

# UNIMA Bulletin



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## And just like that, we are in another year

For most of us, 2023 has crept in in a rather subtle fashion, due to the fact that the university did not fully shut down as we often expect it to at the end of the year. Since the semester was still ongoing – despite the few days of Christmas and New Year break – a lot of people, both students and lecturers, were still working. In their usual sacrificial spirit, staff at the university worked hard to ensure that operations at the institution continued as usual. This amazing dedication to duty is one of the reasons UNIMA staff stand out, ensuring that the learning process proceeds unhampered. The transition has been so smooth, it is almost as if the year-end moment never happened.

Nevertheless, there are a few events that stand out as significant, for those that would insist on marking the end of 2022. One of these is the recent round of promotions that have been approved at UNIMA. If we made noise about having a superior calibre of academics at the institution, then our jubilation should be even more deafening now. Those who work outside academic institutions fail to appreciate

that, for an academic, a promotion is not just an indication of ascending the ranks at a specific university, but rather something that marks the creation of a foothold within the global academic community. When we congratulate those who have been promoted, therefore, we are acknowledging their rise within this global research community, not just at UNIMA alone.

We have also had what we might call a plethora of publications at UNIMA. Academics at UNIMA publish so much in any given year, they make it look easy. Which it definitely is not. The aforementioned promotions are one indicator of the volume of publications that has been produced. These include single author publications and well as joint, interdisciplinary papers, all of which are disseminated through renowned local and international journals. The cherry on the cake comes in the form of book publications, some of which we mention in the current bulletin, indicative of the academic mettle of UNIMA scholars.

Another applaud-worthy event in recent times is the introduction of the Vice Chancellor's Scholarships and Awards, a way of showing appreciation and providing support to students who perform exceptionally well. This was long overdue. Like the Deans' List, this should serve as a motivating factor for students to work hard.

We are also overwhelmed with the amount of successes UNIMA students keep registering in various fora, nationally and internationally.

All this goes to show that, even when it is business as usual at UNIMA, it means we are calmly and quietly producing excellence in all our sections.

### EDITORIAL TEAM:

Prof. Ken Lipenga Jr  
(Chief Editor)  
Mr Alfred Banda  
Mr Gervasio Manyungwa  
Mr James Ngwenya  
Mr Felix Mwalemba





*Executive Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences showcasing UNIMA's programmes*

## RUFORUM yields stronger higher education links

From 12th to 16th December 2022, a delegation from the University of Malawi travelled to the University of Zimbabwe in Harare, where they attended the 18th RUFORUM Annual General Meeting.

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) is a member-based consortium of 147 Universities in 38 countries in Africa. Established in 2004 by Vice Chancellors of the then ten member Universities in Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda and Zimbabwe, RUFORUM's purpose is to transform the mode of leadership, teaching, training, research and outreach in African Universities Faculties/Colleges of Agriculture and related sciences.

At the AGM, the various member universities were supposed to display items and technologies that reflect the core activities and offerings in their institutions. Following this requirement, UNIMA mounted poster presentations, artworks, products from fashion students and brochures and the UNIMA prospectus. These displays attracted a lot

of attention from staff and students from other universities.

The delegation from UNIMA included the Vice Chancellor, Deans of various Schools, as well as representatives from departments. Commenting on their participation at the event, the Executive Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Dr. Emmanuel Ngwira, observed that the

trip had been very beneficial in terms of increasing UNIMA's visibility within the region.

The meeting also provided an opportunity for networking, which is tied to UNIMA's internationalisation drive. Members who travelled attended various presentations and panel discussions in their fields of interest.



*Prof. Samson Sajidu, VC of UNIMA, engaging with other delegates at the meeting*





*UNIMA and MZUMBE representatives discuss areas of collaboration*

## UNIMA signs MOU with Tanzanian University

The University of Malawi has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Mzumbe University of Tanzania which will see the two universities collaborating in various areas. The agreement was signed when a delegation from Mzumbe University visited UNIMA from 20th to 21st February, 2023.

Welcoming the delegation to UNIMA campus, the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Samson Sajidu, emphasized that the partnership directly feeds into the university's plans for internationalisation and noted that this will help in exposing UNIMA in the region.

"Nowadays, universities are not supposed to be working in silos. It is required that we should be global. For UNIMA, within our strategic plan we have prioritised internationalisation. Through this collaboration, we will benefit through collaborative research, student and staff exchange, and joint degree programmes," said Sajidu.

Sajidu observed that it will be easy to operationalise this collaboration immediately as almost all enabling instruments are already in place.

Principal for Mzumbe University's Mbeya Campus College, Prof. Henry Mollel, said the partnership will help their university in boosting its regional reach.

"Working alone, we may not be able to explore much of the potential we have in the region. We believe if we reignite the relationship we already had with the University of Malawi, we will create synergy that will give us an opportunity to do a lot of things such as exposing our students to the regional context in terms of cultural exchange and experiences," said Mollel.

Mzumbe University's Director of Internationalisation and Communication, Lucy Massoi, said the partnership between the two universities will help them tap into various opportunities available in the African region.

"There are some intra-Africa grant opportunities which require universities to partner and apply as a consortium. This partnership will therefore help us in exploring such opportunities. Working together will also help us, as a region, in addressing some issues that are common in our countries," said Massoi.

Mzumbe University is comprised of three campuses based at Dar es Salaam, Dodoma and Mbeya. The entourage that visited UNIMA was from the university's Mbeya campus.

UNIMA has MOUs with several institutions within the region.



*The Mzumbe team on a tour of UNIMA's library*

## UNIMA strengthens ties with Bath Spa University



*UNIMA staff touring the facilities at Bath Spa*

The University of Malawi is committed to strengthening ties with other universities, as a way of improving its internationalization objective. One of the most recent efforts in this direction was a trip that staff from UNIMA undertook to Bath Spa University in the United Kingdom, from 21st January to 5th February, 2023.

