

October Newsletter

Volume 2 issue 3



Accountability project brings hope for public funds

**AAM, partners
commemorate
IDGC**



**COWFA chair
shares more on
UN Gender-
Just Binding
Treaty**



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ActionAid Malawi, partners, kick-start second phase of Social Accountability project

On 10th October 2019, ActionAid Malawi (AAM) and its partners launched the second phase of the SDC funded “Strengthening social accountability and over-sight in the agriculture and health sector in southern Africa” project.

The launch, which took place at Sunbird Capital Hotel in Lilongwe, was graced by the Speaker of the National Assembly, Right Honourable Catherine Gotani Hara, M.P. Other key stakeholders at the launch included, parliamentary committees on Health and Agriculture, government officials and partnership for social accountability (PSA) partners, namely; the Malawi Health Equity Network, NASFAM, the national media, community radios and community-based organisations in the project’s impact districts of Mchinji and Nsanje.

Speaking during the launch, Gotani Hara hailed the project, saying it is in line with the parliament’s mandate of providing national budgetary oversight.

“You will agree with me that the objectives of PSA model clearly align with the mandate of parliament that ultimately purports at strengthening democracy and good governance in Malawi through its key functions of legislation for the common good of the country; representing the interests and aspirations of the constituents from promotion of good governance and achievement of sustainable development,” she said.

The National Assembly Speaker said social accountability is a right for every citizen in Malawi and called upon committees of parliament to embark on meaningful oversight over the implementation



Speaker of National Assembly, Right Honourable Catherine Gotani Hara officially launching the project

of the national resources for the benefit of the citizens.

On his part, AAM Executive Director, Mr. Assan Golowa, said the phase two of the project, to run from 2019 to 2023, will focus on building the capacity of key stakeholders, learning from the previous phase as well as implementation, with emphasis on oversight.

am glad to note that we are launching the project at a time parliament has just passed the 2019/20 national budget. The project will ensure that the resources in the budget go to the intended beneficiaries,” he said.



ActionAid Malawi Executive Director, Mr. Assan Golowa, giving his remarks at the launch

ActionAid, HerLiberty commemorate Day of Girl Child

On 17th October, ActionAid Malawi (AAM) and a girl rights organisation, Her Liberty, brought together girls from primary schools within Lilongwe to commemorate the International Day of the Girl Child (IDGC).

IDGC, which falls on 11th October, is an international observance day declared by the United Nations. It is also called the Day of Girls and the International Day of the Girl. The day aims to highlight and address the needs and challenges faced by girl children while promoting their empowerment and the fulfilment of their human rights.

The Theme for 2019 is **Girl-Force: Unscripted and Unstoppable!** The theme is a clarion call on member countries to enable girls unleash their potential and realise their dreams. AAM Accountability and Gender-Responsive Public Service Specialist, Yandura Chipeta, led the organisation at the event, describing it as platform for girls to interact with female role models from different professions, as one way of motivating them to achieve their dreams.

She added the function also presented an opportunity to call upon government to invest in girl child education through among others, domestically generating more resources and allocating it to the education sector.

Guest of Honour at the function was the Chief Education Officer in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Mrs. Esnart Chapomba, said the ministry will continue to take positive steps aimed at creating conducive environment for girl child education. Mrs. Chapomba appealed to girls to put education first regardless of various challenges they are facing in life.



Meeting the future: Some of the girls pose with their role model at the event



Fired and ready to go: Girls with their role models at the end of the event



Loud and clear message: Main banner at the commemoration of the event

ActionAid Malawi donates to Cyclone Idai victims

ActionAid Malawi (AAM) through its grassroots partner, Phalombe Women Forum, on 1st October, 2019, donated fortified flour worth K7 million to Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres affected by Cyclone Idai that hit the country in March this year.

The donation was acquired with support from International Humanitarian Action and Response Team (IHART) an emergency and humanitarian office under ActionAid International.

