

THE CATALYST

THE NEWSLETTER FOR PAI DONORS AND SUPPORTERS

CEO CORNER

Last week, I had the pleasure of meeting Christina Chilimba, a long-standing PAI partner and the founder and executive director of All for Youth — a youth-led and youth-focused organization in Malawi. During her visit to PAI, Christina shared her inspiring and urgent perspectives on youth advocacy and sexual and reproductive health and rights with champions and advocates, noting:



“We need to have a behavior change in terms of how we view young people. We have to come together as equals, be given the same opportunities as equals and work together as equals.”

As Christina’s words powerfully underscore, the voice and role of youth are essential for progress, and investing in youth advocates is about their growth and development and ensuring they have an equal seat at the table. **When they have the right support and opportunities, young people and adolescents are the most effective advocates for their needs.**

Youth advocates are uniquely positioned to drive meaningful community engagement and demand change. They are today’s leaders and will also protect and advance progress in the future. Our investments in young advocates today help build a strong, sustainable sexual and reproductive health and rights movement.

In this issue of the Catalyst, you will read about how PAI and our partners in three countries are supporting and investing in youth advocates to advance health and rights in their communities. Their efforts have led to major gains, from enabling young leaders to dispense emergency contraception in Malawi to increasing a county’s family planning budget by fivefold in Kenya.

Because of your support, PAI and our partners can offer youth advocates hands-on training, strategic collaboration and direct funding, which is critical to ensuring these frequently under-resourced organizations can grow and thrive.

We are so inspired by the extraordinary resilience and creativity of our youth partners like Christina, and we thank you for standing with us as we continue to fight for every young person’s fundamental right to direct their own future.

In solidarity,

Nabeeha Kazi Hutchins
President and CEO



To see my conversation with youth advocate Christina Chilimba, visit bit.ly/PAIChilimba.

YOUR IMPACT IN ACTION

Empowering Courageous Young Leaders in Kenya

When young people in Laikipia County, Kenya, have questions about their sexual and reproductive health, they are often afraid to seek answers. And with a teenage pregnancy rate well above the national average (27% of adolescent girls between ages 15 and 19 have had at least one child or are pregnant), the fear and shame that prevent youth from getting the care they need can have long-term impacts on their futures.

Pathways Policy Institute (PPI) saw an opportunity to empower young people to be effective advocates for their health needs and, with support from PAI, launched the JASIRI Youth Champion Initiative.

JASIRI — which means courageous in Swahili — trains 18- to 24-year-olds on the SMART advocacy approach so they can define their needs and develop clear goals. PPI then helps the young advocates develop and submit memos outlining specific requests for improving health services and facilitates opportunities to meet with decision-makers.

These efforts are leading to some big advocacy wins for JASIRI, including seeing the county's budget for modern contraceptives go from 800,000 Kenyan shillings to 2.8 million in 2021, followed by an increase to 4 million the following year.

Since its launch in Laikipia County in 2021, JASIRI has continued to grow, expanding to three counties in 2022 and eight counties this year. More than 75 champions have completed the program so far, with several going on to launch their own youth-led organizations.

By giving young people a way to meaningfully engage in the advocacy process, PPI is making sure they have a seat at the table so they can shape decisions that impact their health and lives.



On International Day of the Girl Child in October 2022, PPI's youth outreach program held a community meeting with adolescents to ensure their voices would be reflected in advocacy asks. PAI supported the launch of JASIRI — an initiative that trains young people to advocate for their sexual and reproductive health needs in Kenya. (Photo by Niki Robert for PPI)

Taking to TikTok to Reach Indigenous Youth in Mexico

Chiapas, home to the second largest Indigenous-speaking population in Mexico, is also the state with the highest rate of teenage pregnancies in the country. And because comprehensive sexuality education is not available through the public school system, it is difficult for young people to access accurate information.

With support from PAI, Observatorio de Mortalidad Materna en México (OMM) is addressing this by putting knowledge directly in the hands of young people, giving them the tools and resources they need to drive positive change in their communities.



Using digital platforms like podcasts and TikTok, OMM youth promoters can share their own experiences as well as information on how to access sexual and reproductive health services with other Indigenous youth in Chiapas, Mexico. (Photo on left by Juan Carlos Martínez Pérez for OMM)

OMM produced more than 200 videos and podcasts covering topics such as adolescent pregnancy and contraceptive methods, as well as access to health services and the right to care.

OMM youth promoters developed content and scripts for these digital products, then presented them in Tzeltal and Tsotsil — two Indigenous languages widely spoken in Chiapas — as well as Spanish to ensure their messages reached as many young people as possible.

