

Community Governance Action

A Tilitonse Foundation Newsletter: Issue 7, 1st Quarter 2024



INSIDE

Tilitonse Foundation and
ZGF in Chipata Accord

Cultivating Hope with
Vulnerable Women in
Nsanje

FNS Project Monitoring
Visits

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Foreword



Welcome to the 7th Edition of the Community Governance Action newsletter for Tilitonse Foundation. We are excited to present to you this edition because it covers a continuation of our activities on Strengthening Food and Nutritional Programming project in partnership with Welthungerhilfe (WHH) and Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET), and activities on the Shifting the Power programme being implemented in partnership with Comic Relief and UK Aid.

The edition presents activities the Foundation has undertaken in Ntcheu, Dedza and Nsanje under the Strengthening Food and Nutrition Programming Project in partnership with WHH and CISANET. It also shares the activities jointly undertaken on organizational strengthening under the Shifting the Power programme with the Zambia Governance Foundation for Civil Society.

The edition has also included supplementary section on highlights of activities the Foundation has undertaken in 2023. These include networking and engagements, highlights of the catalyst fund intervention undertaken with 23 grant partners throughout the country.

We hope that this edition will provide the necessary information to all our stakeholders and partners on the developments and activities at the Foundation as we journey together. The Foundation promises to adhere to its values and deliver its mandate on promoting good governance and sustainable development. We thank you for being part of us.

Robert White
Chief Executive Officer

Tilitonse Foundation and ZGF in Chipata Accord



A discussion on challenges and bottlenecks to organizational efficiency and effectiveness

For civil society organisations (CSOs), sustainability is not merely a goal – it is a vital component deeply ingrained in their operations. It ensures the longevity of their mission-driven endeavours, enabling them to withstand challenges and maintain their effectiveness. However, achieving sustainability is not a solo mission; it requires collaborative efforts. Best practices serve as guiding principles, illuminating the path towards organizational resilience and enduring impact.

Tilitonse Foundation and the Zambian Governance Foundation (ZGF) are CSOs, in Malawi and Zambia respectively, that are driving national governance and development programmes for non-state actors in their countries, and spearheading community-led development.

Both organisations hold significant regranting financial resources from Comic Relief and have over the past year developed a relationship on account of a shared “Shift the Power programme” they are both implementing in partnership with Comic Relief and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the UK Government (UK Aid).

Moments of reflection and introspection for each organisation over the past year revealed gaps in ways of working, systems, and financial sustainability both unique and common to all.

Thus began the journey to the “Chipata Accord”¹ working sessions.

The two organisations, recognising their shortfalls, reached out to SGS Consulting to lend their expertise in facilitating organisational development and infrastructure to the problems unique and collective that the two organisations had.

Following these conversations, the sessions in Chipata, Zambia from 19th to 21st March 2024 were conceptualised. *The goal?* To leverage on the benefits of observational learning, improvement via peer support and sharing of best practices for the two to strengthen their organisations.

The following are highlights from the conversations held on areas of interest:

Grants-making:

The Shifting the Power Programme, that both organisations are implementing in partnership with Comic Relief and UK Aid, and its associated principles have not only shaken up the way the Grants departments work but the entirety of their organizations as well.

¹ An arrangement between the Zambian Governance Foundation (ZGF), and the Tilitonse Foundation which is about synergy and mutual support for both organizations on agreed areas.

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The grants process is maintaining most of its parts but now has to allow for more participatory grant making processes such as co-creation of documents and templates for use in the grant-making including self-assessment and financial reporting tools. Autonomy no longer rests with the organization, a collective and inclusive process is necessary at every stage of grant making.

As these adjustments cannot be said to be earth shattering, critical challenges to the grants departments’ work are experienced from other quarters. Issues of inadequate funds to match demands in capacity gaps were raised, as well as the persistent challenge there is to build trust between the organisation and grant applicants as well as donors.

Human Resources and Administration

Several critical challenges were spoken to. Low salaries and benefits were noted to be common factors for a demotivated workforce and staff turnover. Phone talk time and per diems for field work turned out to be touchy subjects as well as feedback showed these elements could be improved for one and in some instances for all.

In the face of all these challenges, the HR personnel from both organisations showed resilience in their efforts and committed to refocus, realign and strategize to have the “Right staff for the right job”. This strategy refers to a sequential process

which starts with job evaluations, then having a performance management system, undertaking talent development actions, and working on job rotation and talent mobility.

Compliance and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

The Chipata Accord brought to light other pivotal functions within the development landscape, notably the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and Risk Management and Compliance sections of the Zambian Governance Foundation for Civil Society (ZGF) and Tilitonse Foundation. Amidst discussions and collaborative exchanges, these sections elucidated their roles and shared strategies aimed at fostering transparency and efficacy within the two organisations.

Racheal Mwila, representing M&E from ZGF, voiced concerns regarding donor-centric reporting, advocating for a shift towards stakeholder-focused assessments to authentically reflect community impact. She said, “*I think going forward, M&E functions should focus on what matters the most – that is the communities and CSOs we work with. That way, when we document success, it is easy to see how it came about.*”

Similarly, Kapaya Cholwe, ZGF’s Risk Management and Compliance Officer, highlighted the challenge of donors deviating from Shift the Power principles. Cholwe noted, “*An example of this is*



Tilitonse Foundation’s Fund and Finance Manager Gladney Mulima makes a point during a breakout session.

Tilitonse Foundation and ZGF in Chipata Accord

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donors introducing the Program Advisory Panels (PAPs) in their partner organisations.”

In addressing these obstacles, the team outlined actionable pathways forward. Emphasis was placed on bolstering grants management systems and fostering collective responsibility for M&E within organisations. “For both organisations to successfully document success, M&E should be everyone’s business,” stated Emmaculate Bitilinyu, Tilitonse Foundation’s M&E Specialist.

Communications:

The communications sections of both Tilitonse Foundation and the Zambian Governance Foundation for Civil Society (ZGF) provide the two organisations with invaluable services such as increased visibility, enhanced credibility, and improved stakeholder engagement. They can also

help to build strong relationships with donors, partners, and the general public, ultimately leading to greater support for their respective missions and goals.

