



VoiceUp Newsletter

Your Health. Your Future

ISSUE 3

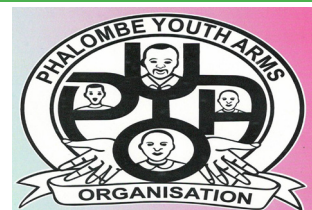


Commonwealth
Foundation

Supported by the Commonwealth Foundation



ALL FOR
YOUTH
MALAWI



Opening Statement



Mr. Andrew Bwanali

**Executive Director - Youth Initiative
for Community Development (YICOD)**

I would like to welcome you to this edition of the newsletter. I am pleased to share that we are making progress in ensuring that young people participate in policy processes and in amplifying advocacy for Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) services, budgets, and accessibility. During this period, we have conducted several engagements aimed at ensuring that the voices of young people are heard.

During this period, young people met with various chairpersons of parliamentary committees and representatives of Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) to raise issues of interest to young people, including lobbying for an increase in the SRHR budget and the establishment of clear budget lines for youth-friendly health services in the national budget for easy tracking. However, during these engagements, it was noted that the absence of a youth caucus of parliamentarians within the youth age bracket also impacts the campaign that youth issues should be heard and considered in Parliament.

I am proud to share that the former speaker of the recently dissolved Parliament, Catherine Gotani Hara, stated that, after following all procedures, Parliament has resolved to establish a youth caucus from the cohort of Members of Parliament who will be elected during the 16th September general elections. She announced this during this year's Youth Summit on Democracy and Human Rights organised by Youth and Society (YAS) and its partners. At the summit, the youth manifesto was launched, which comprises 12 pillars. The youth manifesto outlines key policy recommendations for youth empowerment and development. Pillar number 9 focuses on accessible health services, seeking to ensure that all young people have access to youth-friendly health services, including sexual and reproductive health, mental health, and substance abuse prevention, supported by inclusive health financing.

We would also like to applaud the government of Malawi for recognising the importance of meaningful youth participation and engagement by appointing and re-appointing some members of the platform to serve in the National Youth Council of Malawi Board where they are going to promote and advance the youth development agenda in Malawi. Overall, with support from the Commonwealth Foundation it has been an exciting journey of advocacy for YICOD together with our partners, Phalombe Youth Arms Organisation, All for Youth including the youth platform, as we work to ensure that young people are involved in budget and policy processes as well as ensuring that there is a provision of quality health services.

Enjoy reading!

Parliament to establish a youth parliamentarians caucus



Gotani Hara pictured during the summit

The Parliament of Malawi announces plans to establish a youth caucus for young parliamentarians, aimed at ensuring that youth issues are fully prioritised and discussed during debates.

Speaking at the youth summit on democracy and human rights organised by Youth and Society (YAS), and its partners, held between 25th and 26th June 2025 at Crossroads Hotels in Lilongwe, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Catherine Gotani Hara, revealed that all parliamentary procedures and processes necessary for creating a youth caucus have been finalised.

She stated that this caucus will be formed among the next cohort of Members of Parliament, who will be elected during the general elections on 16th September 2025.

“We believe that the youth caucus will be part of the next cohort, now that all the procedures and processes have been finalised. There is a need to establish this youth caucus in the National Assembly, where young parliamentarians in the youth age category can voice out on issues affecting the youth population,” she said.

The announcement came just few months after a meeting held on 27th March 2025, supported by the

Commonwealth Foundation, YICOD, and its partners, Phalombe Youth Arms Organisation (PYAO) and All for Youth.

The meeting, which involved young people, included representatives from various committees, government ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs), who discussed the importance of amplifying youth voices in policy processes and SRHR budgeting.

During the engagement, it was observed that a gap exists within the National Assembly due to the absence of a youth caucus that champions young people’s interests.

Reacting to the announcement, PYAO Team Leader Vincent Makuluni Thom expressed his happiness, saying the advocacy efforts by the consortium are starting to bear fruit.

