

UNIMA Bulletin



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More than just renaming

There are many exciting events that have happened in the University of Malawi over the past year. Probably, out of all the events, the most anticipated was the commencement date for the delinking of the University of Malawi, which saw the birth of two other new universities, namely Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (KUHES) and Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS), on the 4th of May, 2021. This marked the dawn of a new era for UNIMA and the changing of this bulletin's name from *Chanco Bulletin* to *UNIMA Bulletin* reflects this trajectory. *UNIMA Bulletin* will continue to highlight the numerous, progressive activities and projects undertaken by both staff and students at UNIMA. This is a productive way of updating the stakeholders of the university with news about UNIMA and it is also a way of providing information about UNIMA to potential collaborators and partners who would want to create links with us.

This year alone, the landmark development has been the appointment of Professor Samson Sajidu as the new Vice Chancellor of the University of Malawi. The new VC has hit the ground running, presiding over his first graduate ceremony and overseeing the university's enrollment of first year students in two cohorts. We are all looking forward to seeing the rest of the leadership team that is to be appointed to help in the running of the institution.

On the part of providing teaching services, the university's commitment to serving the nation could not be better reflected than through its ability to enroll two cohorts of first year students in the year 2022. With hardly any time left to rest from assessing work of the previous year, lecturers have taken up their tools again, in order to welcome the first years to the campus, through drilling them in various disciplines. Classes are ongoing, as the first years settle into their routines. Infrastructure projects are also progressing at a steady pace, with the new administration block slowly taking

shape and promising to be an enviable structure within Zomba. The new lecture theatres at the Economics department are also complete and only awaiting a launch date.

This issue features activities that UNIMA staff and students have participated in for the past few months. After unexpected shocks like the Covid-19 pandemic and expected ones like the delinking exercise, the resilience and strength of UNIMA continues to show through the research activities and collaborations, successful and innovative projects highlighted in this issue.

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Students proud to be enrolled at the best university in the land

UNIMA ranked among top universities globally

The Center for World University Rankings (CWUR), the largest publisher of academic rankings of global universities has ranked the University of Malawi (UNIMA) number one in Malawi. The ranker has also placed UNIMA on position 1396 globally. University rankings enhance the reputation of institutions, and are often considered by potential students. They are also considered to reflect the quality of graduates that emanate from the institution.

According to the 2022-23 Edition of Global 20,000 list by the CWUR published on <https://cwur.org/2022-23.php>, the ranking exercise considered the first 19,788 institutions. The report says institutions placed at the top made the global list in which UNIMA emerged in the top 6.8% out of the first 20,000 leading universities across the globe.

The Vice Chancellor of the University of Malawi, Professor Samson Sajidu,

expressed excitement upon hearing the news. “These noteworthy rankings are a testament to the fact that our staff and students are committed to academic excellence and are working very hard to maintain quality education and research,” he said. He noted that the institution had undertaken various projects that have raised its profile globally. “There have been some developmental projects that have facilitated the institution to greater heights,” the Vice Chancellor pointed out. “Strategically, we aim to maintain our leading role as the best and mother university in Malawi and improve our position in Africa. Our academic delivery is successfully done as both face-to-face and online. We are also increasing our internationalization efforts to attract foreign students at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and researchers and academics to constitute up to 10% of our students and staff populations.”

The CWUR considered a number of factors in coming up with the ranking. According to the report, these include “quality of education; alumni employment for those holding top executive positions at the world’s largest companies; quality of faculty based on the number of faculty members who have won major academic distinctions and research performance which includes research output measured by the total number of research articles, high-quality publications measured by the number of research articles appearing in top-tier journals, influence measured by the number of research articles appearing in highly-influential journals and citations measured by the number of highly-cited research articles.”

Apart from the University of Malawi, the country has five other public universities, and a number of private higher education institutions.



Professor Samson Sajidu, Vice Chancellor of the University of Malawi

Prof. Sajidu appointed as Vice Chancellor

The University of Malawi has new leadership in the person of Professor Samson Mkali Idruss Sajidu who was, in March 2022, appointed to helm the institution. His appointment follows the interviews that took place on 5th January 2022.

Professor Sajidu becomes the 10th Chancellor of the University, but the first in that position since the institution became a fully-fledged university, following the delinking process. Professor Sajidu's appointment is as a welcome development for an institution which is treading new ground, in a climate that is very different from the one in previous years. With his appointment, all stakeholders of the University of Malawi are optimistic that the running of the institution will take a turn for the better. The appointment of the Vice Chancellor is the first step towards filling the key management positions in the university.

In the speech which he delivered during the 13th April 2022 graduation ceremony, which many took to be his inaugural

speech, the new Vice Chancellor confirmed his commitment to uphold the ideals and beliefs of the University, the Council, the Senate and the entire University community to achieve the excellence that has long been associated with the institution.

Professor Sajidu has an impressive portfolio of teaching, research and leadership. He has served as Vice Principal, as well as Acting Principal, of Chancellor College. He has also led the Faculty of Science as Dean, and has also been Head of the Chemistry Department. He holds an MPhil in Chemistry (2001) from University of Cambridge, and was awarded a PhD in Chemistry (2008) from the University of Malawi and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences.

The new Vice Chancellor is a Fellow of the Cambridge Commonwealth Society and in 2010 he received the AU-TWAS Young Scientist National award for Malawi. Professor Sajidu serves as a member of Malawi Energy Regulatory Authority (MERA) sub-committee on customer and consumer forum. He is currently serving

as a co-opted senate member of Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST). He has also served on the Board of Council for National Herbarium and Botanical Gardens of Malawi. He is an invited reviewer of articles in a number of international peer reviewed journals.

