

MALAWI 2025 GENERAL ELECTIONS

**An Observational Report on the Democratic Processes
and Outcomes**





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1.0 Executive Summary

This report provides a preliminary assessment of the Malawian general elections held on September 16, 2025. The elections were conducted to elect the President, members of the National Assembly, and local government councillors. Our observation mission monitored the pre-election environment, polling day activities, and the post-election period, including the counting and tabulation of results.

The election resulted in a decisive victory for former President Peter Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), who secured 56.8% of the presidential vote. The incumbent, Dr Lazarus Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), conceded defeat after obtaining 33% of the vote.

The pre-election period was marked by a focus on the nation's severe economic challenges, including aid dependency and external shocks. Although voting day was conducted in a generally peaceful and orderly manner, the results management process faced scrutiny, with observers and political parties demanding greater transparency from the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC). Despite some reported irregularities and the arrests of electoral staff, the outcome was not formally challenged in court by the main contenders, and a peaceful transfer of power occurred, culminating in Mutharika's inauguration on October 4, 2025, at Kamuzu Stadium in Blantyre.

International observers, such as the EU Election Observation Mission (EU EOM), noted the elections as peaceful and orderly, with 99% positive assessments of voting, but highlighted concerns over campaign finance gaps, state media bias, weak transparency in technology use, and low women's participation. The EU EOM's preliminary statement emphasised respect for fundamental freedoms, while recommending reforms in these areas.

2.0 Background: The Evolution of Malawian Democracy

Malawi's democratic evolution has been complex, dynamic, and emblematic of broader trends in sub-Saharan Africa's governance landscape. Since gaining independence from Britain in 1964, the country's political system has traversed distinct phases—from autocracy to reform, and from fragile pluralism to a more stable, though competitive, multi-party democracy.

Under Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda and the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), Malawi functioned as a one-party state for nearly three decades. This era, often characterised by political repression, centralised control, and limited civic freedoms, was sustained until the early 1990s when internal discontent converged with external donor pressure for democratic reform. In 1993, a national referendum marked a watershed moment: over 60% of Malawians voted to end one-party rule, paving the way for constitutional change and the establishment of multiparty democracy.



The first democratic elections in 1994 brought Bakili Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF) to power, ushering in an era of optimism and liberalisation. Muluzi's two-term tenure saw notable gains in freedom of expression and political participation but was also marred by allegations of corruption and patronage.

In 2004, Bingu wa Mutharika, Muluzi's handpicked successor, won the presidency but later broke ranks with the UDF to form the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). His leadership initially focused on fiscal discipline and anti-corruption measures, earning praise from international donors, but his second term (2009–2012) saw rising authoritarian tendencies. His sudden death in 2012 triggered a constitutional transfer of power to Vice-President Joyce Banda, making her Malawi's first female head of state.

The 2014 elections marked the return of the Mutharika family, with Peter Mutharika, Bingu's brother, winning under the DPP banner. However, his 2019 re-election was annulled by the Constitutional Court after findings of extensive irregularities, a landmark ruling that reaffirmed judicial independence in Africa. The 2020 court-ordered re-run was won by Lazarus Chakwera, leading a coalition known as the Tonse Alliance, signalling a renewed phase of democratic accountability.

The 2025 general elections represent a significant moment in Malawi's democratic journey. They reaffirm the country's identity as one of the few African nations that has successfully conducted peaceful, competitive, and alternating transfers of power multiple times since 1994. Despite facing economic challenges, governance issues, and emerging digital threats to electoral integrity, Malawi's democracy remains vibrant and participatory. This is supported by a strong civic culture and an electorate that is increasingly focused on performance rather than patronage.

This election showcased a competitive political landscape, where the power had shifted between different parties and leaders through the ballot box. This trend mirrors a broader regional anti-incumbent wave seen in South Africa, Botswana, and Zambia, driven by economic hardships resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The return of Mutharika at the age of 85 highlights generational dynamics in a country with a median age of just 18.1 years. This raises important questions about the need for fresh leadership in a country of majority young people.

