

## YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION OF MALAWI YWCA MALAWI

## **ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT 2022**

The Young Women's Christian Association of Malawi (YWCA) is a Christian organization dedicated to the empowerment of adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) in order to support and sustain efforts towards achieving progressive communities. YWCA is committed to uplifting the quality of life of AGYW: to empower them to appraise and articulate their needs and thereafter to demand for services from relevant duty-bearers through meaningful participation in decisionmaking processes; to empower them to become aware of and enjoy their rights, and to perform their duties as productive citizens; and to develop self-reliance and increase their capacity for self-development through education, skills-development and economic empowerment.

Key thematic areas include Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR); Psycho-Social Support (PSS); Gender Based Violence/Ending Violence against Women and Girls (GBV/EVAWG); economic empowerment; Political Empowerment of [Young] Women (PEW); leadership, governance and active citizenship; education; and Early Childhood Development (ECD). In 2022, YWCA implemented 2 projects whose interventions were focused on addressing issues in GBV, SRHR, PSS and ECD. These projects have been implemented as follows.

#### a. COMIC RELIEF

# Project title: Malawi Early Childhood Initiative for Children of Adolescent Mothers (MECIAM) (2020-2022)

Donor: Comic Relief

Principal recipient: Regional Psycho-Social Support Initiative (REPSSI)

Implementing partner: YWCA

Project location: Machinga - T/A Chamba; Blantyre - T/A Machinjiri-Mtenje

Targets: Children from birth to 36 months - 540 children (45 children/CBCC);

Children from 36 months to 59 months - 360 children (30 children/CBCC);

Pregnant girls and adolescent mothers - 540 AMs (45 AMs/CBCC).

Malawi Early Childhood Initiative for Children of Adolescent Mothers (MECIAM) is being implemented in 8 Community Based Childcare Centers (CBCCs) – 4 in Blantyre and 4 in Machinga. These include: Madalitso CBCC in Mondiwa village (Blantyre); Mwaiwathu CBCC in Nkhukuten village (Blantyre); Mtendere CBCC in Butao village (Blantyre); Chisomo CBCC in Mtenje village

(Blantyre); Mchema CBCC in Mchema village (Machinga); Yamikani CBCC in M'dalachibwana village (Machinga); Yankho CBCC in Misewe village (Machinga); Titukulane CBCC in Mang'anda village (Machinga).

MECIAMs objectives are to deliver quality early childhood care and education (ECCE) to children; provide psychosocial support and build capacity of adolescent mothers; and engage men in positive parenting sessions. Project activities in 2022 were as follows.

- i. All Community Based Childcare Centers (CBCCs) activities opened on 4th Jan,2022 including children's learning activities and adolescent mothers' monthly meetings.
- The monitoring and learning training workshop for all partner organizations implementing comic relief projects took place in Mponela from 2nd 6th of February. The aim of the training was to train all partners on the Monitoring and learning aspect of the project. The training was done by Center for Development and Management (CDM)
- iii. Refresher training for positive masculinity took place from 25th to 26th March in Blantyre and in Machinga it took place on 23rd to 24th March. 12 participants from each district participated consisting of 3 people from each center for both Machinga and Blantyre.
- iv. Annual Review meeting for 2021 was conducted at heritage hotel in Blantyre on 1st April, 2021. It was aimed at presenting the progress of the project to key stakeholders, invited were representatives from Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare (MGCDSW), chiefs, adolescent mothers, caregivers and Young Mother Champions. This activity was aired on television and radio of 3 media houses namely; Times Television/Radio, Malawi Broadcasting Corporation and Zodiac
- v. Community Dialogue in Blantyre took place on 15th of April at Madalitso CBCC in Bangwe and in Machinga it took place on 18th of April at Mchema CBCC. The aim of the meeting was to review the progress of the project and to get feedback from community leaders, community members and frontline workers (Caregivers and Young Mother Champions). From the discussions, Community leaders narrated that there is an improvement in the quality of education that is being delivered to children through improved infrastructure, enough teaching and learning materials and well-trained caregivers. On the other hand, they also recommended activities that were started through the same project of engaging

adolescent mothers in income generating activities as a way of supporting them with leadership skills and enhancing their financial stand. Some challenges were also shared during the discussions, it was shared that some committees are not actively involved in CBCCs activities and that there are a few committee members who have stopped completely. In the end, community leaders committed to work together with the organization in resolving the challenges that were raised.

