

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE WANT!

EMPOWERING VOICES, SHAPING FUTURES:
Insights from Malawi's Youth on What Matters Most!



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introduction

TIME IS NOW - Empowering Malawi's Young People, Unlocking the Potential of Our Youth Population

Malawi stands at a pivotal moment in its history. With a population of over 20 million, our nation is vibrant, dynamic, and brimming with youthful energy. Young people, constituting 51% of our population, are the driving force behind our collective aspirations for progress and development.

The Urgency of Addressing Youth Needs

80% of Malawi's population is aged below 35 years, reflecting our youthful demographic. These young individuals have dreams, hopes, and ambitions. Yet, their needs remain under-recognised and under-served. As decision makers, you have a responsibility to listen, understand, and act on their behalf.

A Global Movement for Change

Recognising the urgency of adolescent well-being, the Global Partnership on Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health (PMNCH) spearheaded the 1.8 Billion Young People for Change Campaign. Collaborating with organisations worldwide, this campaign aims to ignite momentum for new policies, increased funding, and enhanced services that directly impact the well-being of adolescents.

Malawi's Role: "What Young People Want"

In Malawi, PMNCH joined forces with Plan International and HeR Liberty to launch a powerful initiative: "What Young People Want" campaign. This endeavour sought to amplify the voices of our youth, gathering their perspectives, opinions, and aspirations. Through extensive consultations across our nation, we engaged with over 50 000 young Malawians to understand their unique challenges and aspirations. This booklet will share their voices and insights.

Commitments from Our National Government

The campaign achieved a significant milestone: securing commitments from our national government. These commitments are aimed at improving health and overall well-being for young people. By listening to the voices of young people, decision makers gain valuable insights into their needs and priorities to inform policies, national development plans and budget allocation.

Informing Policies and Decision-Making

The information gleaned from this initiative serves as a compass for our decision makers. As decision makers, you must ensure that the needs of our youth are prioritised within our national development plans. This booklet, which you now hold, provides a comprehensive overview of what young people want. The time is NOW to ensure that every young person's voice is heard, and their well-being is at the forefront of our national agenda.

Together, let us empower Malawi's youth, for they are not just our future they are our present, our hope, and our promise.

PERSPECTIVES FROM YOUNG PEOPLE: VOICES AND SOLUTIONS

1 Learning, competence, education, skills, and employability

Challenges:

- Low quality of education in government and public primary and secondary schools, coupled with inadequate facilities and a lack of reading materials.
- Limited practical training opportunities and mentorship programs to enhance competencies.

Solutions:

- Invest in providing quality education in government and public primary and secondary schools that equip young people with relevant skills such as Information and communication technologies and knowledge for the job market.
- Invest in skill development, entrepreneurship initiatives, and job creation programs at community level.
- Invest in District Youth Service centres to support career guidance, job recruitment and business development support.



2 Safety and a supportive environment

Challenges:

- Concerns about personal safety, particularly in urban areas, due to crime, violence, and substance abuse.
- Lack of access to safe spaces for socialising, recreation, and community engagement.
- Limited availability of mental health services, counselling support, and peer-to-peer mentoring.

Solutions:

- Implementation of measures to address crime, violence, and substance abuse to ensure the safety and well-being of young people.
- Creation of safe spaces for social interaction, recreational activities, and community engagement.
- Provision of mental health services, counselling support, and opportunities for peer-to-peer mentoring.

3 Good health and optimum nutrition

Challenges:

- Distance to healthcare facilities serves as a barrier to accessing essential services.
- Limited access to comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) information and services due to issues related to consent and age.
- Unfriendly healthcare centers and medical practitioners deterring young people from seeking healthcare services.

Solutions:

- Improving accessibility to healthcare facilities through infrastructure development and community outreach programs.
- Strengthening SRHR education and services to ensure young people have access to accurate information and support.
- Enhancing the quality of healthcare services among medical practitioners.
- Investing in existing peer- peer models that promote youth-friendly health service.



4 Connectedness, positive values, and contributions to society

Challenges:

- Gender inequalities, cultural norms, poverty, and food insecurity restricting engagement in community initiatives.
- Lack of access to technology and information exacerbating social marginalisation.

Solutions:

- Addressing gender inequalities and cultural norms through awareness campaigns that promote intergenerational co-development models.
- Enhancing access to technology and information to facilitate social connectivity and empowerment.
- Develop social participant and inclusion guidelines in decision making committees to ensure participation of young people.

6 Agency and resilience

Challenges:

- Disruption of education and daily lives due to natural disasters such as tropical cyclones and the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Limited resources and support systems to cope with the impact of natural disasters on education and livelihoods.

Solutions:

- Building resilience through disaster preparedness and response initiatives, including contingency plans for education continuity during emergencies.
- Strengthen and sustain community support systems during and after natural disasters.
- Invest in mitigating the impact of climate change and enhance disaster resilience among youth.



COMMITMENTS MADE BY THE MALAWI GOVERNMENT

Here are the commitments made by the Malawi Government, aligned with the youth-centric Vision 2063 agenda, which serves as the blueprint for Malawi's development:



1. FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS

Malawi has pledged to allocate increased budgets for the following critical areas:

1. **Family Planning:** Increase the Family Planning 2030 (FP2030) budget to MK 1 Billion from MK570 million.
2. **Gender Equality:** Increase the Gender Budget from 0.4 to 1% of the total budget.
3. **Nutrition:** Increase the Nutrition budget from 0.5% to not less than 1% of the total budget.
4. **Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) Services:** Increase the Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Services (SRHRS) budget of the Ministry total budget from 9.5% to 15%.
5. **Climate Change Initiatives:** Lobby for climate change approved 70% resources to be converted into grants to benefit at least 40% of adolescents affected by disasters.
6. **Social Cash Transfer Programs:** Increase the government's financial contribution to Social Cash Transfer Programme from 20.5% to 50% by 2030.
7. **Tax-Free Menstrual Pads:** Removing taxes on menstrual hygiene products.



2. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

To enhance health and well-being, Malawi commits to the following initiatives:

1. **Logistical Management of Family Planning Commodities:** Strengthen logistical management of family planning commodities to prevent stock outs from the current 60% to 80%.
2. **Community-Based SRHR Services:** Fast-track the provision of community-based SRHRS for adolescents from 30% to 50% using Youth Community Based Distribution Agents (YCBDAs).
3. **Age of Consent for SRHR:** Reducing the age of consent for SRHR services from 15 to 10 years.
4. **Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE):** Improve coordination on Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)- Life skills programming and harmonise training materials.
5. **Research on Drug Abuse:** Investigating drug and substance abuse issues.
6. **Data Collection:** Improving data collection on Mental Health and Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) for informed decision-making .
7. **Data management:** Improve disaggregation of data on HIV/AIDS, NCDs, Malaria, TB and COVID-19 for adolescents by age, sex, disability, and marital status.



3. OPTIMUM NUTRITION

To ensure young people's nutritional needs are met, Malawi commits to the following:

1. **Reduce anaemia:** Provide iron, folate and nutrition support to 50% of adolescents to prevent nutritional deficiencies and reduce anaemia from 35% to 10%.
2. **Stunted growth:** Intensify the reduction of stunting from 33% to 10% as the predisposing factor for NCDs.
3. **Balanced diet:** Intensify the prevention of NCDs by promoting the consumption of a diversified diet from the six food groups of Malawi.
4. **Reduce obesity:** Reduce obesity in adolescents from the current 10% to 5% and prevent heart disease by 5%.
5. **Food technology:** Provide agriculture technology to 30% of adolescents to make farming adolescent – friendly and promote value addition.



4. SAFETY AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Malawi is committed to creating a safe and supportive environment for its youth:

1. **Reusable Sanitary Pads:** Promoting sustainable menstrual hygiene solutions.
2. **Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH) Education:** Educating young people about menstrual health.
3. **Reducing School Dropout Rates:** Reduce the 65% primary, 77% lower secondary and 85% higher secondary dropout rate by 30% and improve the completion rate by 30% from the current levels across the board.
4. **Adult literacy:** Strengthen the linkage of adult literacy to the formal education system as a conduit to decent work to accommodate the 40% of adolescents not in the formal education system.
5. **Children's and Youth Parliaments:** Institutionalize children's and youth parliaments in all the districts as a mentorship program for their leadership in politics.
6. **Gender Equality Policies:** Enforcing policies that promote gender equality and adolescent empowerment.
7. **Inclusion:** Review the targeting criteria for social protection programs to ensure that the most vulnerable groups are not left behind.



5. LEARNING, COMPETENCE, EDUCATION, SKILLS, AND EMPLOYABILITY

Malawi recognises the importance of education and skills development:

1. **Internet Access:** Increase access to Internet services for adolescents from 7.3% to 60% by 2030.
2. **Promoting Self-Employment:** Promote a self-employment spirit from 22% to 50% coupled with training and skills transfer in entrepreneurship.
3. **Parent Education Programs:** Revamping programs to empower parents.
4. **ICT Training for Women and Girls:** Bridging the digital divide.
5. **Functional Literacy Programs:** Strengthening literacy skills.
6. **Employment for Youth:** Increase the proportion of employable adolescents from 30% to 50% in employment by 2030.
7. **Child labour:** Reduce child labour from 26% to 10% by 2030.



6. AGENCY AND RESILIENCE

Efforts to build agency and resilience include:

1. **Disaster Preparedness:** Promote and disseminate early warning systems to enhance community preparedness and response during disasters.
2. **Access to Justice for Gender Based Violence Survivors:** Ensure that survivors have access to legal support, counselling, and a fair judicial process.
3. **Strengthening Community Victim Support Units:** Ensure safe spaces where survivors can seek help, find solace, and receive the support they need.



Meet the Youth Mobilisers



ERICK KALUDZU
Vision Fund Malawi - Loan
Officer



DOREEN BANDA
FOCO-YOPE Peer
Ambassador



MWAYI MTHINI
Malembo CBO Peer
Ambassador



LINDA MALILI
Secretary- Malingunde
Transformation Youth Club



MEMORY MKAKA
Umodzi Youth Club - Chair



JULIA KAMANGA
Area 25 Malembo CBO
member



WALLEN BANDA
HeR Liberty Mobilization
Volunteer



YAMIKANI HARRISON
Administrative Assistant - YOFONAT



LISSAH MCHIMA
Area 24 Chilungamo Hilltop
Based Organisation



CHIFUNDO ROBERT
Executive Director - YOFONAT



MOREEN BENGO
Plan International Peer
Ambassador



GEORGE CHIKAPA
Executive Director - Unity
Youth for Development



DINAH SALUNDA
Student-DMI-St John the
Baptist University



Meet Kimmy Mwandira

Our Youth Champion for the 1point8

Kimmy, aged 20, has been at the forefront of advocating for the 1.8 billion young people for change campaign. As an adolescent herself, she presented the challenges and needs of Malawian adolescents during the Global Forum for Adolescents, the world largest gathering for adolescent well-being that took place on the 11-12 October 2022 and brought together a global community of adolescents, advocates, and leaders for debates, dialogue, and action. Additionally, Kimmy had an online meeting with Honorable Andrew Mitchell, the United Kingdom Minister for Development and Africa, to request additional support for initiatives aimed at benefiting adolescents.

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