



**PARADISO**  
TB PATIENTS TRUST

# NEWSLETTER

JANUARY TO JUNE 2024

VOLUME 1 / ISSUE 1

## FIRST LADY MONICA CHAKWERA HOST A LUNCHEON FOR TB SURVIVORS

First Lady Madame Monica Chakwera hosted a luncheon at Kamuzu Palace in Lilongwe for 100 TB survivors. The event aimed to raise awareness and advocate for increased support for TB and leprosy programs. The First Lady highlighted the need for better dissemination of information in rural areas and urged the National Tuberculosis and Leprosy Elimination Programme (NTLEP) to deploy mobile vans for screenings in remote areas and called on urban residents to share TB information with their rural relatives to combat stigma and improve healthcare access.



STORY ON PAGE 2

## IN BUT FREE EXCHANGE VISIT TO PARADISO TB PATIENTS TRUST



STORY ON PAGE 3

Paradiso TB Patients Trust hosted esteemed Partners from IN BUT FREE (IBF) in Zambia for an exchange visit. The main focus of the visit was on Paradiso's post-TB care, particularly the lung rehabilitation program. The visitors participated in lung rehabilitation exercises at Ngwenya rehabilitation Centre, interacted with TB survivors, and engaged in discussions with Ngwenya Club volunteers about their experiences in post TB recovery.

## OVERCOMING TB WITH FAMILY SUPPORT AND PARADISO'S HELP

Islam Nadi, a 20-year-old young man living with his mother, a single mother heading a family of six, was diagnosed with TB in January and is currently undergoing treatment. Supported by Paradiso TB Patients Trust's Ngwenya TB Club volunteers, Islam's recovery journey highlights the power of community support. With no stable employment, Islam and his mother struggled financially, but Paradiso provided social and nutritional support.



STORY ON PAGE 3

# MARA KUMBWEZA BANDA THE FOUNDER OF PARADISO



Meet Mara Kumbweza Banda, a remarkable woman whose journey serves as an inspiration to us all. In the year 2000, Mara's life took a drastic turn when she was tested HIV-positive. Faced with illness and discrimination from her community, Mara found herself in a discouraging and isolating situation.

In 2000, it was a challenging time in Malawi, accessing life-saving medication, particularly antiretroviral (ARVs), was an uphill battle. The scarcity of these medications increased deaths in Malawi. This only compounded Mara's struggles, leaving her feeling helpless and alone in her fight against HIV.

Yet, despite these immense challenges, Mara's spirit remained unbroken. Drawing strength from her own experiences of stigma and discrimination, including her battle with TB, she made a courageous decision to turn her pain into purpose. As a TB survivor, Mara took a bold step in 2000 and established Paradiso Home Based Care, which was registered in 2003, with the aim of providing support and care for vulnerable individuals affected by HIV and AIDS in her community.

With unwavering determination and dedication, Mara, herself a TB survivor, alongside her team of volunteers, embarked on a mission to bring hope and healing to those in need. Paradiso Home Based Care began humbly, offering essential services such as home visits, medication support, and emotional counseling to HIV-positive individuals and their families.

As Mara immersed herself in her work, she soon recognized another pressing issue in her community: tuberculosis (TB). Having personally battled TB and witnessed its devastating impact alongside HIV/AIDS, Mara knew she couldn't stand idly by. In 2007, she expanded Paradiso Home Based Care into Paradiso TB Patients Trust, broadening its scope to address both TB and HIV/AIDS.

Under Mara's visionary leadership, Paradiso TB Patients Trust gave hope to those battling TB and HIV/AIDS in Malawi. The organization's outreach extended far beyond medical care, encompassing community education, awareness campaigns, and advocacy initiatives to combat the stigma and misconceptions surrounding TB and HIV/AIDS.

With each passing year, Mara and her team of volunteers' dedication and passion for their work only grew stronger. Paradiso TB Patients Trust expanded its reach. Currently, the organization works in 20 districts, where it directly delivers TB and HIV/AIDS programs in 61 health centers and Zomba prison, Paradiso is also working in 174 sputum collection points. At the core of Paradiso's approach are local TB clubs, comprised of TB survivors and volunteers housed within Ministry of Health's Community Health Centers. These clubs serve as pillars of support, implementing vital activities within their communities, from awareness campaigns to patient follow-up and support.

