



BUUNGANO

Newsletter

NON-GOVERNMENTAL GENDER ORGANISATIONS' COORDINATING COUNCIL

July - December, 2022

Building Solidarity for women's Empowerment

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VISION STATEMENT

A society where women are empowered and fully participate in social, cultural economic and political development.

MISSION STATEMENT

To promote women's empowerment for gender equality through coordinated advocacy, capacity development of member organisations and linkages with government, local and international partners.

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From the Director's Pen

SINCE its inception in 1985, the Non-governmental Gender Organisations' Coordinating Council (NGOCC) has been advocating for gender responsive policy and legal reform for the empowerment of women and girls in Zambia. During its 37 years of existence and advocacy work, NGOCC and the women's movement at large have been able to influence some strides towards narrowing the gender gap in the country. Over the years, women and indeed girls have remained on the peripheries of the development pendulum. This has been attributed to a number of factors but largely to the entrenched patriarchy and the inadequate legal framework.

While some strides have been achieved in terms of women's empowerment, there still remains a lot to be done. In 2022, the women's movement closed the year on a rather sad note because the traction on the gender agenda was reversed with the abolishment of the Ministry of Gender by the New Dawn Administration. On assumption of office, the United Party for National Development (UPND) abolished the Ministry of Gender and created a Division in the Office of the President.

We therefore continue to demand the re-establishment of the Ministry of Gender. We believe that the Ministry of Gender remains pivotal in the coordination of actions on women's empowerment and narrowing the gender gap in the country. We also reiterate the need for the Government to operationalize the Gender Equity and Equality Commission (GEEC), which is a creation of the Republican Constitution. Article 231 of the Republican Constitution is unambiguous in terms of the Gender Equity and Equality Commission.

As part of our advocacy NGOCC will continue to highlight some of the work we are doing through the Buungano Newsletter. We are therefore happy to once again share with you this particular edition. In this edition just like in previous editions, we share some stories depicting how the



various interventions are changing lives for the women and girls of this country. We share in particular how the *Promoting Opportunities for Women's Empowerment and Rights (POWER)*, a European Union supported project, is changing lives. The POWER project is aimed at promoting the socio-economic empowerment of women and girls in Zambia.

The intervention seeks to increase women's income through; access to, and control of, productive resources (land, credit and human resources), increased use of clean energy technologies for income generating activities and household chores, increased women's participation in decision-making at household and community level, and in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, had aimed to mitigate the gendered impact of the pandemic. The intervention which is being implemented in selected districts of all the ten (10) provinces of Zambia continues to change the lives of women. Additionally, in this edition we also document stories on the policy and legal advocacy reforms NGOCC continues to undertake. Particularly, our expectation of the execution of the 2023 National budget. We therefore hope you will find this edition informative.

We value your feedback!

Anne Mbewe Anamela
Executive Director

GIRLS, WOMEN MORE AFFECTED BY ADVERSE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE - NGOCC

By **Fridah Nkonde-Mubanga**



Figure 1: Paxina Mulenga receives solar lights in Mumbwa's Moono Area

The Non-governmental Gender Organisations Coordinating Council (NGOCC) Board Secretary Patricia Mukumbuta says women and girls are the most affected by the adverse impacts of climate change.

And NGOCC recently distributed 400 solar lights and 324 solar lamps in Chongwe, Rufunsa, Nyimba, Mongu, Kaoma, Mumbwa, Kapiri Mposhi, Monze, Choma, Sinazongwe and Kalomo Districts.

During the distribution of Clean Energy Technologies (solar lights) in Mumbwa and Kapiri Mposhi, Ms. Mukumbuta said gender roles

often negatively impact the participation of women and girls in economic activities.

"The pursuit of programming in climate change, mitigation and resilience was necessitated by the organisation's recognition that while all people are affected by the adverse impacts of climate change, the marginalized groups, especially women and girls, are even more affected. Women and girls bear the responsibility of ensuring the cooking, feeding, heating and lighting needs of their families are met," Ms. Mukumbuta said.

Throughout its 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the organization

has been implementing strategies to reduce the adverse effects of climate change on women. In doing this, the organization has been contributing towards the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal number 7 "Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all," and Goal number 13 "Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts". Regarding the Seventh National Development Plan, NGOCC has been responding to Pillar 4: "Reducing Development Inequalities" and in the Eighth National Development Plan, NGOCC has through the Climate Change, Mitigation and Resilient



Figure 2: Ms. Mukumbuta handing over the Clean Energy Technology to the beneficiaries

programme been responding to Strategic Development Area 3 “Environmental Sustainability.”

Ms. Mukumbuta said if the trend (adverse impacts of climate change) continues it can lead to further disempowering of women and girls, increasing their vulnerability particularly to sexual and Gender-Based Violence.

She noted that most of the rural population is not connected to the national electricity grid.

“The lack of this infrastructure and access further excludes the rural population from being able to fully participate in the development agenda, further disadvantaging them in their efforts to contribute to their own economic and technological emancipation,” Ms. Mukumbuta said.

She said the distribution of solar lights sought to promote access to and use of clean and renewable energy technologies for women and girls in the targeted project sites and to promote adoption and adaptation of smart agricultural practices.

Ms. Mukumbuta said the distribution of Clean Energy Technologies also sought to build the capacity of rights holders and duty bearers in gender transformation and inclusiveness and promote economic empowerment of women.

“NGOCC seeks to implement dedicated actions to raise awareness to change the mind set of local communities in the target areas on the effects of climate change and the need for adaptative initiatives such as investing in alternative sources of

energy and cooking solutions. Women will continue being engaged on the need to adopt new practices that will reverse the current environmental degradation while at the same time ensuring food security for the targeted communities,” Ms. Mukumbuta said.

The distribution of the solar lights is meant to support vulnerable girls (324 girls) who have been withdrawn from Child Marriage and/or were victims of Teen Pregnancy and had withdrawn from school but have since returned to school. This is to support their studies as they strive to further and complete their education.