3.0 Pre-Election Environment and Campaign Context

3.1 Economic and Social Climate

The 2025 general elections took place during one of Malawi's most challenging economic periods in recent history. Persistent inflation exceeding 30 per cent, chronic fuel shortages, and a foreign-exchange crisis severely impacted daily life and business operations. Basic commodities, including maize, cooking oil, and transportation, became increasingly



unaffordable for ordinary citizens. The government's struggle to stabilise the kwacha and maintain fuel reserves eroded public confidence in its economic management, creating a strong undercurrent of frustration that influenced voter sentiment.

In the months leading up to the elections, public discourse was dominated by these hardships. The Tonse Alliance government, led by President Lazarus Chakwera, faced criticism for failing to deliver on its 2020 reform agenda, which had promised economic recovery, job creation, and improved public-sector governance. As living costs soared, the priorities of the electorate shifted decisively toward material well-being rather than political ideology. The prevailing sentiment became “*The economy first*,” which served as the central lens through which voters evaluated all candidates.

3.2 Political Landscape and Campaign Dynamics

Seventeen presidential candidates contested the 2025 race, though the competition effectively narrowed to two front-runners: Peter Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and Lazarus Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP). Other notable contenders included Dalitso Kabambe (United Transformation Movement), Atupele Muluzi (United Democratic Front), and Joyce Banda (People's Party).

The campaign period, officially launched in June 2025, was peaceful and largely compliant with the Electoral Code of Conduct. Security agencies maintained neutrality, and there were no major incidents of political violence, an achievement underscored by both domestic and international observers. The DPP's messaging centred on restoring economic stability, infrastructure development, and food security, evoking nostalgia for Mutharika's previous term. In contrast, the MCP emphasised continuity of governance, social-protection initiatives, and ongoing projects in energy and agriculture, while struggling to overcome widespread disillusionment over economic decline.

Rallies and roadshows were the main campaign vehicles, complemented by robust use of radio, community gatherings, and social-media outreach. However, policy debates among presidential candidates were conspicuously absent, with both Mutharika and Chakwera declining invitations to participate in nationally televised forums. This lack of direct policy engagement limited voters' ability to compare platforms substantively, reinforcing reliance on past performance and party loyalty as decision-making cues.

3.3 Electoral Administration and Readiness

The Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) faced a challenging timeline for preparation and logistical obstacles, but they successfully completed the election within the required constitutional deadlines. Stakeholders praised MEC for its professionalism in managing voter registration and polling stations. However, ongoing concerns remained regarding the infrastructure for results transmission and the training of staff.



Approximately 7.2 million voters were registered, reflecting a slight decline compared to 2019 as a percentage of eligible citizens. Voter education campaigns conducted by MEC, civil society organisations, and the National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE) Trust aimed to raise awareness about polling procedures, promote the inclusion of women and youth, and prevent electoral violence.

3.4 Media, Digital Space, and Disinformation Management

The 2025 electoral environment was notably shaped by the digital information ecosystem, which served both as an enabler of civic engagement and a vector for misinformation. Social-media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, and X (formerly Twitter) were heavily used for political messaging. While these platforms amplified citizen participation, they also facilitated the rapid spread of rumours, manipulated content, and AI-generated fabrications.

To mitigate this risk, the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA Malawi) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched the iVerify Malawi platform in early 2025 under the Malawi Electoral Support Project. The initiative aims to enhance information integrity through systematic fact-checking, verification of viral claims, and public education. iVerify operates via a hybrid model that combines algorithmic detection with manual verification by trained journalists, data analysts, and legal experts. Its triple-review process ensures that at least three independent verifiers assess each claim before publication.

During the campaign and immediate post-election period, *iVerify Malawi* debunked numerous high-impact falsehoods, ranging from fabricated statements by party officials to forged concession letters and rumours about electoral interference.

These examples illustrate the platform's proactive role in disrupting disinformation, ensuring that false claims were neutralised before they could escalate, and fostering a culture of evidence-based public dialogue. According to UNDP Malawi, the platform reached over 1 million citizens online and thousands more through partnerships with community radio and local news outlets. These interventions significantly reduced the spread of misinformation that could have otherwise undermined public trust in the electoral process.

