



EXPLORING THE BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS THAT COMMUNITIES AND YOUTH IN DEDZA AND MACHINGA DISTRICTS EXPERIENCE TO HOLD DUTY BEARERS ACCOUNTABLE FOR SRHR POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

by

Lyness Soko, MHRRC, Lilongwe
Lydia Mkandawire, CHRR, Lilongwe
Ellen Katoleza, SRHR Alliance
Chimwemwe Chisale, CYECE
Emeless Ngolomi, YRA, CYECE
Sydney Chumbu, YRA, CYECE
Flora Shakira Mgwira, YRA, CYECE
Harald Kedde, Rutgers
Loes Loning, Rutgers
Miranda van Reeuwijk, Rutgers
Peter Mvula, PALM Consulting Limited
Alister Munthali, PALM Consulting Limited

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Abbreviations

ABYM	Adolescent Boys and Young Men
ADC	Area Development Committee
AGYW	Adolescent Girls and Young Women
AYSRHR	Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
CDA	Community Development Assistant
CCJP	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
CDF	Community Development Fund
CHRR	Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation
COR	Central Operations Research
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CYECE	Centre for Youth Empowerment and Civic Empowerment
DEC	District Executive Committee
DHMT	District Health Management Team
DYO	District Youth Office
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FP	Family Planning
FPAM	Family Planning Association of Malawi
GAVI	Global Alliance for Vaccine Initiative
GVH	Group Village Headman
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IDI	In-depth Interview
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
KI	Key Informant
KII	Key Informant Interview
LMIC	Low- and Middle-Income Countries
MHRRC	Malawi Human Rights Resource Centre
MICS	Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey
MIYP	Meaningful and Inclusive Youth Participation
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoGCDSW	Ministries of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare
MoH	Ministry of Health
MP	Member of Parliament
NCRSSH	National Committee for Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities
NCST	National Commission for Science and Technology
NICE	National Initiative for Civic Education
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisation
PtY	Power to Youth
RA	Research Assistant
SASA	Start Awareness Support Action
SDG(s)	Sustainable development Goals
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
TA	Traditional Authority
ToC	Theory of Change
TWG	Technical working Group

UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
VDC	Village Development Committee
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association
YFHS	Youth Friendly Health Services
YONECO	Youth Net and Counselling

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Lyness Soko, MHRRC, Lilongwe
Lydia Mkandawire, CHRR, Lilongwe
Ellen Katoleza, SRHR Alliance
Chimwemwe Chisale, CYECE
Emeless Ngolomi, YRA, CYECE
Sydney Chumbu, YRA, CYECE
Flora Shakira Mgwira, YRA, CYECE
Harald Kedde, Rutgers
Loes Loning, Rutgers
Miranda van Reeuwijk, Rutgers
Peter Mvula, PALM Consulting Limited
Alister Munthali, PALM Consulting Limited

Executive summary

Introduction: Studies have generally demonstrated that social accountability improves health and other outcomes.. However, in Malawi there is limited knowledge on social accountability in relation to SRHR implementation and addressing policy gaps. PtY Malawi has built capacity of young people to implement social accountability mechanisms in Dedza and Machinga since 2021. This study, therefore, explored the social accountability mechanisms being used by PtY Malawi, mapped social accountability mechanisms being used in Malawi, and further explored the barriers and facilitators to the implementation of social accountability mechanisms by youth in Malawi particularly in Dedza and Machinga.

Methodology: We reviewed literature on social accountability in Malawi as well as outside. We conducted 9 KIIs at national level and 13 KIIs in Dedza (8) and Machinga(5). We also conducted 17 FGDs with youth in Dedza (7) and Machinga (10). A total of 180 people participated in this study.

Results:

Types of social accountability: PtY Malawi, according to our respondents, uses 3 types of social accountability mechanisms namely budget tracking, interface meetings and community scorecards. While some participants mentioned social accountability mechanisms such as social audits, budget analysis, *bwalo la nzika* (citizen forum), grievance redress mechanisms and public debates, these other social accountability mechanisms are not being used by PtY Malawi in Dedza and Machinga.

Factors that allow youth to participate in social accountability mechanisms

- *Access to information:* The PtY programme has created awareness among youth about their rights to health including SRHR which they did not know previously. The trainings for youth included harmful practices such as child marriage and SGBV and the need for both girls and boys to go to school. Since they were now aware of their rights and they were also taught about social accountability, these youth are now able to identify the problems and map out issues in their communities, are able to engage duty bearers during the implementation of social accountability initiatives.
- *Building the capacity of youth and other stakeholders:* The PtY programme built the capacity of the youth to conduct social accountability mechanisms. Without this training, the youth would not have implemented the social accountability mechanisms. The PtY programme also sensitised community leaders, service providers and other duty bearers on social accountability mechanisms and the need for these duty bearers to timely respond to issues raised by youth during the process of implementing social accountability mechanisms to improve, for example, the delivery of SRHR services for youth.
- *Training on meaningful youth participation and youth adult partnerships:* PtY Malawi oriented youth and community leaders on meaningful youth participation and advocated for youth membership in decision making community level structures such as VDC and ADC. Youth are able to speak even in the presence of duty bearers; hence, they are able to engage duty bearers during social accountability processes.

- *Approachable, responsive and friendly duty bearers:* The PtY programme has built capacity of duty bearers in meaningful youth participation and youth adult partnership and sensitised them, including chiefs and service providers at community and district level to be responsive to the needs of the youth and listen to young people. Thus the duty bearers participate in social accountability mechanisms. The study has found that duty bearers are in general approachable, responsible and friendly to youth and they have tried to improve service delivery for SRHR services. It is also worth noting that the duty bearers who have been reached directly by the PtY program are more receptive.
- *Group agency:* Youths work as a group through the youth networks during the implementation of social accountability mechanisms. These youths are motivated to participate in social accountability as no one can identify that it was person X who did this.
- *The desire to help their communities:* Youth experience many challenges at community level including harmful practices such as child marriage and SGBV, unintended pregnancies, many children dropping out of school, prevailing SRHR misconceptions, lack of youth friendly corners in health facilities and shortage of human resources and family planning commodities. Social accountability mechanisms aim at finding and implementing solutions to these problems. The desire to contribute towards addressing these challenges motivates them to participate in social accountability mechanisms.
- *Supportive legislation and policies:* The existence of conducive laws including bylaws that support the work of youth encourages them to participate in social accountability initiatives. For example, child marriage is prohibited by the Laws of Malawi. In both Dedza and Machinga communities have established and are implementing bylaws which prohibit child marriage. If these laws and bylaws were not in place, it would have been difficult for them to implement this.
- *Functional youth networks and youth clubs:* Youth meet in youth networks and youth clubs during which they identify the challenges they experience and develop and implement action plans on how these challenges can best be addressed. This identification of the challenges they experience is the basis for planning and implementing social accountability interventions such as interface meetings and community scorecards.
- *Availability of a grant:* In order for youth to implement social accountability programmes, they need resources for their meetings and refreshments. The PtY programme, according to youth, gave a grant of MK750,000 to youth clubs/networks to support them in several activities including the implementation of social accountability initiatives.

SRHR and other outcomes of social accountability mechanisms: Our informants told us that before the start of implementing the PtY programme, the demand for SRHR services among young people in both Dedza and Machinga was low. With the implementation of PtY interventions, including social accountability initiatives, the demand and uptake of SRHR services among young people has improved significantly. Youth are engaged in the delivery of SRHR services, for example, through distribution of condoms and other SRHR commodities. While initially there were many cases of pregnancies among females adolescents, this is no longer the case. Through interface meetings and other social accountability initiatives, staffing of one health facility has improved thereby contributing to improved quality of SRHR related services to youth. In both Dedza and Machinga there was widespread prevalence of harmful

practices such as *kusasa fumbi*, *kutomera* and other forms of SGBV. Our informants told us that these harmful practices are no longer being practised. Youths are now able to identify and differentiate various forms of violence, and unlike in the past, they are increasingly reporting such incidents to relevant authorities. Informants noted a perceived decline in cases of rape, attributing this to increased awareness, strengthened community accountability structures, and the active role of young people in prevention and reporting efforts. Initiation ceremonies, which previously overlapped with the school calendar, are being conducted outside the school calendar. Children are being withdrawn from child marriages and being enrolled into school. Many girls told us that they re-enrolled into school after withdrawing for various reasons.

Barriers to implementation of social accountability mechanisms: Participants identified several barriers to the implementation of social accountability mechanisms and these include:

- *Lack of knowledge:* Many participants, particularly youth, lack awareness of their rights, social accountability principles, and existing legislation. This knowledge gap limits their ability to engage meaningfully in social accountability processes.
- *Inadequate financial resources:* Insufficient funding hampers the ability to organize and sustain activities such as interface meetings, workshops, and other initiatives critical to the success of social accountability mechanisms.
- *Prevailing power dynamics:* Unequal power relations between youth, community leaders, NGO staff, and government actors create barriers to meaningful youth participation. Some duty bearers, such as service providers, resist engagement and fail to attend meetings organized by youth, undermining the effectiveness of these mechanisms.
- *Corruption:* Corruption at various levels obstructs the implementation of social accountability processes, reducing trust and transparency within communities.
- *Religious beliefs:* Deeply rooted religious beliefs often conflict with the principles of social accountability, particularly when addressing sensitive topics such as youth rights, sexual reproductive health and gender equality.
- *Lack of political will:* Limited commitment from policymakers and duty bearers to prioritize and support social accountability mechanisms hinders progress.
- *Delayed responses by duty bearers:* Slow or non-existent responses to issues raised by youth discourage continued participation, weakening the momentum of social accountability initiatives.

Addressing barriers to social accountability-views of study participants: Study participants made several suggestions to address the challenges of implementing social accountability initiatives by the youth and these were:

- Allocating financial and other resources to support youth participation in social accountability processes.

- Building the capacity of youth, community members and duty bearers on how they can best implement social accountability mechanisms.
- Training duty bearers on social accountability including their roles fosters responsiveness by ensuring duty bearers respond to demands by young people thus reducing power imbalances, and strengthens youth-led initiatives, ensuring effective and improved community outcomes.
- Advocating for addressing the prevailing power dynamics existing among various stakeholders and youth.
- Encouraging youth participation in all development activities in the community.
- Facilitating engagement meetings between young people and duty bearers by CSOs adds weight to the engagement meetings and ensures responsiveness from duty bearers
- Creating awareness about existing policies and legislation including the translation of these instruments. These pieces of legislation and policies should be made available to youth.

Conclusions: This study generally demonstrates that the implementation of social accountability mechanisms contributes to improved sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and broader health outcomes. However, several barriers hinder the effective implementation of these mechanisms. These include limited funding, inadequate access to information, particularly regarding youth rights, entrenched power dynamics and social norms, insufficient knowledge of relevant laws and policies, and a lack of political will. Our results show that social accountability works and can work for everyone including marginalised communities so long as capacity is built among rights holders as well as duty bearers, that resources should be available and that duty bearers should have the possibility of effecting improvements in service delivery.

Based on the results of this study we recommend the following:

- There is need for PtY partners and other CSOs to continue engaging duty bearers and facilitate engagement meetings with young people to ensure responsiveness.
- The interventions should be scaled up to other districts and communities since evidence has shown that building capacity of young people in social accountability mechanisms improves SRHR and related outcomes.
- There is need to build capacity of more duty bearers in youth adult partnership and meaningful youth participation so that they are more receptive to being accountable and responsive to young peoples needs.
- Financial resources should be made available for youth to effectively implement social accountability processes. This money can be used for transport, providing refreshment for meetings including interface meetings. Youth would also need to purchase stationery items such as flip charts, markers and pens.

- Youth, community members including community leaders and service providers should be trained in social accountability in order to equip them with skills to improve service delivery and respond to issues raised by youth in social accountability processes.
- Youths and other beneficiaries of social accountability mechanisms should have access to information including budgets for development projects so that they can effectively monitor the implementation of community development projects.
- SRHR and related legislation and laws should be disseminated to youth including their translation into relevant local languages.
- In order to effectively implement social accountability mechanisms, there is a need for coordination and collaboration among different stakeholders namely government entities, NGOs, community gatekeepers, and service providers to enhance AGYW/youth/SRHR advocates to effectively engage leaders, policymakers, and advocates for policy change.
- Social accountability is relatively new in Dedza and Machinga and there is a great need for continuous technical and financial support from organizations such as PtY Malawi and this will keep youth advocates or AGYW motivated and focused on advocating for policy change or engaging with duty bearers.
- NGOs should work with chiefs in order to ensure that youth are members of the decision making structures at community (VDC & ADC) and district level (DEC) where discussions about prevailing problems and how these can be addressed as has been done in Dedza and Machinga.
- The social accountability programme has had some positive outcomes such as children being withdrawn from child marriage and re-enrolling into school. Youth themselves should identify their fellow youth who can act as role models and also as mentors for other youth in the community.
- Advocacy campaigns should be conducted in Dedza and Machinga to address the prevailing gender, social and cultural norms that limit youth power.
- Build the capacity of community gatekeepers on youth SRHR and related issues which can lead to acceptance and their active participation in promoting the implementation of such interventions among youth.
- The limitation for this study is that we only interviewed young people at community level who are familiar with the PtY programme. These young people explained the good relationship that has emerged with duty bearers. Further research is therefore required to explore this positive relationship where the chiefs and other community members to get their perspectives and understand what enables them to positively work with youth.
- Some young people drop out of youth clubs as they feel that these clubs discuss the same issues during their meetings. The PtY should explore working with youth clubs and diversify their activities including the introduction of sports.

- There is a need for civil society and other stakeholders to conduct refresher courses on social accountability for young people.
- PtY and other CSOs should explore the use of youth friendly knowledge products such as infographic or explanation videos or pamphlets in local language whatever works best in the context.

Replication and scalability of Social Accountability Initiatives: The findings from this study highlight the potential for scaling up and replicating social accountability initiatives to improve SRHR and related outcomes in diverse settings. The success achieved in Dedza and Machinga provides a foundation for expanding these interventions while adapting them to other districts or countries with similar socio-cultural and economic contexts.

- *Building capacity and knowledge sharing:* Capacity building for youth, duty bearers, and community leaders on social accountability mechanisms has been a key driver of success. By institutionalizing training programs, organizations can replicate these efforts across other regions. This includes equipping youth networks with skills in advocacy, budget tracking, and meaningful engagement with duty bearers. National platforms, such as youth forums, can be used to disseminate knowledge and best practices, creating a multiplier effect.
- *Scaling up functional youth networks and clubs:* The functionality of youth networks in identifying and addressing community challenges demonstrates their scalability. Expanding these networks to other areas can foster a broader youth movement, leveraging the collective power of young people to drive social accountability initiatives in their communities.
- *Adopting supportive policies and bylaws:* Establishing and implementing community bylaws has proven effective in combating harmful practices such as child marriage. Scaling up this approach involves advocacy for localized policy reforms in new areas, supported by training for traditional and religious leaders on gender equality and SRHR.
- *Leveraging financial support for sustainability:* The provision of grants to youth clubs has facilitated the implementation of impactful initiatives. Replicating this model requires collaboration with donors and governments to create sustainable funding mechanisms, ensuring that financial resources are consistently available to support youth-led efforts.
- *Build on existing structures and proven strategies:* These interventions can be replicated in other areas, scaled up to national level, and integrated into broader development programs. This will not only strengthen SRHR outcomes but also contribute to systemic change in addressing GBV, harmful practices, meaningful youth participation and empowering youth as agents of change.

1. Introduction

1.1 Unintended pregnancies, harmful practices and sexual and gender-based violence

Adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) in Malawi, as is the case with other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, experience a wide range of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) problems, including unintended pregnancies, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and being exposed to harmful practices. At a global level, about 44% of all pregnancies are unintended; 56% of these end in an induced abortion (Starrs et al., 2018). Polis et al (2017) reports that 53% of the pregnancies in Malawi are unintended and that 30% of these end up in abortion. Unintended pregnancies are more prevalent in women including AGYW who lack access to modern contraception and comprehensive sexuality education (CSE). The consequences of unintended pregnancies are aggravated where access to abortion and post-abortion care is restricted (Fathalla, 2020). In Malawi law is restrictive and abortion is legal only if performed to save a woman's life and usually provider initiated otherwise women who procure abortion are at risk of being imprisoned for 7-14 years (Polis et. al., 2017). Abortion is common in Malawi and it is estimated that there were about 141,000 abortions in 2015 among women of reproductive age. Most of these abortions are performed under clandestine conditions. The Guttmacher Institute estimates that there is one in 29 chances that a 15 year old girl in Malawi will eventually die from a pregnancy related condition. Complications from abortions are the cause of 6-18% of maternal deaths in Malawi (Guttmacher Institute, 2017).

SGBV can be physical, sexual, economic or psychological and it includes harmful practices such as child marriage, sexual harassment and abuse. In 2015/2016 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey found that , 21% of the women aged 15-49 report having ever experienced sexual violence at some point in their lives and 14% experienced this over the past 12 months. Among those who have experienced sexual violence, 63% and 31%, reported such violence was perpetrated by their current and former husband, respectively (National Statistical Office, 2017)¹. Intimate partner violence (IPV) increases the likelihood that women will experience unintended pregnancies, abortions, miscarriages, and other perinatal problems (Starrs et al., 2018). Factors seen to increase the likelihood of individual males perpetrating IPV include exposure to violence during childhood, personality disorders, antisocial behaviour, harmful use of alcohol or drugs and attitudes that support gender inequality or condone violence (Starrs et. al., 2018). The 2020-2021 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) found that 24% of the girls aged 15-19 in Malawi justify wife beating for any of the following reasons: a wife going out without telling; neglecting children; arguing with the husband; refusing sex with him; and burning the food. SGBV is therefore quite common in Malawi and sustained by social and gender norms (National Statistical Office, 2021).

Child marriage is among the harmful practices prevalent in Malawi and other low and middle income countries (LMIC). It is estimated that 28% of girls in LMIC are married before their 18th birthday, while an estimated 7% are married before the age of 15 (Starrs et al., 2018). According to Makwemba et. al. (2019), in 2018 9% of the female respondents were married before the age of 15 years compared to 1% of the male respondents. The proportion of female respondents who were married before the age of 18 years was at 42% which was higher than 6% among the male respondents. In 2020/21 38% of the women aged 20-24 were married before the age of 18 years which represents a decline from about 50% in earlier Demographic and Health Surveys (National Statistical Office, 2017 & 2011). Studies conducted in Machinga have generally shown that poverty and gender inequality constitute key drivers of child marriage (Munthali & Kok, 2016). Economic incentives often become more acute during humanitarian crises such as COVID-19 pandemic, when many parents feared that they would be unable to protect or care for their daughters (UNFPA, 2020). A rapid assessment conducted by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare in 2021 found that child marriage had increased tremendously since March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare, 2021). Other

¹ The 2024 MDHS is currently underway.

harmful practices include *kusasa fumbi* in which boys and girls are encouraged to experiment with sex soon after graduating from initiation ceremonies. This practice puts girls at risk of becoming pregnant or contracting sexually transmitted infections including HIV (Munthali & Kok, 2016).

1.2 Addressing SGBV, harmful practices and unintended pregnancies

It is evident that SGBV, harmful practices and unintended pregnancies are major challenges being experienced by AGYWs. The Government of Malawi, in conjunction with stakeholders, has developed policies and interventions to address these challenges. There are also some programmes being implemented by NGOs which aim to address these prevailing challenges among adolescents and young men and women.