The exchange visit fell under a Erasmus Staff Mobility Programme which aims to bring together colleagues

from the two universities to learn from each other and also collaborate on some projects. UNIMA will host colleagues from Bath Spa in April this year. It was a step in a project that started in 2019, when the late Prof. Richard Tambulasi, then Principal of Chancellor College, tasked the Dean of Research to develop a proposal in conjunction with Prof. Ian Gadd of Bath Spa.

The delegation included the Vice Chancellor, Professor Samson Sajidu, Prof. Cosmo Ngongondo (Dean of School of Natural and Applied Sciences) Dr. Emmanuel Ngwira (Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences), Mr Francis Machado (Assistant Registrar - Administration), Mrs Mandere (Secretary), Dr. Asante Mtenje (Department of Literary Studies), Dr. Jonas Mwatseteza (Director of Student Affairs) and Dr. Mangani Katundu (former Dean of Research).

Dr. Asante Mtenje from the Literary Studies Department observed that it had been a successful trip. “The trip was a wonderful learning experience for me as an academic in terms of thinking of new ways to engage with students when teaching but also in thinking of possible research endeavors and collaborations with staff at Bath Spa especially in designing new programmes which will be beneficial to University of Malawi”, she said.

During the trip, the delegates held a number of meetings with their counterparts at Bath Spa. They all agree that the trip has been fruitful, and will yield collaborations among academia, administrative staff and in relation to student welfare. There is a possibility for the development of joint programmes as well as postgraduate supervision. Another area where the two institutions may work together is that of student exchange.

## Dean of Research seconded to NCHE



*Dr. Mangani Katundu*

Every so often, members of staff are called to service in various government departments, through a process known as secondment. Basically, what happens is that someone within the mainstream government service, perhaps in some department or other, realizes the worth or skill of a person within the academy, and decides that this expertise would be put to better use in a different sector. In

almost all cases, a secondment is deemed a form of promotion, since one is often seconded to a position of greater authority and prestige.

This background should serve to explain our celebratory mood when the Dean of Research at UNIMA, Dr Mangani Katundu, was seconded to the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) as Director of Planning, Research and Development. The secondment is for a period of three years. Dr Katundu's is a well-known face at UNIMA. He is an Associate Professor of Food and Nutrition within the Department of Human Ecology. He has served in various leadership capacities, including Dean of Science, and most recently, Dean of Research. He was instrumental in the development of UNIMAREC, and has continually championed the nurturing of junior researchers at UNIMA, most notably through the UNIMA Small Grants programme.

In his new job, Dr Katundu will be expected to lead research planning activities at NCHE. This includes, but is not limited

to, strategic planning, promoting research ethics in the higher education sector, resource mobilisation, policies development, and monitoring the status of higher education in Malawi.

Commenting on the job, Dr Katundu pointed out that he will miss the university campus, but observed that his work will involve a lot of research proposal writing and project management, which will keep him linked to the academic community. Dr Katundu is optimistic about his new role: “I would like to see that research portfolios of HE institutions are enhanced, to support development of regulations that will facilitate better oversight of NCHE over higher education service provision, and to work with the Ministry of Education in development and management of the Higher Education Information Management System (HEMIS)”.

We wish Dr Katundu all the best.





*Participants at the conference*

## UNIMA Hosts Annual Research Conference

Research is one of the key pillars for which a university is recognised. It is in this regard that, on 30th November, 2022, the University of Malawi held its Annual Research Dissemination Conference, which saw researchers from within and outside the institution showcasing ongoing and finalised results of the research they have been carrying out. The conference was organized around the theme: “Promoting Relevant Research and Innovations: A Gateway to Malawi 2063”.

In his speech at the opening of the function, the Dean of Research at UNIMA, Dr Mangani Katundu observed that UNIMA has grown as a research institution, having produced expertise in various fields that are connected to the country’s development. The Deputy Vice Chancellor of UNIMA, Dr Sunduzwayo Madise, also made a speech, where he highlighted the fact that this was the first such conference held at the university since the delinking process had taken place. He reminded the audience that the University regards research as a central component

of its work, since it informs the teaching activities, but also enables the institution to engage with its surrounding community. He further stressed that, in the spirit of taking research seriously, UNIMA has built a research and grant management capacity, to ensure that the spirit of research does not falter. He also expressed the wish that the research conference would continue to be held annually.

The main events at the conference comprised of paper and poster presentations from scholars from UNIMA and other sectors of the country. The conference attracted 26 oral presentations and 17 poster presentations. During the conference, guests were also entertained by a dramatic performance by UNIMA students, engaging in knowledge sharing through the innovative fusion approach. Their performance touched on various themes, including the relevance of the university to the nation and its interactions with political bodies over the years. The conference also had representation from the National Planning Commission,

National Commission for Science and Technology, National Statistics Office, and various Ministries and Research Institutions.

The conference was mainly funded by UNICEF. FDH Bank also funded awards that were given to the best oral and poster presentations.



*UNIMA Deputy Vice Chancellor making his speech*





*Librarians at the MALA indaba*

## UNIMA Staff Shine at MALA Elective Indaba

On 10th February, 2023, Malawi Library Association (MALA) held an elective indaba to elect leaders that will steer the association forward for the next five years. The function took place at SANA Food Court hall in Lilongwe.

By the end of the elections, University of Malawi librarians Felix Mwalemba and Jessy Mphunda made it into the new executive committee. Mwalemba was elected to the position of Treasurer General, while Mphunda made it to the position of Vice General Secretary.