To get to that point, existing gaps within organisational communications systems and ways of working need to be attended to. Of particular note is a pre-existing misunderstanding of what the communication department does, its possibilities and limits. This misunderstanding could lead to misaligned expectations and ineffective collaboration between departments, thus affecting the impact of the communications sections.

By enhancing their skills and fostering stronger relationships with colleagues, the communications staff can increase their efficiency and effectiveness in delivering key messages to internal and external stakeholders.



Shaun Samuels, Executive Director for SGS Consulting, facilitated the working sessions.

How to use Men in Development Work: A Case Study of Male Champions in Wanyemba Village

By Kondwani Matupa

The role of men in development work continues to evolve as time goes by. Initially, it was thought men were enough to achieve development, later it was found that without the involvement of women sustainable development would not be achieved.

While the involvement of both men and women is valued in development work, the way this is applied differs on a case by case basis as novel ways of using the capabilities each has continue to be found out.

Enter the Male Champion concept. This method of using men to champion change in issues to do with food sustainability, good nutrition and hygiene practices is something being advocated for in

the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

The way it works is that the grant partner operating in the area engages local chiefs to identify men who demonstrate the ability to successfully manage their household and an aptitude to learn. These are trained on mixed farming methods, manure making, Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI), and Water and Sanitation Health (WASH).



A male champion meeting in Wanyemba Village in Ntcheu takes place during the March 2024 peer to peer learning visit

the “Strengthening Food and Nutrition Security Programming in Malawi” (FNS) project under implementation by Tilitonse Foundation and the Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET) through Welthungerhilfe and with support from

Following these trainings, the individuals are presented by the chiefs to the people in the community as proponents of all these things that they have been trained on and given a mandate to help the community *continued on page 8*

develop in those areas. Members of the community are required to cooperate with them.

The Male Champion club in Wanyemba village in Traditional Authority Champiti's area in Ntcheu presents a perfect picture of what can be achieved if the grouping operates as expected. The group has 30 members and uses local resources to do their work and they plot action plans as a group with decision-making arrived at by consensus.

Their main focus point is to enforce the initiatives introduced by the grant partner operating in their area, the Dedza Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP). Starting with ensuring the availability of pit latrines, garbage disposal pits and backyard gardens for every household.

They work with local leadership structures on the projects they choose to implement in their community. Traditional leaders are approached for their consent and awareness when an action has been planned. In cases where the leadership appears to be laissez faire about an issue, the group sometimes override the approval for the sake of good health and nutrition depending on how critical a situation is.

While some community members can merely be approached to consider implementing the initiatives proposed by the FNS project on their own, others are not able to participate due to factors such as illness, old age, or inability to find the necessary resources to carry out the required changes.

At the male champion meetings, names of community members to be assisted by the group are proposed and an assessment team is sent to verify the situation.

During a peer to peer learning visit hosted by Dedza Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) in early March 2024, visiting organizations implementing similar projects in other areas had the opportunity to sit in on a Male Champion weekly meeting.

At this meeting there were discussions concerning a number of people who need immediate support, however, a case of one disabled member of the community who had lost all their limbs was prioritised. It was flagged as a priority as the individual had no family members to help them and needed urgent assistance as they were using a nearby graveyard as a toilet. They required a toilet, bathroom and garbage pit.

Gender and social inclusion also turned out to be a part of the conversation as a case of a woman

needing support in constructing a bathroom was also discussed. It was noted that gender alone is not a determining factor when it comes to who to support but vulnerability is considered.

A debate then ensued among the champions at the end of which it was decided that the man would be attended to first as the woman was found to have two males living with her who could erect a bathroom structure. Still, it was decided that a team should go to counsel the woman's children so that they take better care of their parent. For the man, a team would be sent to dig a latrine and bathroom then burn bricks and build the structure.

The grouping also has a system for follow ups on action points made. Those absconding from acting on agreed action points are scolded and sometimes penalised. In fact, the grouping is strict on discipline and has set penalties for various offences. Those absent without giving a reason are fined MK500, late comers pay MK200. There are penalties also for those who show up at meetings drunk. These penalties are used as means to raise funds for the group activities while maintaining a certain sense of decorum in the way the grouping is seen and operates. A membership register is kept and roll call made at every meeting to help with the fundraising. In addition, at every meeting, each member brings a 100 Kwacha contribution to the group.

Women can also bring their issues to the group and the male champions can reach their male counterpart and provide counsel on the issue raised by the spouse. At the meeting in March, one gentleman testified to having been a drunkard and wife-beater. He had been accosted by the male champions when the issue had reached their ears and had since changed his ways. The group encourages the perception that there is little difference between male and female and all can work together as well as contribute to the development of the community.

Men have come a long way from merely bringing home a kill from the forest, they now also have to consider what sort of nutrition it brings, what alternatives to traditional foods can be incorporated in the diet, and what sanitary and good hygiene practices the home has. There is no longer a delineation between male and female in development work much less a distinction between male and female roles. We are all just hands and feet working in a common cause and heading towards the same direction, that of a food and nutrition secure Malawi.



Embracing Transformation: A Call for Change Built on Trust, Solidarity, Truth, and Accountability

By Chimwemwe Kayange, Human Rights & Development Activist & YALI Alumna

Have you ever wondered if there's a different way to make our world better? A different way to development? And if you could be a part of that development you envision? I have, and my journey into this line of thinking began in March 2023 when I first heard about the Shift the Power movement. Thanks to Global Fund for Community Foundations, Tilitonse Foundation and Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation (CHRR), I found myself at the Global Summit in December 2023, where my perspectives on development underwent a profound shift.

In December 2023, the GFCF joined 700 voices from across the globe to engage in a collective dialogue on Shift The Power. The experience was a profound journey, marked by shared experiences and compelling testimonials that left most people in attendance energized and inspired. The side events were vibrant hubs of enthusiasm, fostering a sense of urgency to actively participate in the envisioned change.

The summit provided a platform to pause, encourage introspection and gaze into the present and future landscape of development in our countries and the world. The atmosphere of the room resonated with a shared belief that an alternative path exists, and that it requires to re-evaluate the narratives that have guided our steps, particularly in understanding the dynamics

of power distribution in the development arena.

