



**WORLD CANCER DAY AND INTERNATIONAL
CHILDHOOD CANCER DAY**

THEME: TAKING SERVICES CLOSER TO THE PEOPLE
COMMEMORATED AT: ARUA POLICE GROUNDS, ARUA MUNICIPALITY

15TH FEB, 2020

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Uganda Cancer Society (UCS) would like to thank Government of Uganda, through Ministry of Health (MOH) and Uganda Cancer Institute (UCI) for the partnership extended during the joint commemoration of 2020 World Cancer Day (WCD) and the International Childhood Cancer Day (ICCD).

We would also like to thank Arua District Local Government (ADLG) and Arua police authorities, especially Arua district police commander, for the partnership in the fight against cancer. The Arua police ground was very central in enabling us to successfully commemorate this event. Additionally, we extend our appreciation to the leadership of Arua Municipal Council and that of the traffic police for permitting us to have a procession led by Hon. Minister of State for Health (in charge Primary Healthcare) on the streets of Arua. Indeed, there is no better way to thank you.

In a special way, we would like to thank the Government of Uganda as the lead sponsor for the event. Similarly, special tribute is paid to the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) for the support offered towards this event. Tribute also goes to our partners and supporters; American Cancer Society (ACS), Palliative Care Association Uganda, Rotary and Uganda Non Communicable Diseases Alliance (UNCDA).

In the same way, we thank all our partners including but not limited to; Uganda Rotary Cancer Programme for inviting the Executive Director of UCS to present a keynote address at its fellowship at Hotel Africana on 4th Feb. Warm appreciation to the media fraternity especially the Nation Media Group, Arua One FM, Pacis FM, Next media, UBC, among others etc.). We equally want to thank government for working with the civil society in the planning and execution of this event. Grateful thanks is also extended to all members of UCS who participated in the planning; Cancer Survivors Association Uganda (CSAU), Uganda Child Cancer Foundation (UCCF), Kawempe Home Care (KHC), Uganda Health Communication Alliance (UHCA), Nama Wellness Community Centre (NAWEC), Friends Crew Africa (FCA), Children with Cancer Caregivers Association (CCCA), Thrive a Woman Uganda (TAW), Bless a Child Foundation (BCF), and Precansal Uganda. Your continued cooperation is what is needed to yield greater impact through concerted efforts.

Lastly, we thank the Almighty God for the gift of life and for watching over all cancer patients and their families and all persons who have lost loved ones to cancer. Lord, continue to watch over your people, give them peace of mind and love in their hearts and above all, heal them!

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACS	American Cancer Society
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EBV	Epstein Bar virus
HPV	Human Papilloma Virus
HBV	Hepatitis B
HIV	Immuno Deficiency Virus
MoH	Ministry of Health
UNCDA	Uganda Non Communicable Diseases Alliance
NCD	Non Communicable Diseases
PCAU	Palliative Care Association Uganda
UCI	Uganda Cancer Institute
UCS	Uganda Cancer Society
UICC	The Union for International Cancer Control
WCD	World Cancer Day
WHO	World Health Organization
ICCD	International Childhood Cancer Day
UBC	Uganda Broadcasting Corporation
ED	Executive Director

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Uganda Cancer Society partnered with Government of Uganda through the Ministry of Health and Uganda Cancer Institute – a lead agency for cancer control, and other stakeholders (PCAU, UNCTA and Rotary) to jointly commemorate 2020 WCD and ICCD in Arua district, West Nile. The global theme; **I AM, I WILL** WCD intends to increase advocacy and responsibility at personal level in the fight against cancer. In Uganda, a local theme was developed; “Taking Services closer to the People”. The theme was to re-affirm government’s commitment in decentralizing cancer services. It also intended to remind government, individuals and the community across the country to take more action against cancer and save thousands of preventable deaths each year by advocating for decentralization of cancer services.

The purpose of the event in Arua was to help continue to scale up commemoration of WCD and ICCD by mobilizing rural communities to, not only participate but, also to use it as an avenue to demand for decentralization of cancer services to the people of Arua and the entire West Nile. It should be noted that government plans to establish four (4) regional centres; Arua for West Nile, Gulu for Northern, Mbarara for Western and Mbale for Eastern Uganda. By having the joint commemoration, it was to mobilise political support in preparation for the actual launch in April 2020. UCS as a leading civil society intended to be part of this history making as this center is a product of its advocacy efforts as laid down in its Advocacy Strategy and Strategic Plan 2016 - 2021. Additionally, UCS also intended to use this platform to interest local organisations and individuals to join its cancer work in a bid to create a much stronger voice for advocacy.

There was increased collaboration and partnerships built among stakeholders bringing together government, civil society, media, private sector and the general public in planning and commemoration. The procession in Arua municipality attracted the public to join the ceremony. Media coverage included press conference, talk shows and live interviews conducted with key government officials.

