

National Youth Policy Review: Malawi



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ABSTRACT

In the past decade, Malawi has made significant progress in developing national policies, laws, and strategies of relevance to the youth. The country adopted its first National Youth Policy in 1996, ratified the various international instruments and worked with local and international organizations to develop and implement programs that seek to improve the lives of young people. However, despite these commitments, many young people in Malawi face significant challenges and exceptionally poor outcomes - particularly in the areas of education, health, employment, and participation. The youth still have the highest rate of HIV prevalence in the country compared to children and adults, highest rates of unemployment, and youth participation in governance is yet to be realized, due to political, social, and economic obstacles. In all these areas, and more, young women and the youth leaving with disabilities consistently experience worse outcomes and face multiple barriers that restrict their full participation in the country's development. The review, therefore, assesses this gap between aspirational policy frameworks and the realities experienced by young people in Malawi.

With support of the Republic of Korea National Youth Policy Institute's Global Youth Initiative, the author sought to investigate the extent to which public policies that affect youth, reflect their aspirations, ambitions, and realities. The review also aims to identify potential opportunities to improve outcomes for youth in Malawi.

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The review was based on desk research and primary and secondary data which included Malawi youth background documentation and empirical research was used. Key data, reports and policy documents were gathered and analyzed to establish baseline data and identify areas for investigation.

Key Findings

In examining the situation of young people, the review highlights how youthful the Republic of Malawi is. It reports that 50% of Malawi's population is between the ages of 10 - 35 and these are considered the youth as defined in the 2013 Malawi National Youth Policy. Within this context, the extent to which the country's developmental growth is dependent on securing positive outcomes for its youth is of significance. However, despite having good policies and strategies the situation of the youth is not improving as per the targets set in various youth interventions across the country.

The main findings of the review are presented in the situation of young people and overview of existing youth policies chapters. On health, HIV/AIDS and maternal mortality remain the two major causes of death among the youth and access to sexual reproductive health remains unsatisfactory. Alcohol and drug abuse are one of the major causes of mental health among the young people. Additionally, the presence of drugs in the country has led to some young people especially young women indulging themselves in illegal behavior such as drug trafficking which has seen several of them being detained in the country, as well as in foreign lands.

The education sector faces high dropout rates in all educational levels and poor quality of education has affected the acquisition of basic skills in young people. Education attainment in Malawi, is mostly dependent on the socio-economic and environmental background of young people, as well as individual interest in education.

Youth unemployment rate is estimated at 15.2% and young women face the highest probability of being unemployed due to mostly inequality of opportunities. Among the youth in formal and informal employment sectors in the country, a large proportion is engaged in low quality employment resulting in being underpaid. Furthermore, in the labour market, many youths face job mismatching which has lowered their job satisfaction levels resulting in low productivity which is affecting the country's economy.

Youth civic and political engagement has reached relatively high levels, but trust in institutions remains limited. Gender Based Violence has largely affected the female sex as a large proportion of young women between the ages of 15-35 have been bitten, sexually and verbally harassed at a certain point in their lives. While others have taken an initiative to talk to someone and report what they are facing, others have normalized violence and learnt to live with it. Furthermore, young people living with disabilities are facing numerous forms of discrimination and violence which is affecting their full integration in the society and the country at large.

Climate change and the environment is another issue of concern for the youth in Malawi. As an Agri-based country which relies on the environment for its economic growth, some of the young people realize the need to conserve the environment and be able to adapt to climate change. As a result, youth led organizations have put it in their hands to lead this fight of conserving the environment.

The review acknowledges the good policies and strategies the Republic of Malawi has developed and adopted over

the years; however, implementation of these interventions still affects the development of young people in the country. To address the challenges faced by the youth, the review then suggests the following recommendations; improve coordination arrangements, build alliances for lobbying and advocacy, increase government financing of youth initiatives in the national budget, ensure the relevance and accessibility of youth services, advocate for the alignment of non-governmental organization programs to National Youth Policy, consider the nature of diversity of youth challenges and opportunities in formulating instruments, and call for legal interpretation to avoid inconsistencies between the constitution and other legal documents below the constitution such as acts and bills.

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I . Geography And Demographic Composition

The Republic of Malawi is a landlocked country about 900 km long and 80-161 km wide, with a total area of 118,484 square-kilometer (sq. km) located in the southern part of Africa¹⁾. 80% of the total area, which is 94,080 sq. km, is land while the remaining 20%, 24,404 sq. km is covered by water. Malawi shares its borders with the Republic of Zambia, the Republic of Mozambique and the United Republic of Tanzania.

Malawi has an estimated population of 20,308,502, with the following ethnic composition: Chewa 34.3%, Lomwe 18.9%, Yao 13.2%, Ngoni 10.4%, Tumbuka 9.2%, Sena 3.8%, Mang'anja 3.2%, Tonga 1.8%, Nyanja 1.8%, Nkhonde 1%, other 2.2%, foreign 0.3%²⁾. Malawi has two official languages, English and Chichewa which is the popular local language. Other local languages include Lambya, Lomwe, Ngoni, Nkhonde, Nyakyusa, Nyanja, Sena, Tonga, Tumbuka, and Yao.

Religion has played a significant role in the development of societies worldwide. Malawi considers itself as a religious nation with 17.2% Roman Catholics, 14.2% Central African Presbyterian (CCAP), 13.8% Muslims, 9.4% Seventh Day Adventist/Baptist/Apostolic, 26.6% other Christian denominations, 5.6% non-Christian denominations, and 2.1% are not affiliated to any religion³⁾.

The average household size in Malawi is 4.5 members and, 3 out of the 10 households are headed by women⁴⁾. 84.4% of the population reside in the rural area and the remaining 15.6% in the urban area. Nearly 14 percent of the population are aged 0-4, 15.5 percent and 15.1 percent are in the age groups of 5-9 and 10-14 respectively. The population aged 15-64 constitutes 51 percent of the population and those aged 65 and over constitute 4.2 percent of the population⁵⁾. This age distribution has had a significant impact on the nations key political, social, and economic issues.

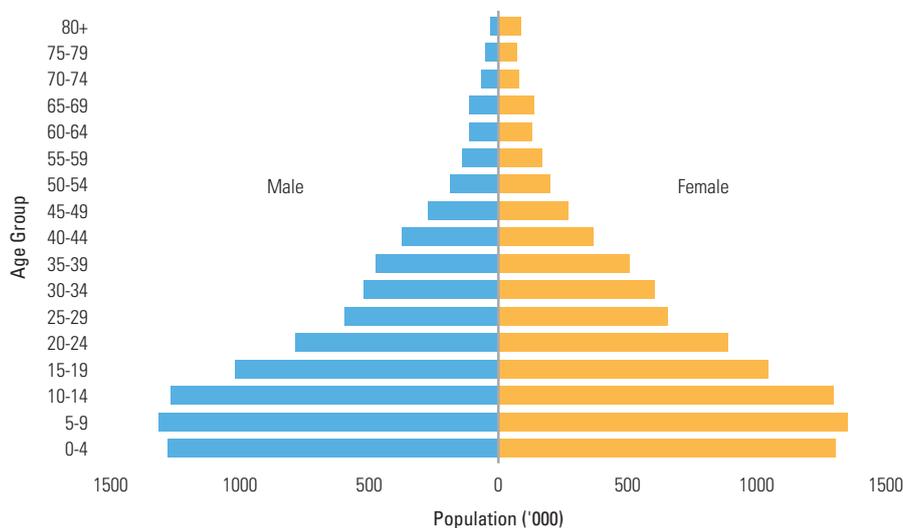


Figure 1 Population Pyramid for Malawi, IHS5 2019-2020

1) Government of Republic of Malawi: Ministry of Lands, Housing and Surveys. (2002). *Malawi National Land policy*.

