



MULANJE MISSION HOSPITAL

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Editorial comment

By Dickson Chisale

Dear friends, development partners and donors across the world.

Mulanje mission hospital is proud to have a new Medical Director, Dr. Andrea Van Acker-Koning. Just for six months as MD, she has proven beyond doubt her abilities to drive MMH to greater heights. She has already gained trust of members of staff and the community. Please, join MMH family in welcoming the new medical director and her family!

We are happy that Dr. Dan Chiluzi has returned from his enriching visit to the Netherlands.

Good news from the Primary Health Care department: irrigation farming has become a solution to persistent hunger to small scale farmers.

Last growing season was badly affected by prolonged dry spell in some districts in the southern

region of the country. Farmers had to replant twice others three times during the same rain-fed season, still they did not harvest enough maize.

Luwanje irrigation scheme is supported by MMH and recently received an upgrade. This is enabling subsistence farmers to grow a variety of crops and harvest more than once a year. MMH is also encouraging farmers to add value to their crops to increase their revenue and livelihood. Below you can read a story about how cassava value addition can be life changing for a farmer.

Vocational skills training for vulnerable youth and the completion of the 14th health post are even more reasons to celebrate! Enjoy the read.

Meet Our New Medical Officer – Ruth Maseko

We are happy to welcome **Dr. Ruth Maseko**, 25 years old, who joined Mulanje Mission Hospital as a medical officer. Ruth grew up in Blantyre and is the first doctor in her family. Her dream is to become a psychiatrist, as she is passionate about mental health and wants to advocate for it in the future.

We warmly welcome Ruth to the MMH family!



A New Healthpost In Mulanje

By Tikondwe Katumbi



Mulanje Mission Hospital operates in a poor community, and its catchment area spans three Traditional Authorities (TAs): TA Chikumbu, TA Nkanda, and TA Mabuka. There are some villagers in the catchment area who cannot afford to pay for transport to travel to MMH to receive free medication under the Service Level Agreement (SLA). Such people include the elderly, those with physical disabilities, child-headed families, very poor families and many others. The hospital, under its PHC department, has a vision to reach out to the whole population. One of the best strategies to

do this is by establishing outreach clinics. MMH had 13 outreach clinics and with funding from Buurtzorg through the Chitsanzo project, MMH has just finished construction of a 14th clinic at Mlatha Village.

MMH became aware of the health situation during Cyclone Freddy because the village hosted a camp for displaced people, for which MMH was responsible. Health workers learned that people were walking long distances to the nearest health facilities; as a result, the community showed little health-seeking behaviour when ill. MMH opened an out-

▲ Mlatha Health Post

reach clinic at the camp while making long-term plans to continue helping this isolated community. MMH is thankful to Buurtzorg for making this dream come true through the construction of a permanent clinic. Above is a picture of the clinic, which will be offering free services such as antenatal care, immunisation, family planning, cervical cancer screening, HIV/AIDS services, non-communicable disease care, and services for orphans and vulnerable children.

Cassava Flour, A Story About Value Addition

By Pilirani Mangasau

Mulanje is one of the districts where cassava is grown, but many people do not make cassava flour for cooking nsima. In Mulanje, cassava is mainly eaten raw, boiled or dried. These three forms of cassava are either consumed at home or sold in the markets. Much of the cassava is sold to companies or factories where it is processed into different food products. Since the companies offer better prices, farmers often sell all their cassava without keeping some for food.

Mulanje Mission Hospital, through the PHC department and Sustaina-

ble Livelihood programme, has been conducting practical training sessions to teach people how to process cassava into flour. Recently MMH Village Agents demonstrated this process to a small group of individuals to transfer the knowledge to other villagers. Together they produced 98 kg of cassava flour. The Village Agents packaged the flour and sold it at K1500 per kilogram, making a total of K141,000.

The villagers are now realising the importance of value addition as a way to improve nutrition and also to attract better prices for cassava.



Welcome To Our New Medical Director

By Annie Bwanaisa

When Dr. Andrea started as Medical Director in April this year, I was wondering how we would manage, because this year we lost our HR and later our Principal Hospital Administrator. But she came with an open mind and was ready to listen to others. With the grace of God, we are managing and finding our way step by step.

Working with her, I see that she is flexible and very approachable. Whenever I have a challenge and go to her, she is always available, kind and supportive. Many times she asks me, "What do you need from me?" which shows that she wants to help. She stays calm in emergencies and is very good at solving problems. In these first months she has faced many difficulties. She had to make very tough and brave decisions, for example standing up for a patient in a legal case, even when it was difficult to do so. Because of her courage we are now taking the right steps. She has also started to improve our records within the Service Level Agreement, so that the hospital can become more financially stable in the future.

She is also a great team player. She listens to ideas from others, is humble and appreciates everyone's input. She works with us, not above



▲ Annie Bwanaisa (left) and Andrea Van Acker (right)

us, and that makes a big difference. She is also a hard worker, when some staff left, she carried extra responsibilities herself, and she has supported me a lot in my HR work. I believe she is leading the hospital in the right direction. She wants to make the hospital financially strong, and she is helping us follow our strategic plan so that we can reach

the goals we have set together.

To our Medical Director I want to say: this is a very high position, and you are still young and new. But nothing is impossible with God. I pray that He will continue to give you wisdom and knowledge, and I wish you all the best as you lead Mulanje Mission Hospital.

MMH Best Nurse 2024 – 2025

By Tabu Gonani

The Outpatient Department at MMH is one of the busiest. It not only serves patients with minor illnesses but also those with emergencies. The department also handles minor procedures such as wound dressing and routine catheter changes. Patients who walk into this department are welcomed by a

young man with a warm smile every day: Mr. Besani Saka. He remains calm even in the busiest and sometimes chaotic situations.

