



NAMIKANGO  
MISSION

JUNE/JULY  
2022

# Women's Ministry & VSL



**Empowering African communities through  
Christ-centered transformation**





# Village Savings & Loan

by Brother Styford Blazio

The Village Savings and Loan (VSL) program provides a simple and accountable system for savings and loans for communities which do not have ready access to formal financial services or which are underserved by formal financial institutions, such as banks or microfinance companies.

Namikango Mission has established over 100 VSL groups in Malawi, Mozambique, and Zambia. This project is helping diversify the livelihood activities of local people who depend mostly on farming and the exploitation of natural resources. Namikango Mission's VSL project brings together church members and community members who save for mutually agreeable objectives. Then, they take out small loans from the savings to start or expand their businesses, pay for their school fees, and support their household activities.

It very encouraging to see that over 80% of Namikango VSL project members are women. Mrs. Idesi Gama (*pictured on front cover*) is from the Mtendere VSL group and is a member at Kazizidwe Church of Christ in Liwonde-Machinga District. She joined the VSL group in 2021.

During her first loan cycle, Idesi borrowed MKW40,000 to start a small business at her house. She is selling soap, salt, fish, cooking oil, and other important items. The VSL loan gave her the encouragement she needed and prompted her to join the group again during the second cycle.

Idesi said, "Namikango VSL has been beneficial to my family, even the church. During the first cycle share out, I contributed K 54,000 (\$54) and received K 91,830 (\$92). My plan is to reinvest this money into my grocery shop."

**"Apart from this, my spiritual life has completely changed, my love for others has grown, my marriage has been strengthened, and I am able to do Bible studies with my family!"**

*~ Idesi, VSL member*





# The Orange Sweet Potato Initiative

by Sister Ziona Maharu

Since the Namikango Women's Development Ministry started in 2018, spiritual, physical, and economic transformation has happened for the women in our nine groups. At the end of each training, we receive many comments about how this ministry is positively affecting them as individuals, in their families, and at their church.

Mrs. Kapanda of Mafuwa Church of Christ is one of the women who expressed her gratitude:

*I used to be a very shy woman and couldn't get along with fellow women at church because I did not know that women can have a ministry at church apart from going to church on Sunday. But the Namikango Women's Development Ministry has empowered me. I am now a changed woman. I am able to pray on my own, pray for my family, lead a prayer or a hymn/song, read the Bible, or teach the Word of God at meetings. When infant funerals occur in our church, now we can assist each other without asking women from other denominations. Our church is now respected in our area.*

*The Orange Sweet Potato (OSP) Initiative has empowered me physically and economically because the potatoes I harvested last year provided food for my family. I sold some of them and bought groceries, paid school fees for my child at Primary school, and gave an offering at church.*

*This year, I have grown more of the OSP, and I am expecting to harvest more. I believe that if we can put much effort in the growing of Orange Sweet Potatoes, one day it will help us achieve big development for our church. I used to hear about OSP on the radio, but now I'm growing it myself, many thanks to Namikango for bringing the growing skills and seeds to us. This was not possible in the Church of Christ in our area for the past several years. I am grateful to Namikango Mission for this ministry. May God bless Namikango so that you continue reaching out to us with more lessons and trainings.*



Mrs. Kapanda

In April 2022, we conducted a 4-day Training of Trainers (ToT) in Orange Sweet Potato (OSP) cooking skills at Mulirankhwazi in Zomba. The ToT was aimed at equipping women to make OSP recipes, learning how to prepare delicious and nutritious food recipes from OSP tubers and leaves. This improves their nutrition and economic status, enabling them to do business if desired.

We conducted this ToT with three expert facilitators from the Makoka Research station. We also gave the women scripture (Philippians 2:5-11) for Bible study and encouraged them to share life stories at night before bed.

Training was successful and well-received with gratitude. Sixty-two women from 53 Church of Christ congregations have been equipped with OSP cooking skills for 10 recipes: juice from OSP roots, juice from OSP leaves, porridge, sweet beer, doughnuts, mandazi, fritters, African cake, one-pot-dish, bread & buns. Now, the 62 volunteer Trainers will go back and train other women in their respective nine groups.

The OSP initiative has fostered the achievement of our purpose to empower women in the Church of Christ, transforming them, their families, their congregations, and their neighborhoods in almost all aspects of life:

**Physically**—Food and Nutrition/Vitamin A security by eating nutritious food recipes made from OSP tubers and leaves

**Economically**—Financial growth by selling OSP fresh tubers and locally processed products to increase their household income, to finance women's activities, and to contribute to church development projects, like constructing toilets to improve sanitation at churches

**Spiritually**—Many women and their families acknowledge God's grace, and they are dedicated to God's work with church attendance increasing. Many others will come to Christ.







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# UNDER THE MANGO TREE

BOARDING SOON: JONATHAN WYNNE



Jonathan Wynne will be leaving to serve with the team at Namikango Mission on June 8th! Please be in prayer for Jonathan as he navigates this upcoming transition.

Among other potential responsibilities, Jonathan will work alongside Executive Director, Ben Hayes, assisting in mission administration responsibilities. He will also aid Director of Education, Eric Gephart, teaching classes at the Bible school's DTI Program.

Jonathan is from Lubbock, Texas. He has interned in cross-cultural contexts in both Kenya and Tanzania during his undergraduate and graduate school years with Lubbock Christian University and Abilene Christian University. He is passionate about holistic ministry and economic development opportunities that cultivate authentic Christian witness and awareness of God's Kingdom.