



UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

HIV/AIDS POLICY

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GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. A&A Academic and Administrative staff
2. AIDS Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
3. ARVs Anti-retroviral therapy
4. CTS Clerical, Technical and Support staff
5. HIV Human Immunodeficiency Virus
6. NAC National AIDS Commission
7. NSF National Strategic Framework
8. OIs Opportunistic Infections
9. PMTCT Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission
10. STIs Sexually Transmitted Infections
11. UACU University AIDS Coordinating Unit
12. UNIMA University of Malawi
13. VCT Voluntary Counselling and Testing

FOREWORD

The extent of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Malawi poses special challenges to all institutions, including universities. In adopting this policy and through its implementation, the University of Malawi (UNIMA) wishes to effectively respond and contribute to the national response to the epidemic in Malawi.

As a University we can not ignore the threat of HIV/AIDS to our students, staff and their families. Our students and young staff members fall in an age group which is particularly vulnerable to HIV infection.

The University of Malawi would like to take a leading role in mainstreaming HIV/AIDS in its core activities of teaching, research and management, including service provision. Our policy seeks to put in place strategies that will among other things address discrimination, destigmatisation, encourage voluntary counselling and testing and integrate HIV/AIDS into the university curriculum. It will also promote community outreach programmes.

I want to express special thanks to the team that led the development process and members of staff who participated in the workshops that led to the development of this policy document. The rest of the university must now own this document and see its effective implementation, coordinated by the University AIDS Coordinating Unit (UACU).

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PREAMBLE

HIV/AIDS has become a major worldwide epidemic. By the end of 2001, it was estimated that 37 million adults and 3 million children under the age of 15 were living with HIV/AIDS. About 25 million people had died of AIDS, leaving 14 million orphaned children.

Sub-Saharan Africa is the region most affected by HIV/AIDS. By the end of 2001 more than 28.5 million people were infected, representing 70% of the total number of HIV infected persons. More than 80% of HIV infected women and 90% of orphaned children were living in Sub-Saharan Africa. Here, more than half of new infections occur in young people 15 to 24 years of age; teenage girls are five to six times more likely to be infected than boys of similar age.

Malawi, like its neighbours in the Sub-Saharan Africa region, has been severely affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Since the first case of HIV/AIDS was identified in May, 1985 epidemiological data has continued to show a rapidly escalating epidemic. By the end of 2001, the National HIV sero-prevalence was estimated at 10.6%, translating to about 800,000 people living with HIV/AIDS, 60% being women. About 300,000 adults and children are estimated to have died of AIDS or AIDS related diseases. The greatest impact in the public sector has been in education, agriculture and health. The poverty status of many homes has been worsened by large numbers of orphaned children.

Earlier efforts to respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Malawi were strengthened by the formulation of the HIV/AIDS National Strategic Framework (NSF). The framework calls for an expanded multi-sectoral response to HIV/AIDS/STIs, including the provision of Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT), Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT), treatment of opportunistic infections (OIs) and anti-retroviral therapy (ARVs).

In general there is no current accurate data on HIV/AIDS status in the University of Malawi. However, in keeping with the national trends for HIV/AIDS, records show increasing number of deaths amongst Academic, Administrative (A&A) and Clerical, Technical and Support (CTS) staff in all

the constituent colleges of the University of Malawi. These deaths have affected teaching programmes, the financial situation and productivity of the University of Malawi. Observations also show that graduates from the UNIMA colleges die within a few years after completing their study programmes. Among UNIMA students, the last HIV sero-prevalence in 1992 showed that 2% of male students and between 4 and 7% of female students entering the University for the first time were HIV positive.

The University of Malawi needs to adopt a proactive approach to matters of HIV/AIDS as they relate to staff and students. The University further needs to take a leading role in the national response to HIV/AIDS through its core business of teaching, research and management. In addition, there is need to undertake outreach services to the communities surrounding the constituent colleges. This policy document will guide the University of Malawi to respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, effectively and efficiently.

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the policy is to guide the University of Malawi to effectively respond and contribute to the national response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic by formulating programmes for the management of HIV/AIDS in the University and the local communities.

The specific objectives are to:

- Provide HIV/AIDS related information and education to university students and staff and the local communities.
- Promote compassion and a supportive environment within the University of Malawi that reduces stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS.
- Facilitate the provision of youth-friendly VCT and STI management services.
- Facilitate the provision of services that prolong the lives of staff and students living with HIV/AIDS, including prompt management of OIs.
- Promote and facilitate research on HIV/AIDS in the University of Malawi.
- Facilitate the mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS into all University of Malawi programmes and curricula.
- Strengthen collaboration with donors and other local and international agencies.
- Facilitate the sourcing and provision of adequate resources for HIV/AIDS activities within the University of Malawi.
- Promote the spirit of non remunerated voluntary blood donation within the University community in order to assist those in need of transfusion services.
- Facilitate the establishment of a functional and sustainable university-wide HIV/AIDS coordinating unit (UACU).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The University of Malawi HIV/AIDS Policy shall be guided by and be based on the following principles:

1. Promotion and protection of human rights
 - The dignity and human rights of all staff and students shall be promoted, protected and respected, irrespective of their HIV status, in keeping with the constitution of Malawi, International Human Rights instruments and other relevant statutes.
2. Non-discrimination and de-stigmatization
 - People living with HIV/AIDS, their families and partners shall not suffer from any form of unfair discrimination.
 - Stigmatization against any person on the basis of real or perceived HIV status shall be discouraged. Protection shall be provided against such stigmatization.
3. Confidentiality
 - All information concerning the HIV status of staff and students shall be kept in strict confidentiality.
4. HIV/AIDS interventions
 - Interventions shall be guided by evidence-based “best practices”.
5. Multi-sectoral involvement
 - All sectors of the University of Malawi shall be involved in the education, prevention, protection and fight against HIV/AIDS.
6. Gender equality and equity
 - Equality and equity between men and women, boys and girls shall be promoted among staff and students of the University.
7. Outreach
 - Recognition shall be taken of the fact that the University is part of the wider Malawi community.
8. Conformity to the National HIV/AIDS policy
 - This policy shall comply with the National HIV/AIDS policy.