2) Central Intelligence Agency. (2021). Malawi. *The World Factbook 2021*. Washington D.C.

3) Government of Republic of Malawi: National Statistical Office. (2019). *2018 Malawi Population and Housing Census report*. Zomba: Malawi.

4) Government of Republic Malawi: National Statistical Office. (2017). *Malawi 2015-16 Demographic and Health Survey Key Findings*. Zomba: Malawi.

5) Government of Republic of Malawi: National Statistical Office. (2020). *The fifth integrated household survey (IHS5) 2020 report*. Zomba: Malawi.

The dependency ratio in Malawi is at 1.2 meaning that there are 0.2 more economically inactive persons for every economically active person with a 1.3 projection in the rural areas and 0.9 in urban areas⁶⁾. Across regions, the ratio was higher in Southern region (1.3) as compared to Central region and Northern region (1.1)⁷⁾. The literacy rate for the population aged 5 years and above is 65.4 percent with a proportion of 68.5 percent of males to 62.6 percent of females respectively, being literate⁸⁾.

II . Situation Of Young People

Just like other countries, the youth in Malawi constitute the large part of the population. The youth are a significant social entity in the development of a country; however, the lack of youth inclusion in decision making both at international, national, regional and community level has left the youth in Malawi suffering multiple deprivations due to interconnectedness of obstacles⁹⁾.

1. Key definition of youth across policy domains

Globally, the definition of the youth has depended on the interpretation of the lives of young people and construction through the global practices that interact with various local practices¹⁰⁾. In Malawi, youth is defined as all persons from age 10 to 35 years regardless of their sex, race, education, culture, religion, economic, marital and physical status¹¹⁾. Malawi definition of the youth stems from firstly, The United Nations definition of the youth as persons between 15 and 24 years of age and adolescents as persons between 10 to 19 years¹²⁾. Secondly, the African Youth charter that defines youth as persons between 15 and 35 years of age¹³⁾. Youth is also understood as a definitive social entity that has its own specific problems, concerns, needs, and aspirations¹⁴⁾.

2. Demography and Priority areas of the Youth

The youth in Malawi constitutes about 50% of the whole population with 50.3% females and 49.7% males¹⁵⁾. In terms of marital status, majority of the youth between the ages of 30-35 were married, while those between 12-14 years had never married, totaling to a 41.7% youth married between 12 to 35 years¹⁶⁾. The divorces rate is high between the ages 30-35.

6) Ibid.

7) Ibid.

8) Ibid.

9) Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Centre. (2018). *Youth Well-being Policy Review of Malawi*. EU-OECD Youth Inclusion Project, Paris.

10) Komwa, S., S. (2019). *The Relevance and Adequacy of Youth Development as Part of the National Development Agenda: Reflection of Malawi*. International Development, Community and Environment (IDCE). 230. https://commons.clarku.edu/idce_masters_papers/230

11) Government of Republic of Malawi: Ministry of Youth and Sports. (2013). *National Youth Policy*.

12) United Nations (2013). Definition of Youth. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). <http://undesadspd.org/Youth.aspx>

13) African Union Commission. (2006). *African Youth Charter*.

14) Ibid.

15) Ibid.

16) Ibid.

Malawi has a child dependency ratio of 0.84, meaning that, a total of 84 are dependent on every 100 people in the working age group¹⁷⁾. Furthermore, in Malawi 50 out of 10,000 children between the ages of 10 to 17 years are heads of households with a ratio of 63:36 females and males respectively, per 10,000 children¹⁸⁾.

2.1. Youth and Health

The overall health situation of youth in the country has improved substantially in recent years. However, HIV/AIDS and maternal mortality remains the two major causes of death among the youth, and access to Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) remains insufficient¹⁹⁾. The decrease in HIV/AIDS prevalence, among young women, has led to a decline in youth mortality rate, from 471 deaths per 100 000 young people in 2005 to 295 in 2015²⁰⁾. This is lower than the Sub-Saharan African average of 354 but still very high compared to the global average of 149. The reduction was highest among young women aged 20-29. Between 2005 and 2015, the number of deaths related to HIV/AIDS fell threefold (from 307 to 92) for young women and twofold (from 139 to 73) for young men²¹⁾.

A good proportion of the youth in Malawi indulge in early sexual intercourse, and at this stage majority do not have any knowledge on SRH, and this has contributed to the increase in health risks and early pregnancies leading to high fertility and mortality rates. According to the 2018 census, by the age of 20, 85% of women and 66% of men had had sexual intercourse out of which 37% of females between the ages of 15-19 and 62% aged 25-29 used a contraceptive method. In 2015, adolescent birth rates reached 136 births per 1 000 women aged 15-19. Furthermore, despite efforts to improve provision of Youth Friendly Health Services (YFHS) and SRH services, sexual reproductive health behaviors vary significantly by social background, with young women from less educated and poorer backgrounds much more likely to experience early sexual intercourse and HIV/AIDS infection²²⁾.

In terms of alcohol and drug use, though the rate in Malawi is not particularly high, if left unchecked this will affect socio-economic development in the long term²³⁾. A good number of youths attaining secondary and tertiary education in recent years have been reported to suffer from mental health caused by the use of cough syrup which contains codeine for pleasure, as well as, other cheap drugs and alcohol which are on the open market and easy to access²⁴⁾. Malawi already has a deficiency when it comes to mental health services providers. In terms of mental health infrastructure, Malawi has a 0.3% of the total infrastructure percentage²⁵⁾. Furthermore, Malawi has been reported as a safe gateway for drug smugglers who have recruited the youth, especially young women some of whom have been detained in countries such as Ethiopia, India and Hong Kong, China²⁶⁾.

17) Ibid.

18) Ibid.

19) Ibid.

20) Government of Malawi: Ministry of Health (2016) *Malawi population-based HIV impact assessment MPHIA 2015–2016*. https://phia.icap.columbia.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/MALAWI-Factsheet.FIN_.pdf

21) Ibid.

22) Youth Decide. (2019). Malawi National Youth Manifesto 2019-2024. <https://thinkproject4.com/projects/malawi-youth-manifesto/>

23) Ibid.

24) Ibid.

25) Ibid.

