

JONEHA

NEWSLETTER

NAC CALLS FOR CONTINUED MULTI-SECTORAL RESPONSE



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NAC called for a continued multi-sectoral response to sustain the gains against HIV

••• Editorial

Welcome to JONEHA 2025 Quarter 2 Newsletter. So much has already happened this far in the year. But the most notable in the health sector has been the change in the funding landscape prompted by the United States Government external aid policy that effected some losses in the support the national HIV response has traditionally been receiving. For those working in this area the fear has been potential risk of losing gains made over many years. To this effect a consortium of Civil Society organisations working on health advocacy convened a national dialogue whose theme was “sustaining the gains: advancing community led solutions amidst declining donor support”. We applaud this initiative for many reasons. First it managed to bring key national stakeholders to a round table discussion to explore how the country can move forward towards domestic resource mobilization for sustainability. Secondly; it brought up opportunities upon which the road to sustainability are premised. These include expediting implementation of the Health Financing Strategy and the review of the draft Sustainability Roadmap. Thirdly; the national dialogue gave hope that it is possible to nationally heal from the wounds caused by the new global funding landscape.

This however demands effective multi-sectoral participation. It also means asking ourselves hard questions as raised by the academia during the national dialogue. Responses to these questions include efficient use of available resources either through prioritization or cutting on waste. Delegates to the national dialogue further agreed on promoting mindset change on issues of domestic resource mobilization. If we all believe that we have to take ownership on our health it follows that we have to demonstrate actions that contribute towards a national purse beyond the current practice. Or simply put; we have to go an extra mile for self-sustaining.



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NAC CALLS FOR CONTINUED MULTI-SECTORAL RESPONSE

By Enayi Mkuwira



Dr Beatrice Matanje


The Chief Executive Officer of the National AIDS Commission (NAC) Dr. Beatrice Matanje has called for a continued multi-sectoral response to sustain the gains against HIV and AIDS in Malawi. She was speaking on 26th. June 2025 at Crossroads Hotel during a national dialogue organized by a consortium of Civil Society organisations working in the health sector. The theme of the meeting was “sustaining the gains: advancing community led solutions amidst declining donor support”. She observed that the current global funding landscape demands that various sectors in the country continue putting their heads together to mitigate the increasing need for domestic resource mobilization.

Outlining the gains so far made; Dr. Matanje noted that the country reached the 95:95:95 universal targets against HIV and AIDS in 2024 long before the set 2025 deadline. Again she said HIV prevalence among adults 15+ years was at 7% by 2024 down from 14% in the 1990's.

New annual HIV infections has dropped by 90%, from a peak of 115,000 in 1990 to just 12,000 in 2024. AIDS-related deaths have also declined sharply from a peak of 80,000 in 2003 to 14,000 annually in 2024. Around 92% of all HIV positive adults aged 15 years and above are on ART. She attributed these gains to the funding support provided to Malawi over the years by international partners like the Global Fund and PEPFAR. However; these key partners now expect the country to increase its domestic resource mobilization for sustainability.

On sustainability; Matanje said long before the changed funding landscape, Malawi started developing a sustainability roadmap. This process was working on the assumption that funding partners would be reducing their support in a phased manner to allow for the country to strengthen its domestic resource mobilization efforts. But as it is the sustainability roadmap has to be redrawn to reflect the new global funding landscape.

It is on demands of the sustainability roadmap that the NAC CEO is calling upon a renewed collaboration among various national players. These include different categories of the public sector beyond health. Again; it is expected that the private sector will now re-engage to demonstrate its contribution towards sustainability of HIV and AIDS in particular and health funding in general in Malawi. Dr. Matanje retorted that gone is the time when HIV was viewed as a standalone issue for the Ministry of health. Today HIV is among broader health issues that need an integrated approach and participation of all sectors interested in human capital for national growth.



“It is expected that the private sector will now re-engage to demonstrate its contribution towards sustainability of HIV and AIDS”...

MEDIA URGED TO COUNTER HIV MISINFORMATION AS MALAWI SUSTAINS HIV SERVICES

By Starphel Sithole

The Ministry of Health has assured the public that HIV prevention, testing, and treatment services remain available across Malawi, despite the United States Government policy on foreign aid. The assurance was delivered during a media engagement campaign organized by the Network of Journalists Living with HIV (JONEHA), which focused on addressing the misinformation around the funding suspension and reinforcing public confidence in the health system.

