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AAM ED, Grace Malera, (R) signing the agreement alongside GF's representative, Mark Edington

AAM signs a three-year \$30m Global Fund Grant

ActionAid Malawi (AAM) has signed a \$30,082,198.00 Global Fund Grant to continue implementing the TB/HIV Programme from 2018-2020.

The AAM Executive Director, Mrs. Grace Malera, signed the Grant on behalf of the organization at a function that took place at Bingu International Convention Center (BICC) on 9 November, 2017.

Gracing the occasion was the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, Honourable Goodall Gondwe, who represented His Excellency the State President for the Republic of Malawi, Professor Arthur Peter Mutharika.

The Global Fund has given the Government of Malawi a total sum of \$460,475,140.00 to implement Tuberculosis (TB), HIV and Malaria. Out of this, the Ministry of Health has received \$25,421,047.00 as a Principal Recipient (PR) for Malaria and \$364,669,494.00 to implement biomedical part of the TB/HIV programme. World Vision Malawi has received \$40,302,401.00 as PR for Malaria while AAM has gotten \$30,082,198.00 as a PR for non-biomedical part of TB/HIV programme.

In his speech, Honourable Gondwe thanked the Global Fund for the support in fighting against the three diseases which he said have a great negative impact on the economy of Malawi. He said Government will ensure the Grant achieves the proposed targets.

“Without the Global Fund support, among other funders, we wouldn't have achieved the progress we have managed in curbing these three diseases by now. And today we have signed yet another huge Global Fund Grant to continue fighting against these diseases. The Government of Malawi is very grateful for the GF support,” he said.

Honourable Gondwe concluded his remarks by requesting all PRs to be accountable to the resources entrusted with them for the betterment of all Malawians.

Representing the Global Fund was the Head of Grant Management Division, Mr. Mark Edington. In his remarks, Mr. Edington said the Global Fund is

pleased with the success Malawi has registered in the fight against HIV and AIDS even though there is a long way to go. “We have seen progress and this is why we are willing to continue with our support. However, we see the need to put extra effort in the fight against Malaria,” he added.

Prior to the Grant Signing Ceremony, the Guest of Honour and the Global Fund delegate toured seven pavilions that were mounted at the venue. AAM showcased the Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) Module through Out-of-School Girls and Young Women Club from Msambeta in Area 23, Lilongwe. This club is working with Plan Malawi which is a Sub Recipient for AAM TB/HIV Global Fund Programme.



Participants pose for a group photo after the grant signing ceremony

AAM for more media coverage on ECD

ActionAid Malawi (AAM) has asked the country's media to dedicate more efforts to report on Early Childhood Development (ECD), saying the programme is critical to laying a foundation for the nation's future.

AAM Executive Director, Grace Malera, made the remarks during the official opening of the day-long media workshop on ECD in Lilongwe on Thursday, 16th November,

The workshop was part of the activities AAM, in partnership with the Ministry of Gender, Disability, Children and Social Welfare, has lined up ahead of the nation-wide ECD Advocacy Week that ran from 20th to 24th November.

Mrs Malera said only sustained media reporting on issues around ECD will attract more investment in the programme across the country. While commending government for raising the budgetary allocations towards ECD over the years, she said the resources still fall short of meeting the country's international commitments such as the Edu-



AAM Executive Director Grace Malera addressing members of the media during the workshop

cation for All Goals. "Under the Education for All Goals, Malawi made a commitment to be allocating 3 percent of national budget towards the ECD. However, the current allocation is only at K630 million, which represents 0.05 percent. Again, Section 25 of the Constitution of Malawi also places the obligation on Malawi government to fulfil the right to education," she said.

Mrs Malera then called upon the media to help in advocating increased budgetary allocations towards ECD. She said AAM will continue partnering government on the ten-year ECD project the organization is implementing in ten districts of the country. She thanked the Rodger Federer Foundation for pumping in USD13.5 million in the project running from 2011 to 2021.

"We believe that as ActionAid Malawi, we are just complimenting government's efforts on ECD programme. This is why we involve government in most of our activities under the program so that when we hand over the project in 2021, government should be able to sustain it," she said.

Concurring with Malera, the ECD national coordinator in the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, Francis Chalamanda, said government looks at ECD as part and parcel of development. He said government will ensure that the program is up-scaled.



