Contents

Page One ......................... Message from the Executive Secretary
Page Two ......................... Achieving Milestones
Page Three ....................... HESLGB Orientation on ATI
Page Four ........................ African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of
                                 the Child (ACERWC)
Page Five ........................ Older Persons Bill
Page Six ............................. GANHRI Annual Meeting
Page Seven ....................... 10th African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development
Page Eight ........................ Open-ended Working Group on Aging
Page Nine ........................ General Assembly for the African Network of Information
                                 Commissions
Page Ten ........................... International Conference of Information Commissioners
Page Eleven ....................... 10th African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development
Page Twelve ...................... Capacity-building on Sex Discrimination
Page Thirteen ..................... Capacity-building Workshop on Rights of Refugees
Page Fourteen .................... Media Engagement Workshop on the Rights of Refugees
Page Fifteen ...................... In the News on the Rights of Refugees
Page Sixteen ...................... Congratulations
Page Seventeen ................... Allies and partners
Page Eighteen ..................... Social Media Tracker
I present to you our second quarter newsletter for this year. The year is trailing by, so quickly and as usual, your Commission has been making headlines both internally and externally. As an A Status National Human Rights Commission it is important that we take part in the regional and global human rights conversations.

The Commission, is pleased to share that it took part in the Annual Meeting for National Human Rights Institutions organized by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) in Genève, Switzerland, in Albania for the Access to Information Conference among other countries where we prominently feature in this newsletter.

We commend the UN Family, the EU and Embassies of Norway and Iceland for supporting the Commission in its quest to fulfil its mandate. The Government of Malawi is also commended for ensuring that the Commission is functioning independently without interference. The Commission looks forward to pushing the cart on refugee work, climate change, monitoring of the hunger situation, protecting the rights of older persons, refugees and the preparation for election observation.

We sincerely appreciate the collaboration with Civil Society Organizations, Critical Media Parliamentary Committees who continue to be allies in the promotion and protection of human rights.

Enjoy our Newsletter.
Commissioner Bonface Massah was nominated by the Malawi government as a candidate for the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

This nomination is a well-deserved recognition of Commissioner Massah's exceptional character and unwavering dedication to human rights, particularly the rights of persons with disabilities.

Commissioner Viwemi Chavula was recognized as a male champion in the 50:50 campaign at the Ritz-Attorney-At Law women of substance award Ceremony.
Higher Education Students Loans Grants Board (HESLGB) organized an orientation on access to information for its management at Linde Motel in Mponela on 3rd May 2024. The Commission led by Commissioner Teresa Ndanga facilitated the session. Honourable Susan Dosi, Chair for the Parliamentary Committee for Media, Information and Communications graced the occasion as a Guest of Honour.

In her opening remarks, Honourable Dosi underscored the importance for the HESLGB to disclose information because its services are for the poor Malawian youths. In her remarks, Commissioner Ndanga thanked HESLGB for taking this step in complying with the law. She called upon them to ensure that it implements all the remaining requirements.
Commissioner Boniface Massah represented the Commission at the 43rd Ordinary Session of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) in Maseru, Kingdom of Lesotho. Among the agenda items of the Session was the consideration of the State Party report of the Republic of Malawi on 19th April 2024.

Commissioner Massah presented a statement on behalf of NANHRI at the official opening of the session. Noted in the speech were issues of equitable access to quality education through the provision of necessary education support such as learning infrastructures and gendered services including menstrual hygiene. The need for the Government to ensure that education user fees and child marriages must stop being hindrances in accessing quality education. Protection of children with disabilities including children with albinism needs government commitment in addressing discrimination, violence and social exclusion. Ensuring availability of support services to mitigate risks and challenges children with albinism face; Government should pay attention to involvement of children in various business interests like small scale mining that is risky and hazardous to children. Therefore, the Commission calls upon government to have a strong and coordinated monitoring mechanism that tracks down the extent of child protection in all aspects.
Commissioners Viwemi Chavula and Andrew Kavala, along with Executive Secretary Habiba Osman, participated in the Older Persons Bill convening for Members of Parliament on April 2, 2024. This event was organized by the Ministry of Gender, Malawi.

