



2022

CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND REHABILITATION ANNUAL REPORT



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OUR VISION

A vibrant Malawi culture which embraces the values of democracy and human rights.

OUR MISSION

To contribute towards the protection, promotion and consolidation of good governance by empowering rural and urban communities in Malawi to be aware of and exercise their rights through research, advocacy and CHRR seeks to contribute towards the realization of this vision through programmes carried out under five core activities, namely: Public Awareness and Community Empowerment, Civic and Human Rights Education, Training and Research; Advocacy, Capacity Building, and Net-working in order to realize human development

OUR CORE VALUES

- Respect for Human Rights
 - Equality
 - Impartiality

WHERE OUR DONORS ARE LOCATED



OUR BOARD OF GOVERNANCE

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS IS RESPONSIBLE FOR GOVERNANCE, OVERSIGHT, AND MAJOR DECISION-MAKING, REPRESENTING THE INTERESTS OF STAKEHOLDERS.

Benson Somba- Nkhoma – Board Chairperson

Martha Kaukonde

Undule Mwakasungula

Auda Msiska

Paul Munyenyembe

Levie Msiska

Susan Kaunda

MEET OUR TEAM



MICHAEL KAIYATSA
Executive Director



Thandizo Mphwiyo



Wilfred Mwambira



Strumpf Munthali



Nyatuwe Phiri



Washington Manda



Dennis Mwafulirwa



Tamara Mutyavaviri



Naomi Phiri



Lydia Mkandawire



Chris Munthali



Jimmy Mponda



Love Thole



Chifundo Kamole



Evance Mavundu



Patrick Mwanyongo

Macpheterson Issa

Modester Ramundi

Kennedy Rashid



Chimwemwe Kayange

Takondwa Mkundika

Maziko Malera

BENSON NKHOMA-SOMBA



BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

This report is a celebration of the achievements we registered in the year 2022. In it, we share with

you the steps we have undertaken to promote human rights and good governance in the country, the projects we have implemented, the partnerships we have created, the lives we have changed and the foundations we have built for ourselves to continue serving Malawians in the year to come.

I am deeply grateful to those who have supported us to reach this far. CHRR continues to progress because of the unwavering support we continue to receive from the communities we serve, public bodies, the media, fellow CSOs, international human rights networks and development partners.

I am also deeply thankful to our staff, interns and community volunteers for their enormous efforts, contributions and resilience, even when the odds appeared starkly against us.

Despite the continued effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the devastating cyclones that battered our country at the beginning of the year, and a hugely challenging economic environment, our team has registered numerous successes and achievements that are highlighted in this report.

These achievements are a testament to the commitment and dedication of the CHRR management and staff as well as our team of district and community volunteers.

Looking ahead, I am hopeful that the year 2023 will be another successful year for CHRR as we continue our journey towards a vibrant Malawi culture, which embraces the values of democracy and human rights.

Benson Nkhoma-Somba

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Benson Nkhoma-Somba', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Board Chairperson

MICHAEL SIMON KAIYATSA

**EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE**



I would like to begin by thanking everyone for your contributions and unwavering support towards the work that we do. What we saw happen during 2022 is proof of how important our work is to the future and wellbeing of our country. Many of you have written or said to me that Malawi needs CHRR more than ever. And I have responded by saying that with your support, we will continue to fight to ensure that Malawi remains committed to principles of human rights and good governance.

Over the last 12 months, there have been many times when the only voice for human rights and good governance has been that of CHRR. During 2022, as our country's democratic traditions were challenged, our human rights threatened, CHRR raised its voice, reminding authorities of the commitment they made to uphold our democratic Constitution.

The year 2022 also witnessed CHRR continuing its work at community, district and national levels to promote and protect the rights of various vulnerable groups, such as women living with HIV and AIDS in Salima and Lilongwe (rural) districts through the generous support we continue to receive from the Stephen Lewis Foundation, as well as adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) through our groundbreaking Power to You(th) project.

Our work with persons with albinism, LGBTIQ individuals and people accused of witchcraft also continued in 2022 with the generous support of the Royal Norwegian Embassy as well as the Munakata Foundation, who have specifically supported our work with LGBTIQ refugees and asylum seekers in and around Dzaleka Refugee Camp.

As we enter the year 2023, our commitment and resolve to promote the rights of these vulnerable groups, and to entrench a culture of human rights, remains stronger than ever, particularly in view of the rise of the far right, anti-rights, movement across the globe.

I would like to thank all our development partners for the support you gave us in 2022. I would also like to thank the Board of Trustees, management and staff and all our interns and volunteers for their dedication and contribution to the noble cause. I am proud of everything we have achieved together in the past year, and it is my hope that our staff and volunteers, and all our partners will continue supporting us with the same generosity of spirit and audacious thinking in the year 2023.

May the Almighty God bless each and every one of you.

Michael Simon Kaiyatsa

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MSK', written in a cursive style.

Executive Director

(1) THREATS TO THE CIVIL SPACE

a. Freedom of association

A key concern on the civil space in 2022 was the adoption of laws that are detrimental to the constitutionally-guaranteed rights to freedoms of association, expression, assembly and labour rights. In March 2022, parliament passed the draconian NGO Amendment Bill despite a 2018 court injunction obtained by CHRR and other CSOs against its tabling on grounds that the bill was inconsistent with international human rights standards.

The Bill contained provisions that threaten NGOs' independence, existence and operations. They included a restrictive NGO definition which could exclude "non-public benefit organizations" or "mutual benefit organizations" such as federations, advocacy groups or research institutions from registering; the requirement of mandatory registration; excessive discretion granted to the official regulatory body with the authority to suspend, cancel and revoke registration; a prohibition on "electioneering and politicking" by NGOs; and disproportionate criminal sanctions against organizations and their leaders for non-compliance with the Act. In addition, the Bill had a lot of vague and open-ended monitoring powers (Section 20(b) of the ACT provides the Authority with the power to "monitor compliance by NGOs with the provisions of the NGO Act or any other written law." This provision grants the Authority broad powers to monitor NGOs without stating which actions it may undertake to fulfil this function, which raises the risk of intrusive government monitoring. Under international and regional standards, freedom of association includes the right to be free from undue state interference.

