



TRAINING WORKSHOP ON PREPARING POLITICAL PARTIES FOR EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS

CROSS-ROADS, LILONGWE, MALAWI
24-25 OCTOBER 2024

BACKGROUND

Malawi's general elections are scheduled for September 2025. This will be yet another important milestone in the country's democracy.

Elections give voice to the political will of the people. The right to participate in government directly or through freely chosen representatives is also enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 21.1) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (article 25). While there are several stakeholders that play an essential role in contributing to successful, peaceful and credible elections, it is indisputable that political parties and candidates have a vital role. For them (parties and candidates), elections are a period during which they will have the opportunity to not only reaffirm their interest in the contest but also to demonstrate the extent to which they represent and reflect the needs and aspirations of the electorate.

Thus, to parties and candidates, the election period is an opportunity to not only reaffirm their interest in the contest but also to demonstrate the extent to which they represent and reflect the needs and aspirations of the electorate.

For the citizenry in general, elections are a moment to note the commitments and promises being made. In other words, elections are the foundation of the social contract between the parties and candidates on the one hand and the electorate on the other.

Such an important democratic exercise needs to occur in an environment conducive to all the participating stakeholders and contestants. Most importantly, the electoral contestants themselves, political parties and candidates need to have a good appreciation in terms of knowledge of, skills about and attitudes towards what it takes for them to meaningfully engage in an electoral process and contribute not only to the holding of free and fair elections in particular but also to the deepening of democracy in their country in general. In other words, well-informed and adequately capacitated political parties are instrumental in ensuring credible electoral processes.

When political parties have an in-depth, comprehensive and shared understanding of the electoral process, the legal framework, as well as the roles, mandate and responsibilities not only of themselves but also of other strategic stakeholders such as the electoral management body, they (political parties) become constructive players and partners in these processes.

As they deepen their understanding of the electoral processes and all its dimensions, they can also individually and/or collectively identify and critically reflect on the likely challenges that will be faced in such processes and proactively explore ways in which such challenges can be dealt with. Better informed and well-capacitated political parties also tend to be well-positioned to constructively engage with other stakeholders in ensuring a successful electoral process. Finally, it is also expected that having political parties that have a good appreciation of the electoral process is instrumental in ensuring that such key stakeholders are compliant in their engagement with and in the electoral process and become champions in ensuring electoral integrity.

TARGET GROUPS

This is a cross-party strategic engagement on the electoral process which targets five senior party leaders drawn from the following parties and are presently represented in Parliament: Alliance for Democracy (AFORD), Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), Malawi Congress Party (MCP), People's Party (PP), United Democratic Front (UDF), and UTM Party (UTM).

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

The workshop will be held at Cross-Roads Hotel in Lilongwe, from 08:30 hrs-16:30 hrs on 24 October 2024 and from 08:30 hrs-13:00 hrs on 25 October 2024.

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WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

It is against this background that Democracy Works Foundation (DWF), within the framework of its regional programme, Political Parties and Elections Support, will host a day-and-a-half long workshop (24-25 October 2024) that seeks to provide political parties in Malawi with the platform to understand the electoral process better and—particularly—to strategically prepare for monitoring of this electoral process and ensure their meaningful and constructive engagement in the same.

Specifically, the workshop will seek to realise the following objectives:

1.

Political parties have an in-depth understanding and appreciation of the electoral process and the role they (political parties) can play to ensure meaningful and effective engagement and contribution to a successful electoral process.

2.

Political parties gain knowledge and skills on how they can strategically prepare to monitor the electoral process and contribute to electoral integrity.

PREPARING POLITICAL PARTIES FOR EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS

TIME	AGENDA ITEM	RESPONSIBILITY
Overall Workshop Moderator: Mr. Wisdom Chimgwede, Communication, Visibility & Media Specialist		
08:30-09:00	Participants Registration	DWF
09:00-09:30	Introductions and welcome remarks	Ms Fannie Nthakomwa, DWF Deputy Regional Director/ Deputy Chief of Party
09:30 -10:15	Setting the context: Presentation on Democracy, Elections and the Role of Political Parties	Dr Augustine Magolowondo, DWF Regional Director/ Chief of Party
10:15 - 11:00	Plenary discussion	All
11:00-11:30	Health Break	
11:30-12:30	The Key Milestones in the Electoral Calendar and the Role of Political Parties- A Perspective from Elections Management Bodies (EMBs)	Mr Hastings Bota, Director of Electoral Services- Malawi Electoral Commission
12:30-13:00	Plenary discussion	All
13:00-14:00	Lunch	
14:00-14:30	The Key Milestones in the Electoral Calendar and the Role of Political Parties - A Perspective from the Political Parties	Dr Augustine Magolowondo and Ms Fannie Nthakomwa
14:30-15:00	Plenary	All
15:00 -15:15	Health Break	
15:15-16:00	Breakaway session on "The Key Milestones in the Electoral Calendar and the Role of Political Parties"	Ms Tadala Chumachiyenda, DWF Regional Coordinator and Mr Wisdom Chimgwede
16:00-16:45	Group presentations in plenary and concluding reflections on Day One	Ms Tadala Chumachiyenda, DWF Regional Coordinator and Mr Wisdom Chimgwede

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Overall Workshop Moderator: Mr. Wisdom Chimgwede, Communication, Visibility & Media Specialist		
08:30-09:00	Participants Registration	DWF
09:00-09:30	Recap on Day One	Mr Wisdom Chimgwede
09:30-10:15	Preparing Political Parties for effective monitoring of the electoral process	Ms Fannie Nthakomwa
10:15-10:30	Plenary discussion	Facilitator
10:30 -10:45	Health Break	
10:45 - 11:30	Breakout Session: Monitoring of the electoral process by political - Which areas of the electoral process can political parties monitor? - What challenges can political parties face that prevent them from effectively monitoring the identified areas? - What role can the political parties play in dealing with the identified challenges?	Facilitator
11:30 -12:15	Plenary Discussion	Facilitator
12:15-12:45	Concluding reflections - party by party	Facilitator
12:45 -13:00	Concluding Remarks and Next Steps	Dr Augustine Magolowondo