



VoiceUp Newsletter

Your Health. Your Future

Issue 1

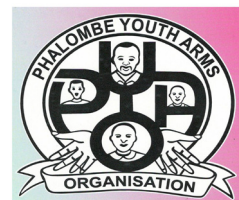


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Opening Statement



Mr. Andrew Bwanali

Executive Director - Youth Initiative for Community Development (YICOD)

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter, where we are excited to share updates on a transformative project implemented by Youth Initiative for Community Development (YICOD) in partnership with All for Youth and Phalombe Youth Arms Organisation (PYAO).

This project is dedicated to empowering young people in Malawi by strengthening their capacity to engage in budget monitoring and policy processes on sexual and reproductive health. Through empowering these young people, we aim to amplify their voices in order for them to play a crucial role in shaping the budget and policy processes that affect their health and well-being ultimately leading to better access to youth-friendly health services that address their specific health needs.

In this edition, you will find highlights from our recent activities, including coordination meeting, capacity-building sessions on meaningful youth participation, Local Government Act and Access to Information, as well as budget analysis and public expenditure tracking.

We believe that enhancing the capacities of young people to fully participate and engage in budget and policy process will ensure that their voices are heard including considering their input in decisions that affect their health and well-being.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement as we strive to empower the next generation. Together, we can make a difference. We are thankful to Commonwealth Foundation for the support and dedication to strengthening people's participation in all aspects of public dialogue, to act together and learn from each other to build democratic societies.

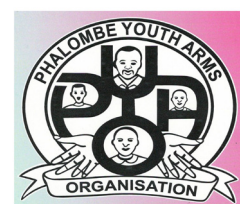


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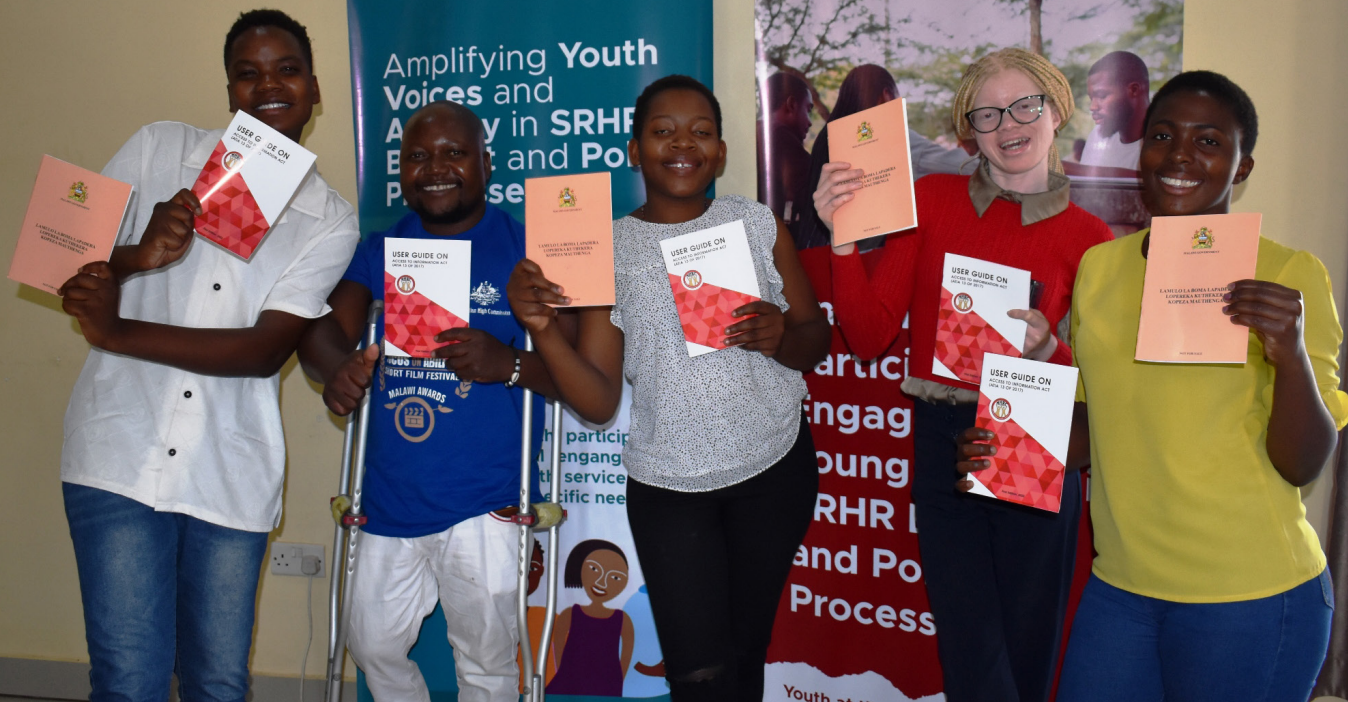
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Young people empowered



Young leaders pose for a photo with their copies of Access to Information Act and user guide of the Act

Young leaders from various parts of the country recently enhanced their skills in meaningful youth participation, the Local Government Act, and the Access to Information Act during a training held at Thope Lodge in Dowa district.

The training aimed to empower youth leaders to engage meaningfully, particularly concerning the Local Government Act and the Access to Information Act, thereby amplifying youth voices and their role in the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) budget and policy processes.

This initiative seeks to address the challenges faced by young people in Malawi.

Executive Director for YICOD, Andrew Bwanali, emphasized that the training is designed to enhance young people's capacity to participate in SRHR budget and policy processes, further amplifying their voices.

