

PAT NEWSLETTER



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Advocating for Child Health and Well-being

Festive Greetings and Reflections on Our Milestones in 2025

Dear Esteemed Members, Colleagues, and Partners,

Warm festive greetings to you and your families.

As we reflect on the year 2025, I extend my sincere gratitude to all members of the Paediatric Association of Tanzania for your unwavering commitment to advancing child health and wellbeing in our country. This year has been one of remarkable progress, collaboration, and impact for our Association.

Among our major milestones was the launch of the Rare Diseases Consortium, a significant step toward improving recognition, care, and advocacy for children living with rare diseases in Tanzania. This initiative underscores our dedication to inclusive and equitable child healthcare.

We also successfully convened the National Child Health and Welfare Congress in Arusha, a landmark event that brought together stakeholders from across the country to reflect, learn, and shape the future of child health services. During this historic congress, PAT proudly launched its Five-Year Strategic Plan, which will

guide our vision, priorities, and actions in strengthening paediatric care and advocacy nationwide.

In our efforts to raise awareness on non-communicable diseases and neonatal health, the Association commemorated World Heart Day in Mwanza, engaging communities and healthcare professionals on cardiovascular health, and World Prematurity Day in Dodoma, highlighting the importance of quality care for preterm and vulnerable newborns.

Throughout the year, PAT continued to support professional development through numerous Continuing Medical Education (CME) sessions. I sincerely thank all paediatricians and healthcare workers who actively participated, shared knowledge, and strengthened clinical practice for the benefit of our children.

I would also like to take this opportunity to warmly welcome new members who have joined the Association this year. Your energy and expertise are invaluable to our collective mission. To our existing members, I kindly remind

you to ensure timely payment of your membership fees, as this enables the Association to sustain its activities and expand its impact.

As we celebrate this festive season, let us renew our commitment to service, professionalism, and collaboration. Together, we will continue to champion the health, welfare, and rights of every child in Tanzania.

On behalf of the Paediatric Association of Tanzania, I wish you a joyful festive season and a prosperous, healthy New Year.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Theopista Jacob

President, Paediatric Association of Tanzania (PAT)



Dr. Theopista Jacob
President, Paediatric Association of Tanzania.

Tanzania Consortium of Rare Diseases: A United Platform for Coordinated Action

The Tanzania Consortium of Rare Diseases (TCRD) has been established as a collaborative national platform to strengthen coordination, collaboration, and impact in the care of individuals and families affected by rare diseases in Tanzania. The consortium brings together key stakeholders involved in rare disease advocacy, research, diagnosis, and clinical care.

Historically, efforts addressing rare diseases in Tanzania have been undertaken by various institutions and individuals, often working independently and, at times, with overlapping or duplicated activities. The establishment of this consortium responds to the critical need for coordination, synergy, and strategic alignment. By fostering linkages among clinicians, geneticists, researchers, advocates, and policymakers, the consortium aims to enhance efficiency, promote knowledge sharing, and improve outcomes for people living with rare diseases.

Key Roles of the Consortium

The Tanzania Consortium of Rare Diseases will serve as a central coordinating body with the following core responsibilities:

- 1. Identification of Stakeholders:** Mapping and engaging key stakeholders involved in advocacy, research, diagnosis, and care of rare diseases in Tanzania.
- 2. Activity Registry:** Developing and maintaining a registry of rare disease-related activities undertaken by various stakeholders to minimize duplication and optimize collaboration.
- 3. Stakeholder Linkages:** Facilitating connections among clinicians, researchers, genetic experts, advocates, and institutions to strengthen multidisciplinary collaboration.



Some members of the Tanzania Consortium for Rare Diseases

4. **Platform Expansion:** Providing a joint platform to broaden participation and expand the scope of institutions and individuals engaged in rare disease work.

5. **Joint Advocacy and Awareness:** Coordinating national and international advocacy campaigns, including commemoration of rare disease days, to raise awareness and influence policy and practice.

Structure of the Consortium

The consortium will comprise both individual members and institutional representatives actively engaged in rare disease-related activities in Tanzania. To ensure efficient and smooth operations, the Paediatric Association of Tanzania (PAT) will provide the secretariat for the consortium.

Consortium members will mobilize resources and support PAT in the provision of secretariat services, which will include:

- Taking and documenting minutes of all consortium meetings
- Maintaining comprehensive records of consortium activities
- Following up on agreed action points and resolutions

The President of the Paediatric Association of Tanzania will serve as the Secretary of the Consortium.