Professor Sajidu is a seasoned academic, specializing in water chemistry. In this field, he has conducted research in a number of areas, including the identification of water fluoridation areas in Malawi, use of locally sourced materials such as gypsum, bauxite and clays in water defluoridation, use of *Moringa oleifera*, *Moringa stenopetala* and clays in heavy metal detoxification in water.

Professor Sajidu has authored numerous internationally refereed journal articles. He has also presented a number of papers at international conferences, and is a renowned consultant within the country. He was also the editor of the *Malawi Journal of Science and Technology*, and is one of the founding editors of the *UNIMA Bulletin*.

UNIMA signs MoU with Central High International Schools

For some time now, the University of Malawi has been in collaboration with Central High International Schools (CHIS) on an informal and irregular basis. Members of staff have been going to do career talks at CHIS and UNIMA students in the FPA department have been going to collaborate with CHIS in teaching various forms of art. On 9th May 2022, the two institutions signed a Memorandum of Understanding to mark the beginning of a formal collaboration.

The MoU is tackling three main areas. Firstly, CHIS and UNIMA students shall be paying each other visits, collaborating in Fine Art, Music and other forms of art. The second area is student internships, whereby students pursuing the education career will be offered internship opportunities. The last area is career guidance, where UNIMA members of staff will be going to CHIS to inspire and motivate the students.

Speaking on behalf of the university, the Vice Chancellor Professor Samson Sajidu expressed his excitement to be in such an agreement with CHIS. "One of our strategic objectives as we train our

students here is that they should enhance their skills and employability by going to the industry. With this collaboration, our students will be able to go and learn as well as gain experience from CHIS and therefore be competitive on the market," he said. Sajidu also requested CHIS to regularly send feedback on the interns' performance in order to create room for improvement.

CHIS Principal Dr. Nishant Mishra stated that currently more than 20 students from different departments in the Faculty of Humanities have already started the internship. Mishra added that their institution will not stop at offering internships but will go further to offer employment to interns that do extremely well. The school will also be giving the interns monthly stipends to cater for transport and upkeep.



Signing of the MoU underway

Increasing UNIMA's Research Capacity

In a bid to capacitate the research portfolio of the University of Malawi, the office of the Dean of Research floated a call for suitably qualified upcoming researchers to apply for research grants from the University of Malawi Research Fund (UNIMAReF). This call was on 26th April, 2022 through the University's official emailing channel.

Dean of Research, Associate Professor Mangani Katundu describes this Small Grant Scheme as part of the University of Malawi's Research Capacity Building Programme. "The aim is to promote a research culture among academic members of staff within UNIMA," he said. "The grant targets upcoming researchers.

"We trust that the grant recipients will increase their ability to apply for bigger grants externally. We have seen that the training sessions we conducted for members of staff in collaboration with

SARIMA, University of Witwatersrand and University of Pretoria are bearing fruits. A number of participants have won international grants courtesy of the knowledge and skills they honed during such initiatives," Katundu explained.

The call indicates that under the recent MoU between UNICEF and the University of Malawi (UNIMA), the successful researchers, especially those conducting research in focal areas of the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022–2025, will access additional technical support. Unlike the first round, which earmarked MK1,500,000 for the grants, this time the amount has been increased to K5 million.

"This is in response to the comments we got from the first round as well as to allow for more extensive research by teams", Katundu said. He pointed out that the response for the second call was very good, saying the number of applicants received is three times more than the numbers in

the first call which meant that there is competition and a wider pool from which to select winning proposals.

The inaugural award ceremony of research grants to successful members of staff took place on 13th January, 2022 in the Little Theatre. According to the Dean, the progress of these research projects has been impressive. "It is good to note that those who received the grants have been trained and are putting into practice what they have learnt so far in their research. We will be having a progress meeting in early June, 2022, to look at developments and preliminary results from grant recipients. Some of the projects that we funded are at manuscript drafting level," he enlightened.

The awardees for the debut research grants included Dr. Gowokani Chirwa, Mrs. Samantha Soyoyo Mosiwa, Dr. Dorothy Tembo and Dr. Gift Kayira.



Smiling graduands in the Great Hall

Graduates encouraged to embrace Malawi 2063 Vision

The Vice Chancellor of the University of Malawi, Professor Samson Sajidu, has advised fresh graduates from UNIMA and its sister universities (MUBAS & KUHES) to use their qualifications and training to change the nation for the better. The VC was speaking in the Great Hall on 13th April, 2022, when he presided over the first graduation ceremony of the university this year. This also happened to be the second graduation ceremony since UNIMA attained the status of a stand-alone university.

According to Sajidu, UNIMA significantly contributes to the attainment and realization of the Malawi 2063 agenda,

hence the need for the new graduates to be part of the equation and to consider themselves critical players in this vision. "Lecturers as well as your family and friends have done their part in shaping your minds. Now we expect you to use the qualifications and training you have attained to contribute towards changing this into a better world. This country needs highly qualified human capital in order to achieve the Malawi 2063 vision," he advised.

The Chairperson of Council for the University of Malawi, Mr. George Partridge, concurred with the VC by encouraging the candidates to not be satisfied with the

awards they have received, but rather use them as stepping stones to gain even higher qualifications from UNIMA or elsewhere. He also encouraged them to be prepared for challenges that include unemployment and use the knowledge gained at their universities to create employment for themselves as well as others.

A total of 636 males and 804 females, making a grand total of 1441 candidates, were awarded certificates, diplomas and degrees. Due to the large number of candidates, there were two graduation ceremonies: one held in the morning from 7:00 am and the other from 13:00 hrs.