The solidarity with which partners worked together both in the preparations and commemoration, including government’s commitment to create an enabling environment for planning and coordination showed that together we can harness greater results in cancer control in Uganda.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, World Cancer Day (WCD) is commemorated on 4th February every year whereas ICCD is commemorated every 15th day of February. In marking these days, the world unites to recognize the burden of cancer and appreciate progress made and challenges faced in the fight against the epidemic.

Uganda, just like all other countries in the world, is affected by cancer and suffers a heavy burden on both its economy at the national level and household income at the individual level. It is important to note that over 32,000 new cancer cases and 21,000 deaths occurred in 2018.[1] There are currently 56,238 people living with cancer.[1] The five commonest cancers in Uganda are; cancer of the cervix, Kaposi sarcoma, breast cancer, cancer of the prostate and non-Hodgkin lymphoma.[1] Among children, Lymphomas, soft tissues sarcomas, leukemia and cancer of the kidney predominate. [2]

The commonest risk factors driving the cancer burden in Uganda include; infections- Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), infections Human Immuno Deficiency Virus (HIV), Hepatitis B (HBV), Epstein Bar virus (EBV) and H. Pylori), physical inactivity, exposure and use of tobacco, harmful use of alcohol, and old age. Late presentation, limited access to screening and early diagnosis, inadequate treatment services coupled with general low awareness levels contribute to the high cancer death rate in Uganda.

Uganda over the years has been joining the rest of the world to mark WCD and ICCD. Uganda Cancer Society in collaboration with government through MOH and UCI, and in partnership with other actors did join the rest of the world in marking WCD and ICCD 2020. This year, Uganda commemorated under the theme: Taking Services Closer to the People.

Therefore, this report comes to present the preparation for the event, the execution and the outcomes. It also highlights the milestones, challenges and recommendations for next year's commemoration, among other things.

APPROACH

Building partnerships in cancer and childhood cancer, fostering dialogue and information sharing, involving the community in advocating for and awareness raising on cancer and childhood cancer is very vital and were considered.. Through partnership of civil society and government, a steering committee comprising representatives from MOH, UCI, PCAU, UNCDA, UCS members and Uganda Rotary Cancer Programme was constituted. The team conducted planning meeting, mobilized logistics and finances, and even sending an advance team to inspect the site for commemoration as well as conducting mobilisation of local communities to participate in the event.



Above: Steering committee in one of the planning meetings at MOH boardroom

OUTPUT AND OUTCOMES

This section presented activities carried out before, during and after the event. These include;

Activities conducted before and on the eve

World Cancer Day Press Conference: The press conference was held by Hon. Minister of State for Health (In charge General Duties), Hon. Robinah Nabbanja alongside Dr. Jackson Orem (ED of UCI) and Paul Ebusu. The Minister communicated government plans for the joint commemoration of WCD and ICCD in Arua, West Nile as a practical step in delivering on government's campaign manifesto on decentralising cancer services by establishing four regional cancer centres in Arua, Gulu, Mbale and Mbarara. The press conference was also to mobilise the media to be part of the commemoration through creating awareness and offering a platform for a advocacy.



Above: Steering committee in one of the planning meetings at MOH boardroom

Presentation at a fellowship organised by Rotary Uganda Programme: Paul Ebusu, made a keynote address at Rotary Fellowship on 4th February at Hotel Africana. His presentation themed; "Cancer Patient Support Services: A Relevant Link to Better Treatment Outcomes" highlighted the plight of cancer patients at the treatment centres, most needed assistance for cancer patients, and what should be done. He concluded his presentation by mobilising attendees to buy kits and participate at the annual Cancer Sukuma dance that was scheduled for 23rd February at KCCA grounds in Lugogo. This sukuma event was to raise funds to support cancer patients in cancer patient hostels and at UCI.



Above: Paul Ebusu delivers a keynote address at the Rotaryfellowship

Media engagement: Two radio talk shows on Arua One FM and Radio Pacis were held with Dr Geriga Fadhil of UCI, Dennis Olodi of UCS, Innocent Atuhe (UCI), Arua District Communications Officer and President Rotary Club of Arua as panellists. The shows were to communicate the event and also use it as a platform to mobilise community members to participate. On the show, caller-in expressed interest to attend and seek cancer services (screening, HPV vaccination and counselling) which would be provided at the venue. The panellists also used the talk shows to respond to inaccurate information in the public especially on the causes of cancer as expressed by some callers.

Inspection of the venue by the Kampala team/steering committee: One the eve of the event, the Steering Committee members inspected the venue to confirm the quality of the ground set up, decoration, public address system and set up of cancer screening services. This was to ensure appropriate security measures were in place since the event was to attract high profile government officials. This inspection also helped to cement the relations with district leadership and that of the police in Arua Municipality.especially on the causes of cancer as expressed by some callers.

