



MALAWI

Media Landscape Guide

MARCH 2022



NETWORK

communicating with disaster-affected communities



Preface

This guide is one of a series of Media Landscape Guides which map the media landscape in different countries. The guides have been produced by the CDAC Network in cooperation with DW Akademie and supported by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. This project is part of the global initiative “Transparency and media freedom - Crisis resilience in the pandemic”.

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Take a look at all of CDAC’s Media Landscape Guides, available in multiple languages, here: <https://www.cdacnetwork.org/media-landscape-guides>

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Contents

SECTION 1: Introduction	4
1.1 About This Guide	4
1.2 What Does The Guide Cover And Why It Is Needed	5
1.3 Methodology	5
1.4 Potential Role Of The Guide In Disaster Preparedness And Response	5
SECTION 2: Overview Of Communications Culture	6
2.1 Media Background	6
2.2 Media Landscape At A Glance	6
2.3 Language And Dialects In The Media	9
2.4 Barriers To Media Access	11
2.5 Media Preferences And Trusted Media	12
2.6 Two-Way Communication With Communities	12
SECTION 3: The Media In Disasters With A Focus On Covid-19	14
3.1 Disasters Overview	14
3.2 The Role Of The Media In Disaster Response	15
SECTION 4: Media Overview	18
4.1 Digital Media Platforms	18
4.2 Social Media Platforms	19
4.3 Television Stations	19
4.4 Radio Channels	20
4.5 Print Media	22
4.6 Traditional Forms Of Communication	23
4.7 Media Training Opportunities	24



SECTION I:

Introduction

1.1 About The Guide

This Media Landscape Guide provides a snapshot of the media in Malawi, including the audiences, the producers, the preferences of different groups in the community, the communications culture, and the languages associated with the media. It gives an insight into the role of media in development work, crisis preparedness, recent disasters, and the (at time of writing¹) ongoing COVID-19 response. The guide also gives an overview of each media sector including, digital and social media, radio, television, print and other traditional forms of mass communication.

It should be noted that with the constantly changing nature of the media landscape, this is not a comprehensive overview of all media outlets and platforms but rather a snapshot summary of those most relevant at the time of writing.

The guide has been written as an introduction to help organisations and individuals engage with media in their work. For example, it can be used by:

- » Community, development, and humanitarian organisations; government and local authorities; non-government organisations (NGOs) and UN relief agencies to work with the media on community engagement, communication, outreach, and messaging and mobilisation.
- » Development workers building societal resilience to disasters by working with media in disaster preparedness.
- » Relief workers using media to engage communities to work together in early recovery from crises.
- » Media outlets (including news outlets): to improve their communication and engagement with different groups, particularly during disasters.
- » Media Development Organisations: to inform advocacy and capacity-building work to improve people's access to quality information and further development goals through better outreach.

¹ April to November 2021



1.2 What Does The Guide Cover and Why It Is Needed

Without an understanding of how a society communicates, any communication efforts may struggle and potentially miss large numbers of those for which those efforts are intended. This can cause difficulties when attempting to work with the community in a development project; in an emergency, it could be even worse, as an incoming relief operation may not have time to carry out audience research before communicating vital information, without which communication may use the wrong channels and miss those who need it. However, by engaging media in a country, you are engaging vital partners who know the communications landscape of any given country well and have the means by which to effectively disseminate information.

The aim of this guide is to act as a starting point for communicators, indicating the most effective media to use to communicate with different demographics. Many existing resources for identifying media users and audiences in Malawi are either out of date or limited in scope: this guide will help identify which media is operable at the time of writing and so help facilitate the communication of reliable, trusted and timely information, helping to make the media part of the solution in a humanitarian response.

1.3 Methodology

Research for the guide was carried out in-country and aided by an in-country reference group who provided guidance, expert advice, and quality assurance. Information and data were collected through a detailed desk review and interviews. Interviews were carried out with media organisations, media experts and academic researchers, government officials, media staff (including producers and journalists), humanitarian agencies, UN agencies, and NGOs.

1.4 Potential Role Of The Guide In Disaster Preparedness And Crisis Response

Effective, consistent, and timely communication is vital in humanitarian response and in building sustainable early recovery from crises. Communities, authorities, and responders must be kept informed of the situation of any disaster and planned response, and of any actions they need to take. Proactive communication to dispel rumours or misinformation is vital, as is the building of trust with audiences, which can be facilitated through developing mechanisms for two-way communication. The media can also play a proactive role in early warning which can influence population and response behaviour and potentially mitigate the effects of a disaster.

In aid responses and disaster preparedness it is important to know how best to use media to reach marginalised groups, with considerations of literacy levels and language preferences. It is also important to be aware of, and to address, any enhanced needs, risks, and information gaps. Good communication requires creative thinking, adapting communication tools, message formats. Working with existing media professionals can help to achieve this.

This guide is intended to help practitioners improve their communication, particularly during humanitarian responses – whether they work in the media or are using it to reach affected communities. The goal is for it to be used to improve communications, messaging and information dissemination and contribute to an effective response.

SECTION 2:

Overview Of Communications Culture

THIS SECTION OUTLINES THE CURRENT MEDIA LANDSCAPE IN MALAWI AND HOW IT SERVES DIFFERENT GROUPS. IT ALSO LOOKS AT THE MEDIA PREFERENCES OF GROUPS AND COMMUNITIES AND THE BARRIERS THEY FACE TO ACCESSING THE INFORMATION THEY NEED.

2.1 Media Background

Malawi is a small, densely populated, agriculture-based, multicultural, multi-religious, multilingual, and democratic country. It has an estimated population of 19.39 million.² It is also known as ‘the warm heart of Africa, lake of stars, Nyasaland (lake of the lake), and land of the leopard. Founded in 1891 as a protectorate of the British Empire, it gained independence in 1964 and became a republic in 1966. After over 30 years of single party rule, Malawi moved to a multiparty system of government through a referendum in 1993. Since the election of President Bakili Muluzi in 1994, Malawi has changed presidents and ruling parties peacefully.

The Federal Broadcasting Corporation (FBC) was Malawi’s first broadcaster, operating from 1958 to 1961. Its primary role was to disseminate propaganda in support of the British colonial administration. After independence in 1964, the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) was established by the government, although the old British laws controlling the media were retained. The Malawi News Agency was established in 1966 to provide information from the government. It is overseen by the Ministry of Information which also controls the Telecommunications Corporation (MPTC).

Since colonial times the newspaper and magazine industry has been dominated by the Nyasaland Times and the Government Gazette, along with faith-based publications.³ However from 1992-94, as people agitated for multi-party politics, the number of newspapers rose to 21 (most of them weeklies). Most of these have now closed, with only four regularly publishing. The media landscape has experienced rapid development since liberalisation and deregulation. It has seen the introduction of the mobile phone, the internet, terrestrial and satellite television, and other digital services. The radio sector has also experienced exponential growth.

Following the first Multi-party elections in 1994, Malawi adopted a new constitution that guaranteed freedom of expression and the liberalisation of the airwaves. Although this allowed for pluralisation and diversity in the media, the government and state monopoly over telecommunications legislation remained until 1998. The first broadcasting licenses were issued in 1995 and the state-owned MPTC assumed a regulatory role of licencing broadcasters, telecommunications, and internet service providers.

MISA-Malawi,⁴ the Malawi chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa, was established in 1996. A non-governmental, member-based organisation, it promotes and defends media freedom in Malawi. The Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) was established under the Communications Act in 1998.⁵ The Communications Acts of 2016, mandated MACRA to regulate and monitor communications services and ensure that reliable and affordable communications services are provided (as is practical) throughout Malawi.

2.2 Media Landscape At A Glance

Today radio and social media are booming in Malawi and the mobile telephone industry is very active. Most radio, TV and print media also have a social media presence through Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. These media channels exist alongside traditional forms of communication, or ‘folk media,’⁶ such as dances, drama, folktales and village meetings.

2 <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-malawi>

3 For detailed discussions see; Chitsulo, E. and Manganda, G. (2011); Origins, Development and Management of the Newspaper Industry in Malawi. Kishondo, P, Kondowe, EB & Mkandawire, F. (Eds.). Journalism Practice in Malawi: History, Progress and Prospects. John Lwanda (2002), Paper Tigers: The rise and Fall of the Independent Media in Malawi, 1961-2001. Society of Malawi Journal, 55(1). Chimombo, S. (1995), The Heathen for thine inheritance. Early missionary poetry in Malawi - 1893-1901. <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/jh/article/view/153033/142625>

4 MISA-Malawi is instrumental in promoting quality in media via its annual awards for media excellence. It hosts/funds other media associations, such the Media Council of Malawi, the Journalists Union of Malawi and conducts training/media research.

5 regulate the country’s communications sector (Communications Act, 1998), now mandated (Communications Act of 2016) to regulate and monitor communications services and ensure provision of reliable and affordable communications services.

