



# Mulanje Mission Hospital

## Newsletter

April 2020

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### Editorial Comment

Dear beloved readers,

This edition highlights the COVID-19 pandemic and the response MMH has undertaken to combat its consequences.

Our first priority in this situation is to continue providing good quality essential healthcare and prevent more infections among staff and patients.

The hospital has procured adequate medicines and medical supplies to cater for at least two months, and enough intravenous fluids and examination gloves for a longer period. These quantities will help in delivering good health care services to our patients without interruptions resulting from restrictions imposed by governments on move-

*By Dickson Chisale*

ments of people and goods. Most border posts to neighbouring countries are now closed.

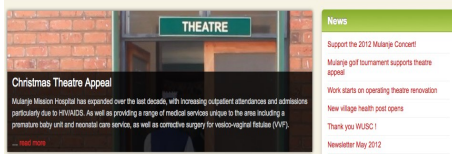
Water and soap are provided for everyone coming in to wash hands before entering the wards, and the number of visitors is restricted. Clinicians and nurses go around the villages teaching chiefs and their subjects about COVID-19 and also how they can prevent getting and spreading the disease. They follow-up individuals who have come from other countries, assess them and where possible quarantine those with signs and symptoms of COVID-19. On page 2 and 3, you can read more.

We wish you a blessed Easter.

*Dickson Chisale*

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### Congratulations!

We are happy with the graduation of Limbikane Namonjeza (*picture*), who finished a degree programme in Palliative Care recently. Well done!

Apart from his work as general Clinical Officer, Limbikane has travelled to and from Uganda over the past years, where he did his studies at Makerere University in Kampala.

Limbikane is involved in the clinical aspects of palliative care and in mentoring other health care workers through the Chifundo programme. Through this programme MMH supports 6 facilities in our region.

Palliative care in the Malawian context includes complex scenarios such as the treatment of cancer on a background of HIV/AIDS and the accompaniment of



children with incurable disease. We trust the skills gained by Limbikane will help these vulnerable groups.

Corona virus is challenging health systems globally. The rate of its transmission is worrisome. Recently, Malawi confirmed its first three cases, currently, there are nine confirmed cases and one death has been registered.

Since March 2020, Mulanje Mission Hospital in collaboration with Mulanje Mission Nursing College started preparing for possible COVID-19 cases. A task force composing of multidisciplinary team members was put in place. The team is responsible for overseeing all activities related to COVID-19.

Currently visits to the hospital have been restricted. Hand washing facilities are provided at the main gates and entrances to various departments. The team is working in collaboration with the Mulanje District Hospital to make sure that all people coming from countries that have registered above 100 COVID-19 cases are actively followed

up. The task force is teaching traditional leaders as well as village health committees in its catchment area to promote awareness of the disease. After these awareness trainings, MMH expects Chiefs and Village Health

committees to assist in suspect case identification and communicating to the task force team.

A problem, as in many countries, is the increasing price of medical supplies and breakdowns in global supply chains. Most of the medication and supplies used in Malawi come from Asia through South African ports and through Mozambique.

MMH therefore did a large order of medical supplies at the beginning of the COVID crisis when these supply lines were still open. Hospital management launched an emergency appeal, to which many already have responded (see page 3). With this support, the hospital now has stocks personal protective equipment as well as infection control supplies like soap, sanitizers, goggles etc. There will be more need for these supplies in the country when the number of cases increases.



**Diverson Mkwapatira—Team leader COVID –19 task force**

## Preparing community leaders



**Training session of village Chiefs on COVID-19 prevention and management, March 2020. Rumours and myths about COVID-19, such as those on social media, are discussed.**

Hello! My name is Dr Charlotte Kane and I'm from Northern Ireland. In 2016, I spent 2 months at Mulanje Mission for my medical student elective and always longed to return. I have taken a year out before starting Paediatric training back in the UK and am sadly already halfway through my 6 months working here. My work is based on the Children's Ward and in Nursery. It can be difficult and sometimes heart-breaking but the rewards far outweigh the challenges. I have the privilege and joy of calling many inspiring clinical and nursing staff my colleagues and am constantly amazed at their tenacity despite limited means. From paediatric nurses who know exactly how to help a seizing child with malaria, to the nursery nurses in Kangaroo Mother Care who are experts at nurturing newborns.

What I am learning here will help me be a better doctor in the future – mostly how much I still have to learn! I am inspired by the enthusiasm of so many our staff to increase their skills and knowledge to better serve the people of Mulanje. I really feel there is something special here. A supportive community where everyone works together to do the best for patients – doctors, clinicians, nurses, patient assistants, managers, pharmacists, lab technicians, maintenance, security, and even the ambulance drivers. Often in the face of great difficulty and without the resources and support structures that we take for granted in the UK, yet they do not lose heart. I am proud to be part of this amazing team even for a short time.



Dr Charlotte Kane ▲

As the Lonely Planet guide succinctly put it, Malawians “remain in adversity among the most decent I have met.” In these trying times Mulanje Mission continues to do amazing work and would appreciate your prayers and any donations you are able to give.

## COVID-19 Appeal—by MMH Management

All who read this message will realize the huge stress the COVID pandemic puts on countries across the world. Malawi is less prepared for the pandemic in comparison with most other countries.