1.2.1 *The development and implementation of sexual and reproductive health policies*

Safeguarding the well-being of women and AGYW is at the centre of sustainable development goals (SDGs), universal health coverage and a range of United Nations strategies, conventions and declarations. The Government of Malawi is committed to providing comprehensive and integrated SRHR services in line with the recommendations of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo, Egypt in 1994. Malawi is also a signatory of the African Union Maputo Plan of Action which advocates for the delivery of integrated SRHR services. Malawi, as a signatory to the SDGs, is obligated to report on the progress it is making in achieving the 2030 targets set for SRHR particularly SDG 3 (3.1: Reducing maternal mortality rate and 3.2: Ensuring universal access to SRHR services) and SDG 5 (5.1: Ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere, 5.2: Eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls, 5.3: Eliminating all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation, and 5.6: Ensuring universal access to SRHR services (UN, 2015). These international instruments outline the need to improve the availability of, and access to, a full range of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services and ensure people's rights to make their own choices about their sexuality and reproduction and receive non-discriminatory care. Malawi, as is the case with other countries, has adopted these international frameworks into domestic legislation, policies and programmes. The country therefore developed comprehensive SRHR and related policies and strategic plans aimed at improving health outcomes including SRHR outcomes for young people. The policies and strategies include the Malawi 2063, the National Health Policy, the Health Sector Strategic Plan, the National Youth Friendly Health Services Strategy, the National Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Policy, the National Strategy on ending Child Marriage and the National AIDS Policy, the National Gender Policy and the School Re-admission Policy. These policies address a wide range of issues including SGBV, unintended pregnancies and harmful practices. In most cases these policies and strategies are developed and disseminated at national level and rarely disseminated at district level. Due to decentralization in Malawi, among other factors, there have been challenges in implementing these policies at subnational level. The gap between policy formulation and implementation is even more pressing particularly in light of Malawi's SRHR and related challenges such as child marriage, unintended pregnancies, SGBV, low contraceptive use and related issues.

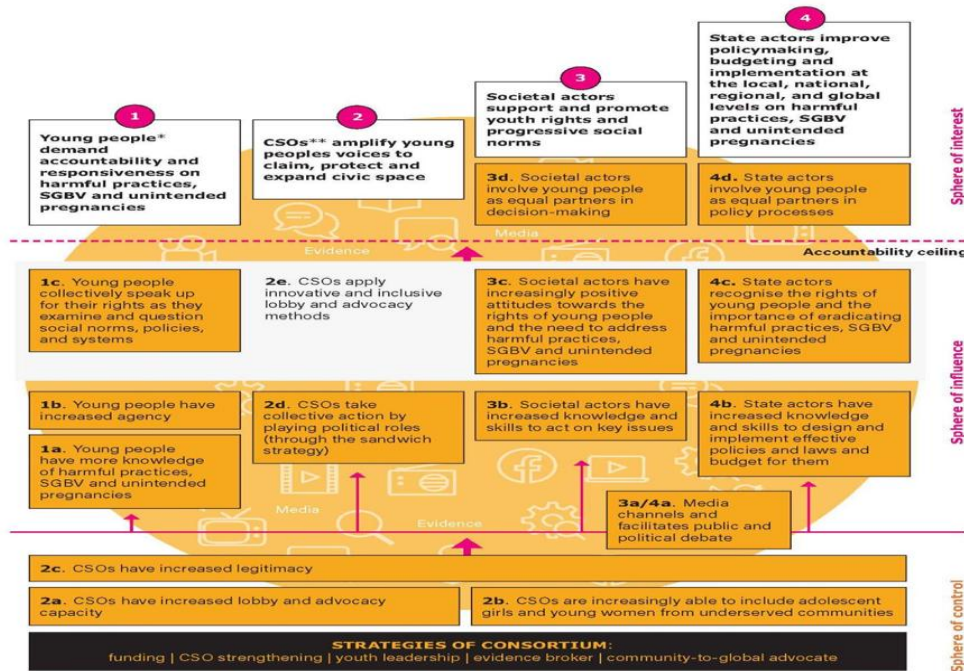
Even though Malawi has developed these policies, there are several factors that have impeded the promotion or implementation of SRHR and related policies. Wigle et al. (2020) for example argue that the lack of translation of policies into local languages and the distribution of these translated policies in youth friendly spaces such as youth clubs is one of the major factors that impedes implementation of these policies. The translation of these policies would ensure that young people understand these policies and strategies and consequently contribute to improving young people's capacity to hold duty bearers accountable for realizing their SRHR (Wigle, 2020).

1.2.2 The Power to Youth Programme

The Power to You(th) (PtY) consortium is a partnership between Amref Flying Doctors, Sonke Gender Justice and Rutgers, supported by the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) and CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality as technical partners. The partnership receives funding from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). It is the vision of the PtY consortium that AGYW from underserved communities make informed choices, enjoy their sexuality, and are free from harmful practices in gender-equitable and violence-free societies. The PtY programme's strategic objective is to contribute to more AGYW from underserved communities being meaningfully included in all decision-making processes regarding harmful practices, SGBV and unintended pregnancies. This objective aligns with results one, two and four of MoFA's SRHR policy. This objective also aligns with specific elements of SDG3 (adolescent fertility) and SDG5 (SGBV and child marriage). The PtY Programme is being implemented in seven countries namely: Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi, Senegal and Uganda over the period 2021-2025. In Malawi the PtY programme is being implemented by the Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation (CHRR), the Centre for Youth Empowerment and Civic Education (CYECE), Youth Wave, Malawi Sexual Reproductive Health Alliance, Malawi Human Rights Resource Centre and Amref.

The programme's Theory of Change (ToC) (Figure 1) presents the pathways to the envisioned change and the strategies the PtY consortium applies to achieve it. Firstly, by the end of the programme, PtY consortium wants young people to have more knowledge of harmful practices, SGBV and unintended pregnancies, as well as increased agency, so they can collectively speak up for their rights as they examine and question social norms, policies, and systems (Pathway 1). PtY also wants CSOs to take collective action and apply innovative and inclusive lobby and advocacy methods on the key issues (Pathway 2). The programme further wants societal actors to have increased knowledge and skills to act on these key issues, and to have increasingly positive attitudes towards the rights of young people as well as the need to address these key issues (Pathway 3). Lastly, PtY envisions that, by the end of the programme, state actors will have increased knowledge and skills to design and implement effective policies and laws to act on the key issues, and the available budget to do so. The programme wants state actors to recognize the rights of young people as well as the importance of eradicating harmful practices, SGBV and unintended pregnancies (Pathway 4). This is achieved by strengthening youth to claim civic space; strengthening civil society; changing harmful social norms; and ensuring policy implementation.

Figure 1: PtY Theory of Change



*Young people, particularly adolescent girls and young women, from underserved communities

**CSOs include Youth-Led Organizations (YLOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Women-Led Organizations (WLOs)

The programme's ToC is underpinned by the following (overlapping) approaches and theories:

- **A Gender Transformative Approach:** This approach examines, questions and transforms harmful gender norms and power dynamics that serve to reinforce gender inequalities (and privileges).
- **A human rights-based approach:** PtY applies a human-rights based approach in the implementation of all aspects of the programme, by paying attention to human rights principles and by regarding beneficiaries as active participants and placing them at the center of development initiatives as rights holders. With Meaningful and Inclusive Youth Participation (MIYP) as a core programme principle, PtY promotes young people's right to participation and places young people at the center of all program initiatives.
- **Intersectionality theory:** This theory promotes an understanding that key issues, such as harmful practices, SGBV and unintended pregnancies, are experienced in and result from a combination with other forms of structural inequality and discrimination.
- **The socio-ecological model.** The ToC is framed within a broader socio-ecological model which recognizes that gender inequality has no one cause and is perpetuated through multiple levels in society and the interplay of individual, relational, institutional, and structural level factors.
- **Social Norms Theory:** This theory looks at implicit and explicit rules regarding the appropriateness of behavior in any given situation. Social norms are defined as those implicit and explicit rules regarding the appropriateness of behavior in any given situation. Linking with the socio-ecological model, social norms are influenced by multiple factors at individual, community and societal level.
- **A feminist approach:** By taking a feminist approach, PtY seeks to redress persistent and historical power imbalances which prioritize the needs, voices and opportunities of men and boys.

In order to address SRHR reproductive health issues faced by young people, the PtY Malawi programme aims to improve and address the policy and strategy gaps. The PtY Malawi programme is implementing initiatives to bridge information gaps on SRHR by conducting awareness campaigns, capacity building and distribution of information, education and communication materials (IECs) on SRHR and SRHR related laws and policies. At the same time, the PtY Malawi programme is empowering young people in social accountability monitoring with a specific focus on ensuring the delivery of youth friendly health services (YFHS). In this study we adopted World Bank definition of social accountability, namely that it *refers to the extent and capacity of citizens to hold the state and service providers accountable and make them responsive to the needs of citizens and beneficiaries (World Bank 2003).*

Social accountability monitoring is essential for promoting inclusive and sustainable local development, facilitating implementation of policies and delivery of services. It acts as a mechanism that empowers citizens, including young people, to actively participate in governance. In order to ensure that young people are able to engage and hold duty bearers accountable, PtY Malawi has built the capacity of young people in social accountability processes including community score card, citizen charter and public expenditure tracking. These approaches enable young people and community members to hold decision-makers accountable and ensure the effective and transparent allocation and utilization of public resources. Additionally, they contribute to ensuring efficient provision of public services including SRHR services. Young people have been using these approaches in the communities to hold duty bearers accountable on the implementation of policies and strategies focusing on SRHR and gender related policies. The PtY project and the young people mainly seek to address implementation gaps in SRH especially focusing on service delivery and budget allocation for SRHR.

1.3. Central operational research

The PtY consortium aims to connect the learning cycle and the programme cycle as closely as possible. Baseline studies and annual reflections at the country and consortium level are used to identify knowledge gaps or needs which are taken forward in the learning cycle for the full partnership through Central Operational Research (COR). The COR is supposed to contribute to a cycle of cumulative learning which will, in turn, strengthen CSOs on themes of harmful practices, SGBV, gender transformative approaches, meaningful and inclusive youth participation (MIYP), and SRHR. The approach to learning and research is collaborative and inclusive, aiming to make the best use of the tacit knowledge of all partners, involving young people in a meaningful and inclusive way, and drawing in external expertise from local and international academic partners where this can add value. Co-creation is used as a fundamental tool in the COR and wider programme to guide partnerships, including youth-adult dynamics and north-south consortium dynamics. For the COR, this means making the knowledge and experiences of all relevant stakeholders in the programme accessible to everyone and fostering shared ownership of the entire research process. The PtY program believes in empowering young people and building their capacity as such PALM Consulting Limited trained the young researchers who collected data for this study. These young researchers were further capacitated to analyse the qualitative data and they took part in the writing of this report.

1.4. Problem Statement

Policies and strategies are vital to ensure that AGYW from underserved communities enjoy their SRHR and, hence, can make informed choices, enjoy their sexuality, and are free from harmful practices in gender-equitable and violence-free societies. Malawi, like many other countries, has developed laws and policies in line with regional or global commitments to safeguard SRHR particularly of women and AGYW. The policies and laws that Malawi has in place include SRHR policies as well as policies banning harmful practices and criminalizing SGBV. While Malawi has very good policies, their implementation lags behind. A synthesis report that was developed in Phase 1 of the COR found that in general limited policy implementation and lack of political will remain as core challenges affecting young people fulfilling their SRHR. PtY Malawi puts a strong

emphasis on strengthening the capacity of communities to hold to account (local) governments and institutions responsible for respecting, protecting and fulfilling their rights through the implementation of and budgeting for relevant laws and policies (social accountability).

While research has shown that social accountability is key in improving health outcomes (Boydell et. al., 2019; Chizimba, undated)), there is not much that is known about social accountability in relation to SRHR implementation and policy gaps. Knowledge gaps exist around best practices of social accountability, particularly at community, district and national level; the dynamics in communities that impede the use of social accountability mechanisms; and young people's needs and priorities when it comes to advocating for policy change and holding decision-makers accountable for policy implementation. In addition to this, and in terms of promoting accountability in SRHR, there is little that is known about what works, why, and what should be prioritised especially among AGYW (Also see Boydell et al., 2019). According to Squares et. al (2020), more primary research on social accountability is needed to advance its evidence by describing interventions and their results in detail and in their contexts, focusing on factors and processes affecting acceptability, adoption, and effectiveness. In line with these recommendations, this research aimed to gain a better and deeper understanding of social accountability mechanisms in Malawi particularly in Dedza and Machinga where PtY Malawi is implementing the PtY program. The research zooms into the social accountability approaches and tools used by the Malawi PtY program, specifically the *community scorecard*, the *citizen charter* and the *public expenditure tracking* in relation to SRH. Given their central place in the programme, the research focused specifically on social accountability efforts by young men and women.

2. Theoretical framework

This research was based on a social science perspective. The approaches and methods built largely on the theories underlying the PtY programme's ToC, most notably the socio-ecological model, intersectionality theory, feminist theory and realist evaluation.

The *socio-ecological model* considers the complex interplay between individual, relationship, community, and societal factors that influence behaviour (Kilanowski, 2017). On societal level, the ability of people to demand accountability is influenced by macro-level politics and ruling ideologies, while on the individual level, awareness of rights and entitlements and the capacity to voice them influences one's ability to demand accountability. Internalized social norms may also challenge one's ability to demand accountability. Dominant ideologies and related social norms may result in women, or others in underprivileged positions including AGYW, not seeing themselves as "worthy of having rights", and hence not feeling empowered to exercise the right to register a complaint and demand redress. At community level, internal hierarchies and power imbalances may end in certain voices within the community overpowering others, which on its turn may challenge individuals and communities to hold duty bearers accountable.

Feminist and *intersectionality* theory are both helpful to assess these power imbalances and dynamics, more specifically by looking at the interactions between social categories (e.g. age, gender, sexual orientation, race, class) and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power. The latter is particularly relevant to gain an in-depth understanding of the factors that influence AGYW and other communities engaged in the PtY programme in (not) taking action to hold duty bearers accountable. This theoretical framework is equally relevant to gain a better understanding of the capacity strengthening needs and priorities of diverse groups of young people, especially those in underprivileged positions.

The *realist approach* to evaluation is appropriate in this study as our aim is to understand how social accountability interventions work and under which conditions they lead to specific outcomes. A realist approach is a logic of inquiry that is theory driven and that facilitates an explanation of what works, for whom, in what circumstances and in what respects. A realist approach further provides explanations for successes or failure (Lodenstein et al, 2013).

UNDP (2013) has described 4 elements that most social accountability initiatives generally comprise of. We use these to map and analyse the PtY program strategies and activities that aim to promote social accountability for AYSRHR.

1. **Preparing community and civil society groups to engage**—includes raising the awareness of citizens, building confidence and capacity for engagement, building networks and coalitions.
2. **Collecting, analysing and using information**—includes finding, securing and analysing information on government activities, translating it into different formats, styles and languages, and sharing it through the media and social and political networks.
3. **Undertaking accountability engagements with governments**—includes using instruments such as scorecards, audits and budget analysis to engage with a government, either by using existing formalized spaces for participation in planning or policy cycles or by developing new ones, or by mobilizing social protests.
4. **Using information from accountability engagements with governments**—includes advocacy, lobbying and campaigning work to follow up on the delivery of commitments.

In line with the core programme principles, the research was participatory in nature. This means that programme partners and young people, AGYW in particular, were actively engaged in all research phases as explained above. Participatory research methods are geared towards planning and conducting the research process with those people whose life-world and meaningful actions are under study. The aim is to produce knowledge in collaboration between trained researchers and practitioners. Since participation in research calls for specific competencies, a participatory approach requires capacity building among the research partners. Moreover, it requires choosing methodological approaches in such a way that they build on the initial state of knowledge of the participants and develop it further. Given the operational nature of the research, which is mainly focussed on learning, the collection of qualitative, in-depth data is vital.

3. Overall Goal and Objectives

The overall goal of this study was to explore the barriers and facilitators that communities and the youth in Dedza District in central Malawi and Machinga District in southern Malawi experience to hold duty bearers accountable for SRHR policy implementation.

The specific objectives of this study were as follows:

1. To identify effective approaches and tools used by PtY Malawi and understand how these enable social accountability related to SRHR policies and implementation.
2. To conduct a detailed mapping of social accountability strategies being used in Malawi.
3. To understand the factors that contribute to community members (not) taking action to hold duty bearers accountable on SRHR.
4. To identify young people's priorities and how PtY Malawi can further strengthen their capacities or opportunities to advocate for policy change and to hold decision-makers accountable for policy implementation.

4. Methodology

This study was qualitative in nature as our interest was to get in-depth insights into the perspectives and realities of the communities where the PtY programme is implementing programmes namely Dedza in central Malawi and Machinga in southern Malawi. Our interest was also to get such perspectives from key informants (KIs) at national level including members of the PtY consortium, some CSOs which are implementing social accountability mechanisms and government agencies especially the Ministries of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare (MoGCDSW) and the Ministry of Health (MoH).

4.1 Desk Review

We reviewed the baseline PtY report; the mid-term evaluation report; and routine quarterly and annual progress reports for the PtY programme, especially relating to social accountability mechanisms. In addition to this we reviewed reports on social accountability studies that have been implemented in Malawi and other countries. This helped us to map existing social accountability strategies in use in Malawi as well as write an academic publication.

4.2 Key Informant Interviews State and Social Actors

Key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted at national and district level. Through these interviews, the study collected insights on the views of local authorities, policy makers and implementers at different levels, service providers, experienced SRHR advocates, social accountability champions and PtY program staff and CSO program implementers regarding social accountability, factors that impede communities from engaging duty bearers and capacity strengthening areas for advocates and communities on social accountability. At community level our targets were individuals who took part in the PtY programme. In addition, these interviews with CSO representatives explored the level of civic space for engaging duty-bearers and policyholders. A total of 8 KIIs were conducted at national level including with members of the PtY consortium, policy makers and CSOs that implement SRHR and related social accountability programmes.

4.3 In-depth Interview

In-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted with one 20 year old young woman, two youth network leaders and two youth advocacy chairs. These IDIs focused on getting personal insights (life stories) on participants' perspectives on social accountability and engagement with duty-bearers and policyholders. A total of 5 IDIs were conducted in the two districts with 2 in Machinga and 3 in Dedza. Table 1 shows the number of KIs which were done at district and national level.

4.4 Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions (FGD) were conducted with groups of adolescent boys and girls and young women and men as well as community structure members namely youth advocates and youth network members. These FGDs provided information about their views on approaches for engaging duty bearers, social accountability methods prevalent in the community, factors that impede communities from holding duty bearers accountable as well as identification of capacity strengthening needs in social accountability. Participants in these FGDs were persons who have been engaged in the PtY programme. Table 1 shows the number of FGDs that were undertaken in Dedza and Machinga.

4.5 Study limitations

As explained earlier, data collection for this study involved interviewing KIs at national and district level. At community level we conducted FGDs and IDIs with youth who were involved in the PtY programme. This study would have benefited from conducting FGDs and IDIs with community members and community leaders. This was not done and this is a major limitation of the study.

Table 1: No. of study participants

Type of data collection tool	Dedza	Machinga	Lilongwe	Total
KII	6 (Government)	3 (Government)	3 Government	12
	2 CSOs	2 (CSOs)	6 CSOs	10
FGDs*****	ABYM 12-19 [9]	ABYM 19-24 [9]		18
	ABYM 19-26 [9]	ABYM 20-24 [7]		16
	AGYW 12-18 [11]	AGYW 13-18 [9]		20
	AGYW 17-24 [7]	AGYW 13-24 [10]		17
	AGYW 12-16 [11]	AGYW 13-25 [10]		21
	Youth Advocates 23-32 [7] (5 males & 2 females)	ABYM 17-24 [9]		16
	Youth Network members 18-24 [11]	Youth advocates 25 years all [9]		20
		Youth Advocates 18-32 [9]		9
		Youth Advocates 18-30 [9]		9
		Youth Network members 19-30 [8]		8
IDIs	AGYW [1]			1
	Youth Advocate leader [1]	Youth Advocacy leader [1]		2
	Youth Network/ Advocacy Chair [1]	Youth Network chair [1]		2
Total participants	76	96	8	180

5. Training of research assistants

The PtY consortium recruited Research Assistants (RAs) who were trained between 8th and 12th April 2024 at Sunbird Capital Hotel in Lilongwe. This training covered the following topics: (a) Objectives of the PtY programme including the use of social accountability approaches and tools; (b) Doing research with human subjects which covered ethical considerations including the consenting processes; (c) Tips on conducting interviews and FGDs; (d) Community entry procedures during fieldwork; (e) Roles of research assistants; (f) Going through the guides for FGDs, IDIs and KIIs and revising and translating them; and (g) the research implementation plan. A pilot for the study tools was conducted on 11th April 2024 in Dedza and debriefing was done on 12th April 2024. After the training and pilot, the data collection guide was finalized. The training of RAs was done jointly by PALM Consulting Limited, Rutgers, Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation (CHRR) and the Malawi Human Rights Resource Centre (MHRRC).