Malawi Human Rights Commission is committed to ensuring the full enjoyment of rights by the aging population in Malawi. We are pleased to announce that the Older Persons Bill has now been passed into law. We extend our gratitude to Manepo for facilitating the working meeting on the proposed law, which was instrumental in this significant achievement.
The Commission was honoured to be part of the 2024 GANHRI Annual Meeting in Genève, Switzerland this year. The Commission was also awarded its A-STATUS certificate along other National Human Rights Institutions that underwent their accreditation last year in October 2023.

On the sidelines of GANHRI Annual Meeting, the Executive Secretary took the opportunity to connect with the Delegation of Oman Human Rights Commission. The topic of collaboration centered on efforts to strengthen collaboration and coordination of the rights of domestic workers that have illegally been employed or found themselves in exploitative conditions.
The Commission, a member of the NANHRI Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), participated in the 10th African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia represented by Director of Disability and Elderly Rights, Mr. Wycliffe Masoo.

The theme of the session was "Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: Eradicating Poverty in Times of Multiple Crises." From Malawi, the forum was being attended by former President Dr Joyce Banda and the UN Resident Representative, Rebecca Adda Donto.
The Commission, an NHRI with an 'A Status', from 20th to 24th May 2024, participated in the 14th Session of the Open-ended Working Group on Aging (OEWGA) in New York, USA.

The OEWGA has for the past years been working on finding lasting solutions to challenges faced by older persons possibly through the adoption of a global framework. Malawi (state) is represented by Chikumbutso Kutengule, an officer from its Permanent Mission to the UN.

The Commission was represented by the Executive Secretary, Ms. Habiba Osman and the Director of Disability and Elder Rights, Mr. Wycliffe Masoo.
The Commission was represented at the 2024 General Assembly for the African Network of Information Commissions (ANIC) by Mr. Chance Kalolokesya, Head of the Access to Information Unit. The Assembly took place in Johannesburg, South Africa, from May 22nd to May 24th, 2024.

The meeting served several key purposes. Firstly, it facilitated peer learning among member countries. Secondly, it oversaw the election of a new Executive Committee for the network. Finally, it served as a preparatory session for the upcoming ICIC conference scheduled for Albania in June 2024.

A core objective of the assembly was to strengthen the strategic positioning and visibility of ANIC. This involved promoting exchanges of best practices and addressing common challenges faced by member states in implementing access to information legislation across Africa.

Representatives from a number of African nations participated in the assembly, including Kenya, Ghana, Morocco, Sierra Leone, Angola, Zambia, Namibia, Ivory Coast, and Malawi, alongside the host nation, South Africa.
Malawi participated in the 15th Edition of the International Conference of Information Commissioners (ICIC) taking place in Tirana, Albania. The conference, which run from June 3rd to 5th, focused on the theme "Empowering Individuals Through Access to Information: Ensuring Transparency and Inclusivity in an Interconnected World."

Officially opened by Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama, the conference brought together information commissioners from around the globe. Representing Malawi are Commissioner Teresa Chirwa-Ndanga, who chairs the Civil and Political Rights Committee overseeing access to information (ATI), and the Commission's Civil and Political Rights Officer, Chifundo Harawa.

The conference will delved into how access to information empowers citizens to fight corruption, ensures transparency and inclusivity for marginalized communities, and fosters a more transparent society through the critical role of civil society and media. Additionally, a key discussion point was striking a balance between access to information rights and data protection rights in the digital age.

This international forum provides a valuable platform for Malawi to share experiences with other countries, learn from best practices, and explore innovative strategies to strengthen its own access to information framework.
Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC) participated in a 4-day workshop on Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CAAC) in Bambane, Eswatini. Ms. Priscilla Thawe, Acting Director for Child Rights, represented the MHRC at the workshop.

The workshop deliberated on the status of CAAC in the region, identify opportunities for engagement to prioritize the implementation of obligations to CAAC, and sensitize participants on strategies for prevention and response.

