

**ACRONYMS**

CBR	-	Community Based Rehabilitation
CONGOMA	-	Council for Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi
DPOs	-	Disabled Persons Organizations
FEDOMA	-	Federation of Disability Organisations in Malawi
ILO	-	International Labour Organisation
MACODA	-	Malawi Council for Disability Affairs
MACOHA	-	Malawi Council for the Handicapped
MANAD	-	Malawi National Association of the Deaf
MAP	-	Malawi Against Physical Disabilities
MSDPWD	-	Ministry of Social Development and Persons with Disabilities
MUB	-	Malawi Union of the Blind
NACCODI	-	National Coordinating Committee on Disability Issues
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organisation
SADC	-	Southern Africa Development Community
UN	-	United Nations
WHO	-	World Health Organisation

## **NATIONAL POLICY ON EQUALISATION OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

### **DEFINITION OF TERMS:**

Below are definitions as used in this document:

- a) *Accessibility: Easily available to all; capability to be seen and/or used by all regardless of economic, social, physical or other limitations.*
- b) *Assistive Devices and Support Systems: Appropriate aids, appliances, technologies and other support systems that facilitate better functioning of persons with disabilities.*
- c) *Community Based Rehabilitation: A comprehensive approach to rehabilitation that maximises the involvement and participation of persons with disabilities, their families and communities in programme design and implementation while maximising the use of available local resources and services.*
- d) *Social Construct of Disability: The stigma attached to disability, which disadvantages and restricts participation in activities, which is more pronounced when society takes little or no account of persons with impairments, and excludes them from mainstream activities. This working definition is in line with the objectives of the National Disability Policy.*
- e) *Discrimination: Different treatment accorded to different persons attributable on the basis of race, colour, sex, disability, religion etc*
- f) *Equalisation of Opportunities: Process through which the various systems of society and the environment are made available and accessible to all persons with disabilities.*
- g) *Federation of Disability Organisations in Malawi (FEDOMA): The Umbrella body of organisations of persons with disabilities.*

- h) Impairment: Any loss or limitations of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function.
- i) Malawi Council for Disability Affairs (MACODA): A statutory arm of government with two pronged functions of regulation and implementation.
- j. Minimum Disability Package: A planned range of services and support systems that facilitate the full participation of persons with disabilities in human development as indicated in (b) above
- j) National Coordinating Committee on Disability Issues (NACCODI): A national forum of all stakeholders on disability issues.
- k) Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs): Organisations formed by persons with disabilities themselves to advocate for their rights.
- l) Medical definition of Persons with disabilities: Any person who, by reason of any impairment of the mind, senses or body, congenital or acquired, is unable to participate fully in regular education, occupation and recreation, or who, by reason of such impairment, require special assistance or training to enable him/her to participate in regular, mainstream or inclusive education, occupation or recreation and other spheres of life.
- m) Rehabilitation: A goal-oriented process aimed at enabling a person with impairment to reach an optimum mental, physical and or social functional level, thus providing him/her with the tools to improve his/her own life.
- n) Special Needs Education: A system for providing a conducive environment for learners who may not benefit much from the regular education system.
- o) Society for all: An environment where all citizens have equal opportunities to participate and realize their potentials and goals in life.
- p) The Ministry: The Ministry of Social Development and Persons with Disabilities.
- q) Persons with Disabilities: Refer to boys, girls, men and women with impairments

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Disability is a cross-cutting issue. It effects and is affected by all aspects of life namely, economic, social, cultural, political, environmental and technological. A comprehensive policy and action plan to address disability issues and their effects on persons with disabilities should be based, therefore, on a thorough analysis of the afore-mentioned factors. A development and human rights approach to disability as opposed to a welfare, charity and philanthropic approach promotes the creation of equal opportunities. Disabilities in Malawi have to be enumerated and their geographic location, age categories, gender, ethnic inclinations, and intensity of occurrence determined. To tackle disability issues effectively their causal factors, effects on society, and on those with disabilities need to be fully explored and appreciated.