26) Embassy of the Republic of Malawi in the United States. (2018). *Increase in incidents of arrests abroad of Malawian Nationals on drug trafficking offences*. <http://www.malawiembassy-dc.org/in-the-news/increase-in-incidents-of-arrests-abroad-of-malawian-nationals-on-drug-trafficking>

2.2. Youth and Education

There has also been an increase in school enrolment, however, dropout rate remains an issue to be addressed in the country, resulting in young people not acquiring basic skills. Access to primary education has steadily increased, with the net enrolment rate reaching 89% in 2013²⁷⁾. This consequently implies that around 10% of primary school aged children do not attend school at all. Malawi has a high dropout rate in primary school level with only 35% of the students in primary education completing the cycle, resulting in the decrease in enrolment in secondary education²⁸⁾. Similarly, enrolment in vocational and tertiary education remains extremely low, with not more than 2.2% and 1.0% of young people aged 15-29 graduating, respectively. In addition to the low educational attainment rate, young Malawians experience poor education quality, resulting in a large share of students without functional literacy and numeracy skills. The 2007 Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality achievement test revealed only 57.4% of grade 6 learners in Malawi had basic reading skills and only 41.1% had basic numeracy skills²⁹⁾.

There are large disparities in educational attainment across youth groups in Malawi. Socio-economic background is a strong driver of educational attainment among young people. In 2014, 49% of young people living in rural areas did not complete primary education compared to only 33% of urban youth. More than 80% of young people whose mothers had no education had either no or only primary education. By comparison, more than 80% of young people whose mothers had some tertiary education had either a vocational or tertiary degree. Youth raised in wealthier households were also more likely to complete higher education levels. Furthermore, financial constraints appear to be another important obstacle to education in Malawi. In the 2014 School-to-Work Transition Survey, 52% of young women and 66% of young men cited economic reasons for dropping out of school. The second most important constraint to educational attainment was lack of interest, which concerned around 15% of youth, while around 20% of young women stopped schooling because they were pregnant (12%) or wanted to get married (8%).

2.3. Youth and Employment

The transition from education to the labor market is a critical stage in young people's lives and can have long-lasting consequences to their wellbeing. Unemployment in Malawi is estimated at 9.3% however, for the youth the rate is much higher at about 15.2%³⁰⁾. 82% of the youth between 15-29 are neither employed nor are they actively seeking work and young women face a higher probability of unemployment³¹⁾. The share of young women neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET) declined from 25.5% in 2012 to 20.0% in 2014 but remained much above the 2014 7.0% NEET rate of young men. Most working youth are engaged in low-quality employment. 18% of the youth are self-employed and self-employment and unpaid family work are often associated with poor working conditions compared to wage employment, which generally provides higher job security, regular income and, more often, some entitlements to benefits³²⁾. Around 83.5% of young workers are engaged in an informal sector activity, and 9.5% are in informal employment³³⁾. Underemployment also affects employment quality. More than one-quarter of young workers underuse their skills. Last, the pervasive presence of skills mismatch reduces job quality and satisfaction. A large share of young workers has jobs that do not match their skills. While 30% of young

27) Ibid.

28) Ibid.

29) Ibid.

30) Ibid.

31) Ibid.

32) Ibid.

33) Ibid.

workers consider themselves underqualified and 18% overqualified, a normative measurement of skills mismatch revealed close to 82% of young workers were underqualified and only 1.6% overqualified in 2014³⁴.

2.4. Youth and Participation

Youth civic and political engagement has reached relatively high levels, but trust in institutions remains limited. According to the 2018 National Census, around 77% of young people reported having engaged in a civic action in the last month, up from 64% in 2011³⁵. Civic engagement is slightly higher among young men than women (81% vs. 73%) and substantially higher in urban areas than in rural (89% vs. 75%). Political participation is also quite high, with signals of the general interest in politics from 60% in 2011 to 72% in 2015, and the decreased share who never discuss politics, from 35% to 24%³⁶. Despite this, distrust in political institutions has massively increased. This is evident with the youth being in the forefront of protest against political institutions and personnel. While trust in the military is relatively high compared to other sub-Saharan Africa countries, the share of youth who trust the judiciary system decreased to 55% in 2015³⁷. In 2019, general elections, an estimate of 54% of the youth registered to vote³⁸. Remarkably, only slightly more than one third of young Malawians trust the honesty of elections, despite the high interest in politics.

2.5. Violence against Young Women and Girls

Young Malawian women face difficulties in reporting and seeking help for widespread sexual, physical and emotional violence. Violence against women increased between 2004 and 2015; 30% of women aged 15-29 had experienced violence as of age 15 in 2004, rising to 38% in 2015³⁹. Among women aged 15-49, 21% had suffered sexual violence, 25% emotional violence, and more than 33% physical violence. Women living in rural areas are slightly more subject to violence than those in urban areas (43% vs. 40%)⁴⁰. Not only do they suffer from physical and sexual violence, but they also often deal with the consequences of all types of violence alone. There appear important barriers to reporting and seeking help. In 2015, 53% of female victims of physical violence never sought help or told anyone, while 12% never sought help but told someone⁴¹. Among women who have been married, the perpetrator is the current husband or partner in 53% of cases and the former husband in 31% of cases⁴². Women also sometimes internalize and normalize violence. Only 16% of female adolescents aged 15-19 report they can refuse sexual intercourse to partners or force condom use; in 2015, 21% agreed husbands or partners are justified in hitting or beating wives for not fulfilling their duties⁴³.

34) Ibid.

35) Ibid.

36) Ibid.

37) Ibid.

38) Ibid.

39) Ibid.

40) Ibid.

41) Ibid.

42) Ibid.

43) Ibid.

2.6. Youth with Disabilities

Youth with disabilities face numerous forms of discrimination, violence and sexual exclusion despite the various legal instruments Malawi has adopted to protect the rights of persons with disabilities⁴⁴. This has, therefore, affected the full integration of the youth with disabilities in the society. Among the youth with disabilities who have largely been subject to violence are the youth with albinism. Since 2014 to date, the number of reported crimes against people with albinism in Malawi is estimated at approximately 170 cases, which include abductions, gruesome murder and exhumations of remains⁴⁵.

2.7. Youth and Environment

Malawi's economy and development largely relies on the environment through land, water and mining. Climate change and environmental degradation threatens youth economic development⁴⁶. Some of the youth have through various organizations taken a leading role in conserving the environment. However, there is still a need for all the youth to work together to conserve the environment.

III. Policy Realities

Youth policies in Malawi have been developed and adopted as a guiding principle in response to the needs of the youth. The policies have been shaped by international agreements and protocols to which Malawi is a signatory. The first Malawi National Youth Policy was established in 1996 and since then, the Government of Malawi has made deliberate efforts to review the national youth policy after every five years. The deliberate effort aims at updating the policy to easily adapt and address the challenges affecting the youth every day because of the diverse occurrences in the world today. The policies are developed after broad consultations with major stakeholders concerned with youth development and the youth themselves.

1. Governmental institutions related to youth

1.1. The Ministry of Youth and Sports

The Ministry of Youth and Sports is the lead Government agency handling matters related to the youth in Malawi. The Ministry facilitates the development of the full potential of the youth of Malawi and promotes their active participation in personal, community and national development.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports as a policy holder of the Malawi National Youth Policy is mandated to:

- a) Provide direction to all relevant government and other stakeholders on mainstreaming issues of young people in all national development frameworks

44) Banks, L. M. & Zuurmond, M (2015). *Barriers and enablers to inclusion in education for children with disabilities in Malawi*. Norwegian Association of Disabled. Oslo: Norway.