POLICY STATEMENTS

1. Commitment

- a. The University is committed to addressing HIV/AIDS in a positive, supportive and non-discriminatory manner by providing leadership and resources for interventions within the University and the local communities.
- b. The University shall establish a University-wide HIV/AIDS coordinating unit (UACU) and ensure its functioning and sustainability – see Appendix 1
- c. The office of the Pro-Vice Chancellor shall be responsible for the coordination of HIV/AIDS activities in the University.

2. Confidentiality

- a. The University shall ensure that information regarding the HIV/AIDS status of all staff and students will be kept in a confidential manner.
- b. Information on the HIV/AIDS status of an individual staff or student shall not be released to third parties without his/her prior written consent unless such disclosure is required by law. In the latter case the staff member or student shall be informed.

3. Discrimination

- a. Staff and students shall respect human rights of all individuals irrespective of their real or perceived HIV status.
- b. No prejudicial or discriminatory attitude or behaviour to people living with HIV/AIDS shall be tolerated.

4. HIV screening and testing

- a. Potential staff or students shall not be screened and/or tested for HIV status as part of their entry requirements to University employment or education

- b. Staff shall not be HIV tested for promotion or further training. This policy statement does not cover the HIV testing required by a country/institution where the student/staff member may go for further training outside Malawi.
- c. No employment contract shall be terminated on account of HIV status or AIDS alone. The principle of accommodation shall apply (See Policy Statement 5 f)

5. Services for staff and students

a. Education

- The University shall ensure that all students, staff and their families have free access to accurate and up-to-date HIV/AIDS information.
- HIV/AIDS shall be mainstreamed into all University programmes and curricula.
- HIV/AIDS specific modules shall be developed and modified for each University programme to ensure that graduates acquire relevant life skills and competencies; that is, graduates demonstrate adequate understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of HIV/AIDS and its impact on all aspects of humanity.

b. Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT)

- The University shall provide for the students, staff and their families free access to good quality and affordable VCT services.
- Services shall be youth friendly.

c. Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT)

- The University shall provide information on available PMTCT services to all HIV infected pregnant staff and students.

d. Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

- Resources shall be made available for appropriate management of STIs to students, staff and their families.
- Services shall accommodate the interests of young people.

e. Anti-retroviral therapy (ARVs) and Opportunistic infections (OIs).

- To the extent possible, the University shall provide services and drugs at affordable prices to prolong the lives of staff and students living with HIV/AIDS.
- The University shall provide free post-exposure prophylaxis to staff and students who are exposed to HIV infection risk during their lawful activity as staff or students.

f. Accommodation

- To the extent possible, the principle of accommodation shall be implemented for University staff with AIDS. This means that staff with AIDS who are unable to do their normal work due to illness will be offered an alternative job to perform, appropriate to their grade and training.

6. Research

- a. The University shall promote, support and actively participate in HIV/AIDS research.
- b. The University shall develop an updated HIV/AIDS agenda, keep an inventory of past and on-going research and ensure timely dissemination of research findings.
- c. The University shall advocate for the implementation of research findings which positively impact on the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

7. Outreach

The University shall develop programmes which address community needs for information, education, VCT, PMTCT and management of HIV/AIDS.

8. Review of the HIV/AIDS Policy

The University of Malawi HIV/AIDS Policy shall be reviewed periodically in accordance with new information and needs. The UACU shall coordinate such review.

APPENDIX 1

Establishment of the University AIDS Coordinating Unit (UACU): Composition and terms of reference.

As part of the implementation of the UNIMA HIV/AIDS policy there shall be established a University HIV/AIDS coordinating unit.

Goal

- To ensure the effective implementation of the UNIMA HIV/AIDS policy, attainment of its goals and objectives.

Specific objectives

- Raise the awareness of HIV/AIDS and its impact as a problem for the University and the community.
- Advocate for appropriate response to address HIV/AIDS in the University and the community through the provision of adequate resources.
- Promote HIV/AIDS related services for staff and students in the University.
- Act in an advisory capacity to the University and the community
- Promote research, maintain database and disseminate research results on HIV/AIDS.
- Provide liaison with Government, NAC, non-governmental organizations, donor agencies and other institutions.

Reporting mechanisms

- The unit shall be headed by an officer in the Pro-Vice Chancellor's office and will report through him to the Vice Chancellor on a quarterly basis.
- Adhoc specific reports may be called upon as required.

Structure

- An officer shall be appointed to the Pro-Vice Chancellor's office to work full time heading the UACU. He/she shall also be the chairperson for all UACU meetings.
- Each college shall establish a college based HIV/AIDS coordinating committee (CACC).
- The chairpersons of CACCs shall be members of UACU.
- There shall be one member representing research institutions of the University.
- UACU may co-opt other competent persons for specific issues
- There shall be at least two student representatives as part of UACU, elected by the UNIMA student body.

Meetings

- Meetings of UACU shall be held quarterly.
- The UACU chairperson shall however call for special meetings as and when required.
- The office of the Pro-Vice Chancellor shall fund the budget for the UACU meetings and activities.