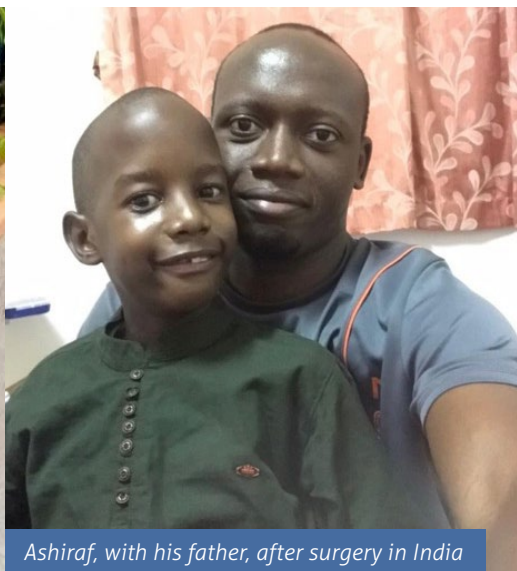


Love in action: Working together to save a child's life

In June 2021 one of Medcare's sponsors was in telephone contact with Pauline Hutchinson. During their conversation mention was made of a young Ugandan boy, called Ashiraf, who was born with Fallots Tetralogy, a serious congenital heart condition.



Ashiraf before surgery



Ashiraf, with his father, after surgery in India



As a result of this conversation Medcare was put in touch with the charity SaltPeter Trust, a Christian charity working with needy communities in urban and rural Uganda to alleviate extreme poverty. This charity was working with doctors in Uganda to try to organise urgent cardiac surgery for Ashiraf, and to raise the necessary funds.

Medcare was able to introduce the SaltPeter Trust to the US charity Morning Star, the charity who worked with Medcare in 2016 to enable the surgery in India for 'baby' Johnson, who also suffered from Fallot's Tetralogy. Johnson's remarkable story and miraculous outcome can be seen on the Medcare website.

The SaltPeter Trust was successful in raising funds for Ashiraf's surgery. In November 2021, with the help of Morning Star, he was flown to the Naryana Hospital in Bangalore, India where he successfully underwent cardiac surgery. He returned home with his mother to Uganda a

changed child and further reports of his health are very encouraging.

How good it is to work together to help save the life of a child such as Ashiraf! With so many needy children worldwide, it is essential that we work together with like-minded organisations and individuals, sharing our expertise, contacts and resources to save and transform the lives of children.

*"Two people are better off
than one, for they can help
each other succeed."*

Ecclesiastes 4 v 9 (NLT)

Love endures through every circumstance

Penina's tears for Denis

In the January 2020 newsletter the story of Penina, grandmother to Alex and Denis, was told. We learned then of her struggles in her care of 2 very handicapped children, both unwanted by anyone else. Alex was blind with serious cerebral palsy, and Denis suffers with cerebral palsy, epilepsy and HIV.

For most of her life Penina has poured love into the lives of Alex and Denis, showing great fortitude and a determination to provide them with the best life she could give them. She was assisted in this aim by the Wellspring Child Sponsorship Scheme and the caring Wellspring staff. Sadly, in 2015, Alex died at home at the age of 15 years. But Penina continued to pour all her love into the care of Denis.

Denis is now 18 years of age. Over the past 12 months his condition has deteriorated, with loss of appetite and consequent loss of weight. During a recent visit to Penina's home the Wellspring Sponsorship Manager, William, was shocked by Denis's general condition. He appeared very malnourished and was unable to do anything for himself. Apparently all he did all day was lie down, often on an old settee, with his head on his grandmother's lap as she attempted to feed him. When advised to allow Wellspring to admit him into hospital for treatment of his malnutrition, she burst into tears and admitted that she is now too frail to lift him or manage his daily needs.