Under the new NGO law, an organization's registration can be suspended if it is deemed to have departed from its original purpose, engaged in partisan politics, or violated any provisions of the law, among other grounds.

b. Right to Protest

In March, police in Lilongwe, fired tear gas at hundreds of protesters marching against alleged government corruption. The demonstrators were led by Citizens Against Impunity and Corruption, a civil society grouping.

In July, police again used tear gas against protesters in Lilongwe that were demonstrating against the high cost of living and 'selective justice' by the courts over corruption cases. The protesters were angry over a delay in the prosecution of former lands minister Kezzie Msukwa, who has been linked to kickbacks for contracts worth more than MK150 Billion (US\$150Million). Although President Lazarus Chakwera had suspended some top officials implicated in the scandal, the demonstrators demanded speedy public trials.

In response to the protests, police brutally arrested four leaders of the Human Rights Ambassadors group, which organised the demonstrations. Police used teargas, rubber bullets, and live ammunition to quell the protests. Police also arrested over 70 protesters, including eight human rights activists from the Human Rights Ambassadors, a civil society organization that had organized the protests.

c. The right to strike and other labour rights

An October 2021 amendment to the Employment Act and Labour Relations Act, which allows employers to deduct wages from striking employees if they strike for more than three days per year, took effect. The law also requires the labour minister to apply to the Industrial Relations Court to determine whether a strike involves an “essential service,” the interruption of which would endanger the life, health, or personal safety of part of the population.

The law does not provide a specific list of essential services, but the October amendment authorizes the minister of labour to designate categories of workers deemed essential who are not allowed to strike. Before the amendment, members of a registered union in essential services had only a limited right to strike. There are no special laws or exemptions from regular labour laws in export-processing zones. The law does not apply to most workers who are in the informal sector without work contracts.

d. Right to freedom of expression

The right to freedom of expression was increasingly threatened as a rise in cases of unlawful surveillance by police, including interception of people’s private conversations, resulted in arbitrary arrests, prosecutions and convictions.

In April, police arrested investigative journalist Gregory Gondwe for publishing a story revealing alleged police corruption involving payments to a company owned by a businessman, himself accused of corruption. Gondwe claimed police demanded he reveal his sources for a story published in March that cited a leaked document alleging the government secretly paid millions of dollars to corruption suspect Zuneth Sattar. The story Gondwe authored claimed the payments were for the procurement of police water cannons, worth millions of US dollars. Police claimed Gondwe was never officially placed under arrest, dropped all charges, and returned his cell phone after the interrogation. On 1 May, police arrested 39-year-old nurse, Chidawawa Mainje, and charged with cyber harassment under section 86 of the Electronic Transactions and Cyber Security Act of 2016. His arrest was in connection with the accusation that he had insulted President Chakwera in a WhatsApp conversation. In his post, Mainje had accused the President of not doing anything to change the lives of people who voted for him. Mainje’s arrest happened a week after police in Lilongwe had arrested a 51-year-old man for allegedly insulting the minister of labor in his WhatsApp group post.

On May 2, 2022, CHRR led other CSOs in condemning rising cases of Police surveillance and interception of private conversations of citizens resulting in arbitrary arrests, prosecutions and convictions. These organisations noted that the arrests were having “a chilling effect on citizens, journalists and activists who use social media platforms, such as WhatsApp.” The organisations called upon authorities to drop the charges and take immediate steps to protect people’s rights to freedom of expression online and offline.

(2) THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

Although the Chakwera government has committed to addressing the issue, several senior members of his government have been implicated in corruption scandals. In some cases, the government took steps to prosecute officials who engaged in corrupt practices, but impunity remained a problem.

Throughout the year, the corruption discourse was dominated by reports of alleged state capture by influential business people such as British businessman Zuneth Sattar, his associate Ashok Kumar Sreedharan, and Abdul Karim Batawalala, along with allegations of corrupt practices by government officials and cabinet ministers. These allegations have raised questions regarding the government's commitment to uprooting corruption.

Several CSOs took to the streets to express dissatisfaction with the high levels of corruption and growing impunity. The high level of perceived public sector corruption is consistent with other assessments of the state of corruption in Malawi. For example, Transparency International showed Malawi had performed poorly on the Corruption Perceptions Index, with a score of 35 out of 100, thus ranking 110 out of 180 countries (Transparency International, 2022). A report by Afrobarometer showed that majority of Malawians say that corruption is increasing and that the government is performing poorly in dealing with the vice.

On December 6, police arrested Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) Director General Martha Chizuma on charges connected to a leaked audio recording of her private January telephone conversation in which she discussed the challenges of investigating and prosecuting corruption cases tied to Zuneth Sattar. The arrest took place just days after the ACB's arrest of State Vice President Saulos Chilima on corruption allegations and at a time when the ACB's Sattar investigation into alleged bribe taking by Chilima and other key members of the existing government, including cabinet-level officials, had reached an advanced stage. In a December 7 joint statement, CHRR and other CSOs condemned the arrest, observing that Chizuma's arrest was directly linked to her tough stance against corruption and was a deliberate attempt by "invisible forces" to sideline her and undermine ACB work. President Chakwera subsequently announced a commission of inquiry had been established to investigate the circumstances behind her arrest, but no findings were available at year's end.