Participants include representatives from National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) from COMESA member countries: Malawi, South Africa, Madagascar, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Kenya, Botswana, Zambia, and Eswatini (the host country).
The Commission, with financial support from the Embassy of Iceland in Lilongwe, conducted a capacity building programme on human rights and sex discrimination, specifically tailored for the Gender Technical Working Group and Beach Village Committees in Salima, Mangochi, Nkhotakota and Nkhatabaye district’s in Malawi. This follows a public inquiry on transactional sex for fish in Nkhotakota district, which was conducted by the Commission in December, 2023.

The engagement aimed at fostering a deeper understanding of human rights principles and gender equality as well as best practices for the fishing communities in addressing transactional sex. This forum also served as a platform to tackle the pressing and concerning issue of sex for fish trade from the Beach to the markets.
The Commission conducted a capacity-building workshop on rights of refugees from 16 to 17 May 2024. Attendees included both Commissioners and staff.

The workshop's facilitators were from the Department of Refugees, IOM - UN Migration, UNHCR Malawi, and Inua Advocacy. This workshop took place under the “protecting rights of refugees" project which the Commission is implementing with funding from the EU Delegation.

In his opening remarks, Deputy Executive Secretary of the Commission, Mr. Winston Mwafulirwa praised the Commission for the timely intervention on refugees and thanked the European Union in Malawi for its support. On her part Ms. Atiji Phiri-Nuka from the EU Delegation emphasized the importance of a comprehensive approach to addressing refugee issues, including discussions on laws, information sharing, and interventions by international organizations, CSOs, and the government. She said that the initiative allows stakeholders to learn from each other and enhance their commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of refugees and asylum seekers.

Commissioner Tereza Ndanga encouraged Commissioners and staff to consider the roles of various government and stakeholder organizations. She highlighted that the workshop offers a valuable learning platform for the Commission to effectively protect the human rights of all, particularly vulnerable groups like refugees and asylum seekers.
Through financial support from the European Union in Malawi, The Commission hosted a media engagement workshop on May 28th, 2024, to strengthen reporting on the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. This initiative aimed to build the capacity of journalists on human rights standards and best practices when covering issues related to refugees and asylum seekers. The workshop targeted 43 participants from various media houses across all four regions of Malawi.

Through this training, the Commission created a network of human rights journalists. These journalists will collaborate with the Commission and other relevant agencies to promote public awareness and understanding of the rights of refugees and asylum seekers in Malawi. The workshop will feature facilitators from the Commission itself, the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Malawi Chapter, INUA Advocacy, and the Department of Refugees. This collaborative approach ensures that participants receive a well-rounded perspective on human rights reporting and the specific challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers in Malawi.
IN THE NEWS ON THE RIGHTS OF REFUGEES

Information distortion on refugees worries MHRC

By Tenson Kalumwa

Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC) has declared that there is still misinformation and disinformation surrounding the refugee situation in the country, which has led to a wave of misinformation and disinformation on the process of registering refugees in the country.

"A lot of information has been shared surrounding the issue of refugees and asylum seekers," said Nkhathwa. "There is a need for the government to provide accurate information to the public." He added that the lack of proper information on the process has led to the public being confused and misinformed.

The commission said that the process of registering refugees in the country is being handled by the Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Interior Affairs. However, the commission said that the process has been marred by misinformation and disinformation.

Refugees’ rights priority—MHRC

By Tenson Kalumwa

The Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC) has stated that it is committed to protecting the rights of refugees and asylum seekers in the country. The commission said that it is working closely with the government to ensure that the rights of refugees and asylum seekers are protected.

"The commission is committed to ensuring that the rights of refugees and asylum seekers are protected," said Nkhathwa. "We are working closely with the government to ensure that the process of registering refugees in the country is transparent and fair." He added that the commission is also working with international organizations to ensure that the rights of refugees are protected.