First cohort of students arrives on campus

In its bid to offer education to as many people in the country as possible, the University of Malawi has in the year 2022 arranged to admit first year students in two cohorts. The first cohort arrived on campus in April 2022, and will be the only year on campus until August 2022. The second cohort of first year students will arrive in August together with the continuing students.

So far, the first-year students have settled on campus. This arrangement has brought a number of advantages to the students, starting with the fact that many of them are housed in University accommodation. Additionally, the students have easier access to library resources, including computers and reading material, which would otherwise be shared with other students. After just a few weeks at UNIMA, most of the first year students have now begun to utilize facilities such as the sports complex, the gymnasium, the ICT laboratories and the clinic.

Two students in the Bachelor of Education (Social Studies) programme, Clara Ngwira and Vera Sanga, expressed joy at joining the university. "We are both staying in University accommodation, and we have had the chance to familiarize ourselves with the campus," they said. Although they can feel the



First year students explore banking options during orientation

absence of the continuing students, they know that they will meet their colleagues in their second year.

The UNIMA administration and the student leadership has helped them acclimatize to university life. "The Students Representative Council has provided some degree of guidance, and there are some clubs that are active on campus, even though they are predominantly religious in nature," one of the students observed. During their first week, the students went through orientation, during which they were introduced to the student online portal and the various programmes on campus. Banking institutions in Zomba also took advantage of the orientation period to introduce their services to the students. Some of the students who are new to Zomba have also taken the opportunity to get to know the iconic university city where they will be spending a few of their years.

UNIMA Special Needs Section receives Orbit Readers



The Vice Chancellor receives the devices on behalf of the University

On 25th April, 2022, the University of Malawi Special Needs Section received a donation of 20 assistive devices for visually impaired students. The devices, which are called Orbit Readers, have been donated by the Kilimanjaro Blind

Trust from Kenya, which is in a partnership with the Malawi Union for the Blind.

Speaking during the symbolic presentation of the gadgets, the Vice Chancellor, Professor Samson Sajidu, expressed excitement over the donation. According to Sajidu, UNIMA is the most inclusive institution of higher education with approximately 90 special needs students enrolled. The University supports the students in a number of ways such as making special accommodation arrangements and providing subsidized tuition. He noted that such good gestures from well-wishers and Non-Governmental Organisations help the institution in providing accessible equipment and facilities for the students with special needs.

The Special Needs Department has been privileged to be trained on use and maintenance of the assisting devices. Among other things the Orbit Reader is

cost effective in the sense that it does not require expensive Braille papers or require constant maintenance as compared to the fragile Braille machine. The reader is also very handy and mobile, since it can use mobile apps that assist in interaction and communication among the users. Additionally, the assisting device does not need transcribers, has a calculator for Math based subjects, high storage capacity and can provide access to the Internet.

In his speech during the ceremony, the President of the Malawi Union of the Blind expressed his gratitude to the Kilimanjaro Blind Trust Africa for being a reliable partner that has been assisting the union with Braille machines and taking visually impaired personnel on board as the world is technologically advancing. He also pleaded with UNIMA staff and students to be responsible in the use of the devices.

School of Education graduates 60 students from short courses

The Dean of the School of Education, Dr. Ken Ndala, presided over the first ever UNIMA short course graduation ceremony on 18th March 2022 in the Great Hall. The Dean said this event is just a starting point of many more graduations of this kind as UNIMA will be offering many short course programmes.

“Now that UNIMA has been delinked and is expanding, the School of Education has additional departments,” he said. “We therefore have a lot of short courses that we want to start offering because we know there are a lot of people that will benefit from such courses. These courses have been introduced in order to address capacity gaps in the secondary education sector but we are including participants from other sectors”.

Ndala further attributed the success of the trainings to the Strengthening High Education Access Malawi Activity (SHEAMA) which is supporting the University in designing short course programmes, developing course modules, shortlisting of students and orientation of students. SHEAMA has also funded 43 students out of the 60 that graduated.

One of the graduates, Mr. Felix Kantande Nkhoma, expressed his excitement for taking part in the short course training, saying the training has added value and knowledge to his previous papers and work experience.

“I work as a project manager at Unity Center for Open, Online and Distant Learning. Before I enrolled for this course there were a lot of things my team and I used to do unknowingly when implementing projects. This programme has widened my knowledge and equipped me with new skills in project management. For example, I now know that for every successful project there is need to involve all stakeholders even minority groups.” he said.

60 students graduated with certificates in Principles and Practices of Education for Science Teachers, Project Planning and Management, Inclusive Education, Guidance and Counselling and Leadership and Management for Education Practitioners.



The Dean of the School of Education presents a certificate to one of the graduands



One of the classes in session

UNIMA in collaboration with SHEAMA on ODeL short courses

The University of Malawi in collaboration with Strengthening High Education Access in Malawi Activity (SHEAMA) is now offering Open Distance E-Learning short courses in several departments at the institution. SHEAMA, which aims at improving access to education to marginalized learners from various sectors of society, is a USAID Funded programme that is implemented by Arizona State University.

Speaking during an orientation programme for the ODeL students, the University Registrar, Mrs Mary Wasiri, said UNIMA is committed to work with SHEAMA in closing the gap in skills development as Malawi fights to achieve Vision 2063.

Considering that the online delivery mode of the programme, and that connectivity and data are challenges to most Malawians, Wasiri said UNIMA has a special arrangement with TNM whereby there is a zero rated data access for students and staff that register their TNM numbers with the university. Therefore these students will also be able to enjoy the privilege.