“We believe this training will enable young people to advocate for SRHR budgets and policies after seeking information from relevant authorities, as outlined in the laws,” he stated.

In her remarks, Desk Officer for Access to Information at the Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC), Chifundo Harawa, noted that the training aligns with the MHRC's objectives of promoting the right to access information.

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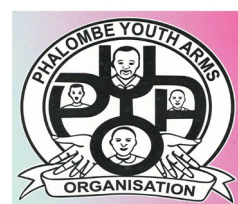


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“Access to information is crucial for youth development and empowerment, as it enables informed decisions about community programs,” Harawa explained the press.

One of the participants a young person with albinism, Merry Seunda, expressed that the training broadened her understanding of the laws regarding access to information and SRHR budgeting processes, which she intends to share with her peers.

“I’ve learned a lot; there is a need to raise awareness about the Access to Information Act so that young people know they can seek information on policies and budgets that affect them,” Seunda said.

The Commonwealth Foundation funds the project “Amplifying Youth Voices and Agency in SRHR Budget and Policy Processes” with a budget of £26,000.



Seunda (in the middle) having lighter moments with her colleagues

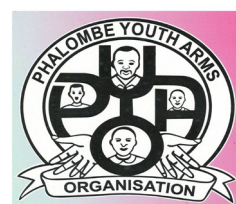


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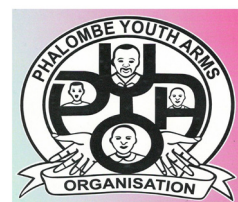


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Youth leaders trained in public expenditures tracking



SP trainers facilitator taking the participants through the PETS process

Fifteen youth leaders from various districts across the country have completed training on conducting public expenditure tracking surveys.

The goal of this training, held in Dowa district, is to enhance youth participation in budget and policy processes related to Sexual Reproductive Health Services and Rights (SRHR).

During an interview which followed an intensive two-day training session, team leader for YICOD, Andrew Bwanali, stated the critical need to empower

young people with both knowledge and practical skills.

He expressed that providing this empowerment is essential for ensuring transparency and accountability in the management of public funds designated for youth benefits.

“There is a need for young people to fully participate in various issues, such as health services, so they can address their needs. Hence, these young leaders are being given knowledge on how to

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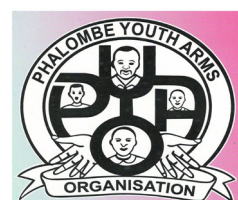


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to track public funds and voice how budgets for their respective councils can incorporate and promote SRHR issues,” said Bwanali.

One of the participants, Mervis Chekucheku from Tipewe Youth Club in Ntchisi district, shared her experience, saying she gained valuable knowledge on how to analyse the budget. This will enable her to scrutinize whether the priorities of young people are included.

“I will inform my peers in my youth network so that we can effectively track public funds and analyse the budget, advocating for the inclusion of young people’s

initiatives in our district of Ntchisi,” she stated.

The executive director of PYAO, Vincent Thom, encouraged youth leaders to be responsible citizens by holding authorities accountable for the proper use of resources. He emphasized that every resource allocated should serve its intended purpose.

“Malawi is ours, and our health is our future. Let’s ensure that every public fund meant for us is used appropriately to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery in the health sector, especially in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR),” he stated.



Participants in a group photo

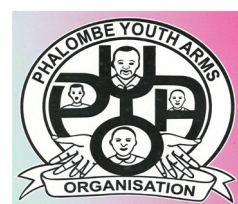


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Young people pledge to join hands in supporting SRHR budget and policy processes



Mumba in the front making his presentation in which he asked young people to be united

Young people in the country have pledged to join the forces in amplifying voices and advocacy in Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) budget and policy processes.

They pledged support at the recent coordination meeting aimed at fostering collaboration among the youths and the stakeholders.

Speaking during the meeting, one of the youth leaders, Austin Mumba, from Christian Youth Association of Malawi asked his fellows to make sure that they have

one voice to increase the benefits of SRHR to larger youth population.

“We need to be united and always speak with unified voices for the betterment of our health as young people in this country. We need to demand for more budgetary support on matters of SRHR,” he said.

YICOD team leader Andrew Bwanali emphasized that the meeting was very crucial as among others it highlighted the importance of youth engagement in shaping Malawi’s SRHR budget and policy ...

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“Participants shared insights on collaboration opportunities, emphasizing the diverse challenges and experiences faced by the youth. The meeting also discussed actionable steps for advocacy to effectively influence the SRHR budget and policy processes,” he said.

He added that the meeting concluded with an open feedback session, ensuring that youth leaders remain engaged and empowered during and after the project implementation period.

“We would like to see more impacts even that the project has phased out, we need to sustain these initiatives,” said Bwanali.

In her remarks, Yamikani Harrison from All for Youth emphasized the importance of inclusivity in Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services issues and encouraged young people to unite in this effort.

“Together, we can break down barriers and create a future where every young person in Malawi has access to quality SRHR services. I applaud the courage and resilience of youth leaders who are advocating for this critical cause. As we move forward, let’s prioritize inclusivity and innovation in our advocacy efforts. We must ensure that SRHR policies and budgets address the unique needs of young people, including adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) and young persons with disabilities,” she stated.



Following the coordination meeting, the participants gathered for a group photo

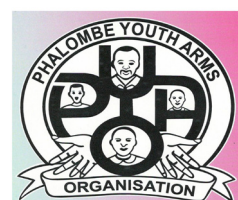


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