



REPUBLIC OF MALAWI
NATIONAL POLICY ON ORPHANS AND OTHER VULNERABLE CHILDREN

Orphans are our Children;
Let us support them for a better tomorrow

Ministry of gender and community services
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Lilongwe

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FOREWORD

The problem of orphans in Malawi is as old as the nation itself. However, in the past orphan hood posed no major problems because the traditional family and community social care system were able to help the few orphans who were at serious risk of deprivation. Now, due to HIV/AIDS the number of orphans has increased rapidly placing unmanageable strains on the extended family and the affected communities.

In response to the situation the Government organized a national consultation on the situation of orphans held in 1991, which led to the formation of the National Task Force on (NTFO) to verse ad coordinate orphan care activities in the country. In July 1992, the Task Force on orphan released Policy Guidelines for the care of orphans and coordination of assistance. The Policy Guidelines have been very instrumental in directing government and community responses in providing care and support to orphan. was that orphans should be cared primarily by their extended family relations, The fundamental principle of the Policy Guidelines was that orphans should be cared for primarily by their extended family relations, supported by their communities and community based organizations/support groups (CBOs), NGOs, Faith-based Organization (FBOs), government departments and other concerned parties.

In 1990 the Government signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Declaration of Child Survival, Protection and Development, which resulted in the development of a National Programme of Action for Survival, Protection and Development of children with emphasis on children in difficult circumstances. The signing of CRC mandates the government to protect all vulnerable children.

In April 1996, the Malawi Government launched the National Orphans care Programme (NOCP), which aimed at strengthening the capacities of families and communities to adequately care for orphans and promote programmes of assistance that emphasize community participation and ownership. Community responses and willingness to absorb and care for orphaned children have therefore encouraged the Government to formulate the National Policy on Orphans and other Vulnerable Children (NPOVC).

The key areas covered by the National Policy on orphans and other Vulnerable Children include Provision of Assistance, Coordination, Institutional and Legal Framework, Transparency and Accountability, Monitoring and Evaluation. Care for orphans and other vulnerable children remains the responsibility of families and communities. This policy

emphasizes community-based approaches because they have proved to be highly sustainable. In this regard institutional care for orphans and other vulnerable children should be the last resort.

In order to promote and enhance effective provision of care and support to orphans and other vulnerable children, the implementation of this policy will be guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other human rights instruments. The government therefore calls upon communities and all stakeholders involved in the provision of care to orphans and other vulnerable children to comply with the requirements of this policy, placing importance on care by the extended family system, community based organizations and active community participation.

Lastly, I wish to appeal for the commitment, support and cooperation of all Malawians towards addressing the orphan crisis. I also urge all government agencies, the donor community, NGOs, Faith-based organizations, civil society and communities to get involved and participate in providing care and support to orphans and other vulnerable children in line with this policy. Your dedication and commitment is vital to ensure that orphans and vulnerable children grow up into useful and productive citizens of the Malawi nation.

Dr Bakili Muluzi

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIDS	:	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CBCC	:	Community Based Children Centre
CBO	:	Community Based Organization
CDAs	:	Community Development Assistants
CEDAW	:	Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
COCC	:	Community Orphan Care Committee
CRC	:	Convention on the rights of the Child
DSWO	:	District Social Welfare Officer
EFA	:	Education for all
FBO	:	Faith-based Organization
GOM	:	Government of Malawi
HBC	:	Home Based Care
HIV	:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
NACP	:	National AIDS Control Programme
NEC	:	National Economic Council
NGO	:	Non-Governmental Organisation
NOCP	:	National Orphan Care Programme
NPOVC	:	National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children
NTFO	:	National Task Force on orphans
NSO	:	National Statistics Office
SWAs	:	Social Welfare Assistants
SWC	:	State of the World's Children

SPU	:	Strategic Planning Unit
UNDP	:	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	:	United Nations Children's Fund

Introduction

The Government of Malawi is deeply concerned about the situation of orphans in the country. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is tragically claiming a lot of lives. More people in the productive age group (15 to 49 years) are becoming ill and dying leaving behind the elderly and the young to fend for themselves. Family structures are being disrupted and the continuing high levels of HIV infections mean that the HIV/AIDS pandemic will continue to exert more social and economic pressures on children, families and communities in Malawi.

