

WEBINAR REPORT

Redefining PCOS as an SRHR Priority: Beyond the Myths

Organizer: Jonica Foundation

Program: Mwili Wangu SRHR Program

Date: 6 March 2026

Time: 2:00 PM – 3:55 PM

Platform: Zoom

Participants: 70 attendees

1. Executive Summary

On 6 March 2026, the Jonica Foundation hosted a virtual awareness webinar titled *Redefining PCOS as an SRHR Priority: Beyond the Myths*. The webinar formed part of the organization's activities commemorating International Women's Day and aimed to raise awareness about Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS), a common but frequently misunderstood hormonal condition affecting women of reproductive age.

The event convened healthcare professionals, advocates, and community members to explore the scientific understanding of PCOS, discuss its diagnosis and management, and highlight the lived experiences of women affected by the condition. Through expert presentations, participant engagement, and open dialogue, the webinar sought to address common misconceptions surrounding PCOS while promoting evidence-based information and holistic approaches to care.

The session featured expert contributions from Dr. Zippora Amecha, Dr. Neema Chacha, and PCOS advocate Adwoa Agyeiwaa Ankomah, who provided insights on the causes, symptoms, diagnosis, and management of PCOS, and the emotional and psychosocial

experiences associated with the condition. Additionally, interactive discussions, including participant polls and a Q&A session, allowed attendees to engage directly with the speakers and share experiences. The webinar attracted approximately 35 participants, including healthcare practitioners, community members, and staff from the Jonica Foundation.

Key themes emerging from the discussion included the need for improved awareness, earlier diagnosis, stronger mental health support for individuals living with PCOS, and increased advocacy to integrate PCOS within broader sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) programming.

The webinar concluded with a commitment from the Jonica Foundation to continue community sensitization efforts, strengthen advocacy around hormonal health, and expand support networks for individuals living with PCOS.

2. Background and Context

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) is among the most common endocrine disorders affecting women globally. Estimates suggest that approximately one in ten women of reproductive age may experience PCOS or related symptoms. Despite its prevalence, the condition remains widely misunderstood in many communities. Women living with PCOS often face a range of physical, emotional, and social challenges, including irregular menstrual cycles, infertility concerns, metabolic complications, and psychological distress. In many contexts, stigma and misinformation surrounding reproductive health conditions discourage women from seeking medical attention or discussing their experiences openly.

In Kenya, awareness of PCOS remains limited, and many women encounter barriers in accessing appropriate healthcare services and accurate information about the condition. These barriers contribute to delayed diagnosis and inadequate management, which can lead to long-term health complications. Therefore, recognizing these challenges, the Jonica

Foundation organized the webinar to foster greater awareness and dialogue about PCOS while positioning it as an important issue within the broader sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) agenda.

3. Objectives of the Webinar

The webinar was designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. Increase awareness of the signs, symptoms, and health implications of PCOS among Kenyan women and SRHR stakeholders.
2. Debunk myths and misconceptions surrounding PCOS that contribute to stigma and discourage individuals from seeking medical care.
3. Amplify the lived experiences of women living with PCOS in order to foster empathy, validation, and peer support.
4. Promote access to respectful and evidence-based SRHR care for individuals affected by PCOS.
5. Position the Mwili Wangu SRHR Program as a platform for ongoing advocacy, education, and community engagement on hormonal health issues.

4. Overview of the Jonica Foundation

The Jonica Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to empowering vulnerable mothers and women through health education, community engagement, and advocacy.

Mission

The Foundation's mission is to empower vulnerable mothers in Kenya to heal, raise, and build sustainable futures through programs that promote women's health, dignity, and empowerment.

Programs

The organization implements several programs designed to address different aspects of women's health and community development.

- ***Mwili Wangu Program***

The Mwili Wangu program focuses on sexual and reproductive health and rights education, equipping women with accurate information about their bodies and health needs.

- ***Sauti Ya Mama Initiative***

This initiative provides platforms for women to share stories and experiences related to health, motherhood, and personal empowerment through dialogues, workshops, and digital engagements.

- ***Imarika Program***

This program focuses on promoting economic independence among mothers by supporting small business development. Through startup grants, mentorship, and business training, the program enables mothers to build sustainable income-generating ventures.

- ***Pamoja Pulse***

Pamoja Pulse promotes community engagement by bringing together mothers, families, local leaders, NGOs, and institutions to discuss issues affecting mothers. The program organizes dialogues, exhibitions, and advocacy events aimed at strengthening community participation and sustainable change.

5. Webinar Proceedings

5.1 Opening and Welcome Remarks

The webinar officially commenced at 2:00 PM with welcoming remarks delivered by moderator Juliet Anyoso. She welcomed participants to the session and provided a brief overview of the Jonica Foundation and the purpose of the webinar. She explained that the session was designed to raise awareness about PCOS, provide accurate medical information,

and create a supportive environment where individuals could discuss their experiences openly. Participants were encouraged to actively participate by sharing their thoughts in the chat box and asking questions throughout the session.

6. Introduction of Speakers

The moderator introduced the invited speakers who would guide the discussion and provide expert insights.