Speaking on the sidelines of the function, University of Malawi librarian Mr. Brian Sitima-Ndau praised his troops for warding off competition from other contestants. He expressed optimism that UNIMA will be well represented in the association and advance the agenda of contributing to the transformation of libraries in Malawi.

Sitima-Ndau highlighted the importance of UNIMA's role in taking part in the leadership of the association, saying through its elected members of staff, UNIMA will be contributing towards the realization of the national vision by empowering individuals with knowledge

and skills in provision of quality access to information. He added that the election of these two members of staff is a vote of confidence to UNIMA that it has a cream of leaders who can lead the association at the topmost level.

Both Mwalemba and Mphunda pledged to deliver as they fly UNIMA's flag high. The delegates to the indaba were drawn from across the country, mainly from public and private universities and government ministries, departments and agencies.

The full Malawi Library Association executive committee is as follows:

President: Associate Prof Felix Majawa (Mzuzu University); Vice President: Teddie Chima (St John of God College of Health Sciences - Mzuzu Campus; Secretary General: Glyn Mughogho (Pentecostal Life University, Lilongwe); Vice Secretary: Jessy Mphunda (UNIMA); Treasurer General: Felix Mwalemba (UNIMA); Director of Publications: Associate Prof Winner Chawinga (Mzuzu University).



*New MALA Executive Committee*





*Majawa (R) receives her award*

## Majawa Shines in FRI Awards

The Acting Station Manager for Chanco Community Radio and Chanco TV, Sakina Majawa, has won this year's George Atkinson Communication Award which is run by Farm Radio International (FRI).

Majawa has scooped the award following her exceptional skills in the production of farmers' radio programmes in which she incorporates local songs, drama and poetry among other things to drive home a particular message.

Speaking at a ceremony organised to present her with the award on Thursday 16th February 2023 at Chanco Community Radio, Majawa said she was very excited and felt motivated to put extra effort in the production of her programmes.

"It is motivating to win such a prestigious award. I will engage an extra gear so that listeners can have solutions to whatever problems they may be facing in their farming activities through my programmes," Majawa said.

Farm Radio Networking Officer for Malawi, Dr Patrick Mphaka, expressed his joy over a Malawian winning the award which saw entries from over 40 African countries.

"The last time a Malawian won this award was in 2014. It is exciting to have a Malawian getting the award again after such a long time," Mphaka said.

Mphaka further emphasized on the need for journalists to strive to be very impactful in their productions by producing programs and writing stories that are relevant to the audience.

"Broadcasters should ensure that the content they are airing is timely. They should not just air programmes just as a matter of filling airtime but should

consider what information farmers need at a particular time. Otherwise it is just a waste of time," advised Mphaka.

Majawa is among two other awardees, one of whom is from Tanzania and the other from Togo.

The George Atkins Communication Award is a yearly award which recognizes broadcasters who produce content that directly responds to small-scale farmers' needs. Since its establishment in 1991, Majawa is the third Malawian to win this award.



*Staff of Chanco Community radio showing their support*





*A photo opportunity with military personnel during the trip*

## MDF enlists UNIMA Expertise

The University of Malawi prides itself for the expertise that it provides to various organs of the nation. These include the security sector, as witnessed through the commencement of the Law Enforcement, Management and Leadership programme, being managed by UNIMA and the Malawi Police Service.

Recently, the Malawi Defense Force (MDF) sought the assistance of UNIMA in a similar capacity. The MDF is currently working on establishing a Malawi Defense College for senior military staff members and other government officials. Through the office of the Vice Chancellor, MDF reached out to UNIMA to set up a team of experts in security studies, international relations, public policy management and human rights law that would help MDF in this exercise.

In April 2022, the UNIMA team comprising of Professor Happy Kayuni (Team leader), Dr Ngcimezile Mweso, Dr Enoch Chilemba, Dr Tiyesere Chikapa, Dr Boniface Dulani and Mrs Towera Mwachunga visited National Defense College, Kenya on a benchmarking trip.

The MDF team was composed of senior officers led by the Army Commander General Nundwe. From 29th November to 2nd December 2022, the team visited the USA for a second benchmarking trip. Specifically, the team visited Africa Centre for Strategic Studies and the National Defense University in Washington DC and finally the team visited United States Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. These institutions focus on the intellectual growth and professional development of

its students who comprise of mainly senior military officers and some civilians.

Apart from a general discussion on the curriculum offered in the said colleges, some of the highlights included a roundtable discussion at the Africa Centre for Strategic Studies on Military Professionalism in Africa and Professional Military Education, where General Nundwe was one of the panellists. The team also had a tour of the War Game Technology Lab at the United States Army War College.



*The UNIMA team poses for a picture with other delegates*



# Population Studies scholar wins award

Academics at the University of Malawi all know that publishing is one of the main avenues through which they may rise in their careers. However, it is one thing to publish articles, and another to have one's articles recognized as being among the best. Scholars from the University of Malawi continue to make the institution proud by writing articles that are internationally recognized for their research excellence.

One of the scholars who has been recently recognised in this fashion is Mr Benson Malinga John, a lecturer in the Population Studies department. Since 2020, he has been enrolled as a PhD student in Sociological Demography at Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research (MPIDR) in Germany and at Stockholm University in Sweden. In December, 2022, he was announced as the winner of the Jan M. Hoem Paper award. The award was established to reward a junior researcher at the MPIDR for a paper that exhibits the quality, innovation and originality and scientific merit exemplified by the work of Jan M. Hoem. This was the third time the prize had been awarded. John is the first PhD student to win it, as it had previously been won by Postdoc researchers.

The paper, which is entitled "Fertility decline in sub-Saharan Africa: Does remarriage matter?" was published in the



*Population Scholar: Benson John*

*Population Studies* journal. John points out that the paper is drawn from the first chapter of his PhD project.

