



**NGO
Coalition on
Child Rights**

"Together, Stronger for Children"

**CIVIC
SPACE**

2025

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About NGO CCR

NGO CCR is a national Coalition of NGOs and thematic networks whose broad goal is to entrench child rights programming in all development processes in Malawi anchored under the four fundamental principles of the rights of the Child: Non-discrimination; The best interest of the child; Right to life, survival and development; and Participation within the evolving capacities of the Child. NGO CCR's Vision is a Malawi society in which Children's rights are promoted, respected, protected and fulfilled. The NGO CCR's mission is to contribute towards the promotion, respect, protection and fulfilment of children's rights through evidence based Advocacy, Coordination, Capacity building and Research, monitoring and reporting

Our Mission

NGO CCR exists to contribute towards the promotion, respect, protection and fulfilment of children's rights through evidence-based advocacy, coordination, capacity building, and research

Our Core Focus Areas

- Child Rights Governance
- Child Protection Systems Strengthening
- Public Investment in Children
- Public Budget Transparency and Accountability
- Child Participation and Children's Agency
- CSO Coordination and Capacity Building
- Child Rights Treaty Monitoring and Reporting (UNCRC, UPR, ACRWC)
- Civic Space for Children Capacity Strengthening
- Child Rights and Business
- Child Rights and climate Change

Communities / Groups we work with or represent

We work with:

- Children (as the primary rights holders)
- Women
- Youth
- Persons with Disabilities
- Community-based organizations (CBOs)
- Faith-based organizations (FBOs)
- District CSO Networks
- National and international CSO coalitions and platforms

How we coordinate CSOs/NGOs in advocating & influencing Child rights in Malawi

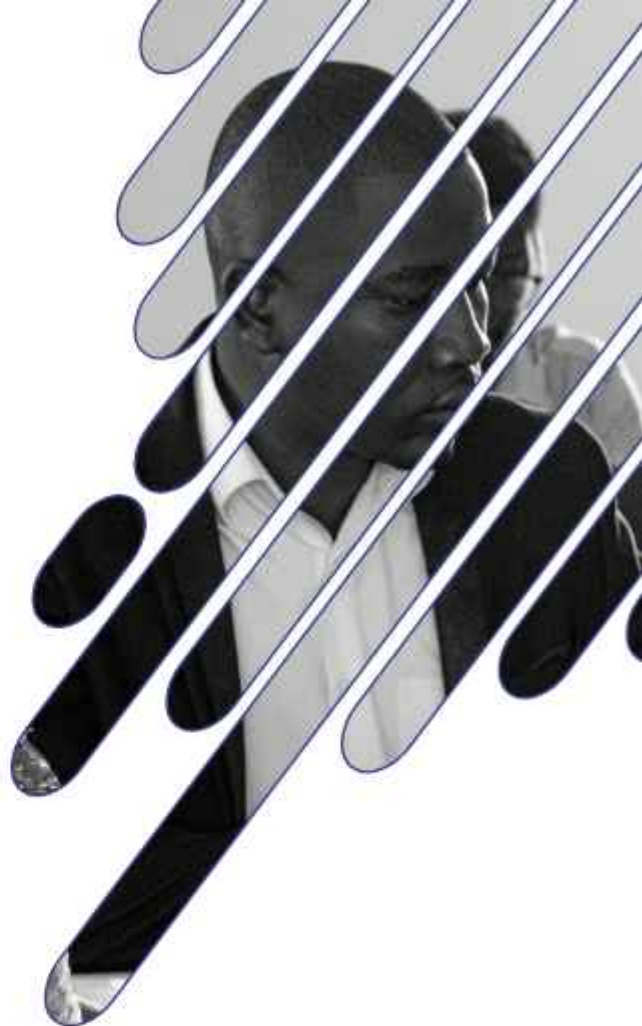


Key achievements / areas of expertise to note

- Civic space analysis and annual reviews (2022–2024) under the SIDA-funded Civil Society Capacity Strengthening Program
- Influence on NGO Act 2022: Co-facilitated CSO engagement on amended regulations
- Child rights treaty reporting: Facilitated and coordinated submission of reports to UNCRC, UPR, ACRWC
- Open Budget Surveys: Member of the International Budget Partnership, conducting national surveys on budget transparency since 2021
- Regional and global engagement: Member of CRNSA (SADC), ACRWC CSO Forum (AU), Child Rights Connect (UN), and Defend the Defenders Network

Current state of Civic Space in our area

- Civic space in Malawi is shrinking, both digital and physical spaces are under pressure.
- Access to information remains limited, especially in border districts like Mwanza, Mulanje, and Dedza.
 - CSOs are denied participation in council meetings for demanding transparency.
 - The NGO Amendment Act (2022) restricts NGOs from engaging in politics and requires compulsory registration.
 - The digital civic space is under threat, with state surveillance (e.g., MACRA's purchase of spying equipment), harassment, and hacking of CSOs' social media platforms.