- vi. Refresher training for data collection that was planned to be done on adolescent mothers only, took place in Machinga on 6th May, 2022. Participants for the training were officers from the social welfare office from both Blantyre and Machinga, 4 participants from each district were trained.
- vii. The process of data collection for adolescent mothers started on 10th April to 15th April in both districts.
- viii. Refresher training for caregivers was conducted from 11th to 15th of July,2022.
- ix. From 5th August for a period of 1 week comic relief organized a monitoring trip for the Rise and Shine partners through the World Relief. The trip was organized in a way that each rise and shine partner organization was visited with the aim of learning from each other. This monitoring trip solved some of the challenges that the organization was facing while implementing the project in different communities.
- x. Refresher training for Young Mother Champions (YMCs)was conducted from 3rd to 5th October in Machinga and Blantyre. The training trained a total of 28 YMCs. The aim of the training was to remind and equip all YMCs with knowledge on how to facilitate the psychosocial support skills training to adolescent mothers.
- xi. Refresher training for the CBCCs committee members took place from 6th to 8th October in Machinga and in Blantyre the same training took place from 12th to 13th at Naizi primary school. The aim of the training was to conduct refresher lessons on the roles and responsibilities of the committee members in their CBCCs
- xii. Data collection for children using the Malawi Development Assessment Tool (MDAT) was conducted from 14th to 19th of November both in Machinga and in Blantyre. Prior to this process, a total of 8 Social Welfare officers were trained as part of their refresher in using

MDAT for assessing children's development. As such refresher training was done on 11th November.

- xiii. Advocacy and communication training for Rise and Shine partners was conducted from 21st to 25th of November at Linde Hotel in Mponela. Malawi School of Government formerly known as Malawi Institute of Management (MIM) facilitated the training. The training aimed at training Rise and Shine partners how to develop strategic plans as well as advocacy and communication strategy.
- Closing community dialogue for Blantyre was done on 9<sup>th</sup> December, 2022 while in xiv. Machinga it took place on 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2022. The objectives of the dialogues were to review the impact of the children's interventions, the impact of the adolescent mothers' program, and the impact of positive masculinity program and to set plans of sustaining CBCCs activities after the project. All 8 CBCCs were grouped in groups to discuss the objectives of the dialogue in regard to their centers. In their groups were chiefs, committee members, caregivers, Young Mother Champions and positive masculinity facilitators. After the group discussions, the meetings continued with activities, the dialogues were also graced with the participation of representatives from the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare (MGCDSW), Ministry of Health (MOH) and community members. Selected children from all 8 CBCCs show cased some of the activities that are done in class with their caregivers. Adolescent mothers also organized activities with content on was learnt through the project. In the end a representative from the social welfare office addressed the meeting and emphasized on the importance of community members working together to support the chief in sustaining CBCCs activities as well as making their communities a conducive environment for adolescent mothers who are always seen as people of less importance in most communities. In both districts, Blantyre and Machinga, Child Protection Workers (CPWs) and Health Surveillance Assistance committed during the meeting to always provide a helping hand to all communities once the project ends.

Due to Covid-19 in 2020, some project activities were delayed and affected all other project activities that were supposed to be conducted in 2021 and 2022. As a result, there are some

closing activities that were shifted to 2023 with No cost extension from Comic Relief. Nevertheless, all planned activities were successfully done and the following are the figures that were reached in 2022.