In the echo of Nana Afadzinu's words – «drop the logos, egos, and silos,» a revelation unfolded in the room. It was a collective awakening, a call to transcend individual interests for a common purpose. The room became a nexus of possibilities and solutions, setting the tone for a transformative journey.

The summit aimed at reshaping the narrative of development, important questions emerged, prompting a critical rethink:

What problem are we truly trying to solve?

What potential solutions exist for this problem?

What local resources, be they financial or non-financial, can we tap into to address this issue?

From the room, a notable concern surfaced – the tendency of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to predominantly concentrate on financial resources, overshadowing the valuable human skills, capacity, and abilities within communities. The summit underscored the idea that communities possess an innate understanding of their challenges and potential solutions. Thus, it is important to recognize and leverage these local abilities, unleashing knowledge that can serve as a foundation for positive and sustainable change.

The discussions also highlighted the necessity to reassess the development narrative within our local context, urging a closer examination of our capacity to respond to challenges.

A reflective visual of some key points during the summit...

A realization struck most of the attendees of one certain side event I attended around “Building collective dreams and strategies for safe communities”, during the conversation one participant pointed out,

«The problem with CSOs/NGOs working with communities is that there is no trust between the

positions, often forgetting the essence of their service. Ambika’s example highlighted the use of terms in spaces to justify actions and the tendency to shift focus without clear and satisfying reasons. We need to “work ourselves out of a job» she said, this underscored the need to challenge the disruptive status quo and relinquish privileges ingrained in the system.

Lightning talk reflections during the summit....

Though challenging, this requires looking back at the initial motivation for entering the line of work and remembering the communities we aim to serve. She then stressed on the importance of international donor agencies in decolonizing

reflect on the broader concepts of development and philanthropy within our specific contexts. The discourse emphasized the significant influence of philanthropy and the intricate power dynamics involved. Even at higher stages, it is philanthropy that channels resources to us, underscoring the need to recognize and navigate this power dynamic.

We need to question ourselves and scrutinize the language we use, particularly terms like «recipients of aid.» Does this align with our long-term aspirations or satisfies our objectives?

This was/is a wake-up call to acknowledge our position, urging a closer examination of our priorities set on those decision-making tables. The learning from this dialogue highlighted the necessity to unlearn and decolonize our mindset, emphasizing that not all solutions hinge on financial resources alone. This insight shaped a path towards independence, encouraging a holistic understanding of the intricate web of power and resources in the realm of development.

In a compelling address at the summit, Hibak Kalfan delivered a stirring speech that not only instilled courage in me but also other attendees present. Key words in the speech were «Trust, Solidarity, Power, Truth and Accountability», painting a vision of a world she aspires to be part of. But the key questions were

– do we share this vision? and is the current aid system fit for this purpose?

To establish a locally-led, trusted, and accountable emergent system, we must create spaces for communities based on solidarity, not differences. We have to build bridges within our collective ecosystems, supporting locally rooted solutions, and humbly recognize that no single group holds all the answers.

In her address, she deliberately posed 2 important questions for our daily consideration:

Do we want to be part of the change? What are we willing to do to make it happen?

To conclude this article, if you desire to contribute to this transformation and believe that another way is possible, join me and 700 other voices in this plea—an appeal inspired by Hibak and directed to various key stakeholders, outlined as follows;

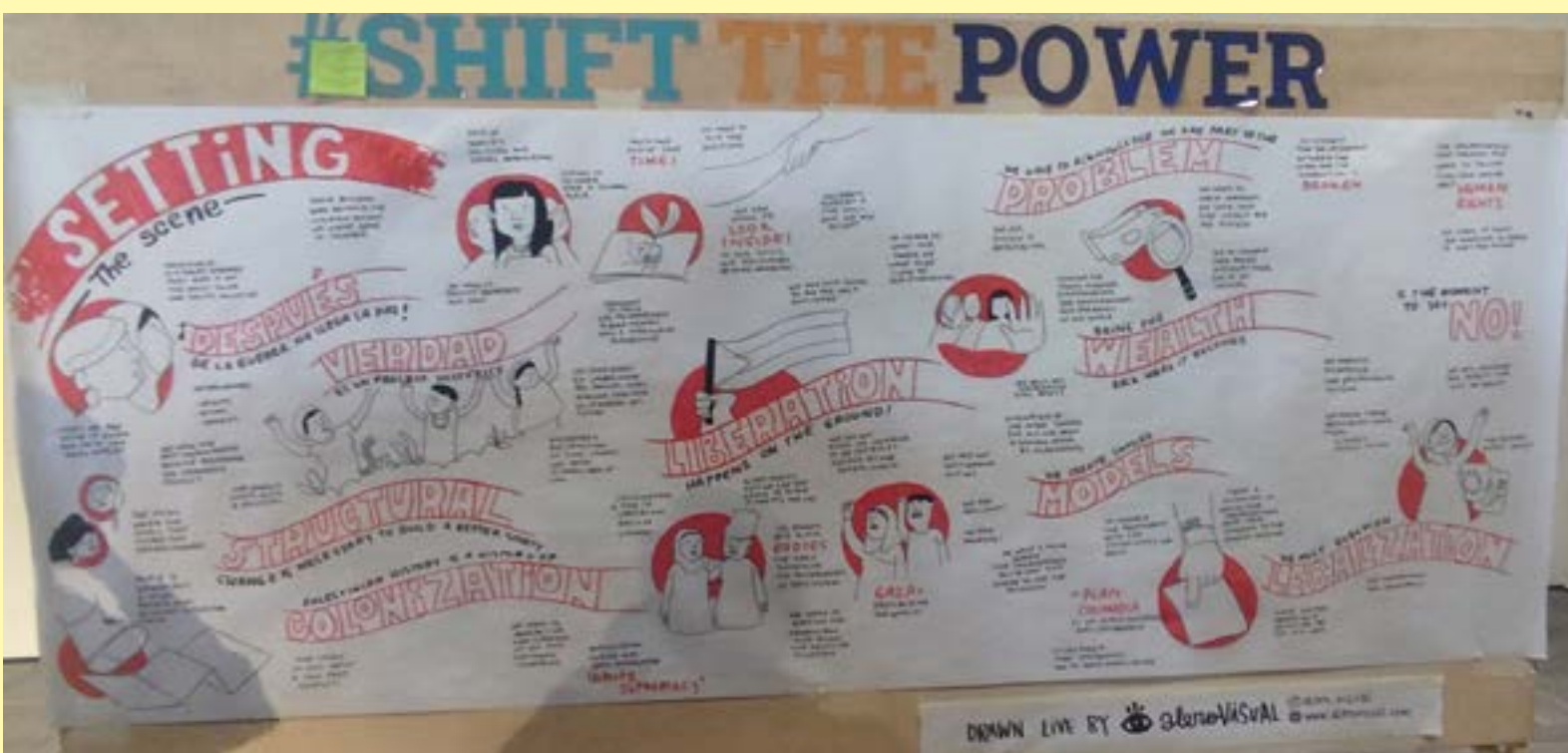
To donors: Humbly seek feedback from local community leaders to assess the effectiveness of your initiatives. Open both yourself and your organization to learning, not through intermediaries but directly from grassroots leaders, national activists, and peace builders. This proactive approach will ensure a comprehensive understanding of the impact of your efforts.