It is heartbreaking to see such love and despair in her face as she looks at her much loved grandson, as seen in the photograph below. This brave woman has given her life to her grandchildren and now hasn't the strength to carry on alone. On discussion with Medcare it has been decided to extend the sponsorship of Denis until he is 21 years old, with the kind agreement of his sponsor. As well as providing food for Denis and any medication he needs, his sponsorship funds will be used to pay a caring neighbor to assist Penina in the lifting and general daily care of Denis. He has been admitted to the malnutrition unit at Kitovu Hospital in an attempt to address his present feeding problems. Denis' future is uncertain, but with these plans in place we pray that the time he and Penina now have together will be filled with love and not despair and joy instead of hopelessness.



Denis before Christmas. His condition has deteriorated very quickly



Thank you Patrick

Medcare wishes to acknowledge the invaluable work undertaken by Patrick Ssemenda, who worked at Wellspring as an enrolled comprehensive nurse for over 10 years. He has had to retire from his work at Wellspring on health grounds and we wish him all the very best for the future.

Love never gives up

2 remarkable grandmothers. Teopista's story...

Teopista is a Ugandan grandmother, caring for 13 grandchildren and her adult epileptic daughter. One grandchild, Gift, is sponsored through the Wellspring Child Sponsorship Scheme.

All her life she has been very poor and has struggled to keep her family fed and clothed. None of her children or grandchildren have ever been to school. Sadly, her own children grew up unemployed, uncaring and disruptive in the communities in which they lived. One by one they brought their own children to Teopista, because they could not provide for them.

This family of 15 people live in a house made of bricks and mud, with holes all over the walls and the roof and a door which does not close properly. There are 4 small rooms in this house and all the family sleep on the bare, earth floor with only rags to cover them. Although Teopista tries her best to keep her house clean and well swept, sanitation is poor, with no pit latrine for the use of the family. Water has to be carried in jerry cans from a distance away, this usually being a job for the children.

Gift is seen as very fortunate in the family because of his sponsorship. He is 8 years old and was born with HIV. Every month Gift and his grandmother attend the Wellspring 'COIN' day, where all sponsored children are given their supply of food. They carry home 6kg of rice, 4kg of sugar, 4kg of soya porridge and 16 eggs. Although this food is meant to feed Gift for a month to help him with his general health and HIV, inevitably all the children receive a share of this food. Small amounts of the food are kept for Gift each day for a month, so that he can take his medicines regularly. However, after one week the only food left is that used by Gift and for the rest of the month they go hungry, often going without food for over 24 hours. The older boys and girls try to find jobs 'digging' in the fields. They are desperate to find work so that they can feed all the other children. One 16-year-old boy has begged Wellspring to find him some work or training, so that he can be of use to his family.



Teopista with Gift and other grandchildren

Teopista's love and care for all the children, despite her poverty and struggle to survive, is remarkable. She is just one of many such grandparents in Uganda selflessly demonstrating her love for the children in her care and showing perseverance in the face of unimaginable poverty.



Gift with some of his cousins

Love never gives up

2 remarkable grandmothers. Margaret's story...



Margaret and some of her grandchildren

Margaret is another grandmother living in extreme poverty, caring for 10 grandchildren.

This family live in a four roomed house, infested with bed bugs and fleas. They too have very little bedding, what they have being little more than rags. This house is built on swampy ground so once again a pit latrine cannot be dug. Instead, they use a semi permanent latrine which floods during the rainy season. A kind neighbor, on seeing Margaret struggling to feed her children, gave her permission to farm a small piece of his land so that she can grow plants to feed the children. She spends all day every day in the fields trying to grow crops and protect them from monkeys. Normally the children eat one meal a day, usually in the evening, with the left overs used to feed the very young the following morning.

One of Margaret's grandchildren, Trevor, is sponsored through the Wellspring Sponsorship Scheme. He is 11 years old and was born HIV+ve. Despite the struggles and difficulties at home he is growing and developing and has a suppressed viral load, a testament to the fact that Margaret takes care that he receives the food he needs daily to enable him to take his medicines regularly.



A bedroom in Margaret's house

Despite Margaret's struggles she thanks her sponsor for all he has done for Trevor and asks God to greatly bless him. A woman of great faith and love for her children.