The speakers included:

- Dr. Zippora Amecha – PCOS Healthcare Provider
- Dr. Neema Chacha – Wellness Consultant at The Nairobi Hospital
- Adwoa Agyeiwaa Ankomah – PCOS Advocate

Each speaker contributed unique perspectives on PCOS, including clinical knowledge, diagnostic approaches, and lived experiences.

7. Key Presentations

7.1 Understanding PCOS: Causes, Symptoms, and Misconceptions

Dr. Zippora Amecha provided an overview of PCOS and explained that the condition is characterized by hormonal imbalances that affect women of reproductive age.

She highlighted several key contributing factors to PCOS, including hormonal imbalance, insulin resistance, genetic predisposition, chronic inflammation, and lifestyle influences.

Dr. Zippora outlined the common symptoms experienced by individuals living with PCOS. These include irregular menstrual cycles, excessive facial or body hair growth, acne, hair thinning, weight gain, fertility challenges, and skin discoloration.

A significant portion of her presentation focused on addressing myths surrounding PCOS. She clarified that PCOS does not exclusively affect overweight women and that the condition affects multiple systems within the body rather than only the ovaries. She also

emphasized that while PCOS cannot currently be cured, its symptoms can be effectively managed through appropriate medical care and lifestyle adjustments.

7.2 Diagnosis and Clinical Assessment of PCOS

Dr. Neema Chacha presented on the diagnostic processes involved in identifying PCOS. She explained that healthcare providers often suspect PCOS in individuals presenting with symptoms such as irregular menstrual cycles, acne, excess hair growth, weight gain, or fertility challenges.

Dr. Neema highlighted the importance of comprehensive medical evaluation and outlined the key investigations used in diagnosing PCOS:

1. Ultrasound imaging to assess ovarian morphology.
2. Hormonal testing including testosterone, LH/FSH, prolactin, and thyroid hormones.
3. Blood glucose and insulin testing.
4. Clinical assessment including medical history and physical examination.

She emphasized that accurate diagnosis requires a combination of these assessments rather than reliance on a single test.

7.3 Lived Experiences and Holistic Management of PCOS

PCOS advocate Adwoa Agyeiwaa Ankomah shared her personal journey living with PCOS. She described experiencing symptoms such as severe acne, irregular menstrual bleeding, and heavy periods, which significantly affected her emotional well-being.

Adwoa emphasized that PCOS management requires a holistic approach that addresses both physical and emotional aspects of health. She highlighted the importance of early diagnosis, individualized treatment plans, mental health support, and lifestyle management. Her testimony encouraged participants experiencing similar symptoms to seek medical support and connect with others for community support.

8. Interactive Poll

Following the presentations, moderator Jeanette Muthoni conducted an interactive poll to gather insights into participants' experiences and concerns regarding PCOS.

The poll explored topics including:

1. Awareness of PCOS symptoms
2. Misconceptions surrounding the condition
3. Access to healthcare services
4. Fertility concerns
5. Awareness of diagnostic and treatment options
6. Need for advocacy and support networks

The poll results indicated that many participants had limited awareness of PCOS before the session and expressed concerns about access to care, symptom management, and the emotional effects of the condition.

9. Questions and Discussion Session

The webinar included an interactive discussion session where participants asked questions related to symptoms, diagnosis, fertility, lifestyle management, and mental health. The speakers provided practical guidance and addressed misconceptions raised during the discussion. Moderators facilitated the discussion by reading questions submitted through the chat box. Leadership from the Jonica Foundation, including the CEO, also contributed to the discussion when necessary.

10. Participant Experiences

During the discussion session, participants shared personal experiences related to PCOS. One participant described the emotional, physical, and financial strain experienced by her family while supporting a relative living with PCOS. She highlighted the challenges

associated with frequent hospital visits, expensive medication, and uncertainty surrounding treatment outcomes. Her story underscored the broader impact of PCOS on families and emphasized the importance of support systems for individuals affected by the condition.

11. Key Outcomes and Lessons Learned

The webinar generated several important insights:

- PCOS awareness remains low in many communities.
- Misconceptions about reproductive health continue to influence healthcare-seeking behavior.
- Early diagnosis plays a crucial role in preventing complications.
- Mental health support should be integrated into PCOS management.
- Community education and advocacy are essential for reducing stigma.

12. Participation and Engagement

The webinar had approximately 35 participants, including healthcare professionals, Jonica Foundation staff members, and community participants interested in women's health and reproductive rights. Participants actively engaged throughout the session through polls, questions, and experience sharing.

13. Next Steps

To sustain engagement and support individuals living with PCOS, the Jonica Foundation proposed several follow-up actions:

- Establishing community support networks for individuals affected by PCOS.
- Conducting additional awareness and education sessions.
- Expanding advocacy efforts to integrate PCOS into broader SRHR programming.
- Strengthening partnerships with healthcare providers to improve access to diagnostic and treatment services.

14. Conclusion

The webinar successfully created a platform for dialogue, education, and awareness on PCOS as a significant yet under-discussed health issue affecting women. By combining medical expertise with lived experiences, the session provided participants with a deeper understanding of PCOS and its implications for women's health and well-being.

The event reinforced the importance of continued advocacy, community education, and improved healthcare access to support individuals living with PCOS. Through initiatives such as this webinar, the Jonica Foundation continues to strengthen its role in promoting women's health awareness, empowerment, and access to dignified reproductive healthcare services.