Besani is a dedicated nurse who has served the hospital faithfully since joining in 2019. He has worked as nurse-in-charge in different units and is known for his ability

to work well with everyone. He is friendly, promotes teamwork, and supports his colleagues.

In May this year, Besani was voted Best Nurse at MMH. The hospital appreciates his contribution to quality patient care and teamwork. Congratulations!

Vocational Skills Training For Vulnerable Youth

By Wise Ndawa



▲ Youth at Nansomba Technical College

Mulanje Mission Hospital has long supported young people in the catchment area through different activities, ranging from sexual reproductive health education and school support to vocational training and youth-friendly health services. This year, the hospital is supporting 32 young people, by enrolling them in vocational skills training. These young men and women have been selected based on social characteristics that make them vulnerable. Some are living with HIV and others are from the orphan and vulnerable children (OVC) programme. These 32 young adults are now studying and practicing skills at Nansomba Community Technical College.

Young people living with HIV or from vulnerable backgrounds face unique challenges such as stigma, disrupted education, health uncertainty and economic vulnerability. Vocational training provides them with a practical pathway to self-reliance, dignity

and sustainable livelihoods. By combining technical skills with psychosocial and health support, the programme helps them build stable and hopeful futures.

This programme offers more than just learning a trade. It helps youth to reshape their lives. After completing the training, the youth are offered opportunities for internships, such as with the hospital maintenance department. Others are given the chance to make use of our workshop. The group of youth who

graduated from their vocational skills training last year are already using the workshop and are earning income by making different products.

Health education is also woven into the programme to support treatment adherence for those living with HIV. Finally, psychosocial support is included to help build confidence and provide a safe space where peer groups living with HIV can encourage and strengthen one another.



▲ Graduates from last year working in the workshop

A Visit To The Netherlands

By Dr. Daniel Chiluzi

In July I had the chance to visit the Netherlands, where I participated in two summer school courses at Utrecht University.

The first course was on Global Surgery and OBGYN. It focused on providing a comprehensive overview of strategies to improve surgical care and maternal health outcomes. The course also emphasized essential surgical care from a worldwide perspective, and how surgical and OBGYN cases can be managed in low-resource settings.

The second course was on Global Health Ethics and Equity. It looked at issues of social justice, fair access to medicine, climate justice, and the role of moral deliberation in navigating ethical dilemmas in global health.

In both courses we had a diverse group of participants and speakers from all over the world, which was a unique opportunity to connect and learn from people with different backgrounds, settings, and viewpoints. I also had the chance to do a clinical observership at Wilhelmina Kinderziekenhuis, where I observed



▲ Dr. Dennis Kok (left) and Dr. Dan Chiluzi (right) in Utrecht UMC

how different pediatric cases are managed surgically. I had a great time in the Netherlands, and I will be

able to use the knowledge and skills gained from this trip throughout my career.

Vision To End Hunger: A Story About Luwanje

By Harry Samaria

The irrigation scheme at Luwanje Village has just received a major boost with the addition of a new borehole and pump. Thanks to this expansion, the 30,000-litre storage tank can now be filled in just two hours, ensuring a steady and reliable water supply for irrigation. The upgrade, which took about a month to complete, was finished last week. The scheme holders have a savings account, where part of their profits are set aside for future maintenance and improvements this makes the project more sustainable for the years to come.



Vision To End Hunger: A Story About Luwanje — Continued

By Harry Samaria

Luwanje Village, under T/A Mabuka, lies a few kilometers from Mulanje Mission along the Midima Road just after Chisitu Trading Centre. For about five consecutive years the area suffered from dry spells, like many parts of southern Malawi. The community harvested very little from rain-fed farming. To cope, villagers began using a small stream for small-scale irrigation. Though limited, it gave them hope and a few bags of maize during the lean season.

Recognizing their efforts, Mulanje Mission officers through the Sustainable Livelihood Project visited the area and worked with farmers to construct a larger irrigation scheme in 2023. The results were remarkable: farmers harvested more than they ever had from rain-fed farming. The maize was used for food and sold to cover family needs such as school fees.

After that successful start, the farmers are now in their second irriga-

tion season. With the new borehole and pump in place, they are confident of even greater results. This season they have diversified beyond maize, adding beans, onions, and leafy vegetables. The people of Luwanje and the surrounding areas

are happy because they can now plant and harvest more than once a year. With irrigation farming and now with continuous water supply they are beginning to believe that hunger will soon be a thing of the past.



▲ Well managed onion and maize field at Luwanje

From The Medical Director

By Andrea Van Acker

It's a privilege to write a few words to close this news-letter. I've been in this office for six months and I'm experiencing the challenges of keeping a hospital operational during an economic crisis with high inflation. Drug prices have doubled and in some cases even tripled compared to last year. This, together with an ongoing staff recruitment freeze and the withdrawal of USAID is keeping us on our toes. In times like these, we are reminded about the importance of a support network. MMH is grateful for long standing partners that helped bridging the financial gaps.

As we move forward, I am committed to strengthening the financial sustainability of Mulanje Mission Hospital. We aim to raise awareness of health issues and the services we provide so that more patients can access quality care. At the same time, we will establish specialised clinics that build on the expertise of clinicians trained through our capacity-building programme. Another priority is to review our invoicing system and advance digitalisation to make our processes more efficient and transparent.

Furthermore, I would love to see Mulanje Mission Hospital continue to grow as an inspirational workplace, where every staff member is a blessing to the community. By expanding local partnerships, collaborating with existing structures and sharing our best practices, we can develop our catchment area into a model for the rest of Malawi.

Finally, I want to ask you to pray for Malawi as we are going into election season, for wisdom in our management team and for financial favour as we continue building a hospital that serves with excellence and compassion.