

**ITU Regional Workshop on ICT Accessibility for Persons
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Malawi's Approach on Access to ICTs for People with Disabilities

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Introduction

Malawi is a state organized on democratic and participative form and founded on respect for human dignity.

ICT Policies/Legal Framework

The Communications Sector Policy Statement (CSPS) states that all people of Malawi have to access affordable communications services (ICTs) and the people of Malawi in this case includes persons with disabilities.

To this effect MACRA has been given powers under the Communications Act to licence operators who are willing to roll-out these services.

Eighty five percent of the population of Malawi lives in the rural areas and the government of Malawi is in the process of implementing UA policy which is addressing access of communication services in the rural and under served areas.

In addressing UN MDGs the government of Malawi in 2005 came up with Malawi Growth and Development Strategies (MGDS) and the Sub theme 5.2.1 of the MGDS goes on to say that special groups of persons with disabilities are most vulnerable if not equipped with resources can be negatively impacted by economic shocks.

Strategies Underway

The MGDS, UA and ICT4D policies have been put in place to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to ICT services.

Most of the persons with disabilities do not have access to ICT services and Federation of Disabled Organizations of Malawi (FEDOMA) (the umbrella body of groups working with persons with disabilities) is working with a number of ministries / organizations to address this issue. Some of the areas underway are:

- i) MACRA has donated six computers to be installed in MCTs which FEDOMA is setting up;
- ii) Sky Band (one of the ISP) has donated one year connectivity to FEDOMA MCTs;
- iii) The telecommunications operators (MTL, Celtel and TNM) have been encouraged to be marketing accessories which can easily be used by persons with disabilities.

Current Statistics

We are yet to access the statistics of people with disabilities.

ICT Equipment

MACRA together with FEDOMA and ministry responsible for people disabilities have come up with a list of ICT equipment which has been distributed to the cooperating partners for possible funding. The items are:

- i) Desk top computers
- ii) Braille printers
- iii) Reading software
- iv) Speaking clocks/watches
- v) Intelligent scanners
- vi) Hearing aids

Most of the schools for persons with disabilities lack ICT equipment listed above and the situation gets worse when the students are selected to higher learning institutions.