

Women's MANIFESTO



A UNITED WOMEN'S VOICE!
ACT NOW

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Women's Manifesto stands as a bold declaration of Malawian Women's unwavering commitment to gender equality, justice, and the full realization of their rights. Developed through an extensive participatory process, this document consolidates the collective voices of women from diverse backgrounds, experiences, and sectors, ensuring that their demands reflect the pressing issues affecting their daily lives. The manifesto builds upon existing national and international legal frameworks, including the Malawi Constitution, the Malawi 2063 Agenda, and gender-focused treaties, yet recognizes that policy commitments alone have not translated into meaningful and transformative change.

Malawi continues to grapple with systemic gender inequities, where women's and girls' participation in education, healthcare, economic empowerment, governance, and access to justice is obstructed by entrenched cultural norms, underfunded policies, and structural discrimination. These persistent challenges, compounded by emerging threats such as digital inequality and corruption's disproportionate impact on women, underscore the need for urgent action from duty bearers—including government institutions, political parties, civil society, and private sector stakeholders. This revised Manifesto does not merely reiterate previous demands but expands on critical new priorities, recognizing the growing impact of technology on gender equity and the deepening need for accountability in governance and economic inclusion.

As a political tool for advocacy, the Manifesto serves multiple purposes:

- ◆ Promoting Women's agency on their respective rights
- ◆ Mobilizing stakeholders to commit to tangible policy action.
- ◆ Holding duty bearers accountable for their commitments on women's rights.
- ◆ Providing a unified framework for structured advocacy and systemic reform.
- ◆ Ensuring inclusion and representation of marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities and older persons.

This 2025–2030 Manifesto integrates intersectional gender perspectives, addressing the unique struggles faced by women across diverse social and economic contexts. It places a renewed focus on policy implementation, measurable accountability, and sustainable change, ensuring that women are not merely passive recipients of progress but active architects of Malawi's future.

The Women's Manifesto Movement calls on every woman, every duty bearer, every community, and every institution to rally behind this document, demand swift action, and push for its implementation at all levels of governance and society. The time for policy rhetoric has passed—this is the moment for transformative action.

1. Women's Economic Empowerment and Access to Resources

Women's economic empowerment is essential for poverty reduction and sustainable development in Malawi. Despite legal frameworks and policies, enforcement remains weak due to funding gaps, limited dissemination, and inadequate gender-sensitive programs. Urgent policy action is needed to remove barriers and create inclusive economic opportunities for women in Malawi.

Women Therefore Demand:

1.1 Review, Amend, Pass, implementation of economic empowerment policies for women

Government must

- 1.1.1 Review and update the National Plan of Action on Economic Empowerment of Women
- 1.1.2 Develop and implement policies and strategies that economically empower women by 2030.
- 1.1.3 Ensure that budgetary allocations and expenditure take into consideration the unequal impact of poverty on the two genders. It must facilitate, at all levels, more open and transparent and gender balanced budget processes
- 1.1.4 Promote women's and other vulnerable group's access and control over productive resources such as land and economic opportunities
- 1.1.5 Develop and implement laws and policies that improve access to funds through more favourable bank interest rates for businesswomen
- 1.1.6 Establish one stop shops in all districts whose task will be to provide information and guidance on registration of businesses, taxes and the utilization of business markets.
- 1.1.7 Expand on the social safety net programs, focus on targeting vulnerable and poor women.

1.2 Access to capital, training and development of women's skills

Government must

- 1.2.1 Women must be given equal access to adequate capital through banks and cooperatives by promoting gender sensitive lending policies to enable women to benefit from loans, so that women are not confined to micro credit societies.
- 1.2.2 Scale up Village Loans and Savings technologies (VLS) by provision of financial management, training and financial literacy training.
- 1.2.3 Train and develop women's skills in entrepreneurship and business, especially how to graduate to big businesses.
- 1.2.4 Develop and implement a policy that ensures that at least 30% of public tenders in public procurement are reserved for women.

1.3 Equality and Non-Discrimination in Employment

Government must

- 1.3.1 Create or facilitate the creation of more jobs to increase equal access to the labour market, ensuring 40-60 recruitment ratio in both private and public institutions as well as formal and informal sectors
- 1.3.2 That the government ratify ILO Convention concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for men and women Workers: Workers with Family Responsibilities, Convention 156 of 1981 and enacts a law to support the convention and ensure its adequate implementation.

