

THE CIVIL SOCIETY MANIFESTO

SUBMISSION OF **THE DRAFT YOUTH/CHILDREN'S MANIFESTO (ISSUES)** **[2008-2014]**

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On Maternal and Newborn Health...
On Youth/Children's Poverty...
On Youth/Children's Education...
On Youth/Children's Health...
On Youth/Children's Vulnerability...

On Youth/Children's Development...
On Youth/Children's Employment...
On Youth/Children's Participation...
On Youth/Children's Welfare...

What should the next elected government do?



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CONTENTS

	Page
1.0 INTRODUCTION	3
2.0 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	4
2.1 Overall goal:.....	4
2.2 Specific Objectives:	4
3.0 METHODOLOGY	4
3.1 Desk research	4
3.2 Consultations.....	5
4.0 DEFICIENCIES/CHALLENGES	5
5.0 IDENTIFIED CAMPAIGN ISSUES.....	5
5.1 Scaling up of Maternal and Newborn Health	5
5.2 Child Poverty	6
5.3 Education	7
5.4 Health.....	7
5.5 Child Protection	8
5.6. HIV/AIDS, Orphans and OVCs.....	9
5.6.1 HIV/AIDS positive children	9
5.6.2 Children with Disabilities	10
5.6.3 Street Children.....	10
5.7 Drug abuse	11
5.8 Youth Employment.....	11
5.9 Children in Conflict with Law (Juvenile Justice)	12
5.10 Youth/child Participation	12
5.0 CONCLUSION.....	13
6.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY	14

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In preparation for the May 2009 general elections, the Child Rights Information and Documentation Centre (CRIDOC) has prepared a draft Manifesto of Children's Rights, for submission to the broader civil society manifesto, with a view to increasing awareness amongst the political parties on matters requiring urgent attention with regards to children.

The Manifesto for Children is based on principles laid out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, as ratified by Malawi as well as the Constitutional guarantees for children's rights. Among other things, the Convention, in Article 2(2), stipulates:

“States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.”

On the other hand, Section 23 of the Republican Constitution, for example, stipulates that all children, regardless of the circumstances of their birth, are entitled to equal treatment before the law, and lists down some of the rights that they are supposed to enjoy, such as the right to know and to be raised by their parents; the right to be protected from economic exploitation or any treatment, work or punishment that is likely to be hazardous, interfere with their education or harmful to their health or to their physical, mental, or spiritual or social development. In other words, all the duty bearers have a duty to create a protective environment for children.

The state must thus be committed to abide by the principles laid out in both the Constitution and the Convention, and it is the duty and obligation of the civil society to advocate for the rights and interests of Children as they are enshrined in the Convention.

Children are often directly or indirectly affected by the decisions, policies, and actions that adults make. These have an impact on children in both the present and the future sense. All children must be given the opportunity to excel in their environment, in order for them to develop in a healthy and holistic manner. Specific attention needs to be given to more vulnerable groups such as disabled children, children infected with the HIV, children with behavioural problems, and children coming from a disadvantaged background.

The World Bank says ensuring healthy child development is an investment in a country's future workforce and capacity to thrive economically and as a society. Yet, according to United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), investment in children tend to receive the least attention and lowest investment from many governments, as every year, countless numbers of children are stopped in their tracks – deprived, in one way or another, of the love, care, nurturing, health, nutrition and protection that they need to survive, grow, develop and learn.

This manifesto, therefore, aims to remind the politicians who will be elected into office about the Government's obligation to take all appropriate measures in ensuring that children's rights are promoted and protected, and to ensure that all issues pertaining to children receive the best attention as enshrined in the Convention. In that way, the best interest of the child will be enjoyed and protected. We hope that this youth/children's manifesto will go a long way in informing and raising awareness among the politicians and political parties alike of the critical issues affecting children and youth, and motivating them take action by not only incorporating the issues into their political and development agendas, but also implementing them.

2.0 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 Overall goal:

A civil society initiative is underway in Malawi led by the Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN) to develop a parallel manifesto with the overall goal of using the manifesto as an advocacy strategy to pressure politicians and political parties to incorporate issues that benefit the **majority** within their campaigning as they vie for political positions at the next Presidential and General Elections, to be held in May 2009.

By “majority” we mean all sectors of society, including children.

As an NGO established to create access to information on child/youth rights or related issues, CRIDOC feels duty-bound to contribute towards the initiative. As such, CRIDOC set out to generate issues that affect children and youth so as to come up with a youth/children’s specific manifesto.

