

# Linking and Learning

NEWSLETTER

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The AWANA touch  
of hope: A case of a Community-Based Organisation

Abusive shelter: Lobbying and Advocacy experience

Landmark activities - 2008 | Planning ahead - 2009



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# A term of OVC opportunities

On 19th May 2009, a new team of Parliamentarians would be voted into the August House for the next five years. Though this may seem a mere political achievement for those that will have made it, the country at large has more expectations from the men and women who would be entrusted with the duty to make our laws and therefore shape our lives.

As a population, we all expect improvements in all areas of the socioeconomic sphere, and therefore ask our MPs not to be naive - particularly when we consider matters of Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVC).

It is our belief that there will be concerted effort emanating from all corners of the socio-development divide - that our MPs shall adhere to calls from our partners in the Linking and Learning (L & L) and particularly those in the Lobbying and Advocacy (L & A) to make OVC programmes meaningful.

We have noted, as a project, that a of Bills remain unpassed by our honourable Parliament for so many years now. Such absense of adequate laws to protect children has led to suffering caused by all forms of abuses - sexual, physical and mental abuse, child neglect and labour, the impact on children in conflict with the law and many more forms of child abuse.

Only when Parliament can expedite laws relative to OVC welfare, can Malawi as a nation start to provide stringent and positive opportunities for OVC management.

We believe that as SAN! supported partners, our working in line with the overarching goal from the Government of Malawi's (GoM) National Plan of Action for OVC to contribute to the facilitation of support for care, protection and development of OVC, we will be in time to finalise development, printing and distribution of the Lobbying and Advocacy OVC Communication Strategy. This, we feel, shall help catapult our efforts to meaningful ends.

The four main partners, NOVOC, CEYCA, PLAN Malawi and MHRRC are also working towards completing the Lobbying and Advocacy Toolkit which among other components will cater for psycho social support; human rights, and advocacy amongst OVC.

Through NOVOC and its partners, the L & L programme implemented the Psycho Social Support (PSS) project. We enjoyed the combination of the two projects - the L & L and PSS as it happened in year one through meetings, sharing workplans and documents.

We therefore look forward to all OVC related bills to be passed in Parliament and that relative legislation shall be ironed out in time.

Finally we invite all OVC support partners and the OVC themselves - to actively participate in sharing their views through this newsletter.

Enjoy the read our second edition and we look forward to your contributions in the forthcoming publications.

**EDITOR**

**(Centre for Youth and Children Affairs - CEYCA)**

*On behalf of SAN! Partners in Malawi*

# The AWANA touch of hope

## A case of a Community-Based Organisation

By M'theto LUNGU

**K**EFASI, Monica, and their two friends are not the least like any average Malawian child.

Aged 7, 11 and 10, respectively, the two boys and two girls happily take turns to take pictures using my digital camera. Whatever is behind that happy banter as they snap about, the innocent and radiant young faces and bright smiles cannot easily tell.

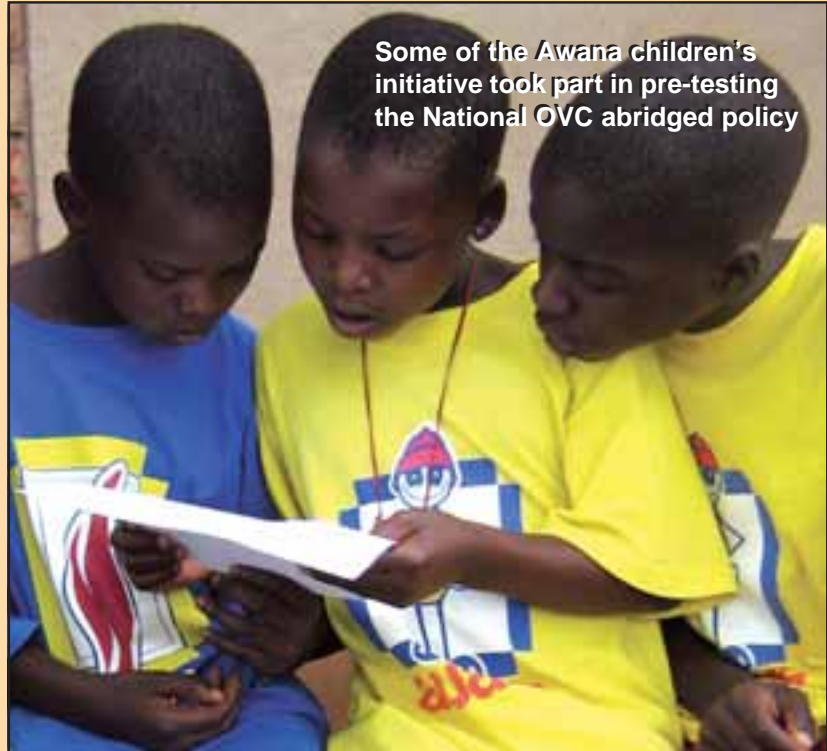
Kefasi can hardly read a simple phrase. In standard one, he scribbles away distorted figurines and letters. He tells me that is the story of how he sees the world about him. A sketchy shabby lined box with two uneven circles seals his greatest wish - to some day become a bus driver.