According to the Director of Scholarships and Grants at SHEAMA, Dr. Selina Mkweteza, the scholarships comprise tuition fees that are paid directly to the University and upkeep allowances to help the students with data subscription and travel expenses to and from ODeL centres where the students meet for discussions and to sit for examinations. She also added that, apart from these short certificate courses, SHEAMA funds students with face-to-face and ODeL diploma as well as degree programmes and encouraged those interested to apply for the courses.



Artists exhibit their pieces

FPA drills Malawian artists

There are a lot of skilled fine artists in Malawi, working with various media. However, the majority of them are not formally trained because there are a few institutions that provide art education. UNIMA's Fine and Performing Arts (FPA) department is one of the few trainers of artists but unfortunately it is not accessible to many.

To fill the gap in professional skill development and reach out to many artists who cannot be enrolled in the university through the normal public university selection mode, the FPA has partnered with the Music in Africa Foundation (MIAF) and the Goethe-Institut South Africa in implementing a project called "Strengthening the Cultural and Creative Industries in Malawi Project". This project is part of the Sound Connects Fund, implemented by MIAF and Goethe-Institut with funding from the ACP-EU Culture Programme and the Siemens Stiftung, a founding partner of the MIAF.

The Strengthening the Cultural and Creative Industries in Malawi Project is aimed at strengthening the cultural and creative industries by providing Malawian artists with skills in digital marketing and art entrepreneurship. One of the key activities for the implementation of the project is professional development training for artists. The FPA in this

regard conducted the Sula Professional Development Training Workshop from 2nd to the 6th of May 2022. A total of 68 skilled artists with no previous formal art training attended the workshop. The department engaged 8 expert art educators and 8 industry experts in the training.

According to the head of the department Dr. Catherine Makhumula-Mtimuni, the FPA has received a double cohort funding to train artists that do Band Leadership, Sound Engineering, Sculpture, Painting, Drawing, Theatre Acting, Directing, Scriptwriting, and Theatre for Development (TFD) but they have been motivated to develop a curriculum and continue offering these short courses, including some which have been left out like cinematography, in the future starting as early as next year.

"As a department, we do not want to stop here but want to do more. It is a good thing that this is an institution of higher learning with the necessary facilities and human resource. Even if there won't be any funding of this sort, we will still be offering these short courses to artists at a small fee," she said.

One of the trainees, Mr. Mwayi Wiseman Kadzandira from Blantyre, said he was happy to learn new skills and could not wait to go back and teach his colleagues.

"I am working with Youth Developers Collaboration," he said. "We have been doing TFD for about 3 years but did not have the capacity building on how TFD is done so that it is effective. After I noted this gap and saw the advertisement for Sula, I applied in order to be trained and widen my knowledge. I am now happy to admit that I have learnt a lot and I will share the knowledge with my colleagues so that we professionalize our performances. I also hope such trainings continue to take place so that more artists benefit."

The Sula Professional Development Training Workshop culminated into an exhibition at the FPA grounds from and a performance event in the Great Hall consisting of various musical and theatrical performances. The next cohort is expected to be trained in August, 2022. Apart from the trainings, the FPA has received funding to create a creative hub that will offer incubation and provide funding for artists to further their art through establishing companies. There shall also be the establishment of a professional sound lab in Zomba where musicians and film makers will be recording their material. Lastly, the project will result in the creation of a website, www.sula.mw, where people will be able to access all creative arts in Malawi.

Minister encourages MFD students to be drivers of mindset change

The Minister of Tourism, Wildlife and Culture, Dr. Michael Usi, has urged UNIMA Media for Development Final year students to go into the world and be specialists in development communication that will bring about change in the media industry and Malawi at large. Dr. Usi made the remarks as a guest of honour at the Media for Development Class of 2022 Symposium. The event was held on 18th March, 2022 in the Little Theatre.

According to Usi, the government needs Mass Communication specialists who can effectively impart knowledge to the masses on the implementation of the Malawi 2063 Agenda.

“One of the enablers of the Malawi 2063 vision is mindset change. We need experts to change people’s mindset about development. We need communication for development specialists to effectively disseminate information about government’s vision to the masses and use creativity to package advocacy and sensitization programmes,” he explained.

Mr Gift Muyayi, the chairman of the organising committee, said students organised the event in order to create a platform for the students to interact with prospective employers and sell themselves through academic and artistic presentations in preparation for the industry.

Also present at the event was Teresa Ndanga, the chairperson for Media Institute for Southern Africa Malawi Chapter. Ndanga encouraged students to creatively devise opportunities for themselves while waiting for jobs when they graduate.

“Nowadays employers always look for people with experience and sideline fresh graduates. With the skills acquired during their studies plus the help of the internet, they must be in a small group of maybe 5-10 students, create a small company and use their skills to do something with the digital platforms that are even cheaper and accessible to a good number of Malawians. This will give them the experience the employers need and potential employers are usually impressed with self-starters,” she said.



Dr Michael Usi, Minister of Tourism, Wildlife and Culture



Participants at the writing workshop

JH runs mentorship program

The production of publications is one of the main expectations from academia at any university. In an effort to improve the writing skills of academics on campus, the editorial board of the *Journal of Humanities* at the University of Malawi has organised a mentorship program.

One of the organisers of the program, Dr Asante Mtenje, pointed out that the main aim was to improve publishing output. “We were interested in seeing more publications from junior academics and early career scholars but realized that some of the young scholars might not be familiar with how the publishing process works and how to get their research published,” she said. “For this reason, the *JH* decided to introduce a mentorship program that would encourage early career scholars and postgraduate students to publish their research by pairing them up with senior colleagues in their field as mentors who would provide guidance and support to them.”

