**The Beacon of Hope for Malawi’s Health Sector**

***Malawi’s health sector stakeholders have endorsed the initiative of Diaspora Community on collaborative partnership with teams on the ground on issues of the delivery of health care by Malawi United Kingdom Nurses Association (MUNA). MUNA is an organisation of Malawian-born nurses and other health professionals who are resident in the United Kingdom*.**

The Malawian UK Nursing Association (MUNA) is immensely indebted to stakeholders for contributing towards the success of it’s official launch event which took place on Saturday 17th July 2021. The event was attended by nearly 200 guests and drew together a diverse group of nursing and midwifery leaders, academics, heads of public and private institutions, as well as dignitaries and non-governmental agencies.

The association would like to thank members and well-wishers who have been key to the success of the fundraising event which was initiated as a Go-Fund-Me website set up by Mr Patrick Vundule (Vice President of MUNA) with the support of the MUNA exec team. This was followed by the selflessness of some Malawian Nurses based in UK, who sacrificed a shift in order to raise money for COVID-19 relief efforts in Malawi. This effort is in honour of our fellow Malawians and colleagues who tragically lost their lives due to lack of resources especially during the second wave of COVID-19.

As a result of Mr Patrick Vundule’s leadership in fundraising efforts, MUNA has successfully procured both standards and high flow nasal cannulas for the critical treatment of patients in respiratory care. The association considered several nursing tools and agreed on these cannulas as a relatively low cost but highly effective resource. As well as the fund raising of Malawian nurses in the UK, the association is also extremely grateful to sponsors like Veetee Rice who paid for Airfreight to ensure timely delivery of these oxygen delivery devices in Malawi in the midst of the third wave of COVID 19.

The cannulas and other donated items were received on behalf of MUNA by the Nurses Organization of Midwives and Nurses of Malawi (NOMN) on 6th August, 2021 and received under the capable stewardship of handed over to Kamuzu Central Hospital in Lilongwe by Mrs Regina Mankhamba.

The Kamuzu Central Hospital Head of Nurses was represented by Miss. Listen Mwemkenja who expressed gratitude for the donation. Miss Mwemkenja informed us that of those admitted, 72 patients were in need of nasal cannulas. She stated that the practice of recycling nasal cannulas has been around for years due to the low supply of medical supplies but increases contamination and infection therefore the cannulas will reduce this risk significantly. Other oxygen cannula deliveries are destined for Mzuzu, Zomba and Blantyre hospitals.

**MUNA Praised**

At their recent launch on 17th July 2021, MUNA was praised for pioneering the spirit of selflessness by diaspora, stakeholders and dignitaries. In his Speech the Right Honourable Dr Saulos Chilima officially launched the association and endorsed the exchange of information through diaspora engagement as the way to go, pledging support from the Malawi Government on future plans and activities of MUNA.

James Dudbridge (UK Minister to Africa) also praised MUNA and recognised the work of diaspora nurses from Malawi, highlighting the care they offer within the UK NHS, particularly their dedication during the COVID-19 pandemic. On its part, the association is grateful for the British Government’s continued assistance to the Malawi Government with resources and the continued collaboration of the two countries where mutual interests are evident.

Deputy High Commissioner,Quent Kalichero, who also helped launch MUNA at the launching ceremony in July, praised the patriotic efforts of UK nurses at the time the country’s health sector was overstrained by the COVID-19 pandemic. She cited the nurses’ commitment by putting their lives at risk by taking shifts in a bid to raise money for relief efforts in Malawi. On its part, MUNA lauds Deputy High Commissioner role’s in facilitating and linking MUNA stakeholders both in Malawi and the UK.

Minister of Health, Honourable Khumbize Kandodo Chiponda, who took time from her busy schedule of leading the country’s initiative to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, commended MUNA for being “A beacon of hope” for the commitment to assist the people of Malawi. “You have shown that it is possible to build a better Malawi. Indeed, nothing for us without us,” she said, mentioning the topics on the agenda, which included stroke, mental health and Covid-19, as topical.

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**More stakeholder engagement**

**MUNA**  s appealing for support from stakeholders as it continues to strive for excellence in healthcare, Charity Gladstone (MUNA President) announced: “We will continue to play a role, as far as our resources permit, to address proverbial ailments in our health sector. Collectively MUNA and our Colleagues in Malawi have a wealth of expertise, through integration and collaborative working we can do our part to address some of the challenges in realising the goal of *“Equitable Access to Health For All’* .” We are grateful for the support of both our governments, the UK and Malawi, and our sponsors locally Totally care, Moto money, African Union, Crown and law solicitors and Mibawa TV for promoting us

If ever Malawi is to realise the goal of *‘Equitable Access to Health for All’*, the mindset of teamwork is needed amongst all stakeholders in the health sector – both within and outside the country. There are encouraging signs that stakeholders have embraced this thinking and are consolidating their efforts, as underscored by success of the recent Launch of the Malawi United Kingdom Nurses Association (MUNA).

What started as a small initiative confined to the members of MUNA, barely a year ago, has gained extensive interests with private and public sector entities, as well as non-profit organisations coming aboard.In a review on the event, Charity Gladstone, commented that she was pleased with the great turnout at the launch event, the government support and stakeholder engagement in both the event and in fund raising efforts for projects to improve patient care and outcomes: “Even in our wildest dreams as MUNA, never did we imagine that we could have widened our reach by attracting likeminded people who regard citizen’s health as both our countries’ priority and key to achieving real prosperity.”

She adds, “We firmly believe that, if we can prudently invest the available resources in the basic health services at the primary level, then we can set ourselves on the path to prosperity. In this day and age, we should not tolerate a situation where the bare necessities of primary health care are either non-existent or appallingly lacking in every district.”