45) Mwananyada, M. (2021). *Malawi: Resurgence of killings and abductions of persons with albinism spells a dangerous escalation*. Amnesty International. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/02/malawi-resurgence-of-killings-and-abductions-of-persons-with-albinism-spells-a-dangerous-escalation/>

46) Ibid.

- b) Develop and provide guidelines for youth development and participation
- c) Guide and monitor youth related policy implementation and evaluation
- d) Build capacity of youth workers, youth participation structures and regulate their professional conduct
- e) Ensure that the National Youth Council of Malawi operates according to guidelines as laid down in the National Youth Council Act
- f) Be the central repository of all youth-related information in the country and shall in this regard develop and maintain a user-friendly and accessible youth data base – Youth and Sports Management Information System (YOSMIS); and
- g) Formulate and review the policy.

1.2. The National Youth Council of Malawi

The National Youth Council of Malawi (NYCoM) is a statutory body responsible for promoting and coordinating activities of youth organizations in Malawi with an aim of contributing towards youth empowerment and development⁴⁷⁾. The council was established in 1996 by an Act of Parliament and has three major programmatic areas namely: youth participation and economic empowerment, youth reproductive health, and research, evaluation and documentation.

To achieve this function, NYCoM is mandated to:

- a) Register and facilitate the process for the same for all youth organizations
- b) Develop and Regulate implementation guidelines of youth activities by various youth organizations
- c) Advise the Ministry of Youth and Sports on matters relating to youth participation and development
- d) Facilitate capacity development of youth organizations both in urban and rural areas
- e) Monitor and evaluate youth organizations' programs
- f) Facilitate and encourage cooperation among registered youth organizations in Malawi
- g) Undertake research and documentation and input this into the Youth, Sports Management Information System (YOSMIS); and
- h) Advocate for youth participation and representation in all structures of leadership, governance and management.

2. Legal frameworks underpinning youth policies

The current national youth policy, just like any other public sector policy, draws from several other public sector policies and programs that target the youth. In this regard, this youth policy has been informed by provisions that government has made for the youth in the following public sector policies and programs, as well as, other international standard setting instruments: National Policy for Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children (2005); Sexual Reproductive Health Policy (2009); The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy II (MGDS II); Vision 2020; The Education For All (EFA) Goals; the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP); The Millennium Development Goals; The Republican Constitution of Malawi; The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; The African Youth Decade Plan of Action (DPoA, 1999-2009); The African Youth Charter; The National TVET Policy; The National Education Policy; The National HIV and AIDS Policy (2003), The Malawi Population Policy (2012) and The National Policy on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and Sexual Reproductive Health Rights Policy (2009).

47) National Youth Council of Malawi (April, 2021). National Youth Council of Malawi blog, <https://nationalyouthcouncilofmalawi.blogspot.com>.

3. Evolution of Youth Policies in Malawi

3.1. 1996 Malawi National Youth Policy

The National Youth Council of Malawi Act, 1996, led to the provision for the promotion, coordination and implementation of the youth development programmes in Malawi, as well as the establishment of the National Youth Council of Malawi (NYCoM)⁴⁸⁾. The Act directed the development of the 1996 Malawi National Youth Policy. The policy focused on empowering the youth to face the social, cultural, economic and political challenges⁴⁹⁾.

The policy priority areas included: institutionalizing and facilitating youth participation in the formulation and review of legislative policies and general decision making machinery; creating educational and training opportunities for youth at all levels and to reorient and encourage the youth to use basic scientific and technological principles; promoting healthy living among the youth through the provision of appropriate awareness in Family Life Education Programmes; creating greater awareness among the youth of the dangers of HIV/AIDS and STDs, and also provide and promote the care of infected persons; and providing appropriate social, vocational, physical and mental programmes for the rehabilitation of the youth with special needs⁵⁰⁾. Other objectives included instituting and promoting environmental education and active participation in environmental conservation among the youth; providing and sustaining adequate recreational and sporting facilities for the youth in communities and schools for healthy minds and healthy bodies; and mobilizing internal and external resources for the development of youth⁵¹⁾. The policy was effective until the adoption of the second Malawi National Youth Policy in 2013.

3.2. The 2013 Malawi National Youth Policy

The 2013 policy aims at guiding the implantation of youth programmes and ensuring that they are in line with policy direction of the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) II. The vision of the policy is to see Malawi with an educated, healthy, well trained, cultured, vibrant and productive youth⁵²⁾. The vision will be achieved through providing an enabling environment for all young people to develop to their full potential to contribute significantly to personal and sustainable national development.

The Youth Policy set out to achieve nine objectives, including: providing guidance on minimum standards for the design of youth programmes; guiding the allocation and use of resources (financial, human, and material); mainstreaming gender equity and equality in all youth programmes; and providing guidelines for monitoring and evaluation and ensuring youth are included as active participants. The 2013 Malawi National Youth Policy is the current living national policy document and under review.

48) National Council Youth of Malawi Act 1996 (Mlw.). https://www.youthpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/library/Malawi_1996_Youth_Act.pdf

49) Government of Republic of Malawi. (1996). National Youth Policy. Lilongwe: National Youth Council of Malawi.

50) Ibid.

51) Ibid.

52) Ibid.

IV. Overview Of Existing Youth Policy By Domains

This chapter looks at the context and reality of the 7 priority areas of the 2013 Malawi National Youth Policy. It will highlight the vision, goal, and specific activities for achieving each priority area as outlined in the policy and assess the state of each priority area on the ground.

1. Youth Participation and Leadership

The participation and leadership of the youth in addressing issues affecting them is of significance. This ensures that the decisions made, and programmes designed reflect the actual needs of the youth as seen from their perspective. However empirical evidence shows that youth are not often included in important decision-making bodies. As a result, the opportunity of the youth to actively and meaningfully be involved in decision making and interventions about issues which affect them as a target group and the nation as whole are limited. In this connection, the youth are unable to visibly contribute to national development.

This priority area aims at raising the status of youth and visibility of their contribution to the growth and development of the country. Specifically, through increased participation of youth in development initiatives at community and national level. To ensure that the youth meaningfully participate in the social, economic and political life of the nation and contribute to growth and sustained development of the country, the policy advocated for the following interventions to be undertaken:

- I. Establishment of youth structures such as youth clubs, youth organizations, youth networks, youth centers and youth parliament to facilitate meaningful youth participation to create an enabling environment.
- II. Conduct trainings, provide technical and material support to youth structures to ensure their functionality and sustainability.
- III. Develop and provide a comprehensive and need-based minimum standard package for youth clubs, youth organizations, youth centers and youth networks.
- IV. Develop and enforce implementation of youth participation guidelines to all stakeholders.
- V. Introduce an award scheme for recognizing outstanding contributions to national development by the youth as groups or as individuals is set up and promoted.
- VI. Ensure that at least 30% representation of youth are in decision making bodies at all levels such as Village Development Committees, Area Development Committees, District Councils and National Parliament.
- VII. Lobby for youth volunteerism and internship at local, national, regional and international levels as an important form of youth participation, as well as a means of peer-to-peer training; and
- VIII. Include youth representatives in multilateral meetings such as the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), to broaden channels of communication and enhance the discussion of youth related issues.