6. Data management and analysis

All FGDs, KIIs and IDIs were digitally recorded, and transcribed in English. Officials from CHRR, MHRRC and PALM Consulting Limited supervised the data collection process. A coding framework was developed and agreed upon by the members of the research team and Rutgers. Thematic analysis of the data was carried out using a comprehensive thematic matrix (coding framework) based on the research objectives and the study guide. Content analysis was used to analyse the data and the Nvivo 12 software supported the data analysis. RAs were trained on how they can code and analyse the data and proceeded to do the coding and the analysis.

7. Management of the study

This study was led by young women from MHRCC and CHRR. Two senior researchers from PALM Consulting Limited provided technical assistance to the implementation of this study: these were responsible for the review of the study proposal, submission of the protocol to the National Committee for Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities (NCRSSH) of the National Commission for Science and Technology (NCST), the training of members of the research team composed of officers from MHRCC and CHRR and young researchers from the Youth Researchers Academy at the Centre for Youth Empowerment and Social Enhancement (CYESE). These young people were involved at all stages of this research namely development of the research tools, data collection, data analysis and report writing. The senior researchers from PALM Consulting Limited supported MHRCC and CHRR with the supervision of the data collection process and took part in data analysis and report writing. Rutgers provided technical support to the research team including participating in the training of RAs and ensuring that the research report is of high quality. There were meetings in the evenings led by MHRCC and CHRR to discuss progress in data collection, experiences encountered that day and how to address the challenges and plan for the following day.

8. Ethical considerations

This research was approved by the NCRSSH permit number NCST/RTT/2/6. The study commenced only after obtaining ethical approval. Informed consent was obtained from all study participants. They were informed about the objectives of the study, how long the interview would last, that their participation was voluntary, that there were no risks for their participation in the study and that they were free to withdraw at any time without their well-being being affected in any way.

9. Results

9.1 Social accountability

This section details the social accountability mechanisms used by the PtY Malawi Programme and how these enable social accountability related to SRHR policies and implementation in Malawi especially in the two districts, namely, Dedza and Machinga, where the PtY programme is being implemented..

9.1 Types of social accountability

There were three major types of social accountability mechanisms that study participants mentioned as being used by the PtY programme. These mechanisms were community scorecards, budget tracking and interface meetings.

"..... Of course, there are many mechanisms, some use scorecards social audits, social and service delivery audits, and budget tracking. Others use engagement meetings and public debates", (KI, Civil Society, Lilongwe).

The training that the PtY programme has provided to youth in Dedza and Machinga has enabled these youth to implement social accountability mechanisms in their communities. The different types of social accountability mechanisms, as mentioned by KIs and youth, are discussed below.

9.1.1 Community scorecards

The World Bank defines scorecards as a quantitative approach typically involving surveys of citizen's satisfaction which include a facilitated meeting between providers and beneficiaries to discuss results and agree on follow up actions (World Bank, 2012). Most study participants at community, district and national level reported that they have ever heard about community scorecards. Study participants explained that community scorecards seek to make the communities understand their own problems and , empowering them to generate interventions that can effectively address the challenges they are experiencing in the community.

"..... so to me my understanding of community scorecards [is that] it is about getting communities involved in the process of identifying challenges or problems and taking lead in making them find the solutions to address those challenges", (KI, CSO, Dedza).

The ranking of problems existing in the community through rights holders and duty bearers is an important component of the community scorecard process. Both rights holders and duty bearers discuss and implement the solutions to the prevailing challenge. This is unlike in situations where solutions are developed by Government and NGOs and then imposed on communities as they may not necessarily address the prevailing challenges. In an FGD with youth advocates in TA Tambala in Dedza, participants explained that the first step for the community scorecard process is that the youth engage with the chief of the area and orient him or her on the community scorecard process and its importance. The chief then calls for a meeting with people in his area of jurisdiction and empowers them so that they, themselves, should be the ones responsible for the identification of the problems that they experience. Then the people invited, including duty bearers, score the identified problems depending on their intensities. What is key is that after the scorecard process is completed, there is an interface meeting to discuss the scores and agree on the solutions to prevailing problems. The youth's responsibility is just to facilitate the session including probing on the root causes of the problems and together they develop effective strategies for overcoming these problems.

A wide range of issues are covered in the implementation of the community scorecard process including access to health services including SRHR services, early pregnancies, child marriages, young men and women dropping out of school, and violence against women and girls. In addition to the PtY programme, there are other organisations that have conducted community scorecards, for example, one 38 year old male KI working for civil society in Dedza participated in implementing community scorecards in 2018 which was conducted by *Mayi Khanda*².

Some of the issues that emerged from the community included long distances to the health centre and resistance by medical personnel to help youth who came to access services. These issues were presented to the chief and the community. On 8th April 2024 through their TA the youth also convened a meeting with medical assistants and other leaders through their TA. During this meeting the youth then presented their concerns for discussion and issues for duty bearers to respond. So health workers from the health centre acknowledged the prevailing challenges and responded by saying that they had heard their concerns and that at the time there were a few health workers at the health centre:= there were only two nurses that were responsible for the whole community. The youth were advised to wait as they also wanted to consult their authorities. Three weeks later both the youth and wider community were informed that there was a new nurse and 3 HSAs at the health centre to help address the shortage of human resources. This was as a result of the scorecard process that they had conducted.

The scorecard process is also used by organisations to assess their performance.

“Uhm for me the scorecard was more or less like a checklist, in terms of what was supposed to be done, what has been done, and in what manner has it been done. So basically, it was about that. In most of our projects sometimes we do scorecards to see how we have performed. It is more like an assessment tool for our performance but also sometimes you engage others to assess you. But that is based on specific areas that depend on the performance indicators that we have set”, (KI, Civil Society, Dedza).

What we see here is that youth and duty bearers are trained after which the community does the scoring of the issues followed by service providers scoring the same issues after which there is an interface meeting attended by the community including youth, service providers and government officials. A plan of action is developed and implemented and monitored in line with Care International Guidelines for conducting community scorecards (Care International, 2020).

The community scorecard has been used in Malawi by several organisations including Save the Children (Save the Children, 2024), Care International (2002), YONECO and CYESE (Chizimba, 2020) in different parts of the country.

9.1.2 Budget tracking

This is a social accountability approach in which people try to find out how much budget is allocated to activities being implemented in their communities by government or NGOs, how much is spent and what outputs were obtained by the money spent (Khadka & Bhattarai, not dated). This is also referred to as public expenditure tracking. For community members to effectively monitor the implementation of development projects being implemented in their community, there is a need for them to know the budget for such projects. The challenge, however, is that they do not have access to budgets. The least they can do is to monitor whether materials [e.g. cement or iron sheets] brought on the site are being used correctly and efficiently.

² A local Malawian NGO.

“In budget tracking; we first capacitate the people what budget tracking is. For instance, in an incident of a development project, we teach people about what needs to be done for the project to be finalised. Therefore, we give them a questionnaire with specific questions on the use of resources in that project, and this questionnaire is administered to the specific duty bearer responsible for the project. This can also be done in terms of service delivery. From all this, an engagement meeting is followed to address the issues found during the process and discussions are also made on the best strategy of addressing these issues”, (KII, CCJP, Lilongwe).

Budget tracking was mentioned by KIs at district and national level as well as study participants at community level in Dedza and Machinga as one of the social accountability mechanisms that is being used by the youth in the PtY programme

“We were taught by the PtY program to follow up on development activities, making sure that there is efficient use of the resources assigned in the particular activity for instance the use of cement. And we also make sure that the remaining resources are kept safe for future use. This helps to eradicate corruption in the country”, (P6, FGD with youth advocates, 23-32, TA Tambala, Dedza).

Most youth in FGDs were familiar with budget tracking. A 38 year old KI working for civil society in Lilongwe had never heard of the term, budget tracking, but she added that, since this was English, budget tracking goes back to the spot checks and audits, for instance what was planned and at the end of the day whether what was planned was achieved or not or whether the resources were utilised accordingly. A community development assistant in Dedza said that in budget tracking community groups are involved when it comes to resource allocation and also that everyone should be aware of any development projects being implemented in the community. A DYO in Machinga reported that he has used budget tracking before and that this is used to monitor how money and other resources are being used in different sectors. It even involves going into the communities and educating the people on how they can do budget tracking. Although youth were trained, one 20 year old AGYW in Machinga who felt that the topic should have been discussed in more depths during the training.

Participants in general felt that budget tracking is important as it helps the community to know how much money has been allocated to projects and how it has been used.

“Yes, it is useful because if many people in the community could know about budget tracking It helps people to know how much money is being allocated and how it is going to be used. This helps people to know that the resources are being used in the right way”, (DYO, Machinga).

“..... because it [budget tracking] helps to know what's going on in the community. Sometimes the leaders can receive the money for construction of a bridge but they can just construct a bridge which is not strong by using the materials that are not good or by using little amount of money to construct a bridge just to show the people that the bridge has been constructed yet a lot of money has not been used, so following the resource and the budget that are available for the construction ensures that the budget is used in a proper way. In addition to that it helps in the development of communities, for example when the leaders are doing something they fear to misuse the material during the work because they know that if they do that people will know”, (20 year old AGYW, TA Tambala, Dedza).

Both KIs and youth cited projects such as the construction of schools, bridges and boreholes where they conducted budget tracking and the outcomes of these processes. Budget tracking ensured effective use of resources and the construction of high quality infrastructure. Where they observed misuse of resources, the issue was reported to higher authorities such as TA who made sure that the issues were resolved. In this study none of the participants gave examples of where budget tracking was used to monitor the delivery of SRHR services.

9.1.3 Interface meetings

Many participants described interface meetings as crucial platforms that facilitate face to face engagements between duty bearers and beneficiaries to address critical problems being experienced by the later and then deliberate on solutions and implement them.

“I think I should explain what it is for the sake of others. This is an engagement meeting we conduct by inviting different duty-bearers depending on the type of issue we want to discuss”, (P3, FGD with youth advocates 23-32, TA Tambala, Dedza).

Many study participants including KIs and youths in FGDs and IDIs were aware of interface meetings. Youth networks organize meetings with different youth groups including youth clubs, survivors of child marriage, young men and women and other youth groups. Many study participants including KIs and youths in FGDs and IDIs were aware of these interface meetings. During these meetings they collect concerns from young people and other community members which are then discussed with duty bearers such as chiefs and service providers such as the police and health workers. After these discussions with duty bearers an action plan is developed on how the challenges will be addressed.

“Let me also add on interface meetings, in this approach we mobilize different community leaders and other stakeholders to discuss an issue raised in the community. We do have people of different roles for example, we can have chiefs, police, health workers and other stakeholders discussing on one issue”, (TA Tambala Chair, Dedza).

If there are no SRHR services at the hospitals or clinics, during an FGD with AGYW in TA Mizinga in Machinga, participants reported that they engage with health workers in order to find solutions to the prevailing problem and even gave examples where they had conducted interface meetings.

“We conducted a follow-up with young people and then we as young people had a meeting with the service providers at the hospital to tell them our problems as youth in accessing SRHR services. We asked if they could give us a special day once a week so that we could go and have access to these services without difficulties. In our case for Mbanila Health Centre, we meet every Friday as a youth to access those services and we are allowed to do our activities”, (P1, FGD with youth network members, TA Mizinga, Machinga).

KIs and some youths had the feeling that interface meetings are youth friendly: a 20 year old AGYW in TA Tambala in Dedza reported that in the past, only adults were attending the meetings but the meetings that are conducted now the youth are included and they are also allowed to give their opinions during such meetings. A network leader in TA Tambala in Dedza reported that during interface meetings they have conducted these were youth led and they could freely engage with traditional leaders.

"In all our meetings, we were warmly received because the issues we raised were addressed. For instance, the meeting with head teachers was prompted by incidents of bullying against girls who had given birth and were reintegrated into school. We emphasized the importance of reintegration, and now we've observed positive outcomes, such as 6 reintegrated students passing exams at Nmbaikho School. This demonstrates that our efforts [through having interface meetings] are yielding results, and people are receptive to them", (P3, FGD with youth advocates 18-32, TA Mizinga, Machinga).

Youths have been given the authority to call for these interface meetings whenever it is necessary. Several examples of interface meetings and the issues they discussed were given by youth and KIs.

9.1.4 Other social accountability mechanisms being used in Malawi

The PtY programme is currently using 3 social accountability mechanisms namely community scorecards, interface meetings and budget tracking. In addition to these, participants also mentioned other social accountability mechanisms which are currently not being used by the PtY programme

- *Social service delivery or social audits:* There was one KI working for civil society who mentioned social service delivery or social audits as a social accountability mechanism. He explained that social audits mainly look at the delivery of services in the community. A tool is developed and administered to the people in the community, and a report is developed from the results. This also calls for an engagement meeting with the service delivery institutions outlining to them the issues that people are facing when accessing these services, and action points are developed from that engagement meeting. The only difference with social audits is that people assess in terms of social issues that people face in their communities but otherwise the process is the same. While social audit is a social accountability mechanism, this description by the informant is not right as this description fits scorecards or interface meetings. World Bank (2012) defines a social audit as a means of independently monitoring or evaluating the performance of an organisation in attaining its goal.
- *Budget analysis:* A KI working for civil society in Dedza reported that they analyse the budget. They meet the representatives of the government such as the Ministry of Finance. They may have specific areas of interest, for example, how much money has been allocated to the youth center, education or health. So, they do budget analysis and at a later stage, they see if the funds were used according to their allocations or as specified. Such an analysis may also happen at the council level for example for the community development fund: they may look at the allocation to various sectors (e.g. Gender, Youth, Social Welfare etc.); and how the funds are being used or were used. Whatever the results, they either use them to lobby for collective action at that moment or use it to lobby for the next funding. In addition, some CSOs for example Malawi Health Equity Network has used *National Health Budget Consultation, Analysis and Advocacy* as a social accountability tool in which CSOs hold government accountable for how resources are raised, allocated and spent in different sectors (Monga & Shanklin, 2018).
- *Bwalo la nzika or citizen forum:* One KI working for civil society in Lilongwe mentioned the citizen forum as a structure while the '*bwalo la mzika*' is also the citizen forum as an approach to social accountability. They have citizen forums in districts which is comprised of civil society organizations and individuals in which they form a forum known as the citizen forum. There have also been citizen forums at the local level. When things happen in their localities, the citizens can engage or report to the citizen forum. So, when they report to the forum whether, at the community level or the district level, they can engage them (civil society) to say 'There are these issues, how can we address them?' The civil society then provides technical support on whether to have a position paper or hold townhall meetings or even the '*bwalo la mzika*' itself. If the issues concern the MPs, Councillors, the District Council or people from the council,

these are brought together and make the engagements. All these engagements are done through the citizen forum as a structure. *Bwalo la nzika* is also an approach which is now the actual dialogue that brings the duty bearers and the right holders together and discusses the issues.

There have also been other studies that have looked at *Bwalo* as a social accountability initiative. These are meetings at community (community *bwalo*) or at district (district *bwalo*) level. These meetings, according to Butler et. al. (2020) are held quarterly and then after these meetings they also have interface meetings between citizens and health facilities. For the district, meetings are held between the citizens and district level staff. In these *bwalo* meetings citizens have the opportunities to voice their concerns, receive feedback from the district or national level (Butler et. al., 2020).

- *Grievance redress mechanism*: Only one KI working for Dedza District Council mentioned the use of the grievance redress mechanism (GRM). She explained that the GRM is a way in which people air out their grievances. For instance, if they are not happy with how finances in a department or community have been utilised, they can give their views on this through the GRM. This KI reported that they have GRM committees in all TAs which are responsible for receiving these grievances. At district level they have registers where they input all the issues. In addition to this, they also have a complaint box where people in the communities put down the problems that they face and once a month they go to the communities and collect all the complaints written down. She said that they are able to address some of the issues while for those that need further engagements, they work through them until they are resolved. She gave an example of a problem which was addressed through the GRM:

“For instance, here at the district level, we had an issue when they were constructing the road and they blocked the road and this delayed a pregnant woman to access the delivery services which would have caused the death of both the mother and the unborn child. People used the GRM to put out this complaint and the issue was sorted”, (District Gender Office).

“The other example of the same road construction is that people were complaining about dust, they put that in the complaint box, and we went to the Roads Authority and lobbied for water that should be spread now and then on the roads. So as the district, we make sure that we address all the complaints put in place”, (District Gender Officer).

The use of complaint boxes constitutes one of the ways the council can get feedback from the community, and, since it is anonymous, people express their views freely. She was, however, not sure whether the PtY programme uses such an approach. There were no examples of the use of the GRM on SRHR issues. The PtY programme can explore how this approach can be used in youth SRHR.

- *Public debates/hearings*: A KI working for civil society in Dedza mentioned the use of public debates as a social accountability mechanism. He gave an example of a circumstance where there are attitudes of people in the community towards a certain thing. They then call for a meeting with different stakeholders, the issue is brought up and people are allowed to discuss it. In the end, the people together with the line stakeholders come up with a solid agreement and strategies on how to solve the issue. Some call these public debates as community dialogues but they are the same.
- *Client feedback form*: There are a number of organisations in Malawi that use a client feedback form for example Family Planning Association of Malawi (FPAM). The client feedback form is a social accountability approach that FPAM has been used in its facilities: there is a suggestion box which is visible to clients, client feedback forms with guiding questions and a pen for clients to use. The client feedback forms are in both English and Chichewa.

- *Health facility committee:* These comprise of 10 elected community representatives and meet every 2 months. One health facility member of staff is also a member of this committee. These committees demand quality of health services that they expect by monitoring the performance of health facilities. These committees are trained and among other responsibilities they receive and collect complaints from the community and facility management, investigate and assess the justification of complaints, forward the complaints and results of the investigation to facility management and the DHMT (Lodeinstein et. al., 2019).

9.2 Factors that allow AGYW and youth to participate in social accountability mechanisms

In Dedza and Machinga youth are involved in the implementation of social accountability mechanisms. Both KIs and youth highlighted factors that allow AGYW and youth to participate in social accountability mechanisms as described below.

9.2.1 Building the capacity of youth and other stakeholders

Before the implementation of the PtY programme, there were several trainings that were conducted in order to ensure that the youth were empowered for the interventions they were to implement. A KI from the PtY consortium reported that most of the activities in the PtY programme revolve around building the capacity of the structures that they are working with, but also stakeholders namely government, other CSOs and other community members.

9.2.2 Sensitisation of duty bearers

There are various stakeholders at district level including government, CSOs and youth networks. KIs from members of the PtY consortium such as SRHR Alliance reported that at district level they engaged policy makers or duty bearers from different government ministries including the Ministry of Youth, Ministry of Education, MoGCDSW on the issues that they were aiming to address in the PtY program. Other key players engaged were the police, Members of Parliament and councillors. The PtY consortium sensitised all these stakeholders so that they should be aware of the project. They further oriented them on the models that the PtY project was using particularly the youth led advocacy model. They sensitised them to understand that young people will be able to engage them for example during social accountability processes and they should be able to support and be responsive as much as possible. The consortium worked closely with all these stakeholders including the Ministry of Health who supported the consortium with SRHR trainings. A KI from the consortium reported that they work with the youth who are running up and down, tracking development programmes within the community as part the PtY programme. These youth simplified the work of the duty bearers as they brought evidence.

