News



Sr. Jeremia Mrowiec, manager at Mother of Mercy Hospice in Chilanga District, Zambia, welcomes Rabecca Mpande, left, and Ireen Thole to the facility. Both women are living with HIV/AIDS and receive regular treatment at the hospice. (Derrick Silimina)



by Derrick Silimina

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Chilanga, Zambia — August 13, 2025

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Monica Chibuye is in her final moments as she confronts the harsh realities of Alzheimer's, which has stripped her of her memories and connections to loved ones.

Chibuye, 72, has been battling the disease for over two years, and it's taken an emotional and psychological toll on both her family members and caregivers.

"I struggled financially and couldn't afford home-based care due to high medical bills. I had no option but to seek holistic medical therapy for mum here at Mother of Mercy Hospice due to the facility's quality palliative health care," Chibuye's daughter Lillian told Global Sisters Report.

Located in the lush suburb of the Chilanga District, approximately 20 km (12 miles) south of Zambia's capital Lusaka, the Mother of Mercy Hospice and Health Centre offers solace, comfort and dignity to patients and their families.

Lillian said that before her mother's admission to the facility in early 2024, she felt hopeless after witnessing her deteriorating health condition.

"My mother's condition was characterized by frustration, sadness and fear," she said. "I thank the religious sisters for their timely medical support."



A sign directs patients and visitors to Mother of Mercy Hospice in the lush suburb of the Chilanga District, approximately 20 km (12 miles) south of Zambia’s capital, Lusaka. (Derrick Silimina)

Established in 1997 by the Sisters of Mercy of St. Charles Borromeo Zambia, the Mother of Mercy Hospice became one of Zambia's first hospices for terminally ill patients to improve palliative care for the dying. The southern African country experiences a high rate of HIV infections and lacks quality medical care for the most vulnerable.

Like Chibuye, Rabecca Mpande's experience with pneumonia highlights not only the medical and financial stress associated with living with a chronic health condition but also the profound mental health impact of being diagnosed with HIV/AIDS.

"After I suffered from severe pneumonia, I was diagnosed with HIV/AIDS during my admission at the Mother of Mercy Hospice. I was immediately put on antiretroviral drugs, and I have been on treatment for 20 years," Mpande said.

Mpande, 52, is now upbeat that her stress-free access to antiretroviral drugs and food supplements at the hospice has enabled her and her husband (also living with HIV/AIDS) to enjoy a positive, healthy lifestyle.

After regaining her strength, she said, the sisters helped her financially by hiring her as a community volunteer to motivate others living with the virus to adhere to antiretroviral drug treatment and embrace a positive outlook.

"Our charism is to serve the poor and neglected, but first of all, the sick. For those in our care that pass on, we ensure they’re cared for even in their last moments," Sr. Jeremia Mrowiec said.



Sr. Jeremia Mrowiec, manager at Mother of Mercy Hospice, chats with the administrator Esther Lungu. Lungu hopes to help expand the hospice's capacity to accommodate more patients.

"When I first came here from Poland in 2009, I [witnessed] how terminally ill people were admitted here, and through our services, they returned to their normal lives, and that gives me immense joy," Mrowiec said.

That same year, Mrowiec took over as manager of the Mother of Mercy Hospice. Although the facility started in 1997 and focused on HIV/AIDS patients, the sisters now serve a diverse range of people, including cancer and stroke patients and those with other life-limiting illnesses.

"Following the high demand of patients on antiretroviral drugs, we opened a clinic in 2006 and have served over 2,000 poor, outcast and terminally ill patients battling various ailments, especially those who are near the end of their lives," she said.

Mrowiec, 67, said that despite financial challenges that led to the clinic's temporary closure, support from VisionZambia, Churches Health Association of Zambia, the government and others over the years has helped sustain their operations. She added that in 2020, management decided to open an outpatient clinic to extend health services to clients under the National Health Insurance Management Authority, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mrowiec, a teacher by profession, said the 20-bed hospice serves 600-700 patients monthly at its inpatient and outpatient departments, but struggles due to limited resources despite, "Our mission is to console and bring hope to the hopeless and helpless in society by reflecting the merciful nature of Jesus Christ," she said.

Hospice administrator Esther Lungu said hospice care is vital in supporting individuals nearing the end of life by prioritizing their dignity and comfort.

Lungu echoed Mrowiec’s emphasis on improving the quality of life of patients and their families facing problems associated with life-threatening illnesses through prevention and relief of suffering.

Advertisement

"I have witnessed significant medical success stories since I started working here. Most patients often leave in better physical and mental conditions than they came, and those that have passed on die with dignity," Lungu said. She joined the Mother of Mercy Hospice in 2021 as an administrative assistant, working closely with Mrowiec.

Lungu pledged to help expand the hospice's capacity to accommodate more patients in the future as she enjoys working in humanitarian settings and finds fulfillment in transforming lives.

Prudence Moyo, 35, praised the hospice for their help as she recovered from a stroke. The hospice provided free essential care, including food, medications and physical therapy.

The sisters provided Moyo hope when her medical and financial burdens were too heavy to bear alone. She credits rigorous physical therapy at the hospice with enabling her to stand and, eventually, to walk again.