The study seeks to position the role of marital instability and repartnering in the discourse of fertility transition in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). He expressed his delight upon publishing in one of the top Demography journals around, and highlights the personal dimension of his research: "This award means more than a prize to me. It is also a symbol of possibilities. Possibilities that women in rural Africa who have experienced union

dissolutions, either through the death of a spouse (like my mother did) or through a divorce, can achieve. I see this award as an acknowledgement of the researcher I have become, which could never be possible if my mother was not determined to fight against all the odds to send me to school. Millions of women in Africa are experiencing union dissolutions and are facing similar challenges my mother witnessed when she lost her husband and her children were still young."

John's co-author, Vissého Adjiwanou, is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Moultrie in Canada.

## Maliwichi presents at ASTMH 2022



*Ms. Limbika Maliwichi*

The University of Malawi always celebrates the achievements of its academia, especially when they get to showcase their research at local and

international conferences. Recently, Ms. Limbika Maliwichi, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Psychology, travelled to Seattle, USA, where she presented a

paper at the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (ASTMH) 2022 Annual Meeting. The meeting was held from 30th November to 3rd October, 2022. The research is drawn from her ongoing PhD research, in which she is enrolled with the University of Liverpool. The study is funded by the National Institute of Health (USA) through the University of Liverpool and the Blantyre Malaria Project.

The ASTMH Annual Meeting drew tropical medicine and global health professionals representing academia, government, non-profits, philanthropy, NGOs, industry, military and private practice. Maliwichi's paper was entitled "HIV-exposed uninfected (HEU) Malawian infants and neurocognitive development: The REFINE study".





*UNIMA representatives at the meeting*

## UNIMA joins Limuru Eastern Africa PHD Hub

PhD programmes at the University of Malawi stand to benefit through the institution's partnering with several other universities in the region. This has been achieved through the Eastern Africa (EA) PhD Hub. The aim of this partnership is to strengthen doctoral supervision across the Eastern Africa partner universities. The partnership was formed primarily from the observation that doctoral programmes have varying completion rates and similarly different times to completion. The Hub therefore seeks to strengthen doctoral supervisory training, thereby building capacity within PhD programmes to support more candidates.

From 27<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> October 2022, the EA PhD Hub partners including Vice Chancellors and their representatives met at Brackenhurst, Limuru, Kenya. During the meeting, the partner universities signed a collaborative MoU. They also appreciated a draft design of a mentorship

programme for PhD supervision for the EA PhD Hub, as well as a research strategy which will support capacity building of doctoral supervisors and develop PhD concept propositions for internal and external funding opportunities. The partners also engaged in strategic planning for EA PhD Hub activities. These will include exploring funding opportunities as a priority to support Hub activities such as grants and scholarships, carrying out training needs assessment and supervisor tools, establishing work teams and responsibilities, and exploring mobility of students/staff between the EA PhD Hub institutions.

UNIMA was represented by Dr Sunduzwayo Madise, Dr Emmanuel Ngwira and Mr Felix Kakowa. UNIMA has over 15 PhD programmes across its five schools, in fields including Literature, Linguistics, Theology, Chemistry, Development Studies and Education. For

many years, students from within Malawi as well as abroad have been enrolling in UNIMA's doctorate programmes.

The initiative was coordinated and supported by Nottingham Trent University in the UK. As part of its internationalization effort, the university established NTU Global, which later established the East Africa Centre. Later, they established the EA Ph.D. hub with the aim of channeling resources (human capital) to supervise Ph.D. students in partner institutions.

The partners include Jomo Kenyatta University, Makerere University, Rongo University, University of Malawi, Mount Kenya University, and Kenyatta University. The partners of the EA PhD hub have worked together over a number of years (2017-2022) to establish aims and objectives and terms of reference both in face-to-face and online workshops.

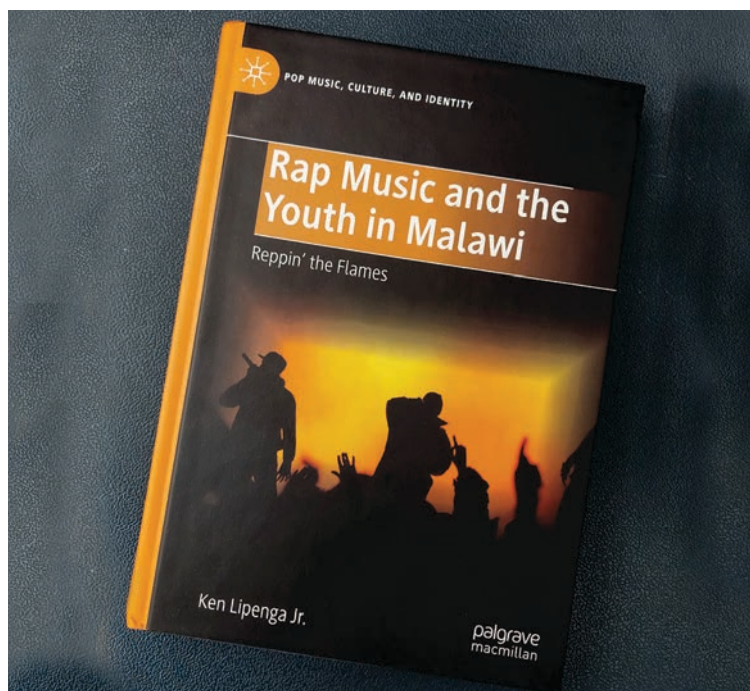


## New book on Malawian hip-hop

Dr Ken Lipenga, an Associate Professor in the Department of English, recently published a book entitled *Rap Music and the Youth in Malawi: Reppin' the Flames*. The book studies the language and content of contemporary Malawian hip hop as a window onto the country's youth culture as Malawian young people negotiate the condition, common among the youth, of lacking opportunities to advance from a situation of dependence and being stuck in a state of relative childhood. The book argues that rap music made by Malawian youth music speaks of – and represents, through its very agency – their need to break out of this stagnant state.