Malawi as a member of the United Nations system and other international and sub-regional bodies, such as SADC, has acceded to several international and sub-regional agreements, declarations, protocols and instruments that commit it to implement and follow certain actions and norms of import for persons with disabilities in the country. United Nations has put in place the principles of participation, integration and equalisation of opportunities in the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons. It also set the UN Standard Rules for the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. In addition, Article 2 of the ILO Convention No. 159 on the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons states that “each member shall in accordance with national conditions, practice and possibilities, formulate, implement and periodically review a national policy on vocational rehabilitation and employment of disabled persons.” The UN Standard Rules that recognize the necessity of addressing both the individual needs of persons with disabilities and the shortcomings of society provided a very useful tool in the development of the policy.

The development of the policy has been inspired by the Constitution of Malawi and other national policies, such as, Vision 2020 and the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (MPRSP). The constitution provides for support to persons with disabilities as a principle of national policy through:

- i) Greater access to public places

- ii) Fair opportunities in employment; and
- iii) The fullest possible participation in all spheres of Malawian Society.

Poverty reduction is the centrepiece of government development policy. In line with this policy, both the Vision 2020 and the MPRSP recognize the need to address the root causes and structural factors of poverty in an effort to reduce it amongst Malawians. The majority of persons with disabilities more especially women live in rural areas and are subjected to abject poverty. The key aspect of the equalisation policy, therefore, is to recognize and develop the capabilities and potential of women and men with disabilities to:

- i) Increase their productive capacity,
- ii) Remove barriers which limit their participation in society; and
- iii) Improve social, economic and environmental conditions that limit their access to decision-making processes.

The situation analysis that follows shows that there are a number of stakeholders trying to address disability issues in Malawi. Their efforts are aimed at ensuring that persons with disabilities can lead decent lives. These stakeholders face various challenges. The institutional arrangements for dealing with issues of disability need to be examined to ensure capacity building and effective utilisation of the scarce resources.

One of the weaknesses of the institutional set-up is the absence of a national disability policy. This has resulted in the lack of sound direction for all stakeholders. Thus, the development of this *Policy on Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities* is a milestone in government's efforts to mainstream disability issues. An Act of Parliament to provide the legal basis for this Policy would be significant in effectively addressing the issues and problems that affect persons with disabilities.

The situation analysis of the status of persons with disabilities helped to identify challenges and key policy areas. The identified policy areas include disability prevention, early identification and intervention, rehabilitation, accessibility, transport, information and communication, education and training, **economic empowerment**, social welfare and social protection; self representation and participation, sports, recreation and entertainment, housing, research and appropriate technology and **HIV/AIDS**. The need for capacity building and wide public education is also highlighted. The policy has developed objectives and strategies for each of these areas.

## **1.1 Development of the Disability Policy: The Consultative Process**

This policy document is a product of broad-based bottom up consultative process. The process started with the establishment of a core team that conducted the literature review and produced a working document. An external consultant was engaged to facilitate the consultative process that involved individual interviews, focus group discussions, three regional and one national consultative workshop. In all these phases of the process, women and men from various levels and sectors of the community were involved reflecting the cross cutting nature and prevalence of disability in Malawi. The people involved in the processes included:

- Female and male persons with disabilities themselves in their individual capacity or as representatives of organisations of persons with disabilities.
- Government officers from different ministries and agencies.
- Key stakeholders that included different development agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the civil society, the private sector, and development partners.

The process provided valuable input to shape the strategic orientations of the Policy.

## **2.0 SITUATION ANALYSIS**

### **2.1 NATURE AND MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM**

Malawi has people with various kinds of disabilities. We have not had reliable statistics on the situation of persons with disabilities for a long period. The last national study done in 1983 revealed that 2.9 % of the population composed of persons with disabilities, 54% being males and 46% being females. It was also found that 45% were in the 15 – 45 age category and 24% were 50 years or older. 90% of them lived in rural areas with little or no access to rehabilitation services. However, a recent study on the Living Conditions among People with Activity Limitations conducted by the Federation