2. Land, Water, and Natural Resources

Women in Malawi face significant challenges in accessing land, water, and natural resources due to cultural biases and structural inequalities. Customary land practices limit women's ownership and control, with tenure security particularly weak in patrilineal societies, leading to economic insecurity. In water access, rural women spend excessive time collecting water, affecting productivity, health, and education, while poor sanitation contributes to health risks. In the mining sector, women struggle with a lack of transparency, financial resources, and opportunities for value addition, keeping them from benefiting fully from natural resource management and economic growth.

Women Therefore Demand:

2.1 Women's equal access to and ownership of land, benefit, and control

Government must:

- 2.1.1 Provide equal access and opportunity to land rights including gendered titling of land.
- 2.1.2 Disseminate and enforce the new Land Act (Amendment Act 2022).

2.2 Improved access to safe water

Government must:

- 2.2.1 Increase women's participation in water governance structures, with 50-50 quotas.
- 2.2.2 Increase budgetary allocation to District Water offices.
- 2.2.3 Provide accessible, clean, safe and piped water in all places at every one kilometre to reduce women's and girl's workload.

2.3 Effective means of avoiding environmental degradation and increasing participation of women mining

Government must

- 2.3.1 Disseminate the Mines and Minerals Act (2023) and include

provisions that encourage women's participation in the mining sector, perhaps through targeted support through female-owned or managed businesses.

- 2.3.2 Provide access to affordable energy through the acceleration of a gendered National Rural Electrification Programme.
- 2.3.3 Provide grants for women to harness alternative energy.
- 2.3.4 Promote energy efficient stoves
- 2.3.5 Make provision for value addition in the mining sector to empower women

3. Climate Change

Malawi has policies and international commitments to combat climate change. However, women and girls are disproportionately affected due to fragile ecosystems, reliance on rain-fed agriculture, and limited adaptive capacity. Extreme weather events like droughts and floods disproportionately affect women, leading to food insecurity, risky coping mechanisms, and restricted access to education and healthcare. Climate change also worsens mental health among vulnerable women. Limited resources for disaster response mean women in camps face poor security, inadequate sanitation, and increased gender-based violence. Recovery efforts remain weak, leaving many without support. Women have low representation in decision-making structures and limited access to early warning systems, worsening their vulnerability to climate risks.

Women Therefore Demand:

3.1 Strengthened measures in combating environmental degradation.

- 3.1.1 Disseminate and enforce the Disaster Risk Management Act (2023)
- 3.1.2 Disseminate and enforce the National Climate Change Management Policy
- 3.1.3 Promote adaptation measures to reduce the impact of climate

change and support production systems and livelihoods strategies targeting women. For instance, climate smart agriculture.

3.2 Strengthen Gender Sensitive Early Warning Information and Management

- 3.2.1 Create transparent and effective information sharing systems for all pandemics; and ensure that all information is accessible to all women

3.3 Allocate adequate resources for the implementation of Gender sensitive disaster response and recovery

- 3.3.1 Strengthen community policing services and ensure that victim support units are functional in the shelters and camps to effectively provide GBV support
- 3.3.2 Strengthen gender responsive humanitarian response interventions such as child and women friendly safe spaces, One-stop multi-purpose centres, female specific dignity materials, emergency obstetric services, WASH facilities, youth-friendly reproductive health services, HIV/AIDS control and prevention, prevention and management of malnutrition, mental and psychosocial support,
- 3.3.3 Gender trainings targeting DRM structures should include topics on the intersectionality of gender, age, and disability
- 3.3.4 Strengthen VLSs and off-farm income generating activities to support women to rebuild their lives after a disaster.
- 3.3.5 strengthen linkages of women to social support programmes, such as social cash transfers programs, public works programs and school meals programs.
- 3.3.6 Enhance sensitisation of women farmers on climate risk insurance

3.4 Increased participation of women in disaster management

- 3.4.1 More women should be recruited in relief programs to protect women and that women should lead the protection cluster
- 3.4.2 Lobby for affirmative action on the inclusion of women in District, Area and Village Civil Protection Committee leadership structures

4. Women and Agriculture

Despite Malawi's strong legal and policy commitments to achieving food security and promoting agriculture for economic growth, a significant gender gap persists within the sector. Women constitute 70% of the agricultural labour force but are, on average, 28% less productive than their male counterparts. This disparity significantly hinders the nation's progress towards its agricultural and developmental goals, including those outlined in Vision 2063 and international commitments like the SDGs. This productivity gap is driven by systemic challenges: women face lower education levels, lesser control over land and natural resources, reduced labour availability due to disproportionate caregiving responsibilities, and minimal access to financial resources, information, and technology.