In the past the orphan problem posed no major challenges to society. However, the numbers of orphaned children has of late increased to crisis proportions requiring interventions by various stakeholders to ensure that they are adequately cared for and protected against all forms of abuse and violence.

According to the National AIDS Control Programme (NACP) AIDS fact sheet, 865,787 HIV cases and 55, 000 AIDS cases were confirmed and reported from 1985 to 1999. Projection on the number of orphans was estimated to go over 800,000 by the year 2000 with AIDS as the major cause of death of their parents.

On the other hand, Malawi is one of the countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa affected by widespread poverty. According to the intergrated household Survey 1998, about 65.3 percent of the population is living in poverty. Poor heath and social indicators like malnutrition, high morbidity and mortality rates and food insecurity characterize poverty in the country.

There is skewed income and expenditure distribution with increasing inequalities in both rural and urban areas, which aggravate the poverty situation. With the increase of the numbers of people getting sick requiring care; and an increase in the number of orphans, families living in poverty are pulled down below subsistence level and can not adequately care and support orphans and vulnerable children without external assistance.

According to UNAIDS:

The basic needs of children that have been orphaned are the same as needs of all children: food, shelter, clothing, health care, education, opportunities for growth and play, and loving care and attention. Yet left without a mother, and often without both parents, children become dependent on extended family members, and if the extended family is not available or is unable to care for them, they are

dependent on the wider community and if the community is unable to care for them, they are left at great risk. If the needs of the orphans are met, they are likely to turn to delinquency, prostitution, and be subject to exploitation, sexual abuse, and violence” (source: AIDS in Africa – UNAIDS 30/11/1998).

In 1992 the Malawi Government developed Policy Guidelines for the care of orphans and coordination of assistance. These policy guidelines helped to influence action resulting in the proliferation of organizations involved in orphan care. However, while all these organizations may claim to have the interests of the orphans at heart, incidences of malpractice can not be ruled out in the absence of a firm policy is to ensure that the provision of care and support to orphans and other vulnerable children is in the best way possible in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The preamble to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child paragraph 6 states that:

...”The child for the full and harmonious development of his/her personality should grow up in a family environment in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding.”

1.0 POLICY BACKGROUND

1.1 Definition of an orphan and a vulnerable child

The government of Malawi defines an orphan as “ a child who has lost one or both parents because of death and is under the age of 18 years.” (Policy Guidelines. 1992). On the other hand a vulnerable child has been described as a “child who has no able parents or guardians, staying alone or with elderly grandparents or lives in a sibling headed household or has no fixed place of abode and lacks access to health care, material and psychological care, education and has no shelter.”

1.2 Demographic Situation

According to the 1998 Malawi Population and Housing Census Report, the population of Malawi as of 1998 was 9.9 million people with 49% of this population being males and 51% females. The census further shows that 1.7 million were children less than five years of age while 4.9 million were aged 18 and above.

The report further indicates that 5.7 million people were aged 20 years and below. Of these, 88,000 had both parents dead while 480,000 had lost one parent. This means that from 1998 Malawi had a population of 568,000 people below 20 years of age who had lost one or both parents.

Furthermore, the census reported that 333,000 orphans had lost their fathers while 147,000 lost their mothers. Out of the 568,000 orphans, 467,000 live in the rural areas while about 100,000 live in urban area. This information shows that the situation of orphans is serious in the country requiring concerted effort to mitigate the problems orphans and other vulnerable children face.

1.3 THE HIV/AIDS PANDEMIC IN MALAWI

The first confirmed HIV/AIDS case in Malawi was reported in 1985 and since then, the disease has spread rapidly. By the end of 1996, the HIV prevalence rate in the 15 – 49 year age group was estimated at over 13 percent. In 1998 alone 46

per cent of those estimated to be infected with HIV virus were the youth aged 15 – 24 with females suffering the largest burden at 60 per cent.