SOLAR LIGHTS BENEFICIARIES

By **Fridah Nkonde - Mubanga**

I ran away from my marriage because my husband used to beat me, says Paxina Mulenga, 18, of Mumbwa's Moono Area.

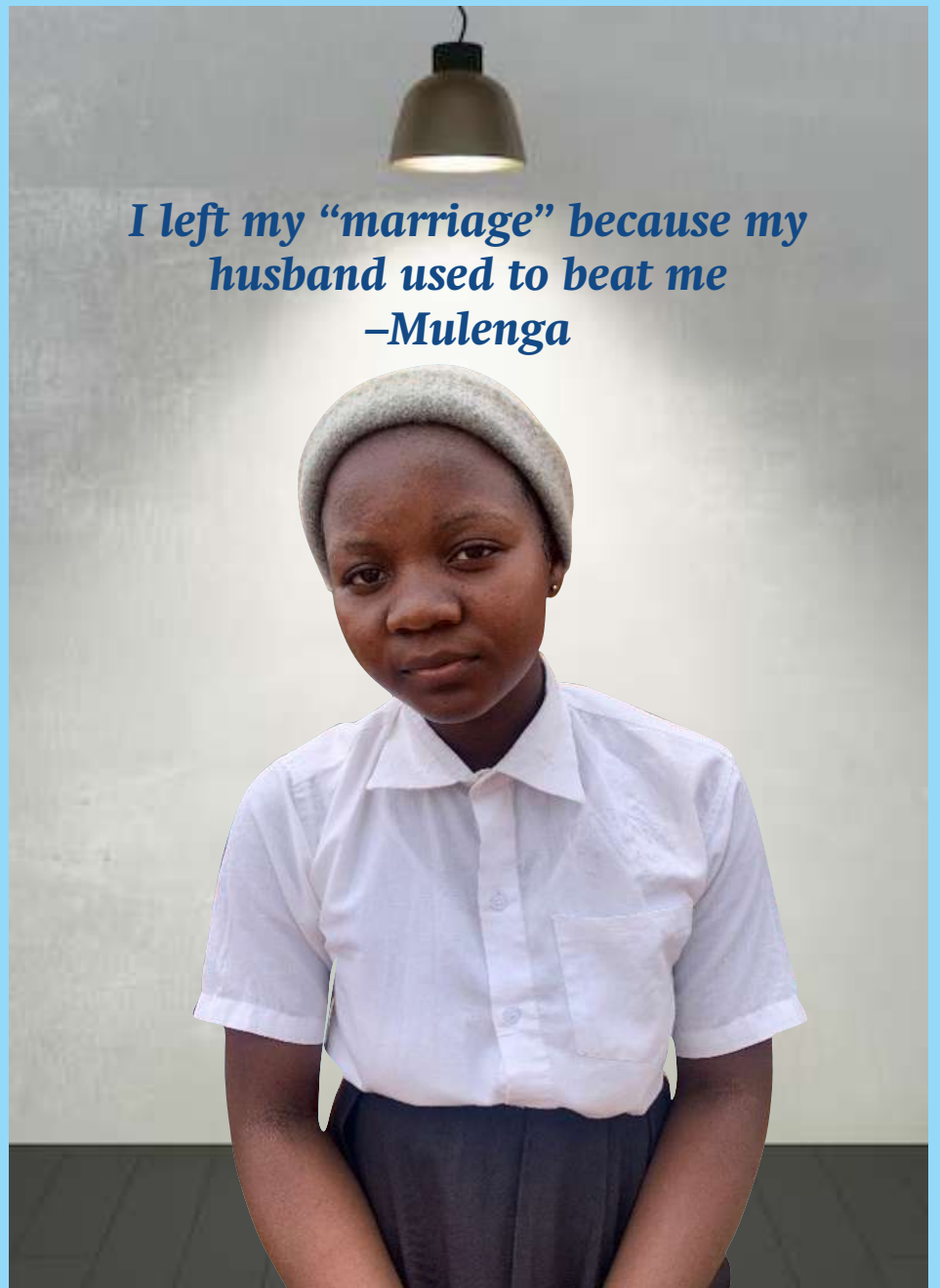
In an interview after receiving solar lights from the Non-governmental Gender Organisations' Coordinating Council (NGOCC), Ms. Mulenga said the only thing she wanted to concentrate on was school.

"I thought marriage was everything. I ran away from home and decided to get married, but I did not find anything in marriage because I was young. In 2018 when I was in grade nine (9), I ran away from home with my boyfriend who was 19 at the time and I was 15 years old. I stayed with him for about a year in Mumbwa Town. My parents were looking for me and they really wanted me to go back home but I didn't want to go back. When my husband started beating me up, I decided to go back home. I later discovered I was pregnant. I didn't really know what was happening. It was actually our neighbour who sat me down when she noticed the changes in me and advised we go to the hospital," Ms. Mulenga said.

"I later informed my husband that I was pregnant. He insisted that I go back to his house, but I refused. My parents wanted me to go back to school. My mother said I was too young to get married. My husband wasn't happy that I refused to go back to him, but he promised to take care of the child."

Ms. Mulenga said she decided to stay home till she delivered.

She said she was happy that her



I left my "marriage" because my husband used to beat me
—Mulenga

mother was ready to take care of the child.

"I went back to school in 2020 in grade 9. I wrote my exams, and I made it to grade 10. I was super excited. I am now in Grade 11, and it feels good to realize that I am only remaining with next year to complete my secondary school education. I am ready to work hard in grade 12 because I want very good grades. I see myself joining ZAF (Zambia Air Force) in a few years' time," Ms. Mulenga said.

She thanked NGOCC and her family for the support.

"I would like to thank NGOCC for giving me the solar lights today. We do not have electricity at home so it's very difficult for me to study in the night because during the day I am at school and at night, it's not possible to study without electricity. But things have changed now. I will be able to study during the night. I would also like to thank my family for encouraging me to go back to school," said Ms. Mulenga.