of Disability Organisations in Malawi (FEDOMA), the Centre for Social Research and SINTEF in 2003 shows that 4.18% of the population consists of persons with disabilities, 51% being males and 48% females. The study further shows that access to education is restricted to persons with disabilities especially those with sensory and mental impairments. The level of unemployment among persons with disabilities is higher. In general women score lower on many of the indicators of the level of living conditions. Individuals with mental/emotional impairments experience activity limitations in social participation to a greater degree than do others with other types of impairments. Based on the statistics of the recent study, it is estimated that there are close to 0.5 million people with disabilities in the country. There is still, however, need to conduct a comprehensive disability survey in order to determine the accurate numbers of people with disabilities, types of disabilities and their prevalence, geographic coverage and age distribution.

## **2.2 POVERTY AND DISABILITY**

In Malawi poverty is widespread, deep and severe. There is a close link between poverty and disability in the sense that poverty often causes disability and disability increases poverty. This situation has been recognized in the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (MPRSP). Under Pillar 3; Improving the Quality of Life of the Most Vulnerable: Action will be taken to “ensure that the quality of life of the most vulnerable is improved and maintained at an acceptable level by providing moderate support to the transcend poor and substantial transfers to the chronically poor.”

## **2.3 CHILDREN AND WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES**

Children and women with disabilities experience greater discrimination and high levels of exclusion from the mainstream society. Women with disability are subjected to dual discrimination; first based on their gender which assign them a lower status and secondly, they are further devalued because of how society perceives disability and are in some instances discriminated against by fellow non-disabled women. Similarly, children with disabilities are severely disadvantaged by their dependence on the goodwill of their parents and guardians for them to access the very limited early intervention and rehabilitation services that are available in the country.

## **2.4 BARRIERS**

Disability itself is not the major obstacle but rather it is the environmental, institutional, attitudinal and economic barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from participating fully and being excluded from the mainstream of society. For example:

- a) **Environmental Barriers:** These include inaccessible public and private buildings, such as schools, offices, factories, shops, transport, information and communication systems. These shut the persons with disabilities out and restrict their movements and freedom of association. That is:
- Most public buildings are not easily accessible for persons with disabilities; for example, there are no ramps in most buildings.
  - The educational, social, health, transport and residential arrangements made by local and central governments or voluntary organisations are often inadequate and uncoordinated. They also do not meet the actual needs of persons with disabilities. As a result persons with disabilities are not empowered and remain dependent.
  - As a group, persons with disabilities do not have equal access to services and facilities available to the rest of the society. Consequently, they are among the least nourished, healthy, educated and employed. They are subjected to a long history of neglect, isolation, segregation, poverty, deprivation, charity and pity.
- b) **Institutional Barriers:** These include expulsion, exclusion and segregation from key social institutions, such as education, employment, health, law and recreation. Direct and indirect discrimination against persons with disabilities prevent them from participating fully in all spheres of life. Thus:
- The lack of reliable information on disability issues has affected planning and management of disability related programmes. There is limited awareness on disability issues among policy makers, planners, community leaders and the general public. Consequently, most persons with disabilities continue to be marginalized, discriminated against, and lead a very poor quality of life.
  - Public information is not readily available in accessible formats for persons with different disabilities for example; HIV/AIDS information is not available in braille.

- The public transport system does not have reserved seats for persons with disabilities and those who use wheel chairs are made to pay double fares.
  - Disability is not integrated in most government development plans, policies, and programmes at both district and national levels. Similarly, institutions of higher learning like universities, research institutions and government parastatals do not have deliberate policies on disability.
  - The existing institutional framework for disability management is not strong enough in terms of funding, staffing and legal backing. Existing mechanisms for collaboration, co-ordination and networking among the different stakeholders in service delivery are weak.
  - There are some ministerial policy guidelines on disability in the Ministries of Gender, Child Welfare and Community Services; Labour and Vocational Training; Health; Education; and Sports, Youth and Culture; and to a limited extent, Transport and Public Works; Lands, Housing and Surveys; and Information and Tourism. These policy guidelines are however, not comprehensive and cover only one or a few departments of the respective ministry's programmes.
- c) **Attitudinal Barriers:** Persons with disabilities in Malawi are treated with prejudice of varying degrees, regarded as incapable, inadequate, resentful, bitter, pathetic, tragic, pitiable, abusive, aggressive, criminal, unhealthy, dependent on charity, costly for society to support, drain on family resources, inferior, unemployable. As a result:
- Most of the problems that are experienced by persons with disabilities, their families and the community are a result of the myths and retrogressive beliefs that are held about disability, like the view that disability is a curse from God. There is social stigmatisation for persons with disabilities that in turn force them into exclusion from mainstream public life. The excessive over-protection of some persons with disabilities lead to the development of a dependency syndrome which further prevent them from accessing social-economic services. This does not only affect the individuals but also their families. Economically, disability may affect the family in the following ways:
    - i) Minimal contribution by the persons with disabilities to the family income;