9.2.3 Training on meaningful youth participation

The PtY programme observed that the youth were not involved in community decision making structures such as VDC and ADC.

“Before PtY came into this area, youths had no space to contribute to the development process in this area. Through the Chief’s Forum, we were accepted in VDCs and ADCs. Every VDC has a youth representative and also the chair of the network is a member of the ADC. All this has happened because of the power to youth programme”, (Chair of youth advocate, TA Tambala, Dedza).

Youth should meaningfully be involved in such structures so that when decisions are being made on issues affecting the youth, the youth themselves should participate. Hence, since there was this gap, the PtY consortium oriented the youth in Dedza and Machinga Districts on meaningful youth participation. The youth now possess the skill to speak to the community including where the community leaders are in attendance. Previously, youth could not stand and even participate in some community gatherings where leaders were present. KIs and the youth themselves reported that many youth have been empowered and they are taking part in many community activities including being members of community structures such as the VDCs, ADC, the DEC and TWGs.

“The program trained us on meaningful youth participation which gave us young people the power to be able to talk to the community on harmful practices such as forcing girls to get into child marriage”, (P3, FGD with TA Mizinga Youth Network members, Machinga).

The aim of meaningful youth participation as explained by a KI working for an NGO which is a member of the consortium is that the voices of the youth should be heard and included in all decision making structures.

“..... Our aim is to make sure that young people have their voice, and their voice should be included in those kinds of structures and in all decision-making processes. And not just being part of those structures, but they should also be able to influence some of the decisions that the structures are making”, (Youth Wave).

A youth advocacy chair in TA Mizinga explained that where there is a particular development project coming into their community for example construction of a bridge, or school, the youth now are in the forefront taking part and following up on how the development is progressing as they were oriented on how to follow up development initiatives in our community namely conducting budget tracking .

During an FGD with youth advocates in TA Mizinga in Machinga participants explained how their involvement in committees such as VDC and ADC started in their area: after being trained on meaningful youth participation, they approached the TA to organise a meeting with community members and their leaders, where youth highlighted the significance of youth involvement in all development activities. This engagement encouraged community leaders and members to recognize the importance of youth involvement in community initiatives. As a result, youth were given opportunities to participate in various platforms and initiatives including VDC and ADCs and engage with chiefs.

“We are able to engage even the T/A on issues to do with child marriages. We are able to facilitate processes to dissolve child marriages together with our chiefs. PtY activities have also helped us to discover ourselves as youth”, (23 year old Youth advocates chair, TA Tambala, Dedza).

During discussions with youth advocates aged 18-32 in TA Mizinga in Machinga participants reported that engaging in these ADC and VDC activities was a valuable experience for them because when youth are overlooked in community affairs, it hinders their progress. With increased recognition and involvement in community activities, youth now perceive themselves as essential contributors and realise their potential to contribute to national development.

“Being actively involved has also prevented youth from destructive behaviours or engaging in violence, as they no longer feel marginalised and understand the significance of the initiatives. By taking leadership roles, they now educate their peers about the benefits of these initiatives”, (P3, FGD with youth advocates, TA Mizinga, Machinga).

A KI from the PtY consortium in Lilongwe said that at first, the PtY consortium experienced a little bit of resistance, especially from the adults, to create that enabling environment for the youth to engage them. The program, therefore, provided an opportunity for capacity building on meaningful youth participation. These trainings on meaningful youth participation were provided by consortium members including Youth Wave and CYESE and this contributed to youth participating in many activities including the implementation of social accountability mechanisms.

“..... I think our being involved in the decision-making bodies can also help us to effectively hold duty bearers accountable as we know how things are going”, (P4, FGD with youth advocates, TA Tambala, Dedza).

A youth advocate leader in TA Sale in Machinga and other youths reported that for them to implement the activities such as scorecards and interface meetings, it was because they had trainings which capacitated them to do this work.

“We received assistance from our colleagues of PTY who taught us and empowered us on how to create a community score card”, (P4, FGD with youth network members 1828, TA Tambala, Dedza).

There were also other types of training that youth underwent to aid their work of participating in social accountability processes as described below.

- Imparted the youth with skills on how to deal with cases of child marriage: As mentioned earlier, child marriage was a big problem in both Dedza and Machinga. These youths were therefore taught by the PtY programme how to approach people in child marriage peacefully to discuss with them about what was the cause of child marriage so that they should not be chased away. They were taught on how to handle sensitive issues as narrated during an FGD with young men aged 20-24.
- *Training on human rights:* The PtY programme created awareness among the youth and other community members on human rights emphasising that children should not get married early, cases of violence such as rape should be reported, investigated and perpetrators should be brought to book accordingly and that parents and guardians should not deny or neglect their children including those that were pregnant and withdrew from school to return to school if they choose to, and that they have the right to accessing SRHR information and services.

“so PTY it’s a program that helps us as youth to be aware of our rights for example sexual and reproductive rights, and also understanding issues that affect us as youth including harmful practices in our communities, just mentioning a few”,(Chair, Youth Advocate, TA Sale, Machinga).

“..... I also remember we had an activity which focused on rights regarding the use of family planning services, information about sexuality, youth wave also trained us about “go back to school” where we were looking at how those girls in early marriages or those that are withdrawn from school can be readmitted. We were oriented about girls’ rights to education and also about child marriages on the same”, (Chair, Youth Advocacy, TA Sale, Machinga).

In order to address human rights abuses, young people use a number of approaches including having meetings with chiefs to assist in such matters or the youth advocates sometimes approach individuals perpetrating the

violence, discussing with them, and making them understand how things should be done. Most people are open to change, according to informants, but when they are faced with difficult individuals, they refer them to the TA.

“For instance, if we discuss the issue of child marriage with parents and the parents understands, they agree to end the marriage. However, if the parents do not agree, we involve the T/A”, (P4, FGD with AGYW, TA Mizinga, Machinga).

In some cases if parents for example do not listen they are informed that they will be reported to the police, and then they allow their children's marriages to end with some parents even agreeing to take care of the child, thus enabling the mother to go back to school as reported during an FGD with AGYW in TA Mizinga in Machinga.

- *Training in drama performances:* During an FGD with AGYW in TA Mizinga in Machinga and an FGD with youth in TA Tambala in Dedza participants reported that the PtY programme also trained youth on how to perform drama as a way of giving information or messages to leaders and other community members. These AGYW in TA Mizinga acknowledged that after the drama performances things do change as, for example, most of the girls have gone back to school. Some participants acknowledged that they have taken part in drama performances.

“The roles I often do is to take part in drama plays which spread the message of the importance of staying in school and going further with education”, (P10, FGD with youth, TA Tambala, Dedza).

- In addition to drama performances, these youth also sing and do poems in the communities where they reside.

“The role I take when working with PTY is to sing along in the choir and also take part in plays earlier mentioned by my colleague”, (P11, FGD with youth, TA Tambala, Dedza).

The training in drama was important as young people reported that during the interface meetings they conduct different activities such as drama and choirs while ensuring that there is a message that they need to communicate to the entire community on the theme of the meeting.]

- *SRHR training:* During trainings on SRHR issues the youth were encouraged to access SRHR services and to inform their peers what they had learnt. This training on SRHR was perceived as useful by the youth as it encouraged them to access SRHR services. Some youth reported that before this some people were telling youth that family planning methods can negatively affect their fertility and made some young people reluctant not to have access to it.

‘But after being part of the PTY training, we learned that family planning methods help to prevent pregnancy. Others were also saying that family planning methods make people not give birth, but we have learned from PTY that it's a lie”, (P6, FGD with AGYW, TA Mizinga, Machinga)

During this FGD with AGYW in TA Mizinga participants reported that through the PtY programme, they are also able to meet as young people and share SRHR information especially information about family planning. The training on SRHR was useful as it cleared prevailing myths and misconceptions that family planning methods can affect their fertility.

“The PtY programme has helped us prevent unintended pregnancies by providing information on the use of family planning methods. Moreover, the PtY programme has assisted us during the cholera period by supplying chlorine and the lids that were used to cover the toilets”, (P1, FGD with AGYW, TA Mizinga, Machinga).

A youth advocate chair in TA Sale in Machinga said that they were also trained on how to engage duty bearers on some issues affecting them and the overall community. For example, he narrated that if in the community there is lack of condoms, and other family planning services, they were trained on the right procedures they can take to engage leaders so that they have solutions to the problems affecting them.

- *Trainings on SGBV:* SGBV, according to an official from an organisation which is a member of the PtY consortium, is one of the challenges that was identified at baseline. Youth network chairs in TA Mizinga in Machinga and TA Tambala in Dedza reported that they had trainings regarding SGBV conducted by the PtY consortium. In the past years before the implementation of the PtY programme youths and community members normalised some behaviours such as beating a spouse which they did not regard as violence. In PtY the youth were trained on identifying GBV cases such as child marriages and other harmful practices. The PtY programme also taught them how to follow up cases of SGBV as previously such cases were not being reported and perpetrators were not arrested.

“[The] PtY program taught us how to follow up on cases for example now we can follow rape cases in the community together with the police and address the case to the relevant authority. We have witnessed people being arrested after we followed up on the case”, (P3).

Some youth reported that in some cases even if youth experience abuse in the home the perpetrators inform them that they should not inform anyone. These days, after being trained, such youth report to the youth network and its members, follow up the issue in a secret way by making sure that the people who committed the crime should not realize that it was this person who actually reported the issue. There is confidentiality with the aim of protecting the reporter as for example narrated during an FGD with young men aged 20-24 in TA Mizinga in Machinga.

They were also oriented on laws that deal with SGBV: a youth network chair in TA Mizinga in Machinga reported that CYECE conducted training on legal awareness where they were oriented on some laws and procedures that youth should take when working on cases, for example rape cases, or any violences that might happen in their community. Previously, rape cases were viewed by community members as just minor issues where the cases were not taken anywhere, but through the trainings conducted by the PtY programme they now know that these cases need to involve relevant authorities for example police. The youth were actually motivated to be part of the team working on ending SGBV in their communities including withdrawing children from child marriages because it was easy for them to report issues that they faced and as reporting was done anonymously.

“I was motivated because being in the groups, other people cannot know that you're the one who reported the issues. For example, things that happen at your home; you can report the issue to the group, but people at home will not know that it is you who have reported; they will think that it was other people”, (P6, FGD with Mizinga Youth Network members, Machinga).

In addition they also learnt how to handle cases and expose SGBV perpetrators.

“We were taught how we can follow up cases in the community on child marriage. The trainings also taught us how to meet duty bearers and parents to deal with those issues”, (P1, FGD with youth advocates, TA Sale, Machinga).

CYESE is a consortium member responsible for Pathways 1 and 2 which are “Young people demand social accountability and responsiveness on harmful practices, SGBV and unintended pregnancies” and “CSOs amplify young people’s voices to claim, protect and expand civic space”, respectively. CYESE is strengthening the youth so that they demand accountability and responsiveness to harmful practices such as SGBV and unintended pregnancies. In order to address SGBV CYESE mostly trains them on SASA which means Start Awareness Support Action. An official from CYESE explained that this is a tool that they use to prevent GBV and HIV. The DYO in Machinga also reported that he provided training to AGYW on GBV awareness to help them report the violence they experience. During an FGD with young men aged 20-24 participants stated that during the training on SGBV youth clubs in TA Mizinga were given forms containing information of different types of violence and their corresponding punishments. The chair of the youth network shared this information to all the clubs. This instilled fear in people who were committing different violence because the forms outlined the consequences for each case.

- *Advocacy training:* The DYO in Dedza reported that advocacy training was conducted by SRHR Alliance and it was aimed at empowering youth to take a leading role in issues affecting them and also Youth Wave was granting the Youth with funds to help the youth in conducting meetings aimed at addressing the challenges they were experiencing. During an FGD with youth advocates in TA Sale, participants reported that they have been trained by Youth Wave twice and as a result of this training they are able to conduct the awareness campaigns. Many youth also reported that they were oriented on the importance of school and they have empowered us to be on the forefront advocating on issues that are affecting us in our communities.

While the capacity building that has been done by the PtY programme is appreciated, there were feelings among youth that they need refresher training in order to engage effectively with duty bearers and policy makers.

“To me I feel we need more refresher trainings to empower us more. Not all the youth have been reached in this area due to the vastness of the area. Some areas are very far. There is need to reach out to these areas too”, .

“There is a need for sensitization campaigns to train communities in advocacy and leadership skills, empowering them to voice their concerns effectively,”(KI, DYO, Dedza).

Strengthening the Building of capacity of youth is important as it gives them confidence to air their voices and implement interventions.

9.2.4 Approachable, responsive and friendly duty bearers

The PtY consortium works very closely with the DYO in the implementation of its activities in both Dedza and Machinga. The DYO in Dedza reported that he coordinated the PtY activities from his office. For example if the activity required officers from gender and education sectors, he informed them accordingly. The DYO in Machinga also reported that he is involved in the implementation of social accountability mechanisms for

example by organising interface meetings where youth directly engage duty bearers such as chiefs and service providers to collectively address youth's concerns and find and implement solutions. He is also involved in conducting awareness campaigns and training the youth in various things including how to track budget and empower young people to participate in addressing harmful practices in their community. A KI working for the MOGCDSW in Dedza said that she was mainly involved in training on SGBV. These trainings have been organised by the PtY consortium such as the SRHR Alliance, MHRRC and Youth Wave. A KI working with MoGCDSW reported that she was particularly involved in community sensitization on issues to do with SGBV in both TAs Tambala and Kasumbu with AMREF in Dedza District.

A youth advocate chair in TA Sale in Machinga reported that youth work collaboratively with the police. There is a police unit in TA Sale which he argued was established as a result of some of the training and activities supported by the PtY programme. Before the implementation of the PtY programme, there were many issues to do with rape, and other forms of sexual violence, and the perpetrators went to neighbouring Mozambique to escape from the police. It was difficult to deal with these issues because a police unit was situated very far. After being capacitated by the PtY programme, they advocated for the establishment of a police unit at Sale. In several FGDs youth mentioned that they work collaboratively with the police in many cases including ensuring that cases of rape are reported to them and the perpetrators brought to book.

"We conduct meetings with the village head, sometimes with the police, and other people from the hospitals", (20 year old AGYW, TA Tambala, Dedza).

The police are, therefore, playing an important role as they work closely with the youth and community leaders to ensure that perpetrators of violence are taken to task.

During an FGD with youth advocates in Machinga participants reported that the way they are welcomed at health facilities motivates them to participate in social accountability mechanisms.

"..... since we are frequently in contact with health service providers, when we go to hospital for services, they easily recognize us and assist us accordingly", (P6, FGD with youth advocates TA Sale, Machinga).

"As youth advocates we have a very good relationship with Mkwepere health centre. Service providers are youth friendly. They set rules that when young people come for a service they should be welcomed and assisted quickly", (FGD with youth advocates, TA Sale, Machinga).

Within these health facilities there are youth-friendly corners which have been established to offer a space where youth can discuss HIV/AIDS prevention, SRHR, and pregnancy prevention. These corners are managed by young people in collaboration with health personnel, ensuring that services are accessible and tailored to the needs of young people.

".... PtY helped us to establish a youth corner in the hospital which helps us as young people to have access to services such as HIV testing and counselling and contraceptives. The services are youth-friendly such that it's safe to say that as young people for TA Mizinga, we can access all these services", (P3, FGD with youth network members, TA Mizinga, Mangochi).

The youth appreciated the health workers who are responsible for the delivery of youth-friendly health services, as they are easily accessible and provide appropriate care. They said that services are now readily available at all health centres and resultantly [young] people can easily access the care they need.

The corners are youth friendly as young people can freely access them and share issues that affect them. In another FGD with young men aged 20-24, participants reported that in T/A Mizinga in Machinga they have two youth-friendly corners at Mbanila Health Center and Ntholowa Health Center. A KI working for one of the consortium members in Lilongwe reported that while health facilities are supposed to be youth friendly, there are some other service providers in those clinics who are not youth-friendly and they even deny providing services to youth. This constitutes one of the issues that the youth have taken up and addressed through social accountability mechanisms such as community scorecards and interface meetings.

This generally demonstrates that policy makers at district level such as the DYO and the Police are performing their duties accordingly and are supportive of the interventions such as social accountability which motivates youth to participate in such interventions. At community level the Chief's Forum, comprised of chiefs, plays a vital role in raising awareness and helping to reinstate girls from child marriages into school among other responsibilities. This forum also involves youth when making community decisions, ensuring that their contributions are valued. Youths in this study reported that they work very closely with the chiefs who are very supportive of the work that they do. For example, during most FGDs youths reported that cases of rape are referred to the TA, and the TA follows the case until perpetrators are taken to court. If the person is found guilty, he or she gets arrested. When it comes to child marriage, while the youth discuss with those in such types of marriages and their parents, such issues are followed up in conjunction with the chiefs until in some cases, such issues reach the TA level.

"We meet with chiefs and inform them about the issues or communicate with other individuals such as youth advocates", (P9, FGD with AGYW 13-18, TA Mizinga, Machinga).

The chief's forum does all this without funding from the PtY consortium. The aspect of volunteerism has therefore been instilled in these chiefs. Unlike in the past when young people were not linked to the chiefs, these days these young men and women can go and approach the chief to assist them in following up a case. Because of the prevailing good working relationship with the chiefs the youth easily get assisted by the chiefs. The chiefs and the chief's forum, therefore, constitute an important and youth friendly forum or platform where issues concerning youth are discussed.

"We engage in chief's forums that assist us in addressing any problems that arise. Sometimes we approach the individuals involved in the issues, discuss with them, and make them understand how things should be done. Most people are open to change, but when faced with difficult individuals, we refer them to the T/A...."; (P4, FGD with AGYW 13-18, TA Mizinga, Machinga).

"Sometimes, young people in the community are the ones who go to the chief and ask him to call for a meeting so that they can discuss different issues and the chief can call for the meeting", (P4, FGD with AGYW 13-18, TA Mizinga, Machinga).

Participants in an FGD with AGYW in TA Mizinga in Machinga reported that it is possible to just call the chief and discuss things with him, because in some cases, they need the chief to be at the forefront of what the youth are doing. As a result of this friendly interaction, youth are now able to bring cases before the TA, which was not the case before, and now these youth are being recognized: they are able to stand in community meetings and voice out.

Youth emphasised that if duty bearers and policy makers take action on the concerns of the youth, this motivates or enables youth to hold duty bearers and policy makers accountable. If duty bearers do not address the concerns raised by the youth, the youth would not be motivated to engage duty bearers.

“If the service providers can address the issues presented to them by the youth because this alone will motivate them to analyse the issues that affect them in their communities...”, (KI, CSO, Dedza).

There should be an agreement/understanding between youth groups and leaders. This will make it easier for the leaders and youth to work together. If youth are given feedback on what they ask, it becomes easy for them to follow what is happening in the community.

“Positive response of the duty bearers when we engage them. They even help us with mobilization when we want to conduct a meeting and sometimes, they provide us with food”, (FGD with AGYW, TA Tambala, Dedza).

Lastly, youth reported that since they work with various groups at community and district level, there is a need for effective coordination among the service providers, the existing community structures and youth. This collaboration should not only be among youth and duty bearers but also among the youth themselves.

“..... a very important point is to do with collaboration among the youth, when youth works together, there are high chance of achieving the intended results so youth must always participate in these clubs so that they also gain that capacity of engaging duty bearers”, (Chair, TA Tambala Youth Network, Dedza).

What we see is that as far as youth are concerned they need support from people with power for the social accountability activities to be more effective

9.2.5 Group agency

These young people in both Dedza and Machinga reported that they never worked as individuals: in every activity they were engaged as a group and this motivated them to participate in the implementation of social accountability mechanisms. This is because other people cannot know that young person X is the one who reported the issues.