Speaking at the event, Dr. Rabson Kachala, Deputy Director for HIV, STI and Viral Hepatitis in the Ministry of Health, highlighted that government has activated contingency plans to ensure continuity of HIV services, especially in areas most impacted by funding disruptions.

“We have put in place strategies to ensure that services continue without interruption,” said Dr. Kachala. “No one will be left behind. Our priority is to sustain access to life-saving treatment and care.”

Dr. Kachala disclosed that, as of March 2025, approximately 991,000 people in Malawi are living with HIV, of whom 945,000 are currently on antiretroviral therapy (ART). He also noted that 46,000 people remain undiagnosed, underscoring the ongoing need to promote HIV testing services.

David Kamkwamba, Executive Director of JONEHA, urged journalists to play an active role in disseminating accurate information about the availability of HIV services and the importance of treatment adherence.

“People need to know their HIV status and continue accessing ART and viral load monitoring services. These services are still available in our health facilities,” Kamkwamba emphasized. “The media must help combat misinformation and reassure the public that the health system is still responding effectively.” Kamkwamba also commended government’s Health Financing Strategy, which aims to increase domestic resource mobilization, improve efficiency in health spending, and build resilience in HIV service delivery through partnerships with development partners.

The media engagement campaign funded by the United Nations Joint Program on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) highlighted the critical role of journalists in shaping public understanding, reducing stigma, and holding institutions accountable during this period of financial uncertainty. Participants agreed that accurate and consistent media reporting is essential to sustaining progress in the national HIV response.



Participants at the media engagement campaign on service availability and funding freeze pose for a group photo

JONEHA USES COMMUNITY MONITORING TO COUNTER HIV FUNDING FREEZE MISCONCEPTIONS

By Meclina Chirwa

The Network of Journalists Living with HIV and AIDS (JONEHA) has stressed the importance of community-led monitoring in combating misinformation surrounding the recent HIV funding freeze in Mulanje and Phalombe districts.

According to Hastings Mwanza, Advocacy and Mobilisation Officer at JONEHA, engaging directly with communities has been key in addressing public fears and correcting widespread misconceptions.

“We have been working closely with communities to address fears and misinformation about the funding freeze,” Mwanza said. “Through our community-led monitoring, we ask community members what they’ve heard and clarify misinformation using content from Ministry of Health circulars.”

Mwanza disclosed that JONEHA has met with 24 community groups — comprising over 240 people — to explain the actual implications of the funding freeze.

“Many community members were afraid that antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) would run out of stock,” he explained. “But we’ve been orienting them based on the Ministry’s assurance that ARVs remain available.”

He added that much of the concern stems from a misunderstanding of the funding freeze, with some believing it meant a complete halt to HIV treatment services.

“That’s not the case,” he clarified. “ARVs in Malawi are procured through the Global Fund, and we’re working hard to ensure communities are properly informed about the continued availability of services.”

To strengthen their efforts, JONEHA has incorporated specific indicators in its community-led monitoring tools to assess how the funding freeze has impacted local health facilities. The organization is also tracking how government circulars are being implemented on the ground.

Looking ahead, Mwanza said JONEHA plans to expand its outreach through radio programs and sensitization meetings with healthcare workers, to ensure recipients of care receive accurate and consistent information.

“We are advocating for closure of service gaps and for accurate communication across all levels of care,” he concluded.

PRIVATE SECTOR REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY HEALTH

By Christer Kalukusha

The Malawi Confederation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (MCCCI) has reaffirmed its commitment to advancing health priorities, particularly HIV response and community health, through inclusive, sustainable, and locally anchored solutions. Speaking during a national dialogue held at Crossroads Hotel in Lilongwe on 26th June 2025, MCCCI Councillor Mr. Bryson Mkhomaanthu, emphasized the private sector's critical role in strengthening Malawi's health systems. The event, organized by a consortium of civil society organizations advocating for health, was held under the theme "Sustaining the Gains: Advancing Community-Led Solutions Amidst Declining Donor Support." In his statement of purpose, Mr. Mkhomaanthu underscored that the private sector is not just a development partner but also an innovator and investor in health systems, service delivery, and public awareness. He outlined five key areas where the private sector can significantly contribute:

Strategic Partnerships: Advocating for stronger collaboration between government, private industry, and civil society to pool resources and expertise, thereby improving grassroots access to health services.