After situating Malawian hip hop with respect to both other musical genres in the country and to the nation's language in culture, Lipenga shows how Malawian youth use rap music to create a sense of community, which then becomes a foothold from which they can engage and activities that transfer them out of waithood and into the adult world, such as getting involved in the music industry, realizing electoral power, or participating in activism about issues such as violence against people with albinism and the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to Lipenga, the bulk of the book was written during his sabbatical, during which he was



*Lipenga's book*

resident as a visiting scholar at Wesleyan University. Among other aims, the book is intended to encourage further research in to Malawian rap music, which does not receive much academic attention. "I have read a lot about rap music from other African countries, but very little about Malawi. My writing therefore emanated from my love of the genre, as well as the desire to add visibility to the music, beyond the country's borders".

The book has been published by Palgrave Macmillan. Apart from the publisher's website, the book can also be ordered from major online bookstores such as Amazon and Barnes and Noble. It is available in hardcover and e-book formats.

## Kayira publishes book on Malawian history

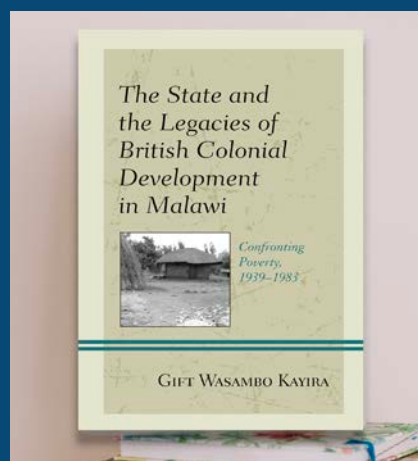
A scholar from the Department of History, Dr Gift Wasambo Kayira, has recently published a book that showcases a particular chapter of Malawi's history. The book, entitled *The State and the Legacies of British Colonial Development in Malawi: Confronting Poverty, 1939-1983* advances the argument that the intentions of officials and agencies charged with delivering economic development programs in Malawi were never as ill-informed or wicked as some theorists have contended. Through a meticulous search of the archive on rural and industrial development projects, Kayira presents a development history that displays the shortfalls of existing works on development inadequately grounded in historical study.

In the book, Kayira writes about development interventions that partially worked or did not work in the

past and why they produced the results they did from the late 1930s when the British were in power to the early 1980s when postcolonial Malawi accepted the first Structural Adjustment Loans. It will serve as a guide against replicating, albeit in different guises, policies that failed in the past, hoping they would produce a miracle for contemporary Malawi and Africa.

According to Kayira, the book is aimed at a broad audience. "Although mainly focusing on Malawi, this book targets scholars interested in the history of development and poverty in other countries as well. It also has a broader application to the academy and will, without doubt, appeal to economic historians, development economists, political scientists, students and scholars in development and those trained diplomatic studies. Scholars studying the British Empire in the 20th century will also find it fulfilling."

The book has been published by Lexington Books. Apart from the publisher's website, the book can also be ordered from major online bookstores such as Amazon and Barnes and Noble. It is available in hardcover and e-book formats.



*Kayira's book*



## Theology scholar publishes new book

Senior Lecturer in the Department of Theology, Dr. Hermann Yokoniah Mvula, on 3rd December, 2022, celebrated the publication of his second book, *Beyond Good Intentions: The Bible's Mandate for Good Governance*, at a book launch function which was held at Mwambo Lecture Theatre at the University of Malawi.

Mvula explains more about the content of his book: "The book is about good governance which must be seen beyond the angle that our Constitution instructs duty-bearers to uphold it. Rather, beyond the confines of the Republican Constitution, the Bible through its ethical principles and moral values mandates good governance for the well-being of the governed."

The book is intended for a general audience, from the academia, the Church, as well as members of the general public. The scholar's research has, in the previous years, been in politics, political processes and governance issues. However, he has maintained a perspective through the lens of the Bible.

The publisher, Montfort Media, organized the book launch as a way of increasing its publicity. Mvula

points out that his choice for Montfort media as the publisher was deliberate. "Since this publisher has an angle in the political history of Malawi, I found it fit to have the book published by them, since the book is contributing to politics, political processes and democratic governance in Malawi, whose history cannot be narrated without mentioning Montfort Media, whose great work in publishing the Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter in 1992 cannot be erased from the annals of Malawi".

Mvula is also the author of *Christians in Active Politics* and *The Theory, Praxis and Pursuit of Constitutionalism in Democratic Malawi*. He also co-edited *Decolonizing the Theological Curriculum in an Online Age* as well as *Theology in Malawi*.



Dr. Herman Yokoniah Mvula

## Chitaukali represents UNIMA at convention on endangered species



Part of the Malawi delegation to CITES CoP19, at one of the working sessions

The University of Malawi, through Mr. Wilbert Chitaukali of the Department of Biological Sciences in the School of Natural and Applied Sciences (SNAS), participated at the 19th Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Conference of Parties (CoP19) that took place from 14 - 25 November 2022 in Panama City, Panama. Mr. Chitaukali was part of the Malawi

Delegation to CITES CoP19 and was in the company of personnel from the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW).

Chitaukali joined more than 2,500 delegates, observers, and journalists from more than 150 countries that deliberated, made decisions and adopted proposals to increase or decrease controls on international trade in wildlife and their

products, bringing many species of sharks, lizards, turtles, fish, birds, frogs, mammals and more than a hundred tree species under CITES control, to ensure the sustainability of these species in the wild while allowing their international trade.

