

JONEHA

NEWSLETTER

COMET:

in Phalombe, Mulanje & Zomba

Community Monitoring and Engagement for Transformation in Malawi



Generate & Use
Community
Evidence



Increase Civil Society
Engagement



Track Policies
& Budgets



Strengthen Advocacy
& Accountability

Empowering Communities
through Data & Advocacy

••• **Editorial**

Welcome to the 4th quarter edition of JONEHA Newsletter. We always value your support through readership and feedback.

It is that time of the year when individuals and organisations reflect on the passing year. For us at JONEHA; 2025 is a year of mixed experiences. From an advocacy perspective; the year started with the shock of the US government funding freeze which has changed faces in the course of time without losing its theme: the global funding landscape will no longer be the same and Malawi needed to sustain its gains by raising its bar on domestic resource mobilisation for health. We thank government for a proactive response by raising its budget allocation for HIV and AIDS including a rise in co-financing for ART from 0.2% in 2024/25 to 0.8% in the 2025/26 budget. In the same vein we applaud government for efforts to offset district health offices' debt owed to Central Medical Stores Trust to mitigate drug stock outs in the country's health facilities. This is the way to go towards sustainability given the current global funding landscape.

At organisational level we look back to 2025 as a time when we recorded not only a significant 40% rise in membership but also in the words of our Board of Directors a year when "strategic direction manifested" This was experienced in programming and funding reflecting a strong stakeholder engagement and donor confidence. We owe it to the direction of the Board, partners, commitment of management, staff and members. The experiences of 2025 motivate us to continue investing for more growth.

Going forward; we have introduced the innovation of integrating ai into community led monitoring through our flagship project; the Community Monitoring and Engagement for Transformation (COMET). The feedback from key stakeholders at district and national levels has been encouraging on the learnings the project will provide for use of ai in public health in Malawi. Apart from enhancing the traditional role of community led monitoring which is empowering communities; COMET will also advocate for including Community Led Monitoring in national policies and plans for sustainability.

2025 has therefore to us been a remarkable year. We look on to 2026 with a refreshed breath for the challenges ahead. We call on you to join hands with us for the Malawi we all aspire to live in.



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JONEHA'S MEMBERSHIP SOARS

By Christer Kalukusha



The growth is an opportunity to spreading JONEHAS work

From a once small network, the Network of Journalist's Living with HIV (JONEHA) has seen itself growing wider and powerful. JONEHA; a network of professionals and their audiences advocating for quality health service delivery in Malawi has experienced its membership grow in 2025.

"This year we experienced a 40% increase in membership which is a big win for us". Said David Kamkwamba, JONEHA's Executive Director during the 8th Annual General Meeting (AGM) held at Thope Lodge in Mponela. The Director described this growth as an opportunity of spreading JONEHA's work all over the country.

He said the growth is not just about numbers but the impact they are going to make to Malawi's health sector through the increase. "I believe that we will be heard more and we can monitor health services in more districts," said Kamkwamba.

He therefore appealed to new members to embrace their membership with purpose for an impactful advocacy.

Rasheeda Matandika a new member and journalist said she joined JONEHA for her health reporting passion. She said belonging to a community of the same cause will not only improve her writing skills; as JONEHA also provides training for its members but it is also a key to meeting reliable and credible sources when it comes to reporting on health issues. JONEHA is committed to advocating for quality health service delivery. While the name suggests journalists Living with HIV as potential members, JONEHA is open to all journalists and their audiences interested in advocating for quality health services irrespective of their HIV status. This follows its strategic direction for inclusive membership.

COMMUNITY MONITORING AND ENGAGEMENT FOR TRANSFORMATION (COMET): A NEW INITIATIVE IN MALAWI

By Joseph Ganthu

In an ambitious effort to contribute towards addressing the pressing health challenges in Malawi the Network of Journalists Living with HIV (JONEHA) with financial support from International Treatment Preparedness Coalition (ITPC), Community Monitoring and Engagement for Transformation (COMET) project has officially launched targeting the districts of Zomba, Mulanje, and Phalombe.

This initiative, slated to run from July 2025 to July 2027, aims to mitigate the existing impacts of the 2025 US funding freeze on vital HIV and tuberculosis (TB) services.

As the project's name suggests, COMET is focused on community engagement and monitoring, designed to document and analyze real-time impacts on access, quality, and continuity of healthcare services for key and priority populations. The stakes are high, particularly with the looming funding cuts, which threaten to disrupt essential health services across.