6 The term folk media describes creative dissemination of information through cultural and performing arts, including: dances, drama, folktales and village meetings. Folk

There are four types of broadcasting licenses issued by MACRA:⁷ public (funded largely by state), private; private and community (geographically limited, owned and operated by the local community). Malawi currently has 84 broadcasting licenses: 57 for radio and 27 for television stations.⁸ Radio broadcasting is dominated by the state-owned radio company MBC. There are two public radio stations licensed to broadcast nationally, MBC-1 and MBC-2, these are both regulated by the 2016 Communications Act.⁹ Other stations are either private-commercial, private-religious or community-owned and operated. Except for the often cash-strapped community radio stations, most radio stations have an online presence with some live streaming. This makes Malawian radio available internationally and accessible to the diaspora.

All television stations broadcast free-to-air content via the Malawian digital TV set-top box named Kiliya Kiliye, operated by the Malawi Digital Broadcasting Network (MDBNL). It is accessed through digital receivers, no subscription required unlike as a satellite pay-TV or other free-to-air decoders. This enables people to watch more free local TV channels with better quality.

Research participants for this guide from urban areas said that TV, social media, radio, and mobile telephones are their most used and preferred sources of information. In rural areas, communication through dance, drama, folktales, and village meetings is preferred, alongside community radio, mobile phones, and social media, particularly WhatsApp. People in rural areas also questioned the veracity of information collected by journalists during disasters as they said they mostly interview people by telephone and rarely visit affected areas.

PRESS FREEDOM Press freedom has been constitutionally guaranteed in Malawi since multi-partyism in 1994. Section 36 of the constitution reads: ‘the press shall have the right to report and publish freely, within Malawi and abroad, and to be accorded the fullest possible facilities for access to public information’. After years of advocacy and lobbying, Malawi now has an ‘Access to Information Act’, which obliges holders of public information to make it available to citizens who request it. Despite these legal guarantees of press freedom and access to information, legal researchers have identified over 40 pieces of legislation on statute books that have the potential to suppress press freedom.¹⁰ One law allows for the imprisonment of those who “insult” the head of state, and a cyber-security law adopted in 2016 allows for the imprisonment of those who post “offensive” content. According to Reporters Without Borders,¹¹ “these laws can be used against both journalists and bloggers”. The Daily Times media group had to apologise in 2018, after the ruling party criticised a report that appeared to favour the main opposition political party. A few months later, the headquarters of another media group said to be critical of the government was closed.

The disputed 2019 presidential elections had a negative impact on media freedom. Social media was disconnected, several commercial TV stations were vandalised, and radio phone-in programmes were banned when the election results were announced. Positive signals were sent when the new president introduced regular press conferences and put the law on access to information into effect (13 years after discussions about this law had begun). Figures from Reporters Without Borders show that, in 2021, 41 journalists were killed, four citizen journalists were arrested, and four media assistants were killed. Malawi is ranked 62 in the 2021 World Press Freedom Index.¹² MISA-Malawi continues to monitor the media landscape to identify, document and publicise developments (both negative and positive) around media freedom.

MEDIA ACCESS Several data sources have been used in the following sections, there are considerable differences between the sample sizes used by each. The data varies according to when it was collected, whether it was taken on a household or individual level and its scope.

media is often successfully used to disseminate message about disasters.

7 Public (those funded largely by the Malawi state and run in accordance with the Communication Act (2016)), private commercial (those for profit, funded and run privately); private religious (those funded and run by faith organisations) and community – those geographically limited, owned and operated by the local community

8 <https://macra.mw/broadcasting-licenses/>

9 licensed to broadcast nationally regulated by Communication Act of 2016; <https://macra.mw/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/COMMUNICATIONS-ACT-2016.pdf>

10 https://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/programs/ai/rti/international/laws_papers/malawi/Study%20on%20media%20freedom%20in%204%20SADC%20-%20Mandela%20Institute.pdf

11 <https://rsf.org/en/malawi>

12 RSF's 2021 World Press Freedom Index (I is the freest), is published annually. The Index measures the level of freedom available to the media. It provides information about advances and declines in respect for media freedom in 180 countries, and is used by the World Bank to evaluate a country's respect for the rule of law.

Data collated from datareportal.com in 2022 shows,¹³

- » Malawi had a population of 19.91 million, (50.7% of the population is female, 49.3% is male).
- » Urban dwellers make up 18% of the population, while 82% live in rural areas.
- » There were 4.03 million internet users (a 17.4% increase in one year), with an internet penetration rate of 20.2%.¹⁴
- » Median internet connection speed from a fixed line as 5.65 Mps
- » There were 820,400 social media users, equivalent to 4.1% of the total population, a rise of 22.4% in one year. Facebook was the most popular platform in 2022 with 752,000 users, with the ad audience on Facebook being 34.9% female and 65.1% male.
- » There were 10.23 million mobile connections, equivalent to 42.7% of the total population (it should be noted that many people have more than one mobile connection).

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is the UN agency for ICT and it acts as the official source for global ICT statistics. According to the ITU in 2020, mobile cellular network coverage was 86%, the population covered by at least 3G mobile network was 86% and by at least 4G mobile network 84%. In 2018 10% of households had internet access at home and 4% had a computer at home. ITU Data on communication infrastructure in 2020 is presented below:

Figure 1 Communication Infrastructure at a glance from ITU data 2020¹⁵

Service	Fixed-line telephone	Mobile cellular	Mobile broadband	Broadband-fixed
Number of connections	12,465	100,04,680	6,822,634	12,255
Per 100 inhabitants		52	36	

The telephone landscape in Malawi is dominated by the mobile telephone providers Airtel Malawi, TNM and Access. Although the landline phone system still exists, the National Statistics Office suggests it is not as commonly used as it was before the dominance of mobile telephone technology, see figure 1 (above).

Broader data is available from the Population and Household Census carried out in 2018 and based on a survey of 3.99 million households.¹⁶ Of the population surveyed, 51.7% had a mobile phone, 33.6 % had a radio, 11.8 % had a television and 16.4 % had access to the internet. Figures vary regionally, with a higher percentage of households in the Northern Region owning a mobile phone. A higher number of households have access to the internet in the Southern Region compared to the Northern and Central regions. Radio access was similar across regions. Figure 3 below, shows the percentages of ownership calculated from the Number of Household Ownership of Assets and Access to internet data, in the 2018 Population and Household Census.¹⁷

Figure 2: Ownership of communication equipment and access to internet, nationally and by region calculated from Census data 2018

Region and District	Total Households	% Household Ownership of ICT Assets Internet Access						
		Radio	Television	Landline	Mobile Phone	Computer Laptop/Tablet	Satellite Dish	Internet Access
Malawi	3,984,981	33.6%	11.8%	1.5%	51.7%	4.2%	5.8%	16.4%
Northern	472,376	37.1%	16.1%	1.9%	66.0%	4.8%	8.2%	14.2%
Central	1,713,009	31.3%	10.2%	1.3%	48.5%	3.9%	5.3%	10.0%
Southern	1,799,596	34.7%	12.2%	1.4%	51.0%	4.2%	5.7%	23.2%

The National Household Survey on Access and Use of ICT technology 2019¹⁸ was a collaboration between the National

¹³ <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-malawi?rq=malawi>

¹⁴ ITU data gives a lower figure that datareportal, for example, with the 2021 figures the ITU lists 13.8% of the population with internet access compared with 17.8% in the datareportal figures

¹⁵ <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx>

¹⁶ http://www.nsomalawi.mw/images/stories/data_on_line/demography/census_2018/2018%20Malawi%20Population%20and%20Housing%20Census%20Main%20Report.pdf

¹⁷ NSO (2019), Malawi Population and Household Census, 2018.

¹⁸ The NSO has been working with the MACRA in conducting ICT Surveys since 2014. This report presents results from research conducted from September to December 2019.

The objective to continue providing reliable statistics to assist policy formulation and strategic planning in national development initiatives driven by the ICT sector: <http://www.>

Statistical Office (NSO) and the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA), later referred to here as the NSO ICT survey 2019. It presented the results of interviews conducted with 12,000 households in 2019. The survey showed 65% of individuals in Malawi used a mobile phone and amongst these 29.5% owned a phone that was capable of browsing the internet. 46.3% of households in Malawi owned a functioning radio which was used by all members within the household, 73.2% in urban compared to 41.2% in rural areas. The proportion of males who owned a functioning radio was higher than females, 40.3% compared to 29.4%. The proportion of households with a functioning television set was 11.6%. However, owning a TV set in Malawi is one thing and subscribing to pay content is another. A strong association was found between the availability of electricity and ownership of radio, TV and computers. About 84% of households with grid electricity had a functioning radio compared to 35.4% without. 71.1% of households with grid electricity owned a functioning television compared to 1.7% with no electricity. 22% of households with grid electricity owned a computer. See table below:¹⁹

Figure 3: Access and use of ICTs summary from the NSO ICT survey 2019 of 12,000 households and individuals

Access and use of ICTs	Ownership	%
Radio	Households owning a radio (used by all household members)	46.3%
	Urban household ownership	73.2%
	Rural household ownership	41.2%
	Individual ownership	71.1%
Television	Households owning a functioning television	11.6%
	Households owning a television with local TV viewership	69.8%
	Urban household ownership	44.3%
	Rural household ownership	5.4%
Computer/Laptop/Tablet	Households owning a functioning computer	3.5%
	Urban household ownership	15.6%
	Rural household ownership	1.2%
Internet Access	Households with internet access	9.9%
	Urban household ownership	31.1%
	Rural household ownership	5.9%

As Englund observed,²⁰ a single radio set, phone or TV may be accessed by the entire multi-member household and other members of the community.