Apart from the academic discussions at the meeting, Chitaukali also took time to visit some of the tourist attractions in Panama City. Visiting the isthmus, the Canal, the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, afforded him a chance to have a better understanding of the land bridge between North and South America, in what he says is an important topic in his academic work. He also had a chance to interact with professionals in various fields.

Chitaukali is grateful to Lilongwe Wildlife Trust (LWT) for sponsoring the trip, and to UNIMA for allowing him to travel to Panama.





*Participants at the validation workshop*

## Sociologists engage with youth in UNICEF project

The University of Malawi through the Department of Sociology has partnered with United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in a study aimed at creating space for children and adolescents to become involved in developing and implementing the new Country Program Document (CPD) for UNICEF Malawi (2024-2028). Through the partnership, the Sociology Department investigated the current status of children's rights with children as main participants and key informants in fifteen (15) districts in Malawi: Karonga, Nkhatabay and Mzimba in the northern region, Kasungu, Lilongwe, Dedza, Salima and Dowa in the central region and Mangochi, Machinga, Neno, Zomba, Thyolo, Chikwawa, and Nsanje in the southern region. The investigation involved 528 children (242M, 286F) of which some were teen mothers, children in refugee contexts, in and out of school children, street connected children, orphans and vulnerable children and children in conflict with the law.

Following the exercise, the Sociology Department conducted regional workshops to validate the findings and enrich the data that was collected. The regional workshops attracted 56 boys

and 71 girls from nine districts across the three regions. The conferences were held concurrently on 21st January, 2023 at Grace Bandawe Conference centre in Blantyre, Liwonde Sun Hotel in Machinga, Thope Lodge in Mponela, Dowa and Emmaculate Lodge in Mzuzu.

The conferences were graced by UNICEF Deputy representative, Gerrit Martiz; Chief of Section Community Development and Resilience, Bhawna M Vajpai; and Sydney Nhamo, Chief of Section, Programme Section. Speaking during the conference in Mzuzu, 14-year-old student from Katoto secondary school, Portia Lajabu, lamented the unfriendliness of communities which are infested with drug and substance abuse.

Principle Investigator for the study, Dr Phillip Kapulula, explained that the socio-cultural environment in which children are growing has been the key barrier for some children to enjoy their rights. "Some parents influence their girl children to withdraw from school and marry early due to poverty, while boys are discouraged from attending school in order to supplement household income through piecework", he pointed out. "In many households, children are subjected to verbal, physical and sexual

abuses. Children living with foster parents suffer the worst abuses."

In her remarks, Dr. Edith Shame, representing the Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, hailed UNICEF for coming up with the project, citing that it is very useful to hear from children on how unfriendly communities are towards their development, evidenced by lack of education facilities, and other social services, and as such there is need to develop interventions that suit them.



*Dr Phillip Kapulula*



# EDF Dept offers satellite programmes

In a move to ensure that the physical location of the University of Malawi does not restrict people from accessing high quality education, the Education Foundations Department in the School of Education is offering two full-time programmes over weekends (Saturday and Sunday) through a satellite centre, the KUHeS-Lilongwe campus. The programmes are Master of Education in Policy, Planning and Leadership and Master of Education in Educational Psychology.

The EDF Department held a function to mark the commencement of the satellite programme delivery on 4th February, 2023. The Vice Chancellor of the University of Malawi, Professor Samson Sajidu, was in attendance. He observed that the initiative is consistent with UNIMA's strategic plan of widening access to quality education and also with Vision 2063. While studying from home as adults with families to manage besides work is challenging, the VC urged the students to be determined in the management of their time and roles so that they complete the journey they have started.

According to Dr Chikumbutso Manthalu, Senior Lecturer in the Education Foundations Department, the idea behind the concept of a satellite centre is basically about taking the university to the people. "The motivation for the satellite centre arose from incessant demand by potential



*Head of EDF, Dr Symon Winiko making a few remarks at the opening function*

students and even students admitted on the weekday model in Zomba. They expressed a wish for a program that is customized to the work demands of those who stay away from the Zomba neighborhood. We are mindful that most of our prospective students have work schedules that cannot allow them travel to Zomba and learn for two working days (Thursday and Friday) excluding a day for travel," he said.

Under this new arrangement, the programs are offered through a blended approach: face-to face and online. The first few weeks are for face-to-face and then later the delivery method shifts to online platforms. The final week of the semester will be face-to-face. Under the

face-to-face arrangement, academic staff shall travel to KUHeS-Lilongwe campus to teach. Dr Manthalu further observed that staff in the department are currently able to manage the workload. However, as the department faces demands to extend to Mzuzu and Blantyre, they may integrate the commencement of the programs.

Currently, the programmes have registered around 30 students, most of whom work outside Zomba city.

The School of Education has plans to also offer the M.Ed (Sociology of Education) and M.Ed (Testing and Measurement) under the same arrangement.

## A-listers to get scholarships



*Some previous Dean's listers*

For a long time, UNIMA has striven to recognize students who perform well, by publicly announcing them on the Dean's List, and awarding them certificates as testament to the same.

However, beyond the ceremony and the photo op with the Vice Chancellor, there has not been much else that obtains from the Dean's List. Indeed, many students wonder why they should aim for distinction

grades in their courses, when they can get by just as well with pass or credit grades.

As a way of motivating students to work even harder than before, the University of Malawi has come up with the Vice Chancellor's Scholarship and Awards. To qualify for the scholarship, a student needs to obtain a GPA of 3.90 at the end of the first semester in any undergraduate programme at the institution. For qualifying, a student may get a tuition waiver, an upkeep allowance or a once-off cash prize, all of which should be welcome to UNIMA students.

UNIMA Assistant Registrar (Communication and Marketing) Alfred Iteta Banda, pointed out that the main aims of the scholarship are to reward hardworking students and motivate others.