To implementers (advocates etc): Embrace openness and cultivate a mindset beyond the current paradigm. Be receptive to learning from others, recognizing that not all answers reside within. Engage with individuals and practitioners possessing lived experiences, understanding their needs. When appropriate, step aside and allow their insights and expertise to take center stage.

From the Global South/communities: Be brave, be bold, and speak up. Make sure others in the sector do what they should, and lead us all on a journey that is real and marks positive change.

Let us learn, unlearn, understand and act accordingly !!!!

“We want change, and we want to play a role in making that happen – a change that reflects Trust, Solidarity, Power, Truth, and Accountability”



A visual transcription of the conversations held during the conference

two components, leading to high prospects of not achieving desired outcomes.»

This statement sheds light on the current state of civic spaces and the trust deficit prevailing among stakeholders in the development agenda. A call was made for CSOs to question ourselves who we are working for and how we are aligning ourselves to the people we are working for.

Drawing from a lightning talk by Ambika from Neelam Tiruchelvam Trust, our development system grapples with structural violence, characterized by a patriarchal flow and an unequal distribution of power, posing challenges beyond what it should. Many CSOs find themselves packaging their initiatives to align with hierarchical

grant-making processes, urging them to comprehend the diverse complexities present in the world. This served as a call to action for CSOs present to be vigilant, re-evaluate systems, and question to whose call we are answering to.

In another thought-provoking discussion, the focus shifted to how Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) could strive for greater independence and reduce reliance on International NGOs (INGOs) for aid. The conversation delved into the inherent nature of power, which becomes an integral part of life and a compelling need, often perceived by many INGOs. From the discussion, in order to foster independence, we as CSOs must critically

The Catalyst Fund: Experiences from Malawi

Shifting the Power in Practice

By Robert White

From December, 2022 the Tilitonse Foundation in Malawi has been implementing a *Shifting the Power Programme in Malawi* in partnership with Comic Relief and UK Aid. The programme is aimed at strengthening civil society in Malawi to be more independent, resilient and effective in delivering priorities of local people around the key thematic areas of Early Childhood Development, Gender Justice, Mental Health and Safe and Secure Shelter.

The programme revolves around four pillars: Organizational Strengthening which is the main focus of the programme; and Funding Windows – Catalyst Fund Window, Civil Society Strengthening Fund Window and Community Resource Matching Fund Window. So far, the Tilitonse Foundation has rolled out parts of an Organizational Strengthening Framework and operationalized the Catalyst Fund Window.

The Catalyst Fund (CF) was rolled out in February, 2023 with grant disbursements made in July, 2023 for projects that run for 6 months up to December, 2023. It was aimed at supporting CSOs to develop effective and viable project proposals for funding through the Civil Society Strengthening Fund (CSSF) under the *Shifting the Power Programme*, and supporting them to put in place capacities that will facilitate access to support from other development partners. Access to funding from the Catalyst Fund Window was based on applications informed by evidence that was presented from a Self – Assessment Tool the Tilitonse Foundation made available to local CSOs.

Its Operationalization and the Realities

The Catalyst Fund was an interesting initiative by Tilitonse Foundation and it proved its **mettle**: *precipitating access to opportunities and support for local CSOs*. The total amount spent under the Fund was **GBP103,792.18** and **23 grant partners** accessed the funding, with grants of a maximum of **GBP5,000** per organization for a period of 6 months. Access to CSSF cannot be measured currently because of the delay in the roll out of the CSSF, but the Catalyst Fund has supported the successful grant partners to register remarkable achievements:

1. Registration for Legal Personality

The Catalyst Fund supported local organizations to meet statutory obligations such as registration with the Government authorities to attain legal persona. An important requirement for financial support for local CSOs is to be recognized as legal entities, and there are organizations that are doing impressive work but have not registered, and a result are not able to mobilize support externally. Under the catalyst fund support, a total of 10 local organizations were registered with institutions such as the Non - Governmental Organizations Regulatory Authority (NGORA), Council for Non – Governmental Organizations in Malawi (CONGOMA) and the Registrar General. These registrations have opened up opportunities for funding for organizations such as the Community Based Natural Resource Management Forum - collective voice of local communities living around national parks and forest reserves in remote hard-to-reach areas - which has accessed 3 funding opportunities because it is now a registered organization.

'The Catalyst Fund grant was the first ever grant for the organization which we used to legally register as a community trust, put in place basic organizational policies and procedures, and operationalized our board. From the GBP3,000 grant, we managed to set ourselves up to attract a grant of USD154,000 from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) , which is our biggest grant achievement so far. We were also able to leverage the organizational changes we experienced to attain further funding of USD25, 000 because of the registration, and this was from the Global Greengrants Fund'.

Dr. Langa, CBNRM Forum Executive Director

2. Setting up of Structures and Systems

The fund supported local CSOs to develop and put in place governance, management and operational systems. These included development of Board Charters, and set up and orientation of Boards; financial management and procurement procedures and systems; strategic plan; anti - fraud and anti - corruption policies; proposal development and resource mobilization.