To enhance youth participation, the government of Malawi and its stakeholders initiated various interventions which included the following three projects namely: youth decide, budget tracking, and lobbying and advocacy.

Youth Decide Campaign is implemented by a consortium of different CSOs aimed at empowering the youth. The programme has multiple components of youth leadership and development with specific activities as follows: The Youth

Manifesto, Not too Young to Lead, He for She, Youth and Violence and Youth and Electoral Reform⁵³). The major outcome of the Youth Decide Campaign was the Youth Manifesto which was assented by different presidential candidates during the 2019 general elections including Lazarus Chakwera⁵⁴, Saulosi Chilima⁵⁵, and Atupele Muluzi. The Youth Manifesto suggests collective measures on how to address issues affecting the youth including unemployment and vocational training, entrepreneurship, corruption, climate change, health, physical and sexual abuse⁵⁶.

The Budget Tracking project is being implemented by several Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) across Malawi. Youth networks through the support of District Youth Offices (DYO) and NGOs have been trained and equipped with skills of budget tracking. The training aims at increasing transparency and accountability by allowing the youth to monitor how public institutions within their communities are managing resources⁵⁷. Through budget tracking, a youth network in Rumphu, a district in the northern part of Malawi, was able to discover that one of the community secondary schools in their areas was misusing funds and held a community meeting where the headteacher and other staff members to explain to members of the community about the school's expenditure⁵⁸. Budget Tracking projects take the rights based and governance approaches to development and youth empowerment.

The advocacy and lobbying projects aim at achieving increased youth representation in various committees at the national, district and community levels. These committees include: District Executive Committee (DEC), technical committees at district council, Area Development Committee (ADC) and Village Development Committee (VDC). Advocating for youth leadership and inclusion in decision-making committees comes upon the realization that most of these committees do not have a youth representative and this affects the decisions made relating to the youth in these committees⁵⁹. The Youth Manifesto programme complements well the programme on Internship that was implemented by Malawi Human Rights Youth Network in all research districts (and all districts in Malawi except Likoma). The Internship programme by Malawi Human Rights Youth Network aimed at building capacity among the youth regarding local governance processes by exposing them to the business of the council and generating their interest to pick up leadership positions⁶⁰.

Despite the positive impact of projects such as budget tracking which has increased transparency and accountability at district level, there are still backdrops from poor governance and development structures which is stalling the realization of youth participation at community to national level against the targeted 30%. Advocacy for increased membership of the youth in governance and development structures has been a problem because of the policy and legislations inconsistencies⁶¹. For instance,

“The Local Government Act says the youth need to be represented at the Council and voting members of the council need to appoint a representative of the youth, that single representative may not constitute 30% of the membership. When lobbying for increased membership of the youth, it is argued that the law stipulates one representative not 30%. According to law, an Act of Parliament is above the policy, in this case the Local Government Act wins over the National Youth Policy.”⁶²

53) Youth African Leadership Initiative (2019). *Defining the future for themselves: Why one man is putting Malawian youth first*. <https://yali.state.gov/defining-the-future-for-themselves-why-one-man-is-putting-malawian-youth-first/>

54) Bauer, G. (2019). Chakwera assents to National Youth Manifesto. <https://smashmw.com/chakwera-assents-to-national-youth-manifesto/>

55) Chiuta, W. (2019). *Chilima assents to Youth Manifesto: Commits to address numerous challenges affecting young Malawians*. Nyasa Times. <https://nyansatimes.com/chilima-assents-to-youth-manifesto-commits-to-address-numerous-challenges-affecting-young-malawians/>

56) Institute of Public Opinion and Research. (2020). *Report of the review of 2013 Malawi national youth policy*. Youth and Society: Mzuzu.

57) Ibid.

58) Ibid.

59) Ibid.

60) Ibid.

61) Ibid.

62) Ibid.

2. Youth Economic Empowerment

According to the 2011 Welfare Monitoring Survey, the national labour participation rate among youth aged 15-24 years was 15.8 % with more females 17.4% than males 13.3%⁶³. According to the MDGS II, unemployment among the youth has worsened over the last 20 years⁶⁴. Increasingly, the youth are completing their education with very little or no prospect of securing a job, or engaging in entrepreneurial activities, especially in rural areas where under-employment and poverty is more prominent. Due to lack of experience, very few employers are willing to recruit and train them on the job and this has contributed to an increase in poverty among the youth. Unfortunately, untrained and jobless youth are vulnerable to joining illegal means such as drug and human trafficking and burglaries. The above priority stems from this reality and therefore, saw the need to create more economic empowerment avenues for the youth, to improve socio-economic status of young people by creating more and decent employment for the youth both in the formal and informal sectors and in urban and rural areas.

To achieve the above-mentioned objective, the Policy interventions included:

- I. Promotion and support for Technical, Vocational and Entrepreneurship training facilities for the youth.
- II. Establishment of community-based skills training programmes for the youths including village polytechnics, business incubation and youth multipurpose skills training centers is promoted.
- III. Development and implementation of strategies aimed at establishing, promoting and supporting agricultural youth clubs and cooperatives linked to the private sector.
- IV. Introduction of incentives such as tax exemptions on industrial tools and machinery to enhance youth entrepreneurship.
- V. Advocacy on modern agriculture through the incorporation of ICT and other modern technologies and tools to make agriculture attractive to the youth.
- VI. Facilitation of smooth access to productive agricultural land in adequate proportion and other factors of production for the youth who fail to access these resources due to culture, gender and / or other socio-economic factors.
- VII. Creation of an enabling environment for Public Private Partnership for youth development.
- VIII. Support the scale up of the national internship and mentorship programmes to facilitate youth to enter the labour market in rural and urban.
- IX. Establishment of a Youth Development Fund to foster a dynamic climate for youth entrepreneurs to access credit is facilitated.
- X. Enforce youth-friendly rules and regulations are in place for the informal sector to create more employment opportunities for young people.
- XI. Develop macroeconomic policies that focus on job creation particularly for youth.
- XII. Promote strategies that ensure youth involvement in public works and major infrastructure development programmes; and
- XIII. Lobby for institutionalized incentive schemes for employers to invest in the skills development and on the job training for employed and unemployed youth.

63) Government of Republic of Malawi: National Statistical Office. (2013). *Malawi Welfare Monitoring Survey 2011-2012*. Government Press: Malawi.

64) Government of Republic of Malawi: Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (2011). *Malawi Growth and Development Strategy II 2011-2016*. Government Press: Lilongwe.

Among the key project activities implemented by NGOs and government under priority area 2 include: Village Saving Loans (VSLs) and entrepreneurship and skill development. Many youth clubs have VSLs, known as Bank Nkhonde in local language, in which every member contributes a specific amount every month, and the money is available to club members to get a loan with a small interest⁶⁵⁾.