Women Therefore Demand:

4.1 Increase budget allocation to Agriculture of 9% to 10% as provided for in the Abuja declaration.

4.2 Women's equal access to and ownership of land, benefit, and control

- 4.2.1 Provide equal access and opportunity to land rights including gendered titling of land.
- 4.2.2 Disseminate and enforce the new Land Act (Amendment Act 2022).
- 4.2.3 Reform the AIP to improve its effectiveness and efficiency to improve productivity and support poor farmers especially women
- 4.2.4 Ensure that women are protected

from abuse and exploitation during the AIP process and other input distribution programs

- 4.2.5 Enforce guidelines for transparent and participatory identification and targeting of women in AIP and other programs
- 4.2.6 Review, Amend, Pass, implementation of laws aimed at safeguarding vulnerable groups especially women and girls' nutrition security
- 4.2.7 Ensure that legislations on matters of food and nutrition are passed in Parliament for instance the food and nutrition Bill
- 4.2.8 Support enforcement of legislations on food and nutrition to protect and safeguard Malawian population for instance Salt Iodization Act.
- 4.2.9 Disseminate and implement new national multisectoral nutrition policy and agriculture policy
- 4.2.10 Strengthen the development of bylaws aimed at safeguarding women on matters of food and nutrition security
- 4.2.11 Strengthen strategies that promote dietary diversity and meal frequency (at least 3 meals a day) among women and other marginalised groups such as older and disabled women.

1.3 Improve access to information, farm inputs and skills development for women

Government must:

- 4.3.1 Strengthen and engender the role of extension workers.
- 4.3.2 Train women farmers on modern agriculture practices, technologies and mechanisation through all the stages of value chains for maximised production and profits
- 4.3.3 Increase the use of machinery in farming and agro-processing activities by 50 % as committed in the National Agriculture Investment

plan. These should be inclusive by prioritising women and the marginalised groups

- 4.3.4 Expand local manufacturing of Agricultural mechanisation equipment such as handheld tractor, planter, harvester, and maize sheller under the Malawi University of Business and Applied Science Project to benefit women farmers.
- 4.3.5 Improve access of women to hired farm machinery through Agricultural Development Divisions to promote mechanised Farm Operations for increased production and profits.
- 4.3.6 Promote climate smart technologies and practices amongst women
- 4.3.7 Promote the participation of women in competitive value chains and agriculture commercialisation for increased production, easy access to markets and profits
- 4.3.8 Provide and regulate markets for the benefit of rural and small- scale farmers especially women

4.4 Improved access to funds for women farmers

- 4.4.1 Develop and implement laws and policies that improve access to funds through more favourable bank interest rates for farmers especially women.
- 4.4.2 improve accessibility of farm input loans such as NEEF to women
- 4.4.3 Strengthen linkages of women and youth to VSLAs and microfinancing institutions.

5. Women and Health

Despite the variances in health needs of women in comparison to men in Malawi, women face significant health challenges due to underfunding, poor infrastructure, inadequate human resource and gaps in healthcare services. Despite progress, health systems remain fragile. Urgent action is needed to strengthen Malawi's

healthcare system and ensure quality health services for women.

Women Therefore Demand:

5.1 Increased Health Budgetary Allocation

- 5.1.1 Allocate 15% of the National Budget to the health sector as per the Abuja Declaration
- 5.1.2 Increase family planning and family planning commodities budget lines in line with the FP Commitments
- 5.1.3 Increase nutrition budget line allocation to meet the 3% of the Scaling Up Nutrition commitments
- 5.1.4 Increase budgetary allocation for nutrition in all local councils

5.2 Improved Hospital Infrastructure Rehabilitation, upgrading, maintenance and equipping of health infrastructure to meet service delivery needs

5.3 Implement the Malawi FP2030 Commitments whereby Malawi re commits to increase modern Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (MCPR) among all women to 60 % by 2030 from a baseline of 48.9% in 2020.

5.4 Improve the quality of Health Care Service Delivery

- 5.4.1 Provide maternal mental health services, partial mental assessment, and treatment during antenatal, labour and delivery, and postnatal period.
- 5.4.2 Provision of comprehensive women's health services including screening for cervical and breast cancer
- 5.4.3 Popularize SRHR policies, National population policy
- 5.4.4 Discourage all practices which disable women from negotiating safe sex and protecting themselves from infection.

- 5.4.5 Implement vigorously its policy of offering anti-retroviral drugs to sufferers of HIV/AIDs across the country to prevent HIV patients from progressively developing full-blown AIDs.

- 5.4.6 Strengthen prevention, screening, referral, treatment and continuum of care for HIV and nutrition disorders amongst women.

