



# YICOD

## Newsletter

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Our line is available from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday. We accept calls and SMS only.



## A WORD FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**G**reetings! Welcome to this edition of our newsletter! Team YICOD would like to thank our partners for their continued support, which is instrumental in program implementation and our growth. Our commitment to improving livelihoods of our rights holders remains steadfast.

YICOD was honoured to host IM Swedish Development Partner Secretary General, Gabriella Fredriksson, and her team who visited our office before interacting with the rightsholders in their respective communities. They also appreciated the positive impact made so far through the core funding support to YICOD.

In this newsletter, you will witness significant progress among rights holders from Group Village Heads of Fosa, Kachere, and Mkhoma Wanthu in Dedza District. They have received various forms of support, including capacity and resources aimed at improving their livelihoods amid changing climate conditions. The mini drip irrigation kits are intended to ease the labour involved in irrigating their vegetable gardens.

Together with our partners, we have been actively facilitating engagement platforms with duty bearers, including Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), as well as various Chairpersons of Parliamentary Committees on issues affecting the well-being of young people, particularly regarding access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) services and participation in budget and policy processes.

As a member of the GNB Malawi chapter which is a national partnership aimed at ending child marriage, YICOD was also privileged to host Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) and its partners, African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP), CAMFED, and Firelight, to understand ending child marriage initiatives in the district.

YICOD has also been awarded a grant from the Civil-Society Strengthening Fund (CSSF) under the Shifting the Power Programme in Malawi, which is implemented by Tilitonse Foundation in partnership with Comic Relief and UK Aid. The support will enhance YICOD's ability to deliver on its strategic mission and achieve organizational sustainability.

I would also like to urge authorities and all Malawians to take mental health seriously, which is often a neglected area that is significantly affecting young people in various communities.

Lastly, as we approach General Elections on 16th September, 2025, it is crucial for political parties to provide a conducive environment for young people, women and persons with disabilities to actively participate in political leadership. We must however, remain vigilant against the misuse of young people as tools for violence. It is everyone's responsibility to foster a culture of peace and constructive dialogue as Malawi navigates this critical electoral period. Enjoy reading!

Andrew Bwanali





## IM Secretary General visits YICOD, empowers Dedza women and youth to assert their rights



*Gabiella speaking to the rights-holders*

During her visit, Fredriksson, accompanied by her team, also visited vegetable gardens cultivated by rights holders using mini-drip irrigation systems. This equipment is easy to use, requires less labour, and is not time-consuming, allowing individuals to engage in other activities while the vegetables are being irrigated.

Additionally, they appreciated a field where young people have planted orange-fleshed sweet potato vines for multiplication.

Fredriksson also encouraged the young people and women to make use of

**IM** Swedish Development Partner Secretary General, Gabiella Fredriksson, has advised women and young people from the traditional authority of Kachere in the Dedza district to always stand up for their rights, with a plea for them to work hard in initiatives that improve their livelihoods.

Fredriksson made this plea during her visit to Group Village Kachere, which is one of the three Group Village Heads where the Youth Initiative for Community Development (YICOD) is implementing interventions aimed at promoting resilience, enhancing nutrition, and economically empowering rights holders through core support from IM Swedish Development Partner.

In her remarks, the Secretary General emphasized the importance of knowing and defending one's rights, stating that rights are at the core of everything people do.

"You should always know your human rights and be able to stand up for them. Rights are fundamental to everything," she said.

interventions that YICOD is implementing in the area to improve their livelihoods.

"Let's work hard on initiatives that aim to uplift our livelihood as we build resilience toward climate change.



*IM Swedish team interacting with Maonde Youth Club in their vegetable garden which they are using mini-drip irrigation*

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### From the previous page

IM would like to see the change and is pleased with what you are currently doing,” she said.

Later, the Secretary General and her team visited Tikondane Savings and Loans Group to understand how they conduct their business meetings, including their processes for handling and storing cash, documenting savings and loans, and maintaining records.

One of the women, Florence Kamtambe, who belongs to the Khumbo Lathu Women’s Care Group, stated that they plan to purchase more mini-drip irrigation kits once the vegetables mature, so they can harvest and sell the surplus.

“These mini-drip irrigation kits have reduced the labor we used when we relied on watering cans. Our plan as a group, which has 30 members, is to buy more kits from the sales we will make after selling the vegetables we are growing here,” she said.

Before interacting with the rights holders, the IM Swedish Development Partner team engaged with YICOD staff to share knowledge and best practices in programming to improve the livelihoods of rights holders.