Central to Paradiso's success are its strong partnerships, particularly with international organizations and stakeholders across all levels of society. Since 2006, the LHL international has been Paradiso's biggest and most enduring partner, playing a vital role in the organization's growth and impact. Collaborations with government agencies, traditional leaders, civil society organizations, and forums such as CSAF have further amplified Paradiso's voice, enhancing its influence on both national and international scales.

Since 2018 alone, Paradiso's efforts have reached over millions of people, delivering crucial TB and HIV/AIDS information and services to communities across Malawi. From screening and diagnosis to treatment support and rehabilitation, Paradiso's holistic approach ensures that no one is left behind in the fight against TB.

As Paradiso continues its mission to create a healthier, more equitable Malawi, Mara remains the backbone of Paradiso and its operations. Her personal experience as a TB survivor fuels her passion and commitment to the cause. As she continues to lead the charge in the fight against TB and HIV/AIDS, Mara's legacy serves as a testament to the transformative power of one individual's determination to make a difference.

## PARADISO ENHANCES POST-TB LUNG REHABILITATION

The Lung Rehabilitation Project (LRP) is one of the projects being implemented by Paradiso TB Patients Trust in 7 districts of Malawi, under LHL grant in partnership with the Nurses Organization of Malawi (NONM). Recognizing the urgent need to support TB patients in their recovery, Paradiso has laid the foundation for what is now a vital component of post-TB care in the country.

Building on the success of this initiative, Paradiso TB Patients Trust is now working with the National Tuberculosis and Leprosy Elimination Program (NTLEP) to expand lung rehabilitation to additional sites. This expansion is not just a project but is being integrated as a continuum of care within the government facilities, ensuring sustainable support for TB patients as part of the broader healthcare system.



In January 2024, Paradiso TB Patients Trust, in collaboration with NTLEP and the Nurses Organization of Malawi (NONM), supported by funding from the Global Fund, organized a crucial training program for health workers focused on post-TB lung rehabilitation. This initiative aims to equip health workers with the skills needed to conduct lung rehabilitation exercises at their respective facilities, thereby assisting patients suffering from post-TB lung disease.

Starting on May 2, 2024, the Paradiso and NTLEP teams, alongside psychologists, began implementing the post-TB lung rehabilitation program in various government facilities across Malawi. The process at each center began with a meeting with the District Health Management Team (DHMT) to discuss the program's objectives and strategies. Following these discussions, the team conducted thorough assessments to tailor the rehabilitation exercises to the specific needs of each center. The final step involved the practical application of the lung rehabilitation exercises, where health workers utilized their newly acquired skills under the guidance of the Paradiso and NTLEP team. Once satisfied with the outcomes at a health center, the team moved on to the next, ensuring that the program's benefits reached many post-TB patients.



## FIRST LADY MONICA CHAKWERA HOSTS LUNCHEON FOR TB SURVIVORS AT KAMUZU PALACE



On the 30th of April 2024, Her Excellency First Lady Madame Monica Chakwera graciously hosted a luncheon at Kamuzu Palace in Lilongwe, inviting 106 TB and Leprosy survivors to share their stories and advocate for increased support for TB and leprosy programs. The event, held in the front gardens of the palace, was a colorful and heart-warming event.

In her speech, the First Lady expressed gratitude for Paradiso's dedication to supporting TB survivors, the First Lady emphasized the importance of disseminating information to rural communities. She noted that lack of awareness often hindered people from seeking TB screening and treatment, she urged NTLEP to ensure that mobile vans reach remote areas to facilitate screening

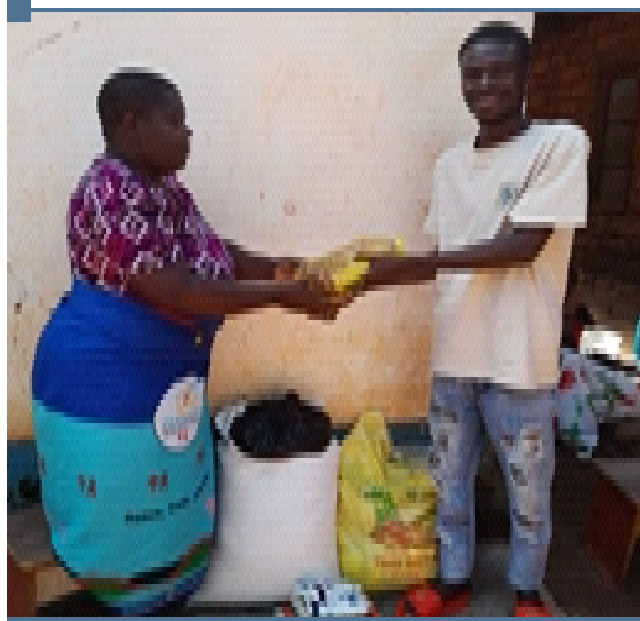
Furthermore, the First Lady called upon all Malawians, particularly those in urban areas, to actively share TB information with their rural relatives and provide support in accessing healthcare services. She emphasized that increased dialogue and awareness are essential in combating TB and reducing stigma within communities.