- 5.4.7 Promote child and maternal nutrition for the special 1,000 days (pregnancy and 2 years of childhood)

5.5 Improve Human resource for health

- 5.5.1 Expedite the recruitment and deployment of Assistant Nutrition Officers at community level to ensure the effective implementation of nutrition programmes targeting pregnant and lactating women.
- 5.5.2 Training of medical personnel especially in the provision of female friendly services.
- 5.5.3 Increase the number of HSAs to a ratio of 1:1000 as per WHO guidelines

5.6 Improve and Empower Health Advisory Committees

- 5.6.1 Improve and empower the capacity of health advisory committees to take action and improve the provision of gendered health services and information in all districts.
- 5.6.2 Increase representation of women in the health advisory committees to at least 50 – 50 ratios in accordance with GEA 2013.
- 5.6.3 Enforce professional ethics and punitive measures on health officers who breach the ethics and violate women's rights.

6. Women and Education

Women in Malawi face barriers to education despite strong legal and policy frameworks supporting their rights. Limited budget allocations, high dropout rates due to financial constraints and early marriage, and inadequate access to bursaries hinder girls' education. Additionally, there is a shortage of female teachers, poor school infrastructure, and long travel distances, which reduce retention rates. Gender-based violence in schools further discourages girls from continuing their education, while weak enforcement of laws fails to adequately protect them.

Women Therefore Demand:

6.1 Increased financial and technical resources to responsible ministries, ensure quality delivery of primary, secondary adult literacy education and TEVET.

- 6.1.1 Increase bursaries, scholarships to female pupils, students' enrolment, retention, and completion of primary, secondary and TEVET
- 6.1.2 Promote public-private partnerships to enhance resources, expertise, and funding for technical institutions.
- 6.1.3 Expand tertiary institutions and increase enrolment of girls, with special emphasis on their performance in science, technical, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and other professional fields.

6.2 Improve human resources capacity in Primary, Secondary Schools, Adult Learning Education and TEVET

- 6.2.1 Training of more female teachers and increase the number of female teachers in leadership while aiming at the 50-50 male / female ratio, building on the benchmark provided in the Gender Equality Act
- 6.2.2 Conduct recruitment and selection of Adult Learning Education

personnel such as Adult Literacy Instructors, inspectors, CDAs etc.

6.3 Improve infrastructure and availability of learning materials for Primary, Secondary and TEVET colleges.

- 6.3.1 Construct a Technical Instructor Training College.
- 6.3.2 Construct female friendly infrastructure including hostels, WASH facilities, incinerators, change rooms
- 6.3.3 Construct more libraries, laboratories and resource rooms, workshops, and Open Distance Learning facilities.
- 6.3.4 End abuse of female Students.
- 6.3.5 Increase the number of female teachers and instructors to function as role models for pupils and female students.
- 6.3.6 Advocate for affirmative action and policies relating to selection of students
- 6.3.7 Strictly enforce laws, regulations, policies and the teachers' code of conduct that address abuse of girls by teachers
- 6.3.8 Mainstream gender equality at all level of learning institutions

6.4 Strengthened Implementation of Education Laws and Bylaws

- 6.4.1 Strengthen and implement laws and bylaws especially those dealing with the right to education and child abuse, child labour and child marriages.
- 6.4.2 Review the policy environment that promotes girl's education focusing on quick win approaches (NGES, Re-admission Policy, 50-50 Gender Parity Selection Policy).

7. Social, Religious, and Cultural Issues

Women in Malawi continue to face marginalization due to entrenched patriarchal structures in both matrilineal and patrilineal societies. Harmful religious and cultural interpretations reinforce male dominance, limiting women's roles in decision-making, leadership, and economic independence. Persistent issues such as child marriage, economic dependence, gender biases in service provision, and the culture of silence surrounding women's rights further exacerbate the inequality.

Women Therefore Demand:

7.1 Ensure Accessibility of Legal Information

- 7.1.1 Translate and disseminate laws and policies in multiple languages to guarantee universal access to legal information for all Malawians.
- 7.1.2 Standardize legal communication formats to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities and marginalized communities.

7.2 Achieve Gender Parity in Service Provision Institutions

- 7.2.1 Increase the number of women in service provision institutions to ensure equitable representation.
- 7.2.2 Strengthen institutional gender policies to support female participation in leadership roles.

7.3 Promote Positive Masculinity and Assertive Femininity

- 7.3.1 Integrate gender-transformative approaches into education and community programs.
- 7.3.2 Develop awareness campaigns promoting positive masculinity and assertive femininity.

