

Nancholi Youth Organization (NAYO) Blantyre, Malawi

“Did you hear the choir?” As we cycled from hilltop to dusty hilltop, churches have blessed us with music. Schools also overflow with song. Let’s relax as we coast downhill, passing an almost continuous spread of stucco houses. We are entering Blantyre, the second largest city in Malawi. The rural area we just passed is called Nancholi - the outreach area of the Nancholi Youth Organization. Although everything here appears idyllic, we learn about challenges. Health care, education and gender equality are huge issues throughout Malawi, particularly in these rural settings. NAYO’s staff and 175 volunteers implement activities related to HIV and AIDS, human rights, environmental protection, and youth activities in 16 villages around Blantyre.



“Our roots go back to 2004,” explains our guide, who was one of four young people who formed the organisation. “AIDS was affecting everyone, including youth, so we created an NGO to help those suffering from the impact of HIV/AIDS. Our goals have been to provide social, nutritional and educational support. Over the years NAYO’s mission, values and outreach have grown, thanks to dedicated staff members, working alongside overseas short-term volunteers. No two days at the office are the same: from youth groups to sports training, to health care clinics to gender empowerment workshops, NAYO’s numerous projects continue to work towards fulfilling local needs.”

NAYO has worked with the SLF on projects aimed to boost the capacity of women and men in their communities. Eradicating gender-based violence required gender mainstreaming, to address both women's and men's interests and concerns. Most impressively, the youth established a Community Development Committee (CDC) to spearhead development initiatives together with traditional leaders and various development partners. NAYO’s partnerships reach beyond the SLF and include local, national and African AIDS Service Organizations, World University Service of Canada, journalism organisations as well as groups like [Bristol Volunteers for Development Abroad](#) (BVDA).

Their five Objectives are:

- To promote full and equal societal participation among youths
- To build life skills among youths
- To educate youths and the community in the areas of HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, human rights, food security, gender and environmental protection
- To fight discrimination against those infected with HIV/AIDS, orphans, elderly people and chronically ill patients
- To educate and assist young people who are in danger of becoming, or are already addicted to illegal drugs, alcohol or other addictive substances

<https://nayoinmalawi.wordpress.com/>