Speaking at the event, DR James Mpunga the Program Manager of NTLEP highlighted a 45% funding gap for TB and leprosy programs that indicates a pressing need for increased financial support to effectively combat TB and Leprosy.

Furthermore, Mrs. Sitingawawo Kachingwe, the Board Chairperson for Paradiso TB Patients Trust, highlighted the persistent issue of discrimination against TB patients and survivors, emphasizing the enduring social stigma surrounding TB. She stressed that addressing discrimination is crucial to promoting an environment of inclusivity and support for TB survivors, empowering them to pursue treatment and engage fully in society without facing prejudice.

The luncheon served as a platform to raise awareness and advocate for greater support for TB and leprosy programs. Through compassion and commitment, the First Lady continues to lead her championship with these values in raising awareness about TB at national, regional, and global levels.

# OVERCOMING TB WITH FAMILY SUPPORT AND PARADISO'S HELP



Islam Nadi, a 20-year-old young man, a member to a single mother headed family of six children, where he is the second born. In January, he was diagnosed with TB and is currently undergoing treatment. Supported by Paradiso TB Patients Trust and followed by volunteers from Ngwenya TB club, Islam's journey towards recovery is proof of the power of community support and resilience.

It all began when Islam started experiencing chest pain and persistent cough. Worried about her son's health, his mother took him to Bwaila Hospital, where he tested positive for TB. The hospital staff introduced them to Paradiso TB Patient Trust, and from there, volunteers began supporting Islam with social and providing nutritional support. Despite the initial shock of the diagnosis, Islam and his mother found comfort in knowing the root of the problem and held onto hope for his recovery.

Living off piecework, neither Islam nor his mother has stable employment. The illness disrupted their ability to earn a living, especially since Islam was too weak to work. However, with the treatment and support he received, Islam's health began to improve. He regained strength and was able to return to his piecework in four months' time. His mother ensured he took his medication and ate properly every day.

Interestingly, six years ago, the family lived with their grandfather, who had been diagnosed with TB but eventually recovered. Following Islam's diagnosis, the family members underwent testing as part of the contact tracing process, but thankfully, they all tested negative.

A lot of families battling TB face different challenges especially those reliant on daily wages for survival. However, through the combined efforts of community organizations like Paradiso and the support of family, Islam is on his way to recovery. With determination, support, and access to proper care, TB can be conquered, one step at a time.

## IN BUT FREE EXCHANGE VISIT TO PARADISO TB PATIENTS TRUST

On April 7th, 2024, Paradiso TB Patients Trust had the honor of welcoming esteemed visitors from IN BUT FREE in Zambia. This visit marked an exciting exchange opportunity where our guests delved into the inner workings of Paradiso, focusing particularly on our post-TB care, notably our renowned lung rehabilitation program.

During their stay, our visitors had the chance to involve themselves in various activities, starting with participating in lung rehabilitation exercises at Ngwenya Rehabilitation Center. Witnessing firsthand the progress made by post-TB patients through these exercises, they were deeply appreciative of the improvements observed.



Moreover, our guests engaged in insightful discussions with TB survivors who had undergone the rehabilitation exercises. These interactions provided invaluable insights into the challenges and successes of post-TB recovery.

Continuing their journey, the visitors had the privilege of meeting with Ngwenya TB club volunteers, who generously shared their experiences, highlighting both the successes and hurdles encountered in their noble work.

The journey didn't end there. Our guests also had the opportunity to meet with NTLEP, further appreciating the collective efforts in combating TB.

At the heart of this exchange is the steadfast support of LHL International, who believe in the power of collaborations. Their backing has been instrumental in fostering the enduring partnership between Paradiso and IN BUT FREE, a relationship that began with Paradiso's visit to Zambia in 2017. This collaboration sparked the TB in Prison program, now a vital initiative operating within Zomba Prison.

The IBF visitors also visited Maula Prison, where they observed the handling of TB cases. With a focus on TB in prisons and refugee camps, IN BUT FREE commended our efforts and gained valuable insights into our operations.