Youth participating in the PtY programme in some cases deal with sensitive issues such as addressing SGBV and child marriages. These issues need to be reported and a solution found and implemented. It is not easy to report such cases. However, youths do not work in isolation: they work in groups which motivates them most especially because they cannot be easily identified that they are the ones who reported the case in question to authorities.

“I was motivated because being in the groups, other people cannot know that you're the one who reported the issues. For example, things that happen at your home; you can report the issue to the group, but people at home will not know that it is you who have reported; they will think that it was other people”, (P6, FGD with AGYW 13-18, TA Mizinga, Machinga).

9.2.6 The desire to help their community

There were some young people who said that they were motivated to participate in social accountability mechanisms as they wanted to help their community so that things can change. The messages young people got from the PtY programme on education and observing that girls who got pregnant or were married went back to school motivated them to participate in these activities.

Many youths in FGDs reported that they participated in the implementation of social accountability activities because they wanted to promote development in their area and at the same time address the challenges being experienced. There are several harmful practices in Dedza and Machinga. The PtY programme is trying to address these harmful practices. A youth network chair in TA Tambala in Dedza reported that he was motivated to participate in these activities because he felt it necessary for these harmful practices to be addressed as they have negative impacts on individuals and communities.

“I participated in the activities because I saw that it was necessary to do [away] with harmful practices, encouraging my fellow youths to be active and aware of their rights. I have grown up in this community and I know better some of the dangers and problems that have been happening previously. I just talked about GBV issues, early pregnancies and early marriages, so from the point of view of the PtY program I was motivated to take part in these activities”, (Chair, Youth Network Chair, TA Tambala, Dedza).

“I participated in these activities because from what we were told from the PtY I feel like participating in these activities we can improve a lot of things in our community”, (Youth network chair, TA Mizinga, Machinga).

Lastly the PtY programme also encouraged those who dropped out of school for various reasons that they should be re-enrolled into school. The PtY programme does not assist children who have decided to enrol in school, but as explained above, community leaders and the youth themselves assist such children in some cases. The fact that the programme promoted education motivated young people to participate in activities such as ending child marriages and encouraging them to go back to school.

“I was motivated because the PtY programme encourages on issues of education”, (P8, FGD with AGYW 13-18, TA Mizinga, Machinga).

“Another reason for taking part in this initiative is to increase the literacy levels in my community, especially in my fellow youth”, (P6, FGD with youth network members, TA Tambala, Dedza).

These messages which encourage girls for example to go back to school motivated some youth to participate in such activities. During an FGD with AGYW 13-18 and KI with a youth network chair in TA Mizinga in Machinga participants reported that they participated in some of these activities because of their desire to help the wider community.

9.2.7 The development and implementation of bylaws

In Machinga youth reported that some by-laws have been developed and are being implemented which specify that if any child including AGYW is absent from school their parents are supposed to pay a fine of one goat to the chiefs. These bylaws were developed after they found that youth were absent from school or dropping out for various reasons. They engaged community members including chiefs during interface meetings and made a decision that bylaws should be developed and implemented in order to ensure that all school going age children attend school. The chiefs and community members took action and this motivates the youth to participate in social accountability processes because they know that they have backing from the chiefs and community members. These chiefs utilise the money from the fines to help children returning to school after, for example, withdrawal from marriages.

“Just to add, the Chief's forum utilises the money that the parents pay [as a fine] to purchase school materials and distribute them to young people who cannot afford these resources”, (P3, FGD with AGYW, TA Mizinga, Machinga).

In addition to bylaws, a KI working for the MoGCDSW reported that there are laws and policies which enable young people to implement interventions such as social accountability mechanisms although she did not mention them.

9.2.8 Functional youth networks and youth clubs

In both Dedza and Machinga there are functional youth networks which are platforms that young people use to discuss the challenges they have and how best to solve them. A youth network chair in TA Mizinga in Machinga reported that members of the youth network hold meetings where all issues concerning the youth from various groups are discussed and they then develop and implement an action plan.

“As Tambala Youth Network, we meet twice a month. If we hear about a case³ within the month, we come together and attend to such an issue”, (Youth Advocate chair, TA Tambala, Dedza).

“.... at the network level, we have monthly meetings and during these meetings, we meet with the [providers of] Youth Friendly Health Services at the clinic where we assess the SRHR services and information”, (P3, FGD with youth advocates 23-32, TA Tambala, Dedza).

A network chair in TA Mizinga in Machinga emphasised that there is strong collaboration between their work and their leaders in the community. He further explained that they have several committees which are guided by the youth network and on every 28th of each month they meet to share issues, for example, there are youth advocates that they meet every week on issues that they monitor [refer to footnote 3 above]. They also have PtY champions that also meet⁴. When committees meet, they provide reports to the youth network and these reports are shared with the DYO and NGOs including the PtY consortium. These platforms namely the network and its committees are AGYW and youth-friendly as they are open enough to share their experiences and any issues affecting them.

“Yes, these spaces [youth networks] allow free participation and all being youth when we meet, we are able to openly share issues that affect us. It is through the same programs from PtY that have made youth to be able to be open in these spaces”, (Chair, Youth network, TA Tambala, Dedza).

An official from Plan International Malawi based in Machinga reported that youth clubs are spread across the district and they do come up with networks at TA level. Representatives from youth networks usually interface with the district council on issues affecting the youth in the district. They send a representative to the full council meetings. A DYO in Machinga mentioned the use of teen clubs which he facilitates for HIV-positive boys and girls aged 10-19. These clubs provide space for them to interact with their coordinators, sharing experiences and insights on taking antiretroviral medications (ARVs) as teenagers. The clubs play a crucial role in encouraging adherence to medication, discouraging defaulting on ARV treatments, and fostering a supportive environment among peers.

³ Cases such as child marriage, rape and other types of violence and children dropping out of school.

⁴ PtY champions comprise of youth advocates, youth network members who are working with the PtY programme.

However, some informants including the youth network chair in TA Mizinga in Machinga reported that the challenge with youth clubs is that there is a limited participation of youth because youth in some cases feel that they discuss the same issues during their meetings. He suggested that they need to have some new innovative activities in their clubs as this can also attract a lot of youth to participate in the activities, for example, he suggested having sports activities which they can be using to disseminate other information that can attract the youth. Therefore, functional youth networks and youth clubs help youth to participate in social accountability processes.

9.2.9 Availability of financial support

One of the major challenges in the implementation of social accountability mechanisms is the lack of financial and other resources. Hence, many informants suggested that financial resources should be made available for the effective implementation of the social accountability mechanisms including the provision of transport to youth, as the areas they cover are vast in both Dedza and Machinga.

"There should be a funding in a community which may help young people to be managing to advocate for different issues and even engaging decision makers".

During the implementation of the PtY programme, the project provided grants which enabled them to conduct meetings in their communities including for social accountability initiatives.

"Yes we were supported by the PtY program through Youth Wave on the small grants initiatives .They supported us with MK750,000 as a club and we use the funds for the activity", (P1, F GD with youth network members, TA Mizinga,, Machinga).

9.2.10 The desire to speak in public

Youth informants were also asked what motivated them to participate in the various PtY activities. Some people initially were not good at public speaking, including discussing issues with their leaders. For example a 20 year old AGYW in TA Tambala in Dedza narrated that she was motivated because at first, she was not able to speak among a group of people, but after PtY trained them on how to approach the leaders and how to discuss issues with them now she can speak to them. She gave an example where she was able to speak to leaders:

"I have once approached the village head and also, we went to TA We discussed with the T/A on the issue of ndowa⁵. In our area the Yao people were practicing ndowa and the ndowa that was happening was about children and we talked to them but they told us that what they are doing is written in their Quran and then we went to the TA and explained to him but he said that he is also a Yao but what the people were saying he also doesn't know about that and we involved him in this issue until the issue was solved", (20 year old AGYW, TA Tambala, Dedza).

For this 20 year old AGYW, she was motivated to participate in PtY activities because of the desire to speak in public and interact with the chiefs.

9.2.11 Access to information

⁵ Ndowa is a Yao term meaning marriage. This quote therefore talks about child marriages.

In general the youth in Dedza and Machinga where the PtY programme is being implemented now have access to information. This information is given during community meetings as well as trainings that have been organized by the PtY programme. The section above on the type of trainings conducted or information given to the youth is covered comprehensively in the section of training above and includes issues around child marriage, education, human rights and the different types of social accountability and how these are conducted.

"... Yes the information is there as I indicated that we have been trained despite the [fact that] not all of us attended that training. But since we have been trained we also trained our fellow youth So I can confirm say that we have information that help us to participate in social accountability activities", (Youth network chair, TA Mizinga, Machinga).

"Some of the promoting factors is knowledge, the young people must have been made aware of the methods to hold duty bears accountable and they should be supported because the process is very long", (KI, FP coordinator).

Once these youth are trained they share the information they have gained with their friends or peers. In TA Sale in Machinga participants in an FGD with youth advocates aged 18-30 reported that they also get information from mother groups on issues concerning unintended pregnancies.

One KI in Dedza reported that access to information is quite crucial for young people to get involved in social accountability mechanisms and other activities. He, however, argued that access to information depends on location because the youth in an urban area have got easier access to information than those in the localities.

Lastly the information that the PtY programme has given the youth also include the youth's rights in terms of access to various services including education and health. Such awareness programmes have enabled the youth to demand services from duty bearers and policy makers.

"..... for young people to part they have to know what their entitlements are. Once they know, it will be easier for them to know how to take the duty bearers to account but it is after they have the information readily made available to them", (KI, CSO, Dedza).

9.2.12 Young people need to be proactive

One KI in Machinga reported that the youth themselves need to be proactive. Most of the time young people think that it is not yet time to become proactive: in most cases these youth tend to look down upon themselves hence they do not necessarily work on issues that affect them. This informant suggested that there should be a mind-set change among young people so that they can contribute to development.

9.3 Results of social accountability processes

The youth have implemented social accountability activities mainly community scorecards, interface meetings and budget tracking. The implementation of these activities, according to youth and KIs, have resulted into immediate action by the duty bearers. In some cases it has taken a bit of time, for example, a 20 year old AGYW in TA Tambala in Dedza reported that they had an interface meeting with staff at Majinga Health Centre and requested that the delivery of health services to youth should be improved so that young people can have a youth-friendly health facility where they access services. She said that the services have not been improved but hoped that they will soon because the plan is already in place. Below we discuss the actions that followed the implementation of various activities by the youth.

9.3.1 Encouraging youth to participate in community development activities

One of the issues that was emphasised by KIs who have participated in PtY activities was that initially young people were not participating in development activities taking place in their community: these KIs, therefore, participated in activities aimed at bringing awareness to the communities and duty bearers that the youth are also part of the community, hence, the need for them to be involved in development activities at that level. They also made sure that the youth should understand their rights and that they must be accountable to any development being implemented in their communities. The creation of awareness among the youth and stakeholders is important so that they should know the rights of young people, the challenges that they experience and the need to address them. Advocacy campaigns, as being performed by CSOs and the youth themselves, are important as they bring out the voices of the voiceless such as the youth.

"In fact, as CSOs, we are involved just because we talk for the voiceless and in so doing advocacy helps to change attitude of people and also the attitude of service providers to achieve what the communities want to benefit from them and also to change some policies which are also not good to people", (KI, CSO, Dedza).

A KI working for one of the members of the PtY consortium stated that in the PtY programme the intention is to see that young people have a platform to demand for services and that they should be empowered by giving them the capacity to meaningfully participate in all development programmes.

"So the young people are working with different stakeholders. For example, at a community level, we call them society actors, religious leaders, chiefs, parents, child protection workers, CVSU, to make sure that they should also be able to respond to issues or challenges that young people are facing. Specifically, we are looking at adolescent girls and young women (AGYW). This is because most of the issues that we are focusing on through the program, are affecting AGYW. So as an organization, as a coordinator I mainly coordinate on Pathway number 1, which is also trying to advocate and make sure that young people are taking a leading role in all decision-making processes at all levels including national levels", (KI, consortium member, Lilongwe).

9.3.2 Youth accessing SRHR and other health and related information and services

A KI at Machinga District Council reported that he had observed that before the implementation of the PtY programme the demand for SRHR services was low because of prevailing misconceptions and myths they had towards SRHR services. However, with the PtY project, he has seen that most of the youths now have information and are engaged in SRHR activities as they are also taking part in service provision because service providers are promoting the use of the youth, for example, in the distribution of condoms and some other commodities. These youths, according to this KI, are taking part in spreading the information and distribution of condoms. It's different from the way it was before as service providers would go to the community with services and come back with no youth demand for services. Some youth further said that the PtY programme has opened them up as initially they were just impregnating each other.

"I view the program as essential and long that the program should not leave us because way back as young people we were just impregnating each other for no apparent reason but now we are able to protect ourselves. The program opened our eyes that in this world young people can also access contraceptives and that it is possible to go back to school after getting pregnant. The program should never end because we are learning more and

this will sharpen generations to come and sharpen us for brighter Malawi”, (P4, TA Mizinga Youth Network members, Machinga).

In TA Sale in Machinga youth, according to a youth advocate chair, were not visiting the health centre to access family planning services because they were complaining that every time they went there, they didn't get the required help due to stockout of commodities and that there were only two health workers which limited the effectiveness of the health centre especially on the provision of family planning services to the youth. The youth had an interface meeting with leaders where they followed up with the health centre on the issues until they were given feedback and youth are now able to access some services from there. At this health centre they received more nurses and community health workers. There are several SRHR activities that the PtY project is implementing including ensuring that youth have access to SRHR services, preventing unintended pregnancies, ending harmful practices such as child marriages and *kusasa fumbi*. However, other youth fear to go and receive the services because they may be afraid of other people talking about them. One youth network leader in TA Mizinga in Machinga reported that it is his responsibility to follow up on SRHR services and ensure that the youth access services.

“The major role we perform as youth in this project is “kulondoloza” [social accountability] SRHR services at our health centre to see to it that youths are being helped accordingly. We make sure that access to SRHR is guaranteed to young people of this area and even getting these services closer to the youth in their clubs”, (KI, Mizinga Network Leader, Machinga).

Many youth at community level, during FGDs and IDIs, cited many SRHR and related activities in which they were involved. These included being involved in activities that aimed at reducing unintended pregnancies and ending harmful practices such as child marriages. They were able to perform these activities after being duly empowered by the PtY consortium.

“We have worked with PtY on various activities such as reducing cases of unintended pregnancy, ending child marriage, and also ending harmful practices”, (20 year old AGYW, Dedza).

In terms of child marriage, before the implementation of the PtY programme in Dedza and Machinga, community members including the youth themselves lacked awareness of the legal age for marriage, but have become informed through the PtY programme.

“The PtY program came as an eye opener in our community. Way back as young people we were not aware of the recommended age to get married. Upon coming of PtY, we were now made aware that the recommended age is 18 years”, (P3, FGD with members of the Mizinga Youth Network, Machinga).

Study participants reported that child marriage was quite high in both Dedza and Machinga and during an FGD with members of the youth network in TA Mizinga in Machinga participants reported that people in their area had a mindset or belief that a girl child's role was to reproduce. After young people were trained on what constitutes harmful practices and how they can address them, they are now contributing to the reduction of some of these harmful practices. In both Dedza and Machinga there are also other harmful practices that for example put young people at risk of contracting HIV. For example, in both Machinga and Dedza, young people reported that before participating in the PtY programme, young men and women were being taught to perform *kusasa fumbi* [literally meaning brushing off the dust] to mark the end of the initiation ceremony. *Kusasa fumbi* is a rite in which boys and girls who have come out of the initiation camp are advised to engage in sex as evidence that they are now grown-ups. Young people have, therefore, worked with the PtY consortium to end this practice.

“In our area, there was a cultural practice called 'kusasa fumbi'. This project has helped to end this practice because it had many effects such as encouraging the transmission of HIV and AIDS and other STIs. The project made people realise that the practice was harmful”, (P6, FGD with young men 20-24, TA Mizinga, Machinga).

During an FGD with members of the youth network in TA Mizinga in Machinga, participants noted that *kusasa fumbi* is dangerous, hence, they worked with initiation counsellors to ensure their teachings are not promoting unsafe sexual behaviours [e.g. *kusasa fumbi*] but rather are sharing on how to abstain or use contraceptives. These activities were important because youth claimed that the practice of *kusasa fumbi* is no longer being practiced due to PtY interventions. Many young men especially went to South Africa to work and before leaving they would get betrothed to a girl.

"Kutomera" is a traditional practice where a man who is planning of going to South Africa went to a girl child's parents and pay money for the girl so that the girl should not get married until the man returns from South Africa", (FGD with AGYW, TA Mizinga, Machinga).

Due to interventions by the PtY programme, this practice of boys going to South Africa, as mentioned earlier is slowly decreasing as boys can also find employment in Malawi and take care for their families so long as they work hard. A chair of youth advocacy in TA Sale in Machinga reported that they had conducted a scorecard process at the nearby health facility. One of the challenges was that the facility only had two medical assistants. He argued that if they had not done this scorecard process, he was very sure that up to the time data was being collected for this study they could still have had the same 2 medical assistants. The health facility therefore took action after the scorecard process and some more health workers were deployed to the health centre. He mentioned said that even community members highlight the significance of this talk about this activity as to be of importance because they are even able to appreciate the results we registered.

9.3.3 Identification of cases of violence and reporting

In addition, young men and women reported that the PtY programme has created awareness among youth and adults on violence including that such cases of violence should be reported and the channels that they can use to do report. Such cases of violence were previously not being reported to authorities. Community members are now aware of the different forms of violence, are able to report to authorities and perpetrators are being jailed and this has contributed to the decrease in the number of cases of violence. During an FGD with AGYW 13-18 in TA Mizinga in Machinga participants said that they approach the chief on several issues including abuse of children. The chief in most cases takes action immediately: for example in this FGD participants said that when issues of abuse are reported, the chief calls the people that are involved and gives them advice and cases of abuse such as rape, child marriage and school dropouts in the community have gone down as reported in other FGDs and KIIs.

Addressing rape in TA Tambala: A 27 year old youth network chair in TA Tambala in Dedza reported that in November 2023, the youth network conducted an interface meeting. This was organised because there were many cases of rape including a case where a Group Village Headman (GVH) raped his granddaughter. This case did not proceed very far. The network saw individuals who had committed rape being free in the community. The network, therefore,, called for an interface meeting which was supported by the PtY programme and attended by chiefs from the chief's forums, people from the district council, Victim Support Unit (VSU) and many community members. Members of the VSU explained the laws related to rape and their fines. In this meeting, the youth network chair in TA Tambala in Dedza reported that the protocols on what to do when someone has been raped were explained. Since then they have seen a great improvement and currently there are almost zero cases of rape: one of the men who committed rape was imprisoned for 21 years which has created fear in people.

9.3.4 Youth are capacitated to monitor community construction projects

In both Dedza and Machinga participants reported that through social accountability processes youth participated in monitoring community construction projects which never used to happen previously. For example youth in TA Mizinga in Machinga who were involved in the construction of a bridge from the beginning until it was completed. Their main focus was to monitor the progress of the work by looking at the number of cement bags which were being used. Among other things, they found that some construction materials such as wheel barrows, planks and nails were missing. They followed up the issue and reported it to the TA who then followed up on missing materials until it was resolved.

"..... as I also mentioned we were trained to be participating in development activities. I will give you an example where we had a construction of bridge, and as youth we were able to monitor each and every activity that was happening including knowing maybe number of cement bags that were used. This was because we were empowered by this program to be able to take part in a developmental activities", (24 year old youth network chair, TA Mizinga, Machinga).

No example was given on budget spending by both KIs and youth. There is a challenge, however, that that development agencies do not reveal the budgets for the projects and it is difficult to effectively monitor the implementation of projects. All they can do monitor how materials brought to the site are being used and they cannot compare what they are monitoring to the budgets.

