

Introduction

Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO) with support from HIVOS has from 2016 to 2020 implemented a citizen led project titled *Stimulating Citizen and Public Engagement in Green and Inclusive Energy (GIE) for Sustainable Development*. The project's focus is built on corporation and capacity strengthening of the civil society to effectively advocate in favour of green and inclusive energy policies. Its strong focus on lobby aimed at influencing citizen agency and public debate to help push the transition from centralised energy production based on fossil fuels towards more decentralized and inclusive energy systems in which citizens take central stage.

Partners

The project the following partner organizations;

Community Energy Malawi-CEM

Renew 'N' Able Malawi-RENAMA

Malawi Health Equity Network-MHEN

National Association of Business Women-NABW

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Activating Citizen Engagement on Green & Inclusive Energy Through Roadshows in Malawi

Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO) conducted nine roadshows in Zomba and Machinga districts in Malawi as part of a mass awareness campaign to promote the use of clean and sustainable energy. With support from Hivos Southern Africa, YONECO is implementing a project called: "Stimulating Citizen and Public Engagement in Green and Inclusive Energy for Sustainable Development.

The roadshows, which featured YONECO FM DJs and upcoming local urban music artists and ambassadors, Blaze and Jammy Marcus, reached out to about six thousand people including 3400 males and 2400 females between the ages of 13 and 39.

The following areas were targeted: Namadidi, Songani, Namwera turn-off and Chinamwali in Zomba as well as Chingale turn-off, Liwonde, Mangochi Turn-off, Ntanja and Nselema Trading centre in Machinga district.

Some of the issues that were discussed during the interaction include: access to clean, affordable and sustainable energy as well as women being key in scaling up access to sustainable energy. Communities welcomed the idea of embracing renewable energy technologies and they are very eager to know how they can benefit from GIE saying this will help in conserving the environment and also ease the pressure that women have to search for firewood particularly now that trees are very scarce.

Lunice Kamwaza, who was part of the audience at Chingale Turn off in Machinga district said he is excited to adopt advocated renewable energy systems especially wind and solar energy for cooking and lighting.

“I was following this discussion with keen interest and I am eager to find someone with the technical expertise so that he can help me light up my home with solar or wind energy,” said Kamwaza.

Enifa Mussa, a woman from Ntaja said the GIE initiative is hope for the better to women who are wasting much of their productive time fetching firewood for cooking their homes.

“I am actually interested to get my own low energy cooking stove because the way am getting it, this would surely ease the pressure that I face as a woman,” she said.

YONECO, with support from Hivos, initiated a tree planting exercise in which a total of 5,000 tree seedlings have been planted around Ndangopuma Hill in Zomba City.

YONECO’s Executive Director MacBain Mkandawire stated that conserving the natural environment would help to mitigate the devastating effects of climate change in the country.

Mkandawire observed that the loss of some glorious natural resources in the district has resulted into serious challenges like the drying up of Lake Chilwa and many rivers.

The Mayor for Zomba, His worship Christopher Jana who graced the exercise also echoed what Mkandawire said. His worship Jana stated that the results of environmental damage that has happened over the years in the district is greatly affecting socioeconomic welfare of people in the district.

“We can reverse our predicament and I would like to implore other institutions in this city to emulate what YONECO has done today,” His worship Jana.

The exercise attracted a number of individuals including the Zomba District Youth Officer (DYO) – Kate Mwandira; the Chairperson for Zomba Civil Society Network – Newton Sindo, the Acting Zomba City Chief Executive Officer (CEO) – Mussa Mwale as well as older community members and young people from various townships of the city.

YONECO Cultural Troupe spiced up the exercise with a traditional dance and a song that was aimed at promoting collective responsibility towards ensuring that the tree seedlings should survive and grow.

The exercise was initiated under Stimulating Citizen and Public Engagement in Green and Inclusive Energy (GIE) for Sustainable Development (Go Green) project which is being funded by HIVOS.