- ii) Diversion of the labour force within the family in caring for the person with disability;
- iii) Straining limited family resources to provide special care for some persons with disabilities.

- In the majority of cases, persons with disabilities are treated as sick people who deserve sympathy, care and cure. The end result is that persons with disabilities are marginalized.

d) **Economic Barriers:** Persons with disabilities are disadvantaged in terms of access to loans; land and property ownership; business ventures and employment avenues resulting in the majority of persons with disabilities living in abject poverty with no access to resources and income.

- Poverty alleviation programmes in most cases fail to specifically identify persons with disabilities as a target group. In the instance where they have been targeted, persons with disabilities still face lots of obstacles in being recognised as a group with entitlements.

## **2.5 DISABILITY AS A DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE**

The advent of the multiparty system of government has brought forward issues of human rights i.e. rights that an individual is born with and are inalienable. This has led to a paradigm shift from viewing disability as a welfare and charity issue to a human rights and development issue. The welfare and charity approach to disability sees persons with disabilities as objects of pity and charity who are always in constant need of caring. The human rights and development approach on the other hand, recognises that persons with disabilities have a right to respect and human dignity and should therefore be empowered to play their rightful role in society.

As a human rights issue, the policy recognises that to compete favourably, persons with disabilities should have equal access to education, training, employment, health and other aspects of life.

As a development issue the policy recognises that persons with disabilities live in abject poverty. In line with government's poverty reduction policy the challenge is to develop strategies to empower persons with disabilities and reduce their poverty so that they can be self-reliant and contribute towards national development.

### **3.0 CHALLENGES**

Challenges for the disability sector are many and varied. They are a consequence of both domestic and international factors. The following challenges are the basis of the issues of concern.

#### **3.1 Institutional challenges: Capacity building**

Among the stakeholders in the disability sector are persons with disabilities and their associations, service providers both in government and non-governmental organisations. These play various roles and the policy aims at cementing these roles and giving them a strategic direction.

- Capacity needs to be built for the disability sector to be able to analyse its situation and status in society, to present its issues effectively to the larger society and to lobby various stakeholders locally and internationally in order to enact appropriate legislation to guide citizens, private sector and all other stakeholders in responding to the needs of persons with disabilities.
- Capacity needs to be raised in various skills and technical capabilities such as resource mobilisation, networking and programme analysis and implementation.
- Although the majority of persons with disabilities are found in rural areas the services have tended to be urban based. There is need to consolidate and extend CBR program to rural areas where the majority of the people live.
- Due to the lack of capacity to deliver services as required by persons with disabilities, there is need for a “*Minimum Disability Package*”. This will ensure provision of a range of basic services and support systems to enable persons with disabilities to cope with the demands of their daily living. This calls for the allocation of necessary resources based on data and information on disability types and on affordable cost effective interventions.
- To ensure effective and sustainable planning, management and implementation of disability programmes it is imperative that the disability stakeholders endeavour to strengthen their capacity in the following priority areas:
  - Research – To establish adequate, appropriate, quantitative and qualitative information on disability in Malawi.

- Trained personnel – To implement and extend programmes to persons with disabilities.
- Management – within stakeholder structures to enable efficient co-ordination and collaboration of disability services with persons with disabilities themselves taking the lead.