Pregnancy pushed me out of school – Chikabwe

I had to stop school when I discovered that I was pregnant, says Phales Chikabwe, 20, of Mumbwa's Moono area.

In an interview, Ms. Chikabwe said she was ready to complete school, adding that she did not want anything to distract her.

"In 2016 when I was in grade 7, I fell pregnant. I was devastated. I didn't know what to do. What was even depressing for me was that I only discovered that I was pregnant during the holidays after writing my grade seven (7) exams. The results came out and I made it to grade eight (8). I was even more confused! My family encouraged me to report to school even though I was pregnant. Along the way, I stopped school because I could not manage. I felt very strange being in school while pregnant," Ms. Chikabwe said.

"I stayed home for 2 years until 2019 when I got sponsorship from NGOCC. When the organisation started implementing Ending Child Marriage activities under the Power Woman project in Moono, I was one of the beneficiaries. NGOCC paid my school fees,



of the beneficiaries of the New Energy Technologies project in her community.

"I am happy that Moono Area Association picked me to be one of the beneficiaries. The solar lights will help me with my studies. Studying for my grade 12 exams next year has been made easy. I see myself getting very good grades next year," said Ms. Chikabwe.

And Ms. Chikabwe's

bought me some books, and uniform. I was very happy, and I decided to change schools and I went to Mukanda Secondary School in grade 8. I wrote my grade nine (9) exams, passed and went to Bulungu Secondary School. I am now in grade 11...thanks to NGOCC's support. I am happy that I am in school, and I will be completing my secondary school education next year,"

She said she was happy to be one

mother Lillian Musakabantu said she was happy to see her daughter in school.

"I am very happy to see my daughter in school. When she fell pregnant, I thought that was the end of everything. I didn't know that it was possible for her to go back to school and still perform very well. She is doing very well, and I am very sure that she will pass her grade 12 exams," said Ms. Musakabantu.



I could not allow pregnancy to disturb my education – Ms. Mutende

I fell pregnant last year when I was in grade nine (9) but didn't give up on school because I wanted to write my exams, says Susan Mutende, 16, of Mumbwa's Moono area.

Ms. Mutende said in an interview that being in school and preparing for exams while pregnant was rough for her but she did not want

anything to disturb her education.

"After I fell pregnant last year, I decided to stop going to school when my pregnancy advanced but I continued with my studies because I wanted to write my exams. I pushed myself to write the exams and I passed. I did not want to get married because I knew I was still young. Falling pregnant was a mistake which I should not have made. I told

myself not to allow anything to stop me from pursuing my education because I know the importance of being in school," Ms. Mutende said.

She said she could not wait to complete her secondary school education.

"I cannot wait to complete school next year in 2023. I pray that I find sponsors to help me out in college because I want to go to college or

university. I thank NGOCC for coming to our community to empower us. We have not only benefitted from the solar lights but also the information that they have been giving us on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights," said Ms. Mutende.

And Ms. Mutende's mother Esnart Shikonka said her daughter falling pregnant in her ninth grade was depressing.

"I was depressed when we discovered she was pregnant. I just thank God that she continued with her studies, wrote her exams, and made it to grade 10. I did not want to entertain the thought of her getting married because she is still young. How was she going to run a home at her age? I am happy she is in school, and I foresee a bright future for her," said Ms. Mutende.

I am happy to be in school – Kayombo



Getting pregnant is not the end of the world, says Mary Kayombo, 23, of Mumbwa's Moono area.

Ms. Kayombo, who is a pupil at Myooye Secondary School, said in an interview that girls should not give up on school when they fall pregnant.

"I fell pregnant when I was in grade 11 and I was only remaining with a year to complete my secondary education. I was devastated but I did not want to give up on school. I stopped school for a year. When I delivered, I immediately went back to school in 2021. I am now in

grade 12 and I will be completing my secondary school education in a few months' time," Ms. Kayombo said.

"My parents were disappointed; I was disappointed and my teachers at school were also extremely disappointed when I got pregnant. I didn't want to disappoint myself and all those who believed in me. I told my parents that I was going to go back to school, write my exams and make them proud. That is exactly what I am doing. I want to make my parents happy."

Ms. Kayombo said the solar lights had been given to her at the right

time when she was busy preparing for her final exams.

"I am happy, thank you NGOCC for empowering us with the solar lights. We will be starting our exams very soon. We do not have electricity at home, and I think the lights have come at the right time. After I write my exams, my younger sisters will use the same solar lights to study," she said.

"I always feel bad that pregnancy was somehow a drawback for me and my education, but I am happy that I am still in school. I want to study hard so that I can join the Police Service. I admire the uniform and I also want to be part of the people ensuring that we are safe in this country."

Ms. Kayombo implored NGOCC to continue empowering girls and women in society.

"We thank God for NGOCC and the work the organization is doing. Most of us who have benefitted from the solar lights are in exam classes. Most of us do not have electricity at home and it was impossible for us to study during the night. But with these solar lights that have been donated today, we will be waking up at night to study for our exams," said Ms. Kayombo.

NGOCC urges Gender sensitive and responsive 2023 budget execution

By **Fridah Nkonde - Mubanga**

The Non-governmental Gender Organisations' Coordinating Council (NGOCC) says the Government should ensure that the 2023 national budget execution takes into consideration the unique needs of women, girls, men and boys as a way of ensuring gender equality.

And the women's movement has advised the New Dawn Administration to ensure that social sector expenditure in 2023 is not hampered by the debt repayments.

In their submission to the Parliamentary Budget committee, the women's movement observed that gender equality could only be achieved if the budget took into consideration the different needs of women and men at both planning and execution.

"While appreciating government's ambition to correct evidently severe economic imbalances through reform that the country has been experiencing in the past seven (7) years, it is also important to check whether the budget truly reflects and takes into serious consideration the different needs and interests of the women, men, girls, and boys. Briefly put, were the theme and the budget in general informed by gender equality and equity imperatives?" NGOCC said.