A cross-section of journalists listening to a presentation by Chalamanda

Rumphi CSOs call for CDF de-politicisation



Towards CDF Accountability: Participants listening to a presentation by a member of Rumphi CSOs Network

Rumphi District Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) Network has called for the de-politicisation of constituency development fund (CDF) to ensure sustainability and community ownership of the fund.

The call was made on Tuesday 31st October in Rumphi District at the presentation of the CDF Budget Tracking Report by the CSOs network with financial support from ActionAid Malawi (AAM). The report presentation, which attracted various community members, traditional leaders, Rumphi district council officials, members of parliament (MPs), district executive committee members, AAM officials and EU head of delegation to Malawi, Marchel GERRMANN, sought to share findings of the report and come up with a roadmap to improve implementation of CDF in the district.

The CSOs' budget tracking exercise was part of the activities under the three-year Social Accountability project AAM is implementing in partnership with Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET) with funding from EU.

Titled, "Turning CDF implementation challenges into positive implementation changes," the report samples three constituencies, Rumphi West, Rumphi Central and Rumphi East with focus on community

knowledge of CDF, community participation, CDF project budget allocations, procurement of goods and services, community access to information on CDF, monitoring, sustainability and impact of the CDF projects. The report looks at the projects funded during the 2014/15 and 2015/2016 fiscal years.

Among other findings, the report reveals politicization of the fund, saying structures running the CDF consist of the representatives of the MPs.

"To make matters worse, the representatives of the MPs were from the same political party with their MP. This has created divisive political havens that have excluded other stakeholders from a number of institutions," reads the report in part.

The report also notes communities' limited access to information regarding budgetary allocations to CDF, expenditures on unnamed projects, and limited community participation in the implementation and monitoring of the projects.

The report also notes that the office of the District Council is bypassed in some processes in the procuring of some goods and services.

"This presents a risk of loss of funds, poor quality of workmanship and

noncompliance to the Public Procurement Act (PPA)," fears the report.

Rumphi CSOs chairperson, Falument Mkinga, said the report findings point to the need for de-politicisation of the CDF.

"MPs, Councillors and the general public need to know that CDF is public money and it has to be used for the benefit of all the constituents regardless of their political affiliations," said Mkinga. His call was echoed by Director of Planning and Development, Frank Mkandawire, who stressed the need for improved information flow between the council and community structures on CDF to ensure that everyone is fully involved.

AAM Country Director, Grace Malera, said she was pleased to note that through AAM's social accountability project in the district, various stakeholders including women are being empowered to hold duty bearers accountable. She urged the community members to keep on having such spaces where they can engage duty bearers on various governance issues.

The social accountability project is also being implemented in Mchinji, Phalombe and Nsanje districts.

Fair tax collection could improve education standards – AAM

ActionAid Malawi (AAM) says challenges affecting the education sector in Malawi could be mitigated if the country becomes aggressive in domestic resource generation. AAM NORAD Project coordinator, Yandura Chipeta, made the remarks Monday, 13th November, at the Parliamentary Engagement on Education Financing meeting organized by Civil Society Education Coalition (CSEC).

CSEC is a national advocacy partner to AAM for the project on 'Promoting Quality Education through Progressive Domestic Resource Mobilisation' funded by NORAD.

Stakeholders at the meeting included parliamentarians from the Education Committee, Civil Society Organisations and members of the press.

Chipeta said there is potential in the country to mobilise a lot of resources that can help in improving education services.

"ActionAid believes that Malawi can collect adequate revenue domestically to finance education if it seals all the loopholes through which Government is losing reve-



Participants pose for a group photo after discussions

nue, especially through the granting of harmful tax incentives.

