



VoiceUp Newsletter

Your Health. Your Future

ISSUE 2

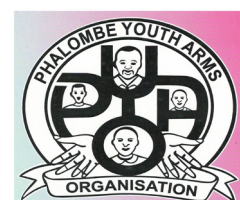


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Opening Statement



Mr. Andrew Bwanali

Executive Director –
Youth Initiative for Community Development (YICOD)

Welcome to our latest newsletter, where we highlight the empowering strides being made in advocating for sexual reproductive health rights (SRHR) among the youth in Malawi. Recently, renowned health rights activist George Jobe led a dynamic training session in Dowa District, equipping young people with crucial skills in health budget advocacy and policy communication. His colleague, Maziko Matemba, later motivated participants by outlining the dos and don'ts in health budget advocacy. Their passionate call to engage meaningfully with authorities resonates as an important step towards amplifying youth voices in the national discourse on health policies that affect them.

We have witnessed young people gathering for a ministerial budget consultation meeting with Malawi's Minister of Finance, Simplex Chithyola, to ensure that their insights and recommendations are integrated into the national budget, courtesy of National Youth Council of Malawi (NYCOM). The emphasis on increasing funding to NYCOM and other youth development initiatives illustrates the collective commitment to fostering a healthier future for young Malawians.

As we move forward, let us continue to champion the rights of all youth, ensuring that their voices are collectively heard and acted upon. Together, we can advocate for sustainable changes that will benefit future generations.

Thank you for your support and engagement in this essential mission.

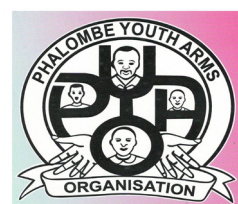


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“Take meaningful advocacy seriously” - Activists



Health Budget Advocacy and Policy communication training in progress

Health rights activists have advised young people in the country to always engage meaningfully with authorities as they amplify their voices on matters of policies and budgets concerning sexual reproductive health rights and services.

Two renowned health rights activists, Maziko Matemba and George Jobe, made the call in Mponela, Dowa District, during a day-long training meant to mentor and drill young people drawn from various districts across Malawi in health budget advocacy and policy communication.

In his remarks, Matemba advised young people to be vigilant and resilient in the field of advocacy as they push for a change regarding SRHR for their peers.

“I urge you all to have a passion for the welfare of your friends in terms of SRHR. I am confident that this advocacy for increased funding for health budgets that concern the youth will be successful, as have past advocacies. Let’s continue to fight unitedly for the health rights of people in the country,” he said.

On his part, Jobe, who guided the participants on how to conduct effective health budget advocacy, stated that the future of Malawi depends on the decisions made under the influence of young people who need to be well-informed about matters that affect them and propose solutions.

“The future of Malawi depends on meaningful engagement in addressing health issues pertinent to

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our generation of young people. It is important to continue advocating for Sexual Reproductive Health Rights and Services, as they are essential for the nation's future amidst a growing population," he said.