VSLs are run for a year and at the end of the year, each member gets a share of their savings together with the interest accumulated on their money. One youth club in Machinga, a district in the southern part of Malawi, adopted the VSLs as a method of economically empowering themselves⁶⁶⁾.

On entrepreneurship, studies have established that youth networks and NGOs in all districts focus on this theme⁶⁷⁾. Through the DY0, youth networks and clubs have been able to receive entrepreneurship training and most beneficiaries of the training are running some small business. Some youth clubs in Dedza, a district in the central region of Malawi, focuses on arts and crafts as a means of generating funds to sponsor their activities⁶⁸⁾. On the same, one youth club in Rumphi and Mzuzu, districts in the northern part of Malawi, run a grocery store while another youth club in Rumphi grows maize and does fishing farming⁶⁹⁾. All these activities are mostly centered on supporting the activities that these youth clubs are implementing including supporting the elderly and paying school fees for orphans.

Capacity building is part of programme activities for the youth that are supported by NGOs and government. Training on several topics including business plan, accounting and market research are delivered to the beneficiaries before they start their business. However, many businesses are not successful because of financial constraints and lack of creativity.⁷⁰⁾

3. National Youth Services

Since the disbandment of the Malawi Young Pioneers (MYP) Movement, Malawi has had no distinct national youth programme that the country's youth can identify with. Although the government has made serious efforts in putting together some activities targeting the youth, these have largely been a one-time off and delivered in a disjointed and uncoordinated manner⁷¹⁾. The faith-based community and non-governmental organizations have also made significant contributions to youth programming in the country. Their programmes are however generally grounded in the doctrines and policies of these institutions and at times are largely guided by the areas of interest by funding agencies⁷²⁾. Thus, establishing a National Youth Service. The programme is a medium for participation of all categories of youth in the social and economic life of the nation. The National Youth Service programme is also intended to bring the excluded youth back into the social and economic mainstream. According to the policy, skills development, character building and agriculture form the core of activities under the National Youth Service programme. Implementation of the programme will therefore, among others, focus on accredited learning and skills development, community development and exit opportunities, voluntary service by professionals in support of young people and periodic volunteering by youth who will offer their talent and time to address the needs of their communities⁷³⁾.

65) Ibid.

66) Ibid.

67) Ibid.

68) Ibid.

69) Ibid.

70) Ibid.

71) Ibid.

72) Ibid.

73) Ibid.

To fulfill interventions under the priority area, the government is at the forefront in providing national youth services. The main activity under the National Youth service theme is afforestation done as a one-day event on the national tree planting day. Most youth clubs across Malawi participate in the National Youth Service by identifying a day to clean the streets as part of the initiative to promote hygiene and sanitation⁷⁴. However, a lack of planned national youth activities to keep the youth engaged because of lack of resources and branding remains the main challenge in enhancing national youth services. According to research by Youth and Society (YAS), DYOs indicated that,

“We do not have funds specific for national youth service. Our monthly subvention is too little to do any meaningful activity. Furthermore, the national youth service is associated with the old youth week hence negative attitude about everything you tell the youth about the national youth service. They have held stories about the youth week, and they think volunteering to do national service or even that is for the common good of the society is not worthy of doing.”

NGOs do not focus much on this theme because of programming issues while some of the community-based organizations have activities bordering on national youth service remotely. The nature of the organization by default makes community-based organization do activities that are location specific with their passion because they are meant to address problems in their own communities⁷⁵. However, some stakeholders such as the civil society organization view the National Youth Service as a key priority of the policy, too broad and need to be specific and clearly clarified for effectiveness of the intervention and instill willingness of NGOs to participate in promoting National Youth Service.

4. Education for Youth

Education is a major priority in the development of young men and women, because it is through education that young women and men can be better prepared for life⁷⁶. The personal development of the individual young person, along with the development of local communities and the country is inextricably linked to the provision of quality, relevant and well-managed education systems⁷⁷. The Republican Constitution of Malawi provides for the right to education for all its citizens. Further, the National Youth Policy recognizes and draws from the provision of the Ministry of Education Policy and Investment Framework (2001), the National Education Sector Plan (NESP) as well as from the recommendations of the National Conference on Education (2005).

The priority areas, therefore, aim to increase the level of literacy and numeracy among the youth for effective participation in national development, through improving both formal and non-formal education and training for young people in the country. To contribute towards improvement of education situation in Malawi, the National Youth Policy will ensure that:

- I. Periodic review of education curricula for both formal and non-formal sector is undertaken to meet the changing needs of youth in the rapidly changing world and labour market demands in urban and rural areas.
- II. Adequate and appropriate allocation of human, financial and material resources to improve quality of education in Malawi are allocated.
- III. A literacy and numeracy programme for out of school youth is established to meet literacy and numeracy needs among the youth that have never been to school or dropped out of school and cannot return to formal education system.

74) Ibid.

75) Ibid.

76) Ibid.

77) Ibid.

- IV. Programmes targeting school dropouts to go back to school are put in place.
- V. Maintenance and expansion programme for educational facilities to accommodate the needs of increasing number of school-going youth including purposely built girls boarding facilities more especially in rural areas is established.
- VI. Government enforces adherence to minimum standards in both publicly and privately-owned schools to ensure quality of education.
- VII. Guidance and Counselling are mainstreamed in school curricula; and that these are provided as a service in all schools and in other out-of-school learning structures.
- VIII. An independent board to administer and manage an organized bursary scheme for deserving youth is established.
- IX. Teaching of career subjects that promote good citizenship, values, duties and responsibilities is promoted.
- X. School feeding programs in all primary schools are encouraged.
- XI. Compulsory free Primary Education especially for girls and OVC and access to secondary education is promoted.
- XII. Compulsory teaching of technical, vocational and entrepreneurial skills from primary school is established; and
- XIII. Promote mentoring of youth to facilitate attainment of higher education levels and enter the labour market.

Under Education for Youth, the following four programmes are among the interventions that have been implemented to address some of the education challenges facing Malawi: school readmission programmes for teen mothers, bursary schemes, career guidance and basic education programmes.

On readmission of teen girls, different activities are being implemented in order to readmit teen girls in schools by both NGOs and youth clubs. For instance, the District Youth Offices are working with UNFPA in the Joint Programme for Girls Education (JPGE) where they are helping young women between the age of 15 and 24 to go back to school after giving birth⁷⁸⁾. The World Vision, Action Aid and Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) are also implementing activities targeting teen girls to be back in school⁷⁹⁾.

Bursaries focus on students who are needy and cannot pay school fees for themselves. Apart from paying for their school fees, youth clubs and networks are also assisting with provision of resources that are important for learning including uniforms and books. Youth clubs are doing this in different ways; one youth club in Lilongwe runs a shop that sells groceries and uses the profits to sustain its bursary program. Another youth club in Mzuzu offers commercial computer programmes to the public and funds generated from this business are used to for their bursary fund⁸⁰⁾. Bursaries are also supported by the government, NGOs, and CBOs.

Another activity under the education for youth component includes career guidance. These programmes are aimed at sharing and discussing with secondary school students about the career choices they can make. These activities are promoted because it is widely acknowledged that most secondary school students lack guidance in this area across the country and are mostly funded by NGOs.

