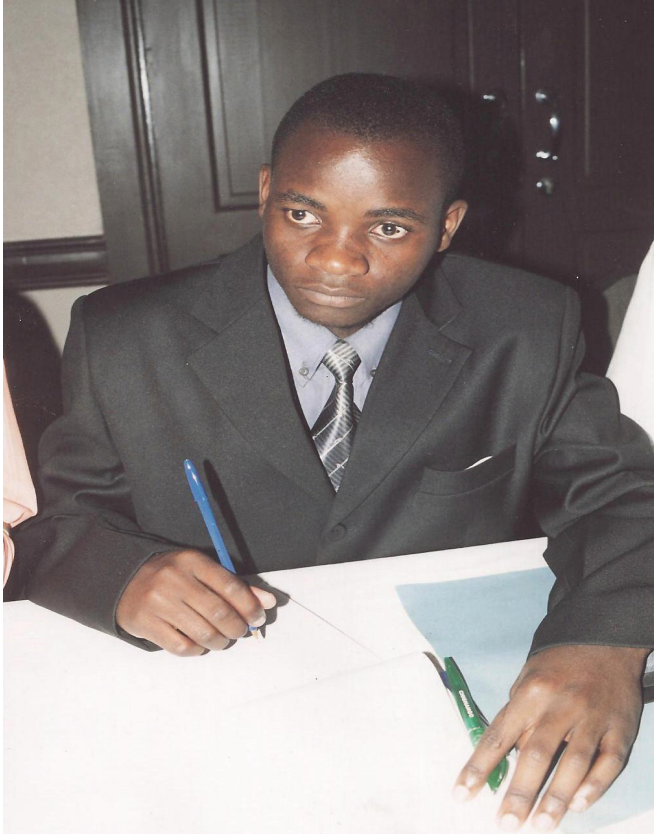


A Deeper Look..... looking into the lives of people and projects that are making a difference in Malawi.....

Medical Rights Watch promoting safe health care for both patients and practitioners

Titus Divala is the founding President of Medical Rights Watch, he talks to Thengo Kavinya about the aims of the organization



On 11th April 2008 the Medical Rights Watch (MRW), the first and only health organization in Malawi, whose main objective is to promote the protection and preservation of rights and responsibilities of patients and health workers, was launched at College of Medicine in Blantyre. The Association is a student's initiative, borne out of Bioethics lectures that are part of training at the College. Thengo Kavinya found out more about this organization from this interview with the Association President Titus Divala.

"Medical Rights Watch came into the minds of students in 2006 after we completed the bioethics course. We realized that this was a very important course in the medical field and that there was need for it to be put in practice". Titus explained that patients usually have little or no knowledge about medical ethics; and this is what encouraged them to form the group so that they could fill in this gap. "After we saw that only few people know about ethics, which we take in the 1st and 2nd year of the medical degree program, we developed an interest to come up with ways of trying to impart this knowledge. I approached five of my friends and we went to see Prof Mfutso Bengo who

is also Director of Centre of Bioethics in Southern Africa (CEBESA). He encouraged and inspired us greatly. From there we talked to Paul Ndebele who developed the vision, the constitution and the objectives of the Association".

Titus added that trust between patients and the health care system is a requirement for good health care "We know that each year many Malawians go through a bad experience at the hands of health care system and there have been cases when health care practitioners have reported being abused by patients that is why MRW has been formed in order to fight for safe health care for both patients and practitioners".

The president reveals that his major responsibilities at the organization include opening up opportunities for the organization, linking up with other human rights organizations, especially in the health fraternity and overseeing operations of the organization at large. "The major responsibilities is to make sure that everything is in place and that we are formulating our projects. More importantly, I need to make sure that everyone in the organization is doing his work properly and that we are adhering to our constitution".

Asked on what major challenges the organization is facing currently the President revealed that they do not have partners as this is the first health organization in the country. "I feel we need to have many partners so that we share and from there it will be easy for us to move forward. Government should also come forward to help us as we are only relying on internal funding at the moment". He added that he feels government should work in partnership with MRW so that it should assist it in dissemination of information to the public.

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A first born in the family of four, Titus was born on 25 June 1986. He comes from Madisi in Dowa and did his primary school at Mkanda in Mchinji and got selected to Mchinji Secondary School before he made it for premed at the College of Medicine in 2004. Apart from being the President for Medical Rights Watch, Titus has also held several leadership positions which include being the President of the University Malawi Students Union from 2006-2007 and was also a co-founder and first president of the Book Bridge Construction, an organization at College of Medicine which makes

sure that students who lose their books at the College get them back. During free time Titus revealed that he likes following current affairs, listening to R&B music and likes playing chess.