This programme has involved several activities, starting with a research and academic writing workshop covering various topics. This was followed by a presentation session by the mentees where they were given an opportunity to talk about their research and to get feedback from the mentors and editorial board. There are two other presentations that are scheduled for June and July 2022, where the mentees will present their work in progress before submitting their article to *JH*.

As this is the first time running the programme, the editorial board was only able to accept 10 mentees. For several months, the younger academics have been working with their mentors in the production of various papers, which are earmarked for a special issue of the journal. Once they are complete, the papers will be submitted to the journal and be subjected to the usual blind peer review.

Nigerian military students visit UNIMA

On Friday, 13th May, 2022, UNIMA hosted students and staff from the Armed Forces Command and Staff College in Nigeria. These students came to Malawi on a study tour as part of on-spot research in efforts and strategies being employed by Malawi to combat brain drain.

During the visit, the students attended a presentation made by Dr. Tiyesere Mercy Chikapa, a senior lecturer in the Political and Administrative Studies Department, entitled “How Brain Drain is threatening Africa’s Collective Security and Development”. Even though Dr. Chikapa’s presentation tackled both the negatives and positives of brain drain, emphasis was on the negative effects and what measures can be put in place to ensure that there is a controlled and regulated flow of skilled people to other continents so that Africa also benefits economically from the trained professionals that migrate to more developed continents.



Nigerian military students during the talk

On behalf of her colleagues, Lieutenant Commander V. B. Bisong expressed her sincere gratitude to UNIMA for the warm hospitality and the well-delivered presentation.

“For about 50 minutes we have listened to an insightful presentation,” she said. “I am happy to confess that the presentation has been informative and has given us more insight into brain drain as a challenge to Malawi and Africa as a whole. We are sure that the knowledge gained here today will be used to bring forth notable solutions on the impact and challenges of brain drain on the security and development of Africa at large.”

Towards the reconstruction of Ubuntu



Dr Kayange delivers his talk in the Little Theatre

As part of the Faculty of Humanities Seminar Series, on 18th May, 2022, Associate Professor Grivas Muchineripi Kayange presented a paper entitled “Critical Reconstruction of Ubuntu”. The talk was delivered in the Little Theatre at the University of Malawi.

Ubuntu is a concept that is famous within the African continent, having been popularized by figures such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and often expressed in the aphorism “I am

because you are”. It denotes humanity or humanness. In his talk, Kayange expressed his dissatisfaction with the Ubuntu concept in its current state, noting that there is too much emphasis on the communitarian or other-regarding dimension of the theory. He further noted that the concept seems to exist merely at the ideal or academic level, and is not reflected in some of the vices that plague the continent, such as corruption, xenophobia, nepotism and tribalism.

“We need to note that, even within African

communities, people value self-existence,” he said. “For instance, people in the villages value self-control because they value their selves, their individual lives.” For this reason, it is a misrepresentation to suppose that all Africans are entirely communitarian. Instead, Kayange suggests, we must recognize that the community comprises people who have self-regarding virtues as well as other-regarding virtues.

Kayange adds that we must do away with the supposition that reason is a Western thing. Even within traditional African societies, people deliberate before they make decisions. Individual rational agency is the basis for deliberation and consensus within communities.

The talk was physically attended by various people from the UNIMA campus community and beyond, but also included an audience that attended through Zoom. Dr Kayange is an Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy, where he teaches and researches on various subjects, including African philosophy.



Part of the project research team (L-R): Dr Evance Mwachunga, Dr Matthews Lane, Prof. Jenipher Robinson, Ms Lisa Njanji

‘Making Africa Urban’ project researchers visit UNIMA

The Geography and Earth Sciences department is hosting researchers involved in the “Making Africa Urban: The transcalar politics of large-scale urban development” project which is investigating how the future of African cities is being shaped by transnational processes based on sovereign, developmental and private investment in large-scale urban developments in Accra (Ghana), Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) and Lilongwe (Malawi). The project is a collaboration involving Prof Jennifer Robinson (UCL Geography), Prof Phil Harrison (University of the Witwatersrand), Prof George Owusu (University of Ghana, Legon) and Dr Evance Mwachunga (University of Malawi). It will run up to 2025.

The researchers who have visited the University of Malawi are Prof Jennifer Robinson and Dr Matthews Lane. They are engaged in a series of research visits to Malawi under the project. On 6th May 2022, the two researchers participated in MSc and PhD proposal presentations in the Dept of Geography and Earth Sciences. On Monday 9th May the two scholars delivered an interactive seminar entitled “Global urban studies: Critique and methods in comparative urbanism” to postgraduate students as well as academic staff interested in urban research.

According to Dr Mwachunga, the project has already sponsored one Malawian to study for his PhD at University College London. The project has also provided funding amounting to 42,000 Euros to cover tuition, stipend and research for three students to pursue Masters degrees related to large scale developments in Lilongwe city.

GES Dept organises field trips for short course students

Since January 2022, the Geography and Earth Sciences department has been running short courses on map reading and interpretation, geographical information systems and remote sensing, geosciences data application, environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental impact assessment, and artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM). The courses are supported by the Strengthening Higher Education Access in Malawi Activity (SHEAMA) led by Arizona State University (USA).

On 2nd and 3rd May 2022, to enhance practical skills in artisanal and small-scale mining to youths in Malawi, the Department of Geography and Earth Sciences carried out field trips to limestone and gold mining sites in Blantyre, Ntcheu, Mwanza and Balaka. These particular trips included those who enrolled for the short course on small scale mining that is offered in the department. The field trips were meant to complement course work and enhance skills in the areas of Mineral Identification, Mineral Hardness Testing, Structure identification and Safety, Health and Environmental issues in small scale mining in Malawi.