NGOCC submitted that the social sectors were critical for the wellbeing of women and girls.

"NGOCC wishes to commend the government for its continued and consistent support to the social sectors of our economy that has



NGOCC team after the submission at Parliament Building

seen an increase in the budgetary allocation when compared to last year. The social sectors are critical for the wellbeing of women and girls as these sectors are the conduits for the provision of basic needs and services," NGOCC said.

"However, fiscal discipline remains an important factor to ensure sound budget execution that translates the budget aspirations into benefits for the citizens. We wish to, therefore, urge the government to enhance its efforts towards fiscal discipline so that resources are spent on the intended activities and beneficiaries."

NGOCC submitted that the 2023 budget theme "Stimulating Economic Growth for Improved livelihoods," demonstrated the government's commitment to transform the economy including provision of incentives to support higher output and production of a wider range of products.

"NGOCC has noted the K167.3 billion national budget announced

by the Minister of Finance and National Planning Honourable Dr. Situmbeko Musokotwane on Friday, 30th September 2022 under the theme, "Stimulating Economic Growth for improved Livelihoods," signified a 14 per cent reduction in the overall budget allocation from K195.36 billion in 2022 to K167.3 this year in 2023. From the gender perspective, the main immediate question and concern in relation to the theme is: What are the real and practical prospects and possibilities for promoting gender equality and equity in Zambia within the annual financial year guided by this timely and thoughtful theme?" NGOCC said.

"According to the New Dawn Government, this budget presents an opportunity to test the success of the Government's policy agenda in realizing its mandate and advancing the welfare of the Zambian people. In the view of government, the pursuit of a more stable macroeconomic environment and an expanded fiscal space, made possible by the recently clinched IMF Extended

Credit Facility (ECF) worth US\$1.3 billion, the 2023 National Budget navigates a delicate balance between stimulating economic growth and ensuring fiscal sustainability, while cushioning the vulnerable groups from the austerity measures.”

The Women's Movement said it was evident that government's aim was to advance the welfare of the Zambian people.

“The concept of “livelihood” appears to be used very loosely in this budget. It is the responsibility of government to bear in mind that ‘livelihood’ refers to the solid consolidation of people's survival options – ability for them to own and control fluctuations in their lives by accessing and possessing assets and resources that they need to strengthen their prospects of strengthening their resilience capabilities. Therefore,

‘improving livelihoods’ is a ‘transformative’ but not a ‘reformative’ process.”

NGOCC will continue to advocate for a gender sensitive and responsive national budget that takes into consideration the unique needs of women and men, girls, and boys.

Increasing women's incomes, improving livelihoods

How the Promoting Opportunities for Women's Empowerment and Rights action is changing lives

By **Staff Reporter**

THE Zambia Association for Research and Development (ZARD), says the promoting Opportunities for Women's Empowerment and Rights (POWER) project being implemented by the NGOCC network through the basket fund has helped women both at individual and community levels in the operational areas.

ZARD Chairperson, Ms. Mary Dimba says the project has helped in accelerating the empowerment of women in the project areas as they are more aware about income generating opportunities and sources of credit to enhance their livelihoods for the benefit of their households and communities.

In an interview, Ms. Dimba says the Action has helped women with information on credit opportunities, on the importance for women to have access and control to productive resources such as land, credit, and human resources.

The Promoting Opportunities for Women's Empowerment and Rights (POWER) is a three-year Action, which aims at promoting the socio-economic empowerment of women and girls in Zambia. The action aims at increasing women's income through access to and control of productive resources

(land, credit and human resources); increase the use of clean energy technologies for income generating activities and household chores; increase women's participation in decision-making at household and community level.

“ZARD trained us in a lot of programs that were so beneficial and empowered us with start-up capital to jumpstart our businesses which were not doing well due to less capital and lack of adequate knowledge to conduct business profitably.

“One of the trainings we received was on clean energy technologies for productive and reproductive purposes. We were encouraged to do businesses which were in line with clean energy,” she said.

She explained that women had become empowered with entrepreneurial skills such that in one of the project sites of Kafue's Lukolongo area, despite that they do not have water, they were now able to use alternative technologies.

“Since the money we received was not enough and Lukolongo area being a dry area with no water, women in the area decided to use the knowledge they acquired to creating linkages and referral mechanisms between

beneficiaries, women entrepreneurs and suppliers of clean energy technologies,” she said.

Ms. Dimba explained that as a result of the information and knowledge acquired through the power action, ZARD was able to engage another partner, Harvest Fund, a Non-Governmental Organisation in the area for help.

“Harvest Fund was delighted with the success stories that were birthed from the Power Project. After several engagement meetings, the organisation empowered us with a solar borehole pump. We managed to buy tomato seedlings from the village banking savings which we planted on an agreed land and is watered with the water from the solar borehole,” she said.

“The tomatoes are growing so fast, and we are just waiting for the tomatoes to grow to full capacity so that ZARD can link us to the markets such as Shoprite, Choppies and Pick n Pay to supply our tomatoes. We are happy with the work we are doing. We are indeed the powerful women from the Power Project.”

Ms. Dimba thanked the European Union (EU), NGOCC, Harvest Fund and ZARD for providing solutions to their problems.

I DO NOT TOLERATE CHILD MARRIAGE IN MY CHIEFDOM, SAYS CHIEFTAINNESS CHUNGU



Figure 18

Chieftainess Chungu at her Palace during NGOCC's visit to her Chiefdom

Child marriage is a disaster and it often affects the most vulnerable, marginalized and poorest girls in Zambia. It is evident that the geographic distributing of child marriage and teenage pregnancies shows a rural skew with quantifiable numbers indicating a consistent pattern of child marriage and teenage pregnancy.

Unfortunately, poverty is a significant driver of child marriage in Zambia. Painful as it may sound, many parents, especially in rural areas, perceive marriage as an economic gain for their households and possible means to support other children in school. Other contributing factors to child marriage are low education levels, lack of sufficient awareness information, and traditional cultural practices among others.