Going further into our community engagement, our guests observed Paradiso volunteers delivering health talks at Kawale Health Center. These discussions underscored our commitment to spreading awareness and empowering communities to combat TB.

But the visit didn't end there. Our visitors also went to see a patient in Area 24 who is being supported by Paradiso and followed by Ngwenya Club volunteers. They saw how our support helps people even after they leave the hospital.

As we reflect on this enriching exchange, supported by the vision of LHL International, we are reminded of the power of collaboration in driving positive change. Paradiso remains committed to fostering partnerships and sharing knowledge to enhance TB care, not only locally but globally.



# PARADISO STEPS UP AS A SUB-RECIPIENT IN THE FIGHT AGAINST TB



Paradiso TB Patients Trust has been selected as a sub-recipient (SR) of Global Fund grant. This is three-year project, called TB/HIV epidemic control in Malawi, which will run from July 2024 to June 2027 and is set to transform TB case detection and management in six northern districts and nine central districts.

This selection marks a significant milestone in our organization's journey. In the previous funding cycle (NFM3), Paradiso served as a sub-sub-recipient in a consortium with three partners: FACT, who were the lead, MANTE+, and MANASO. Our role in that consortium laid the groundwork for our current success, allowing us to gain experience and demonstrate our capability.

Now, in the new funding round (NFM4), Paradiso has taken a big step forward by moving into SR position, working under the aegis of World Vision International, the principal recipient of the grant. This shift is a testament to our growth and the trust that has been placed in us to lead critical aspects of this project.

The project will see Paradiso working closely with World Vision International to enhance TB case finding through community-based interventions. World Vision International, as the principal recipient, will provide strategic oversight, technical support, and ensure that the project adheres to the high standards set by the Global Fund.

Reporting to World Vision International, Paradiso will leverage its local expertise and extensive community networks to implement the project effectively. The partnership with World Vision, an organization renowned for its global health initiatives, ensures that the project benefits from a blend of local knowledge and international best practices.

Central to this initiative is the engagement of local communities. Paradiso will mobilize and work with field officers who will manage community sputum collection points. Each district will have one coordinator who will report to the project lead.

Through this project, Paradiso aims to overcome the barriers of access and stigma that often hinder TB diagnosis and treatment. This community-centric approach is expected to significantly increase the number of TB cases detected and treated, thereby reducing the transmission of TB.

The TB Epidemic Control project is poised to make a lasting impact on public health in the northern and central regions. By increasing TB case finding and improving community-based interventions, the project aims to reduce the burden of TB, improve health outcomes, and save lives.

As Paradiso embarks on this project, the organization remains steadfast in its dedication to improving the health and well-being of communities. The experience gained and the lessons learned from this project will strengthen Paradiso's capacity to tackle other health issues in the future.

With the support of the Global Fund and in partnership with World Vision International, Paradiso is set to make significant strides in controlling the TB epidemic and paving the way for healthier communities.

## WORLD STOP TB DAY, ENDING TB TOGETHER IN MALAWI

Every year on March 24th, the world comes together to commemorate World Stop TB Day, a day dedicated to raising awareness and intensifying efforts to end tuberculosis (TB). This year, the ceremony took place at Khaya Primary School in Mulanje with the theme 'YES WE CAN END TB', a powerful reminder that together, we have the strength and capability to eliminate TB.

The event was organized by the National TB and Leprosy Elimination Program (NTLEP) in coordination with various stakeholders who provided materials and funds to make this day possible, including Paradiso TB Patients Trust. The Principal Secretary of Health attended the event, representing the Minister of Health, who was engaged with other government duties. Among the participants were students, teachers, healthcare workers, and community members, all united by a common goal: to end TB.



This year, Paradiso's dedication has not waned. We supported the program as we always do, we provided transportation for the preparation meetings and the DHMT meetings, making sure that everyone involved could participate without any hindrance. Additionally, we covered allowances for the security team and the organizing officers, ensuring that the event ran smoothly and efficiently.

The ceremony at Khaya Primary School started with a big walk followed by a visit to pavilions by the Principal Secretary, where extensive work on TB was explained. Then, speeches highlighted the progress made and the challenges that remain. Personal stories of triumph over TB were shared. At the end, awards were given to the best 3 performing districts, hospitals, and journalists who excelled in reporting issues of TB.



# PHOTO GALLERY HIGHLIGHTING PARADISO TB PATENTS TRUST PROGRAMS



● Lung rehabilitation exercises



● Nutrition support in Neno



● Tree planting day at Ngwenya TB Club, Lilongwe.