Founding Members

The founding members of the Tanzania Consortium of Rare Diseases include representatives from the following institutions:

1. Ali Kimara Rare Diseases Foundation
2. Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (MUHAS)
3. Muhimbili National Hospital (MNH)
4. Paediatric Association of Tanzania (PAT)
5. Tanzania Human Genetic Organization
6. Ministry of Health (Representative)

Operations of the Consortium

The consortium will operate through close collaboration with partner institutions, serving as a forum where stakeholders regularly convene to share updates on their activities, achievements, and challenges. Through collective deliberation, members will develop solutions, mitigation strategies, and joint advocacy initiatives aimed at maximizing the impact of rare disease interventions in Tanzania.

By uniting expertise, resources, and voices, the Tanzania Consortium of Rare Diseases represents a significant step toward improving visibility, care, and support for people living with rare diseases and their families across the country.

A Shared Commitment to Every Child's Journey: Reflections from the Tanzania Child Health and Welfare Congress 2025



Dr. Seif Shekalaghe
Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Health opening the National Child Health and Welfare Congress in Arusha.

From 23rd to 25th July 2025, the city of Arusha became the heartbeat of child health advocacy in Tanzania as more than 350 delegates convened at the Gran Meliá Hotel for the 2nd Tanzania Child Health and Welfare Congress. Guided by the theme “Quality of Care: Empowering Families to Ensure Wellness in Every Child’s Journey,” the congress brought together paediatricians, policymakers, nurses, researchers, social welfare officers, development partners, students, and child advocates—united by a shared purpose: ensuring that every Tanzanian child not only survives, but thrives.

The tone of the congress was set during the opening session by Dr. Alex Mphuru, President-Elect of the Paediatric Association of Tanzania (PAT). He challenged participants to engage actively, question assumptions, and propose solutions that complement government efforts. His message was clear: this was not merely a forum for discussion, but a platform for action.

The keynote address by Dr. Namala Mkopi posed a fundamental question—why does Tanzania need a Child Health and Welfare Congress?

His response resonated deeply. Child health, he emphasized, is not solely the responsibility of the health sector but a national investment requiring collective responsibility. Drawing on the proverb “It takes a village to raise a child,” he highlighted the importance of nurturing care across homes, communities, schools, and places of worship, urging participants to transform dialogue into meaningful change.

One of the most impactful moments came during a high-level dialogue on persistent child morbidity and mortality. Despite significant investments by the Government of Tanzania in infrastructure, workforce, equipment, policies, and financing, neonatal mortality remains unacceptably high. Participants confronted hard truths—shortages of skilled attendants, preventable deaths from birth asphyxia, limited access to essential medicines and equipment, delayed identification of sick newborns, and fragmented service delivery. Yet the discussions were hopeful, emphasizing evidence-based solutions centered on equity, accountability, skilled staffing, functional neonatal units, and smarter use of technology. The consensus was striking: the challenge lies not in the lack of investment, but in gaps in delivery, prioritization, and coordination of care.

In her address, Dr. Theopista Jacob, President of PAT, reaffirmed the Association’s unwavering commitment to child health. She called for tracking absolute numbers of child deaths, highlighted the critical shortage of paediatric specialists, and advocated for professional associations to be systematically engaged as technical partners.

She outlined a vision of a seamless continuum of care—from pregnancy through post-discharge—supported by partnerships and innovation.

The congress was officially presided over by Dr. Seif Shekalaghe, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health, who applauded PAT for convening a truly multisectoral platform and launched PAT’s 2025–2030 Strategic Plan, coinciding with the Association’s 45th Anniversary. He emphasized accountability, inter-ministerial collaboration, and the urgency of reducing preventable child deaths.

Over the following days, the congress came alive with scientific exchange and innovation, showcasing digital health solutions, low-cost newborn technologies, nurturing care models, and local research shaping the future of child health in Tanzania.

As the congress closed, delegates departed with renewed energy and shared responsibility. More than an event, the Tanzania Child Health and Welfare Congress 2025 stood as a reaffirmation that quality of care, empowered families, strong systems, and collective accountability are essential to every child’s journey.