Support for Community Innovation: Promoting community-driven health solutions aligned with national development plans, and ensuring their financial and institutional sustainability.

Workplace Health Initiatives: Leading the way in implementing workplace health programs, including HIV/AIDS interventions, to enhance employee well-being and strengthen Malawi's labor market resilience.

Local Manufacturing and Supply Chains: Boosting local production of essential health products to reduce import dependence and stimulate job creation.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): Investing in interventions that address social determinants of health such as education, nutrition, and environmental wellbeing.

Mr. Mkhomaanthu concluded by reaffirming MCCCI's commitment to a healthier and economically empowered Malawi, where public-private collaboration delivers equitable and impactful health outcomes. He called for more strategic engagements to transform Malawi's health landscape and sustain progress amidst shifting donor dynamics.

GROWING THROUGH CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

By Chikowa Kamwatonga

Founder and Technical Advisor for Paradiso Tuberculosis Trust Mara Kumbweza Banda says Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) is a good process for any upcoming organisation. She said this during the 3rd Organizational Capacity Assessment meeting held at their office in area 36 in Lilongwe from 24th to 25th June 2025. She said the journey of what people know as Paradiso today started in 2000 when a concept was developed but got established in 2003 when it started as a small community based organisation. Along the way; a Norwegian partner got interested in their work and started supporting them. The partner quickly observed capacity issues with the young organisation as Kumbweza Banda remembers. “They felt that we didn’t have a structured way of calling for their support. It was just like a mind moving about. We wanted to do this and that. So, they discussed with us and suggested that may be we needed to have an organizational capacity assessment which could actually give us a good sense of direction”

That’s how they got into the first capacity assessment in 2013. “That’s when we realized that we had to bind our thoughts together. That our thoughts were just meandering and we didn’t really have a sense of direction. This tool uses four frameworks where you have to assess yourself. So, you are put into groups and you do the assessment of all those levels” narrates the Technical Advisor fondly called the TA in the organisation. She said during this first assessment they realized exactly where they were. So, having realized their grey areas or the weak spots in their operations, they began to build up their strength on what to do about them.

“So, it became a good process for us. Then we had the second OCA in 2017, which showed a great improvement on our part. That’s when we also migrated from a small community organization to a fully-fledged local NGO with all the professional human resource in place” says the founder. After appreciating the benefit of OCA; Paradiso developed an appetite for it. Hence; having another one in 2025. Summarizing her experience, she said “It is worth the while because it really shows you where you need to drive harder and where you need to slow down”

On his part Bruce Matewere the Executive Director said “I think from the experience when I joined Paradiso in 2014, we’ve had one OCA. I think one of the things that we saw from that OCA is that we’re able to see clearly in terms of where we wanted to be and how the approaches we’re using at the time were not really aligned to that. So we had to rectify after the report came back. We had

to make plans and make remedies for some of the challenges that we were facing and from that last OCA in 2017, there’s been a lot of growth based on that self-reflection”.

Focusing on the present, Matewere said “... because we have really realigned ourselves, we’ve changed, revised our vision statement, mission statement, sort of like polished our values and our systems.



Mara Kumbweza

A lot of things are happening in the organization. We're now a Global Fund sub recipient which shows a lot of growth that has happened. So this OCA has also helped us to reflect on the parts that we're taking on board with this refreshed vision and what parts we're defining and what new strategies we might need to work on because we have really realigned ourselves.

Like yesterday, one thing we learned was that as management, we might feel that we're doing the best for the people but different perspectives that were shared yesterday also reflected on some of the things that they would want us to prioritize. We're also in the process of our strategic plan which is ending this year as it was from 2021 to 2025. So we are going to have to develop a new strategic plan. This OCA will also help us to make sure that the strategies that we're putting in are really reflective of what people really want on the ground and processes and approaches that can get us to where we want to be. So I think these are very important processes that also shape in terms of when you're applying for grants, what should we prioritize in the grants, how can we tell our grants to sort of like suit what the donors or the core is wanting but also suit what we want to see on the ground. That can only happen if you have assessed yourself and seen where the gaps are. I think that's the essence of having processes like OCA because it's not just you as management, it's also other eyes and how they see you and how they've worked with you and how they've experienced you. They're also giving you feedback so that you can improve or continue the thing that you're doing well".