Speaking during the symbolic donation that took place at Nkhulambe in Traditional Authority Nazombe in the district, AAM Executive Director, Mr. Assan Golowa, said the gesture is part of the K150 million grant ear-marked for relief and resilience for the families reeling from the effects of the Cyclone Idai in Phalombe and Nsanje districts.

Mr Golowa said AAM will work with local partners, especially women-led organisations in championing accountability in disaster response as well as finding the lasting solutions to the natural disaster.

“We decided to make this donation after realizing how ECD lessons have been affected due to inadequate food in most of the community based childcare centres. We noted that this is a result of the Cyclone Idai disaster that affected most households” said Golowa

He appealed to the participants, which included, Phalombe District Council Chairperson, councilors, Area Development Committees, Senior Traditional Authority Nazombe, Phalombe Council Secretariat, Community Based Organisations and community members to offer Phalombe Women Forum all the necessary support during the implementation of disaster related interventions in the district.

Phalombe District Council Chairperson, Fredson Thomas, thanked AAM for the kind gesture and as-



Phalombe Women Forum members pose with the donation before distribution



ActionAid Malawi Executive Director, Assan Golowa (2nd left) and Council officials symbolically handing over the donation to the ECD centres in Phalombe

sured the organisation that the council will work closely with women to ensure that the donation reaches intended beneficiaries. He hailed the organisation for complementing council's efforts in areas of education, HIV and AIDS, human rights, women empowerment and resilience.

Phalombe Women Forum Chairperson, Catherine Chiwaya said

the support from ActionAid Malawi has motivated them to double their efforts in reaching out to those in need in the district.

“The support will enable us reach out to ECD centres which are worst affected by food shortage due to the effects of Cyclone Idai. This will result into more children attending the ECD classes in the area,” she said.

“UN Treaty will significantly protect women’s rights”

In October, ActionAid Malawi supported Coalition of Women Farmers (COWFA) Chairperson, Ellen Matupi, to attend the conference’s side events reflecting on the Gender-Just UN Binding Treaty at the UN Headquarters, in Switzerland. Upon arrival from the conference, Fletcher Simwaka, ActionAid Communication Officer, sat down with Matupi to get the bottom of the issues discussed at the conference.



Matupi: Chairperson of Coalition of Women Farmers in Malawi

Question: Welcome back, kindly tell us what the conference was all about?

Answer: The conference was basically about looking at the zero draft of the Gender-Just UN Treaty which seeks to protect the rights of community members surrounding the operational areas of the transnational corporations (TNCs). As you will agree with me, most community members, especially women living around TNCs suffer a lot of human rights violations including the right to food, right to health and right to access clean and safe water.

Question: What were the key areas of the Treaty which merited reflections from delegates including COWFA?

Answer: Much emphasis was on articles 3, and 4 which looked at the scope and defini-

tion of the Treaty, respectively. Delegates suggested that the scope of the Treaty ought to be comprehensive enough to protect all communities at the risk of human rights violations by the TNCs. The same applies to the definition of the victim which we felt had to be expounded to include as many potential victims as possible, directly or indirectly.

Question: How do you think such a Treaty would help people like smallholder farmers in Malawi?

Answer: Most Malawians rely on agriculture for their livelihood. However, in many cases, like the Kayelekera Uranium mining in Karonga, we noted that most smallholder farmers cannot longer cultivate any crop on the land close to mining activity due to loss of soil fertility. In other cases, smallholder farmers have always been the victims of land-grabbing by some of the TNCs who are after

mega investment in agriculture. The Treaty comes in to protect such women through, among others, ensuring that they get adequate compensation.

Question: Are you satisfied with the progress on the development of the Treaty so far and where to from here?

Answer So far so good. The inputs into the Zero Draft will now have to be considered in November this year. Next year, delegates will be back to look at and endorse the revised Treaty.

Question: FS Any last remark?

Answer: For countries like Malawi, the Treaty is long overdue. I am grateful to ActionAid Malawi so supporting COWFA to take in the development of such a historic legal document. I am sure the UN Treaty will significantly protect vulnerable groups from abuses.