**IM Swedish team interacting with Maonde Youth Club in their Orange Fleshed Sweet Potatoes multiplication field**



In his remarks, YICOD Executive Director, Andrew Bwanali thanked the IM team for the support, stating that it is crucial for the organisation’s capacity building and the improvement of the livelihoods of rights holders.

“I would like to thank IM Swedish Development Partner for providing core support funding, which has already started bearing fruits for YICOD and the rights holders.” he said.

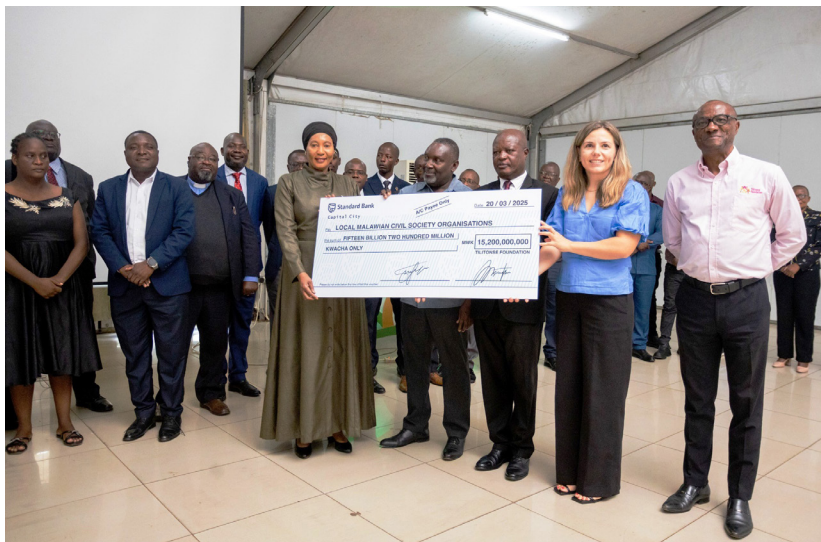
Stelia Konyani, chairperson of the Tikondane Women’s Savings and Loans Group, explained the numerous benefits members receive from the group, including the ability to support their families.

“Through these savings and loans groups, we can obtain loans and start small-scale businesses that help to support our families ensuring we can afford to consume foods from all six food groups,” she said.

Through this core support funding, YICOD is implementing various interventions in the three Group Village Heads under the traditional authority of Kachere: Mkhoma Wanthu, Fosa, and Kachere.



# YICOD receives CSSF grant under the Shifting the Power programme in Malawi



*The Deputy Minister and other dignitaries showing off the dummy cheque*



*Hon Halima Daud speaking during grants award ceremony*

**Y**outh Initiative for Community Development (YICOD) is among civil society organisations in Malawi that were awarded grants from the Civil Society Strengthening Fund (CSSF) under the shifting the power programme in Malawi which is being implemented by Tilitonse Foundation in partnership with Comic Relief and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the UK government (UK Aid).

YICOD's Executive Director, Andrew Bwanali, expressed his gratitude after receiving the grant, stating that this support will enhance the organisation's programming and capacity in areas that were previously lacking.

"On behalf of YICOD, let me express my gratitude to Tilitonse Foundation and its partners, Comic Relief and UK Aid, for the grant that will help our organization grow. We are confident that after the five-year period of this grant, through 'Strengthen! Sustain! Succeed! Through Shifting Power,' YICOD will be transformed," said Bwanali.

The event, held at CrossRoads Hotels in Lilongwe, was graced by Halima Daud, MP, Deputy Minister of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare; Natalie Mitchell Bennett, Head of Politics and Governance at the British High Commission; and Desmond Kaunda, Chairperson of the Tilitonse Foundation Board.



*Some grant awardees celebrating*





## Rightsholders trained in managing savings and loans, group dynamics



*Rightsholders following proceedings of the training at Mtengo wolembera in GVH Mkhoma Wanthu 2*

Rightsholders from traditional authority Kachere have been trained on how to effectively manage their Savings and Loans Groups (SLGs), including group dynamics through core support from IM Swedish Development Partner.

These trained rightsholders come from three Group Village Heads (GVHs) of Fosa, Kachere, and Mkhoma Wanthu, where YICOD is implementing interventions aimed at enhancing nutrition, economically empowering rightsholders, and building their resilience against climate change.

Through these trainings, the rightsholders have learned how to lead their SLGs, resolve and manage conflicts within their groups, and record and maintain information to ensure the SLGs remain functional and beneficial for members' economic empowerment.

Leaders of the SLGs have also been equipped with leadership skills, including how to improve effective communication within their groups.

Tiliya Salatiyeri from Chingwalu Village in GVH Fosa expressed her satisfaction with the training, saying it will help them improve their operations and inspire others to join or form new groups.