The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated the problems encountered by grandparents such as Teopista and Margaret. Many of those who were poor before the lockdown in Uganda are now starving, jobs are scarce and many adults have left their villages, trying to find some form of employment elsewhere. As a result, grandparent led households are growing in numbers, children and the elderly left to survive as best they can.

Wellspring graduates for 2021

In 2021 9 children 'graduated' from the Wellspring Child Sponsorship Scheme

All have been supported through this scheme for a number of years and those, who are able, have received vocational training to enable them to obtain a living as they progress into adult life. Those who are unable to undertake such training have been supplied with a gift of a cow, to provide a form of sustainable income for the future.

Our congratulations and very best wishes for the future go to:



Susan Namirimo



Margaret Namugerwa



Fred Kimera



Eva Namugerwa



Jackson Tusubira



Faisal Ssemanganda



Swale Muwonge



Muminu Tamukedde



Pauline Nassolo

Love never loses faith

2021 report from the Wellspring Sponsorship Manager,
William Lubyayi and Social Worker, Allen Businje



It was in December 2019, when COVID-19 broke out in China and later spread to the entire World including Uganda. The government came up with preventive measures and different directives to follow in order to mitigate the virus. Little did we know that these directives would have serious consequences on the vulnerable children in the communities.

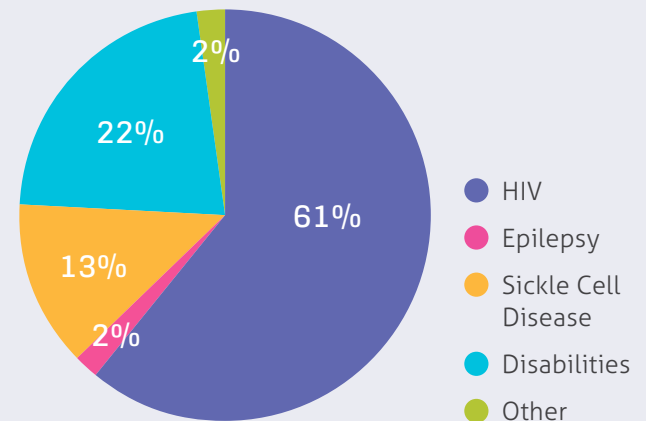
Domestic violence rose to a high level, women and children suffering physically and psychologically. Grandmothers have been left with many grandchildren because their parents split up or lost their jobs. Many of the children's guardians are single mothers or elderly grandmothers, who don't earn any income and depend on subsistence farming. The resulting reduced income and increased day to day costs as children remained at home, put serious financial strain on many families.

School lockdown also contributed to the suffering. When at school most children received at least a cup of porridge every day but during lockdown, which lasted nearly 2 years, the children stayed at home where food became less available and many children only ate one meal every other day.

With malnutrition on the increase, together with gender-based violence, child labour and teenage pregnancies, Ugandan children are faced with added dangers and difficulties in the coming year.

During 2021 all 188 sponsored children were visited in their homes, with particular note taken of their living conditions.