2.3 Language And Dialects In The Media

Malawi's population is made up of over 10²¹ native ethnic groups, each with its own language. The colonial government recognised this, and early primary education was taught in local languages before transitioning to English for older children.²² However, this changed in 1968 when the Malawian government decreed Chichewa to be the national language and made it the only language of instruction in early primary school and English the medium of instruction in senior primary school and beyond. During the colonial administration, newspapers and magazines were available in local languages.²³

The exact number of languages spoken in Malawi is unknown.²⁴ According to the 1998 Malawi Population and Housing Census there are 13 major languages in Malawi (the 2008 and 2018 census didn't give data on languages

[nsomalawi.mw/images/stories/data_on_line/economics/ICT/ICT%20Household%20Survey%202019.pdf](https://www.nsomalawi.mw/images/stories/data_on_line/economics/ICT/ICT%20Household%20Survey%202019.pdf)

¹⁹ http://www.nsomalawi.mw/images/stories/data_on_line/economics/ICT/ICT%20Household%20Survey%202019.pdf

²⁰ H. Englund (2011), *Human Rights and African Airwaves: Mediating Equality on the Chichewa Radio*. Indiana University Press

²¹ Ethnicity Chewa 34.3%, Lomwe 18.8%, Yao 13.2%, Ngoni 10.4%, Tumbuka 9.2%, Sena 3.8%, Mang'anja 3.2%, Tonga 1.8%, Nyanja 1.8%, Nkhonde 1%, other 2.2%, foreign 0.3% (2018 est.) <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/static/65cb940ec634019f9c3ca9a369017071/MI-summary.pdf>

²² Chilora, H (2000), *School Language Policy, Research and Practice in Malawi*. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnack274.pdf

²³ Manda, LZ (2017). *Journalism education and training in Malawi: A case for a national policy*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326442167_Journalism_education_and_training_in_Malawi_A_case_for_a_national_policy/citation/download

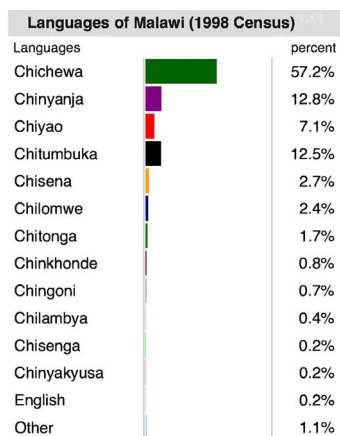
²⁴ Data is from several sources including: <https://translatorswithoutborders.org/language-data-for-malawi/>; <https://data.humdata.org/dataset/malawi-languages/>; <https://www.nationmaster.com/country-info/profiles/Malawi/Language>. Note that Translators without borders may have transposed data for Chitumbuka and Chitonga, and Chichewa and Chinyanja are treated as one language in some. Nyanja means lake and Chinyanja refers to the language spoken by the people of the lake. Nyanja may not be a tribe.

spoken). English is the official language, although only 26% of the population over 14 are able to speak it. It is used for policy documents and laws and is the official language for parliamentary debates and records. Chichewa is Malawi's national language and the most commonly spoken and is understood by over 70% of the population.²⁵

The other languages and dialects most used for communication within households in Malawi are: Chinyanja and Chimang'anja (dialects of Chichewa), Chitumbuka (and its dialects of Chiphoka, Chinyika, Chinyiha, etc), Chiyao, Chitonga (and its dialect of Chisisya), Chilomwe (and its dialects of Chinguru and Chikhokhola), Chinkhonde and Chisena. These are all termed minority languages.

In the Northern Region, the most common language used for communication is Chitumbuka which is used by 67% of the total population. Chichewa is the most common language in both the Central and Southern regions. Chiyao is the most common language in the Eastern region, it is also the major language of Islam. Chisena is predominantly spoken in the lower shire valley. Elomwe/Chilomwe is spoken mostly in the South Eastern region. Chitonga is mainly spoken in the North Eastern region (Nkhata Bay, Likoma, Chizumulu, and parts of Nkhota Kota). Chinkhonde is one of the major languages spoken by the people of Northern and North Western Malawi. Languages spoken differ between rural and urban areas, with Chichewa spoken by a higher proportion of the population in urban areas (70.8%).²⁶ Multiple languages are used in some areas, in the Chitipa district over eight languages have been reported to be spoken.²⁷

Figure 4: Languages of Malawi from the 1998 Census illustration from Wikipedia



LANGUAGES IN THE MEDIA English is the dominant language in newspapers, and shares an almost 50-50 split with Chichewa in newscasts, on national radio and on TV. Online news media has a similar bias towards English and Chichewa.

There are, however, also some newspapers in Chitumbuka/Chichewa (Fuko), Chichewa only (Mkwaso) and English and Chichewa (Weekend Nation and Malawi News), these two dailies carry no local language news.

The NSO ICT survey 2019 found that about 89% of individuals listened to programmes in Chichewa followed by English, 5.7%, and Chitumbuka, 3.2%.

The smallest proportion of individuals listened to programmes in Chiyao and

Chilomwe. Scheduled analysis undertaken, reveals that MBC Radio broadcasts only around 5 minutes of news per day in Chitumbuka, Chiyao, Chilomwe, Chingoni, Chitonga, and Chinkhonde. The content of the bulletins is the same as that of the English and Chichewa broadcasts. This has not changed since 2010 when a content analysis found that only 6.4% of the station's weekly content was in languages other than English and Chichewa.²⁸ MBC TV, Times Radio TV, Mibawa TV, and ZBS TV, do not carry any programming in languages other than English and Chichewa. This means that Malawians without linguistic skills in English and Chichewa are limited in their media access and ability to contribute to national debates. Below is a summary of broadcast languages and media, further details are available in section 4:

Figure 5 Broadcast languages in the main media

Platform	Media	Language
MBC Radio 1	Radio	Chichewa/English/Chiyao/Chitonga/Chitumbuka/Elomwe/isiNgoni
BC Radio 2	Radio	Chichewa/English
Times Radio	Radio	Chichewa/English
ZBS Radio	Radio	Chichewa/English

25 NSO (2019), Malawi Population and Household Census, 2018.

26 The 1998 Population and Housing Census, http://www.nsomalawi.mw/images/stories/data_on_line/demography/census_98/analytical_report.pdf

27 Languages and area spoken for Chitipa. <http://www.unima-cls.org/Docs/MappingNorthernMalawi/In-northernmalawi.pdf>

28 Manda, LZ (2011), Local media, local content and local literacy: How Malawian media thwart popular participation in development. Journal of Development and Communication Studies, 1(1). https://www.academia.edu/33992625/Local_media_local_content_and_local_literacy_How_Malawian_media_thwart_popular_participation_in_development

Capital Radio	Radio	Chichewa/English
MIJ Radio	Radio	Chichewa/English
Joy Radio	Radio	Chichewa/English
Mzati FM	Radio	Chichewa/English
Angaliba radio	Radio	Chichewa/English
Ufulu Radio	Radio	Chichewa/English
Ndirande FM	Radio	Chichewa/English
Dziko FM	Radio	Chichewa/English
Kuwala Radio	Radio	Chichewa/English
Sapitwa Radio	Radio	Chichewa/English
Kasupe Radio	Radio	Chichewa/English
Bua (beyond FM)	Radio	Chichewa/English
MBC TV	TV	Chichewa/English
ZBS TV	TV	Chichewa/English
Times TV	TV	Chichewa/English
Angaliba TV	TV	Chichewa/English
Lamp	Print	English
Together	Print	English
Pride Magazine	Print	English
Mkwaso Catholic Newspaper	Print	Chichewa
Nyasatimes	Print	English
Nation	Print	English
Weekend Nation	Print	English
Nation on Sunday	Print	English
Fuko	Print	Chichewa
Daily Times	Print	English
Malawi News	Print	English
Sunday Times	Print	English
eTimes	Online	English
Radio Maria Online	Online	Chichewa
e-Nation	Online	English
Malawi24	Online	English
aravi post	Online	English
Zodiakonline	Online	Chichewa

Minority languages are also used in various local community radio stations. The use of local languages makes community radio attractive to local communities and it was stated by research participants for this guide from Nkhata Bay and Mangochi to be their preferred media. Community radio stations must be tied to a particular geographical area and have a broadcast radius of 50 KM. All community of interest radio stations are now reclassified as private religious or private commercial depending on their programming. These have national broadcast licenses. The most dominant language on community radio stations is Chichewa. There are no community TV stations in Malawi.