Launching of PAT’s strategic plan during the National Child Health and Welfare Congress in Arusha

Walking for Young Hearts: World Heart Day 2025 Commemoration in Mwanza

On the morning of 29th September 2025, the city of Mwanza came alive with movement, purpose, and hope as healthcare workers, families, and community members gathered to commemorate World Heart Day. The event, organized by the Paediatric Association of Tanzania (PAT) in collaboration with Bugando Medical Centre (BMC), was a powerful reminder that protecting the heart begins early—often in childhood.

A Walk with a Message

The commemoration began with a health walk, symbolizing the importance of physical activity in maintaining heart health across the lifespan. Participants walked together through Mwanza's streets, united by a shared message: Don't Miss A Beat. For many onlookers, the walk sparked curiosity and conversations about heart disease—conditions often thought of as “adult problems,” yet increasingly affecting children as well.

Bringing Care Closer to the Community

Following the walk, PAT and Bugando Medical Centre set up free heart disease screening services for children and adults. The screening included blood pressure measurements, body mass index assessment, basic clinical examinations, and counseling on healthy lifestyles. Families received education on recognizing warning signs of heart disease in children, such as poor feeding, breathlessness, easy fatigability, recurrent chest infections, and delayed growth. For some families, the screening was their first-ever opportunity to interact with paediatric heart specialists. Several children were identified for further evaluation and referral, highlighting the value of community-based

outreach in early detection.

Why Focus on Children's Hearts?

Heart disease remains a major public health challenge worldwide, and children are not spared. In Tanzania and many low- and middle-income countries, congenital heart disease (CHD) affects an estimated 8–10 out of every 1,000 live births, translating into thousands of children born each year with structural heart defects. Without early diagnosis and timely intervention, many of these children face preventable complications or premature death.

In addition to congenital conditions, acquired heart diseases—particularly rheumatic heart disease (RHD)—continue to affect school-aged children and adolescents. RHD often follows untreated streptococcal throat infections and remains one of the leading causes of heart disease among children and young adults in sub-Saharan Africa.

More recently, non-communicable disease risk factors such as childhood obesity, physical inactivity, unhealthy diets, and exposure to tobacco smoke are emerging threats, increasing the risk of hypertension and cardiovascular disease later in life.

Turning Awareness into Action

During the Mwanza commemoration, PAT emphasized that many childhood heart diseases are preventable or manageable when addressed early. Key measures highlighted included:

- Early detection and referral through routine newborn and child health checks
- Strengthening primary healthcare to recognize warning signs of congenital and acquired heart disease



Our General Secretary, Dr. Haika screening a paediatric in commemorating World Heart Day

- Prompt treatment of sore throats to prevent rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease
- Promoting healthy lifestyles from childhood, including physical activity, balanced nutrition, and avoidance of tobacco exposure
- Expanding access to paediatric cardiology services, diagnostics, and long-term follow-up
- Community education and family empowerment, ensuring caregivers know when and where to seek care

A Shared Responsibility

As the day came to a close, one message stood out clearly: safeguarding children's hearts requires collective action—from families and communities to healthcare systems and policymakers. The World Heart Day commemoration in Mwanza reaffirmed PAT's commitment to advocacy, prevention, early diagnosis, and equitable access to care for all children with heart disease.

Through simple actions—like walking together, screening in the community, and sharing knowledge—PAT and Bugando Medical Centre demonstrated that meaningful change begins when health services meet people where they are.

On World Heart Day 2025, Mwanza did more than commemorate a global event—it took a step forward in protecting the hearts of Tanzania's children, today and for generations to come.

Giving Every Preterm Baby a Fighting Chance

On 17th November 2025, the Paediatric Association of Tanzania (PAT) joined the global community in commemorating World Prematurity Day, a day dedicated to raising awareness and accelerating action for babies born too soon. This year's commemoration carried a strong national message of unity, as activities were conducted across all PAT zones, while the national-level commemoration was held at Dodoma Regional Referral Hospital.

A Nationwide Call for Action

From health facilities in the Lake Zone to the Southern Highlands, Coast, Northern, Central, and Zanzibar zones, PAT members marked the day through health education sessions, ward-based discussions, caregiver engagement, and advocacy activities focused on improving outcomes for preterm and low birth weight babies. These zonal activities reflected PAT's commitment to ensuring that quality newborn care reaches every corner of the country.

