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Mathiwos Wondu - YeEthiopia Cancer Society



MATHIWOS WONDU

1999 - 2003 G.C

# PRESS RELEASE

REMEMBERING MATHIWOS WONDU

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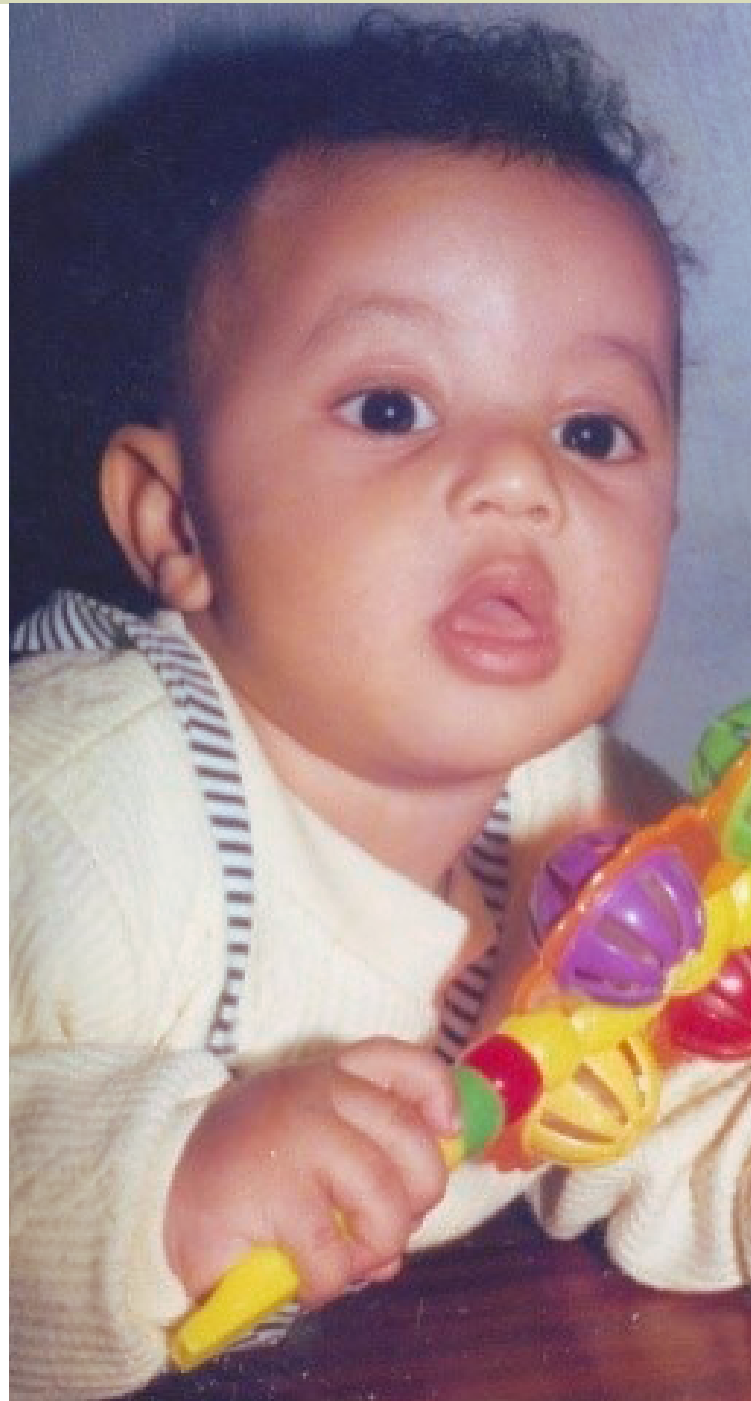
## REMEMBERING MATHIWOS WONDU

September 24, 2023, Addis  
Ababa, Ethiopia

Mathiwos, the third and youngest son of his parents Mr. Wondu Bekele and Mrs. Amsale Beyene, was born on June 17, 1999 (Sene 9, 1991 Ethiopian Calendar) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Until he celebrated his second birthday, he was very healthy, energetic and his growth was corresponding to his age.

A few days after celebrating his second birthday, he un-expectedly became very ill, and after clinical investigation he was diagnosed with ALL-type Leukemia.

He had been under treatment at Tikur Anbessa/Black Lion/ Hospital for 26 months. Even though there is no conducive environment for cancer treatment, the staff of Medical Faculty of Addis Ababa University, tried everything at their disposal to save his life.





Due to lack of cancer medicines here in Ethiopia his family was forced to import from overseas almost all the very expensive medicines that were recommended by his doctors.

Due to Mathy's family unreserved, all-round commitment and dedication and cooperation of personnel of the Medical Faculty, Mathiwos was widely believed to be one of the best-treated patients ever in the hospital.

Because of this Mathy was seen as a good reference and hope to most cancer patients in Ethiopia.