“We are very happy to see that now the other arm of government has decided to accept our call that is to have a youth caucus, we believe our voices will be heard easily, and bills that have the interests of young people will be easily scrutinised and be passed,” said Thom.



YICOD’s Executive Director, Andrew Bwanali, making his opening remarks on the day two of the summit

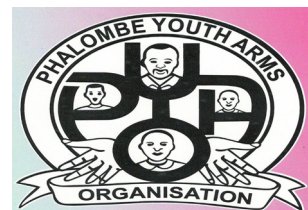


**Commonwealth
Foundation**

Supported by the Commonwealth Foundation



**ALL FOR
YOUTH
MALAWI**



YICOD holds a dialogue on SRHR budgeting with key ministries and other stakeholders



Katengeza explaining the current strategies that the ministry is implementing to ensure accessibility of SRHR

YICOD, in collaboration with its partners All for Youth and Phalombe Youth Arms Organisation (PYAO), held a dialogue session focused on advancing youth Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), where young people met with duty bearers.

This side event took place during the Youth Summit for Democracy and Human Rights, held from 25th to 26th June this year at CrossRoads Hotel in Malawi's capital, Lilongwe.

During the session, supported by the Commonwealth Foundation, young people highlighted several barriers that hinder their access to SRHR and recommended that a dedicated budget line for SRHR be clearly indicated in the national budget.

One youth leader, Ellah Tambalaweko, who was among the panelists, emphasised the need to prioritise SRHR in the national budget to ensure it is accessible to everyone.

“There is need to have a clear budget lines for SRHR and Youth Friendly Health Services in the national budget rather than just telling us that they are embedded in other health budget lines,” she said.

However, the deputy director for reproductive health at the Ministry of Health, Hans Katengeza, stated that the ministry



SRHR expert, Dezio Macheso, emphasizing a point during the dialogue

is implementing several interventions to ensure that sexual and reproductive health services are accessible to all young people.

His sentiments were echoed by his colleague, Timange Banda, an economist in the department of policy and planning directorate, who mentioned that through budget integration, the ministry is making efforts to ensure financing for SRHR and youth-friendly health services.

SRHR expert Dezio Macheso provided an overview of SRHR in the country and urged the youth to remain vigilant in advocating for their rights.

In her remarks, All for Youth Program Lead Chimwemwe Chathyoka commended the two ministries, saying giving young people a space to voice their concerns is very important; she, however, urged the authorities to always consider and deal with issues raised with the utmost urgency they deserve.

“We hope that whatever we have raised here will be taken into account and that authorities will take the issues that have been raised by young people so that SRHR services are improved and made accessible to every young person in Malawi,” she said.



**Commonwealth
Foundation**

Supported by the Commonwealth Foundation



**ALL FOR
YOUTH
MALAWI**



Young people engage Parliament and MDAs on health budget and SRHR accessibility



Ngwale responding to the questions during the engagement

Young people drawn from various youth groups in the country meaningfully engaged with chairpersons of various committees of the National Assembly and representatives of various Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) with the shared mission of increasing accessibility to Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) and services.

The meeting was held at the parliament building in Malawi’s capital, Lilongwe.

The aim of the engagement, organized by the Youth Initiative for Community Development (YICOD) in collaboration with All for Youth and the Phalombe Youth Arms Organisation, with financial support from the Commonwealth Foundation, was to amplify the voices and agency of young people in the budget and policy processes related to Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) and services.

Young people presented various issues that emerged after analysing the 2025/2026 Malawi budget, highlighting the lack of funding specifically allocated to Youth Friendly Health Services and SRHR in general. They proposed a 10 percent increase in the health budget to meet the Abuja agreement threshold.

For instance, in the proposed budget, the health sector has been allocated 741 billion Malawi Kwacha, which is just nine percent of the total budget of 8 trillion Malawi Kwacha. The young people urged parliament to consider increasing the health budget by an additional 500 billion Malawi Kwacha.