In terms of basic educational programmes the DYOs with the support of NGOs work with youth networks and clubs in programs such as functional literacy programmes, which target girls aged between 10 and 19 and such programs are being implemented in Dedza and Mangochi districts⁸¹⁾. Some youth organizations in Mzuzu have focused on computer literacy

78) Ibid.

79) Ibid.

80) Ibid.

81) Ibid.

programmes where they offer basic computer classes to youth within their communities⁸²⁾.

5. Youth in Science, Technology and Environment

Science and Technology are prerequisite to any development process. Investment in science, technology and the environment are therefore critical to increase productivity and promote sustainable development. Participation of the youth, who are the future of the country, in science, technology and environmental management initiatives is however on the lower side in Malawi. Hence, choosing this priority area whose goal is to increase the number of youths taking an active role in science, technology and environmental conservation and management, by promoting recognition and award innovations in science, technology and sustainable management of the environment among the youth.⁸³⁾

The interventions in this priority area include:

- I. Popularize science and technology in all schools and out of school learning centers.
- II. Establish an award scheme for gifted youth in the field of science and technology. Outstanding contributions to Science and Technology by youth are awarded and documented for wide publicity.
- III. Promote Science and Technology Fairs to instill interest in science and technology among the youth of Malawi.
- IV. Involve the youth in climate change mitigation and adaptation programmes as change agents to promote sustainable development.
- V. Train and sensitize the youth in the use of technologies that protect and conserve the environment.
- VI. Support youth organizations in instituting programmes that encourage environmental preservation such as waste reduction, recycling and tree planting programmes.
- VII. Engage the youth in the design, implementation and evaluation of environmental policies including conservation of natural resources at local, national, regional and international levels.
- VIII. Mainstream environmental and climate change programmes in all youth participation structures; and
- IX. Develop and implement programmes that provide for the participation of the youth in environmental conservation programmes such as tree planting, gully reclamation and soil conservation activities.

With the help of the Department of Forestry and district forestry offices, most youth clubs are involved in tree planting and forest restoration programmes by being assigned forests to look after in their respective areas. For instance, in Dedza, 14 youth were identified by the forestry department to take part in this programme, while in Machinga, several youth clubs were also selected and work closely with the department and the extension workers to plant trees in their area⁸⁴⁾. These programmes also economically empower the youth as they get paid for planting and taking care of trees.

There is a major concern when it comes to technology. Community colleges still teach traditional informational technology (IT) which is very basic and may not survive the competition on the market. However, the Government has indicated its interest to shift from traditional IT courses to more applied IT courses.

82) Ibid.

83) Ibid.

84) Ibid.

6. Youth Health and Nutrition

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity⁸⁵⁾. Healthy and happy youth are an asset to contribute to a country's development, therefore youth health and nutrition is one of the major priorities. Young people need to enjoy a health status that enables them to lead an economically and socially productive life. This means that information on health and nutrition is to be made available and accessible to the youth. This notwithstanding, youth still remain vulnerable to many health risks such as Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) including HIV and AIDS, early pregnancies, drug and substance abuse, poor nutrition, other communicable and non-communicable diseases and psychological problems⁸⁶⁾.

Under this priority area, the Government and all stakeholders aim at ensuring healthy and productive young people through promotion of general health, and nondiscriminatory sexual reproductive health and rights of young people. The interventions to be undertaken include:

- I. Full involvement of youth in identifying their reproductive and health needs and designing programmes that respond to these needs with special attention to vulnerable and disadvantaged youth.
- II. Provision of comprehensive sexuality education that promotes abstinence, mutual faithfulness and condom use, uptake of family planning services amongst the youth.
- III. Provision of adequate and accessible youth friendly health services among all youth.
- IV. Setting up deliberate programmes for young people to access integrated counselling and testing, ART, HIV, PEP services and other nutrition supplements.
- V. Promotion and sustainability of comprehensive SRHR and HIV prevention information, services and life skills to in and out of school youths.
- VI. Sensitization on bad sexual and cultural practices that promote the spread of STIs including HIV and AIDS, early marriages and teenage pregnancies.
- VII. Advocate for increase in the legal age of marriage, regulations and enforcement of laws that advance youth reproductive health including sexual violence.
- VIII. Awareness on the effects of tobacco, alcohol and intoxicating drugs.
- IX. Establishment of rehabilitation centers for youth drug addicts.
- X. Enforcement of regulations and by-laws regarding usage of tobacco, alcohol and intoxicating drugs among young people is advocated.
- XI. Provision of nutrition education in general and in the context of HIV and AIDS to youth is advocated and provided; and
- XII. Promotion of programmes that address lifestyle related disease and participation in physical fitness among the youth.

There are several activities being implemented under the youth health and nutrition theme. These include sexual reproductive health, water, sanitation and hygiene, and sensitization dramas on various health-related issues among the youth⁸⁷⁾. The lead implementers of these activities include NGOs, CSOs and district health hospitals.

85) World Health Organisation (1946). *Constitution*. <https://www.who.int/about/who-we-are/constitution>

86) Ibid.

87) Ibid.

As a point of contact, youth clubs are used to disseminate information on contraceptive methods, HIV and AIDs and distribution of condoms to the youth. In districts like Machinga, where teenage pregnancies are high, the youth friendly health services office has a youth corner where the youth meet once a week to share information about contraceptive methods and other issues related to their sexual and reproductive health⁸⁸⁾. The youth friendly health offices are integrated in UN's JPGE coordinated by the District Youth Office.

The Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programme is another major activity in all districts that involves youth clubs. The youth officials implement several activities focused on WASH as a means of promoting hygiene. Some of the WASH activities include prevention of waterborne diseases like cholera, water sanitation and conservation of water sources⁸⁹⁾. These activities are implemented by government, NGOs and sometimes jointly implemented by government agencies and NGOs. Most youth clubs also have drama groups that put-on performances on various issues including education, SRH and early marriages. These drama groups are invited to perform at youth events organized by CSOs and NGOs within their respective districts⁹⁰⁾.

In Machinga, Sexual Health Reproductive Rights and Alliance implements a programme that addresses multiple pillars of the policy including youth health and nutrition and youth political participation and leadership. The Sexual Health Reproductive Rights and Alliance is a consortium of six NGOs – Center for Human Rights and Rehabilitation, Coalition of Women Living with HIV/AIDs, Youth Net and Counselling, Center for Alternatives for Victimized Women and Children, Family Planning Association of Malawi and Center for Youth Empowerment and Civic Education⁹¹⁾. Each of the NGOs implement activities based on their expertise. For instance, Family Planning Association of Malawi do service delivery of youth friendly health services whereas Center for Human Rights and Rehabilitation focus on advocacy for better health services delivery from the human rights perspective in the context of youth participation and leadership⁹²⁾. Through this programme, the youth have taken to task the District Health Office to offer youth friendly health services. The advocacy is done by the youth themselves to equip them with experience of empirical based advocacy for demanding better service delivery from the council⁹³⁾.