Charles Banda; Director of the Capacity Development Consultants (CADECO) for 25 years has been behind Paradiso's growth through capacity assessment. He had this to say about Paradiso. "It's very interesting that I started getting to know Paradiso in 2013. By that time, they were about 13 years old and basically it was a single organization that we refer to as a pioneer organization. Everything was centered around the director then Mara, and so the characteristics would be described as those that are found in an organization that is led by a person and maybe five, three people who are usually volunteers. I have been associated with Paradiso from that time to date.

Initially when we found them in 2013, it was a typical pioneer organization in the face-to-face. In the face-to-face, we mean an organization for example that does not have policy systems and procedures. Maybe even the role of the board is not there, it's not clear.

There could be some people who are both working as management and the board. So, the growth of Paradiso is amazing because now if you look at Paradiso, it is in line with what we call the independent phase which is the phase after the pioneer organization. Meaning that it is a phase that comes because of changes that happen in the organization. For example, the organization now started developing a strategic plan, had also started employing staff who were qualified to do different pieces of work and it started specializing.

At the moment, Paradiso is a typical and independent organization which is even beginning to move towards what we call as interdependent meaning that they are not just happy about being an independent organization doing everything alone. They are now thinking about how can we get others involved in the work that they are doing and how can they support. One of the characteristics that I have noted is that Paradiso

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Timothy Filisoni

WITH COMMUNITIES WE CAN END AIDS

By Hellen Chitseko

UNAIDS Malawi says we should not only sustain the gains against AIDS but finish what was started. David Chipanta, Malawi's UNAIDS Country Director made this remark during national dialogue organized by a consortium of civil society organisations working on health advocacy. The meeting whose theme was "sustaining the gains: advancing community led solutions amidst declining donor support" was held at Crossroads Hotel in Lilongwe on 26th June 2025.

Stating elements of the national HIV landscape, Chipanta noted a hard truth that HIV was not over. In 2024 alone Malawi reported 14,000 people that acquired HIV influenced by 83 adolescent girls and young women every week of the year. This means losing focus now would mean risking reversing all the country has done to fight against HIV and AIDS. He said there is need to face new challenges in the continued fight against the epidemic. These include shrinking donor support, rising economic pressures, shrinking space for civil society, growing threats to human rights and gender equality. He also noted that HIV thrives where there is stigma and discrimination, gender based violence and inequality.

For the above challenges Chipanta recommended various best practices for adoption. Specifically, he mentioned the rights based approach, gender responsiveness, community leadership and fully funding community interventions. He emphasized that communities should not just be called for ticking the box or under tokenism. Communities must meaningfully be engaged as engines of impact because it is them who know where gaps in the response exist. Communities build trust, innovate and reach the unreached. Communities connect people to life saving services. He therefore called on players in the national HIV response to let communities lead. This demands empowering them to shape policies and programs that affect them. Malawi needs to continue demonstrating this approach to the world.



David Chipanta,

MALAWI URGED TO SAFEGUARD HIV GAINS THROUGH COMMUNITY-LED, INCLUSIVE RESPONSE

By Starphel Sithole

This was a key takeaway from the recent Global AIDS Strategy National Consultation Meeting in Lilongwe, organised by UNAIDS.

Linly Chewere, Director of the HIV, STI, and Viral Hepatitis Department, representing the Minister of Health, acknowledged progress in reducing new infections and AIDS-related deaths.

“Let this Strategy guide our future response, ensuring no one is left behind,” she said, affirming the government’s commitment to sustaining gains and investing in the HIV response.

UNAIDS Country Director David Chipanta highlighted the potential reversal of progress due to funding cuts.

“Our hope lies in understanding what works,” he stated. “Life-saving innovations should be accessible to all, and community-led interventions require global solidarity.”

German Ambassador Ute König noted that the new strategy must reflect recent global shifts, including the funding crisis.

“Hard-won gains must be protected and accelerated,” she emphasised.

“We need to step up HIV prevention efforts, tackle societal barriers, and maintain momentum in treatment scale-up.”

Dr. Beatrice Matanje, CEO of the National AIDS Commission, described the Global AIDS Strategy as a “powerful instrument for change” and a unified roadmap.

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Hard-won gains must be protected and accelerated: Ute König

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GROWING THROUGH CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

now is supporting the establishment of networks and they also belong to groups locally and internationally looking at how they can enhance the work and make it more effective in supporting the Malawian population”

Asked about how Paradiso is facing the challenging issue of resource mobilization, Banda had this to say. “Paradiso is also facing the same challenge because they used to receive a good chunk of resources, various resources from USAID. However, one good thing that has always been with Paradiso is their stance in not relying on one single donor and in fact they have now diversified very much their appeal in terms of external funding as well as embarking on local funding.