The goal is to ultimately incorporate the issues into the broader civil society manifesto that will benefit and enhance the livelihoods of the society, particularly children.

2.2 Specific Objectives:

The specific objectives this (draft) youth/children’s manifesto seeks to achieve are as follows:

1. Raise awareness of politicians and political parties on the rights of children/youth as enshrined in the CRC.
2. Inform politicians and political parties of the critical issues affecting children and youth in Malawi, which could be used as benchmarks for the next Government’s programming.
3. Pressure politicians and political parties to incorporate youth/children’s issues into their political and development agendas.
4. Use the children’s manifesto, if endorsed by political parties and politicians, as a monitoring tool on the pledges made by politicians and political parties concerning children.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

In developing this draft manifesto, CRIDOC used the following methodology to come up with the ten priority issues:

3.1 Desk research

As a documentation centre, CRIDOC has systematically kept records of the issues that affect children and youth in Malawi. And as an information centre, it carries out research (mostly desk-research at the moment) from time to time on a number of issues affecting children and youth in Malawi and globally.

In the context of this particular exercise, therefore, the organisation mostly used desk research to identify issues, using the following tools in the process: newspaper clippings, research/survey reports by other stakeholders, websites, books, press releases, and conference papers.

CRIDOC volunteers then drew together these tools and used them to analyse and identify key/priority issues that affect children and youth. They were also able to access other model civil society manifestos produced elsewhere for them to guide them how the issues they identified would be grouped and blended into a manifesto.

3.2 Consultations

CRIDOC also consults with stakeholders on a regular basis who are implementing various projects for and with children/youth at both policy and grassroots levels. The interactions we have had with these stakeholders have also assisted significantly in articulating the critical issues that affect children/youth, which require to be included into the political and development agendas.

4.0 DEFICIENCIES/CHALLENGES

A lot of issues were identified through the methodologies highlighted above, but we had to pick out what we considered the ten priority areas/issues. However, while CRIDOC believes that it had done quite a substantial amount of work in generating and putting together the ten issues in this draft manifesto through mainly desk research, we believe that there was a deficiency in terms of consultations with, particularly, the children/youth themselves.

There was need to do more formal and informal consultations with the children/youth through, for example, participatory surveys and interaction sessions (i.e. formal meetings) so as to determine what they, themselves, consider as priority issues complementing what we had already generated through the desk research. The principle of child/youth participation was not, therefore, achieved in this exercise even though it has been identified as one of the critical areas among the ten priority issues to be incorporated within the nation's political and development agendas.

It was not possible to achieve the above due to unavailability of resources/funds to conduct participatory surveys and meetings. This was the significant challenge we met in drafting this manifesto.

Nonetheless, since this is only a draft document, the organisation is still exploring practical and cost-effective ways we can generate input from children/youths.

5.0 IDENTIFIED CAMPAIGN ISSUES

Both the prospective Members of Parliament and/or the political parties seeking to be elected by the majority of voters and to form the next government must pledge that they shall do everything possible to ensure that the following youth/children's issues are not only well incorporated and articulated within the nation's political and development agenda, but also ensuring that they are implemented at both the constituency and national levels, as follows:

5.1 Scaling up of Maternal and Newborn Health

According to the Malawi Multiple Indicator Cluster (MICS) 2006 survey, the maternal mortality remains at 807 per 100,000 live births in the country, which means Malawi still has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world, even though there has been substantial decline/improvement in recent years. The infant mortality rate is estimated at 72 per 1000 live births, while the under five mortality is 122 per 1000 per 1000 births, according to estimates for five years preceding the survey.

It is clear, therefore, that with the high maternal and infant mortality rates, Malawi needs to make substantial investment in Early Childhood Development (ECD) if it is to make meaningful progress in winning the battle to alleviate poverty for the benefit of the generations to come.

The process of giving children the best start in life begins even before birth. Poor nutrition and ill health on the part of a mother can lead to low birth weight in her children, putting them at much greater risk of developmental delay, malnutrition and death. Poor health and nutrition multiply the risks that women will die of complications related to pregnancy or childbirth. The

consequences are doubly tragic because children's chances of survival and well-being drop dramatically when deprived of a mother's care.

Yet both the previous and the current governments have failed to allocate enough budgetary resources to scale up maternal and newborn health.

As of 2002, estimates show that the Government's budget allocation in children in general had only been 3.5% over the preceding 10 years.