7.4 Dismantle Harmful Cultural Norms

- 7.4.1 Implement and rigorously enforce laws abolishing harmful practices, including child marriage and widow inheritance.
- 7.4.2 Open dialogue and conduct awareness campaigns to expose and challenge harmful traditions.
- 7.4.3 Prosecute perpetrators of harmful cultural practices to ensure justice and accountability.
- 7.4.4 Engage young people in age-appropriate education initiatives to promote gender equality.
- 7.4.5 Establish partnerships with cultural groups and traditional leaders to drive change from within communities.

7.5 Strengthen Training for Traditional and Religious Leaders

- 7.5.1 Train traditional and religious leaders on human rights and women's rights.
- 7.5.2 Mandate peer-learning among chiefs to ensure community-wide adoption of gender-sensitive policies.
- 7.5.3 Increase female representation in traditional leadership structures based on the 50-50 gender quotas.

8. Women's Leadership, Politics, and Governance

Women in Malawi remain underrepresented in leadership and governance. Despite commitments to gender equality, high campaign costs, systemic barriers, and political violence hinder progress. Urgent action is needed to bridge the gender gap in Malawi's leadership and decision-making.

Women Therefore Demand:

8.1 Implementing the 2024-2030 Strategy on Political Empowerment which among

other areas is aimed at achieving the following:

- 8.1.1 Promote successful participation of women in Presidential and Vice President Elections;
- 8.1.2 Increase the proportion of women in Parliament and Local Government seats to at least thirty-five (35) percent in 2025, and fifty (50) percent in 2030 General Elections.
- 8.1.3 Introducing mentorship programmes special fund for women candidates to train female politicians.
- 8.1.4 Provide financial support to female candidates during campaign and for the electoral process; i.e. support the 50/50 campaign
- 8.1.5 Intensifying awareness campaigns to encourage women to participate in politics as candidates and as voters and to hold elected officials accountable.
- 8.5.1 Provide equal opportunities for women to be in leadership positions at all levels.
- 8.5.2 Appointments to leadership positions should adopt the 40 /60 or 50 -50 Gender Equality quotas.
- 8.5.3 Governance institutions must adopt a participatory approach and take into account the views of women in any decision.
- 8.5.4 Enhance inclusion, transparency and accountability in governance institutions

8.2 Engender the new Political Parties Act.

8.3 Propose for political gender quotas

8.4 Implementing mechanisms to prevent and end gendered political and electoral violence especially during primaries. Political parties must develop intra party regulations and guidelines with specific gender targets including 50 – 50 male – female quotas.

- 8.4.1 The police, courts and prisons must deal with cases of VAWE decisively and speedily minimize conflict through adequate, timely and gender sensitive response to internal conflict situations
- 8.4.2 prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish violence against women in elections through mandated governance structures like the Police, Malawi Human Rights Commission and Courts.

8.5 Intensify monitoring of the Gender Equality Act across all sectors.

9. Peace and Security

Malawi ranks 146th out of 177 in the 2023/2024 Women, Peace, and Security Index, reflecting persistent challenges in gender equality and women's participation in peace and security. Despite governance frameworks, corruption, political violence, and exclusion hinder progress. A peaceful and secure Malawi requires women's full inclusion in leadership, peacebuilding, and security efforts. **Women Therefore Demand:**

8.1 Review and operationalize the UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan developed 2019 and aligning with MW2063 Agenda.

8.2 Effectively implement policies such as the National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security which aims to enhance women's participation in decision making structures and peacebuilding processes without discrimination.

8.3 Increase women participation in the District Peace Committees and all other related structures as prescribed by the Peace and Unity Act.

8.4 Provide training and capacity building programmes for women in peacebuilding and security sectors, focusing on leadership, negotiation, and conflict resolution skills.

8.5 Empower women and girls through

education, economic empowerment and social support, enabling them to participate meaningfully in peace and security initiatives.

8.6 Strengthen institutions like the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare and the Malawi Peace Commission to provide necessary support and coordination for women's participation in peace and security.

8.7 Engage with local communities, civil society organizations and traditional leaders to promote the importance of women's participation in peace and security issues.

8.8 Address gender-based violence and provide support to survivors as this is a critical aspect of promoting women's participation in peace and security

10. Access to Justice

Women in Malawi face significant barriers in accessing justice, primarily due to inadequate court structures, geographical challenges, limited legal aid, and financial constraints. Customary laws reinforce gender inequality, worsening discrimination in inheritance, child maintenance, and divorce. Additionally, delays in legal proceedings, corruption, and high legal fees make justice inaccessible. Weak enforcement of laws further fails to protect vulnerable groups, particularly women, children, and detainees. The lack of awareness of legal rights and limited popular education exacerbates the issue, leaving many unable to seek proper legal recourse.