3.5 Civil-Society and International Engagement

Civil society organisations played a vital role in promoting transparency and inclusion. Networks such as the Public Affairs Committee (PAC), Human Rights Defenders Coalition (HRDC), and Centre for Multiparty Democracy (CMD) facilitated dialogues among political parties and encouraged issue-based campaigning. International partners, including SADC, AU, EU, and the Commonwealth, provided technical and logistical support to both MEC and observer groups.

Observers noted that gender representation in campaign messaging improved slightly



compared to previous cycles, though women candidates remained underrepresented in both parliamentary and local races. Youth participation, buoyed by social-media engagement and civic-education initiatives, emerged as a growing force in shaping campaign narratives.

The pre-election environment of 2025 reflected both progress and persistent vulnerabilities in Malawi's democratic system. Economic distress dominated voter concerns, overshadowing ideological discourse, while advances in digital information integrity—exemplified by *iVerify Malawi*—helped shield the process from large-scale manipulation. The peaceful and competitive nature of the campaign period reinforced Malawi's democratic maturity, setting the stage for a credible and largely accepted election outcome.

4.0 Election Day Observation and Results Management

4.1 General Overview

Polling for Malawi's 2025 general elections took place on September 16, 2025, across all 193 constituencies. The elections were conducted to elect the President, Members of Parliament, and local government councillors. Observers from domestic and international missions, including the European Union (EU), Southern African Development Community (SADC), African Union (AU), and Commonwealth, reported that the process was peaceful, orderly, and professionally managed in most areas of the country.

Polling stations opened promptly at 6:00 a.m., with voting materials and staff in place at the majority of locations visited by observer teams. Citizens turned out in large numbers throughout the day, reflecting a high level of civic engagement and confidence in the process. The calm atmosphere underscored the maturity of Malawi's democracy and the trust citizens continue to place in electoral institutions.

4.2 Logistics and Voter Access

The Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) demonstrated notable improvement in logistical coordination compared to previous elections. Ballot materials, indelible ink, and security seals were delivered on time in most regions. In some remote constituencies—particularly in parts of Chitipa, Nsanje, and Phalombe—minor delays were reported due to poor road access and adverse weather conditions. However, these did not significantly disrupt polling activities.

Voter verification using the biometric system functioned effectively, aided by the presence of backup registers in cases where devices malfunctioned. Persons with disabilities, the elderly, and expectant mothers were generally prioritised in queues, reflecting adherence to inclusive voting principles. Civil-society organisations such as the Centre for Disability and



Development (CDD) and NICE Trust deployed monitors to ensure that vulnerable groups were assisted without undue influence.

4.3 Security and Conduct of Polling Officials

Security operations were led by the Malawi Police Service (MPS) under the oversight of the Joint Operations Command (JOC). Their deployment was strategic and proportionate, avoiding heavy-handedness. Reports from observers confirmed that uniformed officers maintained a visible yet non-intrusive presence at polling stations. There were no recorded incidents of major violence, intimidation, or disruption throughout voting day, a significant improvement from previous election cycles.

Polling officials exhibited professionalism and impartiality, following procedures related to ballot issuance, voter identification, and the sealing of boxes after voting. Training provided by MEC and supported by UNDP's Malawi Electoral Support Project appeared to enhance efficiency and adherence to protocols.

4.4 Transparency and Observation

Domestic observer groups, including the Malawi Electoral Support Network (MESN) and the Public Affairs Committee (PAC), were present at most polling stations visited. Their findings largely corroborated those of international missions, emphasising procedural transparency and the cooperative spirit among political party representatives.

Party monitors were accredited across all major political formations, including the DPP, MCP, UTM, UDF, and PP. Their presence contributed to accountability and public confidence in the process. At several polling centres, monitors were observed using mobile devices to transmit preliminary tallies to party headquarters, enhancing internal verification mechanisms.

4.5 Voter Turnout

Preliminary MEC data estimated voter turnout at approximately 68%, a strong figure given the economic difficulties and voter fatigue that had marked earlier stages of the campaign. Participation was particularly high in the Southern Region, where the DPP maintains its traditional strongholds, and slightly lower in urban centres such as Lilongwe and Mzuzu, where economic disillusionment and logistical challenges dampened enthusiasm.