5.2 Child Poverty

So many researches have identified poverty as the main factor behind so many social ills, such as child labour, child trafficking, HIV/AIDS, etcetera. Despite reports of improved economic overview, the economic gains made so far as a result of good economic/fiscal management are yet to trickle down to the majority of Malawians, including children.

Over the last ten years, poverty levels have remained stagnant with 52% of the 12,608,000 people of Malawi living under one dollar per day. Of the 52%, 22% are ultra-poor, living under USD 0.20 per day. This group lives under severe conditions of chronic poverty and is unable to meet their daily needs. A proportion of this group, around 10%, is not able to participate in productive activities because they are destitute and labour constrained, as seen in the elderly, child-headed households, disabled or the chronically ill. The latter group has largely been ignored and never been meaningfully targeted by any kind of social protection intervention, and as a consequence, experience severe destitution.

The country has developed so many policy frameworks on reducing poverty – such as the Vision 2020, the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (MPRS), and now the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MDGS) – but there is need for more collaboration or networking in addressing poverty. This approach will require the leadership of our MPs who are currently on a political break of selfishness.

The country has developed so many policy frameworks on reducing poverty – such as the Vision 2020, the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (MPRS), and now the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MDGS) – but there is need for more collaboration or networking in addressing poverty. This approach will require the leadership of our MPs who are currently on a political break of selfishness.

What is the problem with our Parliament when you consider the sort of debates at national level? Politicians that we entrusted to develop our rural areas are busy driving in cities. Leaders who could help communities reduce poverty spend the whole day debating on Section 65 of the Constitution for years and years.

What Should the Next Government Do?

- 1. The next government should, therefore, pledge to scale up maternal and newborn health programming*
- 2. To double the current budgetary allocation in ECD programmes in all relevant ministries, such as the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MOWCD), Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, etc*
- 3. To facilitate the enactment of an ECD Law*
- 4. Establish Government supported training college for maternal and newborn health and ECD*
- 5. Establish resource centres on ECD, maternal and newborn health*

What Should the Next Government Do?

- 1. We call upon the next Government to accelerate investments in health and nutrition programs, particularly for children and women.*
- 2. The next Government should draw lessons from the Social Cash Transfer Pilot Scheme and scale up the program*
- 3. It should ensure that MPs work with their people to address some of these problems. Parliamentarians should now consider the pride of the country rather than their own personal political benefits.*
- 4. The next government must pledge to work with the Opposition to reduce poverty.*
- 5. The next government must pledge to work with various other stakeholders – including civil society – who are already doing commendable work on the ground.*

5.3 Education

The individual needs of the child are of great importance in ensuring the holistic and healthy development of children. Continuous improvement of our educational system is required in order for children to prosper and receive the good quality, broad and holistic education to which they are entitled.

We acknowledge the establishment of free basic primary education in 1994, which brought good news to the country. It resulted in an enormous increase in the number of children enrolled in school, which was a significant leap towards ensuring the universal right to education for all children.

What Should the Next Government Do?

- 1. To train and provide more teachers in our schools. This would allow for smaller classes and better teaching. For this reason we want to see more teachers and other personnel employed in our schools.**
- 2. Ensure that pupils are provided with fresh and better schoolbooks.**
- 3. We want to see more and better school libraries.**
- 4. Introduce legislation and reinforce already existing programmes by other stakeholders to prohibit discrimination and sexual harassment in our schools.**
- 5. Ensure that schools maintain high standards and must be subjected to quality control.**
- 6. This requires increased resources, which the next Government must pledge to secure.**

However, the situation also brought with it its own challenges. The quality of basic and primary education was compromised, as the increase in numbers of enrolled children put pressure on Government to increase the number of trained teachers, build more school blocks, provide more learning materials, etc. The quality of education, therefore, dwindled significantly.

Gender-related violence in schools is rampant and it is a challenge that needs to be dealt with urgently. The USAID's Safe Schools Program, which aims to create gender safe environments for all boys and girls that promote gender equitable relationships and reduce school related gender based violence (SRGBV), found that boys and girls in Machinga were victims as well as perpetrators of gender-based violence.

There is, therefore, need to ensure that schools are gender safe – i.e. that both boys and girls have equal opportunity to learn, gain skills through classroom and extracurricular activities and be psychologically, socially and physically safe from threats, harassment, sexual coercion, or harm in all parts of the school.

5.4 Health

The 2006 Multiple Cluster Indicator Survey (MICS) has revealed a substantial decline in infant and under-five child mortality rates in recent years. This has been a result of successful healthcare interventions such as the Expanded Programme on Immunisation, which has immunised 71 percent of children under the age of one, and the malaria prevention programme, which resulted in 50 percent of households owning an insecticide-treated bed net (ITN).