## **3.2 Socio-economic Challenges**

### **3.2.1 Poverty and Under Development**

In line with government's poverty reduction policy the challenge is to develop strategies to empower persons with disabilities in order to reduce their poverty. There is need for interventions to address the needs of children with disabilities. Promotion of gender responsive and disability friendly programmes and services will assist to remove inequalities that exist in the society. To compete favourably, persons with disabilities should have access to education, training in micro-enterprise, access to vocational training opportunities and credit and employment on the open labour market. The challenge is how to **promote the economic empowerment among persons with disabilities and their dependants so that they can live fulfilling lives and contribute to making Malawi a productive and exporting nation.**

### **3.2.2 Attitudinal Problems and Negative Beliefs**

The environmental, institutional, attitudinal and economic barriers, as well as many others factors are the result of prejudice born out of ignorance and misconceptions. It is imperative that strategies for public awareness be developed to eradicate misconceptions about disability. Persons with disabilities must also be offered wider and just opportunities to live independently in society with dignity and freedom to contribute to the richness of society.

### **3.2.3 HIV/AIDS**

**The rapid spread of HIV/AIDS in Malawi is a major national concern. It is estimated that 15% of the Malawian population between 15 and 49 years of age is HIV positive. Persons with disabilities are at a great risk of being infected by HIV/AIDS because they do not easily access relevant information on the pandemic. Girls and women with disabilities are more in danger of being sexually assaulted**

**than other women. The problem is also worsened by some damaging myths linked to HIV/AIDS for example, some people believe that sexual intercourse with a woman with disability will cure them of the virus. The challenge is to ensure that HIV/AIDS information is available in accessible formats to all persons with disabilities.**

### **3.3 Global and Regional Challenges**

Periodically, Malawi is called upon to give an account of its actions under the following UN declarations.

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): a common standard of achievement for securing the effective recognition and observation of human rights and freedoms.
- International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (1966) which Malawi ratified in 1994 provides for enforcement mechanisms, reporting procedures and inter-state complaints procedures
- Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted in 1979 and ratified by Malawi in 1987. This constitutes the international bill of rights for women. It recalls that the elimination of discrimination against women and the promotion of equality between men and women are central principles of the United Nations.
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) that Malawi ratified in 1991 is an international legal instrument that specifically guides countries in the area of child rights. The CRC emphasizes on survival, protection, development and participation of children in matters affecting them.
- African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (1981) which Malawi ratified in 1989 guarantees civil and political rights and also contains enforcement mechanisms to ensure that state parties adhere to its provisions.
- World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (1982): Promotes effective measures for disability prevention, rehabilitation and the realisation of the

goals of full participation of persons with disabilities in social life, development and have equality.

- United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993): The rules reaffirm the concepts and scope of the World Programme of Action and provide an extremely useful tool for disability equity to governments, international agencies and organizations of and for persons with disabilities.

Since many of these agreements are not specifically targeted at persons with disabilities but at development, human rights and governance in general, the disability sector especially persons with disabilities and their organizations need to build capacity to analyse these agreements and determine how they affect issues of disability. Similarly the sector needs capacity to present and negotiate with the government and the international community on its interpretation of these agreements and how they can be enforced.

#### **4.0 THE POLICY**

The aim of the Policy on Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities is to “*integrate fully persons with disabilities in all aspects of life thereby equalise their opportunities in order to enhance their dignity and well being so that they have essentials of life.*”

##### **4.1 Priority Policy Areas:**

- *Prevention, Early Identification and Intervention*
- *Rehabilitation*
- *Accessibility to the Physical Environment*
- *Transport*
- *Information & Communication*
- *Education and Training*
- ***Economic Empowerment***
- *Social Welfare & Social Protection*
- *Self Representation and Participation*
- *Sports, Recreation & Entertainment*
- *Housing*
- *Research and Appropriate Technology*
- *HIV/AIDS*

## **4.2 Sector Objectives and Strategies**

The overriding goal of the Policy is the equalisation of opportunities, abilities and capabilities of persons with disabilities to live and participate fully as other persons in society. To achieve this goal, it is important to ensure that action is taken in the following Sectoral priority policy areas:

### **PRIORITY POLICY AREA 1:**

#### **Prevention, Early Identification and Intervention Objective**

- Facilitate the development of a coordinated system for the prevention, detection and intervention of disabilities and reduction of secondary disabilities.

