In Solidarity
MBCA Board of Trustees

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In Solidarity We Can

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THE CHAIRMAN’S MESSAGE

As we draw closer to 2015, I would like all of us in the private sector to reflect on the Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) six (6), whereby the world over including Malawi have to halt and reverse the spread of HIV and AIDS by 2015. As the private sector we employ the majority of the 15-49 age group which also has the highest HIV prevalence rate at 10.6%. We need to reflect on how in the next two (2) years we can contribute to reducing HIV prevalence in the country and halt the spread of HIV and AIDS.

The MBCA has organized a number of activities and programmes to ensure that the Private sector is indeed mainstreaming HIV and AIDS. These include the review of its Strategic Plan among others to ensure that HIV and AIDS issues are tackled accordingly. I would like to encourage members to support the MBCA as it reviews its Strategic Plan to ensure that the new Strategic Plan is reflective of the private sector’s HIV and AIDS challenges. The new Strategic Plan will help the MBCA in the implementation of relevant HIV and AIDS programmes and activities.

The private sector offers a unique opportunity for mainstreaming HIV and AIDS information and services. I would, therefore, like to encourage all member companies to start carrying HIV and AIDS messages on their products, receipts and any other places that HIV and AIDS information can be displayed. This will ensure that HIV and AIDS programming is not only targeting employees but customers and the surrounding communities as well.

I would like to take this opportunity to call on all companies that do not have HIV and AIDS Workplace Policies to develop Workplace Policies. Through the implementation of sound HIV and AIDS Workplace Policies and programmes and fair employment practices free of stigma and discrimination, people living with HIV can live to realize their potential and contribute positively to the business’s profits. The MBCA will avail itself to offer technical support in the development of HIV and AIDS Workplace Policies.

Lastly I would like to thank members for your contribution to the Newsletter and for sharing information. My appreciation and sincere gratitude goes out to the National AIDS Commission for the financial support to the MBCA. I would also like to thank my fellow members of the MBCA Board of Trustees for their dedication in providing policy direction to the MBCA Secretariat for it to execute its programme activities.

KENWELL KHUMBANYIWA
MBCA CHAIRMAN

DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE

I would like to thank all private sector members for participating in the International Candlelight Memorial functions at national and district level as well as for organizing in house activities. The theme for this year is “In Solidarity”. The theme is very fitting because I believe that together we can fight, halt and reverse the spread of HIV and AIDS, thus ensuring a healthy and productive private sector. I am very grateful to Press Corporation Limited and Medical Aid Society of Malawi (MASM) for sponsoring T-shirts, Golf-shirts and Caps for Blantyre District International Candle Light Memorial function which took place on 23rd May 2013 at Chirimba Primary School grounds.

The MBCA has been commended in the 2012 GLOBAL AIDS RESPONSE PROGRESS REPORT: Malawi Country Report for 2010 and 2011 as an example of the best practice in mainstreaming HIV and AIDS in the workplace. The report says that the MBCA has done well in terms of ensuring that HIV and AIDS is effectively mainstreamed in the private sector. This recommendation is not just for the MBCA Secretariat but for the whole private sector because this was achieved through collective effort.

I would also like to thank member companies for reporting on HIV and AIDS programmes and activities that you have been carrying out. May I also remind members to submit your activities Biannual Reports for 2013 to the MBCA Secretariat. However for those that have not been reporting it is important that we report on the same because HIV and AIDS programmes and activities for the private sector are under reported at national level due to non-reporting by some of the private sector members.

I would also like to remind members to renew their membership to the MBCA as well as call upon those that have not yet joined the MBCA to do so.

Lastly let me thank all MBCA members for the continued support that they render to the MBCA Secretariat. This strong collaboration between members and the MBCA Secretariat has enabled the MBCA to fulfill its obligation in the response to HIV and AIDS in Malawi. It is my hope that this collaboration will continue to flourish for the effective mainstreaming of HIV and AIDS in the private sector.

ANDREW CHIKOPA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
The Malawi Business Coalition Against HIV and AIDS (MBCA) on Monday 28th October 2012 drilled steering committee members from a number of organizations on how to strengthen HIV and AIDS activities in their respective workplaces. The training, which took place in Blantyre involved steering committee members from Vanguard Life, Sunbird Tourism, ESCOM and FMB.