'Neno Active Youth in Development (NAYODE) has greatly benefitted from the Catalyst Fund project, which enhanced our proposal skills, trained our Board, and provided essential policies. These improvements empower us to serve our community more effectively'

Quote from Moses Chabuka, NAYODE Executive Director.

3. Community Involvement and Engagement

Through the Catalyst Fund, CSOs were supported to involve and engage local communities in collecting data and information, and design of projects. The catalyst fund projects enabled the successful applicants to interact with local people to inform the development and design of the proposals for CSSF, and its monitoring and evaluation framework – people centred and driven programming.

4. Access to Funding Opportunities

The Catalyst Fund support facilitated access to funding from other sources due to the registration and development of systems and structures by the successful applicants. A total of 6 organizations managed to get funds from various funding sources, with some getting more than 3 times the amount of funding they have been accessing.

'To begin with, the work on improving our financial protocols, guidelines, and enhancing our understanding of financial management enabled us to negotiate effectively with our traditional donor, Commonwealth of Learning, for more funding. This led to a substantial increase in the organisations annual grant amount from GBP 9,520 to GBP56,670).

Complementing this development, we successfully secured funding from OXFAM through a 5 - year project duration with an initial GBP 13,106 marking a significant milestone for the organization. Additionally, the organization has also obtained an 18-month project grant totaling GBP 30,375 with Save the Children. Furthermore, CYO has just signed an agreement with IM Swedish Development Partner for a grant amounting to GBP 56,670 for a one-year project.

Quote from Doreen Chilole, CYO Finance and Administrative Officer

The Results and its Implications

i. Ownership and Drive

The operationalization of the Catalyst Fund and its outcomes buttress the call for flexibility on funding towards local CSOs, and brought to light the good results that come from such flexibility. The organizations that were supported were given the space to determine their areas of need both for programming and organizational development, through their assessments which were supported by a self - assessment tool. The self – assessment tool assisted them to come up with areas that need to be supported, and this formed the basis for the proposals that were submitted and eventually funded.

ii. Catalytic Approach to Development

A key outcome from the support through the Catalyst Fund has been reasserting and confirming the fact that local CSOs *need a push* for them to realize their potential and fulfil their agenda. They need a partnership that will catalyze their comparative advantage: realize their niche and support its full exploitation; provide room and space for them to determine and pursue their agenda; support their capacity to deliver and meet legal and policy requirements; respond to and drive the agenda of the constituents and the people they work with. Local CSOs need a partnership of equals, that is flexible and willing to support them to pursue an agenda set by themselves and the communities.

FNS PROJECT MONITORING VISITS

By Nellie Tsamwa

Through the Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) Programming project, Tilitonse Foundation, Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET), and WelfHungerHilfe (WHH) with support from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) have been making significant progress in improving food and nutrition security in Malawi.

On 6th – 8th February 2024, the three organizations visited grant partners in Nsanje, Ntcheu and Dedza districts to learn what impact their interventions are having on the lives of community members and whether the goal of the project to have a food and nutrition secure people are being achieved.

The visits revealed that innovative and impactful initiatives are being implemented that are improving the lives of many Malawians. Community members now have access to

improved farming techniques and establishment of Village Savings and Loans groups (VSLs) has been done. Promotion of farming nutritious food is an ongoing exercise and work is being done to improve access to clean water and sanitation.

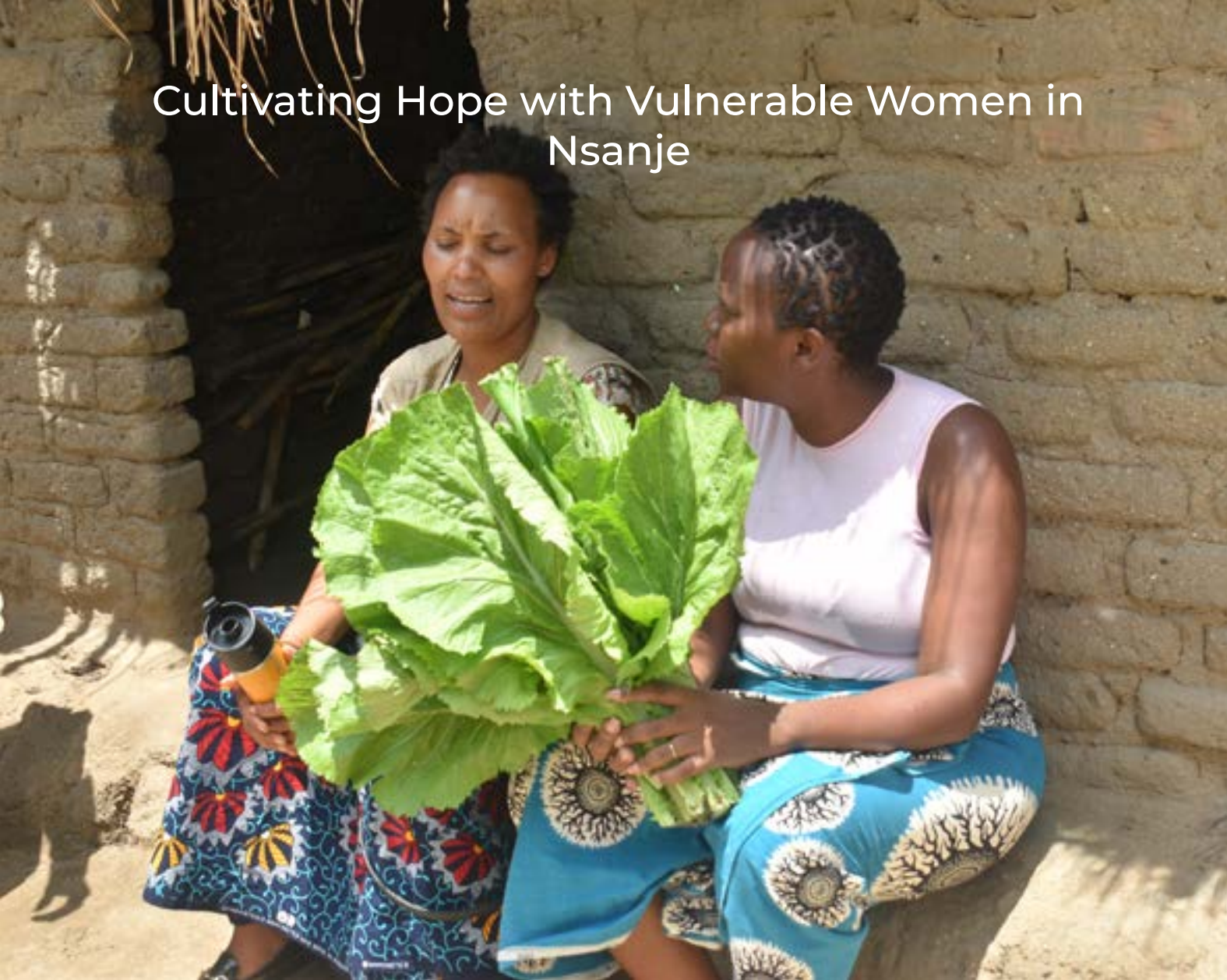
However, gaps still exist and there is a need for the partners to scale up their interventions to address the gaps and challenges that have been identified. Plans have been made and partners are committed to working together to ensure that the project achieves its full potential and contributes to a significant reduction in hunger and malnutrition in Malawi.