2.4 Barriers To Media Access

Participants of interviews for this guide indicate that the biggest barrier to accessing the media is the cost. According to the NSO ICT survey 2019, the main reason for not listening to the radio, or owning a functioning radio is the cost. 75.8% of individuals said they could not afford a radio set, whilst 12.4% indicated they had no time and 6% said they had no electricity at home. The most common reason reported by individuals for not watching TV was that they could not afford to buy a TV set 83.7%. This was followed by lack of electricity 14.6% and not having the time to watch, 9.8%.

Households were not able to access free to air TV services mainly because they couldn't afford a decoder, or there was no signal or electricity. Similarly, about 91% of households reported that they could not afford a household mobile telephone (only 0.5% indicating there was no service or network. About 93% of households said they could not afford to have an internet connection. Newspapers cost almost USD1.00, which is costly in a country where the majority live on less than USD2.0 per day. Many Malawians find the cost of social media-enabled smartphones and the use of the internet (at about 7 USD/gigabyte) prohibitive.²⁹

Language and literacy are barriers for many people. Newspapers are mostly in English while most Malawians don't read and understand advanced English. The 2018 census reported adult male literacy rates as 71.6% and female at 65.9%. Rates are much higher in urban areas than rural. This could explain the preference for radio shown during key informant interviews with chiefs and in vox pops. TV and private commercial radio broadcasting is in English and Chichewa. Although most Malawians understand Chichewa, some report they are reluctant to participate in national dialogues because they believe their Chichewa accent will be laughed at or treated with disdain. It is rare to hear contributions from non-Chichewa dominant areas, such as Chitipa on the radio. Although local community radio stations allow people to participate in debates that concern their local areas these debates are rarely heard at the national level or receive national attention.

2.5 Media Preferences and Trusted Media

Research interviews for this guide was undertaken in several different locations in order to understand more about the preferences of different groups and their levels of trust in various media. During both interviews and vox pops, people indicated that they regularly access social and online media, but they don't always trust it. The main reason cited for this lack of trust was that social media does not distinguish fake news or disinformation from facts. The main reason offered for using social media was chatting with friends and networks. Trust in standalone news sites, such as Malawi voice was relatively high, and the electronic versions of major traditional media outlets were considered more credible than standalone digital media. Most interviewees, urban and rural alike, indicated that social media and online standalone news sites are their sources of information but they almost all indicated they did not trust social media.³⁰ None of the chiefs interviewed mentioned using digital media as a source of news or communication.

Participants said that social media was a key source of information on topics including health and disasters and is seen as a fast way of communicating vital information. Some Mangochi vox pop interviewees cited the role played by social media in sharing audio, voice notes, images, and videos during Cyclone Idai. However, the most common and trusted sources of news and information remain radio, meetings, and telephone communication. According to participants, top social media platforms include WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and TikTok, although none of them are seen as trusted sources of news. None of those interviewed mentioned Youtube,³¹ despite it being the second most accessed social media in the world. WhatsApp, was found to be the platform of choice for respondents due to its low cost and its versatility, allowing people to send text if they are able to type messages or just send a photo or audio message. It was considered to be particularly important for two-way communication during disasters. WhatsApp is also popular among chiefs. SMS were reported to be used in emergencies to alert people and keep them informed. Both key informant interviews and vox pops revealed that social media was not trusted, despite it being very popular among people of all ages. Some of the findings from different groups during interviews and vox pops are summarised below:

Figure 6 Preferred media by different categories of people, from interviews and vox pops

Ranking	Youths	Women	Men	Marginalised groups	Urban working people	Chiefs
1st	Social Media (Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter)	Radio	Social Media	Radio	TV	Mobile phone

29 <https://malawi.misa.org/2019/02/23/digital-rights-how-expensive-is-the-internet-in-malawi/>

30 A study by Wassermann and David-Morales concludes that the more exposed people get to disinformation on social media and standalone news sites, the less trust they have for those sites. Wasserman, H and David-Morales, D (2019). An Exploratory Study of "Fake News" and Media Trust in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa.

31 <https://datareportal.com/reports?tag=Digital+2021>



2nd	TV	TV	TV	TV	Social Media	Community meetings/ engagements
3rd	Radio	Social Media	Radio	Community engagement/ folk media (local drama groups)	Radio	Radio
4rd	Online media	Community engagements	Newspapers	Social media (WhatsApp)	Newspapers	Folk media
5th	Newspapers	Newspapers	Mobile phone	Mobile phone	Music	Newspapers

MEDIA CONTENT A Panos study by Manda³² on media content on Malawi public radio and TV revealed that most of the content centres around entertainment. There was some content focused on behaviour change, disaster preparedness and ad hoc information on disaster response. The study also noted that over three quarters (75%) of the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC)'s Radio and TV programming content was externally generated and was brought to MBC in the form of paid-for content. MBC had no control over this content.

An analysis of the broadcast schedules of some radio and TV stations shows that MBC and others prioritise advertising over content. Sponsored plug-and-play programmes are common on radio and TV. Advertising takes up approximately half of the space in newspapers, which publish very little journalistic content. However, newspapers do carry analytical columns by resident journalists and outsiders, which bring diversity and independent journalism, something which is not seen on TV and radio.

2.6 Two-Way Communication With Communities

Participants for this guide considered WhatsApp messaging and phone calls to be the most important and effective two-way communication platforms during disasters. Important two-way communication during disasters included the following examples;

- » Call-ins to radio stations during live programming to warn others about a disaster or to get clarification from other listeners
- » Regular phone calls among members of the community, leaders, government authorities and humanitarian agencies.
- » WhatsApp - used to share voice notes/voice messages, videos, documents, messages and to make low-cost calls.
- » Meetings and informal functions, such as football matches, folk cultural performances and funerals.
- » Conversations between community members and leaders.

32 Manda, LZ (2010), Development Programming in Public Service Broadcasting in Malawi. https://www.academia.edu/48895092/Development_Programming_in_Public_Service_Broadcasting_in_Malawi

SECTION 3:

The Media In Disasters With A Focus On Covid-19

MALAWI IS VULNERABLE TO EXTREME WEATHER (FLOODS, CYCLONES), CLIMATE CHANGE, EARTHQUAKES, FOOD INSECURITY AND DISEASE OUTBREAKS. THE RECENT IMPACT OF COVID-19 AND THE VACCINATION CAMPAIGN PRESENT A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO UNDERSTAND THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS.

3.1 Disasters Overview

Malawians are used to annual disasters such as floods and cholera outbreaks. The country sits towards the tail of the East African Rift Valley fault line and earth tremors are not uncommon. In 2009 a 6.2-magnitude earthquake damaged villages, causing injury and loss of homes, especially in the Karonga district. Annual floods affect low-lying areas such as the Lower Shire Valley districts of Nsanje and Chikwawa. In July 2019, Cyclone Idai hit Malawi, causing loss of human life and killing livestock, destroying homes and sweeping away crops.³³ Although climate change has not yet caused a major disaster in Malawi, farmers are beginning to be affected by unpredictable annual rains. Little and erratic rainfall means little and erratic crop harvests, affecting food supply at the household level and worsening poverty.³⁴ Recent disease outbreaks include cholera, measles, and COVID-19.

Throughout Malawi the Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DoDMA) works with Village Civil Protection Committees. These committees report to Area Civil Protection Committees, which in turn report to District Protection Committees. These committees are trained in disaster preparedness and early warning and are responsible for monitoring and reporting disasters to higher authorities. At the village level, the committee mobile phone numbers are known by all members of the communities. Members can call the committee to facilitate communication between themselves, committee members and higher authorities. This allows district and national authorities to be quickly informed of any disasters and to prepare for interventions. It also allows planning for disaster management to be decentralised and information to move up from village level and it facilitates two-way communication and information sharing.

The president declared COVID-19 a national disaster in Malawi on the 20 March 2020. The declaration was taken with a pinch of salt by many as it was felt that COVID-19 was being used as an excuse to postpone or delay the upcoming presidential election. Some leaders, particularly from the then opposition parties, openly declared that there was no COVID-19 in Malawi.³⁵ This view spread through social media, along with other misinformation and fake news. The government directive for everyone to follow preventative measures, such as wearing masks, washing hands, and observing social distance, was taken lightly until the first fatalities started to be registered. After the presidential election of June 2020, the new president maintained the status as a national disaster. The first cases were confirmed on 2 April and as COVID-19 fatalities increased, the reality of the situation began to sink in for people. COVID-19 deaths peaked in January- March 2021 and included the deaths of prominent politicians, musicians, teachers, and lawyers. As of 2 February 2022, there have been 84,572 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 2,563 deaths, reported to WHO. A total of 1,740,820 vaccine doses had been administered by the end of 2021.³⁶

The surge in COVID-19 related deaths and the failure of those vaccinated to turn into goats and cattle as warned by social media, led to an upsurge in vaccination. A paramount chief, said during the interviews the fact that the president and other leaders had publicly been vaccinated encouraged some reluctant and sceptical Malawians to get vaccinated. He said "I told my people to ignore whatever they were hearing from unofficial sources. I asked them: 'Are you sure, I, your chief, can accept to be vaccinated when I know the vaccine will kill me? The president should get vaccinated when he knows he is going to die?' Seriously?". He felt this had motivated people to go and get vaccinated and highlighted the importance of trusted local leadership in communication and behaviour change.