MBCA Capacity Building Coordinator Treza Chunda said the objective of the training was to equip steering committee members to understand how to plan and implement HIV and AIDS programmes in the workplace. She noted that 10.6% of people infected with HIV are within the productive age group of 15-49 years. “HIV and AIDS threatens the survival of organizations. It won’t go away if we remain silent. We have to do something about it.” Said Chunda

She said similar training workshops will be held in Blantyre on November 8th and 9th 2012. Chunda encouraged organizations which are not yet members of the MBCA to join the MBCA so that they can access technical support on issues of HIV and AIDS.

The Malawi Business Coalition Against HIV and AIDS’ (MBCA) Capacity Building Coordinator Treza Chunda disclosed this in an interview in Mzuzu where MBCA conducted a review meeting for HIV and AIDS programmes within the private sector.

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The MZuzu review meeting which targeted private sector companies in the Northern region was the first in a series of meetings that MBCA held across the country. The meetings are aimed at sharing the best practices in HIV and AIDS programming and activities implementation by the private sector. The meeting also provides a platform for members to review and discuss the best practices and challenges that they face in implementing HIV and AIDS workplace activities in order to learn from each other.

One of the participants making a point during the Mzuzu review meeting at Sunbird Mzuzu Hotel

Lack of commitment by some members of senior management in the HIV and AIDS response within organizations is hampering effective HIV and AIDS response and fight within the private sector.

Malawi Business Coalition Against HIV and AIDS’ (MBCA) Capacity Building Coordinator Treza Chunda disclosed this in an interview in Mzuzu where MBCA conducted a review meeting for HIV and AIDS programmes within the private sector.

The MBCA mobilizes, coordinates and advocates for the development and implementation of HIV and AIDS programmes in the private sector for the sustenance of businesses and the lives of employees, their families and surrounding communities.

“We are planning to meet management of new companies as a way of expanding our outreach so that they can be members of the MBCA” said Chunda

She was confident that the private sector response was having a positive impact on the HIV and AIDS fight in Malawi.

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One of the participants at the meeting Winiwa Chirambo, HIV and AIDS Coordinator for Northern Region Water Board said that the meeting was helpful in that it encouraged interaction and solidarity in the fight against HIV and AIDS within the private sector.

“The meeting helped us to learn from other companies on issues that we are deficient in, in terms of HIV and AIDS programming and implementation. It’s also helpful for companies to come up with ways that the private sector can complement the government’s efforts in HIV and AIDS programming.” Said Chirambo

MBCA also shared emerging issues on HIV and AIDS and disseminated information on pertinent issues about operations and upcoming MBCA activities.
World AIDS Day (WAD) commemorated on the 1st of December each year, offers an opportunity for people the world over to unite in the fight against HIV and AIDS. The theme for the World AIDS Day Campaign for 2012-2015 is getting to Zero, Zero New Infections, Zero AIDS Related Deaths and Zero Stigma and Discrimination.

Malawi joined the rest of the World on 1st December 2012 in commemorating World AIDS Day. Malawi’s HIV prevalence rate for the 15-49 age group is 10.6% and it is estimated that at least 1 million people are living with HIV. Malawi has an estimated 70,000 AIDS related deaths each year.

The Private sector with the coordination of the Malawi Business Coalition Against HIV and AIDS also carried out in house commemoration for World AIDS Day.

**ESCOM FOR GETTING TO ZERO**

The Electricity Supply Commission of Malawi (ESCOM) is striving to get to zero in accordance with the 2012-2015 theme of “Getting to Zero, Zero New Infections, Zero AIDS Related Deaths and Zero Stigma and Discrimination” with ESCOM giving a special focus to Zero New Infections.

ESCOM Chief Executive Officer John Kandulu said this in Blantyre where the corporation held activities to commemorate World AIDS Day. Kandulu said ESCOM is mobilizing resources to ensure that it achieves the target.

“We need to encourage everyone from Directors to Zone Leaders to participate in the fight against HIV and AIDS” said Kandulu.

ESCOM’s Capacity building Coordinator Treza Chunda commended ESCOM for organizing the event and also for implementing HIV and AIDS workplace programmes.

The day was marked by a march through the streets of Blantyre, speeches and testimonies by Wonderfulford Walani an ESCOM employee who has been living positively with HIV since 2000. ESCOM commemorated the day on 7th December 2012.