Analysts noted that turnout patterns reflected both regional loyalties and the salience of economic grievances, which motivated citizens to vote for change rather than abstain.

4.6 Counting, Transmission, and Tabulation of Results

Vote counting commenced immediately after polling stations closed at 6:00 p.m. and was conducted transparently, with party monitors and observers present. Counting procedures



generally adhered to MEC guidelines, though isolated inconsistencies were observed regarding the sealing of ballot boxes and the posting of results outside polling centres.

Results were transmitted electronically via MEC's District Tally Centres (DTCs) and later consolidated at the National Tally Centre (NTC) in Blantyre. Observers reported minor delays caused by connectivity problems and discrepancies in several tally sheets, necessitating manual verification in certain cases. Despite these issues, the process remained largely credible and well-supervised.

During tabulation, opposition parties, particularly the MCP, raised concerns about irregularities in 13 districts, citing discrepancies between district and national figures. MEC responded by auditing the contested results, and police subsequently arrested eight data-entry clerks suspected of tampering with figures. While these arrests underscored vigilance against malpractice, no systematic manipulation was substantiated.

4.7 Results Announcement and Public Reaction

The final presidential results, announced by MEC Chairperson Justice Chifundo Kachale on September 24, 2025, confirmed Peter Mutharika's victory with 56.8% of the vote, compared to 33% for Lazarus Chakwera. Smaller candidates shared the remaining percentage. In a move widely praised by observers, Dr. Chakwera conceded defeat before the official declaration, describing the outcome as a reflection of "the people's democratic will."

This early concession helped to defuse potential tensions and set a positive tone for the post-election period. Celebrations among DPP supporters were largely peaceful, with no significant reports of clashes or reprisals.

4.8 Role of Technology and Information Integrity

The digital dimension of election-day information management represented a significant milestone. The iVerify Malawi platform, operated by MISA Malawi in partnership with UNDP, played a vital role in real-time verification of viral claims circulating on social media.

In the week following the election, iVerify published several clarifications that helped dispel emerging misinformation. For example, on September 22, it debunked a forged letter alleging the MCP had conceded prematurely, while on October 2, it dismissed viral posts claiming deliberate sabotage of electricity infrastructure by government officials. These fact-checks, accessible via [iVerify Malawi's website](#), were widely shared by news outlets and community radio stations, curbing the spread of falsehoods.

This integration of fact-checking mechanisms into the electoral environment showcased Malawi's growing capacity to safeguard digital integrity, positioning it as a model for regional peers.



4.9 Observations and Preliminary Assessment

Overall, the 2025 elections met regional and international benchmarks for democratic credibility. The process demonstrated notable improvements in logistical planning, transparency, and digital oversight. However, challenges persisted, including:

- Limited accessibility in remote areas.
- Weak public communication during the tabulation phase.
- Sporadic procedural inconsistencies at the district level.

Despite these shortcomings, observer missions agreed that the elections reflected the genuine will of the Malawian people, marking another peaceful transfer of power through the ballot box.

The 2025 election day and results-management process reaffirmed Malawi's democratic resilience. The orderly conduct of polling, transparency of counting, and professional behaviour of security forces underscored institutional progress. The peaceful concession by the incumbent, coupled with digital innovations like *iVerify Malawi*, elevated the credibility of the exercise. While administrative refinements remain necessary, the election stands as a testament to Malawi's democratic consolidation amid economic hardship.

5.0 Post-Election Environment and Lessons Learned

5.1 Immediate Post-Election Context

The days following the official declaration of results were marked by calm and cautious optimism across Malawi. Despite isolated incidents of celebratory unrest in parts of Blantyre and Thyolo, the general atmosphere remained peaceful. Former President Lazarus Chakwera's early concession and his public congratulatory message to Peter Mutharika significantly reduced the risk of confrontation. The tone set by both leaders, emphasising unity and respect for democratic outcomes, was widely commended by observer missions and civil society organisations.