One of the students, Tiyanjane Mkwaila, observed that she had learnt a lot from the trip. “We had only been hearing about gold mining in Malawi, but we had not known how it happens,” she said. During the trip, the students also appreciated how the gold is weighed and sold. At some of the villages, for example, individual miners can get up to 50,000 from gold found in the river. The students also appreciated matters pertaining to the health risks encountered by the miners, as well as the impact of mining on the environment.



Students witness the alluvial gold mining process

CSR dates parliamentary committee

Although research is major function of the University of Malawi, some of the output of this research is rarely appreciated by members of the public. That is why, from time to time, the institution makes deliberate efforts to showcase the results of research to the public.

One of such events occurred recently when the institution's Centre for Social Research (CSR) engaged the Social Welfare Parliamentary Committee (PCSW) of the National Assembly on "Understanding the Experiences of Pregnant and Parenting Adolescents". This engagement is one of the activities emanating from a mixed methods study implemented by CSR and a Kenyan based African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) in 2021. The study focused on Blantyre District and aimed to understand how early and unintended pregnancy culminates in the social exclusion of adolescent mothers.

During the results dissemination workshop at Sunbird Capital Hotel in Lilongwe on 23 March, 2022, Deputy Minister of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, Agnes Nkusa Nkhoma, who was the Guest of Honour, said her ministry has embarked on an initiative to introduce programs that will help girls to go back to school after delivery.

Nkhoma, who agreed with the findings of the study, said the line ministry was

overwhelmed with the increase in the number of school drop-outs from teenage pregnancies in the country.

"Early childbearing starts a cycle of social exclusion that often begins with the girls' expulsion or voluntary withdrawal from school with dire socio-economic consequences. Adolescent mothers' children also face marginalization because of their parents' limited resources to care for them," she said.

Speaking at the same function, the Acting Director for CSR, Dr Chrissie Thakwalakwa, said the purpose of the workshop was to share with the parliamentary committee the findings of the study on the lived experiences of pregnant and parenting adolescents. "We have engaged members of parliament as a key partner in the dissemination of information on sexual reproductive health to the communities in their areas in order to create an environment that is friendly for everyone," she said. She added that if the country was to achieve Sustainable Development Goal Number 5 on Gender Equality, Government and other stakeholders need to include adolescence in all spheres of development and allow re-entry into schools so that girls can complete their education.

The Regional Director of APHRC, Ms Caroline Kabilu, disclosed that her



Deputy Minister of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, Agnes Nkusa Nkhoma

organization chose to partner with the University of Malawi through CSR because Malawi is one of the countries with a high rate of teenage pregnancies. "We have set aside a number of programs, such as providing cash to adolescent girls, as one way of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals on education", she said.

According to the study findings, close to one in three adolescent girls in Malawi begin childbearing before their 19th birthday. The findings further established that early childbearing has significant negative implications for girls' health and wellbeing. The study explored interventions that adolescent mothers could use to secure their education and economic empowerment.

Preparing students for the media industry

UNIMA students pursuing media related programmes were privileged to have a learning session with the Director of Broadcasting at Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA), Mr. Fegus Lipenga, who made a presentation on issues to do with media laws and regulations in Chikowi Lecture Theatre 2 on 14th March, 2022.

Mr. Lipenga's presentation was centered on the various roles that MACRA plays in enforcing media laws, regulating media content and challenges that hinder the activities of the board. The presentation also tackled the obligations of every broadcaster in Malawi.

According to Lipenga, who is a UNIMA alumnus, coming to UNIMA meant coming back home to share information on what MACRA does in the regulation of the ICT sector in Malawi, particularly the broadcasting industry, and also using the experience he has in the regulation of broadcasting to prepare the students for the industry. "These students are about to go into the industry where they will be employed in media houses and some will start their own companies. Therefore they should know that broadcasting is very sensitive hence the need to be well informed of what is expected from a broadcaster and what content to disseminate to specific audiences," he explained.

Speaking on behalf of students, the BACCS Society president, Mr. Luke Mataka, expressed how excited the students were to be given information regarding issues surrounding broadcasting in Malawi. "As students, we just read from books and papers to pass exams and hear people doing different things about the media, some of which are not even true. Having this lecture was a great pleasure because we have gotten the truth of what is on the ground, specifically what MACRA is doing in as far as regulating broadcasting is concerned. We have also gotten answers to numerous questions that we had regarding the media," he explained.

Mjaya publishes book on literacy studies

At UNIMA we continue to celebrate the publication of books as one of the best outputs of research carried out by individuals. The publication of a book is often considered the pinnacle of the publication journey by most academics, hence the reason to celebrate such publications when they do appear. One of the most recent publications from a UNIMA scholar is *Literacies, Power and Identities in Figured Worlds in Malawi*, written by Dr Ahmmardouh Mjaya of the African Languages and Linguistics Department. The book has been published by Bloomsbury Press as part of its Adult Learning, Literacy and Social Change Series.

This book is the product of an ethnographic study of the National Adult Literacy Programme (NALP), which was part of Mjaya's PhD project at the University of East Anglia. During his studies, he undertook fieldwork, staying with the targetted communities for over 10 months. Among other findings, Mjaya discovered that there are often differences between classroom literacy practices and they way rural communities use literacy in their everyday lives.