The Non-governmental Gender Organisations' Coordinating Council has been implementing the Ending Child Marriage Project in Luapula and Northern Provinces. NGOCC has been working hard to ensure that girls in all their diversity are at the centre of finding solutions to end child marriage.

NGOCC has further been engaging families, communities, traditional leaders, the church and other Civil

Society Organisations in transforming the negative social norms that limit girls' choices.

NGOCC's goal is to work with everyone in order to promote gender equity and equality in the homes and in public places, so that girls can reach their full potential.

Chieftainess Chungu of Lupososhi district in Northern Province says she does not tolerate child marriage in her chiefdom.

Speaking when the Non-governmental Gender Organisations' Coordinating Council (NGOCC) and IM

Swedish conducted their field visit to Chungu Chiefdom, Chieftainess Chungu said there was need to end child marriage.

"I am very happy that you came to our Chiefdom. I am also very happy to see the work that you have been doing in my Chiefdom. I will continue to collaborate with you to end vices such as teenage pregnancies, child marriage and issues of Gender-Based Violence. I do not tolerate child marriage in my Chiefdom. I do not and my subjects even know this," Chieftainess Chungu said.

She said there was need to scale up programmes that empower girls in order for the country to

end child marriage.

"We need to support girls' education and healthcare. We need to mobilize families and communities to support change. I encourage my subjects to report any child marriage happening in my Chiefdom. We have been educating the community about child marriage and why it is harmful, and we are encouraging girls to concentrate on school," Chieftainess Chungu said.

And NGOCC Social Economic Development Programme (SEDP) Coordinator Patricia Lwaile said NGOCC was happy to collaborate with her as a champion to end child marriage in her chiefdom.

"We have been working in your Chiefdom for some time now and we must say we are happy with the kind of support that we have been receiving from you, a traditional leader. So, today we brought our partners, IM Swedish, who are coming from Malawi, to come and see the work we have been doing in your Chiefdom. We also brought them here to come and see how the Ending Child Marriage Project is going and also to meet with the people we have been supporting as NGOCC," Ms. Lwaile said.

She thanked Chieftainess Chungu for the work she was doing in her Chiefdom to end child marriage.



Figure 19

Chieftainess Chungu addressing NGOCC team, IM Swedish Partners and Young Women Network members when they paid a courtesy call on her

Forty-eight (48) girls withdrawn from child marriage in Chungu Chiefdom

Forty-eight girls have so far been withdrawn from child marriages since the project started in 2019, says Chungu Chiefdom Village Committee on Ending Child Marriage Chairperson Lewentina Mulenga.

Ms. Mulenga said in an interview that the committee was proud that 20 of the girls had so far completed their grade 12 while 28 were still in school.

“We have so far withdrawn 48 girls from marriage from 2019 when the Ending Child Marriage Project started in our chiefdom to date. We are happy that a lot of things have changed in our Chiefdom and things are getting better. As a committee on Ending Child Marriage, we have been doing our work very well. We move from place to place sensitizing the communities on child marriage and the response has been very good. We have been talking to parents who have been marrying off their children at an early age and also helping them withdraw the children from those marriages,” Ms. Mulenga.

“We also go round the communities asking young girls if they are in school or not...that way we get to know what is really going on. There are some young girls in our community who are not in school because they are orphans and have no one to support them in school. We help some of



Figure 21 Ms. Mulenga during the interview in Chungu Chiefdom

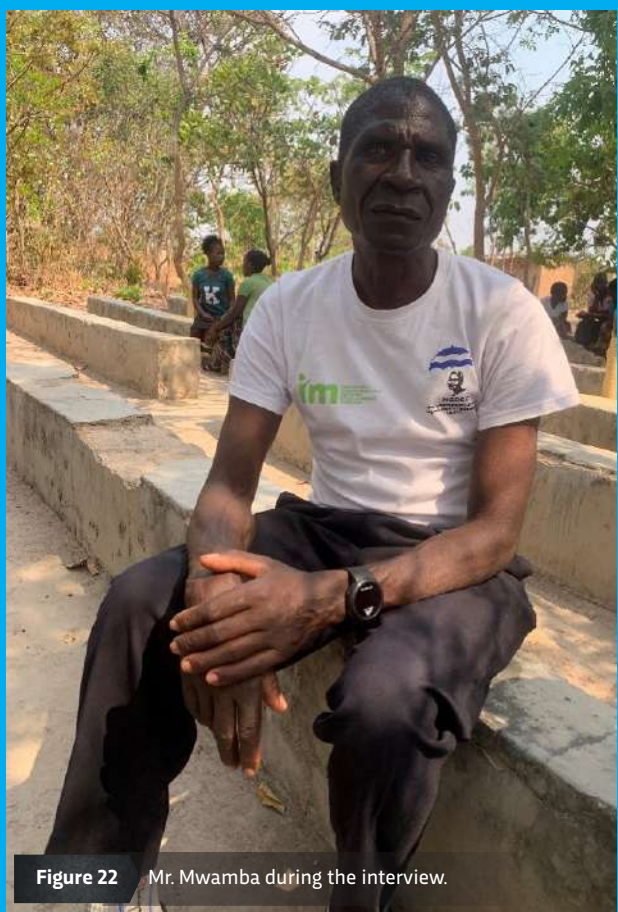


Figure 22 Mr. Mwamba during the interview.

them and look for sponsors for them. For those young girls in marriages, we visit their parents' homes, interview them and ask why they decided to marry off their children at an early age. There are also times when community members come to us to report parents intending to marry off their young girls. We follow them up and interview them. The community knows that we report such cases to Chieftainess Chungu who does not tolerate child marriage in this Chiefdom.”

Ms. Mulenga said for parents who failed to pay school fees for their children, the committee helped by talking to the headteachers.

“To help us with our work, the schools also give us information on children who drop out of school, the areas they come from and their grades. We then follow up such cases and when we follow them up and they appear to be difficult, we report them to the Chieftainess'palace. At the palace, such people are given a choice whether to get punished or to take the child back to school. Most parents are now willing to take their children back to school,” said Ms. Mulenga.

