

PYAO Newsletter

Bringing hope! Changing lives!

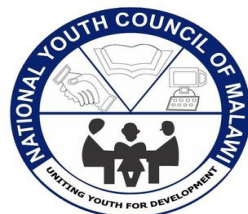
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PROPEL
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Word from the Executive Director

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Greetings to you all,

Welcome to this edition of our newsletter, we are happy to meet you once again. I am thrilled to report that we are making strides in many thematic areas that we have implemented so far.

Last year, through support from USAID Malawi via Propel Project we trained 20 youths in Gender Action Learning System (GALS) who learnt various life skills including entrepreneurial ones such as development of business plans, cash flow analysis. I am pleased to see great progress and impact which is on the ground as there are some strides among other beneficiaries. We have seen most of them executing their vision journeys whilst training over 771 young people from their youth clubs across the Phalombe district. Amplify Change has also powered us with a two-year funding that will empower young people in Phalombe to take lead in SRHR and SGBV advocacy.

The year 2024 looks promising. I am glad to report that we are now rebranding and expanding to districts like Mulanje, Chiradzulu, Mwanza, Chikwawa, Neno and part of Mwanza among others with a new PYAO Strategic Plan. Let me promise a new and improved PYAO this year 2024. Our hope at PYAO that we continue working together and the relationship will grow with this rebranding.

Remember the motto remains *Bringing Hope! Changing Lives!* Still be part of this journey.

USAID Mission Visits PYAO's GALS Beneficiaries, Witnesses Transformative Impact



USAID mission, alongside Phalombe District Council visiting on of the GALS beneficiaries, Richard Nantchengwa

USAID mission recently undertook a visit to the beneficiaries of the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) program facilitated by the Phalombe Youth Arms Organisation (PYAO) through the Propel Health project of which is a significant stride towards empowering youth and fostering entrepreneurship in Phalombe.

The GALS beneficiaries, who underwent training last year, were equipped with essential entrepreneurial skills including business plan development and cash flow analysis. Moreover, they were imparted with strategies to navigate the challenges often encountered in business endeavors. Hailing from diverse corners of Phalombe, these youths embarked on a transformative journey, crafting their three-year visions during the training.

Among these ambitious beneficiaries is Idah Chimkono from Traditional Authority Kaduya, whose resilience and determination stood out. Despite enduring hunger during the rigorous five-day training last October, Chimkono ingeniously utilized her meal allowances as the seed capital for her venture.

Today, Idah operates a small-scale business selling a variety of commodities ranging from soap and snacks to eggs and

cooking oil. With steadfast determination, she aspires to expand her enterprise into a full-fledged grocery store, aiming to become a dependable resource within her community.

Stanford Chidule, Programmes Manager for PYAO, underscored the transformative potential of the GALS program, citing the tangible success stories emerging from its beneficiaries.

“The GALS programme can change the livelihood of young people, as evidenced by the testimonies from the beneficiaries who are excelling in their businesses,” Chidule remarked. He further emphasized PYAO’s commitment to witnessing the upliftment of young people in their economic endeavors.

Charles Katembo, Phalombe District Labour Officer, echoed Chidule’s sentiments, expressing commendation for the program’s impact on youth empowerment and job creation. “The program has the potential to turn more youths into employers in the job market, as the skills they acquire are sufficient to transform one’s fortune,” Katembo affirmed.

Phalombe and Mulanje Communities welcome Nzotheka Project



Bulangeti speaking during community meeting at Kaduya, Phalombe

Stakeholders, mostly young people, have expressed excitement about the Nzotheka project, which aims to empower over 100 young leaders to become active participants in policy-making, advocacy, and community development.

Youth Officer Halson Bulangeti, speaking after the project's presentation to the Phalombe District Executive Committee, said, "This project is a game-changer. It will equip my fellow young people with vital skills to advocate for their rights and communities. We'll see the growth of good leaders who will make a positive impact."