The organisations visited were Youth Initiative for Community Support Organization (YICOD), Foundation for Civic Education and Social Empowerment (FOCESE), and Dedza Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP).

Pictorial focus of the learning visit



Cultivating Hope with Vulnerable Women in Nsanje



By Nellie Tsamwa

At the heart of the Foundation for Civic Education and Social Empowerment (FOCESE)'s intervention lies the establishment of lively vegetable gardens. These green gardens are not just a source of fresh produce but are crucial components in addressing the nutritional needs of pregnant and breastfeeding women. The goal is clear, to improve dietary diversification and in turn enhance the health and livelihoods of households with women of reproductive age.

Walking through the rows of flourishing vegetables, one can witness the tangible impact of FOCESE's efforts. The established gardens have become symbols of hope and self-sufficiency for the women in Nsanje.

Mercy Nkundika from Lundu 1 village, T/A Malemia, is a lead farmer and beneficiary of the project. She is a woman whose life has taken a turn for the better through the vegetable gardens and she narrates her journey, "Before [the gardens], it was challenging to provide nutritious meals for my family, especially during pregnancy and while breastfeeding. But now, with the

vegetable garden, I can ensure a balanced diet, knowing that I can offer my family a diverse and healthy diet rich in vitamins," she reflects. Maria's journey is a testament to the impact of FOCESE's intervention. "

FOCESE's intervention does not only provide seeds and training but also instills sustainable agricultural practices. The women, like Mercy, have not only cultivated vegetables but also acquired the skills and knowledge to maintain these gardens independently. These lessons can be shared, creating a ripple effect within the community, and this empowerment ensures the long-term success of the project.

Patience Kazembe, the Food and Nutrition Security Officer at FOCESE, explains that the project started in April 2023 and is planned to end in March 2024. Household visitations in GVVH Chithumba helped to have an overview of how the impact of interventions is on the ground.

The "Strengthening Food and Nutrition Security Programme" is not just about addressing immediate hunger, it is an approach to fostering self-reliance, health, and empowerment. As FOCESE tends to the roots *continued on page 15*



A discussion of the grant partner's work at FOCESE offices.

continued from page 14 of these gardens, they are nurturing a future where vulnerable women can thrive, one vegetable at a time. The project is proving that with the right support, communities can grow beyond their challenges, cultivating not only food but also hope for a brighter, healthier tomorrow.

Supported by the German Federal Ministry for

Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), this initiative is within the broader "Strengthening Food and Nutrition Programming in Malawi" project under implementation by Tilitonse Foundation and the Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET) through Welthungerhilfe. It is not just about planting crops; it's about nurturing health, empowerment, and resilience among the women of reproductive age.



A cross section of beneficiaries from the project

FNS Proposal Writing, Project Management and Donor Reporting Training



Representatives from the various organizations that attended the training

By **Nellie Tsamwa**

The Tilitonse Foundation, in collaboration with Welthungerhilfe (WHH) and CISANET, conducted a project management training for 10 CSOs in Blantyre from January 15th to 19th 2024.

This training program aimed to provide participants with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively write proposals, manage projects, and report to donors. The program covered topics such as research and needs assessment, developing objectives and outcomes, writing compelling proposals, managing project timelines and budgets, tracking progress and reporting to donors. Participants had the opportunity to practice their skills through hands-on activities and exercises.

Among the CSOs that participated in the training are Youth For Development and Productivity (YODEP), Youth Initiative for Community Support Organization (YICOD), Tiphedzane Community Support Organisation (TICOSO), Rural Development Support Trust (RUDESUT), Foundation for Civic Education and Social Empowerment (FOCESE), Dedza Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP), Centre for Youth Empowerment and Civic Education (CEYCE), Golomoti Active AIDS Support Organization (GASO), Nyanthepa Community Radio Station, and Foundation for Active Civic

Education (FACE).

Speaking at the training, Eranive Nyirenda the Capacity Development and Mentoring Officer for Tilitonse Foundation said they did a capacity assessment on the ten CSOs, and one of the gaps they identified was in Project Management hence the training.

Additionally, Fletcher Sidira, Senior Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) Officer from Welthungerhilfe also added that one of the components in Project Management is to do with building the capacity of CSOs to be able to develop proposals to win projects.

One of the participants, Doshan Kumwenda, Executive Director for Youth for Development and Productivity (YODEP) said they benefitted a lot from the training as an organization because they used to write proposals using shortcuts but with the training they are sure to write winning proposals moving forward.

The training was part of organizational support offered to the organizations under the “Strengthening Food and Nutrition Security Programming” Project currently being implemented by Tilitonse Foundation and the Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET) through Welthungerhilfe and with support from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Comic Relief holds “Climate Dream World” Poetry Challenge



Fletcher (3rd from left) takes a picture with Communications personnel from Comic Relief and participating countries-Malawi, Zambia and Ghana

In quarter 1 of 2024 Comic Relief held a poetry challenge in Malawi, Zambia and Ghana as part of an initiative to raise awareness of the plight of climate change around the world.