National Commemoration in Dodoma

The national event at Dodoma Regional Referral Hospital brought together paediatricians, neonatologists, nurses, hospital management, policymakers, partners, and caregivers. The gathering provided an important platform to spotlight the realities faced by preterm babies and the healthcare teams who care for them every day. Speakers emphasized that prematurity remains one of the leading causes of neonatal and under-five mortality in Tanzania. Babies born before 37 weeks of gestation face increased risks of breathing difficulties, infections, feeding challenges, hypothermia, jaundice, and long-term developmental complications

Yet, many of these risks can be significantly reduced through timely, high-quality, and compassionate care.

From Awareness to Practice

During the commemoration, PAT highlighted proven, life-saving interventions that can dramatically improve survival and quality of life for preterm babies, including:

- Antenatal corticosteroids for mothers at risk of preterm birth
- Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) to promote warmth, bonding, and breastfeeding
- Early and exclusive breastfeeding, including expressed breast milk when direct feeding is not possible
- Infection prevention and control within neonatal units
- Appropriate respiratory support, such as CPAP, for babies with breathing difficulties
- Post-discharge follow-up to ensure continued growth and development

Healthcare workers at Dodoma Regional Referral Hospital shared experiences from the neonatal care unit, highlighting both the progress made and the challenges that remain—particularly gaps in equipment, staffing, and continuity of care after discharge.

Families at the Center of Care

A key message throughout the day was the importance of family-centered care. Parents and caregivers were encouraged to be active partners in caring for their preterm babies, from practicing KMC to recognizing danger signs early. PAT emphasized that empowering families with knowledge and support is essential to improving outcomes for babies born too soon.



World Prematurity Day celebration at Dodoma Regional Referral Hospital.

Strengthening Systems for Small and Sick Newborns

PAT used the occasion to reaffirm its advocacy for stronger health systems that prioritize newborn care. This includes expanding functional neonatal care units, improving access to essential medicines and technologies, strengthening referral systems, and investing in continuous training and mentorship for healthcare workers.

The commemoration in Dodoma also aligned with Tanzania's recent global leadership in advancing prematurity awareness, following the successful WHO resolution recognizing World Prematurity Day, further underscoring the country's commitment to newborn survival.

United for Preterm Babies

As the day concluded, a powerful sense of solidarity prevailed—across zones, facilities, and professions. World Prematurity Day 2025 reminded us that while preterm birth is a national challenge, it also presents a national opportunity: to save lives through simple, evidence-based interventions and coordinated action.

Through nationwide engagement and a strong national commemoration in Dodoma, PAT reaffirmed its mission to advocate, educate, and act—ensuring that every preterm baby in Tanzania is given the best possible start in life.

A New Voice for Child Health in Africa: the African Journal of Child Health Set to Launch Under PAT



AJCH
African Journal of Child Health

The Paediatric Association of Tanzania (PAT) is proud to announce the upcoming launch of the African Journal of Child Health (AJCH), a landmark initiative aimed at strengthening child health research, and evidence-based practice across the continent. The Journal is expected to begin functioning soon and will operate under the auspices of PAT.

From Vision to Acceptance

The idea of establishing the African Journal of Child Health was formally presented during the National Child Health and Welfare Congress, where it received strong support and approval from delegates, academic leaders, policymakers, and development partners. The acceptance of this proposal marked a significant milestone, reflecting a shared recognition of the urgent need for a dedicated African platform to showcase high-quality child health research.

Why an African Journal of Child Health?

Despite Africa bearing a disproportionate burden of childhood morbidity and mortality, much of the continent's research remains underrepresented in global scientific literature. The African Journal of Child Health aims to bridge this gap by providing a credible, peer-reviewed, and accessible platform for researchers, clinicians, and policymakers to share locally generated evidence that is relevant to African contexts.

The Journal will focus on a wide range of topics, including neonatology, paediatrics, adolescent health, nutrition, infectious and non-communicable diseases, child development, health systems, and policy-related research.

Advancing Research, Practice, and Policy

By amplifying African voices, the Journal is expected to:

- Promote locally driven research and innovation in child health
- Support early-career researchers and trainees through mentorship and publication opportunities
- Inform clinical practice and health policy using context-specific evidence
- Foster regional and continental collaboration among child health professionals

The African Journal of Child Health will uphold high editorial and ethical standards, ensuring rigorous peer review and scientific integrity.

