



For a Prosperous Tomorrow, Invest in Women, Children, and Adolescents Today

The prosperity of humanity relies on the health and well-being of women, children, and adolescents – acceleration is needed to ensure their health and rights.

Malawi has made considerable progress in the past decade in improving the health of women, children, and adolescents. Maternal mortality has reduced by 13% between 2015 and 2020. Modern contraceptive use has increased from 38% to 49% in 2024. The country has also exceeded its Health Sector Strategic Plan III (HSSP III) targets for neonatal and infant mortality, reducing neonatal mortality to 19 per 1,000 live births (target: 22) and infant mortality to 29 per 1,000 live births (target: 34).

Despite this—Malawi remains off-track to meet global, regional, and national commitments on reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health.

Maternal health

- Every day, women die giving life—and girls are becoming mothers far too soon. Maternal mortality stands at 381 deaths per 1000,000 live births, over five times above the 2030 target of 70.
- Complications from childbirth among adolescent girls between the ages of 15-19 constitute over 20% of the maternal mortality.

Child health

- Under-five mortality remains high at 39 per 1,000 live births. The country's Health Sector Strategic Plan III for 2023–2030 aims to reduce this rate to 25 per 1,000 live births by 2030.

Teenage pregnancy and adolescent health and well-being

- Nearly one third (30.8%) of adolescent girls have begun childbearing—well above the national target of 20% by 2030. Rural girls are disproportionately affected, with teen pregnancy reaching 34%, compared to 19% in urban areas.
- Adolescents face critical gaps in accessing age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health information and services, despite national policy commitments. Inconsistent implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), limited contraceptive options, and cultural and religious stigma continue to undermine access -leaving adolescents vulnerable to poor health outcomes and unable to make fully informed reproductive choices
- Young people remain largely excluded from decision-making spaces that shape their health and futures, despite national commitment to include 30% of youth in decision-making bodies

Adolescents and children (18 years and younger) represent 51% of Malawi's population – their right to health, education, and a safe livelihood must be protected and respected.

Health financing

- Despite progress, Malawi allocates only 10% of its national budget to health, far below the 15% Abuja Declaration target, with SRHR receiving a disproportionately low share.

As donor funding declines, mobilizing domestic resources is no longer a choice—it is a necessity. Inaction costs lives, stalls futures, and risks missing key commitments.

The future of Malawi demands bold political leadership—leadership that places women, children, and adolescents at the heart of national development.

We need political parties that will not only recognize their critical role in society but actively prioritize and invest in their health and well-being. Investing in women's, children's, and adolescents' health is not optional—it is a moral, economic, and social imperative. It is the foundation of national progress and the key to unlocking long-term prosperity.

The majority of Malawi's population are women, children and adolescents – with **51% of the population** being 18 years or younger. Failing to protect their rights and uphold their dignity is not only unjust—it undermines development and compromises the very future of the nation.

Call to action: For a prosperous tomorrow, we, civil society organizations, NGOs, partners, adolescents and youth, and community members, call on Malawi parties to protect and promote the health and well-being of women, children and adolescents by committing to:

- 1. Increase health financing** – Commit to allocate 15% of the national budget to health in line with the Abuja Declaration—and ensure 30% of the health budget goes to Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) by 2030. Increased health financing is urgently required for a prosperous future.
- 2. Reduce Maternal, Newborn, and Child Mortality** - Fast-track interventions that save the lives of mothers, newborns, and children and implement the 2024 [World Health Assembly MNCH resolution](#). Malawi needs significant scale-up and investment in MNCH to reach the SDG target of reducing maternal mortality to 70 per 100,000 live births.
- 3. Reduce Unmet Family Planning Needs** - Commit to universal access to family planning in your party's agenda, and ensure dignified and uninterrupted access to all essential family planning commodities. We need clear efforts to reduce the unmet need for family planning below 11% as per the ICPD25 commitment.
- 4. Reduce Teen Childbearing and End Child Marriage** - Advocate for full implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education in schools, remove barriers to adolescent contraceptive access, and expand youth-friendly SRHR services through strong multisectoral collaboration and community engagement. A girl child's basic rights must be respected and protected. Tangible progress is required to ensure that teenage pregnancy is below 20% and child marriages end by 2030.
- 5. Ensure Youth Representation in Decision-Making** - Pledge to institutionalize at least 30% youth representation in decision-making bodies at all levels—ensuring young people shape the future they inherit. With youth making up the largest and fastest-growing share of Malawi's population, their meaningful inclusion is not optional—it is essential.

Now is the time for every political party to make a clear, public commitment: Prioritize women, children, and adolescents and ensure their rights and well-being shape the agenda for national transformation.

Learn more about Malawi's commitments for women, children and adolescents' health: [Scoping and Assessment Report of Commitments of Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health in Malawi](#)