**MBCA TRAINS PEER EDUCATION TRAINERS**

Malawi Business Coalition Against HIV & AIDS (MBCA) on 27th February 2013 started a week long peer education training course in Lilongwe to equip private sector company representatives and informal business sector representatives with skills on HIV & AIDS education.

MBCA’s Communications and Advocacy Coordinator, Lyness Soko, said the training which runs up to 1st March, is aimed at training trainers on enabling positive influence.

“The goal of the peer education training is to equip the participants with knowledge and skills in HIV and AIDS, sexually transmitted infections, tuberculosis and peer education, to enable them positively influence behaviour change among colleagues and to become effective peer education trainers.

“We will equip peer educators with knowledge and skills on peer education, and the role of peer educators, prepare peer educators in becoming effective communicators at their workplace and trainers. The training will also explore HIV and AIDS workplace issues and how the peer educators can address them at their respective workplaces,” said Soko.

MBCA is an umbrella organization accredited by government to primarily coordinate and enhance the private sector response to HIV and AIDS in Malawi.

The coalition is a membership organization for private sector, with 83 paid up member companies.
ARKAY PLASTICS WAD COMMEMORATIONS

Arkay Plastics Industries Limited joined the world in commemorating World AIDS Day on 1st December 2012. The company made a big walk from Makata Industrial Site through Wenela Bus depot and then to the company’s headquarters in Blantyre.

Arkay Plastics General Manager Pandit Bhayesh said they have an HIV and AIDS Workplace Policy that guides their HIV and AIDS activities and programmes. The policy was launched in 2009. Arkay Plastics further reported that under their wellness programme 11 staff members who have come out and revealed their status.

"We are happy to note that Arkay Plastics takes care of its members of staff and has not abandoned the clauses of the policy. We strive to ensure that members of staff affected and infected with HIV are well taken care of. We are committed to the fight against HIV and AIDS," Said Bhayesh.

Arkay's Capacity Building Coordinator Treza Chunda commended Arkay Plastics for the work that they are doing in the fight against HIV and AIDS. She encouraged members of staff to utilize the services and information that the company provides them with.

"MBCA is committed to the fight against HIV and AIDS in the workplace. The MBCA will continue to support companies like Arkay Plastics in fighting HIV and AIDS through capacity building," Said Chunda.

STOP TB IN MY LIFE TIME: THE PRIVATE SECTOR’S ROLE

World TB Day, falling on March 24th each year, is designed to build public awareness about the burden of tuberculosis (TB) worldwide and the status of TB prevention and control efforts. It is also an opportunity to mobilize political and social commitment for further progress. Progress towards global targets for reductions in TB cases and deaths in recent years has been impressive. TB mortality has fallen over 40% worldwide since 1990, and incidence is declining. New TB tools such as rapid diagnostics are helping to transform the response to the disease.

But the global burden remains huge and significant challenges persist. In 2011, there were an estimated 8.7 million new cases of TB and 1.4 million people died from TB such as cough of any duration, fever, night sweats, weight loss in adults and malnutrition in children to seek medical attention as soon as possible. Blantyre should not wait for the cough to get worse or the symptoms to get worse because when they do this they expose more and more people to the TB infection since its airborne.  As such Kasawala said TB affects the productivity of businesses through absenteeism and sometimes through temporary retirement while the affected person is recovering. It is therefore important for the private sector to sensitize its members on TB and to seek early treatment.

Andrew Dimba, a Research Officer at the National TB Programme agrees that the private sector has an important role to play in the fight against TB and implementation of the world the government is doing by sensitizing staff members and surrounding communities on TB. Provide TB screening and refer patients accordingly and to support the training of health care providers in the screening of TB and quality care and support and help and patients.

MBCA with funding from the SHOPS project is building capacity of the privately owned clinics in the provision of quality medical treatment, care and support especially in TB within their catchment area. The main target groups of the project are employees, their families and the surrounding communities of these privately owned clinics. The project also aims to promote access to HIV and AIDS and TB information and behaviour change interventions in the private sector," Said Chuka. Chuka further explained that the MBCA will be monitoring and supervising private sector clinics and hospitals to ensure high standards and quality TB treatment and support in the private sector.