One of the project's key objectives is to convert community-generated data into actionable insights. To this end, COMET will develop a dynamic, public-facing data visualization dashboard—powered by Shiny Application—to track health trends and inform decision-makers. This dashboard will serve as a vital tool for advocates seeking to communicate the realities on the ground, translating raw data into compelling narratives that resonate with stakeholders.

Empowering local communities is at the centre of the COMET initiative. By strengthening the capacity of Community Advocates and local health structures, the project seeks to ensure that community voices

COMET is focused on community engagement and monitoring, designed to document and analyze real-time impacts on access, quality, and continuity of healthcare services...

are amplified in health discussions. COMET will focus on utilizing Community-Led Monitoring (CLM) data for targeted advocacy, enabling direct engagement with national and district-level health authorities. This approach not only fosters inclusivity but also enhances the sustainability of health initiatives.

Additionally, the COMET project aims to craft a robust investment case for the formal integration of CLM into Malawi's national health system. By demonstrating the inherent value of health system accountability and resilience, the initiative aspires to attract domestic financing and bolster the continuity of essential health services in the midst of the challenging global funding landscape.

The project was officially introduced in Zomba, generating significant interest among local health officials. Similarly, engagements with the Phalombe and Mulanje District Health Management Teams (DHMT) underscored the importance of continuous CLM efforts. Preliminary discussions at facilities like Namulenga, Muloza, Kambenje, and Mpala have laid the groundwork for skills transfer and sustainability planning, with the Health Centre Management Committee (HCMC) in each facility being engaged. At the district level, a focal person has been designated to maximize ground stakeholder collaboration for the project.

In an encouraging sign of progress, COMET received ethical approval from the relevant district Research Committees within just seven days of its introduction. This swift approval highlights the urgency and importance of the project in addressing the looming healthcare funding crisis.

Additionally, COMET has generated significant interest from national stakeholders due to its integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI). This has sparked an important discussion on how AI can be harnessed for the advancement of public health systems in the country.

With continuous dissemination of findings to stakeholders including the Ministry of Health and civil society COMET is poised to catalyze immediate, evidence-based policy and programmatic actions, ensuring that the needs of the most vulnerable populations in Malawi are met.



Zomba inception meeting with key stakeholders.

JONEHA'S BOARD CHAIRPERSON PROGRESS & FUTURE GOALS AT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

By John Folena

In a heartfelt address at the 8th Annual General Meeting (AGM) held on November 14, 2025, David Mhango, Board Chairperson of the Network of Journalists Living with HIV (JONEHA), reflected on the organization's substantial growth over the past four years and laid out ambitious plans for the future.

Speaking to an audience of dedicated members, Mhango expressed gratitude for their ongoing trust and support, stating, "We do not take the members' trust in us for granted. Together, we have built a community that cares deeply about health advocacy." His acknowledgment of the board's commitment underscored a shared journey characterized by growth, learning, and collaboration.

The board, consisting of Dr. Benson Tembo who is Vice Chairperson, Mrs. Rhoda Zulu, Mr. George Jobe, Mr. Nickson Ngwira and Mhango himself, has faced challenges, particularly regarding gender balance. "While we have made strides, it's clear that there's work to be done to ensure our board reflects the diversity of our membership," he noted.

One of the significant achievements highlighted by Mhango was the successful execution of four consecutive AGMs, from the 5th to the 8th. This continuity is a testament to JONEHA's resilience and the dedication of its leadership to membership. However, Mhango emphasized that the journey is far from over. "We continue to discover gaps in our constitution that could disrupt our growth. It's crucial that our governing documents remain vibrant and relevant."

In addressing the operational aspects of JONEHA, Mhango discussed the implementation of new policies and procedures to instill best practices across the board. "Our aim is to build confidence with our stakeholders," he remarked, noting that an updated constitution is currently with the Registrar for approval.



Mhango-We have built a community that cares about health advocacy

The introduction of the strategic plan for 2023 to 2027 has been a pivotal moment for JONEHA. "Despite our limited resources, our commitment to strategic growth has paid off," Mhango stated, highlighting the initiation of a resource mobilization strategy that aims to diversify funding sources and enhance sustainability.

Financial growth has been another positive development, with the Board's Finance & Administration Committee reporting increased resources under management. "Financial prudence is not just about managing funds; it's about guarding the confidence of our donors and stakeholders," he emphasized. Quarterly financial reports are now standard, ensuring transparency and accountability.

Furthermore, the Programs Committee has reported an increase in visibility, collaboration, and sponsorship for JONEHA. “The impact of our advocacy is becoming evident, not just within our organization but also in our interactions with the Ministry of Health and other stakeholders,” Mhango declared.