In contrast to the disputed 2019 elections, no large-scale protests or legal challenges were lodged, suggesting growing confidence in the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) and its improved management of the 2025 process. Religious and civic leaders, particularly from the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) and Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM), reinforced peace messaging through coordinated post-election statements that encouraged citizens to accept the results and focus on rebuilding the economy.

5.2 Role of the Malawi Electoral Commission

The MEC's performance in the post-election period reflected institutional growth. The



Commission adopted a proactive communication strategy, regularly publishing updates and clarifications to counter misinformation regarding result discrepancies. Its transparency in admitting and investigating irregularities, such as the arrest of data-entry clerks accused of tampering, helped reinforce public trust.

However, observers noted several administrative challenges. The delay in publishing constituency-level data and inconsistent communication with district tally centres created temporary information gaps. These lapses, though not evidence of malpractice, underscored the need for enhanced data management systems and stronger provincial coordination for future elections.

Stakeholders recommended that MEC should digitise real-time results dashboards, improve coordination with the National Registration Bureau (NRB) for voter roll integrity, and intensify capacity-building for presiding officers to minimise procedural lapses.

5.3 Civil Society and Media Engagement

Civil society groups played a crucial role in ensuring transparency, civic education, and peacebuilding during and after the elections. Organisations such as the Malawi Electoral Support Network (MESN), National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE), and Youth and Society (YAS) conducted parallel vote tabulations, community sensitisation, and digital literacy campaigns.

The media environment, though politically polarised, remained relatively open. Public and private outlets provided extensive coverage of both the results and subsequent developments, while fact-checking initiatives such as iVerify Malawi mitigated disinformation risks.

During the immediate aftermath, *iVerify* debunked several false claims circulating on Facebook and WhatsApp, including fabricated reports of MCP-led protests and unverified claims about “missing ballot boxes.” By October 5, 2025, the platform had published over 30 fact-checks addressing election-related rumours, helping to preserve information integrity and limit escalation of tensions.

During the 2025 election period, *iVerify* Malawi actively investigated and verified numerous claims related to the polls and national politics. A few key examples illustrate its importance:

In one case, on October 2, 2025, *iVerify* addressed a viral claim alleging that Abida Mia had been involved in the removal of an electricity transformer in Chikwawa District. After verifying with Mia, the electricity utility ESCOM (via spokesperson Pilirani Phiri), and other local sources, *iVerify* determined the claim was false. ESCOM clarified that it had independently swapped transformers at Ngabu Trading Centre and Mphungu after a fault, not at Mia’s request. On the same day, the platform verified a purported statement attributed to DPP Secretary-General Peter Mukhito concerning fuel and beer price hikes. Upon



investigation, Mukhito himself denied issuing the statement, confirming it was fake.

Going slightly earlier, on October 1, iVerify examined a rumour that Uladi Mussa had resigned from the MCP's National Executive Committee. After direct confirmation from Mussa, the team rated the claim false, noting that it appeared to be part of an attempt to sow internal divisions. On September 26 2025, iVerify reviewed allegations that Alfonso Chikuni, Principal Secretary for the Ministry of Energy, had fled Malawi with his family. The platform found no evidence to support the claim and noted that the supposed source, "Malawi Voice," had not posted the story as alleged, rating the claim false.

Earlier still, on September 23, iVerify confirmed that a court had indeed rejected the MCP's application to halt the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) from declaring results. The platform verified the judgment through judicial sources and rated the claim true. Finally, on September 22, iVerify debunked a fake letter circulating online claiming that the MCP had conceded the presidential election defeat. The party's Secretary-General Richard Chimwendo Banda denied its authenticity via Facebook, leading iVerify to classify it as false.

Through its partnership with UNDP and MISA Malawi, *iVerify* collaborated with community radios in Mchinji, Dedza, and Chikwawa to spread verified information in local languages—strengthening rural access to credible news. This multi-channel approach highlighted the importance of local media ecosystems in defending democracy against digital misinformation.