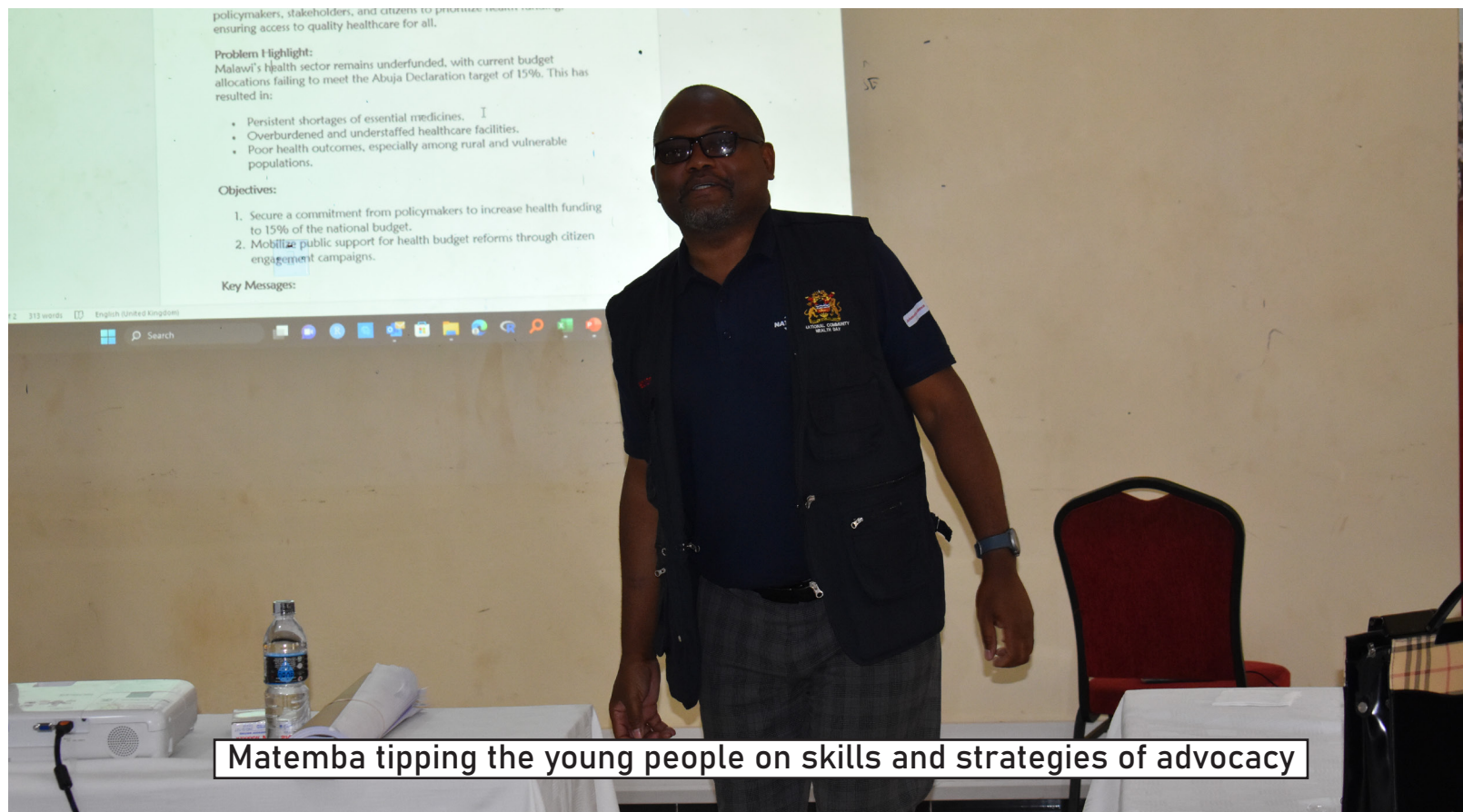
One of the participants, Mary Seunda, stated that she would use the skills obtained to amplify the voices of her fellow young persons with disabilities so that their concerns related to SRHR are heard and addressed by authorities.

"This training is an eye-opener, as it will help advocate for the accessibility of sexual reproductive health rights and services for all young people, including my fellow young persons with disabilities. We need to demand our rights and ensure we are always engaged in matters of policies that affect us," she said.

The Executive Director for Phalombe Youth Arms Organisation, Vincent Makuluni Thom, told the participants to always apply the skills and strategies that the renowned activists disclosed to them.

"You don't just wake up and start calling authorities to engage them on advocacy matters; there is a need to strategize using different approaches so that the advocacy bears fruit," said Thom.

The training was organized by the Youth Initiative for Community Development-Malawi in collaboration with the Phalombe Youth Arms Organisation (PYAO) and All for Youth, with support from the Commonwealth Foundation, aimed at amplifying youth voices and agency in SRHR budget and policy processes.

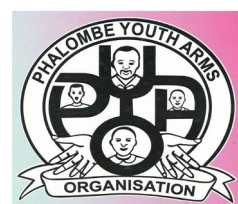


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“Let's Grow Together”

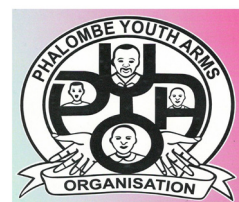


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Young people provide their input on the national budget



Part of the young people who attended the consultation meeting posing for a group photo with the Minister and other officials

Young people across Malawi attended a ministerial pre-budget consultation meeting in a bid to solicit their inputs and lobby for the inclusion of matters of youth interest.

The consultation was part of national youth conversations series, an initiative spearheaded by National Youth Council of Malawi (NYCOM).