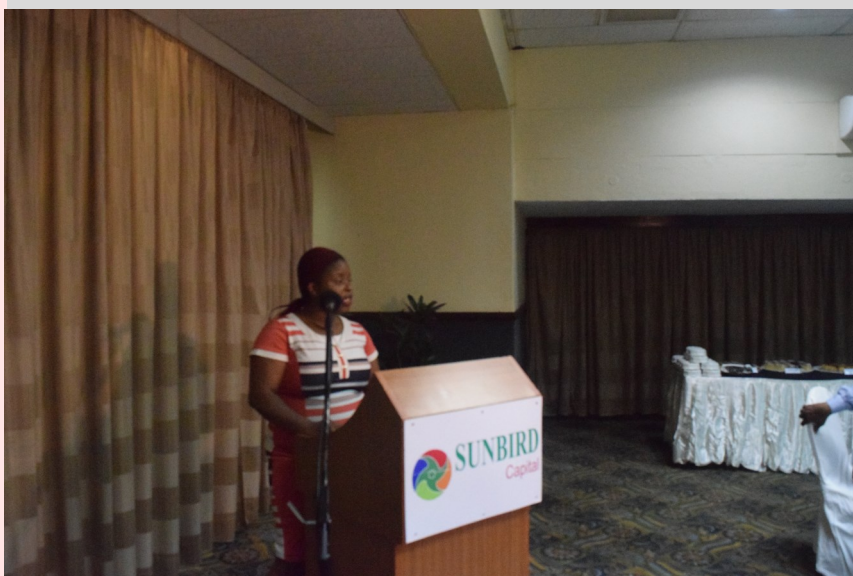
She, thus, called upon members of parliament to influence policy development that can ensure fair tax in Malawi for the benefit of the Malawians, especially children so that they are able to access quality free equitable education and inclusive education.

"Importantly, we would like to see the discussion go beyond the

walls of this room and get into the parliament where, as MPs you will ignite the discussion on tax justice, especially on ending the harmful tax incentives that are negatively affecting our revenue generation and economy," she said.

The meeting had a presentation by CSEC on the Public Expenditure Tracking Survey with focus on School Improvement Grant (SIG) in Dedza, Lilongwe and Ntchisi. Among others, the presentation revealed that there was under allocation of SIG at the district level, late disbursements, financial imprudence on funds utilization and the inadequacy of funds.

Commenting on the matter, chairperson for the parliamentary committee on education Elias Chakwera said his committee will engage fellow parliamentarians on how best to address the issues that have been raised at the meeting. He proposed results based financing as one of the solutions to the challenges in the country's educa-



Driving a point home: Yandura making a presentation during the meeting

Taking justice to abused women and girls

Edna Mphonda of Group Village Chinsapo in Chinsapo Township has no kind words for gender-based violence (GBV). When she got married to her love in 2009, she saw a happy life ahead. But she was wrong.

“Just a few months into marriage, my husband started beating me up, even on petty issues,” she says. Edna, now 36, kept suffering violence in silence in the hope that her husband would abandon her violent behaviour someday. Unfortunately, her husband’s conduct only worsened with time.

“He would go drinking for days, leaving me and children without anything. When I tried to look for him, he would tell me off, saying I was free to quit marriage,” recounts Edna, a mother of six children.

Left with no option, Edna became the ‘bread winner’ of the six children. Her miserable life got exacerbated by her lack of awareness of her rights, let alone redress mechanisms to same in her area. She resigned to violence.

Edna is, however, just one of the numerous silent survivors of (GBV). According to statistics by Ministry of Gender, 53 percent of women suffering violence report their husbands as perpetrators. Worse enough, most women don’t report cases of violence by the husbands, partly due to high illiteracy rates, currently at 71 percent, among women in the country.

The plight Edna and numerous women find themselves in are what led to the birth of Lilongwe Women Urban Forum (LUWF), which among other things, offers redress mechanisms to women and girls surviving GBV.

“Gender-based violence could be worse for women and girls living in urban areas considering that most organisations are concentrated in districts and rural areas. This implies abused women and girls lack platforms and spaces to raise and discuss their issues such as

violence, HIV and Aids and poverty,” says Agness Catherine Bote, a leader of the Lilongwe Urban Women Forum (LUWF).

Established in 2008 with support from ActionAid Malawi (AAM) LUWF today has 2000 members. The forum is currently mainly rooted in areas such as Kauma, M’bwetu, Chatata, Area 25, M’gona, Ngomani College, Area 49, N’goma, Centi, Dubai and Shire. Other impact areas include; Kawale, Chilinde, Chinsapo, Mbwemba, Biwi, Area 22 ,23, 24 and 36.

“Through LUWF, most women and girls are opening up on the violence they suffer in their homes and communities and our role in assisting them has become even critical,” says Agness.

According to Agness, LUWF has managed to rescue over 100 from the jaws of violence. She says LUWF’s approach centres on capacity building trainings, awareness campaigns and paralegal clinics.