33 <http://reliefweb.int/report/malawi/impact-cyclone-idai-poorest-july-2020>

34 <https://ageconsearch.umn.edu/record/212208/files/MagangaAgrarian%20Impact%20of%20Climate%20Change%20in%20Malawi-1039.pdf>

35 <https://www.voanews.com/a/africa-malawi-politicians-ignore-covid-19-measures-elections/6189553.html>

36 <https://covid19.who.int/region/afro/country/mw>

3.2 The Role Of The Media In Disaster Response

In all Malawi disaster management policy documents, the media is acknowledged as a partner.³⁷ The DoDMA, working with other government departments, uses the media to prepare people for natural disasters or disease outbreaks. This includes sharing public information announcements on radio, TV and in newspapers. Towards the start of the rainy season, messages on flood management and cholera control are produced and run in English, Chichewa and minority languages like Chisena (when targeting the people of the Lower Shire Valley). During the annual floods that affect low-lying areas of the Lower Shire Valley districts of Nsanje and Chikwawa, the media provide warnings for people to evacuate low-lying areas. In the 2020 floods, homes were damaged in Nkhata Bay, Lilongwe and other areas. Citizens used their mobile phones to take pictures and shared them on social media, prompting the government to act quickly and warn others to avoid the flooded areas. Depending on the urgency of the situation the Department of Weather and Climate Change releases updates on a weekly or daily basis, often containing warnings. These messages are then conveyed by national TV and radio, national newspapers and news sites.

Participants of Vox pop and key informant interviews for this guide identified some of the many roles that the media play in disaster prevention. These include:

- » the creation of specific broadcasts and publications to raise awareness of disasters
- » working with authorities to advise victims on where to get assistance
- » sharing information from the relevant authorities
- » education on disasters through phone-in radio programmes, jingles, news casts and live coverage.
- » engaging people and policymakers to together on issues of preparedness and response.
- » playing a role in accountability by investigating any fraudulent usage of funds³⁸

In interviews for this guide, participants also identified challenges in relation to how the media covers disaster preparedness and response. They mentioned that disasters tend to be reported in an ad hoc and haphazard manner. While all media outlets are aware of the cycle of regular disasters in Malawi, such as annual floods in the Lower Shire valley, respondents indicated that none proactively focus on disaster preparedness. Coverage often lacks depth and analysis.³⁹ Some chiefs said that journalists did not take their roles seriously and didn't always visit affected area, instead relying on telephone calls for information. Some of the pictures and videos circulating on social media and WhatsApp were said to have turned out to be fake.

Key informant interviews and those in vox pops interviews said that the media often fails to acknowledge what already works at the community level and to work with existing structures. Village Committees are trained and informed about disaster preparedness and early warning, and they are contacted by community members in the case of impending disaster. They have a direct line of communication to higher authorities, which can facilitate quick intervention. One interviewee stated that if the media worked with these committees, they would never run dry of news on disasters. Local knowledge and disaster early warning systems and communication is often ignored and undermined by the media. One traditional leader from the Shire Valley said that observing the water level in reed beds in the Shire River has worked as an early warning system for centuries. He explained they act as rain gauges and when the water level passes certain nodes, people know that the place will flood. The DoDMA is interested in gathering such local knowledge to support preparedness protocols.⁴⁰

COVID-19 The Government of Malawi health information campaign began before the first case of COVID-19 in Malawi. A statement of caution was issued by the Government on 11 February, and a coordinated public information campaign began on the 7 March 2020. According to the Public Health Institute of Malawi (PHIM), COVID-19 health information

37 For example, Malawi Government (2014) National Disaster Risk Management Communication Strategy (2014 – 2018). Lilongwe: Department of Disaster Affairs Management; Malawi Government (2016) National Climate Change Management Policy. Lilongwe: Ministry of Resources, Energy and Mining <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/NCCM-Policy-Final-06-11-2016.pdf>, <https://www.ead.gov.mw/storage/app/media/Resources/Miscellaneous/Climate%20change%20implementation%20Plan.pdf>

38 <https://www.voanews.com/a/africa-malawi-president-fires-cabinet-minister-over-covid-funds/6204774.html>

39 There can often be a lack of analysis in disaster coverage because journalists are not specialists in disaster management and response, or aware of ethical concerns around these issues, see: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/disa.12352>

40 <https://www.preventionweb.net/news/malawi-dodma-exploring-indigenous-knowledge-disasters>

campaigns included radio, television and social media messaging in English, Chichewa⁴¹ and Tumbuka. A mobile phone messaging system, ‘Chipatala Chapa Foni’ (Hospital on the Phone) and a toll-free number, allowed the public to get information about symptoms. A multisectoral pandemic response was implemented, and the response strategy led by the MOHP and DoDMA using clusters to address direct health and indirect socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic. Public communication was one of the clusters.⁴² A presidential task force was established which included the Ministry of Health, the Office of the President and Cabinet, and DoDMA. A subcommittee on media was established to communicate accurate information and to answer questions. Information was available online, and through radio, TV and newspapers.

Since the onset of the pandemic the media has worked closely with health authorities to provide correct information, particularly on how the virus spreads, its symptoms, how it can be prevented and recorded case numbers. It was challenging for the media during the early stages of the pandemic as even medical personnel were unsure about what to communicate to the public. Journalists have been inundated with messages about COVID-19, some false or deliberately fake. As time went by, the media became more active in sharing public awareness information messages about behaviour change. Media played a part to educate themselves and their audiences, MISA Malawi (in cooperation with DW Akademie) organised a series of media briefings to combat Covid-19 misinformation. Also, daily broadcasts in local languages on national and community radio stations were instigated. The Ministry of Health deployed teams of health assistants to villages where they explained the causes of the disease, how to prevent it and the need to get vaccinated. UN Agencies, such as UNICEF and WHO, and others such as USAID played a key role in spreading messages on their websites and on social media and twitter. Information, broadcast as news in English and in local languages, included messages about the need to get vaccinated and the availability of vaccines.

The media, particularly social media and traditional / folk media and other initiatives aim at reaching marginalised sections of the population, has been important throughout the COVID-19 response. WhatsApp role in facilitating cheap communication without the need for direct internet access, has been vital throughout. During school closures due to COVID-19, some schools and universities resorted to WhatsApp for video-based tele-teaching for those that didn't have internet access and couldn't utilise the popular e-learning and teleconferencing facilities provided by Zoom.com, Google Meet, MS Teams, Webex Cisco, and MS Skype.

Participants of Vox pop and key informant interviews for this guide indicated that they got most of their information and knowledge about COVID-19 from the media. They explained that the Ministry of Health also regularly updated its data which allowed people to access up to date and correct information. The presidential task force, headed by the president himself and a senior medical officer, almost daily updates (initially and then weekly) were said to be very important and informative. Interviewees said that during COVID-19, the role of the media included:

- » corrected misinformation, myths and conspiracy theories
- » broadcast updates from the presidential task force,
- » gave people hope that one day the disease would be controlled
- » mobilised the population to get vaccinated
- » explained the differences between the types of vaccines
- » reminded people of the seriousness of the pandemic, particularly when rates were low, of the fluidity of the situation and the risk that things could worsen during the rainy season.
- » uncovered fraud and misappropriation of COVID-19 funds.⁴³

Key interviewees mentioned several weaknesses in the media's role; that they were not as proactive as they could have been and should have used their own resources to investigate. It was felt that the media was slow in addressing fake news and was not always knowledgeable or well informed enough about COVID-19, which led to confusion for

41 Adapted from a Village Reach-supported M-health programme which commenced in 2011

42 Grace W Mzumara, Marlen Chawani, Melody Sakala, Lily Mwandira, Elias Phiri, Edith Milanzi, Mphatso Dennis Phiri, Isabel Kazanga, Thomasena O'Byrne, Eliya M Zulu, Collins Mitambo, Titus Divala, Bertie Squire, Pui-Ying Iroh Tam, The health policy response to COVID-19 in Malawi, BMJ Global Health, May 1, 2021 <https://gh.bmj.com/content/6/5/e006035#ref-12>

43 <https://www.voanews.com/a/africa-malawi-president-fires-cabinet-minister-over-covid-funds/6204774.html>



audiences and readers. The media was also felt to have missed the opportunities to make it clear that the measures that control COVID-19 could potentially do the same for other diseases. The media cluster of the presidential task force was felt by some not to have worked with grassroots organisations and NGOs sufficiently, to spread messages deep into the villages.

FAKE NEWS AND MISINFORMATION COVID-19 has presented unique challenges for the media in Malawi, partly due to the infodemic⁴⁴ that accompanied its global spread. At times social media, TV and radio debates in the country have communicated false information. The most notorious and pervasive were that the pandemic was a punishment from God for human iniquity and that the vaccines were the work of the devil, the antichrist, and would turn vaccinated people into livestock. This created vaccine hesitancy.⁴⁵ However, the Government engaged the media and traditional and religious leaders and went door to door, particularly in rural areas, to explain the usefulness of the vaccines.