Access to public health services, a right for all

Access to sexual and reproductive health services is still a challenge among other adolescent girls and young women (AGYW), especially in the rural communities of Malawi.

This is due to several reasons including unavailability of the services within walkable distance, lack of awareness on the availability of the services, but also the belief that these services are only eligible for married women.

This poses short and long-term challenges to the AGYW and the nation at large. Early and unwanted pregnancies, for example, are some of the short-term challenges that put the girls at high risk of maternal deaths. United Nations Population Fund (2013) report stipulates that stigma, rejection and violence by partners, parents and peers is common among unmarried pregnant adolescents.

Still more, adolescent age is a school-going age which implies that if impregnated, a girl's education is affected despite the chance of going back to school again after delivering the child. In the long term, these challenges affect the health, social and economic costs of the country for the unplanned births and maternal deaths that can be prevented.

These challenges call for a unified effort to protect the AGYW from contracting sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies and most specially to allow them to realize their right to sexual and reproductive health services.

ActionAid Malawi is one of the organizations that are implementing activities aimed at promoting AGYW' access to sexual and re-



Youth in Lilongwe urging the youth to demand access to health services

productive health services. Under its Joint TB/HIV Joint Global Fund Programme, ActionAid Malawi is implementing an AGYW Module that among other things, ensures that

Chikwawa districts are now aware of where to access sexual and reproductive health services. The program also conducts outreach services where the AGYW from hard to reach areas are reached with mobile sexual and reproductive health services.

“But now we know our rights and the benefit of accessing those services,” she said.

AGYW are reached with HIV prevention programs that have a full defined package of services. These services include, HIV & AIDS information, sexual reproductive health (SRH) services, life skills, gender-based violence (GBV) screening and referral to support other services.

Through this program, AGYW from the rural communities of Lilongwe, Mangochi, Mulanje, Thyolo and

Enelet is one of the girls from Malembe AGYW Club in Area 25 in Lilongwe that were trained to be peer educators under the AGYW Module. Apart from HIV information, they learnt about the importance and how they can access sexual and reproductive health services from their nearest health centres. As a peer educator, she replicates what she learnt by sharing the information with her peers.

According to Enelet, the coming in of the AGYW program has helped many girls to open up and gain the courage to access sexual and reproductive health services. “Most of us used to be shy to access things like condoms because we thought the doctors and those who might see us

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would be questioning our character.

But now we know our rights and the benefit of accessing those services," she said.

As a peer educator, Enelet said she ensures she has condoms in stalk all the time as she distributes to her peers. She collects the condoms from Area 25 health centre. She also escorts her peers that feel shy to meet the doctor on their own to access medical assistance on sexual or reproductive health services. "We were linked to our health centre and we know which room provides those services. So, it is easy for us now to access the SRH service we want than before," she added.

A Mid Wife at Area 25 Health Centre, Evelyn Abaleka, who participates in the programme's activi-

ties, said many girls within Area 25 are now accessing SRH services at the health centre because they know about the availability of the services besides being assured of their privacy.

"The girls are being sensitized by Plan International to access SRH services when needed. With the help of their peer educators, the girls come to the health centre with a referral form specifying the services they want. But, before providing them with the service, we ensure that we counsel the girls so that they should make informed decision(s)," she said.

According to the ActionAid Malawi AGYW Manager, Francis Mbvundula, ensuring availability and easy access to sexual and reproductive health services among the AGYW is key in meeting the aim of the AGYW Module, which is reducing HIV incidences amongst

AGYW aged 10-24.

"When girls have a chance to decide whether and when to marry and have children, when they are protected from HIV, remain safe from violence and are educated, then they can contribute positively to the economic growth of our country," he said.