Edna can’t stop thanking LUWF for bringing a life of dignity in her home. “When I learnt about LUWF in 2016, I lodged a complaint regarding my husband’s violent conduct. LUWF engaged my husband on his behaviour and he has since changed,” says Edna, who is now an active member of LUWF.

Spurred by the desire to reach out to more women and girls trapped in violence with technical legal assistance, LUWF courted Women Judges Association of Malawi (WOJAM) for partnership in areas of legal literacy and advocacy. Bote described the partnership, launched on 10th November at Chinsapo, as a watershed in women and girls’ struggle for access to justice.

“Most women, due to poverty levels and other social factors such as illiteracy, find the country’s judicial institutions not accessible.

The thinking is that courts are for the



Edna narrating how LUWF saved her from violence

rich and literate. Hence, the launch of the Memorandum of Understanding between LUWF and WOJAM will remove that unfounded fear among women and girls,” says Bote

Among others objectives, the open-ended MOU will ensure that WOJAM undertakes legal literacy work with members of LUWF; advocate and lobby for issues which are affecting the promotion and protection of women’s rights in Lilongwe Urban;

The partnership will further see WOJAM offer support to Lilongwe Peri-Urban women members on legal literacy, including inspirational talks on access to justice, and corroborate on outreach clinics to enhance timely justice to communities especially women and girls.

Commenting on the partnership, WOJAM president, Justice Esme Chombo, said the partnership will help them demystify the court process and procedures for women and girls suffering various forms of violence in Lilongwe Urban and other areas.

Despite the partnership being limited to LUWF, AAM hopes women in other urban areas and districts will benefit.

“Our wish is that this partnership should extend to all women forums in the country because the issues women and girls face in the country are the same,” says Chikumbutso Ngosi, AAM Women Rights Theme Manager.

It is certain that with the MoU in place, women like Edna Mphonda will no longer have to suffer violence in silence when redress mechanism is just on their door.



Justice Chombo (Rights) and Rose Muyaya showing exchanged copies of the MoU

'Food/Cash for asset' offers resilience in face of climate shock

Nsanje is one of the districts most affected by climate shocks such as droughts, floods and pests. Its vulnerability to perennial disasters pushes the district among the poorest in the country.

Disasters such as floods and dry spells that hit the district in 2015 and 2016 seasons saw a number of stakeholders, especially Non-Governmental Organisations, flocking to the area to offer relief items to the most affected households.

However, relief interventions alone are not enough for the communities to cope with the climate change-induced challenges and reduce the risks to the disasters.

The need for a different approach that could contribute to the affected households' resilience and reduction of risks to disasters motivated ActionAid Malawi (AAM) in partnership with Nsanje District Council to embark on a 'Food/Cash for asset' project spanning July to December, 2017.

The overriding objective of the project centred on meeting the short-term food needs of food-insecure households through a



Food distribution in GVH Annie Petro, T/A Mbenje, Nsanje.

conditional food or cash transfer. The objective envisioned restoring and creating household and group community assets which would help the targeted communities to enhance their livelihoods and build resilience against future climate shocks

With a total funding of MK 215,781,524.00 (\$297,629.69) from WFP, the project managed to reach out to 8498 affected households in traditional authorities (T/As) of Tengani,

Mbenje and Ndamera.

Under the project, there is a successful implementation of asset creation interventions such as small scale irrigation, vegetable gardens, communal road construction, forestry, land resource, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities.

It is expected that by December, 2017, the project will have contributed to a stabilized human and social capital and livelihoods in the district



Backyard Garden In GVH Chibhawa, T/A Tengani, Nsanje.



Community access road construction in GVH Utenda, T/A Ndamera, Nsanje.

Official Campaign Launch of 16 Days of Activism on Violence Against Women and Girls in Pictures

On 25th November, 2017, Malawi joined the rest of the world in launching the campaign on 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (GBV). In Malawi, the official launch took place in Mzimba District. ActionAid Malawi was part of the launch and below are some of the photos depicting AAM participation at the event.



The main banner of the event



Various stakeholders including chiefs and parliamentarians marching during the event



Minister of Gender looking at the key messages and demands displayed by girls



Minister of Gender Hon. Jean Kalirani (2nd Right) listening to a presentation on ActionAid Pavilion.