Threats against Chizuma increased at the same time as the ACB's investigation of Sattar progressed. In May, President Chakwera ordered the ACB to prepare a report on its investigation into corruption allegations against multiple government officials whose names were publicly revealed in a United Kingdom court's bail hearing for Sattar. In June, Chakwera fired Inspector General of Police George Kainja and removed all delegated authority entrusted to Vice President Chilima after their names appeared on a list of high-level government officials believed by ACB to have accepted bribes from Sattar. The ACB's report included the names of 53 sitting and former officials who allegedly received money from Sattar and his agents between March and October 2021. The report also stated the police service and the military awarded 16 contracts worth \$150 million to five companies owned by Sattar between 2017 and 2021. As the year came to a close, no cases against individuals accused of accepting bribes from Sattar had progressed to the prosecution

(3) Rights of vulnerable groups

a. Refugee rights

Previously, in April 2021, the ministry of homeland security had ordered all refugees and asylum seekers living outside the Dzaleka Refugee Camp to return to the camp, claiming they posed national security risks. The Supreme Court issued an injunction against the order, but the High Court vacated the injunction in August 2022. The ministry set a deadline of November 30, 2022 for refugees and asylum seekers living in rural areas to return to the camp, and February 2023 for those in urban areas.

Government officials have accused refugees of creating economic problems for Malawians. Ken Zikhale Ng'oma, the homeland security minister, said that Malawi cannot host refugees "doing business at the expense of Malawians." He said that those who defy the order to relocate would be picked up by security agents and dumped "at the nearest border post."

CHRR and other organisations, including the UNHCR, spoke out strongly against the planned relocation of refugees, urging the government to rescind its relocation decision, and warning that existing structures in Dzaleka refugee camp were already stretched to the limit and could not accommodate more refugees in a dignified manner. CHRR's Executive Director, Michael Kaiyatsa, argued that people fleeing war, conflict and persecution deserve compassion and empathy. Using police to force such vulnerable people out of their homes is the opposite of how things should be done. CHRR also cautioned that relocations would have dire consequences on the provision of critical basic services as well as protection activities. In its public statements, CHRR reminded government of its commitments under both the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and the 1969 African (OAU) refugee conventions. Article 26 of the 1951 Convention recognizes the right of freedom of movement and choice of residence for refugees lawfully within a country, while article 31(2) prohibits restrictions on the freedom of movement of asylum seekers unless such restrictions are deemed "necessary." Of course, Malawi entered reservations when it ratified the 1951 Convention, stating that it considered certain provisions "as recommendations only and not legally binding," including refugees' rights to freedom of movement, employment, property, and public education.

However, CHRR reminded government of its endorsement in 2018 of the Global Compact on Refugees at the UN General Assembly, accepting to roll out the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework. These instruments demonstrated a commitment to a common approach to improve the worldwide response to the needs of refugees. The inclusion and integration of refugees into host communities is a key concept at the heart of the global compact and the framework, which recognize that refugees can become self-reliant if permitted to access education and labour markets, thereby contributing to the development of host communities and local economies. The 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, which Malawi supported, recognizes that refugee camps "should be the exception" as a temporary measure in cases of emergency, and that refugees should be allowed to live among host communities, which can reduce the risk of protracted stays and lessen refugees' dependence on humanitarian aid. However, government officials made statements taking the opposite position in supporting the use of the camps.

b. Rights of children, women and girls

Strong social and traditional norms continued to drive the practice of child marriage in Malawi. Many communities still view child marriage as a way to improve their economic status through the money or goods that the bride gives to the family.

During the year 2022, the youth networks that we have empowered through our Power to You(th) programme managed to withdraw 20 girls from child marriage in Dedza and 87 girls in Machinga districts.

During the year, many girls and young women reported lack of access to modern contraceptives due to regular stock-outs, especially in district and rural health facilities. As a result, many girls and young women were exposed to the risk of teenage pregnancy and forced marriage. The stigmatisation of adolescent pregnancy continued throughout the year, which resulted in pregnant adolescents dropping out, or being forced out of school.

Malawi's abortion law remained one of the most restrictive in Africa, permitting termination of pregnancy only to save a woman's life. This led many women and girls to end unwanted pregnancies in unsafe, clandestine settings. Efforts to table the Termination of Pregnancy (TOP) Bill in Parliament were unsuccessful.

In May 2022, reports emerged that Ludzi Boys Primary School in Mchinji belonging to the Catholic Church had been closed over sex abuse among students. Archbishop Desmond Tambala of Lilongwe Diocese was quoted in the local media as confirming the school's closure following revelations of sexual abuse cases at the campus. However, the Archbishop did not provide details of what really transpired but he said this followed investigations which he instituted and found what was happening was both a violation of rights and sin. The Bishop was also quoted as saying his office is committed to zero tolerance for any forms of sexual abuse including that of children, even among children themselves.

The year 2022 also witnessed continued reports of rape of women and defilement of girls. Although courts meted out stiffer penalties to offenders, the abuse of women and girls continued in 2022. The Malawi Police Service claimed that 2022 had registered fewer cases than the year 2021, saying the service had recorded 1,836 cases of rape and defilement in 2022 compared to 2,387 in 2021. The service attributed the decrease to swift investigations by the police and stiffer penalties imposed by the courts .

There were, however, a number of reported abuses perpetrated by police officers. For example, on 18 January 2022, the High Court of Malawi sentenced former Police Officer, Andrew Chagaga, to 30 years' imprisonment for rape of a minor in police custody. The background to the case is that on 12 December 2020, the complainant, a 17-year-old girl, and her friends who were on their way to church were arrested for being 'idle and disorderly' contrary to section 180 of the Penal Code. They were taken into custody at Limbe Police Station. During the night, the accused police officer took the complainant to a secluded place where he raped her twice before releasing her in the middle of the night. She reported the rape to the Police, resulting in the prosecution and conviction of the accused for rape.