No wonder he strives to capture, using the camera, vehicles zooming past us on their way to nearby Bunda College of Agriculture. We are at Thunga Community Based Organisation (CBO).

In her shy mannerism, Monica sits glass eyed watching Kefasi fumble the lively shots. Her turn up, she rushes towards the road spotting her ash-blue jean trousers. Her attempt is to capture an unsuspecting group of men working just across the road from where we are.

Flash, flash! Goes the camera. She later settles down to scribble a story of her dreams. In a few words, she narrates her fantasies and adds an illustrative depiction of a nurse. Though the sketch lines are hard to decipher, it is clear Monica would like to become that Angel of God.

On the other hand, the third child



Some of the Awana children's initiative took part in pre-testing the National OVC abridged policy

would like to be a pilot. Not a fighter jet pilot, mind you. His drawing is that of a simple house. Perhaps representing his greatest need, that of shelter and love.

He tells me children must be taught the word of God at all times. His photos include the 4x4 vehicle we came in, one of his siblings and one of me!

The second girl is a busy and clever little angel whose attempts to take her own mug shot pays off. She even manages to switch the camera's mode to video, I soon discover.

Her life's burning desire is unique. She too would like to become a commercial jet liner pilot.

What is common about all the four children is their social status. They are all orphans and vulnerable children (OVC).

The four, with Kefasi joining a nearby orphanage in 2007, all now

enjoy care, derive love, experience compassion, and live with hope provided through the CBO located on the sidesteps of the Bunda turnoff - Bunda College road.

They also go to the same school at the nearby Baptist orphanage and are proud members of the institution's *Awana* children's programme where they enjoy accommodation, meals, and camaraderie with countless other OVC.

The quartet's prized *Awana* activities include chase-and-catch games and spiritual songs. Monica provokes the '*Amayenda Ndi Yesu Amaoneka!* (Those who believe in Jesus are clear!) rhyme and I watch breathlessly as the three other children fall into tune with natural ease. I cannot help but sing along - struggling to nurse my hoarse voice into their sweet melody.

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The draft Policy to OVC Action Plan (2005) developed with consultations from other stakeholders by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD) says every child must be provided with shelter as direct beneficiaries. As a representation of direct beneficiaries, the four children joined care givers in pre-testing the abridged version of the policy.

Additionally, the Stop AIDS Now! (SAN!) project which works towards a world without HIV and AIDS has put its efforts to fundraise, campaign and lobby, and integrate the fight against HIV and AIDS into development cooperation innovations in working methods and forms of cooperation with a view of abating OVC suffering.

Most OVC in Malawi are a direct product of the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

Providing information, support and treatment to people living with and affected by the pandemic with special attention towards prevention, children like those under the *Awana* project have a future to look up to.

With the existence of the four key Linking and Learning member organisations; the Network of Organisations for Vulnerable and Orphaned Children (NOVOC Malawi), the Malawi Human Rights Resource Centre (MHRRC), the Centre for Youth and Children Affairs (CEYCA), and PLAN Malawi, grassroots level communities are now ensured to address the felt needs of OVC in the country.

As for Monica, Kefasi and their two friends, their livelihoods may be ensured for now, but there are numerous other children that require the psycho social support that they deserve to make profitable and productive future citizens of Malawi. This, as may further be argued, may include varying skills including photography and storytelling, among many others.

# Planning ahead



Led by CEYCA, the Lobbying and Advocacy Project - a part of the concept of Linking and Learning - which gets its technical and financial support from the Netherlands-based STOP AIDS NOW!, has slated a number of activities for the year 2009. The project is implemented with the Network for Organisations of Vulnerable and Orphaned Children (NOVOC), the Malawi Human Rights Resource Centre (MHRRC) and PLAN International Malawi as partners.

Working in line with the overarching goal from the Government of Malawi's (GoM) National Plan of Action for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVC) to contribute to the facilitation of support for care, protection and development of OVC, the partners are finalising development, printing and distribution of the Lobbying and Advocacy OVC Communication Strategy. The four are also working towards completing the Lobbying and Advocacy Toolkit which among other components will cater for psycho social support; human rights, and advocacy amongst OVC.

Another question the partners will answer is how OVCs can best access services and resources within their districts.

It has long been observed that cases of property grabbing lack proper legal redress, that child abuse - be it sexually, mentally and/or physically - continue to go unreported as society continues to remain unwilling to disclose or expose them for fear of oppression and in some instances due to traditional or cultural and religious beliefs, among other causes.

On the list is also continued organising of meetings with and amongst district level stakeholders (CBOs, faith based organisations - FBOs, non-governmental organisations - NGOs., and government officials. Media advocacy on access to services - including legal instruments, child rights bills (the passing of the birth legislation), and lobbying government to pass these and other instruments that are still in report/bill form into law - particularly to do with child care and protection.

Parliament will continue to be the first target in this approach.

The partners also plan to strengthen CBOs linked to the NOVOC network at district level by putting up ways of reducing strategic conflict with a view of sharing funding and other resources, and by building solid advocacy groups within districts.

Finally, the seven strategic SAN! partners will continue to meet at quarterly level to share, plan and review matters.

# Abusive shelter:

## The Lobbying and Advocacy experience



**The Awana children's initiative is a perfect barometer for positive OVC sheltering**

**C**ULTURE AND TRADITION, so is religious beliefs, are an inherent feature that helps identify a people and give them recognition - setting them apart from differing groups and areas.

This, again, starts at an early stage when a child is born. It starts to develop an identify of its people, that of its parents and close relations. Any attempt to break this inborn norm is - in all respect - an abuse of a child's right.

The Lobbying and Advocacy project has discovered a worrying development where children in Malawi have their culture or traditions changed. Some are also illegally adopted and taken to experience cultures and traditions

far from their own.

Some of the suspicious adoptions have raised the question of when an enabling environment will be created to pass the Child (Care and Support) Protection Bill which was dogged by differing interests between government and the opposition in Parliament.

Additionally, rural masses are not aware of some legislation and instruments that have deliberately been set up by government. For instance, most of the OVC CBOs do not have copies or clearly understand the OVC policy.

In some areas, CBOs claim they are informed the policy is not for their use.

CEYCA's Desmond Mhango says there exists a number of such illegal orphanages, mostly owned by foreigners that adopt children within their institutions.

"They use these institutions to facilitate adoption of children for fellow foreigners. Such children are taught strange ways of life, eating habits, clothing form and even language. They are also introduced

to even stranger religious values and beliefs and are never allowed to socialise or get back to their natural homes. These children are forced to change first and second surnames whilst in orphanages," he said.

"There is need for adequate laws," adds Mhango.

Legally, there must be a court involvement as an adoption policy states the primary consideration should be for the child to be raised by its possible next of kin.

"Adoption should be the last resort," he adds.

To fight this, the Lobbying and Advocacy project has therefore planned to increase its information dissemination drive, design more activities that will increase potential for advocacy at district level so that OVC and their CBOs begin to create demand for services and resources, and finally build capacity for CBOs and other institutions to better address current challenges to provide OVC with accessible services and legal redress in their communities.

### Activities for Lobbying and Advocacy for 2009

1. Orientation of district stakeholders
2. Producing IEC material
3. Coordination meetings for the taskforce
4. Follow up to CBOs /NGOs in the Districts
5. Lobbying Government to pass Child Protection Law
6. Media advocacy
7. Supporting Linking and Learning in the Districts
8. Linking and Learning Partnership meetings
9. Printing and Publishing of Communications Strategy
10. Printing and publish of Communications Strategy
11. Printing of Advocacy and lobbying tool kit
12. Production of Abridged Version of OVC policy – *Chichewa*

# Guiding principles for the L&L project in Malawi

It was the understanding of the L & L partners in Malawi that they put in place principles to guide implementation of the programmes.

The first partners meeting of May 2008 helped to identify some of the values. This desire was cemented at the next Partners Meeting held at Sun 'n' Sand Holiday Resort in Mangochi district, Malawi.

The first draft of the principles of the L & L was drawn by Doortje't Hart and

Desmond Mhango. The two worked further in Netherlands when Mhango paid a visit to SAN! offices after attending an international conference in Rotterdam in November of 2008.

The principles will guide the implementing partners in planning, execution of activities and monitoring and evaluation progressively to ensure achievement of the L & L objectives.

Below are principles showing some indicators:-

Outcome (Goal)	Outcome - Indicators	Means of Verification
Effective L&L within SAN! Malawi	All involved partners have shared understanding of L&L	Newsletter, progress reports, minutes of meetings, leaflet on L&L
	All partners practice the L&L concept within and beyond	Minutes of partner meetings, progress reports
Effective use of the strengths of each organisation in achieving L&L project goals (cooperation/collaboration)	Involvement of relevant partners in each step of the project	Progress report to have section on who was involved in which step
Communicate effectively among all L&L project partners	Quarterly partnership meetings	Minutes of partner meetings (clear, to the point, and with action lists); shared with all partners including SAN!
	Quarterly coordination meetings of each L&L project e-groups for day-to-day communication per project and for partnership (for matters that need input from all)	Minutes of coordination meetings; shared with all partners including SAN! e-mails sent
	Quarterly teleconferences btwn SAN! and CEYCA and NOVOC	Conference minutes
	Every is aware of the guiding principles of the partnership	Guiding principles, minutes, progress reports
Coordinate projects effectively	Joint formulation of organisational structure	Organisational structure
	Clear role description of each partner in both projects	MOUs btwn SAN! and lead agents MOUs among partners involved in one project
	Quarterly coordination meetings of each L&L project Quarterly conferences between SAN! and CEYCA and NOVOC	Minutes of coordination meetings; shared with all partners including SAN! Conference minutes
Reflect on process of projects in way that it feeds transformation/change	Look back at past period process in every partner meeting, and draw lessons	Minutes of partner meetings
	Joint reflection on lessons learnt in coordination meetings of each project (quarterly)	Minutes of coordination meetings
	Each partner writes a short story reflective nature to feed into the L&L reflective report (what did the lessons do to your organisations)	L&L reflection report (separate section for each partner)
Continuously share experiences on institutional/project levels with other L&L partners to enhance the learning process and improve outcome of the projects	Each partner shares successes/lessons and involvement with other partners in the L&L project	Documented lessons (quarterly) with input from all partners
Transformation/change in L&L projects take place and also on organisational level	Turning points in the L&L projects identified and analysed	Partner meetings, progress reports
	Turning points in the institutions identified, analysed and shared	L&L reflection report (separate section for each partner)

# Institutional intervention

## Psycho Social Support Project

The Ecumenical Counselling Centre (ECC) is expected to carry out a number of

planned activities as follows in the year 2009 by December:-

- Framework/criteria based on PSS baseline report Framework drafted and disseminated to PSS partners and stakeholders in Lilongwe;
  - Conduct consultations and desk research on national and international standards for toolkit development to benefit partners and stakeholders;
  - Identify and build a team of experts to compile best practices toolkit among the L & L partners and stakeholders to benefit L & L partners and stakeholders;
  - Organize best practices symposium on PSS Symposium report to benefit stakeholders nation wide;
  - Conduct a Best Practices reflective meeting on the outcomes of the symposium and planning for the toolkit aimed at refining PSS Best Practices framework/criteria, and map for PSS Best Practices toolkit to benefit L & L partners;
  - Develop PSS best practice toolkit through experts;
  - Conduct a stakeholders meeting to review the PSS best practice toolkit targeting stakeholders;
  - Disseminate and orient stakeholders on utilizing the PSS best practice toolkit for partners and stakeholders involved;
  - Conduct research on mainstreaming PSS in order to identify success and failure factors for mainstreaming PSS and to support effective mainstreaming in Malawi for the benefit of Stakeholders and partners.
- NOTE: See the back cover for more ECC planned activities.

# Landmark activities for L & A project

Despite the following successes, it is recommended that more activities that will increase potential for strong advocacy at district level, need for more information, and capacity building, be earmarked as must-do's so that OVC and their CBOs begin to create more demand for services and resources at all levels...

## Linking and Learning is happening

**T**HE LINKING and Learning project is taking place among the partners around the three implementing partners that has trickled down to communities reached out. Currently, OVC and guardians are not enlightened about public services available in the districts and how such services may be accessed.

So far, six OVC have gone through the project office seeking detailed information which has led to their being offered secondary school bursary through the District Social Welfare Office.

## Creating Demand

**T**HE MINISTRY of women and Child Development which is the line ministry for children, argues unless there is demand, services will not be offered to OVC. The challenge is on whether needy people are able to create demand.

Fortunately, this is where the Lobbying and Advocacy project has been able to bring out to OVC and CBOs, the understanding that there must be demand. This advocacy is creating that demand.

Through the project, CBOs have started to go to the District Social Welfare Office (DSWO) to seek assistance for the children under their care. The children too are going to the DSWO to seek assistance.

Six children come through the project office where upon being referred to the DSWO, have been offered secondary school bursary.

## Uniqueness of the Information, Education and Communication (IEC) Strategy

**T**HE IEC strategy for OVC is proving to be a unique document in Malawi.

Government does not have one nor do any of its partners. During processes developing the communications strategy, participating partners confessed not to have any of the specific strategies for OVC hence they requested if the strategy would cover general issues of OVC instead of aligning it to the Lobbying and Advocacy project specifications only.

Some of the partners in the Psycho-Social Support Project raised concern of exclusion of PSS in the communications strategy. This could be understood to be the felt need in appreciation of the strategy.

## Participation in Partnership Meetings

**T**HE PROJECT partners have participated in all the STOP AIDS NOW! Partnership

Meetings that took place in the year. The very first Partnership Meeting was facilitated by the L and A Project.

Partners have been actively involved in formulating the Terms of Reference for the Linking and Learning Exchange Visit to South Africa slated for March 2009.

## Benefiting from Linkages

**D**EVELOPMENT of the Lobbying and Advocacy Tool kit has brought out evidence of benefit of increased networking and partnership in the project. Those who participate in the development of the Tool kit have accepted to be part of the undertaking on the basis that they believe they also have a part to play in addressing the plight of OVC.

Facilitators have small allocations for allowances but they have committed themselves to helping the OVC. They are key persons in Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC), Paralegal Advisory Institute (PASI), whose institutions would be helpful in providing legal redress to OVC issues.

## SAN! visits L & A project

**M**s. DOORTJE'T Hart, an OVC Policy Officer from SAN!, visited Malawian partners in October and December 2008. The Netherlands expert had an enlightening experience as she was briefed on the Linking and Learning concept and how it can best be achieved within the partnership in Malawi.

The two meetings also facilitated reviews on progress of the two projects and was used as a forum where L and A project partners from the Psycho Social Support (PSS) component shared experiences as relates the two projects.

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*“Children in Difficult  
Situations are the  
Reason We Exist”*

**Psycho Social Support (PSS)  
Planned objectives and activities**

1) Promote increased and common understanding of psychosocial support issues, strategies and interventions for OVC service providers through linking and learning in Malawi.

- a. Produce copies of the baseline report
- b. Produce leaflets for the summarized version of the baseline report and PSS best practice tool kit

2) Create a learning environment for the provision of improved psychosocial support services rendered to OVCs by December 2009.

- a. Analyze the PSS best practices based on the baseline report
- b. Conduct desk research and consultations on PSS best practices
- c. Conduct stakeholders PSS best practices review meeting
- d. Develop A PSS best practice tool kit

3) Mainstream psychosocial support in the various OVC related initiatives undertaken by various organizations by December 2009.

- a. Conduct research on PSS mainstreaming
- b. Conduct capacity building training on PSS
- c. Develop PSS mainstreaming strategy
- d. Conduct workshops on PSS mainstreaming strategy

4) To increase networking and exchange of experiences between and among participating organizations.

- a. Meetings with core PSS project partners
- b. Meetings with core partners of the two SAN projects.

**Framework for the whole  
Psycho Social Support project**

**• YONECO:**

Produce 150 copies of the baseline report; produce leaflets for the summarized version of the same report; produce leaflets on the summarized version of the PSS best practices toolkit. All the above to disseminate to PSS partners and stakeholders in Malawi.

**• ECC:**

Conduct training to strengthen the understanding of PSS among PSS partners and stakeholders targetted at PSS partners and stakeholders; Develop strategy on mainstreaming PSS into OVC related programs to benefit PSS partners and stakeholders; Conduct a workshop on mainstreaming PSS into OVC related programs targetted at PSS partners and stakeholders; Disseminate the mainstreaming strategy to all relevant organizations and actors to benefit all OVC organizations in Malawi.

**• NOVOC:**

Conduct four meetings for SAN PSS partners targetting PSS partners; Conduct meetings for SAN L & L partners complete with reports to benefit the L & L partners.