Status of refugees in Malawi needs comprehensive approach

By Jefred Mbita

For a long time now, Malawi has been living up to its good name as the Warm Heart of Africa. This is not without basis. We are a friendly people, so welcoming of strangers that they feel at home instantly. We treat them as our relations, as people we have known for a long time. This has endeared us to the world and to fellow Africans that are caught in civil strife in their countries.

Three decades ago, as conflict tore through Rwanda and Burundi, Malawi started playing host to nationals of those two countries at Dzaleka Refugee Camp. For many refugees at the camp, Malawi is the only home they have known in their lives.

The country has been hosting them in part because it is bound by duty over fellow Africans and also because of international obligations.

But not all has been rosy. The camp is beset by logistical challenges, with

Security and health

According to Charlotte, struggle for basic needs leads to increase in cases of theft. People are robbed phones, money and other food-related items within the camp. Crime cases there include sexual abuse and assault. But many of these go unreported.

Corruption allegations are also common as people want to buy favours from authorities in buying refugee status and other services which are limited despite high demand.

Department of Refugees data indicate that the camp has only 12 police officers against 54,000 people. These police officers are supported by a 150-member community policing structure.

The camp has a health centre which caters for the catchment population of about 70,000 including some communities surrounding the camp. The facility is congested and can hardly offer quality health services.

International conventions

The 1951 Convention Status and Rights of Refugees protects the rights of refugees such as the right not to be punished for illegal entry into the territory, not to be expelled except under certain strict conditions, access to education, access to justice and other fundamental freedoms and privileges enshrined in international and regional human rights treaties.

Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC) Director of Civil and Political Rights Peter Chisi said in 2016 Malawi Government committed to it will adopt Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRF), a policy that would allow government to integrate new refugees and asylum seekers into the host community.

But there’s more to come.

MHRC—There is a need for coordination

Refugees seek total protection

He then said MHRC will engage government to remove some reservations with the 1951 convention in order to stop violations of human rights.

Senior Administration and Operations Manager at Department of Refugees in the Ministry of Homeland Security Hilda Kasiwana said existing laws have restricted refugees from being employed or getting citizenship unless going through the Department of Immigration and Citizenship Services.

"The Department for Refugees will continue to advocate and facilitate the review of laws and policies that affect refugees. At present the Refugees Act is under review which is a positive milestone. We shall continue to counsel on processes to be undertaken and provide refugees access to relevant documents to facilitate their inclusion." Kasiwana said.

She said the department conducted a skills survey among the refugees. It shared this with relevant department for consideration of those with rare skills.

From page 3

Sunday Times COMMENT

Freedoms of Expression, Our Birthright

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The Commission celebrates our very own Cynthia Mtoso on her achievement of a Bachelors degree in Public Administration.

This is no mean feat and you are an inspiration to many. Congratulations Cynthia!
ALLIES AND PARTNERS

UNFPA

UNICEF

European Union

Embassy of Iceland

Lilongwe

Irish Rule of Law International

Norway

UNDP

Empowered lives. Resilient nations.
SOCIAL MEDIA TRACKER

APRIL TO JUNE

**facebook**

**Performance**

Followers: 16,544

New followers: 50

**Top countries**

- Malawi: 14K (5%)
- South Africa: 1K (7%)
- United Kingdom: 106 (1%)
- United States: 194 (1%)
- Zambia: 134 (1%)
- Nigeria: 77 (0%)
- Mozambique: 75 (0%)
- Tanzania: 55 (0%)
- Kenya: 53 (0%)
- India: 48 (0%)

**Top towns/cities**

- Lilongwe, Malawi: 6,291 (21%)
- Blantyre, Malawi: 841 (21%)
- Lilongwe, Malawi: 955 (5%)
- Zomba, Malawi: 330 (3%)
- Kazungu, Malawi: 29 (1%)
- Cape Town, South Africa: 211 (1%)
- Saldina, Malawi: 102 (1%)
- Mangochi, Malawi: 189 (1%)
- Johannesburg, South Africa: 121 (1%)
- Chipata, Zambia: 119 (1%)

**Age and gender**

- Women: 23.2%
- Men: 76.8%

**Followers**

7,068

**New followers**

214
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