



## INTERNATIONAL CHILDHOOD CANCER DAY

### Press Statement

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Today, Uganda joins the rest of the world to commemorate the International Childhood Cancer Day (ICCD), a day aimed at shining a light on the successes, challenges and what potential solutions can be sought to improve on the access to childhood cancer care and management.

This year, the theme for International Childhood Cancer Day is **Through their Hands**, which is a call to all people, corporations, organizations, families, communities to get involved in improving the survival rates in Uganda among children suffering from cancer.

It is important to note that according to GLOBOCAN 2020, over 3,000 children get cancer in Uganda but only 700 of those manage to access care. This is a significant disparity that, as a community, we must be looking to change if we are to realize more children saved from cancer.

Currently, over 40% of children survive from the commonest cancers in Uganda which include Burkits Lymphoma, Retinoblastaphoma, Leukemia and kidney cancer among others.

From health workers, survivors, parents, friend of a survivor, to mere well-wishers, everyone has a role to play in improving childhood cancer care. It is important to note that children with cancers in Africa have survival rates as low as 20%. This can be attributed to several reasons such as delayed diagnosis, lack of diagnosis, obstacles to accessing care, treatment abandonment, toxic death, and disease relapse among others. One really important concern is that protocols and guidelines prescribed in higher-income countries are often not feasible in many parts of Africa due to resource constraints.

The WHO Global Initiative for Childhood Cancer aims to improve outcomes for children with cancer around the world. The WHO aims at improving the survival rates from 20% across Low Income countries to 60% of which many of the African countries fall under.

And as such, this year, Uganda Cancer Society and its members – Soletterre Foundation, Uganda Child Cancer Foundation, Bless a Child Foundation, Kawempe

Home Care, and Children with Cancer Caregivers Association are partnering with Uganda Cancer Institute to lead this commemoration.

It is important to note that Uganda has done a good job in working to open the Gulu, Mbarara treatment centres. However, more efforts need to be put in place by the Ugandan government to ensure that we can have more centers opened and have good access to pediatric cancer care. These achievements and progress must not be halted by economic uncertainty created by inadequate and downward spiral budget allocation for cancer services. We, therefore, strongly call upon the government and development partners to do all possible to fund cancer programmes to ensure the sustainability of the current gains, and intensify future efforts to stop cancer.

Uganda Cancer Society and its members are urging policy makers and the government of Uganda to pass the National Cancer Control Plan so that we can start to have an organized approach towards addressing cancer in Uganda and in particular, the childhood cancer. This Plan will help streamline cancer education and awareness, diagnosis, treatment, care, palliative care, management after survivorship among others.

On a similar note, we urge government to fast track the passing of the National Cancer Control Plan. This plan will give sensible direction to the cancer community in Uganda and above all, it will help us as a country to save more lives and importantly provide after life care.

The civil society in Uganda led by Uganda Cancer Society fully supports Uganda Cancer Institute and the Ministry of Health vision of ensuring a healthy and productive population – this can be achieved if efforts around cancer control are given the much needed audience. It is possible with the adoption and implementation of a National Cancer Control Plan.

The struggle continues!

Thank you,

For All Members and Partners of Uganda Cancer Society

1. Soleterre Foundation
2. Uganda Child Cancer Foundation
3. Bless a Child Foundation
4. Kawempe Home Care,
5. Children with Cancer Caregivers Association

Special recognition and appreciation to;

1. The leadership of Uganda Cancer Institute (UCI)
2. UCI Pediatrics Department