44 <https://www.who.int/health-topics/infodemic>

45 For more, see articles; Levi Manda (2021) Exploring COVID-19 infodemic in rural Africa: A case study of Chintheche, Malawi <https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/intellect/jams/2021/00000013/00000002/art00009?jsessionid=9g8kjh3a5jf.x-ic-live-03>; <http://disinfoafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/FinalReport-FB-AIRA.pdf> and Aceme Nyika et al. (2021) COVID-19 Pandemic <https://www.devcomsjournalmw.org/paper/covid-19-pandemic-questioning-conspiracy-theories-beliefs-or-claims-have-potential-negative>

SECTION 4:

Media Overview

THIS SECTION PROVIDES A CONCISE OVERVIEW OF EACH OF THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF MEDIA IN MALAWI: DIGITAL MEDIA PLATFORMS, SOCIAL MEDIA, TELEVISION, RADIO, PRINT AND TRADITIONAL FORMS OF COMMUNICATION. IT DOES NOT AIM TO GIVE AN EXHAUSTIVE REVIEW BUT INSTEAD FOCUSES ON THE MAIN MEDIA PROVIDERS FOR EACH CATEGORY, USING THE DATA AND STUDIES AVAILABLE.

A directory of Media in Malawi is available on the MISA website, including details of Newspapers, Television, Public and Private radio, Community radio and Online publications, and details of training institutes and Media associations; https://www.macra.org.mw/?page_id=12023. The regulator MACRA lists current broadcaster licensees and their details on their site at <https://macra.mw/broadcasting-licensees/>. There are four types of licenses:

- » Public: funded largely by the state and run in accordance with the Communication Act (2016)
- » Private commercial: run for profit and funded and run privately
- » Private religious: funded and run by faith organisations
- » Community: geographically limited and owned and operated by the local community.

4.1 Digital Media Platforms

In Malawi, all major media (radio, TV, and print) have an online presence (streaming radio and TV programmes live and providing static e-editions of newspapers). They also have a presence on social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. In terms of standalone digital media, the most widely accessed (though not widely trusted according to research interviewees), are <http://nyasatimes.com>, <http://malawivoice.com>, <http://malawi24.com>, <https://www.investigative-malawi.org/>, <https://manaonline.mw> and <https://investigativeplatform-mw.org>. These free-to-access news sites are key sources of information, particularly during elections.⁴⁶ The main online publications, which are all in English, are listed below:

Figure 7: Online publications from MISA

Online Publications	Website	language
Malawi Nyasa Times	Nyasatimes.com	English
Malawi Voice	Malawivoice.com	English
Malawi24	Malawi24.com	English
Malawi Nation	www.mwnation.com	English
Times Media	www.times.mw	English
Malawi Broadcasting Corporation Online	www.mbc.mw	English
Zodiak Broadcasting Station Online (Zbs)	www.zodiakmalawi.com	English
Malawi Institute Of Journalism (Mij) Online	https://news.mijmw.com/	English

There are various Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in Malawi. The fastest ISPs (in terms of upload and download speed) were reported to be TNM, SKYBAND and Airtel Malawi.⁴⁷ The main providers and their reach are listed:

46 See Institute for War and Peace Reporting (2014) election monitoring coverage. <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/print-publications/malawi-election-monitoring-22-march-2-april-2014>. The 2019 election monitoring report, not officially published.

47 <https://www.broadbandspeedchecker.co.uk/isp-directory/Malawi.html>

Figure 8: Internet service providers Malawi

Provider	Website	Reach
Airtel Malawi	www.africa.airtel.com/malawi	National
Access Communication	https://www.access.mw/	Mostly urban
Inq, Malawi	https://mw.inq.inc/about-us/	Mostly urban
Globe Internet	www.globemw.net/	Mostly urban
MTL	www.mtl.mw	National
TNM	www.tnm.co.mw	National
Sykyband Limited	http://www.skyband.mw/	National

4.2 Social Media Platforms

The emergence of digital media has been facilitated by smartphone technology and increasing access to the internet. This has helped ordinary Malawians to participate in information sharing. As Rosen⁴⁸ has argued, the top-down domination of news and information from journalists to audiences has been broken. In today's world, everybody can be a journalist or be part of the audience. Social media and alternative/citizen media are being acknowledged as a major player in news and information circulation. During elections, social media is said to have played an equalising and democratising role across the world, particularly in places where the media is felt to be dominated by an elite which influences the outcome of elections.⁴⁹ Digital media platforms are mostly accessed by urban-based working-class people, due to the cost associated with access.

WhatsApp has played a key role during COVID-19, not least because it was used by some schools and universities for video-based tele-teaching. It is a common platform for two-way communication thanks to the ubiquity of smartphones and its availability through regular phone numbers. Messages are easily shared from group to group and people are able to take photos, send videos or audio messages if they lack keyboard skills. According to napoleoncat (January 2021) there are 780,000 Facebook users in Malawi, which account for 3.6% of the entire population. The majority are men, 63.6%. People aged 18 to 24 are the largest user group (276,500). The highest difference in user numbers between men and women is in people aged 25 to 34. Instagram has 84,600 users, Messenger 707,500 and LinkedIn 192 500.⁵⁰

4.3 Television stations

There are 27 TV broadcasters in Malawi according to MACRA.⁵¹ According to the NSO ICT survey 2019, the establishment of the Malawi Digital Broadcasting Network Limited (MDBNL) has assisted some households in accessing local free-to-air television stations and services. 5.3% of households that own a functioning television set also have access to local free-to-air television services (Kiliye-Kiliye) nationally (21.6% in urban areas compared to 2.2 % in rural areas). In comparison, nationally, 6.7% of households had access to paid TV services (29% in urban areas compared to 2.5 % in rural areas).⁵²

Free services provided by state-run public MBC TV dominate the sector along with private/commercial stations: Times TV, ZBS TV, Mibawa TV, Luntha, TV Islam and others provided through the Kiliye Kiliye decoder. International paid-for services are offered by DSTV, Zuku, StarSat, AZAM and Kiliye Kiliye. There is no cable TV in Malawi and all TV services are accessible through decoders. The licensed service providers include: Kiliye Kiliye, which provides free local channels and paid for international channels, Multichoice, which, through DSTV, provides mostly paid-for international and local channels, and MBC TV which is the only free channel. Multichoice also operates GOTV, a scaled down, reasonably priced version of DSTV.

48 https://www.huffpost.com/entry/the-people-formerly-known_1_b_24113

49 See also Banda, F (2010), Citizen Journalism and Democracy in Africa - An Exploratory Study. Grahamstown: Rhodes University, and Greeber, G and Martin, R (2009), Digital Cultures. Berkshire: Open University Press

50 According to <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/social-media-users-in-malawi/2021/11/>

51 For the full list of TV stations and their coverage, see https://www.macra.org.mw/?page_id=12023

52 http://www.nsomalawi.mw/images/stories/data_on_line/economics/ICT/ICT%20Household%20Survey%202019.pdf

Key informant and vox pops interviews for this guide indicated that the following local TV stations were the most watched:

Figure 9 Most watched TV stations according to research participants

Station	Ownership	Language	URL/Email/Telephone contacts
MBC	Public	English/Chichewa	https://mbc.mw/television/watch-mbctv-live
Times TV	Private Commercial	English/Chichewa	https://times.mw/contact-information/
ZBS	Private Commercial	English/Chichewa	https://www.zodiakmalawi.com/contact-zodiak
Mibawa	Private Commercial	English/Chichewa	https://web.facebook.com/MibawaStudios/?_rdc=1&_rdr
Luntha	Private religious	English/Chichewa	https://web.facebook.com/lunthatelevision/?_rdc=1&_rdr
Timveni	Private commercial	English/Chichewa	https://timveni.com/media-services/tv-radio/
Rainbow	Private commercial	English/Chichewa	https://web.facebook.com/rvtmw/?_rdc=1&_rdr
Aljazeera	Private commercial	English	https://network.aljazeera.net/contact-us

The Times TV has been named MISA-Malawi TV station of the year every year since its inception. Other TV stations (not mentioned by interviewees) include:

Figure 10 Additional TV stations

Language			
African Bible College Television	Private religious	English	africanbiblecolleges.com/malawi/
Angaliba Television (ATV)	Private Commercial	English/Chichewa	www.hbiholdings.com
Mibawa TV	Private Commercial	English/Chichewa	https://www.facebook.com/MibawaStudios/
Chancellor College (Chanco) Television	Private Commercial	English/Chichewa	Facebook.com/chanco/
Channel For All Nations TV	Private religious	English/Chichewa	https://web.facebook.com/CANRadioTV/?_rdc=1&_rdr
Hope Channel	Private	English/Chichewa	https://hopetv.mw/
Pentecostal Life Television (PLTV)	Private religious	English/Chichewa	https://web.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=880202659055253
Television Islam	Private religious	English/Chichewa	https://mbasic.facebook.com/Television-Islam-Malawi-1871106683162701/
Goodnews Broadcasting System (GBS) TV	Private religious	English	Goodnews Broadcasting System (GBS) TV

Analysis by sex shows that 25.5 % of males watched TV compared to 18.5% of females. TV is mostly watched for entertainment, followed by current affairs updates and useful information.⁵³ 67.8% of people watch news programmes.