Integrated healthcare packages such as Child Health Days, which were introduced in the country for the first time in 2006 and reached close to 98 percent and 95 percent of targeted children with Vitamin A and de-worming medication respectively, also show promise in reducing illness and death among children.

However, young children' survival continues to be threatened by high levels of chronic malnutrition, estimated at 46 percent for children under the age of five; high maternal mortality

rates; HIV and AIDS; and poor access to and low quality of healthcare services. Poor hygiene practices at household level also contribute to the spread of disease.

But disease is not inevitable, nor do children with these diseases need to die. According to UNICEF, research and experience show that six million of the almost 11 million children who die each year worldwide could be saved by low-tech, evidence-based, cost-effective measures such as vaccines, antibiotics, micronutrient supplementation, insecticide-treated bed nets and improved family care and breastfeeding practices.

What Should the Next Government Do?

- 1. The next government must take a holistic approach to healthcare including HIV/AIDS prevention*
- 2. Access should be increased with regards to the provision of the best health care to children.*
- 3. Further improvements to health care should be introduced, through universally accessible vaccines and additional screening tests for babies alongside what is carried out at present.*
- 4. The next Government must sustain the programmes that are being implemented at present to promote good health practices such as consistent breastfeeding after delivery.*

5.5 Child Protection

Research on issues put forward in the Manifesto has also outlined the need for children to be better informed of their rights, and the need to be protected from all forms of rights abuse/violations. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) outlines the fundamental rights of children, including the right to be protected from economic exploitation and harmful work, from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse, and from physical or mental violence, as well as ensuring that children will not be separated from their family against their will.

Children are working illegally, with only a small fine inflicted on those found in violation of child labour laws. Over the past few months, we have seen several studies on child labour, child trafficking and other issues affecting orphans and vulnerable children in Malawi. We now have a larger picture of what child labour is at national level. The conditions of work that children are involved in is pitiable, the work involved is abject.

We acknowledge the fact that several organisations are working on child labour and child trafficking. For example, the programme funded by ILO/IPEC could be the largest at national level. In addition, projects funded by UNICEF, Malawi Red Cross, United Nation High Commission for Refugees and other donors are also doing a commendable job.

However, there is not much commitment from the policy makers, in particular Members of Parliament. While we appreciate that there is now a budget allocation on child labour activities at national level, the money is not enough. Today District Social Welfare Officers who are poorly paid are using the same resources to repatriate, accommodate and even feed the victims. Police officers are walking long distances or cycle to assist the communities on these issues. Communities are very supportive, but they lack several materials to meet their targets.

What Should the Next Government Do?

- 1. The next government should express more commitment by approving and passing some of the bills and policies aimed at protecting children from all forms of violations, including the long-awaited Child Care, Protection and Justice Bill.*
- 2. Bold and new anti trafficking legislation is required and consider the introduction of child registration as a priority for child protection.*
- 3. Capacity building for law enforcers is required including those in immigration and courts.*
- 4. Referral networks by stakeholders could be enhanced at national and community level.*

5.6. HIV/AIDS, Orphans and OVCs

The challenges of the HIV and AIDS pandemic to Malawi's growth and development are clear. One of the leading causes of death in the country is HIV and AIDS. Every day an average of 267 people become infected with the HIV virus while AIDS-related infections account for 235 deaths daily. Currently 930,000 adults and children are infected with HIV, 58% of who are women. Life expectancy has decreased from 45 years in 1995 to 39.3 years in 1998 for the average Malawian. Reversing the continued spread of the HIV and AIDS pandemic is central to sustainable social economic development, social cohesion and food security of the country. Although the HIV and AIDS prevalence seems to have stabilized, the numbers of those that are already infected indicate that the numbers of orphans and other vulnerable children (OVC) will increase over the next ten years. Increasing levels of poverty and the impact of the HIV and AIDS epidemic have contributed to the high numbers of orphans, of which there are currently an estimated 1,008,000 in Malawi, half of whom are due to HIV and AIDS.

In response to the OVC crisis due to the HIV and AIDS pandemic, the National Plan of Action (NPA) for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVC) was signed in 2005. The NPA outlines a five-year strategy to scale up interventions to mitigate the OVC crisis in Malawi.