OMM also launched the first TikTok account in Latin America to provide sexual and reproductive health information targeted at Indigenous adolescents. Youth promoters create and publish their own videos and share them on @sinpenasinmiedo — Spanish for “without shame, without fear” — which to date has had over 283,000 views.

By enabling them to speak directly to their peers, in their preferred language and through platforms that are safe spaces for young people, OMM youth promoters are building awareness, destigmatizing sexual and reproductive health and enabling increased use of the services and support that Indigenous youth need to control their health and futures.

See how your gift is supporting the next generation of advocates!

Thanks to generous donors like you, PAI is able to support youth-led organizations and programs with:

- Flexible funding
- Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound (SMART) advocacy training
- Peer-to-peer shared learning exchange
- Resources to help strengthen institutional capacity
- Guidance on advocacy opportunities and strategies

Taking a SMART Approach to Youth-Led Advocacy in Malawi

Health centers are supposed to provide youth-friendly services and be safe spaces for adolescents to get the care and information they need so they can make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health. But what if the facilities aren't delivering on these mandates?

To address this challenge in Malawi, Pakachere Institute of Health and Development Communication (Pakachere) is helping adolescents understand their rights and empowering them to advocate for high-quality, nonjudgmental services from health care providers.

With technical and financial support from PAI, Pakachere has trained more than 65 young people on SMART advocacy — an approach for identifying clear, attainable goals and strategies for achieving them.

The remote area of Masewe has some of the country's highest rates of early and teenage pregnancies. Recognizing how hard it was for adolescents to get to the nearest facility, Pakachere trained advocates to engage with health care providers on the best way to ensure young people could access family planning services.

As a result of these efforts, the youth-friendly health services coordinator created a pathway for young people to access sexual and reproductive commodities, including having youth leaders trained on how to administer emergency contraception and distribute condoms directly to their peers.

By building the capacity of young people in Malawi, Pakachere is empowering them to advocate for their right to respectful and accessible sexual and reproductive health care.



In September 2022, Pakachere-trained youth leaders attended a training session to learn how to administer emergency contraception to young people in Masewe, which has some of the country's highest rates of early and teenage pregnancies. (Photo by Jonathan Mbuna for Pakachere)

PAI ON THE HILL

From back-to-back events on Capitol Hill to face-to-face meetings with lawmakers, your support fuels our work in Washington, D.C., as we fight for U.S. funding and policy that uphold the health and rights of women and young people around the world.



On March 23, PAI joined fellow advocates and several members of Congress, including Congresswomen Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) and Barbara Lee (D-CA) and Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ), for the reintroduction of the Abortion is Health Care Everywhere (AHCE) Act. PAI played a critical role in crafting and securing co-sponsors for the bill, which would permanently repeal the Helms amendment and allow U.S. funding to be used for comprehensive reproductive health care, including safe abortion services, abroad. (Photo by PAI)

In the final days of March, both the House and Senate reintroduced the Global Health, Empowerment and Rights (Global HER) Act, with support from PAI. This legislation would permanently repeal the Global Gag Rule — a policy that, when in place, disproportionately harms adolescents and other at-risk populations and communities. Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), who led the Senate introduction of the bill, invited PAI to weigh in on the impacts of the Global Gag Rule in a press release from her office. PAI also spearheaded the creation of a toolkit enabling advocates, legislators and supporters of global sexual and reproductive health and rights to make their voices heard on social media.

"The Global Gag Rule has caused harm to people around the world by playing politics with people's health."

Nabeeha Kazi Hutchins
President and Chief Executive Officer



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Last month, Abebe Kebede from the Consortium of Reproductive Health Associations (CORHA) in Ethiopia and Amos Mwale from the Centre for Reproductive Health and Education (CRHE) in Zambia joined members of the PAI team for a series of meetings on Capitol Hill. By facilitating discussions like these, PAI creates opportunities for partners to speak directly with lawmakers and their staff about what is needed from U.S. funding for family planning and reproductive health, as well as provide a firsthand perspective on how U.S. policies impact communities abroad. (Photo by Tom Sandner)

BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR



With your generous monthly gift to PAI, you ensure we have the steady, reliable support we need to expand access to sexual and reproductive health care for women and young people around the world. Visit <https://give.pai.org/recurring> or scan the QR code to become a monthly donor or to make a one-time gift today! For more information on ways to support PAI's work, please contact Elena Garofalo at egarofalo@pai.org or +1 (202) 557-3400.

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