5.4 International and Regional Reactions

International observer missions, including those from the African Union (AU), SADC, and the European Union (EU), described the 2025 elections as "credible, peaceful, and reflective of the people's will." The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Commonwealth Secretariat praised Malawi's commitment to democratic norms, noting improvements in institutional transparency and the absence of systemic violence.

Regionally, Malawi's election was perceived as a positive contrast to electoral instability in parts of Southern Africa, reinforcing its reputation as one of the region's most enduring democracies. Development partners, including USAID, DFID, and GIZ, expressed readiness to continue supporting governance and economic recovery initiatives under the new administration.

5.5 Public Sentiment and Economic Expectations

Public discourse in the post-election period shifted quickly from politics to economics. Across social and traditional media, Malawians voiced strong expectations for rapid economic stabilisation under Mutharika's renewed leadership. Persistent inflation, fuel scarcity, and kwacha depreciation remained the population's foremost concerns. Polling by local think tanks such as the Institute for Public Opinion and Research (IPOR) in October



2025 indicated that 68% of respondents believed the elections were free and fair, though 74% emphasised that “economic reform should be the new government’s top priority.”

This sentiment reflects a transition from political to performance-based legitimacy, underscoring that electoral success will increasingly hinge on tangible governance outcomes rather than party loyalty.

5.6 Institutional and Legal Reflections

The peaceful nature of the 2025 elections reaffirmed the robustness of Malawi’s constitutional order and judicial independence. However, ongoing debates around electoral law reform remain pertinent. Stakeholders, including the Law Society of Malawi and the Parliamentary Legal Affairs Committee, have called for amendments to:

- Clarify timelines for resolving electoral disputes.
- Strengthen campaign finance disclosure and political party accountability;
- Introduce safeguards for digital campaigning and data protection.

Similarly, concerns over the Digital Security Act and its potential misuse to limit free expression continue to draw civil society attention. Balancing electoral integrity with privacy rights will remain a key policy challenge moving forward.

5.7 Lessons Learned

Several key lessons emerge from Malawi’s 2025 elections:

1. **Peaceful Leadership Transitions Build Trust** – The early concession by the incumbent and the mature conduct of opposition parties prevented post-election polarisation.
2. **Information Integrity Is Central to Electoral Credibility** – Fact-checking platforms like *iVerify Malawi* significantly reduced misinformation-related tensions.
3. **Civic Engagement Enhances Legitimacy** – High voter turnout and strong observer participation reinforced the election’s credibility.
4. **Institutional Transparency Strengthens Democracy** – MEC’s proactive approach and collaboration with oversight bodies bolstered public confidence.
5. **Economic Context Shapes Political Outcomes** – The decisive role of economic hardship in determining voter behaviour highlights the need for governance reforms tied to social welfare.

5.8 Detailed Election Results

The final results for the presidential election, as announced by the MEC, are as follows for the leading candidates:



Candidate	Party	Votes	Percentage
Peter Mutharika	Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)	3,035,249	56.76%
Lazarus Chakwera	Malawi Congress Party (MCP)	1,765,170	33.01%
Dalitso Kabambe	United Transformation Movement (UTM)	211,413	3.95%
Atupele Muluzi	United Democratic Front (UDF)	102,744	1.92%
Joyce Banda	People's Party (PP)	86,106	1.61%
<i>A total of 17 candidates contested the presidency.</i>			

Parliamentary Election Results

Elections were held for all 229 seats in the National Assembly. While official, certified results for every constituency are still being finalised by the MEC, preliminary results indicate that the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) has emerged as the largest party in the National Assembly, securing a plurality of seats but falling short of an overall majority.

The preliminary distribution of seats is reported as follows:

Party	Seats Won (Preliminary)
Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)	94
Malawi Congress Party (MCP)	68
United Transformation Movement (UTM)	14
United Democratic Front (UDF)	11
People's Party (PP)	6



Alliance for Democracy (AFORD)	2
Independents	34
Total	229

The significant number of independent Members of Parliament will make them a crucial bloc in the new legislature, likely holding the balance of power. The final composition of the National Assembly will be detailed in our comprehensive report upon the MEC's final certification. Local government election results are also pending final tabulation.