However, the implementation of the NPA has been sluggish. One reason for the slow implementation has been the limitations at District Social Welfare Office level both in terms of actual skills and number of officers. Currently the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MOWCD) is operating at 60% of the staff requirements. Given the urgent OVC crisis in Malawi, there is urgent need to rapidly roll out the NPA and considerably increase the scale up of the OVC response.

We expect the next Government to put in place tangible programmes targeting orphans and OVCs. The other vulnerable children include children living with HIV; children with disabilities; street children; the girl child; among others.

5.6.1 HIV/AIDS positive children

The spread of HIV/AIDS has left tens of thousands of helpless orphaned children behind who are vulnerable to exploitative work and other abuse. The situation of orphans has seriously affected the rights of children in Malawi. Currently we have more than one million orphans, representing 14% of the population. This increase is largely attributed to the HIV/AIDS

related deaths that account for 48% of the orphans. Most orphans also fall victim to property deprivation making it difficult for them to sustain an acceptable livelihood. The access to health and food remains a big challenge to orphans in Malawi.

What Should the Next Government Do?

- 1. The next Government should ensure provision of financial support to organised support groups of youth/children infected with HIV/AIDS to initiate collective income generating activities.***
- 2. We need paediatric treatment for children on ART, as children are still dying while taking adult medication.***

According to the Health Civil Society statement on the commemoration of the world Aids Day on December 1, 2007, There has been no paediatric treatment for children with AIDS in the country making the administration of drugs difficult as they have had to be given tablets meant for adults (breaking the tablets into half). Children are biologically

different from adults and adult formulation are not designed for children hence dividing the tablet into half may not guarantee the right quality of treatment.

5.6.2 Children with Disabilities

Children with Disabilities are another vulnerable group whose rights need to be promoted and protected by the next Government. Although there are no specific provisions protecting rights of people with disabilities in the Constitution, these are protected by other provisions nevertheless. The provision on equality in Section 20, for instance, demands that there shall be no discrimination on any grounds including disability.

Children with disabilities, especially girls, are also vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. Beliefs prevail that HIV/AIDS positive people can be cured as a result of sexual intercourse with the disabled persons.

The current and previous Governments have not done enough to guarantee accessibility to buildings and services for children with disabilities, including school.

In a press report on June 10 2003, for example, only one out of 20 visually impaired students attended primary schools, and those in secondary schools usually lacked materials and ended up dropping out of school. This was a violation of the right to education.

Even though Government has made some efforts – although very little so far – in the provision of eye care services and other special needs education in some schools, the Sight Savers International (SSI) in August 2005 said almost 80 percent of visually impaired children were out of school due to ignorance of available facilities in the education sector.

5.6.3 Street Children

The street children in Malawi are vulnerable in many ways, and they are increasing day by day. The rise in street children numbers is the result of worsening economic conditions aggravated by the breakdown of extended family structures and the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

There are an estimated 1.2 million children orphaned by AIDS of which 0.4% are estimated to be street children with another 0.1% as potential street children. As an indication of the escalation of the problem, 90% of the street children in Blantyre arrived within a space of five (5) years only (Chisomo Children's Club).

What Should the Next Government Do?

The next government should commit itself to supporting the disabled children through:

- 1. Greater access to public places;*
- 2. Fair school opportunities, particularly in the award of scholarships; and*
- 3. The fullest possible participation in all spheres of Malawian society.*
- 4. Ensure availability of eye care facilitates and other special needs education facilities*

On the other hand, Constitutional structures/institutions established to address rights of children, including street children, seem to be challenged to effectively carry out their work. The Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC) Child Rights Unit is not widely known or proactive, is inadequate to respond to children's needs holistically, has inadequate staff and infrastructure, is not adequately accessible to the public or children's organisations; and lacks policy on street children.

What Should the Next Government Do?

1. *Strengthen constitutional bodies, such as MHRC Child Unit by equipping it with adequate resources*
2. *Put in place a specific policy on children, particularly street children;*
5. *Develop more targeted interventions for street children;*
6. *Improved training for those working with street children;*
7. *Improved government and NGO communication on matters related to street children.*

5.7 Drug abuse

The struggle against drugs among our youth today requires that we all shoulder our responsibility in this regard. Communities, individuals, voluntary organisations and popular movements must be mobilised.

We cannot tolerate a situation where young people find it easier to obtain drugs and alcohol than to find some place where they can get together. We need to create drug free meeting places and strong supportive networks for our young people.

It has been found that prisons are one of the places where drugs, particularly Indian hemp, have been secretly smuggled. Young people also access and abuse illicit drugs in pubs and other drinking joints. This means something is wrong somewhere within the administrative system, which the next Government must pledge to correct.