Threats, Trends or issues affecting civil society or human rights defenders

- Criminalization of activism and denial of civic space to CSOs and human rights defenders
- Digital threats, including hacking and surveillance, especially for groups critical of government policies.
- Marginalization of LGBTQI+ organizations, operating underground due to fear of legal or societal backlash.
- Lack of donor interest and limited resource mobilization capacity among CSOs.
- Politicization of CSOs, where government co-opts outspoken CSO leaders, undermining trust in the sector.

Our Role in the Civic Space Monitoring Grant

Issues we are focusing on for monitoring

- Identifying and documenting civic space issues across different levels (national, district, and community)
- Focused on marginalized groups including women, children, persons with disabilities, and youth
- Monitoring access to information, freedom of expression, digital surveillance, and CSO participation restriction.

Tools and approaches to be used

I. Approachs

• Rights-based

As civic space is directly linked to the freedom of speech that every person and institution has, the coalition will ensure that throughout the monitoring period, peoples rights are promoted and protected. The most vulnerable groups of people (Women, Children, people with disabilities) will be empowered to take part in the process as the issues that are to be identified need to be contextualized according to specific environment and how they are affected by people

• Participatory

As a civic space analysis monitoring, CSOs will be expected to fully participate throughout the process. The issues that will be identified will be those that have been brought up by them, it is therefore only right for the same involved CSOs to provide what they think might be the best way of addressing the challenges that they are facing in freely expressing themselves

• Child-led

As a child- centric organization, we believe that children remain one of the most vulnerable groups of people that haven't been able to influence some decisions in the decision-making bodies. This monitoring will therefore also involve children who will provide input on issues

• Inclusive and intersectional

In order to understand the different issues as faced by different people, different groups of people will be considered during the monitoring. It is important to understand that people might encounter some issues because of their vulnerabilities, it is therefore important for the documentation of these issues to include all groups of people and assess the power relations among these people for a better comparative analysis.

• Inclusive and intersectional

Going beyond having an equal representation of men and women during the monitoring the civic space, the coalition will also understand the norms and attitudes that are attributed to gender and how much they have contributed to the shrinking civic space. In applying this approach, different leaders of the society will be engaged as they are regarded as champions of transformatio. These include; Tradition leaders and religious leaders.

• Holistic

The coalition will put into consideration all factors that have affected the civic space understanding that civic spaces can be digital and non-digital. It will therefore put into consideration how the 2 are linked and the impact they have had on civic space.

2. Tools

Kobo Toolbox for digital data collection

SPSS, STATA, Excel, and Power BI for data analysis

Policy briefs, discussion/position papers

Media monitoring (electronic, printed, and social media)

Panel discussions and media briefs

Brochures for simplified dissemination of finding

Our Preferred Change / impact

- Empowered civic actors, especially marginalized groups, to participate in governance and policy-making
- Improved capacity among CSOs to respond to civic space threats
- Evidence-based advocacy strategies that influence policy
- Strengthened collaboration and coalition-building among civil society actors
- Safe and inclusive digital spaces that enable civic engagement and rights protection

Why it Matters

This work is vital to us as NGO CCR Secretariat because it directly supports our core mission: to promote, protect, and fulfill children's rights in Malawi through evidence-based advocacy, coordination, capacity building, and research.

Our organization has long recognized that an open and safe civic space is fundamental for the realization of child rights and broader human rights. When civic space is restricted, whether through unjust laws, surveillance, denial of access to information, or harassment of civil society actors, the voices of the most vulnerable, including children, women, youth, and persons with disabilities, are silenced

This project aligns with our previous and ongoing work in civic space monitoring, such as

- Our annual civic space progress reviews (2022–2024)
- Engagements on the 2022 NGO Act regulations
- Participation in treaty reporting to bodies like UNCRC, UPR, and ACRWC
- Our role in Open Budget Surveys and policy advocacy

QUOTE

What this project would mean for our community

This project will have a transformative impact on our community by giving marginalized voices, specially children, women, youth, and persons with disabilities, a platform to be heard and a process to participate in shaping civic space policies that affect their daily lives

According to the project scope, the monitoring will

- Document real civic space challenges experienced at national, district, and community levels, including lack of access to public information, digital threats, and exclusion from decision-making spaces
- Develop actionable strategies to address those challenges, guided by the very groups who face them
- Use dialogue sessions, social audits, and child-led approaches to ensure that community experiences and recommendations are taken seriously by duty bearers

For our community, this means:

- Improved knowledge of their rights, including digital and civic freedoms
- Greater ability to hold government accountable
- Safer and more inclusive spaces, both online and offline
- Capacity-building opportunities for local CSOs and child-led groups to advocate more effectively

The project will help build a civic environment where participation is possible, safe, and impactful, to best deliver for our communities

“This monitoring will involve children who will provide input on issues and empower the most vulnerable groups of people (Women, Children, people with disabilities) to take part in the process”



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