"This training is very important as it has equipped us with new knowledge on how we can operate our SLGs effectively. You know, through these SLGs, we can save our income and borrow when needed for our households' livelihood. This will inspire others to join us or form new groups," she said

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One of the youth from GVH Kachere, Chikondi Mathews Banda, stated that with the skills and knowledge gained, they will change many aspects of their SLG within their Maonde Youth Club.

“We have been following procedures that were not relevant to managing SLGs; now we will sit down and strategise on how to manage our savings and loans better at our youth club,” said the 27-year-old.

During the training in GVH Mkhoma Wanthu, YICOD’s Project Officer, Sheripher Dassu, encouraged the rightsholders to regularly save their income, emphasizing its importance in building financial resilience and stability, which can also enable them to invest in businesses and their children’s education.

“Through these groups, we can gain control over our financial lives and make informed decisions about our money. Let’s be saving our money, which can enable us to invest in small businesses that will generate income, helping us in many ways, including supporting our children’s education,” she said.



**Rightsholders following proceedings of the training at Maonde Court in GVH Kachere**



Choose the right communication method and decide what you want to say ahead of the conversation.



Consider what you want to get from the conversation, and let them know what they can do to support you.



Don’t let a bad experience cause hesitation in reaching out again.

How to talk about **mental health** with your friends

Infographic provided by Bonsecours





## YICOD empowers farmers with smart agriculture skills and climate change solutions



*Rightsholders practising how to use the mini-drip irrigation kits*

**R**ightsholders from the three Group Village Heads (GVH) of Fosa, Kachere, and Mkhomawathu 2 in the area of Senior Chief Kachere, Dedza district, have been equipped with knowledge and skills in mini-drip irrigation, maintenance, and plot layout, all conducted in their respective communities.

The trainings were conducted through core support from IM Swedish Development Partner, aiming to ensure better nutrition and improve the livelihoods of the people while addressing climate change.

During the training at GVH Mkomawathu 2, Matilda Mtambo, the Chief Agriculture Officer for Dedza District Council, praised YICOD for its smart agricultural interventions, stating that these efforts are timely, especially as the country confronts the negative effects of climate change and strives for food security, given that many people depend on agriculture.

She noted that the area faces water scarcity, with no rivers and limited water points. In this context, she described mini-drip irrigation as a viable solution that uses less water while yielding significant results.

She emphasized that this system would allow households to save money that they would otherwise spend on purchasing vegetables and other agricultural products.

However, the Chief Agriculture Officer also advised the participants to consider commercializing their agricultural activities, so the income generated could support their livelihoods.

“We need to take agriculture to a commercial level. Let’s utilize the skills that YICOD has provided through this training. I am confident that we will be able to combat malnutrition by ensuring access to all six required food groups. Additionally, we can sell the surplus and enhance our livelihoods,” she said.

One of the rightsholders, Kezia Kavalo, from Kapitapita village, expressed her excitement about the knowledge gained, stating it has empowered women to be self-reliant.

“This will make farming very simple as it requires small efforts. As a woman, I am happy to learn about mini-drip irrigation. We are going to implement this in our area as, in return, we will be getting income from the sales of whatever we will be growing using this type of irrigation, which is also better for this area that does not have enough sources of water,” she said.



## YICOD attends Hlanganisa's annual partners convening



**Representatives of the partners brainstorming ideas during the group discussions**



**Partners following the proceedings of the convening**

Youth Initiative for Community Development (YICOD) attended the Hlanganisa Community Fund 2025 annual partners convening in South Africa convened by Hlanganisa Community Fund for Social and Gender justice.

The aim of the convening was for partners to share their experiences, learn from one another, and establish networks and partnerships to foster positive change in their respective communities.

YICOD's Executive Director, Andrew Bwanali, stated that the convening provided valuable knowledge on programming social issues that promote the rights of girls and women in the communities.

"We shared our organizations' experiences in efforts that aim to bring about positive changes for girls and women.

I am confident that through the lessons learned, we will be able to integrate all matters to ensure that we create a violence-free community for girls and women," he said.

During the event, partners witnessed the soft launch of The Collective Care Strategy (2025-2028), which reflects Hlanganisa's commitment to institutionalizing collective care and advancing social justice, including the Hlanganisa Community Impact Network.

With financial support from the Hlanganisa Community Fund, YICOD is implementing an 18-month project aimed at creating a safe and supportive environment for women and girls with disabilities to access essential services and skills needed for self-sufficiency and community integration.