They are putting in place plans to see how they could get resources locally much more than if possible what they get outside. This is a big challenge and this is new in Malawi because most organizations rely on outside funding. But with Paradiso, although the funding from outside is important, they are also saying okay what can we do locally”.

On the thorny issue of accountability, Banda further commented about Paradiso. “I can assure you that most organizations have failed due to issues of transparency. When you talk about transparency and accountability, we are not only talking about the use of resources, how we manage finances, it’s also about how we work, what impact are we creating, what is changing in the lives of the people that we work with.

I think in that area Paradiso is a shining star in terms of working with clients and clients talking good. You can even see it going to the field with them or without them and meeting clients in the areas where they work in the districts and talk to them. They will tell you their story and what benefits they have associated with Paradiso. This is what makes the difference. Can we demonstrate impact? Are we claiming the impact ourselves or the beneficiaries are claiming that on our behalf?”

On the link between capacity assessment and organizational growth, Banda concluded. “It is linked. First, for an organization to truly grow, we must understand, through reflecting on our capacities. What do we have? What don’t we have? What can we do? What can’t we do? Can we seek help to build the capacities? This is very important because when you understand who you are, your strengths and challenges, then you are a better organization to address these and even to give out what you have. There is no organization that can give out what they don’t have, but do you know what you have and what you don’t have? This is where organizational capacity assessment comes in and mirrors your strengths for you to actually see”.



... First, for an organization to truly grow, we must understand, through reflecting on our capacities.

FROM PAGE 11

MALAWI URGED TO SAFEGUARD HIV GAINS THROUGH COMMUNITY-LED, INCLUSIVE RESPONSE

She credited Malawi's progress towards the 95-95-95 targets to strong leadership, community resilience, strategic partnerships, and UNAIDS support.

However, she acknowledged persistent challenges, including inequities affecting key populations and shrinking donor support.

The meeting concluded that the forthcoming strategy must address these inequalities, focusing on key populations, adolescent girls and young women, children, men, and HIV in humanitarian settings.

Key recommendations from participants included expanding community-based Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) and Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) refill systems, addressing

stigma and discrimination in healthcare, and securing sustained funding for community-led interventions.

Long-term goals involve advancing community-led approaches and promoting gender equality.

The consultation was attended by a wide range of stakeholders, including representatives from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Gender, National AIDS Commission, civil society organizations such as the Network of Journalists Living with HIV (JONEHA) and the Malawi Network of Service Organisations (MANASO), the National Planning Commission, and members of the donor community and UN agencies.

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About Us

The registered trustees of Network of Journalists Living with HIV (JONEHA) is a media Non- governmental organization created by Malawian journalists to participate effectively in the national HIV and AIDS response by addressing individual and professional needs.

This is a result of an earlier PANOS Southern Africa observation that while the media was communicating HIV and AIDS interventions, it needed more targeting in HIV and AIDS rather than just being used as agents of information.

VISION

Effective media advocate for quality health service delivery.

MISSION

Coordinate media practitioners for responsive health reporting and documentation.

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OBJECTIVES

1. Promote the uptake of services such as HIV Testing Services (HTS), COVID 19 Prevention and Testing, Prevention of Mother To Child Transmission (PMTCT) and Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) among media practitioners and their audiences
2. Harness the power of media in the National HIV and AIDS and related conditions response.
3. Increase risk perception to HIV infection among media practitioners and their audiences.
4. Reduce stigma and discrimination due to HIV and AIDS and related conditions among media practitioners and their audiences
5. Engage media practitioners in HIV and AIDS and related conditions communication for media practitioners and their audiences.
6. Identify critical needs of media practitioners and their audiences living with HIV and related conditions at personal and professional levels.
7. Involve media practitioners and their audiences living with HIV and related conditions in HIV and related conditions research.

VALUES STATEMENT

- i. Respect: We treat all people with dignity and respect.
- ii. Stewardship: We honour our heritage by being socially, financially and environmentally responsible.
- iii. Ethics: We strive to meet the highest ethical standards
- iv. Learning: We challenge each other to strive for excellence and to continually learn.
- v. Innovation: We embrace continuous improvement, bold creativity and change.