

# SUMMARY OBSERVATION REPORT FOR 1<sup>st</sup> WEEK OF PHASE TWO VOTER REGISTRATION EXERCISE: From 9<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER to 17<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2024



## MALAWI 2025 TRIPARTITE ELECTIONS

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## **1. Introduction**

Pan African Civic Educators Network (PACENET) is a local non-governmental organization (NGO) registered in March 2002 by the Malawi government under Trustees Incorporation Act. PACENET identifies itself as an NGO leading the struggle against poverty, oppression, inequality, and all forms of injustices. PACENET strives to promote active citizen participation in the socio-economic, cultural and political affairs of their country, and the promotion of functional, inclusive, transparent and accountable democratic governance. PACENET has a functional Board of Directors comprising five members and led by a woman. Currently PACENET's secretariat is located in the municipality of Luchenza next to Luchenza secondary school.

This report highlights key observations by PACENET LTOs during week one of phase two of the current voter registration exercise. PACENET has deployed 15 LTOs comprising five females and ten males to observe phase two of the voter registration exercise targeting voter registration centers in Blantyre, Luchenza Municipality, Ntcheu, and Thyolo.

In week one of phase two PACENET LTOs visited 116 voter registration centers as follows: Blantyre 14; Luchenza and Thyolo: 99 and Ntcheu: 3.

## **2. Key objectives of this observation**

- To assess whether the registration exercise complied with national laws in Malawi as well as satisfying regional and international human rights standards, principles, and best practices related to democratic elections.
- To assess compliance by the National Registration Bureau (NRB) to the High Court Ruling of 25<sup>th</sup> October ordering the NRB to immediately start registering new applicants for the national ID to enable them to get registered by MEC during the voter registration exercise underway.
- To assess level of community awareness for phase two.

## **3. Methodology**

Fifteen (15) LTOs were deployed to phase two of the voter registration exercise on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2024 with instructions to visit any voter registration centers of their choices in any of the councils targeted for the voter registration exercise during phase TWO. The LTOs were guided by a checklist designed by PACENET seeking information about; the daily opening and closing of voter registration centres; the number of registered voters per day, and rejected number of potential voters segregated by sex; performance of the equipment and personnel from MEC and National Registration Bureau (NRB) at the centers; the presence of party monitors, and other observers from accredited organizations; registration of new applicants for the national ID and thereafter to be registered by MEC as voters per the High Court Judgement, and to assess adequacy of community mobilization for the voter registration exercise by MEC, political parties, and accredited local NGOs.

#### **4. Key findings**

##### **a. Opening and closing of voter registration centers**

- LTOs reported that voter registration centers **opened at 8 am and closed at 4 pm** or after 4 pm in the case where people were still in the queue to register.

##### **b. Presence of party monitors, local observers, and security agents**

- LTOs reported **the presence** of party monitors for the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), the United Transformation Movement (UTM), the United Democratic Front (UDF), the People's Development Party (PDP), National Patriotic Party (NPP) and the Economic Liberation Freedom (ELF).

##### **c. Observers:**

- LTOs reported **the presence** of observers from the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP), the National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE), and the Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation (CHRR) and US Mission observers.

##### **d. Equipment**

- LTOs reported **cases** of NRB equipment malfunctioning and delays in repairing the equipment.

##### **e. Personnel**

- LTOs reported **adequate** staff at registration centers, the majority being young people and females.

##### **f. New registrants for national ID**

- LTOs reported **absence** of NRB equipment for registering new applicants for first three days of the phase two. From day 4 some voter registration centers (very few) started data capturing of new applicants for national ID as per High Court Judgement of 25<sup>th</sup> October 2024. However, at the time of compiling this report LTOs reported **NO single** case of newly registered potential voters in line with the High Court Judgement who managed to get from NRB a unique identifier number to enable him/her register with MEC as a voter.
- LTOs reported that new national ID registrants had to wait for a minimum of **24 hours** before being assigned a unique identifier number to allow them to get registered as a voter by MEC as per High Court Judgment of 25<sup>th</sup> October 2024.
- Not **ALL** voter registration centers are capturing data of new applicants (registering new applicants) to assign them unique identifier number. NRB have clustered such centers for registering new applicants in a constituency of which there is lack of information on such clustered centers to allow new applicants to visit such centers directly from their homes/locations.

**g. Impact of the High Court Judgement on the sole use of National ID by MEC for voter identification.**

- LTOs reported witnessing potential voters being returned at registration centers because they had not registered for national ID. For example, at **Kapeni** Demonstration School in Blantyre 37 potential voters had been returned as from 9<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> of November 2024 as their Unique Identifier number had not yet been generated by NRB through the Synchronization system at their Headquarters to generate new applicants Unique Identifier number. Similar situation as observed at **Chilobwe F.P** school in Lizulu ward in Ntcheu North constituency. Center supervisor reported that about 30 potential voters were sent back. At Makheta L.E.School in Maone ward, Blantyre City Nkolokoti Ndirande constituency NRB officer reported 15 potential voters were not assisted as they had not registered for national ID before.

**h. Community mobilization**

- LTOs reported inadequate mobilization efforts for voter registration due to fuel scarcity and absence of accredited CSOs to participate in the exercise due to funding challenges.