"It is important for people showing signs and symptoms of TB to be seen by an appropriate health provider as soon as possible," Said Kasawala. It is estimated that 85% of TB deaths occur in low and middle income countries. People may not realize that they have an HIV and AIDS Workplace Policy that guides their HIV and AIDS activities and programmes. The policy was launched in 2009. Arkay Plastics further reported that under their wellness programme 11 staff members who have come out and revealed their status.

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"The government has made it a policy that all HIV positive people that are found with TB immediately start ARTs and has also made it a policy to encourage those who are found with TB to access HTC," Explained Dimba.

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Illovo Malawi held a family open day on Saturday 23rd March 2013 in all its branches in Nchalo and Dwangwa.

Illovo Nchalo held an HTC week prior to the open day. Dr. Mkambazi the Head Doctor at Nchalo said that the open day was held to sensitize members on HIV and AIDS and the need for members to go for HIV Testing and Counseling (HTC).

“The HTC week acts as a reminder that we all need to go for HTC and know our HIV status. During the year not a lot of people access HTC but during this week alone we have had 1800 people coming in for HTC. Out of the 1800 people that got tested only 70 were found to be HIV positive. This is good because this shows a reduction in the number of people found positive as compared to last year.” Said Mkambazi

The Guest of Honour at the Open Day was Honourable Harima Daudi, Deputy Minister of Health. The Minister commended the work Illovo is doing in health and reaching out to the community. She said that not only does Illovo provide free medical care to members of staff but the community in Nchalo as well.

“I am happy to note that the HIV and AIDS workplace policy that Illovo has not only caters for the welfare of its staff members but also caters for the surrounding communities as well.” Said Daudi

The Minister also commended MBCA for mainstreaming HIV and AIDS in the private sector and for its continued support to the private sector in HIV and AIDS programme implementation. She further commended MBCA for its collaboration with the Department of HIV and AIDS within the Ministry of Health.

The open day started with a big walk and then an event at Illovo grounds. The open day was characterized by traditional dances, drama and a live band as well as testimonies from those living positively with HIV and AIDS.

Press Corporation Limited on Monday 8th April 2013 held a sensitization meeting for its members of staff on High Blood Pressure in accordance with the World Health Day Theme for 2013.

Press Corporation’s Chief Executive Officer Professor Mathews Chikaonda explained that Press Corporation regards the healthy of its employees as a priority, hence the wellness program and employees being covered under various medical schemes including its own private clinic.

“Press Corporation takes a holistic approach to the health of the person and tries as much as possible to sensitize and encourage its members of staff to lead healthy lives.” Said Chikaonda

“I have always said that the best manager of your health programme is yourself. There has to be a moderation of that which is good and abstinence from that which is bad.” Said Chikaonda

MBCA’s Communications and Advocacy Coordinator Lyness Soko commended Press Corporation management for organizing the sensitization. She encouraged members to take the sensitizations seriously and effectively use the information that they were getting.

“We advocate good health in businesses and for companies to achieve that, they need healthy employees. I commend PCL for organizing this sensitization. It is important that employees understand facts about high blood pressure which is the theme for this year’s World Health Day.” Said Soko

Earlier, PCL nurse Mayamiko Ndovi, made a presentation to the employees on high blood pressure before checking their BP.
The Vice President, the Rt. Hon. Khumbulo Kachali on Sunday, 19th May 2013 led Malawians in commemorating the 2013 International AIDS Candlelight Memorial (IACM) at a main national ceremony which took place in Mwanza.

Like all organizations engaged in managing HIV and AIDS response in Malawi, the Malawi Business Coalition Against HIV and AIDS (MBCA) is also actively involved in the 2013 IACM activities to make sure that the private sector and its workers are part of the solidarity that would make the Malawi response more effective.

In Solidarity is the theme of the 30th International AIDS Candlelight Memorial (IACM) 2013. The theme emphasizes the need for people living with and affected by HIV to join hands and work together in the response to HIV.

Solidarity in communities is essential to reduce stigma and promote the involvement of people living with HIV in order to ensure a more effective HIV response. Only together as communities can we advocate for universal access to human rights and quality treatment, prevention, care and support services.

When the AIDS Candlelight Memorial was held first in 1983, no one could have predicted the scale of the global epidemic. With millions of lives lost and around 33 million people currently living with HIV and in Malawi, more that 1million people are living with HIV and AIDS and over 70,000 die from AIDS related illnesses each year. HIV remains a challenging reality for Malawi and the global. While for many people HIV has become a chronic disease, many others lack access to treatment and experience HIV-related stigma, discrimination and human rights violations on a daily basis. The International AIDS Candlelight Memorial reminds us of the impact that HIV has on our lives locally and globally.