Poetry submissions were shortlisted and a winner identified in each country. For Malawi, Fletcher Chiponda, a journalist for Umunthu FM radio in Nkhosakota, was declared the winner. His poem, and that of winners from the other countries, were then shared with famous British poet “George the Poet” who used them as inspiration to put together his own epic poem that was filmed for the BBC.

The poem by George the Poet was filmed with scenes shot in the United Kingdom, Malawi, Zambia and Ghana. The poets that had inspired George’s work also made guest appearances in the video which was aired on the BBC on Red Nose Day, an annual event where Comic Relief raises funds to support their programs. This year Red Nose Day was on 15th March.

George’s star power and the winning submissions from Fletcher and friends contributed to raising awareness of the problems with climate change and envision the kind of world we want for ourselves and our future.

The video that was aired on the BBC on Red

Nose Day can be viewed using the following link: <https://t.ly/c9wLd>



Unlocking the Power of Meal Training: A Key to Enhancing Food and Nutrition Security in Malawi



Young people in T/A Chilikumwendo's area, Dedza share their inspiring stories of growth, challenges and success from the project

By Alexander Sichinga

Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) are critical components of Food and Nutrition Security (FNS). However, typical M & E approaches may fail to capture the full impact interventions on Food and Nutrition indices. This is where MEAL Training comes in, offering a more thorough and refined approach to evaluating and improving program success. Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) is a comprehensive framework that extends beyond the traditional boundaries of M & E training. MEAL Training's use of responsibility and learning components creates a more dynamic and responsive method to monitoring Food and Nutrition Security Parameters.

So Why MEAL Training and not simply M & E?

M & E is the systematic collection, analysis, and use of information regarding a program's or project's performance and outcomes in order to make educated decisions, enhance performance, and assure accountability. It usually entails tracking progress toward particular goals, assessing the efficacy and efficiency of actions, and giving suggestions for improvement. MEAL, on the other hand, broadens the notion of monitoring and evaluation by emphasizing responsibility and learning. Accountability entails ensuring that stakeholders are involved in decision-making and that the program or initiative is transparent and responsive to their concerns. Learning is the systematic collection, analysis, and application of data to develop knowledge that may be used to improve programs and guide policy choices. Thus, whereas M&E is primarily concerned with the technical aspects of data collection and analysis, MEAL takes a broader view of program management that includes ensuring accountability to stakeholders and promoting learning for continuous improvement. Understanding the

difference between the two concepts can help organizations develop more effective programs and improve their ability to achieve their goals.

Is M & E Necessary for Food Nutrition and Security indicators?

Yes, it is very necessary. Why? MEAL and M&E provide distinct but complementary functions in development efforts. MEAL provides accountability, promotes learning, and improves program design and execution, whereas M&E focuses on monitoring program activities and outputs, assessing program effectiveness, and utilizing evidence to influence program decisions. By using both techniques in program management, development practitioners can ensure that their programs are successful, efficient, and have a good influence on the communities they serve.

Necessity for both M & E and MEAL approaches in FNS

Monitoring and Evaluation as Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) are part of everyday programme management and they are critical to the success of Food and Nutrition Security Project. Without M & E and MEAL, organizations cannot be able to track progress, make adjustments, having a whole picture on the impact made on the lives of those with they serve and also uncover unplanned effects of programmes. Therefore, having a MEAL system for the Food and Nutrition Security will enable organizations to be accountable through information sharing and giving feedback mechanism which can help to guide the Food and Nutrition project implementation.

Disclaimer: Parts of this article are based on information collected from <https://www.evalcommunity.com/career-center/meal-vs-me/>

Highlights of 2023

We had so much going on in 2023 that we were not able to report on everything, in this section we share some of those noteworthy stories



4th African Philanthropy Conference: A Makanjira Experience



by **Ousman Kennedy, Executive Chairman of Makanjira Development Foundation**

Makanjira Development Foundation is an organization that aims to empower the people of Makanjira in Mangochi District to decide and participate in the development of their community through collective action in planning and implementation of projects.

Makanjira Development Foundation with support from Comic Relief, UK Aid and Tilitonse Foundation participated at this year's 4th African Philanthropy Conference held at Dakar and Sally in Senegal.

The conference which ran from 31st July to 4th August, 2023 under the academic and main conference segments held in Dakar and Sally respectively brought together academics, practitioners, philanthropic visionaries, donors, researchers, think tanks, and government officials with the aim of reflecting on best actions that could ignite, support, and accompany movements and initiatives that can propel African philanthropy beyond limitations and create a new era for the continent.

On behalf of the Makanjira Development Foundation I would like to thank Comic Relief, UK Aid and Tilitonse Foundation for financing this trip to the conference. The conference was significant as it served as a platform to share success stories that our organization has made over the years, learn best practices

of philanthropy from other practitioners, network with other organizations, and build strategic partnerships with reputable players in the industry in a bid to increase the organization's exposure.

As regards our organizational objective, the African Philanthropy Conference in Senegal was a transformative event that highlighted the potential of philanthropy to shape a better future for Africa. Our participation at the conference has reinvigorated our efforts towards philanthropy in our community as we have learnt that recognizing the power and perspectives of local communities and embracing true decolonization can truly make philanthropy impactful on the continent.

Participants at the conference acknowledged the importance of transparency, collaboration, strengthening agency and building people power within philanthropy. To address these issues, participants examined ways to empower individuals and communities to take ownership of their own development and drive positive change.

This involved exploring strategies to enhance the capacity and agency of marginalized groups, ensuring that they have a voice and influence in philanthropic initiatives, and the significance of harnessing digital technology for resource mobilization and exploring innovative approaches to leverage local fundraising activities.

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At the conference, Makanjira Development Foundation held talks with several reputable organizations including the Centre for African Philanthropy and Social Investments (CAPSI) with the aim of exploring ways of building strategic partnerships that would strengthen the organization's philanthropic work in Makanjira. Makanjira Development Foundation and CAPSI will finalize their discussions in relation to the partnership before the end of September, 2023.