**5. Key challenges**

- Partial compliance to the High Court Judgment by NRB as only few centers are providing services to new applicants (Data capturing ONLY) and that new applicants are not proceeding to finalize the voter registration since NRB is not providing the unique identifier number immediately or at least within a minimum of 24hrs upon data capturing of new applicants. Based on its own actions it is safe to conclude that the NRB is deliberately frustrating implementation of the High Court Judgement, and therefore liable for a contempt of court action.
- Slow mobilization of potential voters through community awareness leading to low turn up of potential voter registrants.
- The long wait for new national ID registrants to get their unique identifier number for registration with MEC influenced others to give up.

## 6. Key recommendations

PACENET offers the following key recommendations to enhance credibility and integrity of electoral processes in Malawi ahead of the E-Day on 16 September 2025:

### a). Malawi Electoral Commission

- The MEC should consider extending voter registration exercise for phase two for three days to allow NRB catch up for the absence of its service to register new applicants for the national ID from 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> of November 2024 in most centers in respect of the High Court Judgment of 25<sup>th</sup> October 2024.
- MEC should consider engaging developing partners to mobilize financial resources to be accessed by accredited CSOs service providers for their active participation in the electoral process.

### b). National Registration Bureau (NRB)

- NRB should conform to the dictates of the 25<sup>th</sup> of October High Court Judgment by providing national ID registration service side by side with MEC at all voter registration centers for the new national ID registrants to register as voters.
- NRB to fast-track processing of data for new national ID applicants to allow real time voter registration other than the current minimum 24 hours period it is assumed to take for NRB to process data and provide unique identifier number to new applicants, contrary to the reality on the ground as in most centers visited by our LTO's, **we discovered that new applicants whose data were captured on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2024, were not yet provided with the unique identifier number as of 17<sup>th</sup> November 2024.**
- NRB should inform the general public on the process and duration it takes for a new national ID applicant to get a unique identifier number and thereafter a voter certificate.

### c). Development Partners

- PACENET would like to appeal for urgent financial support towards enhancing CSOs' active involvement in the current electoral process leading to the polls on the 16th of September 2025 as observers and mobilizers of voters.

The presence of four or five accredited CSOs at voter registration centers clearly shows that the majority of the over one hundred plus service providers, including CSOs accredited by MEC are not actively participating in the current electoral process for the 2025 tripartite elections due to lack of funding.

However, PACENET appreciates the financial and technical support development partners in Malawi provide during elections to CSOs.

#### **d. Political Parties**

On several occasions political parties and CSOs have raised issue of NRB's non-compliance to the High Court Judgement of 25<sup>th</sup> October 2025. Currently NRB says is using a cluster system to provide this service as per their understanding of the High Court Judgement. The cluster system allows NRB to assign their national ID registering equipment to one voter registration center to serve two or more other voter registration centers, meaning it is not providing the service side by side with MEC at every voter registration center. This clearly shows that NRB and political parties understanding of the manner of implementing the High Court Judgement is not uniform.

In view of this PACENET's recommendations to political parties are as follows:

- **Consider approaching the very same court that issued the order for proper interpretation of how NRB should fulfil this order.**
- **Improve quality of your monitors at voter registration centers to ensure proper documentation and communication of the key observations with party leaders.**
- **Improve the frequency of community mobilization initiatives to reach out to as many potential voters as possible.**

#### **e. Accredited CSOs**

LTOs have reported the presence of very few CSOs as observers and community mobilisers during the current voter registration exercise. PACENET would like to encourage all accredited CSOs to adopt spirit of voluntarism and ensure that they encourage their staff and volunteers to mobilize people for the voter registration and visit voter registration centers as local observers.

### **7. Acknowledgments**

The Pan African Civic Educators Network has actively participated in elections in Malawi since 2003 as an observer, CVE provider, and advocate for electoral reform and women and youth political empowerment. PACENET is exceptionally grateful to the 20 democracy volunteers deployed as roving observers in phase to actively observing the voter registration exercise.

Certified by



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**LIST OF DOMESTIC OBSERVERS FOR PACENET FOR PHASE TWO OF THE VOTER REGISTRATION EXERCISE**

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<b>3</b>	Patricia Njatula-Gender & Communications Manager	0999427871
<b>4</b>	Steven Duwa-Technical Advisor	0995674324
<b>5</b>	Kalisto Phiri-District Coordinator-Thyolo and Luchenza	0995196944
<b>6</b>	Hilda Ntiya	0999380792
<b>7</b>	Cassidy Magreta	0994968958
<b>80</b>	Anthony Phoya	0882140886
<b>11</b>	Demistar Maseko	0886471650
<b>12</b>	Esime Tomato	0983381123
<b>13</b>	Thomas Wadi	0983044548
<b>14</b>	Nyadani Maseya	0999347590
<b>15</b>	Isaac Maston Antonyo	0880424560
<b>16</b>	Merina Biziki William	0996582143
<b>17</b>	Samson Dyton	0888333576
<b>18</b>	Mercy Chabwera	0883059490
<b>19</b>	Bertha Mwanghe	0998839942
<b>20</b>	Enock Kausiwa	0888564602