● Cloth distribution in Dedza



● TB in Prison Project



● PEN-PAL/OVC Children at Paradise TB Patients Trust Head Office



# REACHING THE MASSES WITH INFORMATION OF TB IN MALAWI



On May 14, 2024, the Technical Advisor (TA) of Paradiso TB Patients Trust Miss Mara Kumbweza Banda, together with volunteers from the Ngwenya and Mitundu TB Club, held a significant outreach event at Mitundu Holiness Temple. This initiative was part of a family seminar organized by the Mitundu Holiness church, during which the bishop extended a special invitation to the Technical Advisor (TA) to attend and address the congregation.

Seizing this valuable opportunity, the TA and the volunteers planned an outreach session aimed at raising awareness about tuberculosis (TB) among the church members. The event was well-attended, with 78 participants, including 55 women and 25 men, all eager to gain insights and knowledge about family health and TB.

The session began with a series of enlightening teachings on family health, providing essential information and tips for maintaining well-being within the household. Following this, the focus shifted to TB education, where the TA and volunteers delivered an in-depth presentation on the causes, symptoms, prevention, and treatment of TB.

The educational segment was followed by a highly interactive Q&A session, where attendees posed several insightful questions to the TA and volunteers. Some of the key questions and responses included

In summary this is what was discussed, TB is not hereditary; it's an infectious disease caused by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, which spreads through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Common symptoms include persistent cough, fever, night sweats, and weight loss, but signs can vary depending on the affected body part, such as back pain in spinal TB or headaches in TB meningitis. Excessive sweating, particularly at night, occurs due to the body's immune response to the infection. Individuals can request TB testing at hospitals, and early diagnosis is crucial. TB treatment typically lasts six months, though the duration may vary depending on the severity and type of the infection.

The outreach session concluded with expressions of gratitude from the bishop and the congregation. They thanked the Paradiso TB Patients Trust and Ngenya Club volunteers for their invaluable contributions to the community's health education.

Through such initiatives, Paradiso TB Patients Trust continues to empower individuals with knowledge and resources to combat TB and improve overall health.

## PARADISO HOSTS INTERNATIONAL HEALTH EXPERTS TO SHOWCASE POST-TB REHABILITATION EFFORTS

From June 17th to 19th, Paradiso had the honor of hosting Dr. Daisy Lekharu from Geneva Switzerland, representing the Global Fund, and Dr. Stellah Mpangama from Tanzania as a consultant for the Global Fund. Their visit aimed to observe and appreciate Paradiso's pioneering work in post-TB care, with a special focus on the Lung Rehabilitation Exercise.

This visit holds special significance as it takes place under the Global Fund's strategic initiatives. Although Malawi was not initially eligible for this funding, Paradiso's strong relationship with the National Tuberculosis and Leprosy Elimination Program (NTLEP) made it possible to apply for and secure funds. This has allowed us to continue the crucial work initiated under the post-TB disability project, now with the direct involvement and support of NTLEP.



On June 18th, the visitors toured Mchinji District Hospital and Bwaila District Hospital. During these visits, they observed the successful integration of the Lung Rehabilitation Exercise within government healthcare facilities. This integration marks a significant milestone in enhancing the quality of post-TB care provided to patients.

On June 19th, a comprehensive briefing meeting was held to discuss the findings from the field visits. During this session, Mr. Sosten Ntalika from NTLEP expressed his gratitude to Dr. Lekharu and Dr. Mpangama for the support Malawi is receiving from them. He noted that their visit was a source of encouragement and helped highlight areas that need improvement. Mr. Ntalika also emphasized how much they learned, particularly from Dr. Mpangama, about how similar programs are being implemented in Tanzania.

The discussions during the briefing showed the commitment of all parties to improve and expand the reach of effective post-TB rehabilitation practices. Dr. Stellah Mpangama and Dr. Daisy Lekharu's visit has been incredibly insightful and productive. Their feedback and support are invaluable as we continue to advance our mission of providing exemplary post-TB care.

We extend our deepest gratitude to Dr. Mpangama and Dr. Lekharu for their visit and the wealth of knowledge they shared. Thanks to the continued support of the Global Fund and NTLEP, Paradiso remains dedicated to enhancing the lives of TB survivors through innovative rehabilitation programs.



Paradiso TB Patients Trust  
P O Box 2436,  
Lilongwe, Area 36  
Along M1 Road, Malawi.