After 22 months of comparative improvement, unexpectedly it was found out that the disease has relapsed, accordingly the Medical Board of the Hospital decided that there was no proper medication left for Mathiwos here in Ethiopia and referred him to abroad for possible Bone Marrow transplant which is not possible in Ethiopia and in Africa except South Africa and Egypt.

After intensive search for overseas treatment possibilities in South Africa, Europe, India and North America, National Cancer Institute (NCI/NIH) of Bethesda, MD, USA agreed to accept Mathy for further treatment option including Bone Marrow Transplant.

Mathy accompanied by his mother and his elder brother Yonas (donor) was about to fly to Washington D.C, U.S.A. All necessary conditions for the trip such as round-trip air ticket, accommodation, visa, etc. have been arranged.

Before they leave, unfortunately, Mathiwos passed away on September 24, 2003, while he was under treatment at the Tikur Anbessa Hospital.

Although grief stricken, founding members of MWECS, without being frustrated by the unexpected outcome came to realize that forming a cancer society and trying to help fellow cancer patients in whatever way they can and challenge the growing burden of cancer here in Ethiopia would be one of the best ways to remember Mathiwos and to express their thanks to God for all the opportunities He gave them to help Mathy in every way humanly possible, leaving the rest to the will of God.





MWECS was established at the first General Assembly meeting of the founding members held on April 17, 2004.

Due to weak financial position of the society and lack of support, Wondu, MWECS Executive Director and the founding members were forced to establish and operate MWECS from Wondu's residence without any administration costs and Wondu was forced to hold two top managerial positions simultaneously, for six years as Manager of Administration and Human Resources and Public Relation Officer with National Tobacco Enterprise/NTE/ with very attractive salary, benefits and allowances and as General Manager of Mathiwos Wondu-YeEthiopia Cancer Society/MWECS/ without any kind of salary and payment until he resigned from NTE on his own free will due to conflicting of interests emerged as soon as MWECS start conducting anti-tobacco campaign in selected schools and joined MWECS on full time basis as of December 2009.

MWECS is proof positive example that one family and group of people truly can make a difference.

MWECS, an organization initiated at the Mathiwos family's living room in memory of Mathiwos.

Today with more than 1,400 members, 500 volunteers and 30 permanent staffs, implementing eight projects and support 152 cancer patients and their care givers by covering cost of transport from and to their regions, medicines and diagnostic laboratory services not provided by the Tikur Anbessa Hospital, Provide 500 Birr per month to cover cost of basics while the patients are under treatment at the hospital, Provide 500 Birr per month education support to selected childhood cancer patients, Provide psychosocial support including transport, food, accommodation at our 24 beds Phangisile Psychosocial Support Center in between treatments.

Due to this contribution, MWECS managed to be evolved to be one of the most respected and trusted NGO of its kind and received five international and two national awards in five years.

MWECS, with limited resources at its disposal, played leading role in national effort to challenge the growing burden of non-communicable diseases in general and cancer. MWECS supported:

## **1. Ministry of Health/MoH/ to develop & implement:**

- **National Cancer Control Plan/NCCP/:** Thanks to the financial and technical support received from Pink Ribbon Red Ribbon/PRRR/ and GSK, we supported Ministry of Health/MoH/ to develop and implement National Cancer Control Plan/NCCP/, the first of its kind in Ethiopia and one of the few of costed and budgeted plans in Africa.
- **National Childhood and Adolescent Cancer Control Plan/NCACCP/:** Thanks to the financial and technical support of American Academy of Pediatrics, we have supported MoH to develop and implement National Childhood and Adolescent Cancer Control Plan/NCACCP/ the first of its kind in Ethiopia.
- **NCDI Report:** Thanks to the financial and technical support from Bergen University/Norway/, Harvard University and NCDI-Poverty Network both from USA, we implemented a project on Non-Communicable Diseases and Injury on behalf of Ministry of Health/MoH/ Supported MOH to develop and officially launch NCDI report.

## **2. Ethiopian Food & Drug Authority/EFDA/:**

- Thanks to the financial and technical support from Campaign for Tobacco free Kids/CTFK/and Africa Capacity Building Foundation/ACBF/, MWECS provided financial and technical support to Ethiopian Food and Drug Authority/EFDA/ to encourage House of Representatives of Ethiopia to pass:
  - One of the strongest laws on tobacco and alcohol in Africa,
  - Strong Excise Tax on tobacco and alcohol etc.

### **3. Universal Health Coverage/UHC/ and NCD in Ethiopia report:**

Thanks to the financial and technical support from NCD Alliance/NCDA/, MWECS implemented project on behalf of NCD Alliance of Ethiopia. The goal of the project is to mobilize more concerted effort on prevention and control of NCDs to avoid premature mortality, morbidity caused by NCDs in Ethiopia. We successfully developed UHC/NCD in Ethiopia report, the first of its kind in Ethiopia.