During the opening ceremony, Senegalese Foreign Minister for Foreign Affairs, Aissata Tall Sall delivered a compelling speech, defining philanthropy as a voluntary duty rooted in the principles of People, Power, Policy, and Practices. She emphasized the courage and sense of responsibility required to engage in philanthropy and the importance of transparency and accountability to ensure that philanthropic endeavors have a positive and lasting effect in our communities.

In addition to the aforementioned discussions, the conference also delved into various areas of interest, such as faith-based philanthropy, traditional philanthropy, and emerging models of vertical philanthropy. These discussions aimed to explore the different approaches and strategies employed by these philanthropic

sectors and how they can contribute to the overall development and progress of Africa.

Funders, practitioners and other key stakeholders also discussed ways of transforming philanthropic practices with an emphasis on collaboration and centralizing funding. Presenters at the conference urged attendees to reflect on the philanthropies they represent and ensure that their actions were not merely appeasing the government or funders but genuinely benefiting those in need.

The African Philanthropy Conference is an annual gathering of the continent's philanthropic institutions and stakeholders. It is a platform for sharing experiences, collective reflection and development of philanthropic and social investment practices of the continent's people.

This year's conference themed "Philanthropy at an Inflection Point," was organized by TrustAfrica, Wits University's Centre on African Philanthropy and Social Investment (CAPSI), Africa Philanthropy Forum (APF), East Africa Philanthropy Network (EAPN), Africa Philanthropy Network (APN), and Southern Africa Trust (SAT).

Monitoring and evaluating with WHH & CISANET: Experiences from the Food and Nutrition Strengthening Project



The project M and E team interacting with one of the project participants implementing the small grants projects under CCJP in T/A Champiti, Ntcheu district during projects participant's verification visit

By Emmaculate Bitilinyu, Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist, Tilitonse Foundation

Welthungerhilfe (WHH), in collaboration with the Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET) and the Tilitonse Foundation, is implementing a three-year project which aims at strengthening civil society organisations (CSOs) and improving Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) programming in Malawi and is supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

The synergies created through the combination of existing professional expertise, experiences, and actor networks, form favourable preconditions for the successful implementation of the present project. Specifically, there has been great collaboration in the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) in the project and all partners have been treated with respect and equality.

WHH has great Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) processes and the team has learnt a lot from them, such an example includes outcome harvesting as the project is being implemented rather than just waiting for evaluations. It is no doubt that such processes will be replicated in future Tilitonse Foundation projects.

On the other hand, the value that CISANET brings on board cannot be overemphasized. Being an expert in FNS programming, their understanding of the food and nutrition ecosystem has been invaluable to the programme.

Overall, the coordination when implementing all MEAL activities amongst the three partners (WHH, CISANET and Tilitonse Foundation) has been an opportunity for exchanging knowledge and skills across the team and that's something which cannot be taken for granted. It is really great working with WHH and CISANET.

“Shift the Power Programme: A Catalyst Fund for positive change”



By Reonard Emiliyo, Project Coordinator, YICOD

Youth Initiative for Community Development (YICOD), has embarked on a transformative journey thanks to the Catalyst Fund supported by the Shift the Power Programme which is being implemented by Tilitonse Foundation in partnership with Comic Relief and UK Aid.

The project kicked off with a pivotal activity that would set the stage for the organization's future success by training its board of trustees and management on roles and responsibilities.

In recent years, YICOD has faced a general concern to improve technical diversity in its board of trustees. One of the corporate governance weaknesses that YICOD had was the composition of the board where the organisation lacked a trustee with legal professional background, skills, and experiences necessary to meet the organizational strategic and operational needs. The coming in of the Catalyst Fund helped YICOD to identify this gap through a self-assessment that the organization conducted.

To address the above governance challenge, the organisation has currently incorporated a board member with legal knowledge. Roping in the new board member will improve the quality of decision making on legal matters as well as fostering an

environment that encourages discussion, debate, and the exchange of information thereby achieving a high-board performance.

Having identified the board member with legal knowledge, the organization has trained its board members and management on roles and responsibilities.

The training, being the first of its kind since the organization's inception, was organized with the aim of enhancing the knowledge base and understanding of the board and management on their roles and responsibilities which in turn will ensure effective execution of roles and responsibilities.

The training was organised after noting that board members and management were not trained on roles and responsibilities due to financial constraints which negatively affected the board's oversight and performance. In addition to that, there was overlap of roles between the board and management due to undefined roles which sometimes affected the organisation operations.

“Being the first training involving the board and management, the training helped the board members to understand their roles and responsibilities. Given the important role that the board plays, the training

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Some YICOD Staff during group work

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inspired them to enhance their standards of accountability, transparency and good governance. In the past, board members were literally making decisions regardless of whose position and responsibilities it was. Now members will work with confidence as they will refrain from doing others' responsibilities knowing exactly what to do at their position" said Dr. Hasten Mjoni Mwale, Board Chairperson for YICOD"

One of the key takeaways from the training was a deeper understanding of the percentage of effort required from both the board and management. This clarity prevented overlapping responsibilities and ensured that tasks were appropriately delegated based on areas of expertise, specifically in governance, leadership, and management.

Most importantly, the training instilled a sense of accountability among the board and management which means that management can hold the board to account and vice versa.

"The orientation enhanced our knowledge as management on roles and responsibilities including understanding of board-staff relationship. The developed action plan will help management to improve in its operations," said Sheripher Dassu, Project Officer for YICOD.

All in all, it is clear that the Catalyst Fund is a catalyst for positive change. YICOD is emerging stronger, more efficient, and better equipped to fulfill its mission, all thanks to the support and guidance it is receiving.



YICOD Board of Trustees during group work

Learn more about Tilitonse Foundation's work, listen to these podcasts:



Alternative Convos Podcast:

Promoting Accountable and Inclusive Governance through Strengthening Civil Society: The Tilitonse Foundation Story

Listen now on:



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The Tilitonse Foundation Podcast: Shift the Power series

<https://t.ly/gii9V>



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