

LEAP4YOUTH DISTRICT POLICY CLINIC REPORT



Project: LEAP4YOUTH

Location: Mchinji Community Hall

Dates: 2nd to 3rd January 2026

Implementing Partners: National Youth Council of Malawi (NYCOM) and MwAPATA Institute

Funder: AGRA – Sustainably Growing Africa’s Food Systems

Participants: 50 youth representatives from youth networks across Mchinji District

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1. Introduction and Background

The LEAP4YOUTH District Policy Clinic was conducted at Mchinji Community Hall from 2nd to 3rd January 2026 with the aim of strengthening youth participation in agrifood systems policymaking and implementation. The clinic was organised by the National Youth Council of Malawi (NYCOM) in collaboration with the MwAPATA Institute, with financial support from AGRA under the LEAP4YOUTH Project.

The policy clinic responded to the existing gap in policy awareness and engagement among young people, particularly in agriculture and agribusiness. Given that youth form a significant proportion of Malawi's population and are central to the transformation of agrifood systems, the clinic sought to equip them with knowledge, platforms, and skills to effectively engage in policy dialogue and implementation at district and community levels.



Figure 1: Day one, training in progress

2. Objectives of the Policy Clinic

The specific objectives of the district policy clinic were to:

- Raise awareness among young people on national and district-level policies related to agriculture and youth development.
- Strengthen youth understanding of the National Agriculture Policy and the National Youth Policy.

- Enhance youth capacity to identify agrifood opportunities, value chains, and incentives available to them.
- Promote alignment of youth network plans with national policies and the Mchinji District Development Plan (2023–2030).
- Foster collaboration between youth networks and district council stakeholders.

3. Participation and Stakeholders

The clinic brought together 50 youth participants drawn from various youth networks in Mchinji District. All major youth networks were represented, with the exception of a few that could not attend due to distance-related challenges.

The training was facilitated by resource persons from MwAPATA Institute and NYCOM. The event was also graced by key district council officials, including:

- Director of Agriculture
- Director of Planning and Development (DPD)
- Director of Social Welfare
- District Youth Officer (DYO)
- District Agribusiness Officer
- District Trade Officer among others.

Their presence enhanced dialogue between young people and policy implementers, strengthening accountability and mutual understanding.

4. Key Thematic Areas Covered

4.1 National Agriculture Policy

MwAPATA Institute researcher, Mr. Bornface Nankwenya, led sessions on the National Agriculture Policy. The discussions focused on the policy's mission, goals, objectives, and strategic focus areas that are relevant to youth participation in agrifood systems. Emphasis was placed on the roles young people can play in agricultural productivity, commercialization, access to capital, value addition, and marketing.

4.2 National Youth Policy and Youth Opportunities

Participants were oriented on the provisions of the National Youth Policy, highlighting both opportunities and responsibilities for young people. The sessions aimed at ensuring youth understand policy commitments made by government and how to demand accountability while contributing meaningfully to development initiatives.

4.3 District Development Planning

The Director of Planning and Development (DPD) presented the Mchinji District Development Plan (2023–2030) and the District Implementation Plan (DIP). Particular emphasis was placed on youth-related priority areas and resource allocation. This session helped young people understand district planning processes and the

importance of aligning their initiatives with council priorities through active participation in VDC and ADC.

4.4 Agribusiness and Incentives

The District Agribusiness Officer provided insights on agribusiness opportunities and incentives available to youth, including AGCOM-related support mechanisms. This enabled participants to better understand pathways for accessing markets, finance, and technical support.

Other opportunities were shared from MWAPATA by Mr Lemekezani Chilora, these incentives include, FINESS, NEEF, MAIIC, TRADE and it was emphasized that these opportunities are rewards focused and organised youth who have already started and are persistent.

5. Group Work and Plenary Discussions

On Day Two, participants were divided into groups to brainstorm:

- Agricultural opportunities available within their youth networks.
- Value chains in which they are currently involved.
- Agri-incentives and support mechanisms accessible to youth.
- Challenges faced in accessing opportunities, value chains, and incentives.

Each group presented its findings during plenary sessions. Participants collectively discussed mitigation measures to address the identified challenges, including capacity gaps, limited access to finance, market constraints, and policy awareness issues.

The outcomes of the group discussions will support youth networks to plan or modify their existing action plans, ensuring alignment with national policies, strategies, and available opportunities.

6. Key Messages from Stakeholders

The Mchinji District Youth Officer, Mr. Ian Sukali, emphasized that empowering young people with policy knowledge is essential for effective development planning and accountability at community level. He noted that informed youth participation strengthens collaboration between young people and local authorities, especially in advancing youth-centred development agendas such as Agenda 2063.

The Mchinji District Youth Network Chairperson, Mr. Elad Eleson, welcomed the initiative and highlighted that meaningful youth development depends on active inclusion in policy processes. He acknowledged that the clinic provided a valuable platform for engagement between youth and policy implementers.

7. Outcomes and Way Forward

The district policy clinic successfully enhanced youth understanding of agrifood and youth-related policies and strengthened their capacity to engage in policy implementation.

Key outcomes included:

- Improved awareness of national and district policies among youth.
- Enhanced dialogue between youth networks and district authorities.
- Increased understanding of agrifood value chains and available incentives.
- Commitment by youth networks to align their plans with the District Implementation Plan and national strategies.

Organisers noted that similar policy clinics are critical in bridging the gap between policy formulation and implementation by ensuring young people are informed, organised, and actively involved in decision-making processes.

8. Conclusion

The LEAP4YOUTH District Policy Clinic in Mchinji demonstrated the importance of structured platforms that empower young people to participate meaningfully in agrifood systems governance. Through strengthened policy knowledge, stakeholder engagement, and practical planning, the clinic contributed to building a foundation for youth-led, sustainable agribusiness development in Mchinji District.