"I did not only focus on literacy from a classroom perspectives, but rather how communities regard literacy. Some people attend adult literacy classes just



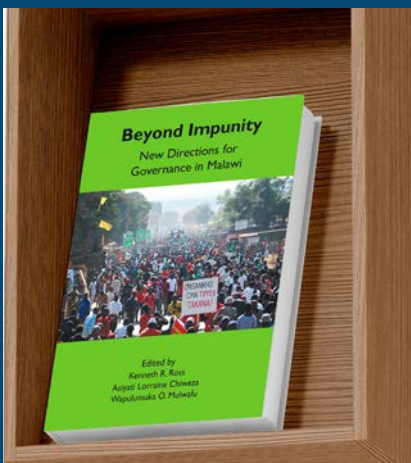
The proud author displays his book

to know how to write their names, some just to be able to read the bible. But they sometimes find that the classes do not meet their expectations," he said.

Mjaya employed various theories in the study, including the theory of Literacy as a social practice, self and identity, and figured worlds, as a way of understanding how literacy is related other issues such as identity and power. After completing his studies, Mjaya received an offer of a contract from Bloomsbury Press to publish his book.

The book is of interest to academics, policymakers, other researchers interested in language, and may be ordered from the Bloomsbury Press website. Meanwhile, the author has also donated copies to the UNIMA library and the Centre for Language Studies library.

New book on governance in Malawi



The new book, featuring essays on governance in Malawi

The year 2022 has finally seen the publication of *Beyond Impunity: New Directions for Governance in Malawi*, an edited publication that contains essays tackling various issues to do with political governance in Malawi. The book has been edited by Professor Kenneth Ross, Professor Wapulumuka Mulwafu, and

Dr Asiyati Chiweza. It has been published by UCT Press and by Mzuni Press.

One of the editors, Dr Chiweza, points out that the book was inspired by the unique events of 2019-2020 in Malawi. "For the first time in the history of sub-Saharan Africa, a flawed Presidential election was invalidated by five Constitutional Court Judges. The opposition then won the re-run poll. This process exposed a wide range of governance issues that called for examination and analysis," she observed. The book is intended for a wide variety of audiences in Malawi, including researchers, policymakers, think tanks working on governance and development, as well as university students studying democratization, governance, public administration and African politics, among other topics.

The book features chapters authored by many University of Malawi academics. Although these are predominantly from the field of Political and Administrative Studies, it also features familiar faces from

fields such as Economics, Law, History and Theology. The editors point out that the response to the call for chapter contributions was positive, and they had to leave out some of the submissions after a rigorous review process.

"The authors drafted their chapters at a very challenging time in mid-2020 when Malawi was facing high political tension, and at the same time having to deal with the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic," Chiweza said

So far, the book has been publicised through a series of international webinars supported by the Scotland-Malawi Partnership. Currently, the book can be downloaded freely from the UCT Press website. However, one can also order a print-on-demand copy. The book is also available at African Books Collective, Kachere Bookshop in Zomba and the Society of Malawi in Blantyre. There are plans to present some copies of the book free-of-charge to some institutions in the country.

UNIMA librarians receive award

The University of Malawi library has been participating in the USA-based NGO Africa Library Project since 2016. Since then, various communities in all three regions of the country have benefited from the project, thanks mainly to the work of two librarians, Jessy Mphunda and Nancy Mpekansambo, whose efforts have been recognized through their selection as recipients of the 2022 Compassion in Action Award by the African Library Project.

The African Library project was started with the aim of creating small and sustainable libraries in rural Africa. As part of their strategy, they support small libraries in various communities with not more than 2000 books per community. As librarians at the University of Malawi library, Mphunda and Mpekansambo have been instrumental in publicising the project and helping various people the across the country to apply for support.

Upon receiving the award, both librarians expressed joy and feelings of appreciation. Mphunda observed that the award was a huge motivator, especially when she considered all the time she had put into it. She also felt that it would have a positive impact on the way the profession of a librarian is regarded. "The award could serve as an eye opener to other librarians to realize that they can go the extra mile, and have an impact on communities outside their workstation," she said.



Setting the standard in librarianship: Mpekansambo and Mphunda

On her part, Mpekansambo similarly expressed thanks to the University of Malawi community for teamwork shown in distributing the application forms to various rural communities, transporting books to those communities, and helping to fund training sessions for teacher librarians. She observed that it is always gratifying to see the happiness on people's faces when they receive the books: "Many people don't believe us when we tell them they will get the books. It can take several months for the books to arrive, and when they finally do, the excitement of the recipients is satisfying enough," she said.

The librarians expressed thanks to UNIMA management for assisting in transporting books from the port of entry to the UNIMA library, from where they are sorted according to the different schools or communities that apply.



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UNIMA sportsmen

UMSSA holds sports bonanza

The Public Universities Staff Sports Association (PUSSAM) plans to hold intervarsity games from 27th to 29th May at the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR). As a way preparing for these games, the University of Malawi Staff Sports Association (UMSSA) organized a sports bonanza on 7th May, 2022, where its members of staff engaged in some sporting codes, ahead of the LUANAR event. Other participants at the bonanza included sportsmen and women from the Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS) and the Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (KUHES). Games held included football, volleyball, pool, netball and darts.

The University of Malawi Staff Sports Association (UMSSA) has always played the crucial role of encouraging members of staff at the university to engage in sporting activities, as a way of burning off fats and keeping fit. According to UMSSA President, Martin Likongwe, the university administration has been very helpful in helping the association to run their sporting activities. “The university normally helps us with transport and other costs when we have to travel to other institutions to play games,” he said. The university has also paid for UMSSA to join PUSSAM. However, Likongwe observed that the association still struggles with procuring sports equipment. UMSSA currently has over 100 members. Currently, each member of UMSSA pays a minimal subscription fee, which is used to purchase various items, such as sports kits.