As the meeting progressed, he called for continued dedication to JONEHA’s mission: “Our desire is to see JONEHA grow in both membership numbers and impact. We must advocate for effective solutions to the pressing drug and health issues facing our country.”

Concluding his speech, Mhango asserted the board’s unwavering commitment to JONEHA’s cause. “All the board members are ready to continue this journey together. Let’s ensure that our organization remains a beacon of hope and advocacy for our beloved country.”

With a clear outline of achievements and aspirations, Mhango’s address not only highlighted JONEHA’s successes but also inspired members to remain steadfast in their collective mission. The meeting ended with a renewed sense of purpose, setting the tone for an exciting chapter ahead.



JONEHA'S COMET PROJECT TO IDENTIFY EXISTING GAPS AMID US FUNDING CUTS

By Thumbiko Nyirongo

The Network of Journalists Living with HIV (JONEHA) says its Community-Led Monitoring (CLM) initiative called the Community Monitoring and Engagement for Transformation (COMET) Project, will help expose challenges and identify areas that need attention following the impact of U.S. funding cuts on HIV programmes.

The United States has for years been one of Malawi's key partners in the health sector through programmes such as the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the U.S. President's Malaria Initiative (PMI) and contributions to the Global Fund.

But the suspension of U.S. foreign aid early in 2025 under the current administration has raised serious concerns over the future of Malawi's health programmes, especially those targeting HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis (TB) and malaria.

Speaking after training data collectors in Phalombe district, JONEHA Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Limbani Gondwe, said the COMET Project, funded by the International Treatment Preparedness Coalition (ITPC), aims to gather evidence from both service providers and recipients of care to measure the existing impact of the cuts on HIV service delivery.

"We were in Phalombe to train data collectors for the COMET Project. As you may know, HIV programmes funded by the U.S. government have either been frozen or reduced due to policy shifts. Through this project, we are documenting how these changes are affecting service delivery and identifying where urgent action is needed," said Gondwe.

He said the training equipped data collectors with the right skills, including ethical considerations, data collection techniques and confidentiality.

"Our expectation is that they will now go into their communities and collect quality data. This information will help us build solid evidence to advocate for action," he added.

Gondwe said for Phalombe; the trained data collectors will be working in Sukasanje, Nkhulambe, Mpasa and Kalinde Health Facilities. These were selected due to their high patient volumes and vulnerability to changes in donor funding.

"The COMET Project is also being implemented in Mulanje and Zomba districts," he said.

The data collectors, who are all from communities around health facilities are expected to gather information confidentially and turn people's experiences into evidence for advocacy.

After the training; one of the participants Leymond Kasenda, said the training has strengthened their capacity to collect data responsibly and advocate for better access to health services.

"We have learned how to handle

information ethically and use it to improve the delivery of health services in our communities," Kasenda said.

The funding freeze follows a directive by U.S. President Donald Trump, to halt foreign aid shortly after taking office earlier this year for a 90-day review period.

Though the position was softened after the review period with some life saving services restored; health experts warn the decision will have devastating effects on African countries, including Malawi, where the majority of HIV and malaria interventions heavily rely on donor support.

A recent Global Health Policy Center brief shows that Malawi depends on external assistance for over 70 percent of its HIV and AIDS response. Analysts say any prolonged disruption could reverse progress made in recent years on prevention, treatment and care.

Gondwe said JONEHA's work through the COMET Project is meant to ensure that affected communities have a voice and that their challenges are documented for both national and international advocacy.

"Our goal is simple — to make sure no one is left behind," he said.

As the COMET Project rolls out across targeted districts, JONEHA hopes the evidence gathered will inform decision-makers and development partners about the real impact of the US funding decision. By turning community experiences into data, the organisation aims to push for sustained investment in Malawi's HIV response, ensuring that gains built on progress over the past two decades are not lost to shifting global policies.



Participants during the Community Data Collector's Training

JONEHA PARTNERSHIP WITH UNAIDS AMPLIFY SERVICE AWARENESS AMID US FUNDING FREEZE

By Fortina Kazembe

In a recent report from George Jobe, Chairperson of the Board's Programs Committee at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Network of Journalists Living with HIV (JONEHA), the organization successfully utilized a grant from UNAIDS to address critical challenges following external funding freeze for HIV services in the country.

The project, running from June to August 2025, reached its objectives, amidst an urgent need for public awareness of available antiretrovirals (ARVs) and the broader implications of the funding freeze.