Richard Juwawo, Youth Officer in Mulanje, added, "This project will inspire young people in our district to take an active role in shaping their future. They'll learn how to participate in local democratic processes, budgeting, and policy-making."

The project was also presented to the Area Development Committee and Kaduya Youth Network in Phalombe. Councillor Simon Abraham, Vice Chairperson of Phalombe -

District Council, emphasized, "Nzotheka will groom politically aware young leaders who will effectively participate in all political and electoral processes. This project has the potential to create a positive impact on the lives of young people and their communities."

Young leader, Collings Khalipwina, said the project is very important for young people. He believes that the knowledge gained from the project will help his fellow young people make a real difference in their communities.

"I think this project will produce knowledgeable young leaders who will make a big impact. They will help committees like Area Development Committees and Village Development Committees work better," he said.

The Nzotheka project aims to empower and mobilize young individuals to engage meaningfully in local democratic processes, budgeting, and policy-making. It's being implemented in traditional authorities Kaduya and Mabuka in Phalombe and Mulanje districts, respectively.

PYAO trains 27 young people in CSE



Participants performing a task during the training

Phalombe Youth Arms Organisation has provided Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) to 27 young individuals, aiming to engage them in advocating for sexual reproductive health rights among their peers in their respective localities.

The intensive two-day training, conducted over the weekend, brought together participants from three distinct traditional authorities: Phweremwe, Nkhulambe, and Nazombe. This has been done under Youth-Led Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Advocacy in Phalombe project funded by AmplifyChange.

The project coordinator, Lucy Bahana, emphasized that the trained youths are now poised to serve as facilitators in disseminating their acquired knowledge within their respective communities.

Bahana explained, “We anticipate these individuals will generously share the insights and expertise gained during this comprehensive training with their peers. This exchange will empower them to safeguard and advocate for the health and overall well-being of their fellow youths and communities.”