Apart from the games to be held at LUANAR at the end of May, Likongwe also said UMSSA is planning to lobby for the university to revert to holding Thursdays as sports days, when classes would end earlier so that staff and students could engage in various sporting activities. There are also plans to organise hiking sessions up Zomba mountain. The association is also looking forward to the resumption of Southern African Universities Staff Sports Association (SAUSSA) games, which are likely to be held in December, 2022. The games had been halted in the past few years due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Staff respond positively to calls for aerobics

UMSSA has in 2022 started holding aerobics sessions at the University of Malawi Chirunga campus. These are held twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays, from 4.00pm to 5.30pm. The aerobics sessions are open to all members of staff, regardless of whether they are paid up members of UMSSA or not.

According to UMSSA General Secretary Esther Chirwa, the aerobics have received an overwhelming response. “As UMSSA we are impressed with the turn up for the aerobics and encourage more staff to join us,” she said. Due to the positive response that they received from staff, UMSSA decided to move from having the aerobics on one day to two days in a week.

The aerobics sessions were organised upon realizing that there are people who desire to be active, after sitting at their desks for long periods of time. People do not have to be sports professionals to participate. Currently, UMSSA members with better experience in aerobics train their colleagues but the association is liaising with the Sports Officer to bring into the picture a professional trainer. These sessions are usually held at the Sports Complex netball court, but there are plans to move it to the gym, to ensure that there is some privacy and fewer distractions. The only problem is that the gym is currently being used as a classroom by the university.



Ladies participating in aerobics

UMSSA volleyball team maintains intervarsity championship



Swimming in success: a display of UNIMA's sporting prowess

The University of Malawi Staff Sports Association (UMSSA) volleyball team has retained the Volleyball Trophy after emerging champions in the second Intersvarsity games that took place at the

Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Bunda Campus, from 28th to 29th May 2022.

On the other hand, the netball team maintained the second position after KUHES and walked away with K100,000 from the Guest of Honor, the LUANAR Vice Chancellor Professor Emmanuel Kaunda, at the event. A number of players have also earned both silver and gold medals after doing extremely well in individual games and activities like chess and athletics.

According to UMSSA President, Mr. Martin Likongwe, UMSSA has a bright future as he is seeing improvements in different aspects regarding members' commitment to training and participation. For instance, Likongwe pointed out that UMSSA has not had participants in certain disciplines in the past tournaments but this time around had participants for all activities.

Likongwe also pointed out challenges that might have affected UMSSA's performance at the tournament: "Time was one issue that was a challenge. All the games were played in a single day which meant players had to play three or more games consecutively. For individual games, our competitors had so many participants as compared to us. We failed because only a few of us registered. I therefore encourage our members to register for the next games because these individual games bring more medals. Also, our competitors in games like darts participate in regional leagues and perfect their skills but there is no functional league here in the eastern region," he explained.

UMSSA was competing with staff from LUANAR, MZUNI, KUHES, MUST and MUBAS in team sporting activities like football, netball, volleyball, darts and pool as well as individual games like chess, *bawo*, draft, athletics and *nguli*.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



There are many events that have occurred since last year. While we celebrate the positive developments, we also mourn for the losses that the institution has suffered.

On the positive side, we wish to acknowledge and celebrate the Appointment of Professor Blessings Chinsinga of the Department of Political and Administrative Studies as Minister of Local Government.

We similarly congratulate Mrs Stella Ndau of the Language and Communications Studies Department upon her reappointment as Malawi's High Commissioner to South Africa.

We also celebrate the various promotions that have been effected in the University of Malawi recently. These significantly include the promotion of Dr Syned Mthatiwa and Dr Levison Chiwaula to the rank of professor.

The institution and its staff have also suffered some tragic losses. As a way of paying our last respects, as well as joining colleagues in mourning, we wish to acknowledge these events.

In January this year, a number of staff members lost their loved ones. They include Mr Alex Ndafulwa of the Maintenance Section whose father passed in that month; and Professor Blessings Chinsinga, who also lost his father. We pray for comfort for the bereaved families.

In March this year, Dr Wisdom Changadeya and Mrs Allepher Mwanema mourned the passing of their father. In the same month, death was announced of the spouse of Mr Dickson Mlelemba of the Chemistry Department. The College Librarian, Mr Brian Sitima-Ndau, also lost his mother in the same month. Mr Lawrence Mpekansambo of the Philosophy Department also lost his mother in March. Mrs Ziona Wataya Mwila of the Economics Department also lost her father. May the souls of all the departed loved ones rest in peace.

At the beginning of April this year, the UNIMA community received the sad news of the passing of the mother to Dr Damazio Mfuno-Mwanjakwa of the English Department. Mr Adam Nthala, one of the institution's drivers, lost his father

during the same period. Mr Stanley Chakandikana of the Language and Communication Studies Department lost his father in April this year. The mother of Mrs Frida Kadzandira of the Sociology Department, also passed away in Lilongwe in the same month.

At the end of May, the college received news of the passing of the spouse of Mr Matthews Beleko, of the ICT Section. Mrs Chisanthi, the Estates Development Officer at UNIMA, also lost her sister at the end of May. At the close of the same month, Dr. Nelson Dzupire, of the Mathematics department also lost his stepfather.

The university joins all these families in mourning the passing of their loved ones.

The student fraternity has not been spared. In April, 2022, the university mourned the passing of Cashion Chibwana, a postgraduate student registered for the Master of Arts in Pure Linguistics programme. May the Lord bring comfort to the bereaved family.