Reasons for sponsorship

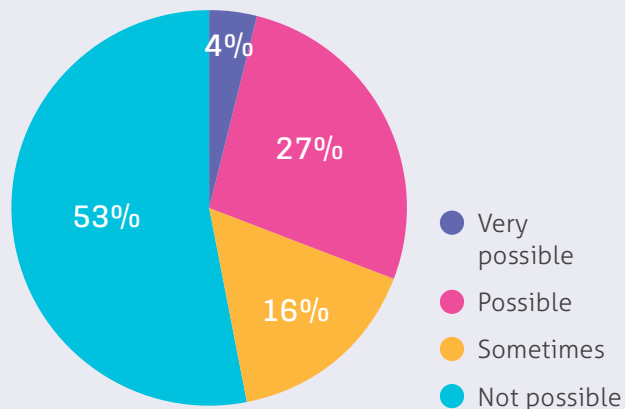


Housing

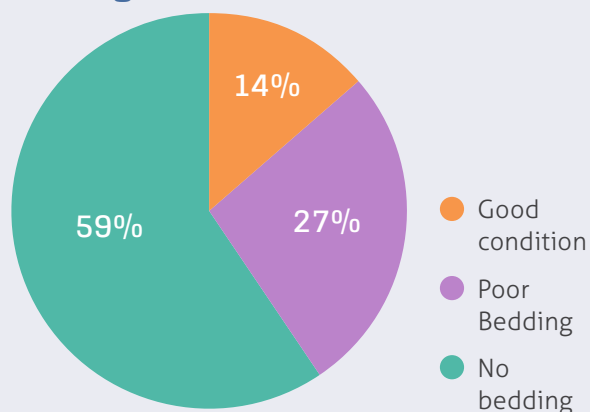
48 families have no home of their own; 43 rent, at rates which many cannot afford, and 5 move from house to house, relying on well wishers allowing them to use their properties temporarily.

In addition, the type and quality of the homes were observed with particular note of toilet facilities and water sources. 20% had either no toilet or toilets which were collapsing; 40% had either poor or no kitchens; 35% fetched their water from unhygienic open wells; and 86% do not have any form of rubbish pit.

Possibility of 2 meals a day



Bedding



It can clearly be seen when looking at the above figures, many of the presently sponsored children are still suffering from hunger and living in unsanitary conditions. However, despite all of these challenges the majority of the children are thriving and those with HIV are adhering well to their drugs and have suppressed viral loads. In the villages there are many other families suffering at this time. We pray that more sponsors may be found to save and transform many more young lives.

We offer our thanks to all the children's sponsors for caring for a Ugandan child.



Fund raising 2021

Despite the restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Medcare has received gifts and donations through out 2021 to assist us in our work in Uganda. Our grateful thanks go in particular to the Grace Charitable Trust, Sir Donald and Lady Edna Wilson Charitable Trust, Inner Wheel, Mount Chapel and Samaritan's Purse for their generous donations and support.

As reported in our last newsletter, funds were raised at the Frodsham Festival in the Park and the Coco's Family Fun Day - in August 2021. In addition, Medcare was able to once again run their annual Christmas Fair in Frodsham Parish Hall, where over £700 was raised.

Our sincere thanks also go to Manchester Airports Group (MAG) who raised a wonderful £10,000 for Medcare at their annual Golf Day.

Fund raising will continue in 2022 - details of events will be sent to all supporters of Medcare and be advertised on social media and the Medcare website www.medcare.org.uk

Love is always hopeful

Community Based Rehabilitation



'The availability of accessible and affordable rehabilitation is necessary for many people with health conditions to remain as independent as possible, to participate in education, to be economically productive, and fulfill meaningful life roles.' (WHO)

Community based Rehabilitation (CBR) is a community development strategy, initiated by WHO, that aims at enhancing the lives of persons with disabilities (PWDs) within their community. It is a multi-sectoral approach working to improve the equalisation of opportunities and social inclusion of people with disabilities while combating the perpetual cycle of poverty and disability.

CBR is implemented through the combined efforts of PWDs, their families and communities, and relevant government and non-government health, education, vocational, social and other services.

Wellspring's multidisciplinary team consists of 2 qualified Ugandan physiotherapists, a social worker and an orthopaedic medical officer. We also partner with Mbarara University to offer internship placements to students enrolled in disability-related courses, which helps to raise awareness for disability and build a more inclusive society within Uganda.