ActionAid Malawi is the Principal Recipient of the non-biomedical part of the Joint TB/HIV Global Fund Programme and is implementing the AGYW Module through five Sub Recipients (SRs). In Lilongwe, ActionAid Malawi is reaching out to 13,260 girls through Plan International as a SR, but also Chinsansi Foundation and Family Planning Association of Malawi (FPAM) as Sub Sub-Recipients respectively.

ActionAid Malawi management, staff bang heads on 2020 plans

In October, ActionAid Malawi (AAM) Management and staff conducted a two day meeting to develop plans for 2020. The year 2020 will be the third year under the current Country Strategy Paper (CSP) V, "Action for Social Justice,"

The meeting involved plan presentations from all program and project leads, which was followed by brainstorming sessions aimed at enriching the plans and aligning them to the priority areas in the CSP V document.

AAM Head of Finance, Rodney Mwaisimba, who represented the Executive Director at the exercise, hailed the meeting as key to the work of the organisation. He called upon staff to commit themselves to key virtues such as ingenuity, hard work and team-work if the organisation is to maximise impact on the ground with limited resources.



Participants during the planning meeting at Linde Motel in Dowa District.

ActionAid Malawi bids farewell to some of its own

There was a prevailing atmosphere of joy and sorrow inside ActionAid Malawi (AAM) conference room on 18th September, as the organisation bade farewell to 14 of its members of staff.

Yes, there was joy to celebrate staff that had been part of the organisation for a long time, dedicating themselves professionally to contribute to the work towards poverty and injustice eradication.

However, it was sad to see such a crème leave the organisation. But as they say, even good things come to an end.

Leading the staff in congratulating the outgoing team for their remarkable journey with ActionAid Malawi was the Executive Director, Mr. Assan Golowa who thanked them for their dedication and loyalty to the organisation. He said the organisation will turn to them for guidance whenever the need arises.

Speaking on behalf of the outgoing staff, the Programme Coordinator for Mchinji Local Rights Programme Mrs. Alepha Mwimba-Mlanga thanked AAM for providing them with a platform for professional growth.

Mrs. Mlanga challenged the remaining staff to remain steadfast on the vision of the organisation, saying there is still more to do to uplift the poor out of poverty. The outgoing staff received gifts and certificate of services. **In the photos: (1) Andrew Chapusa (left) the former Rumphi LRP Coordinator, receiving his certificate of service from Mr. Golowa (2) Alepha Mwimba-Mlanga take turn to get her certificate and (3) Women Forum Representative, Yandura Chipeta (Right) giving gifts to outgoing female staff.)**



Staff Corner



Meet Secret Kabambe, ActionAid Malawi new Finance Manager.

Secret is a qualified accountant (ACCA) and holds a bachelor's degree in accounting from Oxford Brookes university. She comes with more than 15 years of experience in the Accounting field.

"I believe that through my contribution towards prudent financial management and accountability, many women and girls will be reached out and empowered socially and economically," she says.

Secret is happily married with two children,, Stella and Daniel .

During her free time, Secret enjoys travelling, sightseeing and learning foreign cultures



Joseph is now an ActionAider!

Joseph Falakeza Happana Fatch is the new M&E officer for the KULIMA-BETTER project which is implemented in Nkhatabay and Chiradzulu districts.

A graduate in Agricultural Economics from Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Joseph boasts a strong monitoring and evaluation background, having worked with various NGOs in projects such as food security, economic development, sustainable agriculture, water, energy, health, education and gender.

Away from work, Joseph is a Farmer, Musician, Stand-Up Comedian and author of books.

Versatile Manthalu part ways with ActionAid

On 30th October, ActionAid Malawi Governance Officer, Mr. Chisomo Manthalu, left the organisation, after being an ActionAider for five years. During his time at the organisation, Mr. Manthalu played a key role in championing the Tax Justice Campaign which focuses on calling upon the government to cut the wasteful tax incentives being granted to multinational corporations and invest the resources in improving social services such as education for the girl child.

(In the photo, Mr Manthalu (left) after receiving a gift from Accountability and Gender Responsive Public Service Specialist, Yandura Chipeta.)

