

MONTHLY ACTIVITIES REPORT FOR SEPTEMBER, 2024



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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 September, 2024 for the Malawi Electoral Support Project (MESP) and other activities carried out by Institute for Policy Interaction (IPI).

2.0 Town Hall and District Elections Supervisory Team (DEST) meetings.

Institute for Policy Interaction (IPI) organised Town Hall meeting in Blantyre and District Elections Supervisory Team (DEST) meetings in Chiradzulu and Balaka districts respectively. The objective of the meeting was to bring key electoral stakeholder together for familiarisation with the changes in the electoral law and to emphasise the need to follow electoral guidelines to ensure fair and credible in the 2025. In addition, to check a status quo on awareness campaign on new electoral laws, pilot voter registration and preparedness for voter registration.



The Town Hall Meeting and DEST meetings were patronised by participants drawn from different electoral stakeholders groupings namely; Multiparty Liaison Committee (MPLC), District Elections Supervisory Team (DEST), National Registration Bureau (NRB), Persons With Disabilities (PWDs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), religious institutions, Police, Education institution, youth clubs, and women platforms such Churches, Mosques, Markets, Youth Club meetings, Women groups, Market Leaders, young voters and the first-time voters.



A cross-section of MPLC participants during a Town Hall Meeting in Blantyre

The Town Hall Meeting and DEST meetings had panellist that were drawn from Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC), National Registration Bureau (NRB), Youth Groups, Persons With Disabilities (PWDs), Women Groups and the Media. Therefore, engaging them it was very vital to help disseminate electoral management process information to potential voters. Among other issues discussed during the meeting were;

1. To refrain from hate speech, and not to spread unverified information, gossip, and disinformation on social media.
2. Promote greater participation and representation of women, youth and persons with disabilities.
3. The media to report on the electoral and polling process without fear or favour.
4. The CSOs to maintain neutrality, and efficiency in disseminating voter civic education and in election monitoring.
5. To refrain from acts of violence, and vandalism during the campaign and results time.

Description of an Inclusive Approach Taken

The engagement meeting drew stakeholders namely; Multiparty Liaison Committee (MPLC), District Elections Supervisory Team (DEST), National Registration Bureau (NRB), Persons With Disabilities (PWDs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), religious

institutions, Police, Education institution, youth clubs, and women platforms such Churches, Mosques, Markets, Youth Clubs, Women groups, Market Leaders, young voters and the first-time voters. The stakeholders represented the concerned and potential voters who matter in the society and have influence in electoral issues.



A cross-section of participants during DEST meeting

Expected Results/ Immediate Outcomes

- 301 Key electoral stakeholders from Multiparty Liaison Committee (MPLC), District Elections Supervisory Team (DEST), National Registration Bureau (NRB), Persons With Disabilities (PWDs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), religious institutions, Police, Education institution, youth clubs, and women platforms such Churches, Mosques, Markets, Youth Clubs, Women groups, Market Leaders, young voters and the first-time voters were engaged and are familiarised with the changes in the electoral law and are able to follow electoral guidelines to ensure fair and credible in the 2025.
- 301 key electoral stakeholders agreed refrain from hate speech, and not to spread unverified information, gossip, and disinformation on social media.

- Electoral stakeholders agreed promote greater participation and representation of women, youth and persons with disabilities.
- The media agreed and were encouraged to report on the electoral and polling process without fear or favour.
- The CSOs present were encouraged and agreed to maintain neutrality, and efficiency in disseminating voter civic education and in election monitoring.
- Youths and political parties agreed and were encouraged to refrain from acts of violence, and vandalism during the campaign and results time.

Lessons Learnt and Observations

- The involvement electoral stakeholders from civil society organizations (CSOs), Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC), National Registration Bureau (NRB) religious institution, education institution, youth clubs, community gatherings, first time voters and women from Blantyre was very critical because the participants were very vibrant to unearth some of the very critical issues regarding elections such as;
 - i. CSOs and other partners threw their weight to the practice of town hall meetings because they encourage citizens to participate, ask questions and gets answers right away. Town hall meetings is a new phenomenon in Malawi and this practice can help citizens engaging duty bearers on pertinent issues that need urgent solutions. During the town hall meeting citizens asked burning questions to MEC and NRB to clear sticky and steamy issues surrounding the 2025 general elections.
 - ii. It was learnt that there is misinformation and disinformation regarding to the changes in electoral laws. Many political parties are using propaganda to their followers. This has left electorates not fully aware of the changes in electoral laws. This has a challenge of preventing many electorates to vote come 16th September, 2024.
 - iii. CSOs expressed worry at the town hall meeting that, there is little being done on civic and education and raising awareness on the changes on new electoral laws because the number of donor funding elections have gone

down and unfortunately, donors have pumped a lot of money in PVT instead of civic and education and raising awareness new electoral that are critical to 2025 elections.

iv. MEC has added NRB slip as one criteria for ones eligibility to register with MEC during voter registration and during voting. However, there is misunderstanding on the difference between NRB slip and NR1 form. This issue is drawing a mixed reaction because of the mistake that happened in Karonga by-elections where people were denied using NR1 form to vote. Therefore, stakeholders appealed to NRB and MEC to clarify to the nation the actual NRB slip that will be used to avoid the electorates caught unaware during voter registration.

- Stakeholders are willing to help disseminate the electoral information to the potential voters using their platforms.
- It was learnt that stakeholders are anticipating a highly contested elections come the 16th September, 2025 due to unclear information from NRB that the institution is not being honest to tell the exact number of people it registered during mass and mop-up exercise registration and how cards have been issued and distributed. This issue is bringing contestation among political parties that feels that there is a hidden agenda from NRB.
- Stakeholders demanded that, there is a need for an independent body to conduct a research to know how many people have National Identification Cards that might help to know how many people are eligible to vote in all regions.

Challenges:

- IPI invited a few members of Multiparty Liaison Committee (MPLC) and District Elections Supervisory Team due to inadequate of resources.
- UNDP team did not attend the town hall because, it collided with MEC pilot voter registration calendar that was announced to take place from 13th to 14th September in Blantyre City, Balaka, Chitipa, Dedza, Mzuzu City, Neno, Nsanje, and Lilongwe City.
- Due to limited budget, IPI accommodate a few CSO and other relevant stakeholders at the town hall. Services in Blantyre are expensive.

- Some participants came from far where transport refunds were not enough with the distances they covered.

Recommendations:

- There is a need of engaging Multiparty Liaison Committee (MPLC) and District Elections Supervisory Team (DEST) frequently to be appreciating the sequence of electoral events so that No is Left Behind.
- 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.
- There is a need to lobby for more funding to reach out potential voters with electoral messages in remotest areas to avoid voter apathy.
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