Currently, the HIV prevalence rate in the economically productive age group of 15-49 is estimated at 14 percent, with the urban areas shouldering a higher percentage at 26 percent, while in the rural areas it is at 12 percent. In the same age group, the prevalence of HIV in the Northern Region has been estimated at 9 percent, 11 percent in the Central Region and 18 percent in the South (SPU and NACP 1999). High rates of urbanization, high population mobility due to easy transportation and migration are since of the most important factors that have contributed to the high rates of HIV in the southern region (GoM/World Bank 1998).

1.4 Child Rights, Protection and Care

The constitution of Malawi and relevant Acts of Parliament guide child protection and care in Malawi. In addition, Malawi is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, International Labour Organization Convention on Child on Child Labour and the Organization of African Unity Charter on the welfare and rights of a child.

Despite these international and local human rights instruments, cases of child abuse such as child deprivation, child labour, especially of the girl child, have been on the increase and orphans stand a big risk (NEC 2000). In 1998, 34% of children aged 10 to 14 years were reported doing employed work (Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training). More children are also seen in the streets who are vulnerable to abuse and incidences of Child Rights Commission to monitor child rights issues in the area of care, support and protection.

1.5 Education

Early learning and child stimulation is essential for child mental and physical development. In Malawi, most children are deprived of early learning and stimulation and when parents die orphans suffer form lack of psychosocial care. However in recognition of the importance of early learning and stimulation, communities are setting up community based childcare centers (CBCC) to provide care and support to orphans and other vulnerable children, but resource and knowledged constraints are hindering the expansion of the initiatives. NGOs and faith-based organizations are also showing interests in community based childcare initiatives but their coverage is limited and benefiting a few orphans and other vulnerable children.

Community based childcare centres offer an environment for the integration of orphans and non-orphaned children thereby minimizing the discrimination and stigmatization of orphaned children. On the hand preschool playgroups are being established but these are concentrated in urban centres and are expensive. As a

result very few orphans and other vulnerable children have the opportunity to attend pre-school before joining primary school.

In 1994 the Government of Malawi introduced free primary school education but death of parents and coupled with the fact that most orphans live with guardians who are seriously affected by poverty makes orphans and other vulnerable children drop out of school. Their priorities shift from education to survival, forcing most children to seek employment and engage in other activities of livelihood. While primary education is free, orphans and other vulnerable children who get selected to go to secondary schools and other institutions of higher learning fail to continue with their education because of lack of school fees, learning materials and economic hardships.

2.0 THE SITUATION OF ORPHANS IN MALAWI

2.1 The extent of the Orphan problem

The exact extent of the orphan problem is not known. Susan Hunter and Williamson in "Children on Brink"(1997) estimated that over 1.2 million children in Malawi would be orphaned by the year 2000. These are orphans whose parents died due to various causes. On the other hand estimates by NACP indicate that from the year 2000, over 400,000 children would be orphaned in this country through death of a mother due to AIDS. However records in the Ministry of Gender and Community Services show that 350,000 orphans have been reached with assistance by various stakeholders over the past four years especially in the areas where community responses have been initiated. The National Statistical Officer (NSO) has indicated that 568,000 persons of 20 years of age and less have lost one or both parents (1998) Malawi population and Housing Census Report).

The figures present a contradictory situation of the magnitude of the orphan problem, which confirms the complexity of the nature of the problem. Subsequently, efforts to collect data on orphans are being made at all levels by various stakeholders but lack a coordinated approach. In addition, there are inadequate skills in collecting the relevant data. This policy will therefore provide guidance and direction in the collection of relevant information and data on orphans and other vulnerable children and care activities.

2.2 Strains on the Orphans Care System

Poverty is endemic and affects the majority of both the rural and urban population in the country. High poverty levels and the rapid increase of the number of orphans is causing severe strains on limited available resources and the extended family coping mechanisms. This means that those living in poverty are pulled down below subsistence levels by the influx of orphans where they can not be adequately cared for and supported (NEC 200; Cook, Ali and Munthali 1995).