And Village Committee on Ending on Child Marriage member Stanley Mwamba said Chungu Chiefdom was doing well in terms of ending child marriage.

NGOCC ELECTS NEW BOARD OF GOVERNORS

By **Fridah Nkonde-Mubanga**

Non-governmental Gender Organisations' Coordinating Council (NGOCC) Board Chairperson Grace Manyonga says her organization stands out among the many NGOs in the country.

And NGOCC has elected a new board of governors.

Speaking during the closing ceremony of the 22nd NGOCC General Assembly held from November 18-19, 2022 at the Andrews Motel in Lusaka, Ms. Manyonga called on NGOCC Member Organisations to unite and be in solidarity with one another to move the organisation's agenda forward.

"Let me take this opportunity to thank you members of NGOCC for your vote. This clearly signifies the confidence and trust you have in me. The Member Organizations, your vote is a vote of confidence and trust that together we can restore the vibrancy of NGOCC and the one loud voice. It is a

challenge you have placed upon me and the entire board-elect," Ms. Manyonga said.

"I believe that NGOCC stands out among the many NGOs in this country. NGOCC has distinguished itself over the years by holding elections and being able to pass the baton to the next team. Here lies the integrity of NGOCC. NGOCC is bigger than all of us. Others before us came and went, NGOCC still remains. Let us hence move forward as one. Let us continue to distinguish NGOCC. I call on the board elect, individually and collectively, to brace ourselves up for the mammoth task ahead of us."

Ms. Manyonga implored NGOCC members to continue speaking with one voice.

"The NGOCC logo, is a woman under an umbrella. NGOCC should be the umbrella that shelters the woman from the harsh environment; harassment, abuse, violence, marginalization,

exclusion, discrimination, domination and manipulation in all facets; social, economic and political. NGOCC must be a comfortable and safe space, a home for the women of Zambia. There must be a common thread that holds us together. NGOCC must be restored to oneness, it should not be them and us," Ms. Manyonga said.

She said the top on the agenda for the new board was the Gender Commission and the Ministry of Gender for Zambia.

Meanwhile, NGOCC former Chairperson Ms. Mary Mulenga in her speech said there was need for NGOCC members to reflect on the lessons learnt in the last 37 years of the organization's existence.

She said there was need for the movement to gravitate and begin to promote approaches towards their quest for greater gender equality for women in Zambia.



Figure 3: NGOCC Chairperson Grace Manyonga during the General Assembly

“As we meet at this General Assembly, we need to deeply introspect and reflect on some of the lessons we have learnt in the last 37 years and how best we can reposition our advocacy work. As we have consistently stated, women’s rights are human rights. The failure by nations to fulfil these women’s rights, is a serious infringement of human rights,” Ms, Mulenga said.

“How can we explain the low numbers of women in decision-making positions in Zambia at all levels when we the women are in the majority? How can anyone explain the high cases of maternal mortality and the limited access to sexual reproductive health for women and girls at this stage in the development trajectory of the country?”

Ms. Mulenga said it was time to take stock of the strategies NGOCC had been using in the past and reposition itself as a women’s movement.

“What have we been doing right, what lessons have we learnt over the years? What can we do differently? Having been in the leadership of this movement for eight (8) years (first as Vice-Chairperson and then as Chairperson), close to a decade, I would like us to challenge ourselves and think outside the box. As I have stated, our relevance to remain the focal point of the women’s movement is to ensure that we maintain our position as the voice of the women of Zambia,” said Ms. Mulenga.

Meanwhile the 22nd NGOCC General Assembly elected Ms. Grace Manyonga-Sinkamba as the new Board Chairperson to lead the movement for the next two years (2022-2024).

The new Vice Chairperson is Ms. Mwaka Mulenga.



Figure 4: Some delegates during the General Assembly



Figure 5 Lusaka Muslim Organisation Chairperson Taslima Kuluneta voting during the General Assembly

Below is the full list of the New NGOCC Board of Governors:

1. NGOCC BOARD CHAIRPERSON – Ms. Grace Manyonga Sinkamba
2. NGOCC BOARD VICE CHAIRPERSON – Ms. Mwaka M. Mulenga
3. NGOCC BOARD SECRETARY – Ms. Patricia Mukumbuta
4. NGOCC BOARD TREASURER – Ms. Miyoba J. Munkombwe Mweendo
5. NGOCC BOARD LEGAL ADVISOR – Ms. Rosemary N. Mbewe
6. NGOCC BOARD PUBLICITY SECRETARY – Ms. Precious M.K Mungambata
7. NGOCC BOARD MEMBER (YOUTH CATEGORY) – Ms. Martha K. Chansa
8. NGOCC BOARD MEMBER (DISABILITY CATEGORY) – Ms. Rebecca Njovu
9. NGOCC BOARD MEMBER (SENIOR CITIZEN CATEGORY) – Ms. Rodia Buntele
10. NGOCC BOARD MEMBER (CBO CATEGORY) – Mr. Jackson Kesa
11. NGOCC BOARD MEMBER (CBO CATEGORY) – Ms. Ireen Musopelo

LITERACY LIFTS PEOPLE OUT OF POVERTY- BENEFICIARIES

By **Fridah Nkonde-Mubanga**

Lacking basic reading and writing skills is a tremendous hindrance especially for girls and women. Literacy not only enriches an individual's life, but it creates opportunities for people to develop skills that will help them provide for themselves and their families.

The Non-governmental Gender Organisations' Coordinating Council (NGOCC) with support from We Effect has been promoting literacy programmes in selected NGOCC operational areas.

One of the beneficiaries Betty Banda, 37, of Katete's Muzime area said it was evident that literacy lifts people out of poverty.

