



within their respective contexts. Some of the outstanding issues included:

- Failure to include the youth in the national COVID-19 response in Malawi right from the start, created gaps in providing youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services at subnational level.
- Breakdown in supply chain for pandemic-related logistics such as personal protective equipment and other essential health commodities in Kenya. The national leadership later turned this into an opportunity by boosting local capacity to produce such logistics locally instead of relying on imports.
- The disconnect in handling the pandemic between central and local governments in Ghana caused unfair budget shifts, which negatively impacted primary health care services at subnational level.

**“While we are fighting COVID-19, we must not forget the youth. Otherwise we will go back to same old statistics.” – Christina Chilimba**

Below are some key takeaways from the conversation.

- Becoming even more apparent at the time of COVID-19 where technology is key for communication, youth are a strong force. They should be represented in all initiatives and included in all conversations at all levels aimed at addressing issues that affect their wellbeing.
- In the absence of face to face interaction, policymakers can remain accountable by embracing the use of virtual/online platforms such as zoom which are proving to be more effective in facilitating decision-making during the pandemic period. Policy makers and other stakeholders can participate in decision-making anytime, anywhere.

- We need to take advantage of existing community assets such as non-profit community radio stations and complement them with national media platforms and social media with messages targeting policy makers
- Establish and facilitate citizen monitoring groups to support rapid assessment exercises to generate evidence which can be used to engage policy makers on the realities at subnational level such low availability of personal protective equipment.
- Stronger civil society collaboration that places emphasis on joint advocacy action plans is key. A case in point is the Ghana civil society platform for health organizations that issued joint statements calling for provision of relief supplies and sensitization of vulnerable groups such as women and street children.
- CSOs must be innovative by utilizing available resources, being present in dialogue forums including county program planning and budgeting forums. With continuous engagement and coordination, CSOs can strengthen their networks to tackle accountability and community engagement issues during this pandemic.

**“When you are talking to government, the game changer is evidence, evidence, evidence.” – George Osei-Bimpeh**

Outlined below are additional experiences and lessons learned from subnational level advocacy:

- Training is critical for health care workers including community health volunteers on how to use digital platforms to enable them join virtual sensitization and capacity building meetings.
- COVID-19 has prompted service providers to shift to new ways of reaching clients including telemedicine and referrals using virtual platforms such as zoom.



PATH is a global organization that works to accelerate health equity by bringing together public institutions, businesses, social enterprises, and investors to solve the world's most pressing health challenges. With expertise in science, health, economics, technology, advocacy, and dozens of other specialties, PATH develops and scales solutions—including vaccines, drugs, devices, diagnostics, and innovative approaches to strengthening health systems worldwide.

[path.org](http://path.org)

**Mailing Address**  
PO Box 900922  
Seattle, WA 98109 USA

**Street Address**  
2201 Westlake Avenue  
Suite 200  
Seattle, WA 98121 USA

**Date Published**  
August 2020

- There is greater synergy in complementing government efforts in dissemination of protocols, procurement of masks for community health volunteers and creating community awareness.
- Evidence generation, documentation and media engagement are all strong building blocks for effectively engaging policy makers on realities on ground.

**“As advocates we have to be innovative. When things change, we also have to change our advocacy tactics and ensure there is social accountability.” – Monica Oguttu**

This session was facilitated by **Melissa Wanda**, PATH’s Advocacy and Policy officer in Kenya.



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