9.3.4 Establishment of a police unit

A youth advocate chair in TA Sale reported that in his community there were many issues that youth were facing including child trafficking, rape and other forms of SGBV. Perpetrators were running away to Mozambique to escape from facing the law. Youth advocates then met chiefs and brought out the need to have a police unit in the area. They asked the TA that they wanted to meet the ADC so that they could inform them on what they wanted to do. They engaged the Selema Police Unit and explained to them that there are increased cases of violence because they didn't have a police unit in their area. The officer in charge of this police unit told them to wait for two weeks as he wanted to consult other stakeholders at the district. Then the youth advocates asked him if they can be allowed to meet district officials for the discussion. Through PtY programme and other members, the youth advocates were supported to go on with this initiative. They had interface meetings with the Officer in Charge for Machinga Police, the District Social Welfare Office, the District Director of Health and Social Services and other district officials where they presented the need for a police unit in their area. So the youth advocates were informed that there is a need for land for the construction of the police unit and where police officers' houses can be constructed. The youth advocates took this feedback to the TA who assured them that the land will be made available. The youth after discussions with the TA visited

Mkwakwata - the proposed site for the police unit given by the TA. They then reported to the Officer in Charge at Selema Police Unit that the land is available only that they did not have any blocks. They then organised a meeting with their Member of Parliament requesting for the construction of the police unit. So they requested the MP that, as he was going to parliament, he should prioritise the budget for the construction of the police unit. They told their Member of Parliament that they had already engaged the District Commissioner and the Officer in Charge for Machinga Police Station. So in 2022-2023 youth were told that MK40 million was allocated for the construction of the police unit. On 3 June 2023, there was a launch for the construction of a police unit at Mkwakwata. As at the time of data collection for this study the construction of the police unit was in progress.

9.3.5 Young people who dropped out of school being enrolled

There were observations by study participants that an increased number of young people, especially girls, were either absent or they dropped out of school. The youth mobilised the community and conducted a community scorecard and parents and other community members were able to give their opinions and they also scored on the problems. At the end, the youth and parents discussed the way forward on the issue for example the development and implementation of bylaws which require that all school going age children should be in school otherwise parents of children who are absent from are fined. Young people have worked with the PtY consortium in Dedza and Machinga to create awareness among youth who dropped out of school, their parents and other community members about the importance of education. They have encouraged those who, for example, got pregnant, dropped out of school and got married to go back to school.

“As members of the PTY we have also worked on sensitising the community on the back-to-school initiative, where we encourage girls that have been married that they can go back to school after they have delivered and proceed with their education”, (P6, FGD with TA Mizinga youth network members, Machinga).

Youth in both Dedza and Machinga are involved in ending child marriages. They do not do this on their own but they work with the chiefs. For example, during an FGD with AGYW in TA Tambala in Dedza, participants explained that when they hear that one of the people who is getting married is young, regardless of whether it is a boy or a girl, they alert the chief while they continue researching the issue including trying to find out the age of the one getting married. They then engage the parents together with the chief and the CVSU and child protection services if they observe that they are still proceeding with the marriage. They make them understand the disadvantages of child marriage and the importance of the children continuing with their education. It is from this engagement that youth make sure that the marriage has ended or the process does not proceed. During an FGD with AGYW in TA Tambala participants narrated a story in which the youth stopped a wedding from going ahead.

“In GVH Mtawanga, there were processes of a wedding between a young girl aged 16 years and a man, and almost everything was done in preparation for this wedding. Upon hearing about this issue, we did some research to generate evidence. We called for a meeting with the parents and made them understand that what they were doing was wrong. At first, there was resistance from them but then they came to an agreement in the end, and the wedding was cancelled. We did follow a protocol. In every activity that we conduct, we make sure that we inform the chief first to let them know what is happening. (P2, FGD with AGYW, TA Tambala, Dedza).

The youth generally reported that they are best placed to investigate and contribute to ending child marriage. During an FGD with young men aged 20-24 in TA Mizinga in Machinga participants reported that those who have dropped out of school openly tell them the reasons for dropping out of school because “we are their

fellow youths and they can even tell us their experience on what happened for them to drop out of school". During an FGD with young men aged 20-24 in TA Mizinga in Machinga, participants also reported that in cases where the parents are responsible for their daughter's marriage, the parents are summoned by the chief and are sent to the police, and they are fined or they get arrested according to the crime they have committed. These parents may be reported to the chief by the youth who monitor what is happening in the village.

In addition to girls dropping out of school because of pregnancy and marriage, some young men and women also drop out of school due to lack of basic needs and other abuses from parents, such as making them sell things in the markets or taking care of livestock. After finding out about the challenges experienced by young men and women who dropped out of school, youth have interface meetings with parents and community leaders to discuss the challenges and find lasting solutions. Young men and women have worked with the PtY programme, reached out to fellow young men and women who dropped out of school and consequently they have gone back to school. A youth network chair in TA Mizinga reported that there are many families with goats and cows. Previously, children were the ones responsible for taking care of these animals even during school times which meant that they missed classes. So youth networks had an interface meeting with chiefs and other community leaders to set bylaws on that practice: if a child is now found looking after livestock, the owners of livestock are fined and these fines are used to buy scholastic materials for those children who have returned to school.

Through interface meetings with young people who have dropped out of school, their parents, community leaders and teachers people understand that some young people dropout of school because they do not have enough resources to sustain themselves in school. During these meetings, youth, community members and community leaders find solutions: for example youth through youth networks also do some income-generating activities such as farming where they sell their harvest and use the money to provide them with resources such as exercise books and school uniforms.

"We also have meetings with the parents whose children are not going to school, and we try to understand the reasons why the children are not going to school. Some of the reasons might be a lack of school necessities such as soap, uniform, and exercise books just to mention a few. Upon hearing that, together we find strategies that can enable the children to go back to school. Sometimes we, the AGYW, come up with some income-generating activities to help with the purchasing of these commodities. But if the parents persist and the children are not enrolled in school, we take the issue to the chief and the police to escalate the matter until the children are back to school (P1, FGD with AGYW, TA Tambala, Dedza).

During an FGD with AGYW in TA Tambala in Dedza participants also reported that sometimes the headmaster of the school takes part in purchasing notebooks and school uniforms and other school materials. A District Gender Officer in Machinga reported that they had an interface meeting with youth and, in her case, she was responsible for addressing issues related to the girl child education, particularly focusing on how to ensure they continued schooling and the sustainability of support especially for girls who had been married and withdrawn from those marriages. They discussed how to support their education. The District Gender Officer further said they implemented an integrated child support approach which covered school fees, uniforms, childcare, educational materials, and financial support for girls who got pregnant, got married and were withdrawn from child marriage. Through the Spotlight Initiative⁶, they connected the mothers of these girls to Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) groups, providing them with seed money to start businesses. The profits generated from these businesses were then used to support the girls' financial needs.

⁶ Spotlight Initiative is a United Nations Initiative that aims at ending violence against women and girls and was launched in 2017 with funding from the EU. "see also: <https://www.spotlightinitiative.org/>"

In terms of education, one observation, as said earlier, was that in some cases the conduct of initiation ceremonies overlapped with the school calendar. Through interface meetings with community members and community leaders organised by, for example youth networks in TA Tambala in Dedza, communities formulated and implemented by-laws which require that the timing for all initiation camps should not overlap with the school calendar to ensure that every child has the right to education and does not miss classes because of attending initiation ceremonies. A youth network leader in TA Tambala in Dedza gave an example of a GVH who delayed releasing initiates from the initiation camp at a time when schools were opening. The issue was reported to the senior chief and the GVH was ordered to close the camps but also paid a goat to the chief for violating the by-laws.

Youth appreciated that the activities, such as withdrawing underage boys and girls from child marriage and encouraging them to re-enrol into schools that they have implemented are useful as they have encouraged children to go back to school.

“The activities have helped us because they have promoted education among young people in our community. The activities have also helped people understand what is said in policies about education. Additionally, the activities have also addressed issues of child marriage. Without these activities, our community could have many cases of child marriage, leading to poverty”, (P8, FGD with young men 20-24, TA Mizinga, Machinga).

During an FGD with young men aged 20-24 in TA Mizinga in Machinga participants reported that in the past young people needed to go to South Africa⁷ and work there in order to find jobs and support their families. Such a perception, however, has changed because the PtY programme has made them realise that young people need to go to school and be educated, which can help them get employed and support their families instead of trekking to South Africa. Some AGYW reported that they had dropped out of school earlier but that with the PtY programme they have since re-enrolled and are currently in school.

“Just to add that the PTY [programme] has helped AGYW to go back to school even after delivery which is good because a lot of AGYW will be educated. Some of us here are coming from school. We have also been readmitted”, (P3, FGD with AGYW aged 13-24, TA Mizinga, Machinga).

These activities are therefore very useful as young girls who were withdrawn from their marriages and sent back to school will have a great future if they continue with their education and, consequently, as narrated during an FGD with AGYW aged 17-24 in TA Tambala in Dedza, they will even become role models for their fellow young women.

9.4 Barriers to participation in social accountability

There was the only KI who reported that there were no barriers to the implementation of social accountability mechanisms as duty bearers are more open and they are always ready to be held accountable. However, several barriers to participation in social accountability processes by youth were mentioned by study participants.

9.4.1 Lack of resources

⁷ Malawi is one of the countries which has been sending labour to South Africa during and after South Africa became independent. Even now there are many young Malawians who are going to South Africa for work.

Many informants in this study including KIs at national and district level and participants in FGDs with young men and women reported that the lack of resources hampers the implementation of social accountability mechanisms. A KI working for the MoGCDSW in Lilongwe reported that most of the interventions that are being implemented including social accountability mechanisms are donor-dependent, emphasising that the local resources at the various ministries allocated by the Ministry of Finance are not adequate to cater for the implementation of interventions. He added that the Ministry of Finance mainly caters for salaries of civil servants. This official from the MoGCDSW added that the Ministry needs other resources such as vehicles to ensure mobility and being able to reach young men and women. However, there are not enough vehicles at all levels. Other KIs also explained the lack of financial resources, competing budgetary demands, inadequate infrastructure, shortage of skilled health workers and stockout of essential medicines as hindering the implementation of SRHR policies.

“Lastly, fragile or under-resourced health systems may struggle to deliver quality SRHR services, particularly in rural or marginalized communities. Issues such as inadequate infrastructure, shortages of skilled health workers, and stockouts of essential medicines and supplies can hinder access to contraception, maternal care, and other critical SRHR services”, (KI, Dedza District. Council).

“Our duty-bearers sometimes b rush us off saying the problem is the bad road. It is not possible to have consistent flow of contraceptives because of the condition of the road. They also tell us that government does not allocate enough financial resources to Ministry of Health hence continued SRHR challenges in our area”, (IDI, Youth Advocates Chair, TA Tambala, Dedza).

Social accountability processes are implemented, among other reasons, in order to improve service delivery. Without resources, it is difficult to implement SRHR policies. The lack of resources may make it difficult for duty bearers to respond to issues raised by youth.

“Barriers might be there for example lack of resources may limit duty bearers to respond to some of our issues because when we question some leaders on issues affecting us, we are sometimes told that they are also waiting to be responded from other authorities so this limits leaders from responding to issues,”, (Youth Network Chair, TA Mizinga, Machinga).

The youth network chair in TA Mizinga in Machinga gave an example of stockout of commodities at the health centre where a health worker responded that they are also waiting from their authorities. The lack of resources does not only mean money but other items as well.

“Resources, inadequate staffing, shortage of materials such as the hard copy policies for youth related policies”, (DYO, Machinga).

“.... I can also cite lack of resources because we are failing to do most of these things even the duty bearers are failing to do most of these things because they don't have resources.....”(KI, NICE, Lilongwe).

A youth advocate chair in TA Tambala explained that it is not possible to have consistent flow of contraceptives because of the condition of the road.

Some duty bearers especially at community level such as village headmen demand money or refreshments in order for them to attend meetings called for by the youth as part of the social accountability mechanisms.

“When we call for meetings as youth, you find that some chiefs expect to at least take some refreshments. Due to financial challenges we could not fulfil their wish”, (Youth Network Leader, TA Tambala, Dedza).

During most FGDs the lack of resources including transport was also emphasised by young people as hindering the implementation of social accountability mechanisms. Youth emphasised that the areas they cover in both Dedza and Machinga are so large such that they have challenges in covering the whole area.

“The major problem is the vastness of this area. This means that we are not able to reach some of the hard-to-reach areas to help address some of the development issues in those areas through scorecards. This means that development issues in those areas are just piling up”, (Youth Advocate Chair, TA Tambala, Dedza).

“... Another risk is the problem of mode of transport, Mizinga is that big so due to some distances it limits our ability to conduct some activities in distant areas”, (IDI, Youth Network Chair, TA Mizinga, Machinga).

It was only during one FGD with young men aged 20-24 in TA Mizinga in Machinga where participants reported that they lacked an office from which they would operate. The lack of an office, the lack of phones among young people, and the lack of a public address system is a further demonstration of lack of resources.

“I remember last time none of the advocates in TA Sale had a phone and we used to call through the TA's phone: we would like to talk to Happy, can you please tell someone to go and call him you know such kind of thing”, (KI, CSO-consortium member, Lilongwe).

It is important once the social accountability mechanisms are implemented action should be taken to address the persistent problem. However the lack of resources may be a barriers to implementation of agreed interventions. For example, one issue that came out in many FGDs with youth is that they lacked money to assist those withdrawn from child marriage because such youth need financial support to go back to school and it is very difficult for them to be assisted as youth participating in social accountability mechanisms as they do not have money. They can withdraw children from child marriages and as much as this is an important outcome for social accountability but how do these children get assisted.

These youths also meet and they come from different locations of the TA and they lack transport so it is difficult for them to be punctual during their meetings or scheduled interface meetings with duty bearers. One issue that came out strongly from KIs is that while youth can implement social accountability mechanisms, holding duty bearers accountable on SRHR services and other issues, duty bearers can just inform the youth that they understand the issues but that they do not have financial resources to provide what they are demanding. The lack of resources is, therefore, a major barrier for the successful implementation of the social accountability mechanisms.

9.4.2 Power dynamics

Both KIs and youth in FGDs reported that as youth implement social accountability mechanisms they can be threatened by duty bearers.

“Some traditional leaders reprimanded some youths for speaking without fear or favour during these interface meetings. Some leaders are not yet comfortable with transparent

discussions for fear of being exposed on their failures or those of their political masters”, (Youth Network Leader, TA Tambala, Dedza).

It is not only the youth who are threatened, NGO staff can also be threatened as well.

“ There are times they [NGO staff] can be pinpointed or even embarrassed in public. For instance, on the issue of the school block, when we involved the media there was commotion from the opposition party blaming the MP [for the area] that he was not doing anything which made the MP threaten us (our organization) up to the point that we dropped the case and let the government officials continue following up. But I feel like the risks get bigger depending on the sensitivity of the issue you are trying to address”, (KI, CSO, Dedza).

KIs also reported that there can be a backlash from the duty bearers : in some cases duty bearers react angrily because youth are trying to ask them to explain how they are doing their work. In addition to this, in some cases duty bearers may not cooperate, for instance, by not showing up at meetings to which they have been invited simply because they are not ready to face the youth or citizens or they know that they will not gain anything from them during the meetings. In some cases they accuse these youth as smoking *chamba*.

“When perceived as youth, some duty bearers tend to underestimate us, assuming we cannot offer productive contributions or insights”, (FGD with ABYM, Dedza).

Youth involved in *kalondolondo* were being threatened by parents of children involved in child marriage. These parents actually tell youth that they do not have any rights over their child. When parents of these children say this, they go to the village head who then intervenes and tells them about the punishment that they can receive, namely that they can either be arrested or fined. In some cases parents may have made an arrangement for their child to marry a rich person so when youth go to end the marriage, parents can tell them that they get support from their child and if they want to end the marriage, the youth will give them the support that they get from the child or if not this then the youth will take responsibility of supporting their daughter including giving the girls withdrawn from child marriage blankets and food.

“Yes, there is often a risk of negative reaction when we dissolve early marriages because some community members believe we should provide support like food to those girls withdrawn from marriages. This can create a sense of fear, especially among those in the community like extension workers”, (KI, Machinga District Council).

A few KIs reported that some youth are aggressive when they are approaching duty bearers which sometimes leads to unfavourable responses. They emphasised that it is also not good for the duty bearers to be defensive when engaged in social accountability processes. Some argued that these social accountability mechanisms work when the right approaches are used.

“..... I should give an example of scorecard sessions; both sides (right holders and duty bearers) should all be in a pleasant mood, but apart from that, the one who is supposed to do facilitation should also be an expert (in scorecard) because he or she might mislead other people or the whole process”, (KI, CCJP, Lilongwe).

While there can be backlashes from the community and duty bearers, youth reported that they have learnt how to handle such backlashes.

“Yes we have, backlash from the parents. But over time we have learned to negotiate with them together with the chiefs on the importance of children finishing school and the possible negative effects of child marriages”, (P3, FGD with Youth Advocates, TA Tambala, Dedza).

“Yes, we have, especially backlash⁸ from the service providers as they thought that we have gone too far. But this did not stop us, we continued conducting our activities. With the help of the training of the PtY, we were taught how to handle this kind of incident, and as of now, there is a good relationship between us young people and these service providers”, (P7, FGD with youth advocates, TA Tambala, Dedza).

This demonstrates that the youth are able to implement these interventions with support from chiefs, they have given them the authority to implement these interventions. Two KIs in Dedza reported that when implementing projects community members including the youth are not informed of how much money is involved. One KI said that while it is important to hold duty bearers accountable including in the implementation of CDF in relation to SRHR, most duty-bearers are not open about this. They felt that they needed stronger voices to help move their MPs for example to take issues of SRHR seriously. Most of them promise to address youth issues without any corresponding action.

“There is also this challenge where some leaders including the district council do not feel comfortable disclosing the project budgets. With this secrecy, it is very difficult to effectively follow-up on public expenditure”, KI, CSO, Dedza).

In addition to power differentials between duty bearers and youth, there are also power differentials between within marriage and homes. One AGYW was of the view that some female youth do not participate because they are married and their husbands do not allow them to participate in these activities.

The PtY consortium has capacitated youth in Dedza and Machinga to engage duty bearers. However, there are some youth who still do not have confidence for example to speak in public; hence the failure to participate in activities including social accountability which involve engagement with duty bearers.

“.... Also some youth lack capacity to speak with confidence in such spaces and this makes them to keep quiet without contributing anything throughout the meeting”, (Machinga Women Forum.).

“Other youth are shy and fail to speak in public becomes a struggle for them. They are scared that the community will not listen to them”, (P11, Files\\Transcript Tambala youth, TA Tambala, Dedza).

In several FGDs youth felt that there are young men and women who lack confidence because they have low education levels .

“Others dropped out of school, and they think that if they attend these meetings, people will gossip about them because they dropped out of school”, (P3, FGD with AGYW 13-18, Machinga.

⁸ Negative reactions, not cooperative, angry and not taking action on the things that young people want.

Lastly, during several FGDs and interviews with youth, participants reported that youth in general fear their parents or duty bearers and this prevents them from participating in the implementation of social accountability mechanisms.

As youth implement social accountability mechanisms, they also encounter people who do not cooperate, for instance, duty bearers not showing up to meetings to which they have been invited simply because they are not ready to face the citizens. The major risk is the backlash from duty bearers. One KI reported that these backlashes arise if the duty bearers and the youth do not understand each other or that the youth were not well mentored on how they can approach the system and if the service providers are in a position where they can't understand that young people have the right to demand for services. This has potential to create conflicts among duty bearers and the youth. There can be hatred between young people demanding services and service providers such as health care providers thereby affecting youth's access to services.

There were some informants both KIs and youth who said that there are risks when youth are conducting social accountability mechanisms because the perception is that the youth would like to expose what the leaders or duty bearers are doing. Some duty bearers have bad behavior because they think that if they do things in the right way, they will not benefit anything. So, in the end, things don't work. Social accountability is good, but the risk is that other duty bearers do not want community members to know how things are going. This might lead to youth being discriminated against and not being involved in community activities.