What Should the Next Government Do?

1. *The next Government must ensure that municipalities/assemblies have a special responsibility. They need to get a better picture of the drug abuse in our bars and clubs and offer the security personnel and bar attendants training in how to deal with drugs.*
2. *The next government must ensure that drug smugglers are stopped. It must improve border controls, employ more drug police and intensify international police co-operation.*
3. *The new Government must work to ensure that our prisons, in particular, are free from drugs*

5.8 Youth Employment

In today's fast-changing, global economy, educators and employers alike recognize that traditional education often falls short of providing young people with the basic life skills they need to succeed – in school, in their communities, and future workplaces.

There is need for the next government to focus on local programmes that aim at equipping young people with essential skills that will empower them to become competent, confident, responsible, and caring adults.

What Should the Next Government Do?

1. *The new Government should support formation of new or already existing youth networks, which will enhance collective voice and raise their visibility at local, national and international level.*
2. *It must strengthen, through these networks, their capacity to lobby for support both locally and internationally to support their micro enterprise activities and other issues.*

The next Government must also ensure that children and young people must be adequately educated with regards to the increasing opportunities available to them in the field of work, in order for them to access and be aware of present and future work prospects.

5.9 Children in Conflict with Law (Juvenile Justice)

Currently, there are over 400 children and young persons in Mzuzu, Kachere and Bvumbwe prisons. The current Child and Young Persons Act does not allow for the convictions, sentencing and imprisonment of children.

Some of the children are in prison for very minor offences like theft. Some of them have been on remand for more than three years. Some are aged 16 years and are serving sentences of about 10 years.

The children in prison have only one meal per day and do not have all the necessary requirements for proper child development. They do not attend school, they do not have recreation and they do not have anything to occupy them with. They are subjected to different abuses.

Efforts are underway to ensure that children in conflict with the law are also accorded a chance to enjoy their rights just like other children. They should be given a chance to develop into useful citizens.

The Child Care, Protection and Justice Bill suggests that “diversion” – defined as the channelling of young people from criminal justice system into programmes that make them accountable for their actions – is one way of dealing with children in conflict with the law.

5.10 Youth/child Participation

Children/youth have a right to participation, as well as a right to know, understand, and explore their culture in a creative way. Opportunities and accessibility to sport, culture and the arts should continue to be built upon and provided for children, in order for children to not only learn about them, but to enjoy them. The next Government must continue to create opportunities in the field of sport and culture, in order to increase child participation in these activities, and for children to do so in a safe and healthy environment, which enables them to socialise and develop their interpersonal and intra-personal skills.

Children/youth also have a right to participate in the decision-making processes in all the development endeavours. Meaningful youth participation, according to the UN definition and standards, entails recognising and nurturing the strengths, interests, and abilities of young people through the provision of real opportunities for youth to become involved in decisions that affect

What Should the Next Government Do?

- 1. The next government must pledge to fully back the efforts already on the ground by, among other things, enacting and implementing the law that ensures “diversion” of children in conflict with the law.*

What Should the Next Government Do?

- 1. The next Government must develop a programme approach/policy that enhances participation/involvement of children in programme planning and policy formulation in all issues that affect them and society at large.*
- 2. It must support peer learning and exchanges among youth groups to enhance learning of best practices locally and internationally.*
- 3. Support the activities of the Children’s Parliament to effectively address issues that concerns their rights at Policy and local level.*

them at individual and systemic levels. Successful youth participation involves shared decision-making and collaboration with adults who can serve as mentors for youth.

It is also important to involve them as these do not only affect them now, but will also affect their children in the next generations to come.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The desk research conducted and consultations held during the drafting of this Manifesto were instrumental in outlining the achievements reached thus far, the challenges, as well as the way forward which is required from this point on. The need to address youth/children's issues transcends political differences, and will require significant investment from the political party that will be elected to Government in May 2009.

Investing in our children is not only worth doing for its own sake, but is also the surest way to improve the livelihoods of tomorrow's society.

CRIDOC, therefore, urges the political parties to take heed of the suggestions put forward in the Manifesto for youth/children, which will also be submitted to the taskforce on the civil society manifesto. We trust that the taskforce will incorporate the issues into the broader manifesto, accordingly.

Besides, it is also expected that this manifesto may be used for various other advocacy endeavours by CRIDOC or any other stakeholder(s) that may find the document useful in our quest to ensure the full realisation of the rights of all children/youth in Malawi.

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