IACM seeks to advance The Paris Declaration, by leaders to scale up their commitments to adequately address the scope and depth of HIV, including other contributing social and economic challenges.

28 years after the first HIV and AIDS case was discovered some strides have been made especially in treatment, care and support services as well as prevention and awareness. But there is still a long way to go in order to decrease the number of new infections, to ensure that all people living with HIV who are on ARVs have access to the new 1st line regimen, and to ensure that all people have access to the new 1st line regimen. The first new regimen has few side effects, it is easy to take and has less pill burden. He further explained that the new regimen has also increased access to ARVs for pregnant and breastfeeding women through the provision of option B+.

Geoffrey Kapusa who is living positively with HIV commended government for the ARV programme and said that is important Malawians to come together in the fight against HIV and AIDS especially by pooling resources from all sectors to ensure that ARV’s are available. He further said that there is also need for the government and its partners to work fast in order to ensure that all people living with HIV who are on ARVs are moved to the new 1st line regimen which is said to have less side effects than the one that is being used now.

The Ministry of Health through the HIV and AIDS department, in order to increase equitable access to treatment has been working in collaboration with the MBCA sector to ensure that clinics in the private sector are also offering ARVs. According to Dr. Chibwandira this was done to reduce congestion at government hospitals as well as to ensure that people can access their medication quickly in order for them to get back to work since HIV affects the most productive age group of 15-49. According to ART Coordinator of the MBCA Stuart Chuka, the ART programme in the private sector is working effectively. It is also explained that the private sector is a partner with government in the fight against HIV and AIDS as well as TB.

“With the ART programme in the private sector working effectively I would also like to commend the private sector for supporting government of Malawi through the Ministry of Health in the scaling up of the ART programme in the country” said Chuka.

One of the main challenges in the fight against HIV and AIDS is that the needs of communities affected by HIV by far outpace the current resources allocated to meet them. The International AIDS Candlelight Memorial urges leaders to scale up their commitments to adequately address the scope and depth of HIV, including other burdens accompanying or enhancing its spread such as TB, malaria, sexually-transmitted diseases and opportunistic infections, and other contributing social and economic challenges.

The International AIDS Candlelight Memorial calls upon leaders to listen to the voice of people living with and affected by HIV in the formulation of policy, as well as in the design and implementation of programmes. Their experience and opinions are essential to the global HIV response. This includes promoting the empowerment of women, young people and key populations.

According to MBCA one of the ways to ensure an end to stigma and discrimination especially in the work environment is to ensure that all people have access to the new 1st line regimen. For companies to develop HIV and AIDS workplace policies. There is also need for HIV and AIDS programming within workplaces, the behaviour change interventions are very helpful. People stigmatize and discriminate against PLWHIV because of lack of information and ignorance but when people are sensitized and have a better understanding things change. Employees from companies that have developed and have a working HIV and AIDS Workplace Policy and are implementing HIV and AIDS workplace programmes have attested that the development and launch of the policy has helped to curb stigma and discrimination within the workplace.

The issue of stigma is far wide reaching than people realize and it has been attributed as one of the key drivers of HIV and AIDS. Solidarity in communities is essential to reduce stigma and discrimination, and promote the involvement of people living with HIV. The International AIDS Candlelight Memorial urges leaders to work as part of the solidarity that would make the Malawi response more effective.

“PLWHIV should be looked at as part of the solution, how can policies be developed for us when we are not involved in the process. There should be nothing for us without us. Being HIV positive does not mean you are a liability, you are still productive.” said Kapusa.

According to MANET+ the official coordinating Body for IACM in Malawi, the Malawi Business Coalition against HIV and AIDS (MBCA) is also actively involved in the 2013 IACM activities to make sure that the private sector and its workers are part of the solidarity that would make the Malawi response more effective.

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According to Dr. Frank Chimbwandira, the private sector is a partner with government in the fight against HIV and AIDS. Solidarity in communities is essential to reduce stigma and discrimination, and promote the involvement of people living with HIV. The International AIDS Candlelight Memorial urges leaders to work as part of the solidarity that would make the Malawi response more effective.

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