The initiative's primary goal was to raise awareness about the availability of HIV services amid the funding freeze and advocate for enhanced domestic financing for HIV services. JONEHA emphasizes the importance of information sharing and community engagement to ensure that citizens are informed about their rights and the availability of health resources during this challenging period.

The project's outcomes reflect a mix of successes and learning opportunities. While JONEHA aimed to engage 14 media practitioners, it managed to train

13, falling slightly short of its target. However, all seven targeted media houses participated, ensuring robust media representation at community and national media house levels, despite two sending only management staff instead of reporters.

Moreover, the initiative exceeded its targets for radio programming, producing 14 shows against a goal of 12. In leveraging social media, JONEHA achieved significant engagement, garnering 2,300 likes, 1,800 comments, and 24 shares across platforms like X and Facebook a clear measure of the project's reach and impact.

JONEHA is also actively broadening its network by engaging additional media houses and practitioners as it continues with advocacy journey.

JONEHA's commitment to contributing towards improving HIV service delivery and fostering community advocacy remains critical, particularly in a landscape where external funding has become increasingly uncertain



COMPASS YEAR 2025 PROGRAMS UPDATE: ADVOCATING FOR HEALTH EQUITY

By Starphel Sithole

At the Annual General Meeting held on November 14, 2025, at Thope Lodge, George Jobe, Chairperson of the Board's Programmes Committee, presented a comprehensive update on the COMPASS Campaign and associated programs. The meeting reflected a significant step forward in advocating for equitable healthcare access for people living with HIV in Malawi.

With the COMPASS Africa Campaign targeting Mulanje and Phalombe catchment areas, the project has achieved over 98% of its implementation goals, moving towards a complete rollout by the end of November 2025. The campaign's overarching aim is to secure long-term funding for antiretroviral therapy and essential medicines, significantly improving health outcomes for individuals living with HIV by 2026.

The objectives are clear: to increase the allocation of funds for the procurement of antiretrovirals (ARVs) from 0.2% to 5.2% of the health fund, and to reduce the debt owed by District Health Offices (DHOs) to the Central Medical Stores Trust (CMST) by 50%. Jobe emphasized the importance of timely disbursements of funds to ensure that essential medicines reach those in need.

Despite hurdles, notably delays in fund disbursement caused by liquidity issues at the Ministry of Finance, progress has been made. A mechanism for timely disbursement has been established, addressed by the National Local Government Finance Committee, allowing for better resource allocation and management.



JONEHA members during the 2025 Annual General Meeting deliberating on annual reports.

In his report, Jobe noted the ongoing advocacy efforts, including engagements to secure additional funding for DHOs to facilitate the procurement of essential medicines. “We still face challenges,” he stated, “but our commitment to ensuring equitable access to health services for all remains unwavering.”

As the COMPASS Campaign moves forward, the emphasis on collaborative efforts and continued advocacy is crucial. The resilience of the program has been mirrored in the responses from various stakeholders who understand the necessity of secure funding for healthcare.

In closing, Jobe captured the spirit of the meeting with a resonant statement: “Access to healthcare is not just a privilege; it is a fundamental right that we must fight for—because every life matters.” This rallying call underscores the dedication of all involved in the ongoing fight against HIV in Malawi, reminding us that together, we can create a healthier future for everyone.



Jobe-A mechanism for timely disbursement of funds has been established.

KEEPING COMMUNITIES AT THE CENTRE OF HIV SERVICE ACCOUNTABILITY

By Isaac Limu

At a time when the national concern over HIV funding cuts continues to grow, voices from Mulanje are reminding us why community-driven evidence matters. Through the Community Monitoring Engagements for Transformation (COMET) Project, Network of Journalists Living with HIV (JONEHA) recently rolled out a data-collection exercise across its four operational sites of Mpala, Muloza, Kambenje and Namulenga Health Centres in Mulanje where recipients of care, health workers and key population groups were engaged in a process designed to make their realities heard.

Over two days, sex workers, young people and people living with HIV (PLHIV) participated fully in interviews and discussions centred on how the funding freeze is affecting service delivery. The questionnaire captured both the challenges faced by providers and the lived experiences of those relying on HIV services daily. Representatives from the District Health Office (DHO) also joined the exercise, underscoring the importance of multi-level stakeholder accountability.

Community members expressed deep appreciation for JONEHA's continued engagement through the COMET project, noting that such platforms ensure authorities remain accountable for resource use while empowering service users to advocate for their needs.



One of the most pressing concerns raised across all sites was the inconsistent availability of emergency HIV prevention commodities, particularly Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) and condoms. For many participants, these supplies are not optional; they are lifelines.

