



PAN AFRICAN CIVIC EDUCATORS NETWORK

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THE ROAD TO 2025 MALAWI TRIPARTITE ELECTIONS:

Prospects for Local NGOs in Malawi

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

INTRODUCTION

Local NGOs play a critical role in elections, and their participation is both a legal and human rights imperative. In Malawi, the involvement of local NGOs in elections can be categorized into two main areas: election observation and the facilitation of civic and voter education, which is granted through accreditation by the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC).

Regarding election observation, the participation of local NGOs aligns with the provisions outlined in sections 102 and 103 of the Presidential, Parliamentary, and Local Government Elections Act. These sections designate local NGOs as observers and authorize them to oversee various stages of the electoral process. Additionally, the engagement of local NGOs in election observation is endorsed by regional and international human rights frameworks, such as the Principles for Election Management, Monitoring, and Observation in the SADC Region (adopted on November 6, 2003), and the Declaration of Global Principles for Non-partisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations, along with its accompanying Code of Conduct, launched at the United Nations in 2012.

OUR OBSERVATION

With the Malawi Electoral Commission evidently making progress in its preparations for the tripartite elections scheduled for September 2025, and with the vital voter registration process set to begin in September 2024, local NGOs are confronted with two primary challenges: (1) obtaining accreditation from the Malawi Electoral Commission in a timely manner, and (2) securing financial resources from development partners promptly.

Past elections have shown that accreditation certificates play a critical role in facilitating the mobilization of resources for the involvement of local NGOs in elections.

OUR CALL TO ACTION

Given this context, the **Pan African Civic Educators Network (PACENET)**, a local NGO in Malawi, with over **20** years' experience in elections focusing on women political participation, voter mobilization, election observation, and electoral reform process, and in collaboration with its grassroots partners would like to appeal to the MEC, development partners, and local NGOs in Malawi as follows:

a). THE MALAWI ELECTORAL COMMISSION

To expedite the screening and selection processes for potential providers of civic and voter education for the 2025 Malawi Tripartite Elections, and to clarify the accreditation procedure for observing all stages of the elections in line with their respective phases.

b). DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

PACENET acknowledges that the responsibility for financing elections in Malawi lies with the Malawi Government. However, it has been observed that local NGOs do not benefit from government funding for elections, as these funds are allocated for activities of the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC). Instead, local development partners in Malawi typically support the MEC's budget for the elections and facilitate the involvement of local NGOs.

Therefore, PACENET appeals to development partners to share their plans for supporting local NGOs during the upcoming elections. This support is crucial to enable accredited local NGOs to fully engage in facilitating civic and voter education and observing all stages of the elections, including Election Day. Reflecting on lessons learned from the 2019 tripartite elections, it is important to provide significant support to a diverse range of local NGOs to observe the various stages of the 2025 tripartite elections.

c). LOCAL NGOS

Being accredited and funded is one aspect while carrying out our work professionally is another. Drawing from the lessons of the 2019 Tripartite Elections, it is imperative for local NGOs to be effectively coordinated and be physically present to conduct civic and voter education, and to observe all phases of the elections. In undertaking these roles NGOs should always be non-partisan and principled in order to support the Electoral Commission to deliver a free, fair, and credible election.

CONCLUSION

The involvement of local NGOs in the upcoming elections in 2025 remains critical. Effective and timely involvement of local NGOs will help to actively engage citizens at the grassroots level in the election process for them to make informed electoral choices, identify challenges, and expose irregularities. Ultimately the involvement of the NGOs will promote stakeholders' confidence in both the process and outcomes of the election while enhancing the capacity of the local NGOs to promote citizen participation, and stakeholder accountability within and beyond the election cycle.

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