Welcome to our 4th and last newsletter for 2022. I am excited to share critical milestones that we have achieved this quarter and indeed this year.

The Commission was highly visible nationally, regionally and globally, in strengthening its mandate of protection, promotion and monitoring of human rights. This year, the Commission carried out a number of critical investigations, monitored the situation of human rights, held various high level engagements and interventions which included; submission of reports to Parliament and various treaty bodies. There has also been scaling up of collaboration with Civil Society Organizations and the private sector as allies and partners in advancing the human rights agenda in Malawi.

I am mostly grateful to our strategic partners: the UN in Malawi (UNDP and UNAIDS), The Malawi Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence, the Canadian Embassy, the Embassy Iceland in Malawi, Save the Children, Think Tank for Sustainability (TMG), and the European Union through the Chilungamo program among others, for jointly contributing to 50% of our interventions. Finally, our efforts have been sustained by the continued commitment of the Commissioners and Secretariat.

I look forward to strengthened partnerships and collaboration in 2023. Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New year!
The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights held the first physical Ordinary Session from 21st of October to 9th of November 2022 in Banjul, in the Gambia. In this session, African States presented reports on the status of human rights in their respective countries since the start of Covid 19. The Malawi delegation including the Malawi Human Rights Commission submitted its statement. The delegation from the Commission was led by chairperson Scader Louis and Director of the Disability and Elderly Directorate, Wycliffe Masoo.

The session also marked the 35th anniversary of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

The statement submitted by the Commission addressed key human rights issues including corruption, review of land laws, abduction and killings of persons with albinism among others.

During the session, chairpersons, vice chairpersons and special rapporteurs of different mechanisms in the African commission provided reports on various missions they undertook since the 72nd Session.
On 1st November 2022, the Commission interacted with the Parliamentary Committee on International Relations to deliberate on the role of Parliament in International Human Rights mechanisms. The Commission delegation was led by Commissioner Baldwin Chiyamwaka who described the meeting as timely and in line with the Commission’s mandate.

“It is our obligation to ensure that all Honorable Members of Parliament are trained on relevant human rights issues, including the international human rights monitoring and reporting mechanisms”, Baldwin Chiyamwaka.

While the Commission was commended for the introductory engagement on Universal Periodic Review (UPR), Committee members took turns to appeal to development partners including UNDP to support the Commission in carrying out a fully fledged training targeting the Committee on International Human Rights monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

“ The recommendations shared by MHRC on the role of Parliament in these mechanisms are valid, and must be taken seriously. As a Committee we feel this is just the beginning of our continuous engagement with MHRC on these issues. We therefore appeal to UNDP representative here to consider supporting MHRC to hold a comprehensive training for the Committee so they are well grounded on International Human Rights mechanisms and the role of Parliament in such processes”, Hon. Patrick Siyabonga Bandawe, Chairperson International Relations Committee.
From 23rd of November to 2nd of December 2022, the Commission was part of the Malawi delegation that attended the 40th ordinary Session of the African Committee on the Rights and Welfare of a child in Maseru, Lesotho. Mr Michael Mperembe, the principal child rights officer represented the Commission.

Some of the key takeaways from the discussion were to; strengthen/harmonize laws to protect children from the digital risks, educate the children and parents for them to understand the risks of online exploitation and abuse, increased police and the courts capacity for proper handling of digital child exploitation and abuse and the accountability of digital companies.
The Commission is grateful to all its partners -old and new- who tirelessly support its work of promoting and protecting human rights work in the Country.

European Union through their new Head of Political, Press and Information Section, Else Boonstra, paid a courtesy call to the Human Rights Commission, to reflect on just ended support under the EU Chilungamo Project. The Commission also shared on their new priority areas for 2023.

The Commission collaborated with the Danish Institute for Human Rights to explore potential areas of mutual interest. The Commission is looking forward to a partnership in 2023 in the area of business and human rights.
On the 25th of November 2022, the Embassy of Iceland honored the Commission with financial and strategic support to undertake a Gender-based project that aims to eliminate all forms of sex discrimination. This project is expected to run for a duration of 3 years and it is targeting all the 28 districts in Malawi. The contract was signed between the Commission and the Embassy of Iceland represented by Ms. Habiba Osman and Ms. Inga Dóra Pétursdóttir respectively.

On the 5th of December 2022, the Embassy of Iceland hosted the Commission to handover a brand new Toyota Land Cruiser. The Embassy of Iceland was led by the delegation of Honourable Minister Malaórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörður Gylfadóttir and the Commission was led by Chairperson Scader Louis.
The complaints handling system within the Commission is the process of receiving of human rights complaints or reports of abuses from people in Malawi. This can either be done remotely (telephone, letters, texts, Facebook, WhatsApp) or in person.