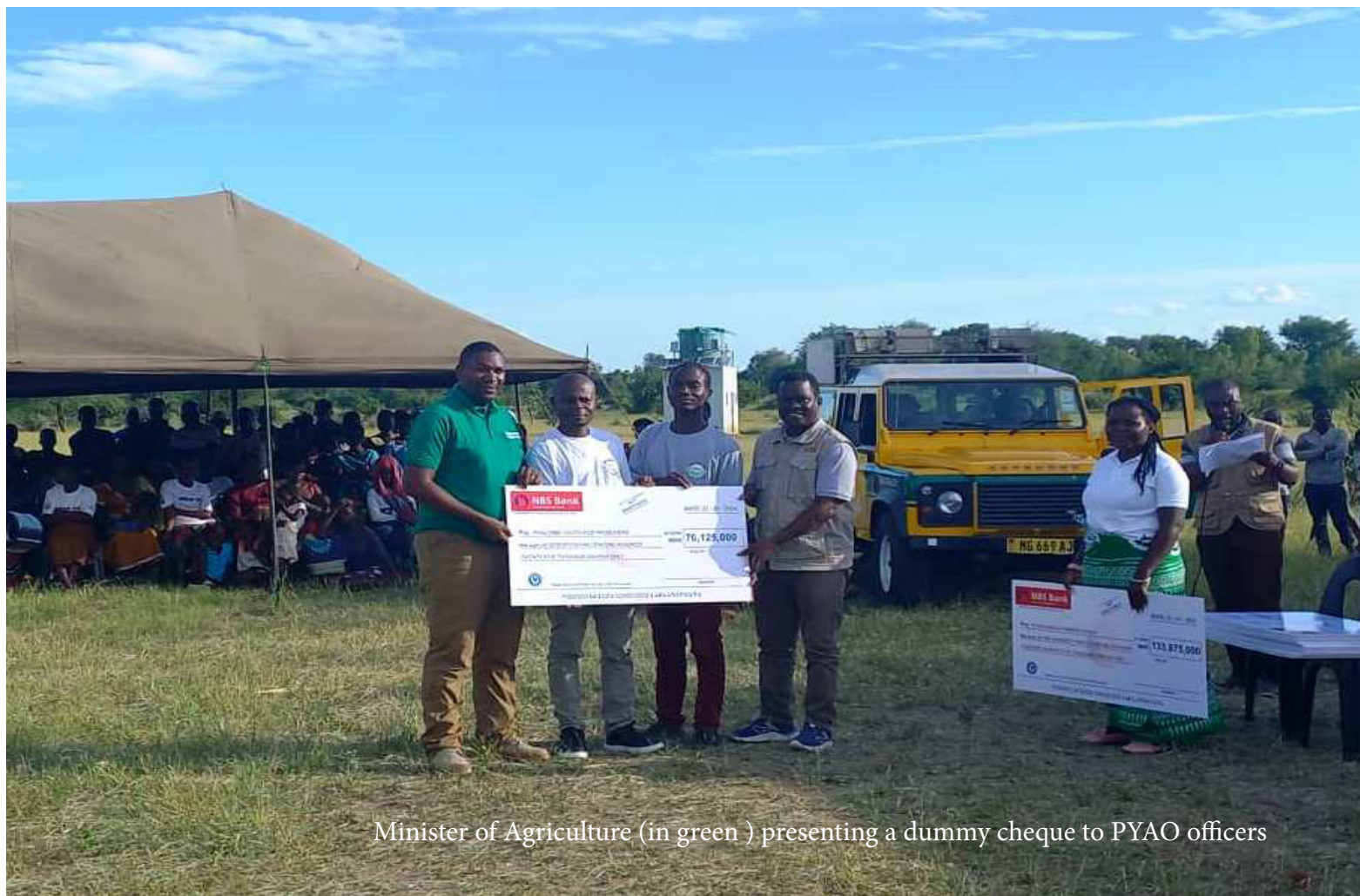
Stella Masamba from Nakonaka youth club, expressed gratitude for the invaluable lessons she has absorbed during the training and she has since pledged to impart this knowledge to fellow members of his youth club, enabling them to make well-informed decisions regarding their personal development.

“CSE provides us with the means to make informed decisions about our personal well-being, particularly in the realm of sexual health. It serves as a shield against the risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections and acts as a support system for us girls, aiding in the prevention of unintended pregnancies. This commitment drives me to share this valuable knowledge with my fellow youths in our club,” she said.

Halsan Bulangeti, the youth officer for Phalombe district urged the participants to treat the acquired skills and knowledge with the utmost seriousness, emphasizing their essential role in fostering youth development.

“For youths to actualize their aspirations, they require the competencies and knowledge instilled through CSE.”

Phalombe Youth Rice Producers Programme gains momentum



Minister of Agriculture (in green) presenting a dummy cheque to PYAO officers

The Phalombe Youth Rice Producers programme, operated by the Phalombe Youth Arms Organisation, is now on track following the approval of funds from the Malawi government through the Agricultural Commercialisation project.

The programme aims to empower young rice producers in the district through value addition and the implementation of climate-smart agricultural practices.

Executive Director of PYAO, Vincent Makuluni Thom, emphasized the formation of cooperatives among young rice producers to enhance their ability to supply large quantities of rice efficiently.

“No man is an island; through cooperatives, young people can excel in their agribusinesses. This is why the

programme is dedicated to promoting the establishment of cooperatives for young producers.

“The initiative aligns with the goals outlined in Malawi 2063, aiming to foster economic independence among young people,” he said.

Thom added that the programme’s focus on value addition and the use of appropriate rice varieties highlights its commitment to enhancing productivity and sustainability within Phalombe’s agricultural sector.

Phalombe stands out as one of Malawi’s major rice-producing districts, particularly in the areas under the jurisdiction of Traditional Authorities Chiwalo, Jenala, Nyambalo, Phweremwe and Nkhulambe.