COM	MUNITY	DIALOGU	E DECEMB	ER 2022					
PARTICIPANTS	AGE								TOTAL
	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25>	М	F	
COMMUNITY						4	3	1	4
LEADERS BT									
COMMUNITY				5	7	38	6	44	50
MEMBERS BT									
TOTAL									55
COMMUNITY						4	1	3	4
LEADERS MHG									
COMMUNITY				6	8	41	6	49	55
MEMBERS MHG									
TOTAL									59
<b>BT+ MHG TOTAL</b>									115
CAREGIVERS(CG) A	ND YOU	NG MOTH	HER CHAM	PIONS (YN	1C)				
PARTICIPANTS	AG	θE					SEX		TOTAL
	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25>	М	F	
CG BT					3	9	2	10	12
YMC BT					2	14	0	16	16
CG MHG					1	11	1	11	12
YMC MHG						16	0	16	16
TOTAL									56
CBCC CHILDREN									
CHILDREN	AGE SEX								TOTAL
BLANTYRE	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25>	М	F	
MADALITSO CBCC							30	13	43
NTENDERE CBCC							40	34	69
CHISOMO CBCC							22	24	46
MWAIWANTHU							32	33	65
CBCC									
TOTAL									225
CHILDREN	AGE								
MACHINGA	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25>	М	F	
TITUKULANE	39	13					26	26	52
CBCC									
MCHEMA CBCC	44	7					24	27	51
YANKHO CBCC	32	7					25	14	39
YAMIKANI CBCC	39	4					20	23	43
TOTAL									185
ANNUAL REVEW MEETING END PROJECT (DECEMBER)									
PARTICIPANTS	AGE							TOTAL	
	0-4	5-9	10-15	16-19	20-25	25>	М	F	

GOV OFFICIALS					5	4	1	5
CARE GIVERS				1	2	1	2	3
YMC					2	0	2	2
COMMUNITY					3	1	2	3
LEADERS								
ADOLESCENT			2	1	1	0	4	4
MOTHER								
COMMITEE								
MEMBERS								
POSITIVE								
PARENTING								
YWCA STAFF					6	0	6	6
REPSSI					2	2	0	2
DRIVERS					6	6	0	6
TOTAL								32



Children enjoying a nutritional meal at Mwaiwathu (CBCC (Nkhukuten village - T/A Machinjiri) in Blantyre on 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2022.



Psycho-social support session for adolescent mothers from Yanko CBCC (Misewe village - T/A Chamba) in Machinga on 18th October, 2022



Figure Group Village Headman (GVH) Mchema addressing community leaders and members during Community Dialogue held at on 10th December, 2022 at GVH Mtema's compound in Machinga.

#### b. HER Voice Fund

Project title: **AGYW for Active Citizenship II** Donor: Global Fund through ViiV Healthcare for Positive Action Principal recipient: Y+ Global Implementing partner: YWCA Project location: Blantyre - T/A Machinjiri-Mtenje Targets: 20 AGYW – GBV survivors

HER Voice Fund (HVF) aims at supporting the meaningful engagement and leadership of adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) and community-based organizations serving AGYW within Global Fund and other related national processes. Since 2020, YWCA has been implementing projects annually under HVF. From June 2021 – March 2022, YWCA implemented the "AGYW for Active Citizenship" project targeting 30 AGYW from T/A Machinjiri (Nkhukuten, Butao & Mtenje villages). The project empowered the AGYW to engage with local duty bearers and to participate in decision-making processes (i.e. ADC meetings) so as to ensure that their needs are well articulated and adequately reflected on the development agenda at community level. The project also empowered the AGYW to access SRHR services through the Youth Friendly Health Services (YFHS) locally available to them at the Bangwe Health Centre.

From July – December 2022, YWCA implemented the "AGYW for Active Citizenship II" project targeting 20 AGYW from Group Village Headman (GVH) Mtenje within T/A Machinjiri. The main goal of the project was to support AGYW who are survivors of GBV towards self-reliance through continued engagement with local governance structures for access to economic empowerment programs, social protection services, and Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services.