Women Therefore Demand:

10.1 Legal literacy on laws and legal procedures

- 10.1.1 Government must provide adequate and fair disbursement of financial resources for awareness raising on laws and procedures targeting men and women.
- 10.1.2 Mainstreaming gender in the e-court users' system.

10.2 Effective and efficient justice system and delivery

- 10.2.1 Providing physical access to courts and justice system;
- 10.2.2 Providing funding for construction of more court structures and mobile courts in every constituency;
- 10.2.3 Building capacity of courts and police in gender and law.
- 10.2.4 Introduce mobile courts in districts that are not served by the High Court
- 10.2.5 Adequately fund Family Court.
- 10.2.6 Strengthen Child Justice Courts.
- 10.2.7 Establish rehabilitation Centres for girls and GBV survivors
- 10.2.8 Provide adequate legal assistance in One Stop Centres
- 10.2.9 Reform police stations and court facilities to make them gender sensitive and responsive to victims of violence •
- 10.2.10 Train and enhance the role and response of the police when dealing with cases of domestic violence.
- 10.2.11 Prosecuting corrupt court officials;
- 10.2.12 strengthening accountability mechanisms in the judiciary;
- 10.2.13 Strengthening checks in the judiciary and regular check in with communities through the various structures at the district level.
- 10.2.14 Provision of incentives to employees in the judiciary to curb corruption;
- 10.2.15 Scaling up more mobile legal clinics and paralegal services in rural and urban areas
- 10.2.16 Improved legal aid services including Malawi Law Society, Legal Aid Bureau and mandatory pro bono services by lawyers.

10.3 Enforcement of decided cases that favour women

- 10.3.1 Government must develop mechanism to ensure decided cases are brought to their proper finality through:
- 10.3.2 The appointment of a specific office in justice institutions to follow up on decided cases.
- 10.3.3 Develop and implement timelines and guidelines for case handling.
- 10.3.4 Improve on timely judgments and access to engendered formal and informal justice system.

11. Digital Justice

Women in Malawi face systemic digital inequalities, limiting their access to technology, decision-making, and economic opportunities. Digital transformation risks deepening gender disparities. Urgent action is needed to bridge the gender digital divide and empower women in Malawi's digital transformation.

Women Therefore Demand:

- 11.1 Provision of quality access to infrastructure for Science, Technology and Innovation (STI), including equipping academic institutions with world-class laboratories. Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) for the youth and girls.
- 11.2 Strengthened innovation and job creation such as incubation hubs in academic institutions and research centres to commercialize local innovations and heavily invest in research and development to encourage innovations.
- 11.3 Significant increase public and private investments in evidence-based initiatives aimed at bridging the gender digital divide, building more inclusive innovation ecosystems and supporting women's entry into and retention in the digital economy.
- 11.4 Development of human rights centred technologies and enhance access,

affordability, and use of ICTs for women.

- 11.5 Provision of funding, sponsorship and training to enhance the professional development and participation of women leaders in the digital age, especially for youth and underrepresented groups (women with disabilities) and to facilitate their involvement in negotiations, expert panels and advisory boards.
- 11.6 Creation or reinforcement of public bodies that support people affected by technology-facilitated gender -based violence and algorithmic discrimination, including through social and legal services, information and awareness campaigns, investigation and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, collective action and routes for redress and the monitoring of cases.
- 11.7 Laws that specifically criminalise digital violence (cyber stalking, cyberbullying) and a legal infrastructure that will protect women and girls.
- 11.8 Creation and development of safe, inclusive gender transformative online guidelines for women and girls to participate in and develop global digital gender rules to avoid tech-GBV.

12. Women and the Fight Against Corruption

Corruption destabilizes governance, the economy, and social structures in Malawi, despite existing anti-corruption strategies. It hinders access to justice and perpetuates inequality. Patriarchy limits women's access to leadership and economic opportunities. Corruption deepens gender disparities, restricting women's ability to benefit from resources and fair justice. Women contribute significantly to the economy but remain excluded from policy benefits due to corruption. Weak enforcement of anti-corruption measures allows unfair practices to persist. Malawi's judiciary, though trusted, faces corruption at lower levels and lacks financial independence, affecting fair legal outcomes and governance integrity.

