

MONTHLY ACTIVITIES REPORT FOR DECEMBER, 2024



COMPILED BY

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SUBMITTED TO

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1.0 Introduction

This report outlines the summary progress for activities implemented in the month of October, 2024 for the Malawi Electoral Support Project (MESP) and other activities carried out by Institute for Policy Interaction (IPI).

2.0 Mobilization on voter registration exercise in Mwanza district

Institute for Policy Interaction (IPI) conducted mobilization on voter registration exercise in Mwanza district. Mwanza district was in the third phase of voter registration in Malawi, in preparation of 2025 general election.

The objective of the mobilisation was to encourage people to register with MEC for them to be eligible voters and vote on 16th September, 2025. In addition, roadshows conducted were also meant to raise awareness on the rights and responsibilities of voters and to deal away with misinformation and disinformation.



A cross-section of potential voters in Mwanza during one of the voter registration exercise

The mobilisation was conducted in two constituencies namely; Mwanza Central Constituency and Mwanza West Constituency. The roadshows were conducted in the following areas; in Senior Kanduku, Nthache and Govati in the following areas Michiru, Nsakambewa, Wingolo, Siledi, Chatha, Lupiya, Chiala, Thambala, Mgango, Tulonkhondo, Gonamwache, Mdzinja, Mwalemera, Ngaziwe, Njolomola, Sanjika, Fusa, Tchesa, Namisi, Mwembezi, Kachere, Chimbwinda,

Chisumbu, Mpandazi, Phanda, Ziyaya, Kunenekude, Chidole, Kadole, Faiti, Hau, Rabson, Makanani, Kasambanyoni, Nkantho, Nsamira, Elia, Tuwembu, Silota, Kagulo, Chikoleka, Chimulango, Kamphirimo, Muwale, Envulo, Mgwedura, Mpeni, Mferanduna, Lipongwe, Chamwalira, Stampa, Govati, Likongwe, Mpandazi, Kaponyatola, Muwale, Chete, Malowa, Kalanga, Andisupe, Mchotseni, Tchereni, Laundi, Moffatt, Mulongolora, Chikolosa and Liwonde.



A cross-section of Mwembezi FC players posing with IPI staff during a football bonanza during a voter registration mobilization at Mwembezi Primary School Ground.

C. Summary of Participants

District	M	F	Total
Mwanza	38,095	42,820	80,915

D. Expected Results/ Immediate Outcomes

- 80,915 potential voters were mobilized to register with Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) to be eligible to vote on 16th September, 2025.
- Potential voters who had no National Identification Cards (IDs) or NRB generated slip, were mobilized to register with National Registration Bureau (NRB) to be eligible to register with MEC.
- Political parties were engaged in voter registration mobilization exercise.

- The messages to deal with misinformation and disinformation about rigging of elections were disseminated.
- The messages to promote greater participation and representation of expectant women, youth and persons with disabilities to register with NRB and MEC were spread all over by IPI hired artists.

E. Lessons Learnt and Observations

- The coordination between Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC), National Registration Bureau (NRB), religious institutions, education institutions, youth clubs, market and local proved to be fruitful during voter registration mobilisation. Stakeholders collaborated well in mobilization.
- There was a low voter turnout during the voter registration exercise. After interviewing people reasons for low voter turnout were as follows;
 1. Unfulfilled promises by politicians
 2. Their political masters told them to register after MEC abandons using smartmatic machine.
 3. Some people who did not benefit from coupons for Farm Inputs Subsidy Programme (FISP), social Cash Transfer and Climate Smart Public Works Program said do not see a reason to participate in elections.
 4. New registrants above 25 years are above were being referred to Mwanza NRB district office for registration, as such, many potential voters could not afford to walk a distance of approximately 50 kilometres for registration hence lost interest.
 5. Very few centres had NRB Biometric Voter Registration Kits (BVRK) that led to new registrants walking long distances to get registered with NRB. Due to terrain and long distances led people lose interest to register with NRB.
- It was learnt that majority of stakeholders were not aware that MEC has made a declaration that people will also use the NRB generated slip during voter registration.

- It was also learnt that NRB will be at each and every voter registration centres to verify the cards and slips for the people that may have some problems with their cards for eligibility to register with MEC.

F. Challenges:

- Very few centres had NRB Biometric Voter Registration Kits (BVRK) that led to new registrants walking long distances to get registered with NRB. Due to terrain and long distances led people lose interest to register with NRB.
- Biometric Voter Registration Kits (BVRK) were not synchronizing data to the server for the new registrants. This means majority of new registrants were not issued with NRB generated slips hence did not register with MEC.
- Some areas had network challenges to synchronise data hence were walking 2-3 kilometres to access internet to synch data.

I. Recommendations:

- IPI and electoral stakeholders should engage MEC and NRB to redo the exercise in all the three phases to give a chance to the potential voters who did not register with NRB and MEC in the first phase. Secondly, to give a chance to potential voters who registered with NRB but were not issued with NRB generated slip to register with MEC to register and have an opportunity to vote.
- In the supplementary time, NRB should be in all centres with Biometric Voter Registration Kits (BVRKs) to reduce distances for people who might fail to register with NRB due to long distance.
- Electoral stakeholders should continue coordinating as it has proven workable during all the three phases of voter registration mobilization exercise.
- IPI should continue engaging all the stakeholders in the electoral process because of their large following will help to reach out a huge population with electoral messages.
- CSOs agreed to engage security agencies to intensify surety in preparation for 2025 general elections to reduce the occurrence of political violence for further escalation.
- There is a need to train peace building committees to help manage and arbitrate political violence.