Our main goal is to ensure children with disabilities (CWDs) have access to equal opportunities and can thrive without stigma and discrimination in their communities, using a holistic, community-based approach, which includes:

- **provision of specialist therapy services,**
- **improving the nutritional status of CWDs suffering from malnutrition,**
- **provision of essential epilepsy assessment and medication,**

- **providing training to raise awareness of disability amongst community members,**
- **providing support to caregivers through parent education and peer support groups,**
- **providing training to healthcare workers and teachers**
- **providing economic empowerment training to caregivers of CWDs.**

Wellspring has been delivering CBR on a small scale across 7 districts over the past 8 years, reaching more than 1,000 children with a wide range of physical, intellectual and communication disabilities. This, however, is estimated to be less than 5% of CWDs in the region. This includes partnering with village health workers and local health centres, by providing quarterly visits to increase accessibility and community engagement. Wellspring has built relationships with individual family members, communities, local health centres, schools and districts and is recognised as the centre of excellence in regards to disability in the greater Masaka region. Research has shown that our parent education and peer support groups increase resilience by providing a participatory approach to learning to care for CWDs, and participants increase their quality of life by an average of 24%, which is an essential component of overcoming stigma and isolation.

It is, therefore, anticipated that implementing the CBR programme will not only improve accessibility to PWDs but will also improve the quality of service that we offer.

*PT. Muhindo Pascal and
PT. Sengendo Ibrahim*

This article is taken for the physiotherapy end of year report 2021.

"Please sponsor me"

188 children are presently being sponsored
through the Wellspring Child Sponsorship Scheme

These children are greatly envied in the communities, because of the life saving care given to them. There are literally thousands more sick and disabled children desperately waiting for help. Medcare has been provided with the names of a further 25 children who are hoping for sponsorship in 2022. Here are 4 of these children:



Charles Tamale

12 years old, born HIV+ve. He lives with his grandmother, who is a peasant farmer, and 3 other children. This family often have to survive on less than £1 a day.



Lawrence Muwonge

12 years old, suffering from Sickle Cell Disease. He lives with his parents and is in desperate need of help.



Edward Kayuma

Now 4 years old suffering from cerebral palsy. He lives with his mother and 3 siblings in extreme poverty.



Madina Naggijja

12 years old and born HIV+ve. She lives with her parents and 3 siblings in an abusive home and the children lack the basic necessities of life.

Please assist Medcare in spreading the word of the very great needs of these Ugandan children. For more information regarding sponsorship please contact Pauline in the Medcare Office on 01928 740538 or email admin.medcare@icloud.com



New Carpentry Workshop for Noeline's 'boys'!

After months of planning and fund raising, the new workshop for the carpenters at the Wellspring Home for Disabled Children has been constructed.

Here they will make furniture and other items to be sold on site for the benefit of the Home and themselves. The old container has been adapted as a shop from where both the carpentry goods, together with beads and mats made by Noeline and the children, will be sold.



Everyone loves a wedding!

One of the most commonly read Bible verses at weddings is from 1Corinthians 13 - a passage defining real love. It shows us how love makes our actions and gifts useful to others.



"Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. ...Three things will last forever - faith, hope and love - and the greatest of these is love."

1Corinthians 13 v 7,13 (NLT)

On receiving the reports from our Wellspring team about the conditions the children in Ugandan are presently facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was very concerned. I was also, I must admit, overwhelmed by a feeling of hopelessness faced with the enormous and urgent task ahead of us in caring for so many very needy children, whose very lives are at risk every day. But on reading the narratives again I saw that threaded through all the reports was a picture of faith, hope and love.

Love is about action, how a person lives for others and serves them. Love in action (or compassion) is best understood as a way of life that is focused not on oneself but on another and his or her good.

At the centre of the work of Medcare and Wellspring is love in action – love for the Ugandan children in such desperate need, sick, disabled and living in extreme poverty. Love shown through the selfless love of their mothers and grandmothers; love shown by the Wellspring staff as they

care for thousands of children every year; love shown by the sponsors and all Medcare supporters in their generosity and faithfulness in providing for the needs of the children; and, most importantly, the love of God for all people, but especially the children and those in need.

At the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions over much of the world, we can look into the New Year with renewed hope and an expectation of better things to come. Thousands of children lives have been saved since Wellspring was first opened in 2008. As Medcare and our supporters, Wellspring staff and local Ugandan people, work together in a spirit of compassion, even more can be achieved in 2022.

Wishing you all a healthy, fruitful and peaceful New Year.

Pauline Hutchinson

Chairman of Medcare