A Strategic Step for PAT and the Region

The establishment of the Journal aligns closely with PAT's broader mandate to advocate for quality child healthcare, support continuous professional development, and strengthen research capacity. It also complements PAT's newly launched Five-Year Strategic Plan, reinforcing the Association's leadership role in shaping the future of child health in Tanzania and beyond.

Looking Ahead

As preparations continue, PAT calls upon paediatricians, researchers, academicians, and partners across Africa to engage with and support this new initiative. The African Journal of Child Health represents more than a publication—it is a platform for collaboration, learning, and collective action to improve the lives of children across the continent.

Further updates on editorial structures, submission processes, and launch timelines will be shared in upcoming editions of the PAT Newsletter.

Strengthening Practice Through Continuous Learning: PAT Continuing Medical Education (CME) Activities in 2025

Throughout 2025, the Paediatric Association of Tanzania (PAT) continued to advance its commitment to excellence in child healthcare through a robust program of Continuing Medical Education (CME) activities. These CMEs served as dynamic platforms for knowledge exchange, skills enhancement, and professional dialogue—ensuring that paediatricians and healthcare workers remain equipped to address both long-standing and emerging child health challenges in Tanzania.

Addressing Priority Child Health Conditions

Several CMEs focused on high-burden diseases affecting children nationwide. The session on “Childhood Tuberculosis: Early Detection, Challenges and Advances – Commit, Invest, Deliver” highlighted the persistent burden of TB in children, gaps in early diagnosis, and innovations in diagnostics and treatment. Participants explored practical strategies to strengthen case detection, improve treatment outcomes, and integrate TB services within routine child healthcare.

Another important CME examined “Viremia in Children and Adolescents Living with HIV,” emphasizing viral load monitoring, adherence challenges, treatment failure, and adolescent-friendly approaches to care. The discussions reinforced the need for sustained investment in differentiated service delivery models for children and adolescents living with HIV.

Improving Newborn and Preterm Care

Newborn health remained a central theme in PAT’s CME agenda. The session on “The Experience of Newborn Sickle Cell Screening in Tabora Region” shared valuable lessons from a pioneering regional program, demonstrating how early diagnosis can transform outcomes for affected children through timely intervention and follow-up.

Equally impactful was the CME on “Caffeine Citrate in Preterm Care: Transforming Outcomes in Apnea of Prematurity,” which explored evidence-based use of caffeine citrate, its safety profile, and its role in improving survival and neurodevelopmental outcomes among preterm infants.

The CME on “Oxygen Therapy for Sick Children” addressed one of the most essential yet often limited life-saving interventions in paediatric care. Participants discussed rational oxygen use, delivery systems, monitoring, and strategies to improve access and safety across different levels of care.

Strengthening Clinical Decision-Making

Enhancing diagnostic and clinical management skills was another major focus. The CME on “Approach to a Child with Bleeding” provided practical guidance on evaluating bleeding disorders, differentiating medical emergencies from chronic conditions, and making timely referrals.

Similarly, the session on “Challenges in the Management of Asthma in Children” explored barriers to diagnosis, adherence, availability of medications, and caregiver education, while reinforcing guideline-based management and long-term follow-up.

Embracing Innovation and Emerging Science

Recognizing the growing role of technology and new scientific insights in paediatrics, PAT organized CMEs on “Digital Solutions for Enhanced Patient Monitoring”, showcasing how digital tools can improve monitoring, documentation, and continuity of care, particularly for critically ill and chronically managed children.

The year’s CME program concluded on a forward-looking note with “Gut Microbiome & Probiotics: What You Need to Know.” This session explored emerging evidence on the role of the gut microbiome in child health and disease, translating research findings into practical considerations for paediatric practice.

A Platform for Professional Growth

Across all CMEs, PAT provided a space for meaningful interaction between specialists, general practitioners, trainees, and allied healthcare workers. These sessions not only updated clinical knowledge but also strengthened professional networks and encouraged reflective practice.

PAT extends sincere appreciation to all speakers, facilitators, partners, and participants who contributed to the success of the 2025 CME program. Their engagement reflects a shared commitment to lifelong learning and quality care for every child.

As PAT moves forward under its Five-Year Strategic Plan, continuous medical education remains a cornerstone of the Association’s efforts to strengthen the paediatric workforce and improve child health outcomes in Tanzania.

**We wish you and your family Merry
Christmas and a happy New Year!**