PYAO Celebrates Senior Chief Kaduya's Elevation to Paramount Chief



President Chakwera talking to Paramount Chief Kaduya

Phalombe Youth Arms Organisation celebrates as one of its long-serving directors of board, Senior Chief Kaduya, has been elevated to the position of Paramount Chief of the Lhomwe people in an event held at Mpsa Primary School ground on Thursday.

The elevation was presided over by Malawi's President Lazarus Chakwera, marking an important momentous for Senior Chief Kaduya and the entire Lhomwe community.

In his remarks, Board Chairperson for PYAO, Christopher Misuku, expressed admiration for the leadership qualities that Senior Chief Kaduya brings to both her traditional role and her position on the organisation's Board of Directors.

"We extend our warmest congratulations to Senior Chief Kaduya on her well-deserved elevation to the position of Paramount Chief of the Lhomwe people. Her leadership has always been of the highest calibre, and this new role only solidifies the

reflective impact she has on the community," stated Christopher Misuku.

Misuku further highlighted her invaluable contributions to the organisation, emphasizing the positive influence her leadership has had on shaping the future of the youth in Phalombe district and general.

Senior Chief Kaduya, who has served as a dedicated member of PYAO's Board of Directors since the early days when the organisation was established, is known for her unwavering commitment to youth, girls and women empowerment, and community development.

The ceremony, attended by dignitaries and community members alike, resonated with a sense of pride and cultural significance. As Paramount Chief, she is now poised to play a crucial role in advancing the welfare of the Lhomwe people and fostering unity in Malawi.

EKODDA Foundation visits PYAO



Ekkoda team interacting with PYAO management

In a bid to appreciate initiatives being implemented by Phalombe Youth Arms Organisation in Phalombe district, a team from EKODDA Foundation recently engaged with organisation's team in a meeting held at PYAO offices in the district.

The EKODDA Foundation, renowned for their pioneering initiatives in community development, sought guidance from PYAO on implementing programmes beneficial to the district.

Led by their Executive Director, Alec Kaponda, the EKODDA team comprised of experts in diverse fields ranging from sustainable development to gender equality. Their purpose was clear—to explore potential initiatives aligned with PYAO's ongoing programmes in areas such as Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), education, environmental conservation, tourism, and tackling gender-based violence.

During the meeting, Kaponda said: "We're excited to see PYAO, a hub of expertise and passion for community empowerment. Together, we aim to strategise and implement initiatives that will truly transform Phalombe for the better."

In response, Stanford Chidule, a Programmes Officer at PYAO, welcomed the collaborative spirit, saying, "It's an honour to share our experiences and insights with EKODDA. By pooling our knowledge and resources, we can design sustainable interventions that address the pressing needs of our district."

The discussions were energetic and engaging, drawing on PYAO's successful campaigns in promoting sexual reproductive health, conserving natural resources through youth-led initiatives, and advocating for gender equality and women's rights

NDI Malawi Meets PYAO Management



NDI team interacting with PYAO

National Democratic Institute (NDI) of Malawi recently visited the Phalombe Youth Arms Organisation (PYAO) to discuss matters of partnership and new project called Nzotheka, which has since commenced.

The Nzotheka project, which started on the 1st of March this year, is being implemented in two traditional authorities: Kaduya and Mabuka from Phalombe and Mulanje, respectively.

Chimwemwe Kalea, the Senior Programs Assistant for NDI Malawi, who led the delegation, emphasized the importance of the partnership, which is vital for youth development in the country.

In his brief remarks, Vincent Makuluni Thom, Executive

Director for PYAO, commended NDI for their support, stating that the project will enable young people to participate fully in matters of governance.

“Recognizing the essential role of young people in shaping the future of the nation, this project seeks to foster a politically aware and engaged youth population through comprehensive civic education and inclusive participatory processes,” he said.

The “Nzotheka” project, which is being funded by NDI, aims to empower and mobilize young people to actively and meaningfully participate in local democratic processes, budgeting, and policy-making.