Women Therefore Demand:

- 12.1** Government must demonstrate commitment and political goodwill to fight corruption in all sectors of society.
- 12.2** That the Corrupt Practices Act be disseminated to all citizens.
- 12.3** The Judicial Service Commission implement and enforce the new Judicial Service Commission Act (2025) so that corruption is checked within its corridors and that no impunity is allowed.
- 12.4** Grant more autonomy to the ACB to curb corruption and allow no political/ executive interference.
- 12.5** Strengthened checks for all government branches and allow more public scrutiny and recommendations on fiscal discipline and accountability.
- 12.6** Inclusion of more women's representation in elected offices to reduce corruption by promoting a different political agenda and being more risk averse.
- 12.7** Development of programs and activities that strengthen women's role in fighting corruption, including their ability to resist, report, and seek redress when corruption occurs.
- 12.8** Enactment of the Whistleblowers Act- Whistleblowing is a powerful tool for exposing corruption and protecting those who report it.

13. Women, Media and Access to Information

Access to information is vital for women's informed decision-making and participation in political, socio-economic, and cultural spheres. The media plays a crucial role in amplifying women's voices, promoting democracy, and holding institutions accountable. However, in Malawi, media portrayal of women has historically been negative, reinforcing stereotypes that diminish their leadership potential and societal contributions. Gender-insensitive language

and biased reporting perpetuate inequality, while media often commodifies women in advertisements and entertainment.

Women Therefore Demand:

- 13.1** Government liberalises the information sector to enable women access relevant and appropriate information
- 13.2** Government should respect, protect and promote the fundamental rights of all citizens, women included, especially the freedom of expression, association, assembly and the press;
- 13.3** The media should stop stereotyping women and instead cultivate a positive image about women in public life, including politics.
- 13.4** Women should never be commodities in media advertisements;
- 13.5** Media houses should disaggregate all their programmes in both electronic and print. In this regard, the media in general should take into account women's multiple roles and time constraints when assessing their participation and contribution in public affairs;
- 13.6** Government should provide opportunities for women in different sectors to enhance their capacity to handle information and communication technology, especially in rural and marginalised areas;
- 13.7** The media should give equal voice and airtime to women in their multiple roles in the society.
- 13.8** Gender sensitive and responsive reporting by both print and electronic media about women issues;
- 13.9** Good journalism dictates that the media practices good governance, gender equality, and justice for all;
- 13.10** Women in different capacities engage positively with the media to correct the negative image about women's role in politics and public affairs in general;
- 13.11** Government enacts, through Parliament, a gender-responsive Freedom of Information

legislation to enhance access to information and ultimately benefit women and the marginalised in society;

13.12 Government raises awareness on women's rights, gender equity and the media through the speeches of officials and discussions

13.13 Government puts in place legislation to address concerns such as pornography and the exploitation of children, youth and women raised by new information.

14. Violence Against Women and Girls

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in its multiple manifestations remains alarmingly prevalent across Malawi, with women and girls disproportionately affected, experiencing it at rates roughly twice as high as men. Despite legal frameworks like the Gender Equality Act (2013) and the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (2006) recent data underscores the pervasive nature of the problem. Reports indicate that as many as one in three, and some sources suggest up to one in two, Malawian women have faced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, with intimate partner violence being particularly common. Forms such as sexual assault, physical abuse, emotional abuse, economic control, and high rates of child marriage persist. Factors like poverty, entrenched patriarchal norms, and the socio-economic impacts of recurrent climate-related disasters, further exacerbate vulnerabilities, hampering women's safety, well-being, and their full participation in society.

Women Therefore Demand:

14.1 On Gender Based Violence:

- 14.1.1 Adopt, implement and fund legislation to end violence against women and girls, and develop comprehensive national action plans, including support and coordination with community-led organizations to extend the reach of services.
- 14.1.2 Propose amendments to the Marriage Divorce and Family Relations Act and the Penal Code to make spousal violence and marital rape a criminal offence and that government establishes a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating instances of de facto discrimination in law.
- 14.1.3 Strengthen collaboration with chiefs to address harmful social norms and unequal power relations that fuel violence against women and girls through enactment of community by laws and working with chiefs' councils to end child marriages.
- 14.1.4 Implement the National Male Engagement Strategy on Gender Equality, GBV, SRHR and HIV (2023-2030) to guide the implementation of all male engagement interventions to ensure that men and boys play a role in promoting positive masculinities and addressing Gender Based Violence particularly violence against women and girls.
- 14.1.5 Strengthen support services, and the operationalization of Police and Community Victim Support Units in all the police formations across the country the twenty-one (21) One Stop Centres in thirteen (13) districts to support women and children facing violence and abuse.
- 14.1.6 Sensitize the public on responsible and safe use of cyber spaces; on cyber-crimes. Police and law enforcement agencies should be trained on cyber violence; punish perpetrators using the Electronic Transactions and Cyber Security Act (2017) and other relevant statutes.
- 14.1.7 Disseminate the Gender Related Laws; Male Engagement Strategy; and Public Service Workplace Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy to MDAs and CSOs at national level and district councils.
- 14.1.8 Amplify mass awareness on GBV and gender related laws during the

16 days of activism against Gender Based Violence campaign and also using the Social Behavioural Change Communication at national and district levels where gender is a key topic.