4.4 Radio Channels⁵⁴

There is a total of 57 public, private commercial, private religious and community-owned and operated radio stations in Malawi, according to MACRA. Household radio ownership is almost twice as high in urban households compared to rural - this figure is similar across the 3 regions. Radio is also accessed via FM-enabled mobile phones. A higher proportion of men (75.1%) than women 59.6% listen to the radio.⁵⁵ Because it is relatively cheap to access, radio is the dominant source of news in Malawi. The Southern African Gender and Media Audience Survey⁵⁶ found that 94% of men and 98% of women listen to radio to get the news. According to the NSO ICT survey 2019, 59% of individuals stated provision of useful information as the reason for listening to the radio. Listenership surveys indicate Zodiak Broadcasting Station (ZBS) and MBC radio are the most listened to radio stations in Malawi.⁵⁷ However, in the rural districts, community radio stations are amongst the preferred stations.

Public radio stations, there are two licensed MBC 1 and MBC 2. Both are obliged to broadcast nationally as a condition of their licence.⁵⁸

Private/commercial radio stations, the main stations and their main broadcast languages are listed below:

53 http://www.nsomalawi.mw/images/stories/data_on_line/economics/ICT/ICT%20Household%20Survey%202019.pdf

54 For details of frequencies, see MACRA https://www.macra.org.mw/?page_id=12023

55 http://www.nsomalawi.mw/images/stories/data_on_line/economics/ICT/ICT%20Household%20Survey%202019.pdf

56 Genderlinks (2005) My Views on the News. www.generlinks.org.za

57 http://www.nsomalawi.mw/images/stories/data_on_line/economics/ICT/ICT%20Household%20Survey%202019.pdf

58 <https://www.macra.org.mw/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/COMMUNICATIONS-ACT-2016.pdf>

Figure 11 Main private radio stations

Radio broadcasters		Language
Capital Radio	Private Commercial	English/Chichewa
Joy Radio	Private Commercial	English/Chichewa
Angaliba FM	Private Commercial	English/Chichewa
FM 101 Power	Private commercial	English/Chichewa
Ufulu FM	Private Commercial	English/Chichewa
ZBS	Private commercial	English/Chichewa
Times Radio	Private commercial	English/Chichewa
MIJ	Private Commercial	English/Chichewa
YONECO	Private Commercial	English/Chichewa
Timveni	Private Commercial	English/Chichewa
Galaxy FM	Private Commercial	English/Chichewa

Community radio stations, transmit locally and, according to MACRA, are not permitted to broadcast beyond a 50KM radius. However, until recently, they were allowed a 100 KM transmission radius, meaning their broadcasts could be accessed outside the district boundaries. Each district has its own community radio station which tends to compete favourably with regional and national and broadcasters. The main community radio stations are:

Figure 12 Main community radio stations

Community radio stations (geographical)	Region	District/HQ	Language
Nthalire	North	Chitipa	Chitumbuka
Rumphi	North	Rumphi	Chitumbuka
Mzimba	North	Mzimba	Chitumbuka/IsiNgoni
Radio Dinosaur	North	Karonga	Chitumbuka/Kyangonde/Chichewa
Tuntufye	North	Karonga	Chitumbuka/Kyangonde
Nkhata Bay /Chirundu FM	North	Nkhata Bay	Chitonga
Usisya	North	Nkhata Bay	Chisisya/Chitumbuka
Likoma	North	Likoma	Chichewa
Voice of Licvingstonia	North	Mzuzu	Chitumbuk/Chitonga/English
Nkhota Kota	Centre	Nkhota Kota	Chichewa
Umunthu	Centre	Nkhota Kota	Chichewa
Kasungu	Centre	Kasungu	Chichewa
Bua	Centre	Kasungu	Chichewa
Dedza	Centre	Bembeke	Chichewa
Love	Centre	Salima	Chichewa
Chisomo	Centre	Salima	Chichewa
Mudziwathu	Centre	Mchinji	Chichewa
Nkhoma Synod	Centre	Lilongwe	Chichewa/English
Yetu	Centre	Dowa	Chichewa
Dzimwe	South	Mangochi	Chichewa/Chiyao
Umoyo	South	Umoyo	Chichewa/Chiyao
Lilanguka	South	Lilanguka	Chichewa/Chiyao
Mwandama	South	Zomba	Chichewa
Chanco	South	Zomba	Chichewa/English
Nyanthepa	South	Nsanje	Chichewa/Chisena
Gaka	South	Nsanje	Chichewa/Chisena
Chivomerezi	South	Chikwawa	Chichewa/Chisena

Neno	South	Neno	Chichewa
Maziko	Centre	Lilongwe	Chichewa/English

Religious radio stations, there are a number of privately owned religious stations, the main ones are:

Figure 13 Main privately-owned religious radio stations

Private religious			
Alinafe	Centre	Lilongwe	Chichewa
Transworld	Centre	Lilongwe	Chichewa/English/Chitumbuka
Pentecostal Life FM	Centre	Lilongwe	Chichewa/English
ABC	Centre	Lilongwe	Chichewa/English
Tigabane	North	Mzuzu	Chitumbuka/English
Maria	South	Mangochi	Chichewa/Chitumbuka/Chiyao
Islam	South	Mangochi	Chichewa/Chitumbuka/Chiyao
Living Waters	South	Blantyre	Chichewa
SDA	South	Blantyre	Chichewa/English
Blantyre Synod	South	Blantyre	Chichewa
Litala FM	South	Mangochi	Chiyao/Chichewa

Key informant and vox pops interviews for this guide indicated that the radio stations they most commonly access are:

Figure 14 Most listened to radio stations, according to research

Station	Ownership	Contacts/URL
ZBS (Zodiak)	Private commercial	https://www.zodiakmalawi.com/contact-zodiak
MBC 1, MBC	Public	https://mbc.mw/radio
Times	Private commercial	https://times.mw/contact-information/
Radio Maria	Private Religious	https://www.radiomaria.mw/contact/
Community Radio (various)⁵⁹	Community	Various
Voice of Livingstonia	Private Religious	https://ccapvol.org/about/
MIJ	Private Commercial	https://timveni.com/media-services/tv-radio/
ABC	Private Religious	https://africanbiblecolleges.com/radioabc
YONECO	Private Commercial	https://www.yonecofm.com/index.php/contact-us/
Timveni	Private Commercial	https://timveni.com/media-services/tv-radio/

Since its inception in 2005, ZBS has consistently been voted MISA-Malawi radio station of the year. According to the NSO ICT survey 2019,⁶⁰ carried out in 2019, when asked which national radio stations they listened to, about 57 % of individuals said they usually listened to ZBS, 39.4 % said they listened to MBC Radio 1, and 37.7% said they listened to MBC Radio 2.⁶¹ The highest proportion of individuals, 40.3%, listened to the radio from 16:00-20:00 hours followed by 27.2% from 08:00-16:00 hours. The smallest proportion of individuals listened from 24:00-05:00 hours.

4.5 Print Media

The Malawian print media industry is very small and is concentrated in major cities and towns, mostly in Blantyre and Lilongwe. Below is a list of papers and a summary of publishing houses - all these newspapers are also available as electronic editions which are accessible upon subscription (with the exception of Pride Magazine):

- » Nation Publications Limited (NPL), with offices in Chichiri and Blantyre, and regional offices in Mzuzu, and Lilongwe. Publishes the Daily Nation, the Weekend Nation, Nation on Sunday, Fuko, and e-Nation. www.mwnation.com, and voted the best newspaper 3 years running.
- » Times Media Limited (TML) is headquartered in Chichiri, Blantyre and a NPL's rival for over 20 years. It also has an

59 These have been lumped together, but each district has its own community radio.

60 http://www.nsomalawi.mw/images/stories/data_on_line/economics/ICT/ICT%20Household%20Survey%202019.pdf

61 It is important to note that the survey allowed an individual to mention more than one radio station in their responses.

e-edition. TML owns, Times Radio and Times TV, and the Times Group publishes the Daily Times, Malawi News, and Sunday Times. Named MISA-Malawi print media house of the year at least 3 times. www.times360.com

- » Montfort Media Limited is owned by the Catholic Church with an independent outlook in terms of news coverage. Publishing the Lamp Magazine, Together Youth Magazine and Mkwaso, all also . available online. Montfort Media Limited also publishes and prints works by other clients. www.montformediamw.org.
- » Pride Magazine is headquartered at Kanjedza in Blantyre and printed in South Africa. It is published quarterly in hard copy. It has no e-edition. Email: pridepublication@gmail.com
- » The Football Association of Malawi (FAM) publishes Zampira Magazine, from headquarters at Chiwembe and Blantyre. <https://fam.mw/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Zampira-Janury-2021-Edition.pdf>
- » The Malawi Government Ministry of Information publishes Boma Lathu (in Chichewa) and This is Malawi (in English). The stories published are from the Malawi News Agency (MANA).
- » The Malawi Investment Promotion Agency publishes the Investor Magazine
- » Globe Publication publishes the Weekly Globe newspaper, (not published since the 2020 elections).
- » Independent Digest is published biweekly. (<https://web.facebook.com/The-Independent-Digest-102823371988917/>). It is a new entry on the print media scene.

