

# Malawi Youth Mental Health Literacy Newsletter

September 30, 2021

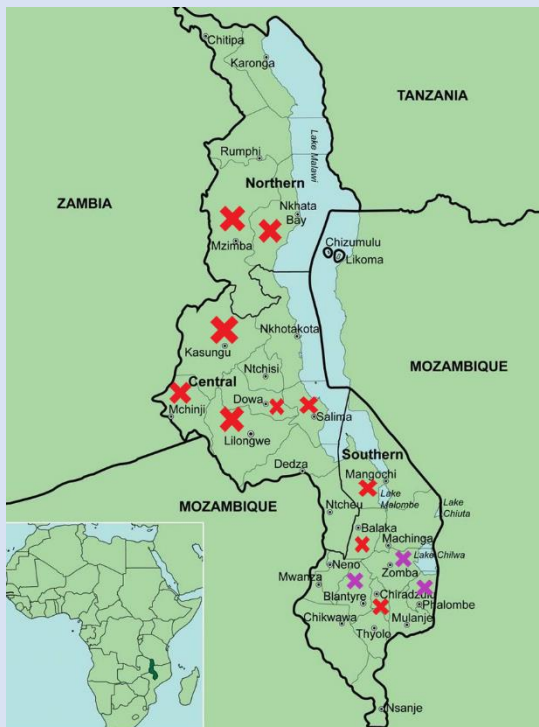
Dear all,

Welcome to the second newsletter of the project titled ***“Increasing capacity for mental health literacy to improve mental health for young people in Malawi”***. This month, content will mainly centre on the current ongoing national mental health literacy survey, being done in various districts across all three regions of Malawi. We will update you on progress made with this survey.

You may recall in our preliminary newsletter; it was stated that ***“we also have continuous activity of a national mental health literacy survey. The National Youth Council of Malawi and Drug Fight Malawi are providing both intellectual and hands on support to help us complete this work of which we are grateful”***. Therefore, knowing how important stakeholder involvement is, and driven by the keen interest, mutual respect and understanding shown by most people we have engaged over this project’s duration, we have approached some youth advocates who participated in our focus group meetings earlier this year, based on their location to help carry out some surveys on our behalf. In the next newsletter, expect to have a profile of these amazing people and the work they do within their organisations. Some of the initial surveys were done by Drug Fight Malawi whilst the others are being done by National Youth Council of Malawi (NYCOM) with the lead of Maryrose Simbeye, their highly experienced Planning, Research, Monitoring & Evaluation Officer.

The survey questionnaire being used was designed to assess understanding and knowledge of mental health of a young adult responder [Dias et al, 2018]. The data we are collecting will not only reveal the key point of mental health literacy among Malawian youth. It will identify socio-demographics factors e.g., sex, education and employment status, that may impact literacy, and correspondingly unwrap whether mental health concepts within the questionnaire translate to a Malawi population. Such data will vitally inform on the type of interventions required to tackle the seemingly “impervious” problem of mental health literacy. Preliminary survey data from districts (see map below) is currently being analysed.

## Map of survey target areas



The X on the map marks the 13 districts targeted for the national survey. The red X indicate districts where surveying has already been completed and the purple X where surveying is yet to be done. Roughly about 77% of the target districts have been completed. If you look closely, we are targeting youth in both urban and rural settings and in this case, all major cities have been included in the survey. In Mzimba district for example, youth from Mzuzu city were engaged as well as rural Mzimba. In the Capital city Lilongwe again both rural and urban areas were targeted, and this approach will also apply to the commercial city Blantyre as well as Zomba.

The general idea with this survey is to get data from a sample population that is representative of Malawi. To understand whether geographical settings or culture's influence knowledge of the mental health, and if so, how? To give solutions if the problem of mental health illiteracy is as high as existing research evidence assumes [[Kutcher et al, 2019](#)]. This is our goal and support from our stakeholders will help us to achieve this. To borrow from the knowledge of an economic perspective of social organization, people work together to achieve a goal that would be costly to be done by an individual or a small group [[Granovetter, 2005](#)]. Challenges will always be there but understanding the problem first is the key step to devising effective solutions. In our case, we hope to work together and share ideas with young people and their advocates to beat the challenge of mental health problems.

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