"The risks are that firstly, the youth are being discriminated. They are not called if there is a meeting, and sometimes the leaders do not allow the youth to be in the committee. For example, the leaders can agree that the young people should not be included in the committees because they can destroy their plans. And the youth are not allowed to be in the committee because they say that they disturb them. So, the youth are discriminated. Even if there are activities, they are not invited, and in the committee, they are not included", (DYO, Machinga).

This KI reported that the youth are discriminated against because they follow every issue very well. For example, there was a group of young people in Machinga, who because they followed issues very closely, caused hatred among members of the community and people even accused each other of practicing witchcraft.

9.4.3 Corruption

KIs mainly from civil society and a few youth cited corruption as a factor that can affect the successful implementation of social accountability mechanisms.

"We cannot rule out the issues of corruption because we know that some have benefited from it in one way or the other", (KI, CSO, Lilongwe).

"On the part of the duty bearers I think the issue of corruption you know, corruption is delaying a lot of development in the country so instead of maybe being transparent we have actually put corruption as a way of life so I can cite corruption", (KI, CSO, Lilongwe).

A KI working for civil society in Lilongwe was of the view that corrupt practices among duty bearers delays many development programmes in the country, emphasising that corruption is the order of the day. During an FGD with youth advocates in TA Sale in Machinga participants reported that in some cases duty bearers respond to the issues that youth submit very late, thereby causing delays in addressing the matters at hand. In this FGD they gave an example of a situation when a child has been defiled and then authorities often seem unresponsive until the perpetrator escapes, suggesting a lack of attention or possibly corruption within the

system. This necessitated the construction of a police station in TA Sale in Machinga which has reduced chances of perpetrators of violence from escaping to neighbouring Mozambique.

9.4.4 Lack of knowledge

Young people appreciated the training that the PtY programme has implemented, specially creating awareness among them on various issues including the implementation of social accountability mechanisms. While there has been this capacity building, a few participants reported that there are many youths who do not have the capacity or technical know-how on social accountability and especially on how they can approach systems for example the health system when they have challenges accessing services. In addition to this, one KI working for civil society said that many young people do not go to youth friendly health services because they lack knowledge on the availability of the service. In some FGDs participants reported that young people lack knowledge about many issues due to lack of participation in youth club activities: they do not attend these activities because they think that in such fora young people only discuss issues about women and sex. One KI working for civil society in Lilongwe also narrated that some young people have low literacy and even if you train them they do not understand and one would need to train them for a long time for them to understand. He emphasized that on issues around YFHS, policies and laws, even if these are translated they will not understand.

"..... we're talking about poverty levels, education levels because if you're not educated you cannot fully understand these issues, we're talking about another setback could even be politics because of the youth being used by politicians", (KI, CSO, Lilongwe).

"For social accountability to work, there is a need for popular participation. You need to build a strong movement as we do here. But sometimes it becomes difficult to mobilize people due to high illiteracy levels. Some women have resigned to fate not wanting to take part in public spaces that can change their communities", (KI, CSO, Machinga).

"I believe in the Holy Bible, there is a verse that states that, "My people are destroyed due to lack of knowledge", following that saying, I can say that the lack of information is what greatly inhibits young people from participation", (KI, Dedza).

9.4.5 Some youth might feel sidelined

There were some informants for example the DYO in Machinga and the DYO for Dedza who explained that discrimination against the youth is a barrier to youth participation in social accountability mechanisms. Leaders for example see the youth as people who smoke *chamba*⁹. Whatever youth say, the leaders do not believe them. As a result, in many committees, the leaders do this deliberately so that the youth should not disturb their plans, and the leaders ensure that the youth are not included so that they can do what they want.

"The youth are discriminated because they follow every issue very well. For example, there was a group of young people here in Machinga, and this group was following issues very carefully, and it even caused hatred among members of the community, even in the households, just because the group was following up different issues. It reached a point where people were calling each other witchcraft", (DYO, Machinga).

⁹ Indian hemp

“When perceived as youth, some duty bearers tend to underestimate us, assuming we cannot offer productive contributions or insights”, (P6, FGD with ABYM 15-26, TA Tambala, Dedza.

9.4.6 Religious beliefs

A youth advocate chair in TA Sale in Machinga added that some youth don’t even see the value of joining clubs and that due to religious beliefs, some youth do not to participate in clubs activities for example, some young girls mention that in clubs the focus is on SRHR issues which is not in line with their religious beliefs.

9.4.7 Lack of understanding of meaningful youth participation

It is important that duty bearers and community members should understand meaningful community participation. A KI working for a consortium member in Lilongwe said that there might be challenges in terms of the community understanding the concept of inclusive youth participation. Since they do not understand, they fail to act according to what this concept means; hence, the challenge of youth participating in community activities including social accountability mechanisms.

9.4.7 Lack of knowledge about existing laws and policies

Policies are developed at national level and in some cases these are not widely disseminated and the youth and other community members may not know these policies and pieces of legislation.

“When the policies come, it is difficult to ensure that everyone is aware of them. So, the policy is only seen by a few people, but many people in the communities are not aware of it. So, it is important to tell the people about the policy and also how things should be done”, (DYO).

In addition to this, SRHR and related legislation and policies are in English and it is important that these should be translated into local languages.

“It’s good maybe to translate the policies to Chichewa so that people can understand the policies and also, they can follow the SRHR guidelines. This approach can address the issue that many community members may not be fluent in English, which is the language in which most policies are written.

It is not only young people and community members who may not be aware of the policies and pieces of legislation but even providers of services such as health workers may not be aware.

“To be honest with you even myself I have no idea of what the SRHR policies state. Hence, I believe even my fellow service providers are not aware of what is in the policies. Some of the barriers is that the leaders are not aware of what the policies say, additionally implementation of some services is hard as we don’t not have any supplies”, (KI, FP coordinator).

A member of the PtY consortium was of the view that while people need to know existing policies and laws, these documents however are usually huge and always in English. She suggested that these policy documents are supposed to be translated into vernacular languages and ensure that they are popularized within the communities.

“..... I don't know, maybe use community radios, or just sometimes go and hand out leaflets or posters [on policies and legislation], but information is key. Let people know what they're entitled to and what the law says”, (KI, CSO, Lilongwe).

One DYO said that there are policies which contradict each other. He gave an example of the education policy which does not allow the use of SRHR services including the use of condoms in school premises while in the hospitals encourage young people to use the SRHR services such as condoms. So, the policies do not speak to each other, and this constitutes a major barrier to holding policy makers and duty bearers accountable. While this issue of contradiction was raised, another KI in Machinga working for the district council reported that these conflicts between the education policy and the SRHR policy have been addressed through recent meetings on policy formulation and they now talk to each other.

An official working for Dedza District Council reported that restrictive laws related to SRHR can be barriers as well in the implementation of social accountability mechanisms. Legal frameworks that criminalize certain reproductive health services such as abortion, restricting access to contraception, or discriminating against marginalized populations can impede progress in achieving SRHR goals.. There is a need for supportive legislation and policies which should facilitate the implementation of social accountability initiatives. For example while abortion can be recommended by interface meetings, it can be difficult to implement this as Malawi's laws consider abortion as a criminal offence.

9.4.8 People's expectation of logistical support to participate in social accountability processes

Some community members including the youth themselves in some cases expect to be given an allowance or some incentive such as a drink if they participate in some youth activities emphasising that they do not want things that are for free but some form of compensation.

“Of-course, there are some who participate for monetary gains. Such youths do not attend these meetings when they know that there is no allowance”, (KI, CSO, Machinga).

It is not only youth who expect to be facilitated but other community members as well demand some compensation for participating in social accountability initiatives.

“In addition to that when we call for this meeting the community expects some sort of logistics for them to participate”, (P2, FGD with Youth Network Members, TA Mizinga, Machinga).

In addition to youth and community members some participants reported that even some duty bearers for example chiefs expect that if the youth invite them to a meeting such as interface meetings they will be paid an allowance or they will be offered a drink.

“When we call for meetings as youth, you find that some chiefs expect to at least take some refreshments. Due to financial challenges we could not fulfil their wish”, (IDI, Youth Network Leader, TA Tambala, Dedza)..

“We aim to organize interface meetings with chiefs in our community. However, we face a challenge where community structures expect allowances or refreshments. Unfortunately, we lack the resources to provide these incentives. Without support from well-wishers, it becomes difficult for us to host these meetings”, (P1, FGD with ABYM, TA Tambala, Dedza).

It was only a youth advocate chair in TA Sale in Machinga who reported that the youth are not given incentives for example T-shirts which can attract them to participate in various activities at community level.

“.....For example, we were once given T-shirts as youth advocates, so this attracts some girls and boys to join youth clubs, so if there are more incentives and other benefits to the youth, I believe that might really promote others to join and participate in the initiatives made from our clubs”, (Sale Youth advocate chair).

This informant was also of the view that if they are given opportunities to visit other districts to learn from one another, it will motivate others to join in the activities they are implementing.

9.4.9 Lack of platforms where young people can speak out

With the coming of the PtY programme, a number of existing community structures have incorporated youth. One KI in Dedza and one youth network leader reported that there are quite a few platforms that allow young people to speak out and that could be a factor as to why they fail to participate in social accountability processes. This youth network leader in Dedza reported that there is no platform where young people can interact with their Member of Parliament as they feel that they have no access to him as some traditional leaders block us.

9.4.10 Lack of political will

Three KIs namely officials from the MoGCDSW headquarters, district council and civil society reported that the lack of political will is one of the barriers that youth experience in holding duty bearers accountable towards the implementation of SRHR policies.

“Yes, In some cases, leaders and policymakers may lack the political will to prioritize SRHR issues or allocate sufficient resources for their implementation. This can stem from competing priorities, ideological beliefs, or societal norms that stigmatize discussions about sexual and reproductive health”, (District Gender Officer).

9.4.11 Delays in responding to issues raised by youth

In this study some informants also mentioned that duty bearers and policy makers in some cases take an extended period to respond to the issues that youth submit causing delays in addressing the matters at hand. For example during an FGD with youth advocates in TA Sale in Machinga participants explained that when a child has been defiled, authorities often seem unresponsive until the perpetrator escapes, suggesting a lack of attention or possibly corruption within the system.

9.5 Whether social accountability mechanisms work all the time and for everyone

Most study participants reported that social accountability mechanisms work all the time as most of the times after conducting community scorecards or interface meetings, they see changes as action plans on how the prevailing challenges can be addressed with specific timeframes. Many examples have been given in this report in both Dedza and Machinga where these social accountability mechanisms have worked. For example youth were trained and given information on their rights to health, education and other rights and how social accountability mechanisms can be implemented. Due to this training, they realised that the things that these youth and the wider community members took for granted [e.g. child marriage, the practice of *kusasa fumbi*, not going to school, experiencing barriers to accessing SRHR and other health] were abuses of their rights. They collected data and then discussed with community gatekeepers, mainly chiefs about the need for them to

implement social accountability mechanisms to address the challenges they and their communities were experiencing. It was only after this preparatory work that they went ahead and did interface meetings, community scorecards and budget tracking. They then held the interface meetings with duty bearers during which they discussed the results, drew an action plan and then followed upon the actions with these duty bearers.

While these social accountability mechanisms work some informants for example from civil society reported that this should not start with creating demand but creating the environment which would provide the services. They argued that stakeholders who champion social accountability should start with resource mobilization and creating favourable environments in health facilities and then create demand. They further argued that one doesn't just create demand for example in an environment where there is only one health worker in the facility who cannot manage to meet the demands from young people which has been created.

“So I’ll say that the main challenge [is lack of] resources like the whole SRHR sector in Malawi. It’s donor dependent like 95% thereabouts is donor funded, so we depend on donors and if donors are not there young people will always face challenges to access services and in Machinga they were relying on Banja La Mtsogolo service provision and now Banja La Mtsogolo their project phased out from the district, they moved out and that’s when they were frequent stockouts which means it’s a gap”, (KII, civil society, Lilongwe).

“Because of lack of resources and the like, but we cannot manage to reach every community”, (KII, Machinga District Council).

It is, therefore, important that facilities should be strengthened adequately before creating demand. This is why some KIs such as a CDA also noted that while during interface meetings, duty bearers can make promises, but once meetings are done, there is now a challenge to follow up on the promises made or to fully track the issues that have been discussed in these meetings as they may fail to provide services due to other health system challenges such as financial constraints. There are also some things that may take time to address for example a KI in Machinga reported that to changing cultural practices is a long process takes longer to change.

“Additionally, addressing issues of harmful practices requires a change in mindset. If people are not willing to change their attitudes and behaviours, it becomes a significant challenge”, (KI, Machinga District Council, Machinga).

There were some informants, however, who reported that sometimes social accountability mechanisms don't work especially for marginalised groups for example an official from Machinga District Council reported that social accountability mechanisms may not reach or adequately represent marginalized and vulnerable populations such as women, adolescents, LGBTQ+ individuals, people with disabilities, and ethnic or religious minorities. These groups may face barriers to participation, including limited access to information, unequal power dynamics, and discrimination, which can undermine their ability to engage in advocacy efforts and hold decision-makers accountable.

While social accountability in most cases work, during an FGD with AGYW in TA Tambala in Dedza participants explained that these can work as long as duty bearers and beneficiaries such as youth are all working together as a team. They explained that it would also depend on if the beneficiaries are interested in those activities and it would also work if they fully understood the concept of social accountability; hence, the need for capacity building. Another issue raised by a CDA was that these mechanisms work but not all the time, citing that communities might be aware of community development funds available in the community, but then for them to start following up on these funds it becomes a problem as duty bearers are not willing to disclose the budget. This study has also shown that while there are some changes and youth are part of the decision making

structures, in some cases duty bearers do not take up issues from young people seriously; hence, they fail to implement them as required by youth.

9.6 Discussion

Young men and women in Malawi experience a wide range of SRHR challenges including unintended pregnancies, child marriage and other forms of SGBV, lack of access to SRHR services due to non-availability, negative reactions to youth accessing SRHR information and services by parents and health service providers, misperceptions about contraceptives, stockouts of family planning commodities and long distances to facilities where SRHR services are being offered (see Feyistan et al, 2014). Malawi's laws are restrictive especially on abortion which results into adolescents girls using unsafe ways of ending pregnancy. There are several strategies that the Government of Malawi has developed in order to improve how access to SRHR services one of which was the introduction of youth friendly health services in Malawi health facilities in 2007. There are also some NGOs such as Care, YONECO and CYESE which have successfully utilised social accountability mechanisms to improve SRHR and other health outcomes (Chizimbi, 2020). There are several social accountability mechanisms that citizens and civil society use to hold duty bearers accountable. These mechanisms include citizen report card, community scorecards, citizen participation in public hearings, participatory planning and budgeting, public budget tracking, citizen monitoring of public service delivery, lobbying, campaigning and advocacy (Eshetu, 2011). However, the PtY programme mainly uses community scorecards, interface meetings and budget tracking. While participants never mentioned lobbying, campaigning and advocacy, it is evident that this was being used by the PtY programme as advocacy is core in this programme.

This study has generally demonstrated, as Care (2020) and GUSO (Chizimbi, 2020) did, that the implementation of social accountability mechanisms resulted into improved SRHR and other health outcomes. The major outcomes in the current study were improved quality of SRHR services by ensuring that SRHR commodities are available in health facilities, more staff being deployed to a facility where there were shortages of human resources and the establishment of youth friendly corners in health facilities where youth easily access SRHR. Other studies have also shown that youth social accountability initiatives can result into actions that improve the quality of service provision for adolescents and youth for example the designation of youth friendly clinics or areas and restocking of essential commodities (Momentum, 2021).

Access to information is key: In order for youth in Dedza and Machinga to start implementing social accountability mechanisms, the PtY programme invested in the training of the youth, community members and duty bearers on social accountability, human rights and other issues. In many situations youth, as argued by Momentum (2021) and Doja and Duressa (2019), youth might be limited in their asks and the outcomes they seek through social accountability mechanisms due to lack of human rights education and low levels of awareness among the youth and citizens in general of their rights to health and quality services. Doja and Duressa (2019) have also highlighted that the absence of access to information is also a major challenge in the implementation of the social accountability initiatives. The issue about lack of information has also been addressed by the PtY programme through the various trainings, a pre-requisite for implementation of social accountability. It is difficult for youth to implement social accountability interventions without information on their rights to SRHR information and services (IRC, 2015); hence, access to information is a critical component of any social accountability interventions. The challenge with access to information, as found in this study and also other studies (e.g. IRC, 2015) is that gaining access to information pertaining to budgets and expenditures is a major constraint to initiatives such as public expenditure tracking (IRC, 2015).

Unravelling the power of youth voices and leadership: Momentum (2021) argues that the implementation of social accountability processes by youth results into youth understanding the power of their own voices and leadership, that they can improve health, education and other outcomes. Such a potential was not imagined previously before the implementation of the PtY interventions in Dedza and Machinga. The youth emphasised

that things in their communities have changed: while there are still some dissenting voices from community members, chiefs and service providers, their voices are now largely being heard and communities including community leaders understand that youth have a role to play in development activities taking place in their communities. This has been demonstrated by youth being members of the ADCs, VDCs and DECAs and chiefs giving youth space for youth voices and being allowed to implement social accountability initiatives in their communities. In addition chiefs and other duty bearers are responsive to young people's asks as demonstrated in this study for example by participating actively in establishing and implementing bylaws relating to child marriages, education and conduct of initiation ceremonies during the school calendar as part of the social accountability processes.

Power dynamics and social norms: While social accountability has been acknowledged to contribute to better SRHR outcomes, the results of this study demonstrate that there exist barriers to the implementation of these social accountability mechanisms. One of these barriers is the power dynamics including social norms that exist in the community. In both Dedza and Machinga the norm is that youth must be subordinate to their elders, must respect and not question professionals such as health workers as they are perceived as people who are educated and should have to be respected (Doja, 2019). One of the issues which has been raised in this study is that the implementation of social accountability processes in health facilities has been perceived as a way of monitoring the way they work which they consider as inappropriate. This is in line with the findings of Lodenstein et. al. (2016) who argues that the medical profession is not the place for youth or any lay person to provide oversight of health services and systems. There is, therefore, a need to continue with awareness raising campaigns so that duty bearers appreciate and support youth social accountability initiatives as also recommended by Momentum (2021) who argues that the duty bearers need to be appropriately trained and supervised for them to be engaged in such processes. These power dynamics and social norms, as argued by Momentum (2021), can stifle the willingness and ability of youth to participate in social accountability mechanisms that require youth to speak up and share their perspectives with older people and those in positions of leadership. Older people are decision makers and they are in most cases also service providers and it becomes volatile for young people to start speaking of the gaps that exist (Momentum, 2021). While young people in this study mentioned that power dynamics do exist, PtY Malawi build the capacity of the youth and consequently they were able to target these traditional norms. In addition to this, the PtY programme also oriented the chiefs and other duty bearers on several issues including the social accountability mechanisms including their roles, gender transformative approaches, power dynamics and how this influences social norms and the importance of youth participation in decision making structures at community level. These duty bearers have been involved in the PtY programme and have realised the importance of involving or supporting youth in development programme. They have become aware that girls can also go to school, that child marriage is bad and overall the negative impacts of some social norms on their communities. They are therefore involved in ending child marriages, ending SGBV and the development and implementation of the bylaws. This is why they are supporting the activities of the youth including taking part in interface meetings either arranged by the PtY consortium or by the youth themselves.

These youth have also in turn gone ahead to explain to the chiefs on the different activities they conduct in the community including social accountability: for example during social accountability processes the chiefs are further oriented by the youth and then chiefs call for meetings where issues are discussed. These chiefs have been very friendly, responsible and supportive to the youth and this has contributed to the success of social accountability initiatives in Dedza and Machinga. Malawi's National Youth Policy 2023-2028 aims at increasing opportunities and strengthen platforms that promote youth participation in decision making processes at all levels; hence, existing laws, policies and guidelines will be reviewed to ensure that they allow for a minimum level of youth representation at 30% in governance and coordination structures (Ministry of Youth, 2023). These governance structures include ADCs, VDC and DECAs. As the PtY programme is winding up it will be important that to emphasise to the chiefs as well as the district leadership that they should maintain the membership of the decision making structures in line with the National Youth Policy.