A GBV survivor presenting her case against gender-based violence at the event



Minister of Gender, Jean Kalirani (Guest of Honour, making the speech at the event

Indeed, accountability is key

During the 47th Session of Parliament opening remarks, President Peter Mutharika minced no words on accountability. The President---troubled by the growing aversion towards accountability in the country---posed a soul-searching question to the parliamentarians on accountability.

“We are here to act on behalf of our voters and citizens. And how many of us truly represent the will of the people. How many of us consult the people we represent?” queried the President. Good questions, they were.

The President said he has seen times when Members of Parliament represent their parties more than the people.

“The third reason why we exist as Parliament is to maintain oversight of the Executive on behalf of the people of Malawi. It is critical to hold the Executive accountable. But who holds us accountable? ...in any human society everyone must be accountable to someone else.” Great observation, this is.

The President deserves a pat on the back for coming down to earth on accountability. For so long, Malawi has stagnated on the rut of underdevelopment because those entrusted to lead have short-changed the led.

During the campaign trail, many politicians; Presidents, Parliamentarians and Councilors engage the people, the voters, with their manifestos. But how many of them, once elected, go back to the same people to explain the progress of their manifestos? How many MPs and Councilors meaningfully consult their constituents on issues they want to be presented before parliament and full council meetings?

There are some actions by the Executive branch of government which are far wanting on accountability. During this year’s United Nation General Assembly (UNGA), government



Mark of accountability: Rights Holders and Duty Bearers gather for a group photo in Rumphi District after presentation of a CDF Budget Tracking Report by Rumphi Civil Society Network

refused to disclose the budget and number of delegates. Similarly, during the celebrations of the country’s 53rd Anniversary, government blatantly refused to disclose the budget. This shows accountability is wanting on almost all levels of the country’s

Accountability is central to any development that answers human rights challenges for the rights holders.

governance. This ill needs to go.

For a developing democracy like Malawi, accountability is not an option. It ought to be the country’s way of life. Accountability is central to any development that answers human rights challenges for the rights holders. Without accountability, citizens feel powerless and voiceless. The eventual tragedy is citizens grow nonchalant and disenfranchised in the affairs of the country, leading to unresponsive planning, budgeting and utilization of the taxpayers’ resources.

Earlier this year, ActionAid Malawi

commissioned a study on factors limiting participation of citizens in policy and budget process in Malawi. The findings were disappointing. Among other depressing issues, the study revealed that social accountability and oversight capacity of district councils and communities in promoting participation of citizens in good governance is very low.

To buttress the point, the study pointed out that there is very weak engagement by the councilors, District Councils, ADCs, VDCs with local citizens in propagating for accountable and inclusive governance. Furthermore, the study noted there is no practice of participation in deliberations on local level financial reports, budgets and expenditure reports.

The study also unveiled several structural and policy challenges that hinder the participation of citizens in social accountability. These include; lack of information and education, culture of secrecy and respect and fear of reprisals.

For sure, if Malawi is to develop, accountability should not be limited to lip service or academic discussion. It has to be entrenched in the country’s governance architecture, right from the central level down to the common citizen in the village.

AAM STAFF CORNER

Appointment of Ms. Tiwonge Kumwenda-Simkonda as Head of Fundraising and Communications

Late October 2017, AAM appointed Ms. Tiwonge Kumwenda-Simkonda as Head of Fundraising and Communications. Ms. Kumwenda-Simkonda replaces Ulemu Chiluzi who left AAM earlier in the year. Before her appointment, Tiwonge was managing the EU-funded Social Accountability project at AAM.

Congratulations Tiwonge and we wish you all the best in your new job!!!!!!

Welcome to the world, baby boy!

The family of Mr. and Mrs. Graciam Kamnyamata is pleased to inform the AAM family that God blessed their family with a gift of baby boy, Emmanuel Kamnyamata. The baby was born on 25th October, at ABC Clinic, Area 47, Sector 5

Wedding Bells

John Mysali; SDC Accountant is this Saturday, 2nd December tying a knot with a his long-time sweetheart, Mtisunge Matita. Officiation will be at New Apostolic Church in Area 14 starting 9: am. Reception will be at ICC Marquee (formerly Sheaffer)

Let's come and support our fellow ActionAider!

Sports

After a long break, Tingathe Boys, a Social Football Team at AAM bounced back into action on Saturday, 25th November, against Makuta Social Football Team. The game ended 6-0 in favour of Makuti. Tingathe Boys Captain Gift Okasiya blamed the loss on fatigue.