#### **Strategies**

- Undertake research to continuously update disability information
- Make available current information to planners and stakeholders for appropriate interventions and programmes
- Develop and implement appropriate screening tools for the identification of disabilities
- Facilitate the training and availability of personnel to implement screening and health care messages.
- Increase the capacity of trained medical and other rehabilitation personnel
- Promote occupational health and safety in the work place
- Strengthen measures to prevent risky social activities and practices
- Encourage mass awareness about the causes and prevention of disabling conditions.

**PRIORITY POLICY AREA 2:**

**Rehabilitation**

**Objective**

- Promote availability of the necessary equipment, skills and services to all persons with disabilities to enable them achieve and maintain their optimum physical, sensory, intellectual and social functional level.

**Strategies**

- Increase access and availability of trained rehabilitation personnel
- Facilitate availability of adequate and accessible medical and other rehabilitation services and facilities
- Equip social workers with necessary counselling techniques in health, social, education and employment issues.
- Facilitate the production and availability of quality adaptive equipment and assistive aids.
- Promote access to vocational training and socio-economic advancement.
- Provide minimum disability package
- Consolidate and extend CBR programmes

**PRIORITY POLICY AREA 3:**

**Accessibility**

**Objective**

- Promote easy access to the physical environment

**Strategies**

- Develop building standards and guidelines including internal furnishings that are appropriate and accessible for persons with disabilities.
- Produce regulations for stakeholders compliance
- Encourage owners of public property to adapt existing buildings

#### **PRIORITY POLICY AREA 4:**

##### **Transport**

##### **Objectives**

- Develop an accessible transport system for persons with disabilities
- Develop an appropriate transport system for persons with disabilities
- Develop an affordable transport system for persons with disabilities

##### **Strategies**

- Design public transport facilities and internal furnishings to allow easy access and convenience for persons with disabilities
- Support innovative designs for appropriate modes of transport for private use.
- Make available and accessible travel information, signs, symbols and warning signals for all users with disabilities.
- Undertake disability awareness among public transport staff and encourage the use of sign language and alternative communication systems
- Install appropriate and adequate road safety measures for persons with disabilities.
- Allocate appropriate parking lots for persons with disabilities in public and private car parks.

#### **PRIORITY POLICY AREA 5:**

## **Information and Communication**

### **Objectives**

- Undertake disability awareness for full involvement of persons with disabilities in society
- Improve access to public information and communication by persons with disabilities

### **Strategies**

- Provide guidelines on disability friendly terminology for use by the media and general public.
- Facilitate availability and accessibility of public communication and service points to women and men with disabilities.
- Promote the availability of information and education materials in accessible formats to persons with disabilities.
- Establish a national sign language.
- Research and develop alternative communication systems for persons with communication difficulties.
- Provide equipment and technology to reproduce accessible materials.
- Promote public awareness on disability.

## **PRIORITY POLICY AREA 6**

### **Education and Training**

#### **Objective**

- Promote equal access and inclusion of persons with disabilities in education and training programmes

## **Strategies**

- Design and develop appropriate technologies, assistive devices and learning materials.
- Provide free appropriate technology, equipment and resources to assist boys, girls, men and women with disabilities with their learning needs
- Review and reform the delivery of the national curriculum and examination system to cater for the needs of learners with disabilities, where necessary modify the curriculum to be competency and modular based for groups such as learners with intellectual challenges.
- Adapt and adopt communication systems appropriate for learners with special education needs in all centers of learning
- Implement appropriate education and training mechanisms for persons with learning difficulties.
- Train specialist educators and ensure that their training is recognized.
- Incorporate special needs education in the teacher- training curriculum.
- Establish accessible specialist education resource centres through out the country.
- Support and encourage inclusive education.
- Promote research in special needs education.