Youth demands that exceed authority of service providers: What we have also seen in this study is that, as also highlighted by GAVI, there are certain asks from youth that the health providers are unable to address as they may exceed their authority and this constitutes a major barrier. This is why in some cases service providers informed the youth during social accountability processes that they needed to refer the issues to their authorities either at district level or national level as they do not have powers or authority to act on them. For example in terms of staffing and stockouts of family planning commodities, they cannot address these problems on their own but seek an intervention of higher authorities hence the delays in addressing the challenges being experienced by youth. Social accountability can work when duty bearers actually have possibilities to make improvements and there will be delays if effecting the change would require an intervention from higher authorities.

Funding is a critical input for social accountability: We have seen in this study that after being trained youth are ready to implement social accountability initiatives. While these young people are working in their communities, they will require transport as in some cases they cover long distances hence they need transport fare or bicycles, refreshments during meetings and stationery. The PtY programme assisted with these costs as it provided a once off grant. Youth emphasised that they do not have financial resources to effectively implement these interventions and therefore called for financial support. Other studies for example Doda and Duressa (2019) have also highlighted the lack of funds as a barrier to the implementation of social accountability mechanisms as well.

Engage youth who have some level of education: At community level, there are some people who have not gone far with their education and may not be able to understand laws and policies which are written in English. There are some people who argued that even if these policies are translated into local languages those who have not gone to school may not still understand. It can, therefore, be more effective and efficient to engage youth in social accountability who have a certain level of education, preferable Form 4 and have the capacity for 'lobby & advocacy', some degree of 'power'. These are the people who can interact with decision makers and duty bearers. For other adolescents and youth (lower education, not trained, more vulnerable to backlash, or less motivated/more insecure to interact directly): their voices can be collected through tools such as score cards, youth club meetings etc.

Our results demonstrate that the *socio-ecological model* is applicable in our context. As mentioned earlier, Kilanowski (2017) says that this model explores the interplay between individual, relationship, community, and societal factors that influence behaviour. We have seen in this study that at national or societal level, the ability of youth to demand accountability is influenced by macro-level politics: e.g. the existence of laws and policies that support the interventions being implemented. The Constitution says that the state has an obligation to provide adequate health care including SRHR services; the Health Sector Strategic Plan 2023-2030 talks about increasing equitable access to and improve quality of health care services including SRHR while the National Policy on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights states that all young people should have access to quality youth friendly health services and that such services should be made available at all levels of the health care system. Young people have the right to health including SRHR. The laws and policies at national level provide a conducive environment for service providers to provide quality SRHR services which should be accessible at the community level. Therefore at individual level young people should be aware of their rights and entitlements and the capacity to voice them influences one's ability to demand accountability. As discussed the PtY programme created awareness among youth about their right to SRHR and to demand accountability. The prevailing power dynamics including social and cultural norms as we have seen in this study tend to challenge young people's ability to demand accountability. These social and cultural norms result in AGYW and young men and women perceiving themselves as not having rights hence not participating in social accountability mechanisms.

We have also seen in this study that the *realist approach* to evaluation is appropriate as our aim was to understand how social accountability interventions work in Dedza and Machinga and the conditions under which they lead to specific outcomes. A realist approach, as detailed by Lodeinstein et al. (2013), further provides explanations for successes or failure of social accountability mechanisms and in this study we have outlined the facilitators and barriers to the implementation of social accountability mechanisms.

Lastly, the World Bank has described 4 elements that most social accountability initiatives generally comprise of and our results demonstrate that the PtY program strategies and activities that aim to promote social accountability for AYSRHR fulfil these elements.

- *Preparing community and civil society groups to engage:* The PtY Programme has been key in raising the awareness of youth, community members, duty bearers such as chiefs and service providers on the rights of young people and strengthened their capacity to engage duty bearers as detailed in this study.
- *Collecting, analysing and using information:* Young people in this study have been very good in collecting data from their communities on prevailing problems for example the challenges that they have in terms of accessing SRHR information and services, the number of cases of child marriage and youth dropping out of school. This data has been the basis for engaging duty bearers during interface meetings to bring about change.
- *Undertaking accountability engagements with governments:* They have been able to implement social accountability mechanisms such as scorecards, budget tracking and interface meetings to engage with a government and demand quality SRHR services among other social services.
Using information from accountability engagements with governments: After interface meetings, duty bearers and youth developed a plan of action which youth monitored and made sure that everything agreed was implemented. There were certain items which were addressed in a short time but there were also others which took a long time to be implemented.

9.7 Conclusion

In line with our objectives we have been able to identify the social accountability mechanisms being used by PtY Malawi as well as other social accountability being used by other organisations in this country. The other social accountability mechanisms not being used by PtY were identified either by the study participants or were identified through review of literature. The list of these social accountability mechanisms may not be that exhaustive. We have also been able to identify the major SRHR outcomes of social accountability initiatives. While the implementation of social accountability mechanisms brings about improved SRHR and other health outcomes, there are various barriers to the implementation of these initiatives mainly the lack of funding, lack of information including on youth's rights, power dynamics and social norms, lack of knowledge including on laws and policies and lack of political will. Our results show that social accountability works and can work for everyone including marginalised communities so long as capacity is built among rights holders as well as duty bearers, that resources should be available and that duty bearers should have the possibility of effecting improvements in service delivery and that AGYW should be able to make constructive recommendations. Lastly there is also a need for duty bearers and rights holders to work as a team and for duty bearers to be transparent and provide all the information including budgets and expenditures for youth to monitor these projects.

Based on the results of this study we recommend the following:

- There is need for PtY partners and other CSOs to continue engaging duty bearers and facilitate engagement meetings with young people to ensure responsiveness.

- The interventions should be scaled up to other districts and communities since evidence has shown that building capacity of young people in social accountability mechanisms improves SRHR and related outcomes.
- There is need to build capacity of more duty bearers in youth adult partnership and meaningful youth participation so that they are more receptive to being accountable and responsive to young peoples needs.
- Financial resources should be made available for youth to effectively implement social accountability processes. This money can be used for transport, providing refreshment for meetings including interface meetings. Youth would also need to purchase stationery items such as flip charts, markers and pens.
- Youth, community members including community leaders and service providers should be trained in social accountability in order to equip them with skills to improve service delivery and respond to issues raised by youth in social accountability processes.
- Youths and other beneficiaries of social accountability mechanisms should have access to information including budgets for development projects so that they can effectively monitor the implementation of community development projects.
- SRHR and related legislation and laws should be disseminated to youth including their translation into relevant local languages.
- In order to effectively implement social accountability mechanisms, there is a need for coordination and collaboration among different stakeholders namely government entities, NGOs, community gatekeepers, and service providers to enhance AGYW/youth/SRHR advocates to effectively engage leaders, policymakers, and advocates for policy change.
- Social accountability is relatively new in Dedza and Machinga and there is a great need for continuous technical and financial support from organizations such as PtY Malawi and this will keep youth advocates or AGYW motivated and focused on advocating for policy change or engaging with duty bearers.
- NGOs should work with chiefs in order to ensure that that youth are members of the decision making structures at community (VDC & ADC) and district level (DEC) where discussions about prevailing problems and how these can be addressed as has been done in Dedza and Machinga.
- The social accountability programme has had some positive outcomes such as children being withdrawn from child marriage and re-enrolling into school. Youth themselves should identify their fellow youth who can act as role models and also as mentors for other youth in the community.
- Advocacy campaigns should be conducted in Dedza and Machinga to address the prevailing gender, social and cultural norms that limit youth power.

- Build the capacity of community gatekeepers on youth SRHR and related issues which can lead to acceptance and their active participation in promoting the implementation of such interventions among youth.
- The limitation for this study is that we only interviewed young people at community level who are familiar with the PtY programme. These young people explained the good relationship that has emerged with duty bearers. Further research is therefore required to explore this positive relationship where the chiefs and other community members to get their perspectives and understand what enables them to positively work with youth.
- Some young people drop out of youth clubs as they feel that these clubs discuss the same issues during their meetings. The PtY should explore working with youth clubs and diversify their activities including the introduction of sports.
- There is a need for civil society and other stakeholders to conduct refresher courses on social accountability for young people.
- PtY and other CSOs should explore the use of youth friendly knowledge products such as infographic or explanation videos or pamphlets in local language whatever works best in the context.

9.8 Replication and Scalability of Social Accountability Initiatives

The findings from this study highlight the potential for scaling up and replicating social accountability initiatives to improve SRHR and related outcomes in diverse settings. The success achieved in Dedza and Machinga provides a foundation for expanding these interventions while adapting them to other districts or countries with similar socio-cultural and economic contexts.

- *Building capacity and knowledge sharing:* Capacity building for youth, duty bearers, and community leaders on social accountability mechanisms has been a key driver of success. By institutionalizing training programs, organizations can replicate these efforts across other regions. This includes equipping youth networks with skills in advocacy, budget tracking, and meaningful engagement with duty bearers. National platforms, such as youth forums, can be used to disseminate knowledge and best practices, creating a multiplier effect.
- *Scaling up functional youth networks and clubs:* The functionality of youth networks in identifying and addressing community challenges demonstrates their scalability. Expanding these networks to other areas can foster a broader youth movement, leveraging the collective power of young people to drive social accountability initiatives in their communities.
- *Adopting supportive policies and bylaws:* Establishing and implementing community bylaws has proven effective in combating harmful practices such as child marriage. Scaling up this approach involves advocacy for localized policy reforms in new areas, supported by training for traditional and religious leaders on gender equality and SRHR.
- *Leveraging financial support for sustainability:* The provision of grants to youth clubs has facilitated the implementation of impactful initiatives. Replicating this model requires collaboration with donors and governments to create sustainable funding mechanisms, ensuring that financial resources are consistently available to support youth-led efforts.
- *Build on existing structures and proven strategies:* These interventions can be replicated in other areas, scaled up to national level, and integrated into broader development programs. This will not only strengthen SRHR outcomes but also contribute to systemic change in addressing GBV, harmful practices, meaningful youth participation and empowering youth as agents of change.

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Annex 1: FGD/IDI Guide for AGYW and Youth Advocates

Involvement in PtY activities

- I understood from the Power to Youth team / [name of partner organization] that you have been involved in some of their project activities. Is that correct? Can you tell me how you have been involved?

Ndanvetsedwa kuti mumagwila ntchito ndi athu a PtY ndi zoona? Ndi zithu ziti zomwe mwapanga nao a PtY?

- Probe for details of the activity: what was done, where, with whom, one or more activities, what was the goal of the activity/were the goals of the activities. Who conducted the activity(ies).

Munapanga chani? Kuti? Ndi ndani? Chifukwa chake chinali Chani? Kodi anali maphuzilo?

- What do you think about these activities?

Mukuona bwanji pa ntchito zimenezi?

- Probe: was it a good experience? Why? How did it make you feel? Did it result in anything positive or negative? How?

Kodi zinali zothandiza? ndi chifukwa chani? kodi zinali zofunikira?

- [validate mechanisms] What is the most important thing we need to understand about how this strategy / activity [use name of actual activity] works?

Kodi chenicheni chofunikira kumvestese mene ntchito imagwilidwila ndi chani?

- [validate mechanisms] There is this idea that the social accountability activity helps to/makes/ does ...[*hypothesized explanation*]. What do you think of that idea?

Ena amati ntchito za kalondolondo zimathandiza nanga inu mukuganizapo bwanji?

- If there is a general consensus on the issues within the community, you will have better changes of convincing the stakeholders that they have to change things/work on change
Ena amati pakakhala mgwilizano pa zochitika mdera lathu ndizosavuta ku wamema adindo kuti athandizile positha zithu.

- If there is a general consensus between community and services providers on the issues, there is a better chance of convincing the stakeholders that these need to be picked up.

Enanso amati pakakhala mgwilizano pakati pa athu akudera ndi athu opeleka thandizo pa nkhani za uchembere wabwino ndikwapafupi kuti nkhani zimezi kuti adindo athe kutengapo gawo.

- What initiatives have you carried out under the PtY programme? [For each initiative mentioned probe the following]

Ndi ntchito ziti zimene mwagwila nao pa project ya PtY?

- Spaces/platforms **[mention the one they indicated]** used and how these spaces/platforms work.
Kodi ndi mikumano yake iti yomwe mumagwilisa ntchito? Ndipo imagwila ntchito motani?

○ Whether the spaces/platforms are/were AGYW and youth-friendly? How can they be improved?
Mikumano imenei kodi ndiyofikilika kwa achinyamata? zinkhoza kusithidwa/kukozedwa motani? fotokozani

- Access to required information to enable your meaningful and effective participation in social accountability?

Muli ndi mwayi opeza uthenga oyenela okuthandizilani kutenga nao mbali pa ntchito za kalondolondo?

(Ndipo mumatenga nao munjila zanzi?)

- Why did you want to participate in these initiatives/activities? What was your motivation? Did it bring you anything? Your role and motivation to be involved and to give feedback?

Kodi ndichani chinakupangisani kuti mutengepo nao mbali pa ntchito zimenezi? Ndi zithu ziti zomwe zinakulimbikisani kuti mutenge nao mbali? Munapindula nazo bwanji? Kodi mbali yanu ndi chani popeleka mauthenga mene ntchito zikugwilidwa ndi adindo athu?

- Whether you were supported to participate ?

Munalandila upangili otani kuti ukuthandizileni kutenga nao mbali pa ntchito imenei?

- Whether your involvement and feedback reached the officials and led to action by the officials? Kodi mukuona kuti kutenga nao mbali pa ntchito imeni kunathandiza kufikila adindo? Panali zosatila zanzi kuchokela kwa adindo athu pa ntchito imenei?

- What enabled your involvement in these initiatives [social accountability]?

Kodi ndizinthu zake ziti zomwe zinakuyenelezani kutenga nao mbali pa ntchito za kalondolondo?

- The inhibiting factors for young people and AGYW participation in social accountability activities. What hold young people and AGYW back and why?

Kodi ndizinthu ziti zomwe zimalesa achinyamata kutenga nao mbali pa ntchito zakalondolondo?

- What could motivate/ help AGYW become more active to provide feedback/engage leaders?

Ndizinthu ziti zingalimbikise/kuthandizila achinyamata kuti akhale ochagamuka polumikizana ndi kupeleka zosatila kwa adindo ?

- Which initiatives [social accountability mechanisms] have you used to hold duty bearers or your leaders to account for the implementation of the SRHR policies?

Ndi ntchito ziti zakalondololo zomwe munagwilisapo ntchito poonesesa kuti adindo akusata ndondomeko zokhuzana ndi uchembere wa bwino ?

Effectiveness and outcomes of social accountability mechanisms

- You have mentioned a number of initiatives such as Are any of these initiative related to SRHR policies and implementation? Explain. Did these initiatives work? What happened? Explain? Did these initiatives result into increased availability and access to contraceptives? What else? YFHS availability and access?

Mwatchula ntchito zingapo monga..... Mwa ntchitozi ndi ziti zomwe zikugwilizana ndi ndondomeko za uchembere wa bwino ? fotokozani. Ntchitozi kodi zinapindula ? China chitika ndi chani? Fotokozani. Kodi zosatiliza zake zinali zotani .

- Is it useful? Would you participate again if you got the chance? Would you encourage others to participate? Why?

Kodi zinali zaphindu? Mutapasidwa mwayi wina mutha kutengapo nao mbali? Mungalimbikise ena kuti atenge nao mbali? Chifukwa chani?

- What are the results (both negative and positive) of implementing these initiatives [social accountability mechanisms/activities]? Probe for each approach/initiative. Any unintended outcomes of these social accountability interventions?

Kodi zosatila (zabwino kapena zoipa) za ntchito ya kalondolondo zinali chani?Ndizosatila zake ziti zoonjezela (zosayembekezeleka) zomwe zinalipo pa ntchito ya kalondolondo?

- [validate mechanisms] Do you think these initiatives [social accountability mechanisms] work all the time / for everyone? When / for whom would it not work (well)? What things could hamper the activity to achieve results

Kodi mukaganiza kuti ntchito zakalondolondo(specify) zamapindula thawi zonse?kwa aliyense? Ndi thawi iti yomwe mukuona kuti ntchito kalondolondo singagwile kwa aliyense ?Ndi zithu ziti zomwe zingalephelese kuti phindu la ntchito zakalondolondo zisaoneke

- Are there any risks for you or those engaged in the activity? Can you explain? How do you deal with these risks

Pali ziopsezo zili zonse kwa omwe amatenga nao gawo pa ntchitozi ?fotokozani . Mumathana nazo bwanji?

Promoting factors and barriers to holding leaders and policy makers accountable

- What are the promoting factors that enable or help the youth to engage with duty bearers accountable?

Ndi zithu ziti zolimbikisa kapena zowayeneleza achinyamata kuti athe kufikila adindo kuti azikwanilisa malonjezo awo

- Are there any barriers to holding leaders and policymakers to account on the implementation of the SRHR policies? How can the barriers be addressed?

Pali zolepheletsa adindo kuti athe kukwanilisa zomwe zili mundondomeko zauchembere wabwino ?Muona kuti mungathane nazo bwanji zolephelesazo?

Promoting factors

- Are there any promoting factors (b) as policy makers and leaders - that support the leaders and policy makers to account on the implementation of the SRHR policies? Explain?

Ndi zithu ziti zolimbikisa kapena zowayeneleza adindo kuti athe kukwanilisa ndondomeko zauchembere wabwino?fotokozani

Training in social accountability

- Have you participated in any social accountability trainings before? If yes, who provided the training? What issues were covered? What needs to be improved about this training?

Kodi munatengapo nao mbali pa maphuzilo a kalondolondo ?Anakuphuzisani ndani?ndizithu ziti zomwe munaphuzila?Ndi ziti zomwe zingakozedwe pa maphuzilo ameneo?

- Apart from training[s], what other opportunities have had access to that has enhanced your knowledge and skills in social accountability [mention the training they have had]? Did you take up the opportunities? What were your experiences? How did they aid your work in social accountability and as an SRHR advocate? Do you have any recommendations?

Kupatula maphuzilo omwe munakhala nao ndi mwai wina uti omwe munakumana nao ukupasani upangili ndi kuthekela pa nkhani ya kalondolondo? Munawugwilisa ntchito mwayi umeneu?mukuona kwanu ndi zithu ziti zomwe zikuyenela kuchitika kuti zikuthandizileni mu ntchito yanu? Zimakuthandizilani bwanji pa ntchito yanu?

- Do you think that Youth and SRHR advocates have the necessary capacity to effectively advocate for policy change and holding decision-makers accountable for SRHR policy implementation? If no, what are their capacity needs/gaps to enable their effective advocacy and holding decision-makers accountable?

Mukuganiza kuti achinyamata ali ndi ukadaulo okwanila powathandizila kupitasa pasogolo nkhani za uchembere wa bwino ndi kulondoloza ndondomeko za uchembere wabwino? Ndizithu ziti zosowekela zimene zingapangise kuuti asagwile bwino ntchito yopitisa pasogolo ndondomeko za uchembere wabwino ndikuonesesa adindo akungwila ntchito mostattila ndondomeko?

Recommendations

- What are your recommendations to strengthen/enhance AGYW/Youth/SRHR advocates to effectively engage the leaders and policymakers/decision-makers and advocate for policy change?

mukuona kwanu ndi zithu ziti zomwe zingalimbikise achinyamata kuti akwanilitse kulumikizana ndi adindo ndi cholinga choti asithe zina mwa ndondomeko za uchembere wa bwino?

- What are your recommendations to strengthen social accountability for the implementation of SRHR policies?

Mukuona kwanu ndi zithu ziti zomwe zingathandizile kulimbikisa ntchito za kalondolondo pa ndondomeko ya uchembere wa bwino?