## Youths, women trained in tree nurseries and woodlot management



**Rightsholders sowing tree seeds in tubes**

The impacts of cyclones and strong winds can be lessened if we plant more trees. As young people, we will ensure that we establish woodlots, as trees also provide us with economic benefits when we harvest and sell timber and firewood,” said the 32-year-old.

Another participant, Deliwe Jacob, a woman from Kufunda Village in GVH Kachere, described the training as an eye-opener, stating her plans to plant fruit trees that will enhance the nutrition of her family members once they begin producing fruit.

“The fruit trees we plant at home will help us consume the recommended six food groups, as you know fruits are so important in our diets. We want to thank YICOD for providing us with this training, as it has imparted significant knowledge,” she said.

Jacob’s sentiments were echoed by Enelesi Isaac, a woman and a champion for nutrition initiatives in GVH Mkomawathu 2, who stated that they will ensure they plant more trees in the area to restore the weather pattern so that rains can return to what they used to be when the area had abundant forests before they were depleted.

“We need to restore the forest reserves that we had here by planting more trees so that we can receive sufficient rains in a timely manner,” she said.



**Young people preparing the seeds before sowing them**

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Young people and women from the area of traditional authority Kachere in Dedza district have been trained in tree nursery and woodlot management with IM Swedish Development Partner.

The trained rights holders are from three respective Group Village Heads (GVH): Fosa, Kachere, and Mkomawathu 2. Each GVH has establish two tree nurseries, making a total of six nurseries that are expected to have over 12,000 trees of different species sown.

The training sessions were conducted in series, totalling three as per the number of GVHs.

Speaking during the training in GVH Fosa, one of the participants, Wiseman Kawiche from Sitenala Village, expressed that the training was highly educational. He emphasized the need for young people to plant more trees.

“The future belongs to us, the young people, hence the need to conserve the environment by planting more trees that will help build resilience to climate change impacts and mitigate them.





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In his remarks, Senior Chief Kachere urged the training participants not to keep the knowledge to themselves but to share it with others. He encouraged everyone to plant and grow trees, including fruit trees, to enhance the nutrition of the community and improve their economic livelihoods.

“Everyone here needs to plant trees at their homes, including various fruit trees, to boost nutrition and income. We want to make Dedza, especially this area, one of the regions that feed others with fruits. It is essential to take the skills and knowledge gained from this training seriously and to apply them. Let us also share this knowledge with others,” he said.

Assistant Forestry Officer for Dedza district, Cosmas Sesani, advised the participants to ensure that they plant trees that help restore soil fertility, such as *Faidherbia albida*, popularly known as Msangu in the local vernacular.

In his remarks, Land Resources Conservation Officer for the Dedza district council, Franklin Gomani, encouraged



**Senior Chief Kachere speaking with the rights holders**

participants to take the training seriously and ensure that each household plants at least two trees.

YICOD's Project Coordinator, Reonard Emiliyo, reminded the rights holders of the importance of the core support from IM Swedish Development Partner for their livelihoods and for future generations in Malawi, particularly in building resilience against climate change, economic empowerment, and nutrition.



**Stelia Konyani presenting to the house the findings of an assignment given to their group during the training**



**Assistant Forestry Officer for Dedza district, Cosmas Sesani, interacting with the rights holders**





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



*The meeting in progress at the Parliament building*

Young people drawn from various districts 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 and funding 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 (PYAO), 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 2025/2026, the health sector was 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 want to see an increase in the health budget so that as a country we can improve accessibility to SRHR services. There is also a need for Young people to participate in all the policy and budget processes so as to incorporate their ideas," he said.

Echoing Bwanali's sentiment, Vincent Thom, team leader for PYAO, said there is more that authorities should do to the health sector.

"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 all stakeholders to explore strategies and ways to finance the health sector for it to be efficient and effective," he said. **Continues on the next page**



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# Pictorial Focus



Youth leaders in a group photo with Chairpersons of Parliamentary Committees and MDAs after the engagement in the Parliament building



Gabriella and her team in a group photo with Tikondane Savings and Loans Group in GVH Kachere



Tilitonse Foundation and Nguzu Africa during their visit at YICOD Office in Dedza



A vegetable garden for Maonde Youth Club which they are using the mini-drip irrigation



Chief Agriculture Officer, Matilda Mtambo, interacting with rightsholders in GVH Mkoma Wanthu 2.



Rightsholders from GVH Fosa showing off their vegetable seeds which they received



Rightsholders being trained in good Agricultural practices



Principal Agricultural Extension Officer, Gilbert Malota, interacting with rightsholders



Rightsholders listening and watching attentively to Irrigation expert who was unpacking the mini-drip irrigation kit.