From the 21st to the 22nd of November 2022, the Commission's staff conducted a two-day training workshop on complaints handling mechanism as the Commission is in a position of migrating to a digital complaints handling system. When fully implemented, the digital complaints handling system will help in reducing case backlog and promote efficiency in case handling and investigations. The Commission is partnering with the UNDP to ensure that the digitization of the complaints handling system is functional.
In October this year, the Commission carried out a prison inspection in response to print and social media reports highlighting acute food shortage in prison facilities which resulted in a hunger crisis leading to a number of rights violations.

One of the prisons visited was Chitipa prison in the northern region of Malawi. On this particular inspection, the prison had only 25 bags of maize left in their store room and their rations account for 3 bags to be used a day. The monthly budget for food is ideally K1,387,000 which would cater for 248 bags of maize and some beans to supplement the maize.

The prison has the capacity to house a total of 140 inmates however the prison is currently housing 227 inmates. Of these, 7 are females and 1 of the 7 is a lactating mother who has a 15 months old baby.
On the 22nd of November 2022, the Commission in collaboration with Youth and Society (YAS) and with support from OXFAM, conducted a training on the provisions of the Access to Information Act and Access to Information Regulations for information holders from MDAs, CSOs and private sector.

The Commission has an oversight function in the implementation of ATIA and in the exercise of that function it has the powers to raise awareness of the right of access to information among members of the public and information holders.

"The right to access to information is an enabling right which means that it is critical for the respect and protection of many other rights" Habiba Osman.
SCALING UP OF HIV AND AIDS PREVENTION MEASURES AND
PROMOTION OF SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS

The Commission is conducting a study on scaling up of HIV and AIDS Prevention Measures and Promotion of Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights in the district of Lilongwe funded by UNAIDS.

The target of this intervention are the youth and key populations. The ongoing activities are being conducted in the area of T/A Kabudula with the objective of promoting awareness on Sexual Reproductive Health Rights. In addition, the study addresses structural barriers in accessing services among people of non-conforming sexual orientation while putting in place human rights abuse reporting mechanisms.

Monica Namonde from the Commission facilitating community engagement

Participants and MHRC staff during one of the sessions
CONTINUED ATTACKS ON PERSONS WITH ALBINISM

On 2nd of December 2022, the Chairperson of Disability and Elderly Rights Directorate Commissioner Boniface Massah joined Police Commissioner for Central East Region, Noel Kayira in Kasungu T/A Chulu where a 3 year old Talandira Chirwa a child with albinism, was brutally murdered and was found with her arm severed. In the pictures below, Commissioners addressing community members during a monitoring visit.

The Commission also inspected the house where the attack was carried out.
On the 3rd of December 2022, the Commission, through its Chairperson Scader Louis, participated in the commemoration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities under the theme "Trans-formative Solutions for Inclusive Development: The Role of Innovation in Fueling an Accessible and Equitable World".

"The International Day for Persons with Disabilities should remind us all that persons with disabilities are entitled to civil, political, economic and cultural rights as recognized in International Human Rights Instruments". Scader Louis

This year's theme is geared towards building an inclusive world where innovations and accessibility are prioritized for persons with disabilities. Significantly, it is a call towards making Malawi accessible to persons with disabilities hence creating an inclusive community.
The Commission oriented newly elected members of the Reference Group and their matrons/patrons targeting Lilongwe rural west which has 21 zones. The orientation meeting was held at Kafulu Primary School in Lilongwe. During the orientation sessions, members of the Reference Group elected their leaders in the positions of the chairperson, deputy chairperson, secretary, deputy secretary and members of the executive committee.
Save the Children under the Securing Children’s Rights through Education and Protection Programme (SCREP) hosted a learning event from the 1st to the 4th of November 2022. The aim of the learning event was to appreciate the progress that the programme is achieving through implementing partners such as the Malawi Human Rights Commission, Citizen Action for Sustainable Development Organisation and Blantyre Synod among others.

The Commission visited Neno district and held a dialogue meeting between members of the community and duty bearers on ending child marriages and teenage pregnancies. The objective for this dialogue meeting was to learn the interventions implemented through the SCREP program partners in the area on ending child marriages and teenage pregnancies.
Every year on 10th December, the Commission joins the international community and national stakeholders in commemorating International Human Rights Day. This year's commemoration was celebrated at Capital Hotel in Lilongwe. The guest of honour was the Minister of National Unity and Civic Education, Honorable Timothy Pagonachi Mtambo. This year's local theme is: *The Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment*. The commemoration was financially supported by UNDP, Save the Children and Think Tank for Sustainability (TMG). Some of the key takeaways were; protecting the environment so that future generations have security, practicing good hygiene and avoiding careless disposal of plastics and providing alternative energy sources in order to prevent deforestation in our country.
HUMAN RIGHTS DAY PICTORIAL FOCUS
We appreciate the print media as a partner in the dissemination of human rights information and promoting access to information.
OUR STRATEGIC PARTNERS

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