14.2 On Sexual Harassment:

- 14.2.1 Promote policies and laws that eliminate gender discrimination and sexual harassment in all sectors (Public, Private and Informal)
- 14.2.2 Eradicate sexual harassment at workplaces, schools, homes, communities and other areas through the institutionalization of Anti-Sexual Harassment Workplace Policies and Programs in all sectors.
- 14.2.3 Eliminate sexual harassment and gender-based violence in elections and open up spaces for women in political parties by engaging leaders of political parties

14.3 On Trafficking

- 14.3.1 Advocate for enforcement of the law on the elimination of human trafficking by harmonising the sentencing of trafficking offences in the penal code, Child Care protection and Justice Act and the Trafficking in Persons Act
- 14.3.2 Adopt a comprehensive policy on human trafficking
- 14.3.3 Protect and repatriate victims of human trafficking that are stuck in foreign countries such the United Arab Emirates and Oman, ensure are urgently brought home safely.
- 14.3.4 Investigate and prosecute all agents of this harmful practice.

15. Older Women and Women Disabilities (Marginalized groups)

Women with disabilities and older women in Malawi face severe social, political, economic,

and healthcare barriers due to discrimination and systemic exclusion. Poverty and economic hardship, exacerbated by unemployment and lack of support, limit their ability to achieve financial independence. They are also disproportionately affected by violence and abuse, including gender-based violence and harmful cultural practices. Access to healthcare remains inadequate, with discriminatory treatment and inaccessible services further restricting their well-being. Educational barriers persist, particularly for girls with disabilities, who are often excluded from learning opportunities. Additionally, social exclusion and lack of recognition continue to marginalize older women, preventing them from fully participating in society and accessing essential resources. Urgent policy action is needed to ensure women with disabilities and older women can fully participate in society with dignity and equality.

Women Therefore Demand:

15.1 Efficient and effective support systems

- 15.1.1 Availability of appropriate infrastructures in private and public places especially in schools and hospitals for persons with disabilities.
- 15.1.2 Protection and safety of persons with albinism

15.2 Access to social and welfare services

- 15.2.1 Increase funding to the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare (as a policy holder) for the social protection programme and;
- 15.2.2 Provide necessary and adequate social welfare support to older persons and other vulnerable groups especially children and persons living with disabilities.
- 15.2.3 Increased participation of marginalized and vulnerable groups in politics and development activities.

CALL FOR ACTION

The fight for gender equality demands more than promises—it requires collective and unwavering action across all sectors of society. Every thematic pillar in this manifesto is a call for justice, inclusion, and empowerment. The time to implement these priorities is now.

1. Political and Economic Empowerment:

Women call on policymakers to guarantee equal representation in governance, enforce gender-sensitive policies, and remove economic barriers that hinder women's advancement. Governments and financial institutions must prioritize women's access to credit, business ownership, and fair wages.

2. Legal and Social Protection:

Women deserve the full implementation of laws that protect women's rights, including stronger measures against gender-based violence. Justice systems must ensure survivors have access to timely legal recourse and support services, while communities must challenge harmful cultural norms that perpetuate inequality.

3. Education and Health:

Every girl deserves a quality education, and every woman has the right to healthcare. We urge governments and institutions to invest in gender-responsive education systems, eradicate barriers to learning, and strengthen healthcare services that prioritize women's reproductive rights and maternal well-being.

4. Climate Justice and Land Rights:

Climate change disproportionately affects women, and their voices must be central to environmental policies. We call for equitable access to land ownership, sustainable resource management, and protection against displacement. Policies must recognize women as leaders in climate action.

5. Digital Inclusion and Innovation:

Technology must be a force for empowerment, not exclusion. Women deserve greater investment in digital literacy, online safety protections, and equal opportunities for women in STEM fields. Connectivity and access must be prioritized to bridge the gender gap in the digital space.

A Collective Responsibility:

This movement belongs to all of us—governments, civil society, the private sector, and individuals alike. We must demand accountability, challenge entrenched inequalities, and drive policy reforms with unwavering determination. Awareness must turn into action, advocacy into results.

We will not wait for change; we will make it happen. The time to act is now!!



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CONSORTIUM
ON GENDER BASED
VIOLENCE**

