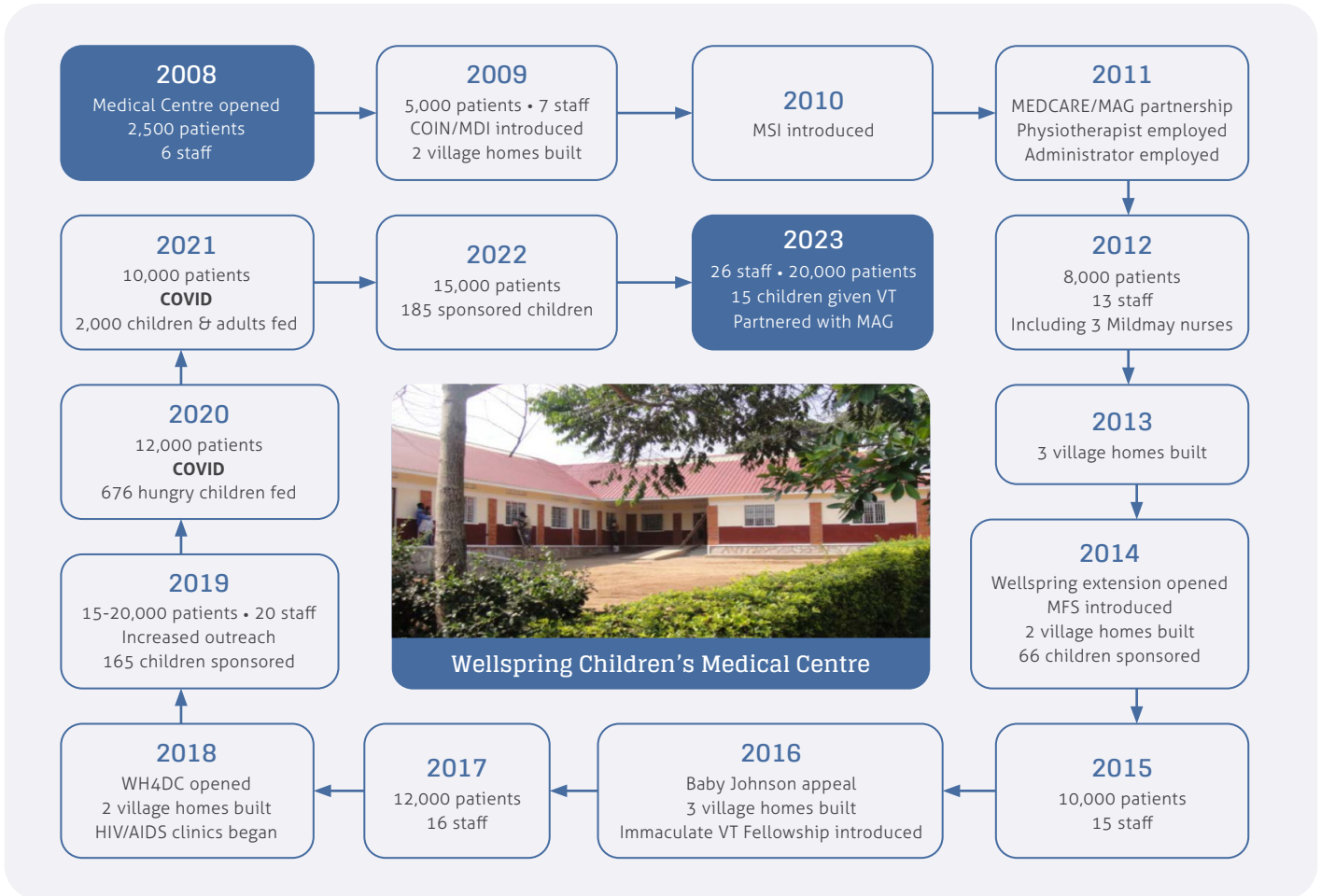
- We also wish to acknowledge the continued generous support of the Grace Charitable Trust and the Sir Donald and Lady Edna Wilson Charitable Trust, together with Kings Free Methodist Church, Brook Chapel and Mount Chapel, Salford.
- Medcare's Sponsors and Supporters have provided generously to the work of Medcare for over 15 years. These funds have enabled Medcare, through Wellspring, to save thousands of children's lives, saving hundreds in this year alone. Our grateful thanks to you all.
- Thanks to the wonderful 15 strong Medcare team who undertook to run the gruelling Tough Mudder course at Cholmonley Castle, Cheshire, on 10th September. Five of these were children aged 4-8 years competing in the mini Mudder race. Between them they raised over £3,000 for Medcare. Well done and very many thanks to you all!

London Stansted Airport is to host film screenings for charity in its JetParks car park for a week in December. They include Christmas classics Elf and Home Alone, as well as Dirty Dancing, Grease and Top Gun: Maverick. All proceeds will go to Medcare, Magic Breakfast and the Children's Society, MAG's partner charities.



From our Founder

I first visited Uganda in November 2004. During that visit I was made aware of the very great needs of many Ugandan children, particularly those sick or disabled and living in extreme poverty.



Since that first short visit I have seen Wellspring develop and grow out of all proportion to what I had first imagined. When the medical centre opened in 2008 we employed 6 staff and cared for 2,500 children, suffering from malaria, HIV/AIDS, TB, Sickle Cell Disease and other diseases, and many with physical disabilities.

Today, the medical centre is twice its original size, we have a beautiful home for 42 disabled children, and the prospect of a new rehabilitation unit in 2024, caring for hundreds of children suffering from cerebral palsy and similar conditions. Our loyal, dedicated staff now number 26, who work as a team to ensure first class medical and social care is provided to all children who come to Wellspring for assistance - approximately 20,000 children in 2023. It is estimated that over 250,000 children have received life transforming and life saving care since Wellspring opened in 2008.

All the work of Medcare has been underpinned by the very great love God has for all children, particularly those suffering and abused. This love, together with the generosity and compassion of Medcare's partners, and many supporters and sponsors, has enabled the work of Medcare in Uganda to be sustained and developed for the past 16 years. As we look into the New Year I am sure we all 'cherish the desire' to save and transform the lives of thousands more desperately needy Ugandan children - and with the help of God, I believe we will see our desires come to fruition in 2024.

Wishing you all a Happy Christmas and a Peaceful and Blessed New Year.

Pauline Hutchinson Medcare Founder and Trustee