## **PRIORITY POLICY AREA 7:**

### **Economic Empowerment**

#### **Objectives**

- **Increase access to technical, vocational and entrepreneurial training opportunities for persons with disabilities**
- **Improve access to loans and credit facilities for income generating activities**
- **Improve equal access to open employment opportunities for persons with disabilities**

## **Strategies**

- Facilitate adaptation of and provision of support mechanisms to existing vocational training colleges to make them more inclusive and responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities
- Promote development of a national programme of action for vocational guidance, training and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities
- Facilitate the integration of national norms and standards for the training, testing and certification of persons with disabilities into the National Trade Testing.
- Provide training for men and women with disabilities in special and marketable skills
- Support Disabled Persons Organisations engaged in vocational training or sheltered employment
- Promote the removal of barriers and implementation of enabling and inclusive mechanisms within existing and proposed small, micro and medium enterprises
- Provide access to business loans for both men and women with disabilities
- Encourage development of cottage industries
- Facilitate the development and implementation of enabling legislation on employment equity that will protect job-seekers and workers with disabilities against unfair discrimination
- Promote an inclusive work environment that accommodates diversity
- Encourage employers to comply with the stated quotas
- Encourage employers to provide necessary adaptive equipment to enable men and women employees with disabilities to do their jobs effectively.
- Promote adaptation of work premises to guarantee safe access for male and female employees with disabilities.
- Maintain a gender disaggregated data bank of available services capturing the level of job placement.

**PRIORITY POLICY AREA 8:**

**Social Welfare and Social Protection**

**Objective**

- Develop a coordinated and effective legislative and administrative welfare system framework to enable persons with disabilities live self-sufficient and independent lives.

**Strategies**

- Develop an effective referral system for persons with disabilities to access services
- Provide a co-ordinated and equitable system of social security to meet the basic needs of persons with disabilities
- Provide information to persons with disabilities for accessing benefits that they are entitled to.
- Facilitate availability of effective feedback mechanisms for co-ordinated social protection and safety nets.
- Enforce systems to protect the rights of persons with disabilities against any form of discrimination and abuse in society.

**PRIORITY POLICY AREA 9:**

**Self-Representation and Participation**

**Objective**

- Promote effective self-representation, participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities at all levels in decision-making, planning and development activities.

**Strategies**

- Support and promote the work of organizations of persons with disabilities

- Empower persons with disabilities through counselling, education and training
- Encourage public awareness campaigns
- Improve representation of persons with disabilities in leadership structures
- Promote the involvement of persons with disabilities and their families in the provision of services
- Facilitate the establishment of mechanisms to improve access to election polls by persons with disabilities
- Create avenues for self-expression.

### **PRIORITY POLICY AREA 10:**

#### **Sports, recreation and entertainment**

##### **Objective**

- Promote the development, participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in sports, leisure, entertainment, and crafts..

##### **Strategies**

- Make available adequate numbers of competent teachers and trainers in sports, arts and craft for participants with disabilities
- Promote accessibility of sports, entertainment and arts facilities to persons with disabilities.
- Improve access and availability to sports and leisure equipment for persons with disabilities.
- Increase public awareness and profile of persons with disabilities in sports and the arts.

### **PRIORITY POLICY AREA 11:**

**Housing**  
**Objective**

- Improve access to adequate housing for persons with disabilities.

**Strategies**

- **Provide building materials at subsidised costs on a case by case basis to qualifying men and women with disabilities**
- Provide men and women with disabilities with access to secure land tenure, housing, and property rights.
- Eliminate prejudice and discrimination in housing transactions and provision of services.

**PRIORITY POLICY AREA 12:**

**Research and Appropriate Technology**

**Objective**

- Promote and support disability research and the development and application of appropriate technologies for disability programmes.

**Strategies**

- Facilitate availability of financial and technical assistance to key stakeholders, universities and other research institutions to conduct disability related research
- Encourage innovations in appropriate technologies
- Facilitate the co-ordination and integration of gender disaggregated disability data collection and research in national census, house hold surveys and other relevant studies
- Disseminate research findings to planners and stakeholders of disability programmes

- Establish a national disability user-friendly information management system.