"It is true when people say that literacy lifts people out of poverty. I was in poverty before I started attending literacy classes but now, I am slowly getting out of it. In July 2022, I decided to join the literacy programme in our community. I knew I needed to because I am a businesswoman but I didn't know much about business. I had been doing business for a very long time, but I didn't understand much. After joining the literacy classes, I began to understand things. Most of the things began to make sense," Ms. Banda, who is a mother of six (6) said.

"I can now write my name properly, I understand the village banking model more and I am able to run my business well. If you don't know how to read and write, it's very difficult to understand anything. You can run a business but if you can't read and write, you can't make proper profits because you don't fully understand. I am happy that my life is slowly changing for the better."

Ms. Banda implored NGOCC to continue with the literacy programme in her community.

And Vestina Phiri, 40, said the literacy programme had changed her life.

"The literacy classes I have been attending for close to six months now have changed my life tremendously. I have always wanted

to know how to read and write but I didn't have the opportunity to do so. When I heard about the literacy program in my community, I was happy. I joined because I couldn't wait to learn how to read and write. I am currently running a grocery shop. I understand my business better



Figure 6: Betty Banda during the interview in Katete



Figure 7: Vestina Phiri during the interview in Katete

now and I am managing my money very well," Ms. Phiri said.

"I am happy that my business is growing. I am doing things that I never used to do before I joined the literacy program. I now write everything I buy for my shop. When I sell my things, it's easy now to tell whether I have made any profit or not. I thank God for this programme. We are now better people."

VILLAGE BANKING HAS HELPED ME TAKE MY CHILDREN TO SCHOOL - BWALYA

By **Fridah Nkonde - Mubanga**

If it was not for Village Banking, I would not have managed to take my children to school, says Susan Chungu Bwalya (42).

Ms. Bwalya of Chungu Chiefdom in Lupososhi district said in an interview that Village Banking has greatly benefited her.

“Before I joined the Village Banking Group, I had difficulties taking my children to school. I used to struggle so much. One thing I knew for sure was that I wanted to see my children in school, but it was difficult. When the Non-governmental Gender Organisations’ Coordinating Council (NGOCC) came into our Chiefdom and began doing some work, I saw how some women’s lives started changing because of this same Village Banking Concept and I decided to join the group. We were given all the information on how it works, we were trained, and I knew it was going to change my life. I joined the group with only K500,” Ms. Bwalya, a mother of four (4) said.

“After a year of saving, during our share out, I managed to go home with K3000. I didn’t want to waste the money and I knew where I wanted it to go. I decided to invest the money in my children. I have a son who completed grade 12 and is now in college. I also have another one who recently completed grade 12 and the other two are also in school; one in high school and the other one in primary school.”

Ms. Bwalya said she had also started a fish business to help her sponsor her children in school.

“At the moment, I am also doing a



business. I sell fish and it is also helping me with school fees and tuition fees. I am very happy that I see my children in school. I would like to thank NGOCC for coming to our Chiefdom to empower us with knowledge and help us change our lives. I also want to thank Chieftainess Chungu who has been helping us and encouraging different organisations to come to our community to help improve our lives,” Ms. Bwalya said.

“Seeing my children in school is gratifying. I know that my children will live better lives because of

education. Life has changed; we have now built proper houses with electricity. Our children are able to study at home at any time because we have electricity,” she said.

Ms. Bwalya encouraged other women to embrace the Village Banking Concept.

“I would also like to encourage other women out there to ensure that they join Village Banking Groups if they want to see change in their lives,” said Ms. Bwalya.

ZAMBIA INCREASINGLY BECOMING UNSAFE FOR GIRLS, WOMEN – NGOCC

By **Fridah Nkonde - Mubanga**



Figure 17

NGOCC Chairperson speaking during the launch of the 16 Days of activism against GBV at Mulungushi International Conference Centre in Lusaka

Zambia is increasingly becoming unsafe for the girl child and women, says the Non-governmental Gender Organisations Coordinating Council Chairperson Grace Manyonga.

And government says there is need to tackle Gender-Based Violence (GBV) holistically at all levels.

Speaking during the launch of the 16 Days of activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) at Mulungushi International Conference Centre in Lusaka, Ms. Manyonga said GBV was fast becoming a national crisis.

The Sixteen Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence (GBV) covers the period from 25th November to 10th December. It is an annual international campaign that commences on 25th

November, which is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and goes on until 10th December, which is Human Rights Day.

This period is set aside to call for the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls. Thus, it is a time to call to action, individuals and institutions alike, to rise and speak against human rights violations especially towards women and girls. For NGOCC, the 16 Days resonate very well with Pillar Two of the Strategic Plan which is about Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights of women and girls, a key

intervention on the implementation of SDG number five and the Africa Union Agenda 2063, among others.

The 2022 16 Days were commemorated under the global theme “UNITE! Activism to end violence against women and girls”.

“This year Zambia witnessed an emergent and shocking form of violence against girls with the reported abduction of the thirteen (13) girls. The abduction and the attendant crimes against the 13 girls just epitomized how the world and indeed Zambia is increasingly becoming unsafe for the girl child and indeed women. This case is just but one of the many cases that are reported daily of girls, of women, being abused,” Ms. Manyonga said.

“On this day, we reaffirm our

commitment and resolve to end Gender-Based Violence (GBV), a vice that has become so endemic in our society and negatively affects women, men, girls, and boys. This occasion accords us, the women’s movement, an opportunity to once again interface with the government and outline the challenges we face as women in our diversity. Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is just but one of the many challenges that girls and women face in Zambia and indeed across the globe because of the entrenched patriarchy and inadequate laws to address inequalities.”

Ms. Manyonga said it was time to act and find sustainable ways to end violence against women and girls.

She said while GBV affected both females and males, women and girls remained the most affected by the scourge.

Ms. Manyonga said GBV, against women and girls continued to be one of the worst human rights violations.

“Freedom from violence is a fundamental human right, and GBV undermines a person’s sense of self-worth and self-esteem. It affects not only physical health but also mental health,” she said.

Ms. Manyonga said the theme “UNITE! Activism to end violence against women and girls”, called everyone to unite.