MWECS is one of the most respected and trusted NGOs of its kind, received five international and two national awards in five years period from 2017 to 2023 including:

- **Enabler of Vision Award:** presented during International Conference on Gender and Sustainability (ICOGAS), being held at side event of United Nations meeting in New York, USA in 2017.
- **Distinguished Community Social Service Award:** from People to People/P2P/NGO formed by Ethiopian Diaspora in North America with more than 5,000 Doctors and Engineers.
- **CEO Award:** Nominated among the three finalists and runner up for the International Union Against Cancer/ with more than 1,200 cancer organizations, ministry of health and research organizations/ CEO Award in 2018.
- **Warrior Against Cancer:** MWECS received Warrior Against Cancer award from John Damonti, President of BMSF at BMSF-STF 20th Anniversary program being held in Durban, South Africa, August 27, 2019, Durban, South Africa.
- **World No Tobacco Day Award:** Mr. Wondu Bekele, Executive Director of MWECS, nominated as one of the six recipients of World Health Organization World No Tobacco Day Award 2020 from Africa Region.

- **Center of Excellence:** By implementing organizational reforms based on technical support provided by USAID LCD team in the areas of financial management, project management, monitoring and evaluation and sustainability, at the end of the project, USAID LCD Team finally awarded MWECS Certificate of Achievement as Center of Excellence capable of implementing big projects.
- **Outstanding Contribution Certificate:** MWECS received certificate of recognition from Ethiopian Thoracic Society/ETS/ in February 2,2023 for its outstanding contribution in the successful journey of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine program in Addis Ababa University College of Health sciences.
- **Golden Jubilee/50 years/Good Practice Award:** MWECS project on tobacco selected as one of five best practices of some of the best projects from Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Association /CCRDA/ in June 15,2023.







## PROJECTS BEING IMPLEMENTED:

- **Childhood Cancer Mitigation Project:** This first project of our society, mostly supported by local donations. MWECS supported more than 2,000 cancer patients and their families and currently supporting more than 154 cancer patients and their care givers. Due to growing cost of psychosocial support services, we are looking for every kind of support and toward this end we are conducting different kinds of local fund-raising activities.
- **Tobacco-CTFK supported:** Support the adoption of implementing regulations and the implementation of Pictorial Health Warnings (PHWs) and smoke-free provisions in Ethiopia.
- **Tobacco-ACBF supported:** Contribute toward MWECS institutional and TC community capacity building, support creation of 100% SF in the hospitality industry, and TI monitoring and countering.

- **Multinational Lung Cancer Diagnose and Control Project:** We have launched lung cancer project for three years to be implemented in Oromia, Amhara, Afar and Addis Ababa. Thanks to generous support from BMSF, we are able to renovate 15 rooms of Chest Unit of, procured and handed over Bronoscopy and Ebus /the first of its kind in Ethiopia/ equipment to TASH. The total cost of renovation and Ebus and Bronoscopy equipment is more than 6.5 million Birr. The first phase of the three years project came to an end and we have been negotiating for the second phase and expected to be finalized soon.
- **PEN-Plus Project:** With support of NCDI Poverty Network, we have been implementing Ethiopian PEN-Plus Implementation demonstration project for chronic care of severe NCDs at Primary Hospital level. The project is intended to increase coverage of high-quality care for less common and more severe conditions Type I & II DM, Heart Failure and RHD Complications, Severe CRDs, Cancer and Palliative Care, by Primary Level Hospital in Oromia and Amhara regions. We have successfully constructed PEN-Plus clinics at Muketuri in Oromia and Addis Zemen in Amhara regions. Based on the outcome of the first phase there is a plan to scale up the project to more regions.
- **Advocacy for Strengthening Consortium of Ethiopian NCD Associations/CENCDA/:** The goal of the project is to mobilize more concerted effort on prevention and control of NCDs to avoid premature mortality, morbidity caused by NCDs in Ethiopia. The project came to an end and we are negotiating for its continuation.
- **Support Food Policy in Ethiopia:** The overall purpose of this project is for advocating for the passage of a comprehensive and mandatory food policy to promote healthy diets and tackle non-communicable diseases in Ethiopia. This project is also the first of its kind in Ethiopia.

- **Initiatives in Lung Cancer Care (ILC2):** We have just joined Lung Ambition Alliance's Initiatives in Lung Cancer Care (ILC2) programme and the Lung Ambition Alliance agreed to support our society to deliver 'Strengthening multidisciplinary Team (MDT for) Lung Cancer care with digital technologies to improve Quality'. The Lung Ambition Alliance partners are: Global Lung Cancer Coalition (GLCC), International Association for the Study of Lung Cancer (IASLC), Guardant Health, and AstraZeneca. We have successfully signed project agreement with AstraZeneca and Ministry of Health for two years and officially launched the project and start implementing according to its work plan.

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