### **PRIORITY POLICY AREA 13:**

#### **HIV/AIDS**

##### **Objectives**

- **Promote access to HIV/AIDS information and health care by persons with disabilities**
- **Empower persons with disabilities to develop and maintain safer sexual and reproductive health practices**

##### **Strategies**

- **Increase awareness on HIV/AIDS among various categories of persons with disabilities**
- **Utilise Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) for disseminating information about HIV/AIDS to persons with disabilities**
- **Encourage persons with disabilities to go for voluntary counselling and testing (VCT)**
- **Support relevant projects/programmes which include orphans with disabilities**
- **Encourage discussion and openness about sex and sexuality among persons with disabilities**
- **Promote safer sexual and reproductive health practices among persons with disabilities**

## **5.0 IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS**

The policy implementation plans will have short, medium and long-term outcomes that are in consonant with the country's socio-economic status. The National Disability Policy therefore needs to be harmonized with existing and new policies and legislation in various areas that impact on persons with disabilities.

The successful implementation of the policy strategies will require substantial amount of financial and material resources. These resources are expected to come from Government and other development partners. The use of existing and available resources and facilities is encouraged as the most cost-effective way of implementing the policy.

It is logical, therefore, to assume that coordinated efforts of several governmental and non-governmental organizations are imperative for the successful realization of the policy objectives. To achieve this, it is important to revitalize the National Coordinating Committee on Disability Issues (NACCODI), under the leadership of the Ministry Responsible for Persons with Disabilities. The responsibilities of the Committee are to:

- Ensure the availability and commitment of resources
- Negotiate key performance indicators with all role players
- Ensure effective reporting and monitoring

## **5.2 Key Roles and Responsibilities**

An appropriate and efficient administrative structure and system shall be put in place to manage, coordinate and oversee the implementation of the National Policy. The following are the roles and responsibilities of structures at macro level, namely, Ministry, other Ministries, MACODA, FEDOMA and NACCODI and Local Government.

### **5.2.1 THE MINISTRY**

The Ministry as the political and government administrative head on disability issues shall be responsible for policy formulation and review; and oversee the policy implementation. It will also ensure that disability issues are mainstreamed in all sectors.

### **5.2.2 OTHER GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES**

All government ministries, departments and state bodies have a responsibility to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access, rights and responsibilities as any other

Malawian. This would enable persons with disabilities to play a full and participatory role in national development. The successful integration of persons with disabilities in the mainstream of society, therefore, requires a multi-disciplinary approach in government. The following ministries will play a very key role in the implementation of the policy:

- Health
- Education
- Gender Child Welfare and Community Services
- Labour and Vocational Training
- Local Government and Rural Development
- Economic Planning and Development
- Transport and Public Works
- Lands, Housing and Surveys
- Information and Tourism
- Agriculture
- Trade and Private Sector Development
- Sports, Youth and Culture
- Justice and Constitutional Affairs
- Finance

Each of these Ministries will according to its mandate ensure that the needs of persons with disabilities and disability issues in general are taken on board in its plans, policies, legislation, programmes and activities. They will also take the lead in giving effect to the identified disability sector policy objectives falling under their jurisdiction. In doing this, the Ministries will closely work together with the coordinating Ministry, MACODA, organisations of and for persons with disabilities and other relevant stakeholders.

### **5.2.3 MACODA**

The Malawi Council on Disability Affairs (MACODA) shall be the main regulatory and implementing agency of government policy on disability issues. It will also register NGOs dealing with disability issues.

### **5.2.3 NACCODI**

This is a forum for all stakeholders on disability issues that provides an opportunity for networking and resource mobilisation.

#### **5.2.4 SERVICE PROVIDERS**

These are organisations that provide support services to persons with disabilities. They include organisations of persons with disabilities whose primary role is advocacy.

#### **5.2.6 LOCAL GOVERNMENT/ STRUCTURES**

The assemblies and local structures represent people at the grass root level. Disability issues shall be reported through these channels. The assemblies shall then implement necessary interventions to address the issues and only seek outside assistance if the problems cannot be handled locally.