5.9 Conclusion

The post-election environment in Malawi demonstrated resilience, maturity, and democratic continuity. Despite logistical and administrative challenges, the overall process reflected the will of the people and reinforced Malawi's standing as a regional model for peaceful democratic change.

The focus now shifts to governance delivery, as the new administration faces the dual task of revitalising the economy and consolidating public trust in democratic institutions. The experience of the 2025 elections, marked by peaceful transition, technological innovation, and civic vigilance, offers valuable lessons for the future of electoral democracy in Malawi and beyond.

6.0 Key Findings

1. Voter Discontent Driven by Economic Challenges

The 2025 election results were largely shaped by widespread voter dissatisfaction stemming from Malawi's deepening economic crisis. Key economic issues such as soaring inflation, estimates exceeding 27% during the election period, increased fuel shortages, dwindling foreign currency reserves, and rising cost of basic commodities fueled public frustration. These challenges overshadowed other electoral considerations and became the dominant factor influencing voter behaviour and preferences. The opposition campaign effectively capitalised on these economic grievances by highlighting the population's desire for improved stability and management reminiscent of previous periods under Peter Mutharika's leadership. This economic frustration translated into tangible electoral gains for the DPP, reflecting the electorate's demand for change in economic governance.

2. Peaceful Conduct on Polling Day with High Civic Participation

Election day, September 16, 2025, was marked by a generally peaceful and orderly voting process across most parts of Malawi. Observers noted that polling stations opened promptly, staff adhered to voter identification and ballot procedures, and logistical coordination



appeared effective. The government and security agencies maintained an adequate security presence, which contributed to the calm and secure voting environment. High voter turnout, comparable to or exceeding previous election cycles, underscored the strong civic engagement and commitment among Malawians to participate in the democratic process despite underlying socio-economic difficulties. The peaceful nature of the elections is a testament to Malawi's democratic consolidation and effective election administration on the ground.

3. Transparency Gaps and Concerns in Results Management

While the operational conduct on election day was largely commendable, the post-election period revealed significant challenges in the transparency and credibility of the results management process. The Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) faced delays and disruptions in releasing official partial results, which generated an atmosphere of uncertainty and suspicion among stakeholders. Several procedural lapses were reported, including the arrival of tally kits at the national tally centre without proper security seals, raising concerns about possible tampering or at least poor chain-of-custody management. Allegations of vote count manipulation surfaced, leading to the arrest of eight election data entry clerks suspected of fraudulent activity. Opposition parties, notably the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), cited irregularities in 13 districts, underlining the need for technical and institutional reforms in vote tabulation protocols. These transparency gaps posed risks to the perception of election legitimacy and highlighted the imperative for comprehensive improvements in electoral administration, particularly surrounding results verification and communication.

4. Crucial Role of Presidential Concession in Democratic Stability

A defining positive feature of the 2025 elections was the prompt concession by incumbent President Lazarus Chakwera following the announcement of preliminary results indicating his defeat. This timely concession was broadly praised domestically and internationally as an exemplar of democratic maturity and statesmanship. It facilitated a peaceful electoral transition and helped avert potential post-election unrest or protracted legal battles that had marred previous election cycles in Malawi. The concession not only reinforced public confidence in the electoral process but also demonstrated a commitment to respect the will of the electorate, underscoring the strengthening of democratic norms and peaceful political culture in Malawi. It sent a hopeful signal of political stability in a nation facing considerable economic and social challenges.

7.0 Recommendations

Enhance Transparency in Results Management

The Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) should implement a clear, standardised, and publicly accessible protocol for the live, disaggregated release of election results as they are verified at each stage of the tabulation process. This real-time dissemination of data will reduce public anxiety, build confidence in the process, and effectively counter misinformation and rumours that often arise during result delays. Measures could include



digital platforms, social media updates, and coordination with accredited observer missions to ensure transparency and accountability in finalising results. Additionally, MEC could promote voter education campaigns on how results are processed and verified to strengthen public understanding and trust.