YICOD’s Executive Director, Andrew Bwanali, stated that there is a need for parliament to increase the health budget and allocate more funds to SRHR and Youth Friendly Health Services (YFHS) to protect young people from contracting sexually transmitted diseases, preventing unintended pregnancies, and addressing early marriages, among other issues.

“We came here with one voice to raise the issues affecting us as young people. We want to see an increase in the health budget so that as a country we can improve accessibility to SRHR services. There is a need for a clear budget line for the YFHS, which is critical for the provision of quality SRHR service delivery.

“We are glad that the parliamentarians, through their representatives from various committees, have noted our concerns and promised to take action. However, there is still a need for the government and all stakeholders to explore strategies and ways to finance the health sector for it to be efficient and effective,” he said.



The engagement in progress at Parliament building
Continues on the next page...

...From Previous Page

On his part, the chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee on Health, Mathews Ngwale, emphasized that health financing is key to addressing funding challenges in the health sector, adding that other sectors are coming up with innovative ways to finance their activities. He suggested that the health sector could adopt similar strategies, including health insurance and levies on products such as cigarettes and alcohol.

Ngwale acknowledged that youth-friendly health services are not explicitly included in the budget, despite district councils already spending on such services at the local level. “Of course, there is no clear budget line showing SRHR and YFHS, but there is spending on those areas; the estimates are simply embedded within other budget lines. I agree that we need to find ways to fund the health sector and increase its budget,” he said.

The Deputy Director of Youth in the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Kettie Mwandira, commended YICOD and its partners for organising the event, stating that it aligns with

the ministry’s emphasis on meaningful participation of young people in decisions that affect their development and well-being.’

Mwandira emphasized that, despite most structures not adhering to the 30 percent youth representation guideline, those given the opportunity should leverage it fully and meaningfully contribute to improving the well-being of young people.

Program Assistant at the National Youth Council of Malawi (NYCOM), Wezzie Mbendera, echoed Mwandira’s sentiments regarding meaningful participation, as young people are being given space for engagement. She noted that the council was recently involved in State of Nation Address engagements, dubbed SONA for the Youth.

“We should always utilise these spaces whenever they are provided. I want to thank the organisers of this meeting and the parliament for giving young people this opportunity. I urge you all to make the most of these opportunities,” she said.



Young people, Chairperson of parliamentarian committees and representatives of the MDAs captured after the meeting

Young people hold an engagement meeting with stakeholders in a bid to amplify advocacy on SRHR



Youth leaders and representatives of different stakeholders captured after the engagement

Young people representing various youth-led organisations and youth clubs recently held an engagement meeting with different stakeholders to review strategies and ways of amplifying advocacy on issues of Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) services and the inclusion of young people in policy processes.

The engagement was organised by the Youth Initiative for Community Development (YICOD) in collaboration with its partners, Phalombe Youth Arms Organisation (PYAO) and All for Youth, with support from the Commonwealth Foundation.

The meeting, held in Lilongwe, provided a platform for youth leaders to raise the various challenges they face during SRHR advocacy and to discuss strategies that could be adopted to ensure that the advocacy yields positive results.

Maximum Inclusion for Disability Affairs team leader Misheck Mithi said the engagement was important, stating it gave youth leaders the opportunity to review the efforts made so far in advocacy and that he believes change will be achieved.

“Most times advocacy takes time to yield results, but we can see progress made so far. Young people are now beginning to be recognised and are given forums to voice their concerns; that’s a big step as we strive to see SRHR services fully available and accessible to everyone,” he said.

On her part, Tinali Magombo from the Ministry of Youth urged the young people to never give up, emphasising that the ministry is also doing its part to ensure that young people’s concerns are heard at all levels.

Program Lead for All for Youth, Chimwemwe Chathyoka, stated that the engagement was fruitful, as youth continue to fight for SRH rights and services, ensuring their voices are heard and they are involved in policy processes at all levels, from communities to the national stage.



Chathyoka explaining a point during the engagement meeting held in Lilongwe



Commonwealth
Foundation

Supported by the Commonwealth Foundation