Specifically, the project capacitated 20 AGYW who are GBV survivors to understand basic human rights and gender concepts (including GBV and child rights) and to understand the legal tools and services which are available to them; supported 20 AGYW to successfully engage and lobby local governance structures and duty bearers (i.e. Blantyre District Council and the Area Development Committee (ADC)) to facilitate the AGYWs access to available bursaries and participation in economic empowerment programmes which are managed by the governance structures;

established and supported 1 Mental Health Support Group for 20 AGYW who are GBV survivors; and capacitated 20 AGYW in skills development towards the successful management of Income Generating Activities. The following were the outcomes of activities:

#### i. IMPROVING ACCESS TO JUSTICE/ADDRESSING GBV

20 AGYW were engaged in processes to enable them to access justice services at the local level through the District Gender Development Office (DGDO). The DGDO was responsible for the facilitation of a Gender and Rights training (focused on GBV) on 18th August, 2022. The DGDO was supported by the District Youth Office (DYO), District Social Welfare Office (DSWO) and the District Community Development Office (DCDO), as well as other protection officers including officials from the One Stop Centre<sup>1</sup>, and from the Bangwe Police Victim Support Unit (PVSU) in facilitation of the training.

In commemoration of '16 days of activism against GBV' YWCA in collaboration with the DGDO, DYO, DSWO, Blantyre PVSU, as well as other CSOs (Blantyre Synod, IPAS, Jhpiego, Pakachere, GLOArt) held a community sensitization campaign for Blantyre district on 13th December, 2022. The whistle-stop campaign was carried out within T/A Machinjiri (Chilaweni ADC) with key addresses given at Lunzu market, Lirangwe market, Mdeka market and Nkhalamba market in the area. Carlo Mdala, councillor for Chilaweni ward was the guest of honour and participated in delivery of key messages at all four stops. The messages were centered around various GBV issues which are prevalent in the area including physical and domestic abuse; issues around child abandonment, negligence and maintenance; promoting children's rights to education; issues of sexual abuse (defilement, 'blessers', school-based abuse); GBV against men; financial abuse; and how to report abuse to appropriate structures. 5 AGYW were supported to participate in the event, and they also delivered messages at each of the centers.

During the Gender and Rights training for the AGYW, it was discovered that the Communitybased Victim Support Unit (CVSU) for Mtenje Area Development Committee (ADC) has not been operational for some years. The structure (which was established and operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Gender) is essential to ensure that GBV cases are handled

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> From Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital (QECH)

appropriately and followed to their conclusion through justice structures. AGYW and community members in general at Mtenje can only report to the PVSU (i.e. Bangwe police) which is approximately 10km from the Mtenje area. As a result most GBV incidents particularly sexual abuse cases are left unreported, and those which are reported are not always followed through due to resource constraints of the police themselves.

This issue was discussed at length with the community leaders and the key department heads from Blantyre District Council during the final ADC meeting held on 22 December, 2022. As a result, the DGDO has authorized YWCA and the Mtenje ADC to establish a new CVSU in the Mtenje area in order to ensure that the task is carried out as efficiently and effectively as possible. However, the gender and community development offices will render all the necessary support in establishing, capacitating as well as supervising the operations of the CVSU.

#### ii. IMPROVING ACCESS TO SRHR INFORMATION & SERVICES

As a rule, the 20 AGYW are participating on a monthly basis in the "Youth Corner" sessions which are provided by Youth Friendly Health Services (YFHS) at Bangwe Health Centre. The sessions allow them to access the relevant information and services, and also to interact and engage in discussions with their peers including their male counterparts. The AGYW are encouraged to invite friends to the sessions in order to increase the number of young people from Mtenje who are accessing SRHR services. To this end, it has also been agreed that the YFHS providers from Bangwe Health Centre will be supported at least once a month to attend the AGYWs youth club meetings which are held on Thursday afternoons.

However, the issue of distance from Mtenje to the Bangwe Health Centre (approx. 20km) has been taken into consideration with regards to efficient access to services. During the ADC meeting (held on 22nd December, 2022), it was proposed by the YFHS providers as well as the DYO that the AGYW should be empowered as Youth Community Based Distribution Agents (YCBDAs). Community Based Distribution (CBD) is a strategy employed by the Ministry of Health to increase provision of contraception and condoms. Empowering the AGYW as YCBDAs will therefore, increase access to these SRHR services for the many Adolescent and Young People (AYP) within the Mtenje area who fail to access the YFHS due to distance. It will also increase effective response in emergency situations (i.e. sexual abuse cases). The youth structures will provide all the necessary support towards capacitating and supervising the AGYW, and they are enthusiastic of the effectiveness of the strategy considering that the AGYW group has representatives from all the villages within the Mtenje area.