3.0 MEC and MESP Partners Meeting

Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) organized a review the voter registration mobilization exercise meeting with Malawi Electoral Support Programme (MESP) partners funded by UNDP. MEC wanted to get honest feedback from MESP partners on what they documented.

The meeting was chaired by MEC Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Mr Andrew Mpesi along with heads of Elections, Finance, ICT and Security. Whilst MESP team was led by Isaac Otieno from UNDP along with Praise Mwenegamba and Patrick Masala from IPI, Grey Kalindekafe (NICE) Michael Kaiyatsa (CHRR) and a new National Coordinator for CCJP/ECM.

MESP Team Feedback on voter registration mobilization exercise

MESP partners gave feedback on voter registration mobilization exercise in clusters issues as follows;

Successes (Achievements)

- Political leaders have registered
- Except for two, all voter registration centers opened on day one voter registration
- Challenges encountered during pilot voter registration (PVR) thoroughly addressed
- MEC's continuous civic and voter registration education
- Press releases
- Successful completion of all voter registration phases
- Engagement with various stakeholders
- Preliminary VR figures released
- Improved responsiveness
- Enhanced relationship with stakeholders
- Enhanced visibility
- Efficient machines

CSOs reached out to the masses through the following strategies

- Using volunteers
- Bonanzas
- Weddings and Funerals
- Market days

Challenges

- Misunderstandings (Wards and Constituency)
- Accredited CSOs not carrying out Civic and Voter Education
- Misunderstanding of the voter registration process
- Political parties not taking responsibility to encourage people to register
- Attribution of NRB challenges as if its MEC's
- Misinformation and deliberate distortion of information
- Party reps interfering with registration process
- Party agents leaving registration centers before closing time
- Party agents believing MEC would cater for their welfare
- Party reps not turning up
- Deliberate silence by media houses when political parties were making force allegations
- Fuel scarcity
- Party reps preferring post concerns on social media than otherwise
- People deciding not to go for registration
- Attribution to MEC of apparent low turn during registration
- Multiple registration by some eligible voters

Challenges Observation CCSOs)

- MEC personnel were not on top of things at registration centres. Most centres political party monitors and local leaders had more powers than MEC supervisors.
- NRB Inefficiencies
- Media and Publicity (Reactive most of the times) (Crisis in terms of communication)
- Key personnel travelling abroad during critical time
- Constituency demarcation controversies

- Fuel scarcity
- Court Ruling-Came a bit late
- Social Cash Transfer registration and MEC registration were running concurrent which led many people opting for Social Cash Transfer registration
- Minors registering. Challenges to confirm age. The use of traditional means
- Rumour mongering on vote rigging
- Party monitors not well trained and not well paid
- Youth showed no interest due to social economic challenges
- Corruption by local leaders and politicians
- Coercing of potential registrants through hand-outs
- Multiple registration

Why another phase

- Enhanced credibility of the election
- More people to register who did not benefit from court ruling
- Enhanced engagement with all electoral stakeholders to avoid blame game.

Recommendation

- Enhanced collaboration
- Need to investigate why double registration before prosecution
- Involve DCs
- Engaging the register of political parties on hand-outs issues

4.0 . CSOs Review of the Voter Registration in Blantyre

Accredited Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Blantyre organized a second phase voter registration review meeting at National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE).

Objective

The meeting aimed to review the voter registration exercise: what went well, challenges, recommendations and the stand for CSOs.

Group Work



Group work during the CSOs Voter Registration Mobilization Exercise Review Meeting

During the review meeting stakeholders were put in groups to discuss what went well, challenges and recommendations as follows;

1. Strength

- There was a good coordination among CSOs during the mobilization of voter registration. During the mobilization CSOs shared areas to mobilise potential voters to register with MEC.
- MEC coordinated well with CSOs during the exercise and officers were swiftly responding to the challenges encountered.
- There was also a good coordination with local and religious leaders helping in voter registration mobilisation in communities, churches and mosques.

- National Registration Bureau (NRB) though came late registered new potential voters in civil registration.



Participants during the CSOs Voter Registration Mobilization Exercise Review Meeting

2. Challenges

- National Registration Bureau (NRB) came late to register new registrants into civil registry. This has left many people unregistered because were returned back due to absence of NRB officers in registration centres.
- Lack of funding for CSOs choked the mobilization of voter registration exercise. Many NGOs have not received funding for elections. This made few organizations such IPI and NICE to be visible than the other.
- Some MEC officers were found drunk during working hours and this made the unruly to the potential voters.
- Very few centres had NRB Biometric Voter Registration Kits (BVRK) that led to new registrants walking long distances to get registered with NRB. Due to terrain and long distances led people lose interest to register with NRB.

- Biometric Voter Registration Kits (BVRK) were not synchronizing data to the server for the new registrants. This means majority of new registrants were not issued with NRB generated slips hence did not register with MEC.
- Some areas had network challenges to synchronise data hence were walking -10 kilometres to access internet to synch data.

3. Recommendations

- Electoral stakeholders agreed engage MEC and NRB to redo the exercise in all the three phases to give a chance to the potential voters who did not register with NRB and MEC in the first phase. Secondly, to give a chance to potential voters who registered with NRB but were not issued with NRB generated slip to register with MEC to register and have an opportunity to vote.
- In the supplementary time, NRB should be in all centres with Biometric Voter Registration Kits (BVRKs) to reduce distances for people who might fail to register with NRB due to long distance.
- Electoral stakeholders agreed continue coordinating as it has proven workable during all the three phases of voter registration mobilization exercise.
- CSOs agreed to continue engaging all the stakeholders in the electoral process because of their large following will help to reach out a huge population with electoral messages.
- CSOs agreed to engage security agencies to intensify surety in preparation for 2025 general elections to reduce the occurrence of political violence for further escalation.