*Zola Manyungwa, Davie Nthiya, Mphatso Ben and Ndapile Mkuwu during the field mapping function*

## UNIMA Students in Jamaica for Youth Mappers Summit

Two university Malawi students, Davie Nthiya and Mphatso Ben from the Geography, Earth Sciences and Environment Department were selected to participate in the 2023 YouthMappers Leadership Summit as fellows from 4th to 12th January, 2023. They were among 67 students selected from 26 countries across 49 academic institutions.

YouthMappers is a USAID-funded international network of university-student-led chapters. It enhances digital literacy and builds Geographical Information Systems (GIS) skills for development and humanitarian work by capitalising on web-based open geospatial technologies. It enhances professional development by nurturing technical skills and fostering leadership abilities through leadership and research fellowships, funded fieldwork programs and allowing students to participate in projects led by USAID and its implementing partners. The University of Malawi YouthMappers Chapter, established in 2016, is one of the 345 chapters in the network.

The students were selected under the summit themes of Mapping for Climate Resilience, Activating Youth Leadership and Promoting Equity and Inclusion. The 10-day summit was held at Hilton Rose

Hall Resort & Spa in Montego Bay, Jamaica.

In their thematic groups, fellows participated in sessions led by subject matter experts. This gave them the opportunity to take part in in-depth conversations about how open mapping can be used to highlight issues associated with their respective themes. The students interacted with fellows from their regions and learned about the development priorities of USAID missions in their regions. The regions represented were the Americas, West Africa, Asia, and East and Southern Africa. Divided into technology clusters based on their technical abilities, the students attended sessions that provided them with knowledge, skills and capacity training in open mapping techniques. Mapping with OpenStreetMap, projected management with the Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Tasking (HOT) Manager, mapping with artificial intelligence and machine learning, remote sensing, and QGIS were some of the topics discussed in technology-centred sessions. The fellows participated in field mapping activities that introduced them to drone technology and attribute field data creation using KoboCollect, an open-source data collection tool.

Also present at the summit serving as navigators and instructors were

UNIMA and YouthMappers alumni, Zola Manyungwa and Ndapile Mkuwu, who previously served as YouthMappers leadership fellows in 2017 and 2019 respectively. They continue to contribute to the network and have recently contributed to two chapters of the recently published YouthMappers open-source book under Springer. A copy of the book can be accessed online <https://bit.ly/3UorsXL>.

Prior to the summit, YouthMappers held a workshop at the University of Malawi in September 2022. In attendance were students from the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR), University of Malawi (UNIMA), Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS), Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST), University of Pretoria, University of Limpopo and Mzuzu University. The UNIMA YouthMappers were also part of the Bicycle for Growth (BFG) project implemented by World Bicycle Relief (WBR) with USAID support in April 2022.

UNIMA YouthMappers chapter is the most active and successful YouthMappers chapter in Malawi. The students are making a difference in their community, one map at a time.





*Celebration! The UNIMA team receives their trophy*

## UNIMA debate team wins again

The University of Malawi team at the 2022 Student Debates has once again impressed the nation, having defended their title as winning debate team. The most recent victory took place on 9th December, 2022 during the Grand Finale of the debates, which were held at the Golden Peacock hotel in Lilongwe. This was the final event in debates that had been held since 14th February, 2022. 8 universities were involved from the beginning, including Blantyre International University, Central Christian University, Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR), Pentecostal Life University, Malawi Assemblies of God University, Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS), Malawi Institute of Management (MIM) and the University of Malawi (UNIMA).

The UNIMA Team comprised of Jatta Manoah Mhone (4th Year), Nomsa Zgambo (3rd Year), Tracy Mwalilino (3rd Year), and Ernestina Chiona (3rd Year). In preparation for the debates, the students underwent intense training, which comprised of several meetings with coaches. During these meetings, they shared ideas and perfected various points for debate.

During the finale, the four students faced their opponents from LUANAR. The two teams were tasked with debating the motion on whether the government

should continue borrowing, given its levels of debt. The debate was characterised by impassioned presentations, well supported with reports from authoritative sources such as Ministry of Finance, the country's nation budget, and the Malawi Economic Monitor. The students impressively defended their points by drawing on data from various sectors of the country, such as the agricultural and mining sectors.

Although the battle was a close one, UNIMA was finally chosen as the leader, gaining an average score of 52.33 points, ahead of LUANAR which gained 52.22 points. Among the criteria that the judges referred to were confidence, clarity, and citing of factual details. The winners received MK1,000,000, whereas the runners-up received Mk500,000.

Various organisations were involved in the organising of the debates. These included OXFAM, Economics Association of Malawi (ECAMA), and the European Union (Funders). Other organisations, such as the Reserve Bank of Malawi, the Ministry of Finance, MEJN, and FDH were also represented at the function.

The OXFAM Country Director, Ms Lingalireni Mihowa, also spoke during the event. She pointed out that the debates fall under the "Enhanced evidence-based research to inform policy decision making in public finance management" project, which is part of the European Union's

*Chuma cha Dziko* programme. The project aims to contribute towards improved use and management of public resources through a public finance management system that promotes transparency, accountability, fiscal discipline, efficiency and effectiveness. "The debates have provided a unique opportunity for students to share their perspectives as well as well-researched evidence on best practices on public finance management policy and practice," she said. "We have noted a number of benefits from these debates. There has been expanded discourse on public finance management among students in public universities, the youth have been able to provide alternative pathways for improving public finance management in Malawi, and the debates have also improved young people's understanding of the national budget and also built their capacity to engage in fiscal justice."

Certificates were presented to all students who participated in the debate. One of the coaches for the UNIMA team, Ms Bertha Nguluwe, observed that through the debates, students from different universities have had the chance to interact and to improve their research skills. She also pointed out that the performance of the UNIMA team reflects the quality of training that the institution offers, as well as the dedication and commitment of students.