As AIDS continues to claim more lives in the productive age group, the number of children orphaned will continue to rise rapidly causing an enormous burden on the

extended family, particularly communities where the problem is concentrated. The loss of parents means that in some cases the following functions can not continue; material safety; affection, love, nurturing, social and support and socialization.

2.3 Orphan Needs and Vulnerability Assessment

The needs of orphans just like any other children vary from child to child depending on age and sex. Orphan care studies carried out 1993, 1994 and 1997 reveal that orphans who lose a mother have children needs form those who lose a father. The studies have also shown that the death of a mother is critical for orphans below 5 years of age, and that of a further has greater effect on the development and educational opportunities for old orphan. However throughout the country who lose both parents are considered to be more vulnerable that those with one parent.

The studies also revealed that the extent of vulnerability was linked to the social and economic status of the family, both before and after the death of parents. In certain cases the situation was made worse by property grabbing and different cultural and traditional practices for example patrilocal and matrilocal systems of marriage.

The experience with HIV/AIDS is that children see one parent die first and within a short period, the remaining parent follows. This means that children lose both parents within a short time. They experience the trauma of caring for their parents before death, and also provide support to siblings, elderly guardians or other relations how may also be affected in one way or another by the HIV/AIDs pandemic. This situation exerts enormous pressures on the extended family and communities, which are struggling to cope with the increasing numbers of orphans in the country. Although the distribution between girls and boys shows little difference, records indicate that there are more female orphans than males. In addition, the majority of orphans are below 15 years of age and the problems of child-headed households and street children are becoming common.

3.0 JUSTIFICATION AND RATIONALE

Malawi has had no substantive policy on the provision of care to orphans and other vulnerable children. The Policy guidelines developed in 1992 have not undergone any revision over the years, yet the problem of orphans and other vulnerable children has worsened; and the number of stakeholders increased and their activities diversified. It has, therefore, become necessary that from the lessons learnt so far, a policy be developed in order to promote quality care, transparency, accountability and also coordinate the service delivery and check malpractice. The Ministry of Gender and Community Services therefore, as the Ministry responsible to oversee and coordinate services for the care and protection of children, has in collaboration with various stakeholders drawn up this policy to guide the provision of care to orphans and other vulnerable children in the country.

4.0 MISSION STATEMENT, POLICY GOAL AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

4.1 Mission Statement

The mission is to promote an environment in which orphans and other vulnerable children are adequately cared for, supported and protected physically, psychologically, materially, socially, morally, spiritually and legally to grow and develop to their full potential.

4.2 Policy Goal

The overall goal of the National Policy on orphans and other Vulnerable Children is:

- To facilitate support for care, protection and development of orphans and other vulnerable children in a coordinated manner in order to provide them with an environment in which they realize their full rights and potentials.

4.3 Guiding Principles

Underlying this broad policy goal are key principles that will guide implementation of policy objectives and strategies. The principles are that:-

1. The extended family system shall remain the primary support structure for the care protection and development of orphans and other vulnerable children.
2. Community participation, empower and ownership shall be emphasized as key elements in mitigating the social impact of HIV/AIDS on orphans.
3. Community based approaches to care for orphans and other vulnerable children shall be emphasized and institutional care in form of orphanages shall remain the last resort.
4. Establishment of Community-based support organizations or NGOs for the care of orphans and other vulnerable children shall be approved by the Ministry of Gender and Community Services.
5. There shall be transparency, accountability and good governance in the provision of orphan care services by all stakeholders.
6. Care programmes for orphans and other vulnerable children shall be guided by the Constitution of Malawi, relevant Laws of Malawi, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant national and international human rights instruments.
7. Care activities for orphans and other vulnerable children shall be integrated and harmonized with other interventions and services relating to the care and welfare of the children.
8. No child shall be discriminated against, or segregated in the provision of care services on the basis of HIV sero-status.
9. The Government shall use available means to protect children whose rights are being violated.
10. Where relief assistance is provided to alleviate suffering, efforts shall be made to ensure that it does not create and develop a dependency syndrome.