The MISA list of print media includes, two daily newspapers, five weekly newspapers and 10 monthly periodicals, the main titles are listed below:

Figure 15 Print media

Print media	Ownership	Language
Lamp	Private	English
Together	Private	English
Pride Magazine	private	English
Mkwaso Catholic Newspaper	private	Chichewa
Nyasatimes	private	English
Nation	Private	English
Weekend Nation	Private	English
Nation on Sunday	Private	English
Fuko	Private	Chichewa
Daily Times	Private	English
Malawi News	Private	English
Sunday Times	Private	English

Participants for this guide said in vox pops and key informant interviews that the Lamp is seen as a leading news magazine in Malawi, and that the NPL and the Times are seen nationally as leading newspapers. The newspaper Mkwaso featured prominently in vox pops conducted in Mangochi, suggesting that it has a geographical niche, targeting a specific readership and locality. The paper Fuko, was mentioned by some interviewees and targets those that read Chichewa and/or Chitumbuka.

4.6 Traditional Forms Of Communication

Malawi has a rich culture which is expressed through traditional dances, music, folktale performance and village meetings (all often held at the Chief's Courtyard). Messages relating to disasters and response, including announcements from government, are shared during such gatherings. Chiefs, also called traditional leaders, have been identified as a key entry point into local communities. They play a key role in communicating new messages and innovations, reinforcing old ones and driving change. They are recognised as the official channel of communication from government to the communities. Chiefs are considered guardians of culture and speak for their people on many issues, including disasters and hazards. Their opinions matter. Chiefs have been instrumental recently in delivering COVID-19 messages. In an article by UNICEF, Paramount Chief Kawinga said with his leadership, 'they are

enhancing awareness campaigns to deal with stigma, discrimination and ignorance about the facts of the disease'. He is personally using platforms such as WhatsApp, religious platforms and other opinion leaders in his area to raise awareness. He said "One of the issues we are dealing with is the lack of concern towards the spread of the disease. Many do not even want to wear face masks or observe social distancing. These are some of the issues that I and my subjects are trying to deal with."⁶²

Participants of Vox pop and key informant interviews for this guide community village meetings, drama, and cultural performances were highly rated as key platforms for transmitting important information including on disaster preparedness, health emergencies, and COVID-19. Specifically, COVID-19 messages are being transmitted through cultural performances. According to interviewees, there is further opportunity for planners and strategists to explore how existing trusted indigenous methods of communication can be harnessed and incorporated into national communication planning for disaster communication. Important events which were highlighted as opportunities for communication are listed below:

- » Village Bank Savings (Chipelegano) meetings and pre-marriage ceremonies (Chinkhoswe) attended exclusively by women
- » Village beer-drinking ceremonies, attended mostly by men but served by women
- » Drama groups (such as those mentioned during vox pops)
- » Initiation ceremonies such as jando, dambwe, and umwali for inducting youths into adulthood
- » Funeral ceremonies reserve space for communication from political parties and community leaders. These opportunities are often used to communicate messages about disasters
- » Religious ceremonies, religious leaders are key to communicating health and other messages
- » Sporting activities for communicating messages to youths; Malawian youths love football, netball, field and track events and other sports.

4.7 Media Training Opportunities

Several opportunities exist for academic training in journalism, mass communication, and media studies at different levels. These are offered by public and private training institutions. Qualifications offered by universities and others accredited by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) are considered prestigious and credible. Various CSOs, Media Associations, and NGOs indicated that they offer non-certificate short courses lasting one day to several weeks. These media training opportunities are listed in the table below:

Figure 16 Media training opportunities Malawi

Training Institution	Location	Ownership	Weblink	Qualification/s Courses offered
Malawi Institute of Journalism	Blantyre	Semi-private ⁶³	https://mijmw.com	Certificate in Journalism, Diploma in Journalism, BA in Journalism
Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS)	Blantyre	Public	http://www.mubas.ac.mw/faculty/faculty-of-education-and-media-studies	Diploma in Journalism, Diploma in Graphic Media, BA in Journalism, Bachelor Business Communication, MA of Journalism, Master of Business Communication
Mzuzu University	Mzuzu	Public	https://mzuni.ac.mw	Minor in communications, media and journalism
University of Malawi	Zomba	Public	https://unima.ac.mw	BSc Media for Development, BSc in Communication Studies, BSc in Communication and Cultural Studies, MA in Theatre and Media Communication in Development
Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources	Lilongwe & Blantyre	Public	https://luanar.ac.mw	BSc Agricultural Development Communication
Blantyre International University	Blantyre	Private	https://biu-edu.com	Bachelor of Journalism, Master of Journalism
African Bible College	Lilongwe	Private	https://africanbiblecolleges.com/abcmalawi	BA in Mass Communication
University of Lilongwe	Lilongwe	Private	https://unilil.ac.mw/	BA Journalism

62 <https://www.unicef.org/malawi/stories/chief-kawinga-leads-covid-19-fight-malawi>

63 Funded by government, run independently.

University of Livingstonia	Mzuzu	Private	https://unilia.ac.mw	BA Journalism and Development Communication
Kamuzu University of Health Sciences	Lilongwe & Blantyre	Public	https://kuhes.ac.mw http://sphfm.medcol.mw/publichealth/handbook/	Master of Public Health
Pentecostal Life University	Lilongwe	Private	https://plu.mw	Diploma in Journalism and Mass Communication, BA Journalism and Mass Communications
ABMA (UK)	International & locally ⁶⁴	Private	https://abma.uk.com/professional-qualifications/professional-journalism-and-media-studies/	Certificate in Journalism, Diplomas (Levels 4-6) in journalism
AMITY (India) (Offered through HBI Institute of Communication and Management)	International	Private	https://amityonline.com/master-of-arts-journalism-and-mass-communication-online# https://web.facebook.com/HBI-Institute-of-Communication-Management-Creative-Media-Production-1524004834539932/	BA in Journalism and Mass Communication, MA Journalism and Mass Communication, Postgraduate Diploma in Journalism and Mass Communication
Civil Society Education Coalition (CSEC)	Lilongwe	Civil Society /Private	https://csecmalawi.org	Training communities in community journalism, Positive reporting on education SDGS, Social Accountability for improved service delivery
Malawi Economic Justice Network (MJEN)	Lilongwe	Civil Society /Private	https://mejn.mw	Social accountability, Investigative journalism
Civil Society Nutrition Alliance	Lilongwe	Civil Society /Private	https://csona.org	Knowledge on nutrition and on how to educate the general public on issues such as data analysis, the analysis of information sources and advocacy skills ⁶⁵
Human Rights Defenders Coalition (HRDC)	Lilongwe	Civil Society /Private	https://www.hrdc.mw Malawi Human Rights Defenders Coalition - HRDC Facebook	Women's rights, governance and accountability, minority rights albinism, witchcraft, using community radio, sponsored newspaper columns, sponsor investigative journalism
World Relief International	Lilongwe	Civil Society /Private	https://worldrelief.org/international-locations/#malawi	Through World Relief's implementing partners (grassroots churches); does not deal with the media directly. Material produced in-house and broadcast via chosen radio stations
World Vision	Lilongwe	Civil Society /Private	https://www.wvi.org/malawi	Nutrition, Early marriages, Education
Ministry of Mining	Lilongwe	Public		Positive reporting of socioeconomic situations; fighting corruption, fraud, etc., combatting and detecting false and fake information, portraying positive public relations
Ministry of Agriculture	Lilongwe	Public	https://agriculture.gov.mw	Training of journalists in integrating and mainstreaming agriculture, disasters and food security
Ministry of Forestry	Lilongwe	Public	http://mnrem.gov.mw	Role of media in environmental reporting, urbanisation/ population growth and environment
Ministry of Health	Lilongwe	Public	https://health.gov.mw	Use of masks, importance of vaccines, Covid prevention, Covid transmission
MISA Malawi in collaboration with DW Akademie	Lilongwe	Civil Society /Private	https://misa.malawi.org/training	Elections reporting, investigative journalism, digital story telling skills, effective public communication skill, essential radio skills for community broadcasters
Media Council of Malawi	Lilongwe	Civil society /media association	https://mediacouncilmw.org	Media Ombudspersons (Office of the Ombudsman), Access to Information and Corruption

64 Locally through; Salima technical College; Soche Technical College; Blantyre International University; Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences.

65 Challenge: Staff turnover (movement away to new jobs) and lack of media specialisation



This guide is one of a series of Media Landscape Guides which map the media landscape in different countries. The guides have been produced by the CDAC Network in cooperation with DW Akademie and supported by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. This project is part of the global initiative "Transparency and media freedom - Crisis resilience in the pandemic".



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