

Dear colleagues and friends,

Being considered for ILAE – Africa board membership is an honour that I do not take lightly. Thank you for this great opportunity. My career in epilepsy care started when I was a Junior Resident Officer, 10 years ago, I was helping in the epilepsy clinic at the Levy Mwanawasa Hospital. Since Zambia's Chapter affiliation to the ILAE, I have been a member of some ILAE task forces and committees, which has been an amazing journey and has given me a broad perspective on the mission and goals of ILAE and global epilepsy care.

I have been a long-standing advocate for the epilepsy community in Zambia from the very earliest stages of my career to present. During my internship, I pioneered the formation of the ILAE- Zambia Chapter, undertaking its registration and successful application for affiliation to the ILAE. I have been actively involved in epilepsy care, providing services to people with epilepsy in the Neurology clinics both in the public and Private sector in Zambia. I have organised and participated in community outreach programs, providing free epilepsy clinics in rural Zambia. In the last three years, I have organised and participated in Epilepsy training of nurses, clinical officers and medical doctors. I am also a trained faculty member of the Paediatric Epilepsy Training Course (PET 1). This is a course offered by the British Paediatric Neurology Association (BPNA). It was launched in Zambia in 2023, and we recently had a successful training in November 2024, where we trained nurses, general doctors, paediatric registrars and Paediatricians. I conduct an all-staff training on epilepsy and seizures at Special Hope Network, a local NGO that serves children with special needs, to empower the staff to educate parents and caregivers on how best to care for their children with epilepsy and their needs. I am a 2024 European Academy of Neurology (EAN) neurology and brain health ambassador.

With the launch of the Intersectoral Global Action Plan on Epilepsy and Neurological diseases (IGAP), the focus will be on ensuring the implementation of this plan on our continent, because Africa has a high burden of undiagnosed and untreated or poorly treated epilepsy, with limited access to epilepsy care and anti-seizure medication in some areas. Secondly, we need to ensure that Africa chapters actively take part in this initiative and other ILAE activities, to advance its mission and goals. Training health care providers in epilepsy care is another area that I intend to focus on. Lastly, collaboration within the continent needs to be emphasized in advancing epilepsy care.

Let us work together to reduce stigma and the treatment gap in Africa.

Naluca Mwendaweli.

