



(c) Weak civil society monitoring mechanisms and capacity to track expenditure for OVC education support.

(d) Continued over reliance on NAC and donors for education support to communities is unsustainable when the taps run dry.

### Statement of engagement

In 1994, the Malawi Government introduced the on universal primary education for all children. The policy has made it possible for orphans and other vulnerable children to attend primary education but many OVCs face challenges in accessing education because of inadequate support in terms of bursaries and payment of user fees.

NOVOC, with support from OXFAM Joint Program is engaging education development actors, including civil society, relevant parliamentary committees responsible for child development, and the private sector in a three year Access to Quality Education for OVC Project to lobby and advocate for the (1) abolition of user fees in schools (2) increased budgetary allocation for education support for OVCs and (3) increased bursary deposits by stakeholders.



The advocacy intends to facilitate understanding on the levels of attention that the national budget gives to OVCs.

It will support policy review to ensure transparency and accountability in the national budget allocations and usage of funds for education support.



### Abolishment of user fees

NOVOC and its partners believe that user fees in public schools are hurting the education of children in general and OVCs in particular. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should abolish user fees and instead allocate more resources to the basic education in order to improve the quality of education and provide education support for OVCs.

In addition to playing the advocacy role, civil society and stakeholders should explore possibilities of working with government in the improvement of education through direct financial resource investment among others. The civil society should monitor closely government's effort to improve basic education in line with policy commitments such as expressed in Vision 2020, National Education Sector Plan and the Malawi Education Sector Policy and Investment Framework.



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## FOCUS ON HIDDEN COSTS OF PRIMARY EDUCATION



### Dear Friends of OVCs

NOVOC is a network of organisations for vulnerable and orphaned children that has operated since 2003. Following reflections on the plight of OVCs in accessing basic education; and the social, economic and political impact of their situations in development, NOVOC is scaling up responses to ensure that OVC rights are promoted and protected.

The reflections arise from a research on user fees in public schools - "Hidden costs of free primary education in Malawi," February 2008 (NOVOC), "Analysis and review of the Malawi Government budget on education support for OVC", February 2008 (NOVOC) and the "Budget analysis on education support for OVC", February 2008 (Human Rights Consultative Committee-HRCC). NOVOC undertakes to engage in an advocacy campaign to ensure that OVCs become productive citizens.





## Engagement.....



NOVOC's mission is to network OVC service providers, to build their capacity to: (a) to offer quality services to orphans and other vulnerable children (b) develop and link OVC service providers with funding agencies and donors. (c) advocate for child protection.

### Introduction

The State of the World's Children report of 2004 estimated that Malawi would have 1, 008, 000 orphaned children by 2005. The Ministry of Women and Child Development estimates that by 2010 the country will have 1,150,000 orphans.

Presently many of these OVCs fail to access education while those that do can not proceed with education due to lack of school fees and related education support.

Research reveals that public schools levy user fees on pupils and students to meet various costs such as school examination report cards, utility bills, employment of guards for school security, rentals for postal boxes, monthly allowances for volunteer teachers, sporting equipment, contributions to feeding programmes, contributions towards labour (moulding bricks, collecting sand etc).

A 2005 Integrated Household Survey revealed that 25 per cent of primary school going age children never enrolled for basic education because they could not pay such hidden costs of education. At some point the children miss classes and go for piece works (*ganyu*) to earn money for education.

However, others view user fees as community contribution to raise resources to finance local operations for school management instead of always relying on external support.

Experts attribute the problems encountered in the implementation of the UFPE as lack of proper planning, and sensitization on its meaning, likely challenges and new roles. Without the necessary information, it is not surprising that people perceive UFPE as "not free".

### National budget and HIPC savings

In the 2007/08 budget, government is expected to collect MK162.9 billion in domestic and foreign revenue. However, it has been noted that the MoWCD has since 2000 been receiving low allocations compared with other key sectors. ORT for the ministry, which forms part of the education support for OVCs, has been steadily declining.

Further, government has not provided a clear breakdown on how much debt relief resources from the MK15 billion HIPC initiative is made available for spending and where the savings are applied. This information can help gauge levels of contribution that the savings will have in improving funding for education support for OVCs.

### OVC education support policy

In 2003, government launched the National Policy on OVCs to promote an environment in which OVCs are cared for, supported and protected. In 2005, a National Plan of Action (NPA) for OVCs was adopted to guide in the implementation of the policy while the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) in which the welfare of OVCs is a pillar under social protection and social development was launched in 2007.

According to the NPA for OVCs, a total of 65,000 primary school age OVCs are expected to be supported every year with bursaries amounting to MK210 million (shared among government, donors and NGOs) while 35, 000 secondary school age OVCs are

expected to be supported at an annual cost of about MK265 million. As of now, government supports 12, 000 OVCs only.

The NPA is designed to provide MK3, 500 and MK8, 000 for primary and secondary school age OVCs per term. In the budget year 2006/07 the National AIDS Commission (NAC) set aside MK201 million education support for 32, 000 OVCs out of which 20, 000 were primary school OVCs. But only 3, 833 were assisted with school fees amounting to MK22.1 million. Following this, the number of OVCs seeking bursary assistance rose to 11, 619 in 2007/2008 academic year.

Part of the MK201 million NAC grant remains at MoWCD while the other was used for other purposes outside education support since the ORT national budget provision for assemblies is not adequate to support OVC identification, screening, and bursary administration.

### Problems

(a) OVC education support is largely made through local governments which have weak operational and human resource capacities. Generally, the country has a small existing bursary scheme (mostly supported by the NAC). OVC identification system and collaboration among stakeholders are weak. There is inefficient flow of funds for school fees and monitoring systems. And local governments have not made any observable movements to mobilize own resources for the integration of education support for OVCs in their budgets.

(b) Weak information flow as some NGOs do not want to share and disclose important information to stakeholders.