“We need to unite as civil society, women’s rights organisations, the government and indeed the private sector to fight GBV. The theme calls for us to stand in solidarity with women’s rights activists and to support feminist

movements around the world to resist the rollback on women's rights and calling for a world free from violence against women and girls. As stated, GBV is a national crisis, a crisis that we must continuously address. With collective commitment and effort, the battle against GBV can be won and must be won!" said Ms. Manyonga.

And guest of honour during the launch of the 16 Days of activism against GBV Hon. Brenda Tambatamba said there was need to tackle GBV holistically at all

levels.

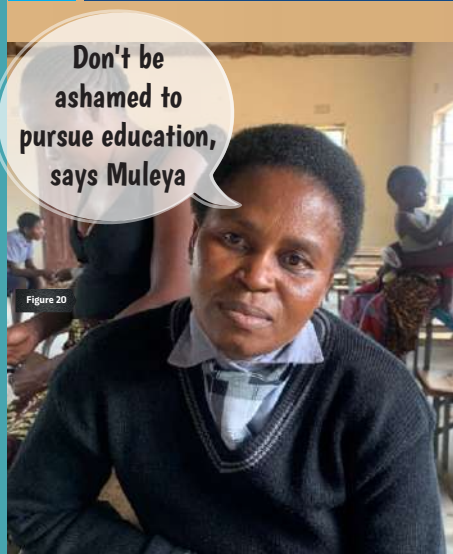
"Tackling GBV holistically in our country Zambia will contribute to human and social development as espoused in the 8th National Development Plan, particularly development outcome number two (2) on improving the rule of law, human rights and constitutionalism. Violence against women and girls is a grave violation of their rights. It has immediate and long terms consequences in relation to physical, sexual and mental well-being of women and girls," Hon.

Tambatamba said.

"GBV affects everyone in the communities. The resulting negative effect of GBV is that women and girls are prevented from fully participating in development processes. This violence has negative consequences on families, the community, the country at large and globally as it increases costs for health care, legal expenses and leads to losses in productivity."

FORTY ONE (41) & STILL IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

By **Fridah Nkonde - Mubanga**



Young girls should not give up on education for anything, says Coreen Muleya, 41, of Myooye Village in Mumbwa district.

Ms. Muleya, who is a grade 11 pupil at Myooye Secondary School said education was an equalizer.

"I am not ashamed to be in grade 11 at my age because I know that education will benefit me a whole lot. I have always wanted to be educated but things were very difficult. Young people should take advantage of the opportunities they have today. School is very important and people should not

be ashamed of going back to school. I started school in 1993 but I was only in school for five (5) years. When I moved to my aunt's place in Kalomo, I thought I was going to continue with school but my aunt too, couldn't pay my school fees. I later moved to my older sister's place in Lusaka again with the hope of going back to school, but I was made to stay home doing nothing," Ms. Muleya said.

"I got married In 2001 in Kalomo district in Southern Province and in 2004, I gave birth to my first child. I knew all was well, but I was not satisfied. My husband, in 2018, asked me to go back to school and I was happy. I went straight into grade seven (7), wrote my exams and passed with flying colours...I actually got 708 marks. My husband was very happy and he asked me to continue with school."

Ms. Muleya said she was excited that when she wrote her grade nine (9) exams, she made it to grade 10.

"I couldn't believe it because I didn't know that I was going to pass my grade nine (9) exams. I knew I was doing the right thing.

What bothered me at that time was the fact that there were no secondary schools in our village. Our home is in Shimayugwa village, but it was difficult for me to go to a boarding house because of my age and so I rent a house here near the school. When we got married, my husband was not doing anything but had already completed his secondary school. He later decided to go to college and did a teaching course. He is now a teacher in our village. I am here because of school but I go home from time to time," said Ms. Muleya, who is now in grade 11.

She said she could not wait to complete her secondary school education.

"I am in grade 11 now and I will be writing my grade 12 exams next year. I am 41 years old but I will continue with my education. I really want to become a police officer one day. Being in school at my age hasn't been easy but I will continue pushing. I am happy today to receive the solar lights from NGOCC. I will make proper use of them. The house I am renting here in Mumbwa has no electricity so I will be using the solar lights to do my studies," said Ms. Muleya.

32-YEAR-OLD MWANGALA GOES BACK GRADE TO 7



Ms. Mwewa with her family in Kaoma, Western Province

“**says going back to school is the best decision she has ever made**”

By **Fridah Nkonde - Mubanga**

Going back to school was the best decision I made in my life, says Mwangala Deborah Mwewa, 32, of Kaoma district in Western Province.

In an interview, Ms. Mwewa who is a mother of five (5), said she always had interest in education but that money for school fees was a challenge for her.

“I have always wanted to go to school and become an accountant after secondary school, but I could not enroll because I did not have money to pay school fees. Therefore, I stopped school in 2010, got married when I was 18 years old. However, life has not been easy, as it had been filled with a lot of challenges. To make ends meet, I engaged in piece work so that I could earn

something,” Ms. Mwewa said.

She said she decided to go back to school in 2021 because she was ready to take up the challenge.

“In 2021, I was really encouraged to consider going back to school after the NGOCC, working through the Zambia Women’s Lobby (ZNWL) was encouraging women on the value of education. My husband came through by supporting the idea and so I went back to school,” Ms. Mwewa said.

“In addition, when the new government came in, I heard about the free education. I was happy because the burden for fees would be lighter. I am now in Grade Seven and I will soon be going to secondary school. I know

that some people cannot do what I decided to do for myself...I am not ashamed to say that my daughter and I are at the same school.”

Ms. Mwewa is one of the beneficiaries of the solar lights that NGOCC donated to some of the victims of teenage pregnancies and child marriage in Central and Western Provinces.

“I am also grateful to NGOCC for considering as a beneficiary for the solar lights, which will go a long way in meeting the challenges of electricity and lighting,” said Ms. Mwewa.