### iii. ECONOMIC EMPOWEMENT/SKILLS DEVELOPMENT & ACCESS TO BURSARIES FOR AGYW

The Blantyre District Council was engaged in the "AGYW for Active Citizenship II" project through a meeting held with the council's District Executive Committee (DEC) on 19th July, 2022. The DEC committed to support AGYW (through key departments including DYO, DGDO, DSWO and DCDO), to participate in economic empowerment programs; and to support in lobbying the relevant Member of Parliament (MP) (Blantyre City South East) to allocate bursaries for at least 3 of the AGYW under the project.

The 20 AGYW have been successfully registered as an official youth club in Blantyre district known as "Mtenje Youth Club" through the District Youth Office (DYO). Subsequently, the DYO has selected the club as one of the beneficiaries of the National Youth Service (NYS) project for Blantyre district. The NYS is a two year (2023-2025) youth empowerment project which aims at empowering Malawian youth with relevant 21st century skills, to foster their contribution to personal, community and national development. Under the project, the AGYW will be empowered through quality technical entrepreneurial and vocational training opportunities; opportunities for work experience and orientation for entrance in the labour market; enrolment in a reservoir/database for recruitment and deployment both in the public and private sector (including during emergencies); and social skills that promote a spirit of hard-work, honestly, integrity, volunteerism, discipline and patriotism.

Under HVF, on 1st November, 2022 the AGYW as part of their skills development participated in a training on Business Management which focused on topics such as capital management, savings, calculating profit and turnover, as well as basic marketing. The training was facilitated by the District Community Development Office (DCDO). Between October and November, there were challenges in accessing the MP for the Mtenje area (Blantyre City South East constituency), primarily because the MP was engaged in legislative duties during the official seating-in of parliament, and also as chairperson of the Parliamentary Agricultural Committee. However, a representative of the MPs office attended the ADC meeting on 22nd December, 2022 in order to discuss the issue of provision of bursaries at length. The office of the MP has agreed to provide the bursaries for select AGYW through the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) which is currently set at MK100,000,000.00 per annum for each constituency. 5% of the CDF is allocated towards bursaries and there are 5 wards within the Blantyre City South East constituency. The MPs office stated that the bursary fund will be distributed equally across the wards which translates to MK1,000,000.00 per annum for each ward. To ensure orderliness in selection of candidates for the bursary, it was agreed by the stakeholders (council department heads, MPs representative and ADC members) that a bursary selection committee should be established. All elected candidates should also be verified by the ADC to ensure that recipients are those who are in need of assistance, and to avoid issues of nepotism and issues of duplication (there are other bursaries available in the district and there have been incidents where some candidates are beneficiary to more than one bursary). The selection committee will be established before end of January 2023, and provision of bursaries will begin as early as March, 2023.

#### iv. IMPROVING ACCESS TO PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORT

The DSWO has been responsible in leading the establishment and support of the Mental Health Support Group for the 20 AGYW who are survivors of GBV (largely sexual-GBV). The Mental Health Support Group was established on 31st August, 2022 and the group is being counselled by various trained professionals in psycho-social support from the social welfare office.

There were 2 mental health sessions (group inter-personal therapy) held for the 20 AGYW GBV survivors on 10th November, 2022 and on 30th November, 2022. The sessions were facilitated by counsellors from the DSWO with support from YWCAs AGYW counsellor.