On February 8, 2022 a police board of inquiry found suspended Director of Human Resource Management and Development Stan Kaliza guilty of abuse of office following an investigation into reports Kaliza sexually abused 40 women police officers . The inquiry into Kaliza's conduct was initiated after screenshots were shared on social media in November 2021 showing Kaliza had solicited sexual favors from the women in exchange for promotions, deployment to peacekeeping missions, and assistance recruiting others into the police service.

c. Rights of the elderly and people accused of witchcraft

The year 2022 was particularly bad for older persons in Malawi largely due to prevailing beliefs about witchcraft. During the year, CHRR recorded 15 cases of killings on the basis of witchcraft, all involving the elderly. Many more were subjected to harassment and torture by mobs. Some of the cases CHRR documented in the year include the following:

- On 8th January 2022, a 72-year-old woman named Lignet Chapula, from Malipe village in Chiradzulu district, was left to die, after being severely assaulted by villagers suspected to be her relatives and other community members who accused her of practicing witchcraft. The attack was so severe that doctors treating her had to amputate her leg.

- During the night of 23-24 July 2022, two older women identified as Witness Phiri and Elizabeth Juwa of Guta under Group Village Headman Kamtondoli Gondwe of Euthini in Mzimba were brutally murdered and their houses set on fire by a mob, who suspected them of practicing witchcraft.
- On the night of 27th of August 2022 Marita Phiri aged 48, was killed by unknown people who were in Gule Wamkulu regalia in Macheso Village in Ntchisi district. Marita was suspected of having a hand in the death of a woman who had died after a short-illness in the village. A mob of gule wamkulu stormed the village carrying stones and pangas which they used when assaulting her. Her house was also set ablaze and her livestock killed.
- On 29th November 2022, Levison Simwa, aged 67, from Chitipa district was hacked to death by his own family members after he was accused of practicing witchcraft.
- In December last year, an elderly woman Christina Mphande survived a ruthless attack from a group of funeral-goers who accused her of killing her daughter-in-law. A video clip about the assault went viral on social media, prompting authorities to condemn it and the police to arrest the suspects.

In Mzimba, in the area of Inkosi Kampingo Sibande, two elderly women were assaulted and forced to bury a dead person on their own over witchcraft accusations. A video shared on social media showed the women being forced to fill the grave after a coffin was lowered into it. The work is usually done by a group of young men known as adzukulu. At least 20 people were arrested by police following the incident.

However, as at year's end, none of the accused had been convicted. The incident highlighted the continued abuse of elderly women as a result of witchcraft accusations. In the year, CHRR made several statements, strongly condemning attacks based on witchcraft accusations and calling upon authorities to do more to end the practice. CHRR also decried the slow rate of prosecutions for witchcraft-based violence related offences.

d. LGBTIQ rights

The violations of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) persons continued in 2022. CHRR and its local partners documented over 16 cases of abuse and violence against LGBTIQ persons. The nature of the violations fell into three broad categories: stigma, harassment, and violence.

CHRR also documented over 20 cases of abuse, discrimination and violence against LGBTIQ refugees and asylum seekers living in and around the Dzaleka Refugee Camp in Dowa. Most of the cases involved denial of basic services such as water, health and housing. There were also cases of rape and physical assaults against some members of the LGBTIQ community at the camp. CHRR worked with UNHCR and Plan Malawi to provide psychosocial support to survivors of the attacks.

In a rare sign of progress on LGBTIQ rights, in September, 2022, the Malawi Supreme Court of Appeal ruled a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) rights-focused organization, Nyasa Rainbow Alliance, could proceed with a 2017 legal challenge questioning on freedom of association grounds the constitutionality of the government's refusal to permit the organization to register as an NGO. The case remained pending at year's end.

The government permitted peaceful assembly of LGBTQI+ persons, including permitting a Pride march in Lilongwe in June. Freedom of association was somewhat restricted, as NGOs that sought to register as LGBTQI+ rights organizations continued to face government

restrictions.

e. Rights of persons with albinism

Attacks against persons with albinism, which were first reported in 2013, continued in 2022 despite the implementation of the National Action Plan on Persons with Albinism (2018 –2022). On November 30, 2022, around midnight, an assailant broke into the house of a 3-year-old girl with albinism, Tadala Chirwa, while she slept next to her grandmother. The assailant killed the girl, cut off her left arm, and escaped. Less than a week later, police arrested three suspects in connection with the girl’s killing. The investigation was pending at year’s end.

The killing of Tadala and the removal of her limb is consistent with past patterns on attacks on persons with albinism, which are driven by the false belief that their body parts bring wealth and good luck.

provide psychosocial support to survivors of the attacks.

In a rare sign of progress on LGBTIQ rights, in September, 2022, the Malawi Supreme Court of Appeal ruled a lesbian, gay, bisexual,

On 26th November 2022, thugs killed Marko Chagaga, aged 8, who hailed from Masanduko village Traditional Authority Ngabu in Chikwawa. Three suspects persuaded Marko to accompany them to a specific bush to fetch firewood. While there, the thugs decapitated the boy and buried his headless body. Well-wishers tipped Chiromo Police who immediately set up a roadblock at Sorgin, leading to the arrest of a man identified as Bima. When police questioned Bima, he mentioned his accomplices Tipa and another person who is still at large. However, the three suspects were charged with murder and were expected to appear in court to answer murder charges. As at year end, investigations into the murder had not been completed.

CHRR called on authorities to end attacks on persons with albinism and to ensure that all those responsible for these attacks were promptly brought to justice. However, in a sign of improved justice for persons with albinism, courts across the country handed down severe sentences to those convicted of killing persons with albinism. On June 27, 2022, a judge sentenced five persons to life in prison, five others to 30 years in prison, and one to 60 years in prison for conviction of their roles in the 2018 killing of a man with albinism, MacDonald Masambuka. Those convicted included the victim’s brother, a police officer, a Roman Catholic priest, and a medical officer convicted of conspiring to sell the victim’s human tissue.

Norwegian Ambassador Steinar Egil Hagen and CHRR Board chairperson, Benson Nkhoma Somba signing an agreement on protecting minority rights





Find above the picture at the Julia Taft signing ceremony: In the picture are CHRR Board chairperson Benson Nkhoma Somba, Programmes Manager Thandizo Mphwiyo and United States of America Embassy in Malawi Ambassador Young

CORE BUSINESS

UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE



Project Coordinator Modester Ramundi addressing the community of Dowa district

CHRR is dedicated to fostering a national culture that upholds human rights, including the right to health. With this commitment, the organization focused its efforts under the Oxfam project on contributing to the protection, promotion, and consolidation of health rights. By empowering rural communities through research, advocacy, and networking, We aimed to raise awareness and enable individuals to exercise their rights. To ensure community participation, the Center engaged in advocacy activities in Karonga and Dowa districts, specifically targeting the localities of T/A Kyungu, Kayembe, and Chakhaza.

The year 2022 witnessed productive interactions between project participants and policymakers, resulting in positive policy decisions such as the launch of a code of ethics and professional conduct for health workers. Under the initiative "Increased agency of poor and marginalized people seeking universal health care," project structures in collaboration with community entities conducted 93 initiatives advocating for improved access to universal health coverage. This led to

local responsibility bearers in the communities developing a deeper understanding of policies and legal frameworks related to universal health care, directly impacting an estimated 146 individuals (66M). Additionally, the program generated significant media engagement across radio, television, online, and print platforms, contributing to an increased national public discourse on universal health care.

However, challenges emerged throughout the program implementation. The devaluation of the Kwacha at the beginning of the year posed a risk to meeting project targets and indicators, prompting Oxfam to provide additional funds to counter rising costs. Towards the end of the program, a cholera outbreak minimally disrupted implementation, and individuals caring for sick relatives interfered with program-related activities at various intervention levels. In response, the program team implemented enhanced hygiene measures and increased awareness of cholera preventive measures at all meeting locations.

SEXUAL REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS



The BAI project was a 2-year project that aimed at promotion of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and HIV prevention among key populations by engaging stakeholders. It seeks to address the specific healthcare needs of marginalized groups through advocacy and implementation of tailored UHC strategies. The project emphasizes the importance of HIV prevention and creating a supportive environment for comprehensive healthcare services for key populations. The project also focused on advocating for the protection and promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for individuals with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions. It aimed to eliminate discrimination and ensure access to comprehensive SRHR services by engaging policymakers, healthcare providers, and community leaders. Thereby creating an inclusive environment that upholds the rights of individuals with diverse SOGIESC.

Policymakers and duty bearers were strategically involved to support access to safe abortion services. The project advocated for the recognition of safe abortion as an essential component of reproductive healthcare and women's rights. The project contributed to raise awareness, remove barriers, and promote evidence-based information and quality reproductive healthcare services. Hence, empower women to make informed decisions regarding their pregnancies and access safe abortion when needed. Overall, this project demonstrates a commitment to advancing health and health rights in Malawi. By engaging 563 various stakeholders, advocating for inclusive policies, and removing barriers, the project contributed to the creation an environment where everyone can access comprehensive healthcare services, exercise their SRHR, and make informed choices about their reproductive health.

The BAI Malawi consortium had its fair share of challenges in the implementation year. For instance, some key stakeholders were not represented during high level meetings. The Ministry of Finance was not present during deliberations in the National Health Budget Briefing and Advocacy meeting for CSOs and Development Partners in Malawi. Also, Malawi encountered a kwacha devaluation of about 25% and a fuel price increment, leading to an increased cost of living. Furthermore, the consortium encountered resistance from the state actors to support TOP bill law reform advocacy. Lastly, the BAI Alliance, through research, also noted that there is minimal knowledge among stakeholders on SRHR laws and policies.

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY ACCESS TO COVID-19 INFORMATION AND INVOLVEMENT IN PANDEMIC RESPONSES



Board member Levi Msiska, Salima District Officer Mcpherson Issa, project Coordinator Tamara Mutyavaviri and Salima District community under T/A Khombeza during a review meeting of the Commonwealth funded project in Salima District

Commonwealth Foundation is a Commonwealth agency for civil society, a unique, stand-alone organisation established by, funded by, and reporting to governments. The Foundation caters for people's participation in all aspects of public dialogue, to act together and learn from each other to build democratic societies. Ultimately, the Foundation seeks to ensure that policy and government institutions are more effective contributors to development through the influence of civic voices. CHRR received funding from Commonwealth Foundation to implement a project entitled, Strengthening community access to Covid-19 information and involvement in pandemic responses.

The areas of implementation covered by this grant were four communities in two districts; Salima district having an estimated total population of 154 563 under the community of T/A Khombeza and T/A Kalonga and Lilongwe district under the community of T/A Chiseka with an estimated population of 102 909 and T/A Kalolo with an estimated population of 52 369.

Inaccurate information about COVID-19 at the outbreak's inception hindered vaccination rates. Due to the exclusion of certain populations from pandemic information, CHRR worked with vulnerable groups to enable increased vaccination coverage.

This project sought to address the issue of lack of information around COVID-19 and the need to be vaccinated amongst vulnerable groups. Specifically, the main target group for this project were Persons with Disability (PWD) focusing more on people with visual and hearing impairment and Person's living with HIV (PLWH).

During the projects tenure we noted the various misconceptions the community had on COVID-19 vaccination and the virus itself. Some of the misconceptions raised by the community regarding the COVID-19 vaccine are :Barrenness, Reduced immunity after vaccination, thereby reducing one & #39;s lifespan, Increased disability, Satanic occultism, Western agenda for African population control, Imminent death and Community belief that COVID-19 vaccination kits are pre-infected.

Success Stories

- There is now an evident recognition of People with Disability within the communities we implemented in as the awareness activities also helped capacitate them on inclusivity.
- Production and distribution of COVID-19 information in braille was a welcome invitation as this was a non-existent practice.
- We have now initiated discussions on including segregated data on COVID-19 statistics that also has a clear representation of vulnerable minority groups as this was not considered at the onset of the pandemic.
- Capacity building has enabled the community to be more aware of the benefits of the COVID-19 vaccination.
- The community also disregarded the various myths and misconceptions they previously had as they also noted that the vaccine was meant to protect them and not harm them.

Inclusivity is vital in ensuring that decisions made to benefit the community benefit everyone and no one is left behind. The community is now capacitated as they now know what COVID-19 is and many have been vaccinated. A total of 96 Female and 62 Male from the vulnerable groups were vaccinated during the four targeted meetings we had. From the interface meetings with duty bearers, vulnerable groups were now able to voice issues affecting them in a formal set up.

Increased knowledge and awareness of COVID-19 pandemic also assists in ensuring that COVID-19 measures are adhered to at all times and the right precautions are taken when one is infected. Use of the right material to present to various disability groups such as use of braille for the visually impaired and use of a sign language interpretation for those with hearing impairment made a significant difference to the community as PWD felt included as they were able to fully understand the content.

EMPOWERING WOMEN LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS



Cyclone Freddy affected communities receiving aid from the Stephen Lewis foundation

The overall objective of this program is to make a positive contribution towards the economic empowerment of women living with HIV & AIDS and to reduce discrimination and human rights violations against people living with HIV & AIDS in the targeted districts of Salima and Lilongwe. The program recognizes the intersectionality of gender and HIV & AIDS, aiming to address both the economic challenges faced by women living with the virus and the violations of their human rights.

Through capacity building initiatives and awareness-raising activities, the program aims to empower communities with accurate information about HIV & AIDS, dispel myths and misconceptions, and promote a supportive and inclusive environment. Furthermore, by facilitating linkages with stakeholders such as government agencies, financial institutions, and vocational training providers, the program seeks to enhance opportunities for income generation, entrepreneurship, and skill

development among women living with the virus. In addition, by fostering partnerships and collaboration, the program aims to advocate for the protection of human rights, increase access to justice, and improve the overall well-being of women affected by the virus at the district level. Overall, a total of 5,874 beneficiaries were reached out in the year 2022 through the broader goal of promoting the economic

empowerment and rights of women living with HIV & AIDS. A combination of community capacity building, economic linkages, and collaboration with district structures, the program contributed to the creation of an enabling environment where women can thrive, exercise their rights, and overcome the challenges posed by HIV & AIDS-related discrimination.

Despite registering successes in this project, it also faced some challenges. For instance, the devaluation of the kwacha has affected our work as an institution, such that several commodities are now pegged at a high price and we have to adjust some of the activities, in order to stay within the budget. The women that we support have also been affected by these high prices of commodities, such that their businesses are not making as much profit as they anticipated.

STRENGTHENING MINORITY RIGHTS



CHRR and The Royal Norwegian Embassy provided funding to the Strengthening Minority Rights project in Malawi, aiming to establish community rapport and interventions. As of late there has been more cases of violence against people accused of witchcraft. The three groups continue to face stigma and discrimination, especially LGBTIQ+. The project has faced challenges, such as the murder of a 3-year-old girl with albinism in Kasungu and the ongoing progress of unsolved murders of PWAs killed in 2021 and 2022. Through this project the government of Malawi constructed 21 houses for PWAs, 19 of which have been occupied, and promises to construct more in the 2023–2024 financial year to ensure their safety.

However, one of the main challenges faced in the project was related to the quality of reporting from the volunteers in the target districts and the central office. This resulted in delays in submitting quarterly reports to the coordinating office and compromised the overall quality of the submissions.

During the capacity building workshops for Community-Based Educators (CBEs), difficulties were encountered in filling out the pre-test and post-test forms to assess their knowledge on program issues. This posed a challenge in accurately measuring the impact of the capacity building sessions.

FROM DISCLOSURE TO IMPACT: DEEPENING AND BROADENING OPEN CONTRACTING IN MALAWI/AFRICA

The Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation (CHRR), in collaboration with the Africa Freedom of Information Centre (AFIC) and with the financial support of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, has been implementing the project titled "From Disclosure to Impact: Deepening and Broadening Open Contracting in Malawi/Africa." Over the course of two years, the project has aimed to enhance health and education service delivery in Malawi, specifically in the targeted districts of Lilongwe and Salima, by promoting the disclosure of public procurement information, public participation, efficiency, value for money, fair business practices, and competition in public contracting. public contracting. consideration the findings and recommendations from contract monitoring.



The project has set forth several result outcomes to be achieved. Firstly, it seeks to enhance transparency by facilitating the disclosure of contract information in the targeted sectors in Malawi. Secondly, it aims to increase citizens' participation in government processes, ensuring that their voices are heard and taken into account. Thirdly, it aims to promote fair business practices within the target sectors, fostering an environment of equal opportunities and ethical conduct. Lastly, the project aims to improve the responsiveness of government entities in the target sectors towards Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), taking into consideration the findings and recommendations from contract monitoring.

To achieve these goals, the project has established specific milestones. It has conducted radio talk-shows and stakeholder engagement meetings to raise awareness among the general public about access to information laws and regulations, thereby strengthening public demand for transparency and accountability. Furthermore, it has provided capacity-building initiatives for community members, CSOs, and journalists in the target districts, equipping them with knowledge on access to information and public procurement processes. As a result, citizen participation in demanding transparency and accountability has increased.

However, the project has faced certain challenges throughout its implementation. One significant challenge is the low pro-active disclosure of public procurement information by government Ministries, Departments, and Agencies. This lack of transparency stems from an institutionalized culture of secrecy, which has hindered citizen participation and fair business practices within public procurement processes. Additionally, there is a limited awareness and understanding of the importance of transparency, citizen participation, and fair business practices in public contracting, not only among government entities but also among businesses, CSOs, and community members.

ENHANCE THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN YOUTH, PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, AND OTHER MARGINALIZED GROUPS IN LAW AND POLICYMAKING



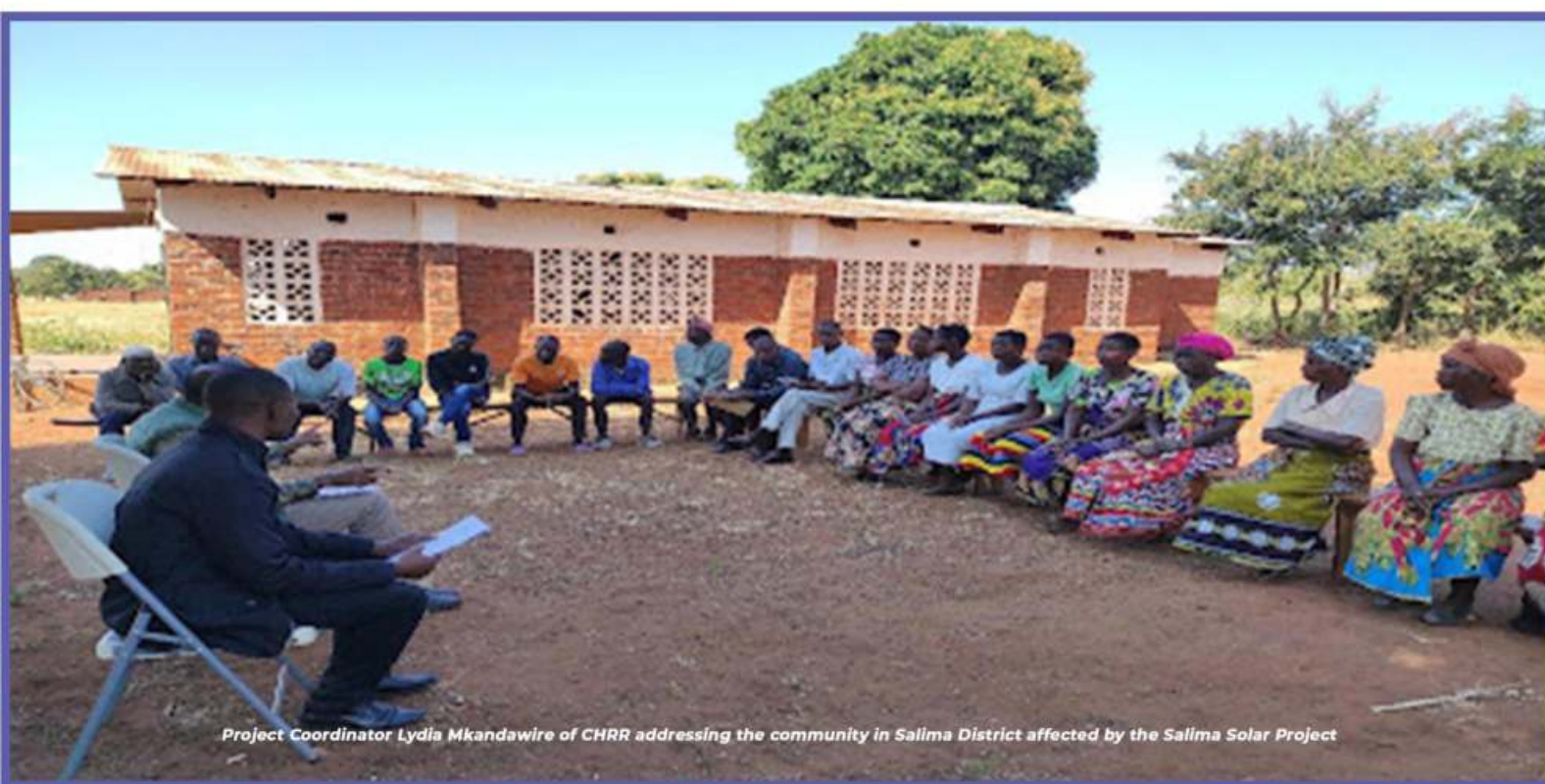
The PROTECT Project, implemented by the Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation (CHRR) with support from the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL), aimed to enhance the public participation of women, youth, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups in law and policymaking through various strategies such as outreach, advocacy, capacity building, and networking at national and district levels.

The project had specific result outcomes that it aimed to achieve. Firstly, it sought to enhance the sensitization and capacity of women, youth, people with disabilities, LGBTI individuals, and other vulnerable groups in law and policymaking. Secondly, it aimed to improve the implementation of relevant policies, laws, and government commitments regarding public participation in policy and lawmaking by public authorities.

Throughout the project, several milestones were achieved. Tailor-made messages targeting marginalized groups were developed to ensure effective communication and engagement. Information on public participation processes was disseminated to marginalized groups and communities, providing them with the necessary knowledge and tools to participate meaningfully. Engagement meetings were also held with policymakers and other duty bearers to discuss the inclusion of marginalized groups in policy and decision-making processes. Additionally, a civil society organizations (CSOs) network on open government partnership (OGP) was established, fostering collaboration and joint efforts in advancing public participation.

Despite the progress made, the project encountered challenges, primarily limited funding for activities. This constraint resulted in the project's activities being mostly concentrated in the Lilongwe district, limiting its reach and impact on a broader scale.

ENHANCED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Project Coordinator Lydia Mkandawire of CHRR addressing the community in Salima District affected by the Salima Solar Project

JCM in response to the solar project that resulted in the acquisition of land from community members in Salima district is implementing a livelihood restoration program (LRP). In 2022, CHRR continued monitoring the community programs led by JCM, particularly the LRP. The monitoring efforts drew attention to several concerns raised by the community regarding the LRP.

One of the major concerns identified was the distribution of goats to project-affected individuals. It was found that some beneficiaries did not receive any goats, while others received unhealthy goats that died within a short period of two weeks. Additionally, there were plans for an irrigation scheme and the procurement of two tractors to support farming activities. However, no tangible progress was observed, and instead, two ploughs were purchased without the necessary materials for operation.

Through close monitoring and facilitated dialogues facilitated by CHRR and IAP, the community members were able to voice their concerns regarding these issues. As a result, JCM made the decision to terminate its contract with Total Land Care (TLC), the company responsible for implementing the LRP. JCM has committed to revising the implementation of the LRP to address the identified challenges.

To enhance the effectiveness of the program, JCM has taken several steps, including hiring an agricultural economist and livelihoods expert. Furthermore, the organization is providing training to its staff members in livelihood restoration techniques.

Overall, reports have highlighted the efforts made to address the issues faced during the implementation of the livelihood restoration program. The termination of the contract with TLC and the commitment to improve the LRP demonstrate JCM's dedication to rectifying the challenges and ensuring the program's successful outcomes.

POWER TO YOUTH



Power to Youth consortium members explaining the project concept to Malawi's President, Dr Lazarus Chakwera during the International Youth Day celebrations at CIVO stadium in Lilongwe

The Power to Youth (PtY) Consortium implemented a successful project in Dedza and Machinga districts of Malawi to reduce unintended pregnancies, Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV), and Harmful Practices among Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW). The project's impact was evaluated through court and police records, community interface meetings, stakeholder interviews, and success stories, revealing significant decreases in unintended pregnancies, SGBV cases, and harmful practices.

One specific outcome of the project was increased access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) information and services for youth. The project created a demand for SRHR services among young people, improving knowledge about SRHR and contraceptive utilization. However, the surge in demand put pressure on the availability of family planning commodities, highlighting the need for ongoing support and resource allocation.

Another significant outcome was the acceleration of justice on rape cases in the T/A Sale area of Machinga district. Advocacy efforts improved access to justice for survivors of rape by establishing a police station and introducing a mobile police unit. The Social Welfare Office provided transportation support to child protection workers, enhancing the overall response to rape cases and ensuring survivors' safety. It also contributed to significant progress in child protection legislation, with the Ministry of Gender and Ministry of Justice collaborating to produce the first draft of the Child Care Protection and Justice Act amendment bill.

The PtY Consortium faced a couple of challenges, including economic instability, fuel shortages, managing cases of Sexual Gender Based Violence, and persistent stock-outs of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) supplies.

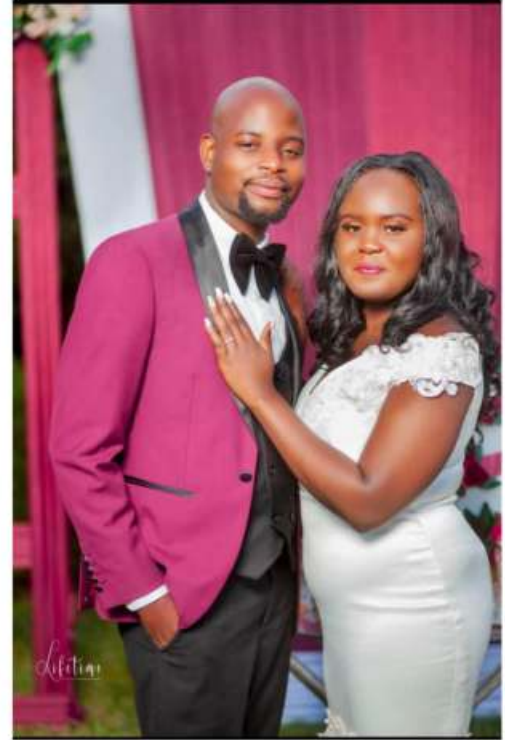
The success of the PtY Consortium's project in 2022 was made possible through the strong commitment and collaboration of various stakeholders at both national and local levels. Civil society organizations, community members, policy makers, duty bearers, and service providers actively participated in project activities, demonstrating their dedication to supporting the rights of AGYW and working towards ending the issue.

PARALEGAL DEPARTMENT

The table below presents data on various types of cases handled the paralegal department. The cases are categorized based on their nature and their status, including "In Progress," "Referred Cases," "Advice Given," and "Case Closed." The table also provides the total number of cases received for each category.

NO.	Nature of case	In Progress	Referred Cases	Advice Given	Case Closed	No. of Cases Received
1	Unlawful dismissal	11	61	29	16	117
2	Child Maintenance	0	5	1	0	6
3	Road accident	2	4	1	0	7
4	Land dispute + Grabbing + encroachment	53	34	26	19	132
5	Matrimonial	0	12	7	4	23
6	Chieftaincy	6	4	0	0	10
7	Domestic Violence	0	7	3	10	20
TOTAL		72	127	67	49	315

CHRR STAFF ATTENDING TAKONDWA MKUNDIKA EDWARD'S WEDDING





AIDS and Rights Alliance for southern Africa

Commonwealth

Oxfam

Royal Norwegian Embassy

Africa Freedom for Information Centre

Paradigm Initiative

International Center for Not-for-Profit Law

Sonke Gender Justice

Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Munakata Foundation

Both Ends

Stephen Lewis