7. Social Services, Sports, Recreation and Culture

Physical Education, Sports, Cultural activities and recreation are essential in ensuring the wellbeing of young people. Socially and culturally, young people grow up and develop within a society or community and family that have various beliefs, customs, and norms and practices that impact on their lives. In this regard, relationships that exist between the young person and the family, community, school and peers etc. should be taken into consideration when coming up with programmes for young people⁹⁴⁾. Social needs for young people also include recreational, cultural and sporting activities. This priority area aims at enhancing mass participation of the youth in sports, recreation and cultural life of the nation. Specifically, increasing the proportion of youths participating in sports, cultural and recreation activities including those that are friendly to youth with disabilities through promotion of mass awareness on the importance of general fitness, health, recreation and the appreciation of our cultural heritage⁹⁵⁾.

88) Ibid.

89) Ibid.

90) Ibid.

91) Development Aid. (2019). *Malawi SRHR Alliance*. <https://www.developmentaid.org/#/organizations/view/131504/malawi-srhr-alliance>

92) Ibid.

93) Ibid.

94) Ibid.

95) Ibid.

The interventions under this priority area includes:

- I. Adoption and enforcement of programmes that support youth to participate in sporting activities, recreation, and culture.
- II. Lobby the public and private sectors, FBOs, NGOs, and local authorities are fully to support participation of young people in sports, cultural and recreation activities through provision of sports, cultural and recreation facilities and equipment.
- III. Encourage Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) participation in the provision of sports and recreation facilities.
- IV. Rehabilitation and maintenance of available sporting and recreational facilities in the district centers to increase youth participation in sports; and
- V. Hold annual youth cultural and sports festivals to mobilize young people to embrace and preserve culture for posterity and to support mass participation in sports.

The seventh and final priority area of the 2013 Malawi National Youth Policy among the most popular activities include sports bonanzas, football and netball, which take place in all the three regions of Malawi, at the district level. These are usually organized by DYOs working with different NGOs. Youth teams, both football and netball, compete for various prizes, mostly in the form of cash.

However, despite their popularity of bonanzas, the intended goal of educating and empowering the youth is not achieved because they are often politicized by sponsors. Thus, despite their potential value, sports bonanzas have the negative effect of reversing the gains made under the theme of social service, sports, recreation and culture.

V. Recommendations

As stipulated earlier, the Republic of Malawi developed good policies and strategies to address the various challenges faced by the youth to ensure their development. However, poor implementation of these interventions has been a major setback in the development of the youth in the country. The Government and NGOs may consider the following recommendations:

For successful implementation of the interventions there is a need for all stakeholders to be involved at each implementation level. This is achievable by firstly understanding the roles and responsibilities each stakeholder must play. Then, the Ministry of Youth and Sports as the custodian of the National Youth Policy and the main coordinator of the policy, need to improve their coordination strategy by developing a result-based monitoring and evaluation system to track the levels of implementation against the targets set with all stakeholders. On the district level, the Youth Department and DYOs need to be proactive in terms of coordination so that all energy and effort is channeled into enhancing the development of young people.

Policy influence is dependent on the voice created and quality and quantity of actors involved. By upholding the roles and responsibilities each stakeholder plays in developing the youth, they need to make deliberate efforts to create alliances to be used for lobbying and advocating youth initiatives. Alliances will enhance chances of positively influencing policies and creating synergy. Creation of alliances between the government and NGOs will give a sense of ownership in youth initiatives across the country as well as a tool for checks and balance. The synergy will promote transparency and accountability which will in a long run remove the suspicion that duty bearers and CSOs have towards one another.

In recent years, the development projects under the National Budget are largely dependent on donor funding. Under these projects, youth activities are found under each ministry however, they are underfunded. Furthermore, the Ministry of Youth and Sport is one of the ministries that is not adequately financed to discharge its mandate. The government should channel a meaningful part of its revenue to support youth initiatives under various ministries, as well as statutory bodies like NYCoM. This will help youth initiatives in the country become less and less dependent on donor funds.

The national youth services are a platform that enables the youth to give back to the nation, however the relevance of these programmes has not been clearly understood by many young people in the country as they are not able to identify themselves in the services. The Government then through the DYOs may consider setting a week in which the youth in each district under the various chiefs should come together and share their ideas on what kind of services they would like to undertake for the policy life cycle, 5 years. From the community and district levels the discussions should move to the regional then national level. The services suggested should finally be adopted by the youth parliament. This will drive many youths to take part in the youth services as they will identify themselves in the activities.

To address the low uptake of youth services in other districts and insufficient access to youth friendly services such as SRH services in other districts, the government should work towards a demand recreation strategy. This should be done by advertising the services in an attractive manner. Furthermore, increased awareness of the importance of the services is needed to make the services acceptable by the community. Government through the district councils should ensure each community has competent youth advisors who will administer the services at an affordable price.

While recognizing the significance of diversity in organizations implementing youth initiatives, a good number of organizations mandate are outside the pillars of the National Youth Policy mainly because of the interests of their sponsors. In view of this, it is recommended that partners in the youth sector need to develop programs in line with the National Youth Policy without compromising on service delivery. This will enhance coordinated effort towards improving the welfare of the youth.

Within the time the National Youth Policy was being implemented, some issues such as the respect of minority rights have emerged and possesses as either a threat or an opportunity for youth development in the country. The government, therefore, should take into consideration these issues as they are reviewing the 2013 Malawi National Youth Policy for the next policy document to be more inclusive and all-encompassing in nature.

To address the inconsistency of laws when it comes to participation of youth in politics and governance, the government through the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Judiciary, Malawi Law Society should come up with a mechanism to interpret the constitution to be able to adapt the changes in the society.

VI. CONCLUSION

The youth in Malawi are as exceptional as all the youth across the globe because of their significance in ensuring the development of the country. As such, strategies that will ensure the proper growth of young people in all sectors are to be developed and implemented, so that they are prepared to play the central role in promoting and ensuring economic growth. The Republic of Malawi as highlighted in the review, has good policies and strategies however, implementation of the interventions has downplayed the developmental growth of young people.

Socio-economic and environmental factors have affected educational attainment of the youth in all educational levels which has caused the rise in dropout rates. Educational quality is another area of concern which has resulted in young people lacking necessary basic skills to prepare them in the labour market. Due to the lack of skills unemployment rate is still a major problem especially for young women. In order to survive therefore, the majority of the youth in the labour market have settled for underpaid jobs which are categorized by job mismatching and low-quality jobs resulting in decrease in the level of job satisfaction and productivity.

In order to adequately address the challenges faced by the youth, youth participation in decision making is vital. However, Malawi still faces setbacks in this area, resulting from political influences and inconsistencies of laws. The review recommends the need to interpret the laws for the constitution to adequately save the nation in this era and avoid misinterpretation especially by politicians.

Furthermore, the key to ensure the success of the interventions developed relies on the need for all stakeholders to work together by understanding each other's roles and responsibilities which will enhance easy coordination of the programs. Youth friendly services should be acceptable, attractive, affordable and accessible by young people to fully realize their benefits in ensuring their well-being. Lastly, the National Youth Policy being a living document and open to review, needs to adapt the emerging issues surrounding the youth to ensure the rights of all the youth are respected, protected and promoted.

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