#### v. PARTICIPATION OF AGYW IN SUB-NATIONAL AND NATIONAL PROCESSES

- 2 AGYW were supported to participate and interact with the Blantyre DEC (on 19th July, 2022) which led to commitments from the DEC to facilitate access to IGAs and assist in lobbying for bursaries as reported above.
- On 29th August, 2022 YWCA provided support towards a meeting with the Blantyre district SRHR TWG. 2 AGYW were supported to participate in the meeting and they were able to contribute on strategies that can be utilized to mobilize more AYP to access SRHR services through the Youth Friendly Health Services (YFHS) in the district.
- From 15th-16th September 2022, 2 AGYW were supported to attend the 8th Malawi Mental Health Research and Practice Development Conference at Amaryllis hotel in Blantyre. The AGYW were able to learn more on mental health issues relating to substance abuse, suicide, culture, maternity, community and the youth. They were able to interact and network with some of the youthful speakers and were also able to learn more of available mental health services in the country.
- On 22nd September 2022, 2 AGYW were supported to participate in a meeting with the Blantyre District SRHR TWG in preparation for an AGYW symposium which was held on 26th October, 2022 under the theme "Towards an inclusive society amplifying opportunities for the youth and adolescent girls and young women". The same AGYW also attended the symposium (which was held at Lunzu Primary School) and were able to share some of their experiences of abuse with the audience.
- On 13th December 2022, 5 AGYW were supported to participate in the "16 Days of Activism" where they were able to connect with audiences including grassroots leaderships, Adolescent and Young People (AYP), community members in general, CSO representatives and protection workers. They delivered messages encouraging parents and guardians to support AGYW to attain a quality education, and to support teen mothers adequately by increasing psycho-support services (in and out of school) as well as self-reliance programs. They also addressed their peers (both young males and females) to avoid engaging with 'blessers' as this only brings many adverse effects to their lives. They were also able to share their personal stories (surviving abuse, early

pregnancies, abandonment and homelessness) and how they have been able to overcome their struggles and the importance of continued support from all stakeholders.

 From 3rd to 4th January 2023, 2 AGYW were supported to participate in the periodic review of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The review was organized by UNICEF and Save the Children, and focused on vulnerable children i.e. street connected, orphan, teen mothers and sex workers. The AGYW were engaged to source views and opinions from children in Blantyre with regards to the state of child rights and protection in Blantyre district.



John Manyumba from One Stop Centre addressing 20 AGYW on sexual GBV during the Gender & Rights/GBV training held on 18th August at Mtenje clinic in Blantyre



YWCA finance & administration manager with the programmes manager captured during the commemoration of "16 days of activism against GBV" in Blantyre district on 13th December, 2022



AGYW (from Mtenje in Blantyre) captured during one of their skills development (welding) sessions with the District Youth Office under the National Youth Service project on 25th February, 2023 in Blantyre.

#### CHALLENGES

- 1. Poor attendance of adolescent mothers towards the end of the year as many were busy with farming which also led to poor attendance of children in CBCCs activities.
- Malawi experienced a 25% devaluation, resulting in high inflation. The rise in goods and services has been a challenge when implementing activities, but this was overcome by reducing the number of participants in some activities and opting for cheaper goods than usual.
- Inaccessibility of the MP for Blantyre City South East constituency led to delays towards accessing bursaries for AGYW. Through the office of the ward councilor, a representative for the MPs office was engaged on behalf of the MP.

#### LESSONS LEARNT

- 1. All CBCCs should be supported with nutritional meals (porridge mix).
- Engagement of fathers has proved to be effective towards increased enrolment of children in CBCCs while indirectly having positive impacts on marriage and family life as well as encouraging positive dialogue around domestic GBV.

- 3. Engaging and collaborating with other stakeholders (local government and CSOs) is the most effective method to achieve impact and ensure sustainability of advocacy efforts in provision of services (i.e. GBV response, SRHR, economic empowerment, etc.) for AGYW.
- It is more effective to support scaling-up of community out-reach activities to ensure that AGYW and young people in general are able to access SRHR services as well as GBV prevention and response services.
- AGYW can and should be empowered to address challenges faced in accessing SRHR information and services (i.e. empowering the AGYW as Youth Community Based Distribution Agents (YCBDAs).
- 6. Continue building AGYWs experience and capacity by supporting them to participate in decision-making process at the national, sub-national and local processes. This ensures that AGYW are empowered to better understand, identify and articulate their needs in development processes.

- 5. AGYW can and should be empowered to address challenges faced in accessing SRHR information and services (i.e. empowering the AGYW as Youth Community Based Distribution Agents (YCBDAs).
- 6. Continue building AGYWs experience and capacity by supporting them to participate in decision-making process at the national, sub-national and local processes. This ensures that AGYW are empowered to better understand, identify and articulate their needs in development processes.

DR. M. KACHINGWE BOARD CHAIRPERSON

NETTIE DZABALA THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR