



Government of Malawi

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

FOR THE

**GENDER, CHILDREN, YOUTH AND SPORTS SECTOR WORKING
GROUP**

2013 – 2017

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ACRONYMS

ADC	Area Development Committee
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DAGG	Development Assistance Group on Gender
DAS	Development Assistance Strategy
DEC	District Executive Committee
DPs	Development Partners
DTP	Desktop Publishing
FBOs	Faith Based Organizations
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GCY&S	Gender, Children, Youth and Sports
GCY&SGCY&S SWG	Gender, Children, Youth and Sports Sector Working Group
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology
JSSP	Joint Sector Strategic Plan
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MoGC&SW	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare
MoY&S	Ministry of Youth and Sports
PA	Public Address
SWAp	Sector Wide Approach
SWG	Sector Working Group
TV	Television
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Government of Malawi has established the Gender, Children, Youth Development and Sports Sector Working Group (GCY&S SWG) as one way of improving coordination and service delivery on issues affecting women, men, youth and children. The GCY&S SWG will eventually evolve into a Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) which will provide an institutional framework for planning, coordinating and budgeting for Gender, Children, Youth Development and Sports programmes in the country.

A GCY&S audit exercise conducted at the national level and in 12 selected districts in December 2011 exposed major communication challenges in the coordination and implementation of GCY&S programmes. Among other things, the audit revealed that there was little internal as well as external awareness on the existence of the SWG and as a result, departments and institutions in the GCY&S Sector failed to coordinate well in the implementation of their programmes. The institutions also lack sufficient communication capacity to carry out advocacy and public outreach activities effectively. In general, the institutions lacked a strategy to guide their communication activities.

This strategy is therefore intended to address the communication challenges and improve coordination and synergy among institutions within the GCY&S SWG. The guidelines encompassed in this strategy will enable the SWG to effectively raise awareness about itself and its activities; enhance collaboration with all stakeholders; improve relationship with media for accurate and continued publicity of GCY&S programmes; promote the participation of women, men, youth and children in GCY&S programmes; and assist the SWG to win the trust and support of development partners.

Successful implementation of this strategy will rely on strong commitment from institutions in the GCY&S SWG as well as cooperating partners. Furthermore, the proposed activities will require the provision of adequate resources for their effective planning, coordination, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

1.0 Background

In November 2008, the Government of Malawi launched 16 Sector Working Groups including the Gender, Children, Youth and Sports Sector Working Group (GCY&S-SWG), to strengthen the implementation of the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) and the Development Assistance Strategy (DAS). This SWG brings together the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare (MoGC&SW), Ministry of Youth & Sports (MoY&S) and other stakeholders working in the functional areas of the two ministries. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), as representative of development partners, is co-chair of the GCY&S-SWG. With the institutionalisation of the SWG now taking place at both the national and district levels, it becomes imperative for the SWG as well as all individual institutions and departments to communicate effectively on issues concerning GCY&S.

This strategy has therefore been developed to guide the GCY&S-SWG on fundamental communication issues related to Gender, Children, Youth and Sports. The strategy is informed by findings from a situation analysis study conducted in 2010 and a GCY&S audit exercise which was carried out in December 2011 at the national level and in 12 selected districts where the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare is implementing a programme on gender equality and women's empowerment. The audit unearthed a number of challenges and these include:

Lack of a communications strategy: The single broad challenge concerned the need to develop formal guidelines to guide and direct the manner in which all internal and external communications affecting the Sector could be handled. The audit established that the absence of a Communication Strategy made it difficult for the GCY&S-SWG and its constituents to liaise well with development partners and the media and speak on GCY&S issues with one voice. These findings necessitate the development of a Communication Strategy that would spell out the modus operandi on how the GCY&S organisations would communicate as a group horizontally, vertically and diagonally. The lack of clear guidelines on horizontal, vertical and diagonal communication has resulted in duplication and inconsistency in the messages emanating from the GCY&S institutions.

Similarly, there is need to handle media relations in a coordinated manner to address the challenges being experienced when each

institution deals with the media individually. A well coordinated approach to communication would therefore improve media relations and help in increasing the impact of the Sector's messages thereby persuading development partners even more to increase funding for the GCY&S programmes. This Communication Strategy is intended to provide guidelines which will assist in addressing the challenges discussed above.

Limited knowledge on the GCY&S SWG: There is limited awareness of the GCY&S-SWG and inadequate advocacy of the GCY&S activities at both the national and district levels. This could be attributed to the inadequate information and documentation related to the Sector. Although structures such as the Development Assistance Group on Gender (DAGG), District Executive Committees (DEC) and Area Development Committees (ADC) do exist and provide platforms for sharing information, meetings concerning the latter two structures do not sufficiently tackle GCY&S issues. Most officials within the two line ministries leading the Sector as well the relevant civil society organisations possess little or no knowledge of the sector wide approach process. It is therefore necessary to ensure that adequate documentation related to the sector is available at various resource centres across the country.

Ineffective feedback mechanisms: The Sector experiences delays in obtaining feedback on important communications, hence needs to improve its feedback mechanisms.

Limited internet connectivity: The Sector is challenged by limited internet connectivity at the national and district levels to the extent that some institutions in the districts operate without internet connection at all. The problem is further compounded by limited number of computers in the GCY&S institutions which makes it impossible to introduce local area networks that would facilitate electronic linkage among members in the Sector.

Inadequate information, communication and technology (ICT) skills: There is need to build capacities of officers in the GCY&S Sector on ICT skills to access important information concerning the Sector that may be available in electronic format.

High communication costs: Communication activities are compromised due to limited financial resources both at national and district levels. The GCY&S-SWG officials experience challenges in

relaying important messages to partner institutions and other stakeholders outside the GCY&S Sector due to high communication costs such as mobile and ground phone bills. Additionally, the annual budgets of the GCY&S Sector are not sufficient to cater for production of advocacy materials like brochures, banners, newsletters and branded t-shirts. Inadequate funding is similarly responsible for low TV, radio and newspaper advertising which reduce visibility of the GCY&S-SWG and its programmes, projects and activities.

2.0 Rationale of the Strategy

The GCY&S-SWG needs coherence and good coordination in the execution of its activities. Given the fact that the GCY&S-SWG is made up of several government departments and institutions, there is need for proper guidelines on how communication activities will be handled both internally and externally. This will ensure consistency in the messages being disseminated as well as improve relationships with other stakeholders such as the media, civil society organisations, development partners and the private sector. The strategy will therefore address the communication challenges identified above.

3.0 Goal and Objectives of the Communication Strategy

The overall aim and specific objectives of this Communication Strategy are:

3.1 Goal

To ensure effective internal and external communication in the GCY&S-SWG through appropriate transmission of the right information to the right audience at the right time.

3.2 Specific Objectives

The Communication Strategy is intended at achieving the following specific objectives:

- i. Enhance internal communication and build synergy of members in the GCY&S SWG to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness
- ii. Enhance awareness-raising and advocacy activities for the GCY&S SWG among key stakeholders including members of the general public
- iii. Improve collaboration with development partners on GCY&S SWG programmes
- iv. Ensure that all stakeholders including the media deliver accurate, evidence-based and balanced reporting on issues related to the GCY&S Sector
- v. Increase access to information related to the sector

3.3 Communication principles

The following principles will be followed to achieve the preferred manner in which communication has to be developed and delivered:

- **Simple and clear:** Develop communication in a simple and straight forward manner
- **Objectivity and transparency:** Design and deliver communication using fact-based information in an open and transparent manner
- **Audience appropriate:** Tailor communications to discreet audiences according to needs analysis
- **Constant flow:** Deliver communications regularly
- **Consistency:** Ensure communications contain consistent core messages
- **Constant feedback:** Continuously provide and ask for feedback and acknowledge the same
- **Impact-conscious:** Evaluate at pre-determined points to ensure message is understood

4.0 Audience Analysis

The key messages to be transmitted through this Communication Strategy will target the following audiences:

4.1 Primary Audiences

Primary audiences are groups of people or institutions which are directly involved or affected by the activities of GCY&S SWG. These include:

- **Local communities (particularly children, youth and women):** The local communities shall be made aware of the GCY&S programmes and activities taking place in their areas for them to fully utilise and participate in such undertakings
- **Traditional leaders:** Traditional leaders will require some awareness on the GCY&S programmes so that they can effectively mobilise their subjects to make use of the available services
- **Religious leaders:** These will be sensitised on the activities of the GCY&S SWG to influence their followers to either access related services or support the Sector's activities
- **Government officials:** The Government officials shall be encouraged to promote the affairs of the GCY&S SWG
- **Civil Society Organisations and the academia:** These will play a major role in lobbying for policies and programmes and

mobilizing resources both human and financial for some of the outcomes of the GCY&S Joint Sector Strategic Plan (JSSP).

- Faith-Based Organisations: The role of the FBOs will also be critical in the implementation of the JSSP hence, they will be fully involved in the GCY&S SWG
- Development Partners (DPs): These partners will be crucial to the operationalization of the SWAp for the GCY&S SWG

4.2 Secondary Audiences

Secondary audiences are groups of people or institutions which are indirectly affected by the GCY&S-SWG and its activities. These include:

- Men: While men are not the primary beneficiaries for most GCY&S SWG programmes, they will be involved to promote GCY&S issues and shall play their rightful role within the GCY&S SWG to advance the overall Sector's agenda.
- Media: The media is a strategic partner in the GCY&S SWG and as such they will be fully engaged in the activities of the SWG. The Media shall be sensitised to report objectively and consistently on the Sector.
- Private sector: In the spirit of Public Private Partnership, the private sector will be involved so that they should play their part as well as fund some of the activities under the GCY&S SWG.

5.0 Guidelines on Communication Flow

This strategy provides guidelines on how internal and external communications on GCY&S SWG will be coordinated.

5.1 Internal communication

In this strategy, internal communication refers to all communications that occur between and among the members and institutions in the GCY&S SWG. High standards within internal communication will guarantee effective communication externally.

Channels of internal communication: Internal communication comprises all communications that occur within the GCY&S SWG. This kind of communication will be vital for the GCY&S SWG as it will enhance synergy and coordination among institutions within the Sector. When interacting internally, the members will use horizontal and vertical channels of communication.

Horizontal communication

Horizontal communication takes place when members at the same level communicate with one another. At the national level, this will occur among the MoGC&SW, MoY&S, Civil Society Organizations, Private Sector and Development Partners. This will involve quarterly meetings and circulation of project reports among members of the GCY&S SWG. The meetings shall be called to discuss progress made; note challenges experienced and map out ways on how to address the problems. Members within the Technical Working Groups (TWGs) will be able to communicate amongst themselves through memoranda and e-mails using this line of communication. Horizontal communication will therefore promote a culture of information sharing on GCY&S issues.

Horizontal communication will also occur at the district level and it will involve exchanges taking place among the members and institutions in the GCY&S Sector. The District GCY&S Committees will facilitate the horizontal lines of communication through quarterly meetings and regular sharing of reports among members in the districts.

Vertical communication

Vertical communication refers to the downward or upward communication that occurs when members at different levels communicate with one another. This will concern communication between the GCY&S SWG or District GCY&S Committees on one hand and the Sector members on the other at both the national and district levels. This will also take place when the GCY&S SWG, through the Secretariat, communicates with the District GCY&S Committees and vice-versa. Vertical communication will not only improve personal relationships between committees and other members in the Sector but also allow downward and upward communications between the two levels.

Through vertical communication, the GCY&S SWG secretariat will have an opportunity to convey its instructions, advice and respond to queries from individual members, institutions, District GCY&S Committees and Technical Working Groups. On the other hand, individual members, institutions and TWGs will be able to pass their reports, suggestions and grievances to the GCY&S SWG secretariat. At the district level, the District GCY&S Committees will pass information concerning policies and instructions to individual members, institutions and TWGs through downward communication while the individual members, institutions and TWGs will be able to

communicate their reports and suggestions to the District GCY&S Committees through upward communication. The TWGs, as structures mandated to implement the activities of the GCY&S SWG in line with the Joint Sector Strategic Plan, will use vertical communication to liaise with the national and district secretariats respectively.

These lines of communication are expected to open up communication processes and improve feedback mechanisms among the institutions in the GCY&S Sector. By following the guidelines presented in this section, the GCY&S institutions will be able to provide responses on important messages through horizontal or vertical communication depending on the prevailing circumstances.

Channels of internal communication: These are the ways through which communication will occur within the GCY&S Sector. The most important channels of internal communication will include:

1. **Memoranda:** This channel will be most appropriate for personalized messages which can be sent to individuals or a group audience to call for meetings, request for information or update members on GCY&S issues. The memoranda will be written by the national and district secretariats or any member of the GCY&S SWG who has an issue to communicate with other parties whenever necessary.

2. **Reports:** Members of the GCY&S SWG shall use reports to present information pertaining to their projects and activities which need to be shared with other stakeholders. These reports will be written quarterly, bi-annual or annual, as deemed necessary, by the national and district secretariats and GCY&S institutions to update others on progress made in the course of a project or to evaluate completed projects.

3. **GCY&S SWG Website:** The GCY&S SWG secretariat shall develop a separate website aside from existing websites of the MoGC&SW and MoY&S which will provide on-line information and updates about GCY&S activities all round the clock. The GCY&S-SWG shall therefore hire or assign an expert to manage the site and update the content on regular basis, preferably, weekly.

4. **Electronic mailing lists:** These lists will enable one to instantly send information to a large group of people at a very low cost. The GCY&S SWG secretariats at the national and district levels shall

develop their own mailing lists and those for the media and development partners to allow the sharing of project reports and other important information. The website expert in liaison with the national and district secretariats shall ensure that the lists have been developed at the onset of the implementation of this Strategy.

5. **GCY&S SWG meetings:** These will be called by the national and district secretariats every quarter and will involve all members of these committees. The meetings will provide an opportunity for the members to interact on face-to-face basis and exchange ideas concerning the GCY&S Sector.

6. **Tele-conversations:** Telephone conversations will allow real-time personal interaction among members of the GCY&S SWG at the national and district levels. This channel will be used whenever necessary and will enable the members to communicate fast on urgent matters.

5.2 External Communication

External communication involves the GCY&S SWG, its members and institutions conveying certain messages to other parties who are outside the Sector. The quality of internal communication will in turn affect the way external communication will be conducted in the Sector.

Channels of external communication: The channels to be used in this kind of communication will include the following:

1. **Newsletter:** This shall be produced bi-annually by the GCY&S SWG secretariat and should also be used as a medium for advocacy as well as sharing information on best practices on projects among the GCY&S institutions.
2. **E-mail and internet:** The GCY&SSWG shall also use e-mail and the internet to communicate with external stakeholders such as the media and private sector. The SWG should ensure that there are adequate computers for the GCY&S institutions. Additionally, the internet systems in most GCY&S institutions will have to be upgraded to the broadband category for efficient and reliable service.
3. **Public announcements:** These will be made by the GCY&S-SWG national and district secretariats as well as GCY&S institutions using the public address (PA) systems to announce

important information to the public whenever necessary. The announcements will enable the secretariats and institutions to reach out to people in very remote areas which are not accessible through other modes of communication such as newspapers.

4. **Public meetings:** These meetings called by the district officials of the GCY&S-SWG to convey important GCY&S messages to members of the general public.

6.0 Media Relations

One major part of this Communication Strategy concerns the relationship between the Sector and the media. Improved media relations will ensure that accurate and objective reports are written about the GCY&S SWG and related programmes.

6.1 Strategies for improving media relations

The major strategies will include:

1. **Media reports:** The GCY&S SWG shall produce quarterly media reports to update other stakeholders and the general public on their programmes and activities
2. **Press conferences:** This shall involve inviting the media to inform them about important news that has public interest. The GCY&S SWG shall organize press conferences twice a year to provide updates on programmes being implemented in the Sector.
3. **Press releases:** These are documents that are written by organizations or bodies to inform media institutions about important news which needs to be conveyed to the general public. The GCY&S SWG shall issue press releases whenever there is crucial information deemed important for the public to know. Such information will include introduction of new programmes, donations and normal periodical updates.
4. **Press dinners or luncheons:** The GCY&S SWG shall hold either a press dinner or luncheon where journalists will be invited to learn about new developments concerning the Sector. The programme of activities shall include speeches, photo displays, short film show on success stories and dinner or luncheon itself.
5. **Site visits:** The site visits will involve taking journalists on trip to locations where the GCY&S-SWG and its institutions is implementing its programmes to enable them to appreciate the achievements that are being made by the Sector and its institutions.

7.0 Advocacy and Public Outreach

Advocacy as well as public outreach activities will be required to raise awareness of the GCY&S-SWG activities and increase its own visibility. As part of its advocacy strategy, the GCY&S-SWG and its member institutions shall carry out the following activities:

IEC materials: These shall include posters, banners, brochures and branded t-shirts bearing GCY&S messages to publicize the -SWG and its activities. The key messages shall also highlight important aspects of programmes under implementation at both the national and district levels.

Public exhibitions: These shall constitute open days when members of the general public in the districts will be invited to appreciate what is happening in the Sector. The exhibitions shall be organized by the District Committees and should take place at least once in a year. Activities during the exhibitions shall include poster and picture displays, dances, theatre, film show and speeches from committee members, district commissioners and traditional leaders.

Radio programmes: The GCY&S-SWG national and district secretariats shall finance the production of radio programmes which will be aired on national and community radio stations respectively. The programmes shall carry crucial messages concerning the major projects and events taking place in the Sector.

8.0 Monitoring and Evaluation

The SWG Communication Strategy shall be monitored quarterly to ensure that planned activities are carried out on time and in the right manner. The Secretariat will ensure that responsible officers, departments and institutions implement the communication activities as required and assess their effectiveness and efficiency.

The monitoring and evaluation tools to be used will include the following:

- Communication implementation plan (Appendix B) – which outlines the communication activities to be carried, their timelines and responsible officers
- Communication budget – which presents a tentative outline of the communication activities and their related costs
- Baseline studies – a research used to determine the state of affairs on a particular subject.
- Pre and post-testing of messages – scrutiny of messages by a few members of the target audience to assess their effectiveness

- Media content analysis – analysis of media reports and articles to assess their accuracy.

9.0 Resource Requirements

The implementation of this strategy will require adequate financial, material and human resources. The notable resources to be required include the following:

- Office equipment: stationery, phones, television sets (*to be used by GCY&S institutions for video shows during exhibitions*), radio sets, scanners, printers, photocopying machines, still cameras, video cameras, PA systems, ding lamps, LCD projectors, desktop computers, laptop computers, extension cables, tape recorders, DTP software.
- Public outreach facilities such as the video outreach vans which should be bought for district assemblies for use by GCY&S institutions during exhibitions
- Human resources: training on communication skills such as reporting skills, ICT skills, DTP skills, public relations skills, record management skills

ANNEX 1: COMMUNICATION MATRIX

STRATEGIC OUTPUT	AUDIENCES	KEY MESSAGES	CHANNELS	ACHIEVEMENT INDICATORS	RESPONSIBLE OFFICERS
<p>1. Enhanced internal communication and synergy among members in the GCY&S-SWG</p>	<p>GCY&S-SWG secretariat, Technical Working Groups, District SWG committees, SWG departments and institutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhere to communication principles • Follow guidelines on internal and external communication • Promote sharing of information 	<p>Quarterly GCY&S-SWG meetings, memoranda, quarterly reports, e-mail messages, tele-conversations, GCY&S-SWG website, resource centres, capacity building programme on communication skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of internal communication products • Number of reports submitted to the resource centres • Number of SWG meetings 	<p>GCY&S-SWG secretariat, District SWG committees</p>
<p>2. Enhanced awareness and advocacy for the GCY&S-SWG among key stakeholders including members of the general public</p>	<p>General public, women, youth, athletes children, traditional and religious leaders, civil society, other government departments, donors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in GCY&S programmes • Change attitude towards GCY&S issues • Adopt positive practices on GCY&S programmes • Fund GCY&S programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotional materials • Radio programmes (national and community) • Public exhibitions (dances, theatre, films, posters and picture) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of IEC materials developed and disseminated • Number of women, youth and children accessing GCY&S services 	<p>GCY&S-SWG secretariat, District SWG committees, GCY&S departments and institutions</p>

STRATEGIC OUTPUT	AUDIENCES	KEY MESSAGES	CHANNELS	ACHIEVEMENT INDICATORS	RESPONSIBLE OFFICERS
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> displays) • Banners • Brochure • Bulletin • Public debates 		
3.International and development partners' attention and endorsement for GCY&S-SWG activities achieved	Development partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GCY&S-SWG committed to the improvement of services • SWG has effective accountability and transparency mechanisms • Provide sufficient funding for GCY&S programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bi-annual briefings for development partners • Quarterly and annual reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of DPs supporting the sector (Financial, material and technical support) 	GCY&S-SWG secretariat, District SWG committees
4.Accurate, evidence-based and balanced reporting on issues related to the GCY&S-SWG delivered by Journalist	Reporters, sub-editors, editors and producers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media is a strategic partner on advocacy and public outreach • Accurate reporting on GCY&S is crucial • Ethical reporting is important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media reports • Press releases • Bi-annual press conferences • Annual press dinner/luncheon • Site visits • Reporting skills workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of accurate media reports 	GCY&S-SWG secretariat, District SWG committees

ANNEX 2: COMMUNICATION IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

STRATEGIC OUTPUT	ACTIVITIES	REQUIREMENTS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBLE OFFICERS
1. Enhanced internal communication and synergy among members in the GCY&S-SWG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce quarterly reports • Update e-mail lists quarterly • Update Sector members through memoranda • Develop GCY&S-SWG website and update it weekly • Conduct GCY&S-SWG meetings bi-annually • Conduct a training workshop on communication skills • Train staff on public relations and media production 	Funding, SWG secretariat staff time and effort	2012	GCY&S-SWG secretariat, District SWG committees, GCY&S departments and institutions
2. Enhanced awareness and advocacy for the GCY&S-SWG among key stakeholders including members of the general public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct annual public exhibitions • Produce radio programmes weekly • Produce IEC materials (banners, brochure, bulletin bi-annually) • Conduct annual public debates 	Funding, materials and equipment, all SWG staff time and effort	2011 – 2014	GCY&S-SWG secretariat, District SWG committees, GCY&S departments and institutions
3. International and donor attention and endorsement for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulate quarterly and annual reports 	Funding, SWG secretariat staff time and effort	2012 – 2014	GCY&S-SWG secretariat

STRATEGIC OUTPUT	ACTIVITIES	REQUIREMENTS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBLE OFFICERS
<p>GCY&S-SWG activities achieved</p> <p>4. Journalists delivering accurate, evidence-based and balanced reporting on issues related to the GCY&S-SWG</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce quarterly reports • Produce quarterly press releases whenever necessary • Hold press events such as bi-annual press conferences • Hold annual site visits • Conduct one training workshop for reporters 2012/13 	<p>Funding, materials and equipment, SWG secretariat staff time and effort</p>	<p>2012 – 2014</p>	<p>GCY&S-SWG secretariat</p>