5.0 KEY POLICY ISSUES, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

The policy covers five key issues. The objectives and core strategies have been developed to guide implementation of each key issue. The strategies are base on

identified problems and programming needs after assessing current interventions. The five key policy issues are

1. Provision of Assistance
2. Coordination
3. Institutional and Legal Framework
4. Transparency and Accountability
5. Monitoring and evaluation

5.1 Provision of Assistance

Currently some of the recognized initiatives for the care and support of orphans and vulnerable children are the extended family systems; community-based organizations; formal and informal foster care; distant foster care or child sponsorship; adoption; and institutional care. However emphasis is on the extended family and community-based care and psychosocial support which be supported by income generating activities, skills training and other sustainable support interventions.

5.1.1 Policy Statements

- Increase community participation in developing community based orphan care initiatives and improves the efficiency with which they are designed and executed.
- Enhance the teaching of a range of basic and technical life skills including counseling to older orphans, guardians and community members so as to stimulate and motivate their participation in the poverty reduction efforts and overall development.
- Provide economic and psychosocial support to orphans and other vulnerable children most at risk of deprivation.
- Expand and promote both formal and informal foster care services to provide substitute family care to more orphans and other vulnerable children.

5.1.2 Policy Objectives

- To set standards and guidelines for various stakeholders designing and implementing care programmes to create a conducive environment for the care, support and protection of orphans and other vulnerable children.
- To strengthen the capacity of families and communities to cop with the burden of, and provide adequate care and support to orphans and other vulnerable children.

5.1.3 Policy Strategies

Capacity Building

The increase in the number of orphans has seen the corresponding increase of orphanages and orphan care organizations throughout the country. Some of these orphanages and organizations do not meet the minimum acceptable standards. To address the situation. The Ministry of Gender and Community Services in close collaboration with other stakeholders will:

1. Train and empower caregivers with knowledge and skills for working with orphans and other vulnerable children for their proper growth and development.
2. Train and empower older orphans and guardians with knowledge and skills in running income generating activities/small businesses.
3. Promote professionalism in the delivery of services to orphans and other vulnerable children in collaboration with coordinating bodies/structures and service providers
4. Provide technical advice and guidance to stakeholder's involved in the care, support, and protection of orphans and other vulnerable children.
5. Facilitate the training of individuals, families and organizations involved in the care of orphans and other vulnerable children.
6. Involve more extension workers and increase the numbers of social workers in the field to support CBOs in the provision of care and interpretation of policy matters.
7. Encourage caregivers to recognize existing policies that affect children in the course of discharging their roles and responsibilities.
8. Include orphans and other vulnerable children when planning, designing and implementing development and assistance.
9. Establish revolving loan schemes for older out of school orphans based on individual needs assessment.
10. Establish revolving loans schemes for older orphans and guardians caring for orphans and other vulnerable children.
11. Encourage CBOs, NGOs, Faith-based organizations, government, companies and other to provide educational support to needy orphans and other vulnerable children to increase their opportunity for self-reliance.

5.2 Coordination

Coordination of services for orphans and other vulnerable children is an essential requirement especially considering the complexity of the problem and the multiplicity of players involved. Coordination will ensure that resource available is used optimally to avoid duplication of efforts.

5.2.1 Policy Statement

The Ministry of Gender and Community Services through the Department of Social Welfare and other stakeholders will:

- Intensify efforts to oversee and coordinate the activities of the various service providers involved in providing care and support to orphans and other vulnerable children.
- Improve communication and promote extensive use of existing structures and channels of communication to support orphans and other vulnerable children and report on activities being undertaken.

5.2.2 Policy Objective

To facilitate the coordination, integration and harmonization of activities for the care, protection and support of orphans and other vulnerable children at all levels.

5.2.3 Policy Strategies

To harmonize the activities for the care of orphans and other vulnerable children, the following will be done:

Capacity Building

1. Establish and strengthen recognized structures to coordinate support for orphans and other vulnerable children at community, district and national levels;
2. Establish and maintain communication channels with orphans and other vulnerable children, care coordinating structures and stakeholders;
3. Facilitate networking and exchange of experience among organizations, communities and families providing care and support to orphans and other vulnerable children;
4. Establish a national directory of stakeholders involved in the care of orphans and other vulnerable children, and
5. Design a website on the situation and care of orphans and other vulnerable children.

5.3 Institutional and Legal Framework

The constitution of Malawi under Chapter IV, section 23 provides for the protection of all children in Malawi. The Department of Social Welfare in the Ministry of Gender and Community Services will take a leading role to oversee and coordinate orphan care activities in Malawi. To facilitate this, the Ministry shall be responsible for the administration of the relevant Acts of Parliament designed to protect the welfare of children.

5.3.1 Policy Statement

The Ministry of Gender and Community Services through the department of Social Welfare will:

- Promote the provision of institutional mechanisms and establish and use legally accepted structures at all levels to guide the execution of orphan care services at national, district and community levels.
- Facilitate the use of legal instruments, institutions and structures to protect and safeguard the welfare and interests of orphans and other vulnerable children in Malawi.
- Strengthen the institutional capacity of the extended family to continue providing care for orphans and other vulnerable children in order to meet their social, familial and basic necessities.

5.3.2 Policy Objective

- To provide the institutional and legal framework within which services for the care and protection of orphans and other vulnerable children shall be organized and managed.

5.3.3 Policy Strategies

In order to meet this objective the Ministry of Gender and Community Services, through the Social Welfare Department will do the following:

Capacity Building

1. Establish a National Coordinating Body to oversee the provision of care and support to orphans and other vulnerable children.
2. Establish institutional structures at all levels to provide and guide the execution of orphan care services at national, district and community levels.
3. Facilitate and promote the establishment of orphan care support groups and community-based organizations by the community.
4. Develop mechanisms for identifying and assessing the needs of orphans and other vulnerable children.
5. Develop effective mechanisms for the identification and registration of orphan support groups/organizations, institutions, individuals and families caring for orphans and other vulnerable children through the District Social Welfare Office.
6. Integrate orphan care service delivery with the existing development structures.
7. Facilitate the collection of information through government structures, DSWOs, SWAs, CDAs, CBOs, NGOs, Faith-based Organisations and Village headmen on the number of orphans to determine the extent of the problem.

Legal Support

1. Develop guidelines for the establishment, suspension or closure of support groups/organizations, NGOs and other institutions.
2. Develop guidelines for identifying, placement and withdrawal of orphans and vulnerable children from individuals and foster families abusing their rights.
3. Recognize and legalise district and community orphan and other vulnerable children care communities as legitimate coordinating structures.
4. Facilitate the enactment and amendment of Children's Acts.
5. Produce rules and regulations for the establishment of children's home (i.e. orphanages), Community-based organizations and foster families.
6. Establish special mechanisms for inspecting institutions caring for orphans and vulnerable children to ensure their compliance with the requirements for child protection and security.
7. Facilitate the provision and accessibility of legal aid services related to children and the youth, especially orphans and vulnerable children.
8. Prosecute individuals, families or organizations found to be in gross abuse of the rights of the children in their custody or guardianship.
9. Take legal action on individuals/organizations obtaining resources for personal gains under the guise of assisting orphans and other vulnerable children.

Advocacy

1. Organize forums for articulating problems experienced by orphans and other vulnerable children.
2. Facilitate the commemoration of events for children and families at community level.
3. Facilitate open debate and discussions on legal issues concerning orphans and vulnerable children through appropriate forums and the media at all levels.

4. The Ministry of Gender and Community Services and all stakeholders to sensitize children on their rights and responsibilities.