The stories and insights gathered through this exercise highlight not only the gaps caused by funding cuts, but also the resilience of communities determined to sustain progress in the HIV response. Through CLM, their voices continue to guide the path toward more equitable, accountable and responsive health services.

... One of the most pressing concerns raised across all sites was the inconsistent availability of emergency HIV prevention commodities

JONEHA IN STRONG FINANCIAL HEALTH AND STRATEGIC GROWTH

By Alinafe Kaphaizi

At the Annual General Meeting of the Network of Journalists Living with HIV (JONEHA) held on November 14, 2025, Nick Ngwira, Chairperson of Board's Finance and Administration Committee, presented an optimistic financial report outlining the organization's achievements and strategic direction. His presentation provided insight into the rigorous audit processes, funding successes and advocacy initiatives that have characterized JONEHA's activities over the past year.

Ngwira began with a summary of the 2024 audit, which commenced in May and concluded in July after receiving Board approval. "The auditor confirmed that our financial statements fairly represented JONEHA's financial status," he declared, underscoring the transparency and integrity of JONEHA's financial management. The audit significantly bolstered stakeholder confidence, crucial for sustaining donor funding eligibility.

Highlighting the program highlights, Ngwira emphasized JONEHA's focused efforts in health advocacy initiatives. The organization has advocated for antiretroviral drugs (ARVs), essential medicines, and early warning systems to improve healthcare access for vulnerable populations. "Our commitment to health advocacy not only enhances accessibility but also empowers communities," Ngwira stated, reflecting the organization's mission to improve health outcomes in the broader community.

Significant milestones were also achieved in stakeholder engagement as well. JONEHA successfully conducted prioritization workshops and orientation sessions that strengthened accountability and collaboration among stakeholders. In addition, Ngwira shared how media outreach initiatives have expanded the organization's visibility. "By leveraging media practitioner orientations and social media campaigns, we have broadened public awareness and fostered a dialogue around health issues," he noted, highlighting the power of communication in advocacy.

"Our financial management practices reflect a commitment to sustainability and impact," he asserted, indicating that the organization is well-positioned to meet its upcoming obligations and sustain its programs.

In discussing JONEHA's reregistration towards constitutional review update, Ngwira revealed that the organization has completed all initial requirements and is currently awaiting approval from the relevant authorities.

"This proactive approach to governance demonstrates our dedication to compliance, transparency, and accountability," he remarked, reinforcing the organization's commitment to maintaining the highest standards of administration.

As he concluded his report, Ngwira reflected on JONEHA's recent achievements, noting significant funding growth, program success, and increased membership. He encouraged stakeholders to engage more actively, inviting them to share insights and feedback during the Q&A session.



**... We cannot
achieve our
mission alone; we
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collaboration of
everyone involved**

“We cannot achieve our mission alone; we need the input and collaboration of everyone involved,” he emphasized, reminding attendees of their shared responsibility in fostering the organization’s impact.

With plans in place for future initiatives and a

solid financial foundation, JONEHA is poised for continued growth. Ngwira’s presentation not only highlighted the organization’s resilience and strategic direction but also inspired a sense of collective purpose among its members as they look forward to overcoming challenges and advocating for a healthier Malawi.



Ngwira-JONEHA is poised for continued growth

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About Us

The registered trustees of Network of Journalists Living with HIV (JONEHA) is a media Non- governmental organization created by Malawian journalists to participate effectively in the national HIV and AIDS response by addressing individual and professional needs.

This is a result of an earlier PANOS Southern Africa observation that while the media was communicating HIV and AIDS interventions, it needed more targeting in HIV and AIDS rather than just being used as agents of information.

VISION

Effective media advocate for quality health service.

OBJECTIVES

- (a) To build media practitioners' capacity on health care advocacy
- (b) To create an information resource hub for media practitioners
- (c) To engage media houses and practitioners for increased health advocacy
- (d) Advocating for health policy change
- (e) To promote positive health behaviours among media practitioners and their audiences at personal and occupational levels

MISSION

Ensure Access of Quality Health Care Service for All.

BOARD MEMBERS

Chairperson

Mr. David Mhango

Vice Chairperson
Dr. Benson Tembo

Members

Mr. George Jobe
Mrs. Rhoda Zulu
Mr. Nickson Ngwira

VALUES STATEMENT

- i. Respect: We treat all people with dignity and respect.
- ii. Stewardship: We honour our heritage by being socially, financially and environmentally responsible.
- iii. Ethics: We strive to meet the highest ethical standards
- iv. Learning: We challenge each other to strive for excellence and to continually learn.
- v. Innovation: We embrace continuous improvement, bold creativity and change.