Understaffed, weak public health care facilities, poor availability of personal protective equipment and testkits and very few intensive care options are a daily reality. With the disruption of global supply chains, access to drugs and medical supplies becomes increasingly difficult and expensive. Mulanje Mission Hospital with its reputation of good clinical care will likely see an influx of COVID-19 and other cases from the whole surrounding area. We are getting prepared to help those who seek our care, but require additional funds to do so effectively.

**Please consider a donation to help us making maximum impact during this difficult time.**

There is a lot we *can* do. Health education; provision of infection prevention supplies such as soap and disinfectant, provision of protective equipment for health care workers and patients and strict adherence to infection prevention measures. For very sick patients extra oxygen concentrators and other intensive treatments are

required and can make the difference between life and death.

As all around the world work together to control this crisis, please also stand with the people of Malawi and Mulanje and consider a donation, no matter how small.

**£ 1, € 1,10 or \$ 1,20 will provide a set of disposable personal protective equipment** to one nurse, cleaner or clinician.

**£ 1800, € 2000 or \$ 2200 will provide one oxygen concentrating machine** that will work on our solar system.

Please use the account details on the frontpage, or email [director@mmh.mw](mailto:director@mmh.mw). For those in the Netherlands, please contact us too as your contribution could possibly be doubled. Thank you !

## Beekeeping provides income to small farmers - *By: Hastings E. Chitengu*

Bee farming (apiculture) is one of the neglected forms of farming in Malawi. The sustainable Livelihoods Project at MMH introduced farmers in its catchment area to this farming. Farmers are happy because it is yielding results with farmers in the trade now earning up to K2,600.00 for a kilo of honey.

The initiative by Mulanje Mission Hospital already has over 200 farmers from Traditional Authorities Chikumbu, Mabuka and Nkanda. The project is only two years old and is banking on quick returns with farmers who have 10 hives earning up to K780, 000.00 annually. “We realized that most farmers lack knowledge on the economic and agricultural importance of Apiculture. Although many players in the agricultural sector are supporting agribusiness initiatives, most of that has made the venture to be shunned by

many rural farmers” said John Mpatama, chair of Mlatho Hills Conservation Committee.

The little attention accorded to this promising sector prompted Mulanje Mission Hospital’s Sustainable Livelihoods Project to enlighten farmers on the less labour intensive venture that guarantees relatively large returns. “Beekeeping, unlike other agricultural ventures requires less attention and space. You just hang the hives at an appropriate point and wait to harvest the honey after four months. Bees do not need medication, feeds among others” added Mpatama.

Mulanje Mission Hospital having realized the challenges to successful commercial beekeeping, like poor standard beehives among others, set out to eliminate them with the main focus on access to modern bee hives and other accessories.

The projects campaign is rooting for quality honey production. The honey market is filled with a lot of fake honey which is affecting the growth of the sector. When MMH ventured into the industry, we realized that it was hard for one to get pure honey with some unscrupulous traders going to an extent of faking clients with molasses. Quality honey being a key point in the project’s work has driven MMH to partner with the farmers and provide accessories for harvesting honey. MMH offers ready markets to its farmers at an average of K2, 600.00 per kilo. Currently, MMH is sourcing funds for the purchase of machinery for processing of honey and honey products (Wax) into polish, candles and many more. This work has recently been supported by Blacksburg Presbyterian Church (Virginia), Fane Valley, the Good Little Company and Stichting Steun Malawi.



*Clockwise, from above left: (1) dressing up for honey harvesting, (2) smoke apparatus using cow dung to calm bees, (3) beehive, lid removed (4), freshly harvested honeycomb*

Mulanje Mission Hospital continues to provide care and support to orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) through its community-based orphan care project. OVC are offered support through supplementary feeding, free medical care when they are sick, essentials for primary and secondary schools such as uniforms, shoes and school bags, and livestock like goats for their economic empowerment. Those under one year are given lactogen (infant formula milk) and those above one year get Likhuni porridge flour (maize and soya beans blend plus vitamins) in order to prevent malnutrition.

Through this holistic approach the life of OVC has changed health wise and the project is now prepar-

ing them for an independent life through vocational skills training to those who are out of school. This kind of economic empowerment to orphans and vulnerable children will assist them to gain skills and support themselves. The aim of the project is to promote the living standards and self-reliance of orphans and vulnerable children at community level. The vocational skills project rolled out in 2018, so far 29 orphans and vulnerable children have been trained in different courses like welding, solar installation, carpentry, brick laying, mechanics and tailoring.

As the project continues in 2020, MMH through OVC project has also enrolled 12 OVC to do informal vocational skills in welding,

motor vehicle mechanics and tailoring. MMH through this same project would want to see OVC children starting up their own small-scale businesses after gaining some skills.

We are now looking at providing tool boxes which graduating beneficiaries can use after training to set up a business. This will be done in a way that that tool box beneficiaries repay the cost so that others should also benefit.

Many thanks to supporters to Presbyterian World services and Development (PWS&D) and the Good Little Company for a wonderful support that is changing lives of OVC children in Mulanje.



*Some of the youth in the Vocational Skills training program with their newly received work suits. Girls are being trained, too! ▲*

**We wish you a peaceful and joyful Easter !**