Among the attendees were those trained by the Youth Initiative for Community Development in budget analysis and tracking, advocacy, and policy communication under the project amplifying youth voices and agency in SRHR budget and policy processes, funded by the Commonwealth Foundation.

The meeting was presided over by Malawi's Minister of Finance, Simplex Chithyola. One of the attendees, Jane Chaguda, said that as young people, they lobbied for an increase in funds allocated to the district-based youth offices and youth-friendly health services (YFHS) to enable good youth development and improved sexual reproductive health rights and services (SRHR) for young people.

“We lobbied with the government to consider allocating more funds to the youth department

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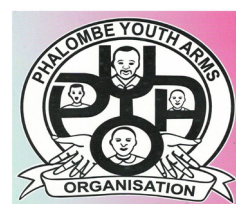


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and also YFHS corners so that youth offices can initiate initiatives that benefit young people and also increase the accessibility of SRHR,” said Chaguda.

She added that the young people asked the Minister of Finance to urge the executive and legislature to revise the constituency development fund policy in order to allow that at least 20 percent of the total money allocated per constituency should be channeled to youth-led initiatives.

“As young people, we also want to see an increase in the percentage of the CDF school bursary program so that more young people can benefit as they pursue their education in order to have literate and productive young people,” she said.

On his part, National Youth Council of Malawi (NYCOM) Chief Executive Officer Rex Chapota

commended the Ministry of Finance for involving young people in the formulation of the national budget, as the Malawi 2063 vision is more youth-centric and is supposed to be driven by young people.

“I would like to thank the Minister for involving young people; I know you are going to incorporate all the crucial matters that young people have raised,” he said.

In his remarks, Chithyola commended the input of the young people, saying that the Malawi government believes that young people are the architects of the country’s future.

“The President of the Republic of Malawi believes that young people are not just beneficiaries of development but architects of their future,” he said.



Minister of Finance speaking to the young people

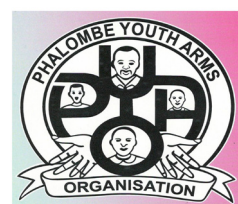


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Young people attend 25/26 Fiscal Year Budget presentation



Young people with NYCOM officers at the parliament building

With an aim to enhance youth participation in national development agenda, youth representatives in earlier in February attended the presentation of Malawi's 2025/2026 fiscal year national budget in the National Assembly in Malawi's capital, Lilongwe, courtesy of National Youth Council of Malawi (NYCOM).

Among other initiatives, the budget saw the establishment of a Youth Innovation Fund that aims to promote innovation and creativity, for which K2 billion has been allocated to recapitalize the Youth Innovation Fund.

The government has also increased the monthly stipend for the Graduate Internship Programme from K80,000.00 to K150,000.00. This move aims to provide greater support to young graduates, enabling them to gain valuable work experience and build professional networks.

There are also development projects that aim to promote youth gatherings and enhance access to SRHR services regarding youth development, such as the construction of the Mzuzu Youth Resource Centre and the Achinyamata Centre, just to mention a few.

Young advocates in Lilongwe engage with council officials on SRHR



The young people meeting the councils officials (Lungu in white golfshirt, standing from right)

Young people from various district councils recently met with their respective council officials to discuss a range of issues, including accessibility to Sexual Reproductive Health Rights and Services (SRHR).

Speaking after meeting with Lilongwe city council officials, Maximum Inclusion and Development for All (MIDA) Executive Director Misheck Mithi, who was among a group of young people from the city, said they met with the council after the young people noted challenges they faced regarding SRHR services.

“We have gaps as far as data is concerned; we don’t know why we do not have segregated data on matters of SRHR such as of young persons with disability accessing the services. We have also noted that there is no clear budget allocation for SRHR. It shouldn’t take young people to do the tracking to know how much has been allocated to such an initiative.

“There is also inadequate allocation of resources for SRHR by the council; there is a need for an increase in funds so that they are accessible to young people,” said Mithi.

On his part, the council’s Principal Economist and Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Vitumbiko Lungu, said the council has noted the young people’s concerns and will look into them.

“You have raised serious concerns which we have to address. On the issue of information management regarding segregated data, we are going to work on it and all other issues so that we improve service delivery,” he said.

The young people who engaged the council are among those who were trained in public expenditure tracking and analysis with support from the Commonwealth Foundation.



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