Strengthen Logistics and Security Protocols

Given the reported procedural lapses, such as unsealed tally kits and arrested data clerks suspected of manipulating results, it is critical for MEC to reinforce training programs for all electoral staff on strict chain-of-custody procedures and secure handling of sensitive election materials. This should include comprehensive security protocols for transporting, storing, and processing results sheets and tally kits. Independent audits and tamper-evident mechanisms for ballot and tally materials should be institutionalised to minimise opportunities for fraud or operational errors. Further collaboration with law enforcement is essential to protect the integrity of electoral materials throughout the cycle.

Investigate and Prosecute Electoral Malpractice

All allegations of electoral fraud, including those connected to the arrested election data clerks, must be thoroughly investigated impartially and transparently. Establishing an independent electoral crimes investigation unit or committee with authority and resources to pursue malpractice cases is recommended. Clear legal frameworks and penalties should be publicised to deter future offences. Timely prosecution and adjudication will reinforce the rule of law and deter attempts to undermine electoral integrity, ultimately preserving public confidence in democratic processes.

Promote Issue-Based Campaigns and Political Dialogue

To foster a political culture centred around substantive policy debate rather than personality-driven or ethnic politics, political parties and civil society organisations should actively encourage issue-based campaigning that addresses critical voter concerns, especially the economic hardships that dominated the 2025 elections. Initiatives could include public forums, televised debates (ensuring front-runners participate), and voter education programs that highlight policy platforms and governance plans. Strengthening civic education to enhance voters' capacity to critically assess candidates' proposals will promote informed voting and mature democratic engagement.

Additional Strategic Recommendations

- **Strengthen Voter Registration Processes:** To address the decline in voter registration compared to prior cycles, MEC should expand outreach and simplify registration procedures, particularly targeting underrepresented groups such as youth and rural populations.
- **Enhance Collaboration with Observer Missions:** Incorporate formal mechanisms for



observer recommendations into electoral reforms and improve synergy with domestic and international observers for ongoing electoral monitoring.

- **Invest in Technological Innovations:** Explore the use of technology (e.g., biometric voter identification, secure digital result transmission) to enhance accuracy and speed in the electoral process, while ensuring safeguards against technical failures and cyber threats.
- **Continuous Capacity Building:** Ensure regular training and capacity development for electoral staff and political stakeholders on election law, ethics, and management to support professionalisation and competence across electoral phases.

These recommendations are designed to build on the lessons learned from the 2025 general elections, reinforcing Malawi's democratic institutions and safeguarding the credibility and inclusiveness of future electoral processes.

8.0 Conclusion

The 2025 Malawian general election represents a significant moment in the country's democratic journey, demonstrating the power of the electorate to mandate change in response to national challenges. While the peaceful voting process is commendable, the identified weaknesses in the results management system highlight a critical area for reform. Addressing these issues will be vital for strengthening trust and ensuring the integrity of future electoral cycles in Malawi.

9.0 References and Sources

The information compiled in this report was gathered through **direct observation by accredited election monitors** and supplemented by reporting from the following credible domestic and international sources:

1. **Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC)** – Official reports, press releases, and electoral data. <https://www.mec.org.mw/>
2. **Al Jazeera** – International news coverage of Malawi's 2025 elections. <https://www.aljazeera.com/>
3. **Anadolu Agency** – Regional and global reporting on election developments. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en>
4. **Chatham House** – Analyses on governance, democracy, and electoral systems in Africa. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/>
5. **The Guardian** – International news and commentary on Malawi's political and economic environment. <https://www.theguardian.com/international>



6. **SADC Election Observation Mission (SEOM)** – Official regional observer reports and assessments. <https://www.sadc.int/>
7. **European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM)** – International observation reports and recommendations.
https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/election-observation-missions-eoms_en
8. **Local Malawian Media Outlets** – Newspapers, radio, and online platforms providing coverage of the elections.
9. **Civil Society Organizations** – Observations, parallel vote tabulations, and civic-education initiatives from organizations such as MISA Malawi, MESN, NICE Trust, and Youth and Society (YAS).
10. **iVerify Malawi** – Fact-checking and information integrity reports during the 2025 elections. <https://malawi.i-verify.org>