Activities conducted during the event

Procession in Arua municipality: The procession with music band was led by the State Minister for Primary Health Care, Hon. Dr. Moriku Kaducu. She was accompanied by Dr Charles Olaro and Dr Charles Amone (both from MOH), Hon Kassiano Ezati Wadiri (MP for Arua Municipality), UCI Senior Management, members of the Uganda Cancer Society, the Media and residents of Arua Municipality. The banners, t-shirts and other awareness materials communicated information about cancer and sought to mobilise communities to seek cancer services. On one of the t-shirts, it was written, "Childhood cancer knows no borders - neither should the cure". Additional messages on the banners also aimed at created awareness



Above: Hon. Minister Dr. Joyce Kaducu leads the procession alongside MP for Arua Municipality, Hon. Kassiano Wadri. Far left is UCS Board Chair, Dr. Samuel Guma

Tour of the Arua cancer clinic: After the procession, the minister was taken on a tour of cancer clinic at Arua regional referral hospital. This was to check for its level of organisation in preparation for the eventual start of operations. Part of the clinic was already offering palliative care services to patients at the hospital. The minister noted that Arua was to host a regional cancer centre but due to resource constraints, it was envisaged that government would do it in phases starting with the cancer clinic. She made commitments that the centre would start full operations in April 2020.

Civil society position on cancer: The civil society position was presented by Dr. Samuel Guma, the Board Chair of UCS. He applauded government for seeking to decentralise cancer services and also for creating an enabling environment for civil society to make contribution in the fight against cancer in Uganda. He further called on government to speed up the processing of approving a policy on palliative on palliative care and the national cancer control plan.

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Above: Dr. Guma flanked by Heads of other CSOs that participated in the planning and execution of this event

Cancer screening: As a way of managing health costs arising from poor health seeking habits, screening for blood pressure, HPV vaccination, breast and cervical cancer screening were done during the event. Over 200 persons received screening with more receiving information materials about cancer and palliative care.



Above: Locals receive services delivered by UCI, UCS members, UNCCA and PCAU.

Activities conducted during the event

Publicity: The The Minister's Message was shared with radio stations in Arua and television stations in Kampala. The Ministry of Information Technology and National Guidance was also involved in sharing with government structures as a custodian of information in government. UCI ran a newspaper release about the event in the New Visioness

Preparation for launch of the cancer clinic: The UCI team was to follow up with renovations of the cancer clinic in Arua ahead of the proposed official opening on the 1st April 2020 as requested by the Hon. Minister Dr. Joyce Kaducu.

Reflection meeting: A reflection meeting was done in preparation for 2021 World Cancer Day planning. It was noted that challenges such as late disbursement of funds and low levels of social mobilisation should improve going into the next event.

CHALLENGES

- ✓ Late disbursement of funds. Much as preparations for the commemoration was on time, funds to facilitate the event were released on the day of the event and several days after the event and this negatively affected the quality of the event. For example, FUNDS FOR procuring t-shirts came in late.
- ✓ Social Mobilization did not attract as many people as envisaged. In as much as a van with a public address system mounted on it made road runs to mobilise people to attend, the attendance was not below the expectation of the planners.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE EVENT

- ✓ Increased social and political will. There is a lot of political and social support for taking cancer services to West Nile Region that can be capitalized on to raise more resources for setting up a regional cancer centre. This will was strongly expressed by the Area Member of Parliament, Hon. Kassiano Wadri, in his address... *"Previously, our grandparents used to eat boju, akwege, and the likes and didn't suffer from cancer.... today, cancer is on the rise and as the people of Arua and West Nile, the cancer centre is going to help us in screening people"*.
- ✓ Social mobilisation. The attendance of the commemoration was not big enough because the event was held in the busy business areas and most of the would be attendees remained in their shops / market selling their merchandise. Ineffective mobilisation possible contributed to this low attendance. It is important that mobilisation is done early with local players/organising committee taking the lead in galvanising support.

CONCLUSION

The 2020 WCD-ICCD joint commemoration in Arua was a success in every aspect starting with the planning, execution and the immediate post event activities which attracted multiple stakeholders in and outside of cancer control. The manifest desire of these members to work together is a new source of our strength in our endeavour to fight cancer. It demonstrated that civil society movement in Uganda is a useful partner in the fight against cancer and has a great role to play.

Other key indicator of success was commitment by the district leadership and Area Member of Parliament, Hon. Kassiano on their excitement to receive cancer clinic in Arua. They expressed gratitude that decentralizing cancer services to Arua would reduce the burden of transportation that would otherwise come with having to transport cancer patients to the national treatment centre in Mulago.

RECOMMENDATION

In light of the above, these recommendations are made thereof;

- 01** There is need to include specific funding for commemoration of world cancer and international childhood cancer days in the UCI and UCS partners' annual budgets to have funds released on time to commemorate the event.
- 02** There is need to take advantage of the heightened social and political will to kick start operationalization of Arua Regional Cancer Center.
- 02** In future, just as it has started, World Cancer Day commemoration should be taken to rural areas where the need for cancer services is greater in order to reach those in greater need and attract mammoth crowds which would inadvertently help in raising awareness.

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