5.4 Transparency and Accountability

Transparency and accountability are two major pillars of good governance and are interlinked to each other. Transparency, which relates to the sharing of information to all concerned, greatly contributes to accountability, which refers to being responsible to the beneficiaries and resource providers in the utilization of resources provided. Observation on the group reveal that some organizations carry out activities without the knowledge of the Ministry of Gender and Community Services which is responsible for coordinating activities for the care of orphans and other vulnerable children. This practice makes the care system susceptible to malpractice.

5.4.1 Policy Statement

- The national Policy on Orphans and other Vulnerable shall through the Ministry of Gender and Community Services emphasize that all stakeholders involved in the care of orphans and other vulnerable children are transparent and accountable in the delivery of services.

5.4.2 Policy Objectives

- To establish proper modalities and mechanisms for ensuring transparency and accountability at all levels to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of programmes for the care and support of orphans and other vulnerable children.

5.4.3 Policy Strategies

In order to ensure transparency and accountability, which are considered as two desirable outcomes that enhance performance and delivery of services, the Ministry of Gender and Community Services will promote community participation and ownership of care services. To do this the Ministry will do the following:

1. Encourage community and district structures involved in the care of orphans and other vulnerable children to be in the forefront to formulate and execute plans to be funded by government and various donors.
2. Ensure that planning processes at community, district and national levels are as participatory as possible
3. Ensure that all plans are realistic and cost-effective and that communities indicate their local contributions in human, material and financial resources;
4. Involve orphans and vulnerable children according to their evolving capacities to make decisions on issues that affect them.
5. Institutionalize participatory internal and external auditing of project activities including accounts.

5.5 Monitoring and Evaluation

The problem of HIV/AIDs and orphans is complex and there are currently a variety of stakeholders involved in providing care and services to orphans and other vulnerable children. Due to the diversity of stakeholder interests various approaches, which are also

conflicting, are used to serve the same children. More serious problems also arise; for example, the Ministry of Gender and Community Services observed in 1996 that a number of organizations were operating in same areas resulting in duplication of efforts by assisting the same children while other needy children in other areas have no source of assistance.

To minimize duplication of efforts and facilitate optimal utilization of resources, the Ministry of Gender and Community Services will take a leading role in monitoring and evaluating the situation of orphans in Malawi in close collaboration with all stakeholders.

5.5.1 Policy Statement

- Mechanisms will be put in place to keep track of all activities for the care, support and protection of orphans and other vulnerable children leading to the development of an affective monitoring system.

5.5.2 Policy Objective

- To continuously monitor and assess the magnitude of the problem of orphans and other vulnerable children, effectiveness of various care interventions and quality of care in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

5.5.3 Policy Strategies

- To achieve the Monitoring and Evaluation objective, the Ministry of Gender and Community Services in collaboration with relevant stakeholders will:

Programme Assessment and Evaluation

1. Provide constant supervision to organizations involved in orphan care to ensure harmony and compliance with the recommended standards at all levels in collaboration with the designated Coordinating Body.
2. Undertake mapping and assessment of families, communities, institutions, community-based organizations actively involved in the provision of care and support to orphans and of the vulnerable children.
3. Conduct periodic surveys to monitor the orphan situation and the effectiveness of care interventions.
4. Carry out assessment to determine the needs of orphans and other vulnerable children and the affected families.
5. Carry out snap inspections, assessment and supervisory visits as regularly as possible through designated coordinating bodies to check incidences of malpractices and abuse.
6. Facilitate the auditing of the accounts of any organization involved in caring for orphans and other vulnerable children to ensure the funds obtained for such purposes are serving the intended purposes.

Capacity Building

1. Develop effective and relevant monitoring tools at community, district regional and national levels

2. Sensitise the communities on the basic recommended standards for providing care and services to orphans and other vulnerable children so that they are able to assess the performance of organization working in their areas.
3. Facilitate through village heads maintenance of village and those who come from deaths; and for orphans and others the village and those who come from outside.
4. Facilitate the training of all personnel involved in programmes for care of orphans and other vulnerable children for proper delivery of services including monitoring and evaluation.