*Mukeya Chirwa (L) and Davie Manjawira (R)*

## UNIMA Law Students Lead in International Essay Competition

Three University of Malawi Bachelor of Laws (LLB) students recently emerged victorious in the 2022 Lex: Lead (Lawyers for Economic Advancement and Development) international essay competition. Students had to submit essays responding to the topic, “How developments in Fintech impact upon economic development and how it should be regulated.”

The three, Mukeya Chirwa (4th Year), Davie Manjawira (3rd Year) and Uchizi Manda (2nd Year), have been awarded \$500 each, which will go towards their tuition and or books.

According to information on their website, Lex:Lead is a group of international lawyers and friends who support economic development focusing on the world’s least developed countries. Participants in the essay competition are students currently studying in 39 least developed countries in Africa, Americas, and Asia.

One of the winners, Mukeya Chirwa, who is in the final year of his Law degree studies, said the competition has given him confidence to believe in his abilities that he can compete on the international stage. He said that he researched and read widely in preparation for the competition

which he believes was key for his essay to be among the successful.

He added that he made a personal commitment to participate in any competition or activity in order to broaden his knowledge and skills. “I made a conscious decision to not lose opportunities as they come,” he said. “Participating in academic competitions and other activities is one thing I think I can use to improve as a student.”

Chirwa said that emerging as one of the winners in an international competition where participants are drawn from various international universities is confirmation that University of Malawi students are capable of competing on the international stage. He then urged fellow students not to miss opportunities in fear of compromising their grades.

On her part, Uchizi Manda, a second year Law student, said the competition gave her a platform to test her abilities. “This competition was an opportunity to take on a new challenge while at the same time standing the chance of obtaining an award that could go towards my tuition fees,” said Manda. She added that in preparation for the competition she read essays by previous winners on the LEAD website

and researched quite widely on the topic to know how best to approach the question.

She also urged fellow students to take up challenges in order to broaden their skillset as the job market requires graduates who can innovate and take up challenging tasks.

Since 2010, the essay competition is conducted annually with funding from International Bar Association Foundation. 117 awards have been given so far, totalling nearly \$60,000.



*Uchizi Manda*



# Student aces French storytelling competition

The University of Malawi has yet another reason to celebrate the achievements of its students after one student, Alfred Kamwendo, won the Concours de Contes 2023 (Storytelling Contest) on 11th February, 2023. The competition was organised by Jacaranda Cultural Centre and Maison de la France. This was the 4th edition of the competition, and was framed under the theme Economic Crisis (La Crisé économique).

Kamwendo is a 2nd Year Bachelor of Arts Humanities student. He joined UNIMA with some secondary school fluency in French, but has continued improving his ability to speak, read and write in the language. He came to know of the competition from the UNIMA French Society, which received the information from the Head of French Department, Mr. Boniface Dokotala. In the competition, everyone was supposed to write an original story and translate it into French under the given theme. Three stories were chosen to represent UNIMA at the national finals, which were held at Mzuzu University. A number of institutions, including Domasi College of Education, Mzuzu University and UNIMA were represented at the function. Each institution had three student candidates. Each of the students had to tell their story in 10 minutes.

The winning story was entitled “Si je l’avais connu” (If I had known). It tells the experience of an individual who experiences a series of misfortunes and financial difficulties. One day, in a fit of anger and frustration, he beats his wife, who dies as a result, leading to the narrator’s incarceration.

For his impressive storytelling skill, Kamwendo was awarded MK100,000. He was also given a gold medal and a trophy. Although his story emerged as the winning one, Kamwendo acknowledges the help of others in reaching this stage. “The power of teamwork helped me to prepare well for the competition. My friends Godfrey Chipojola and Mercy Chirwa played a huge role since our audition days. The Department was also there for us as lecturers rendered their assistance in terms



*Kamwendo: Etudiant extraordinaire en langue française*

of correcting our grammar and giving advice on the performance.” His success has strengthened his desire to major in French, and to continue participating local and international in academic and artistic activities using the French language.

Mr. Beaton Galafa, lecturer in the French Department, who accompanied the

students to the competition, observed that it was a tight race. “All the performers were generally impressive, but Alfred’s performance wowed the audience the most. That aside, all the three students representing UNIMA were highly praised by the judges for their top notch grammar and an excellent oral performance.”



# Sportsmen battle for gold in Botswana

After a 2-year break due to Covid-19, sportsmen and women from the University of Malawi finally had the opportunity to once again participate in the annual SAUSSA (Southern African Universities Staff Sports Association) games. They were part of a 79-member group that travelled to Botswana in December last year to participate in the annual SAUSSA games. These members went under the umbrella of PUSSAM (Public Universities Staff Sports Association Of Malawi).

The 21st Edition of the SAUSSA games was held at the Botswana International University of Science and Technology (BIUST) from 4th to 9th December, 2022. The aim of the gathering was for member universities to participate in recreational sports, arts and cultural activities. The event is held on a rotational basis every year. The sporting codes for this edition included football, volleyball, netball, pool, darts, walking race, athletics, chess and table tennis among other.

This year, the PUSSAM darts team performed very well, coming first place and thus claiming the gold medal. Malawi's team also attained the gold medal in table tennis. In netball, PUSSAM came third, claiming the bronze medal. In athletics, PUSSAM athletes managed to get one bronze medal and one silver medal.

During the cultural night, which is normally held on the Thursday of the week of the games, the PUSSAM team dressed in traditional wear bearing the Malawian flag colours. They also used the opportunity to share Malawian foodstuffs with their fellow sportsmen from other countries, and also



*Unima athletes at the Cultural Night*

sampled some food and drink from the other regions.

According to Mrs. Esther Chirwa, General Secretary of UMSSA, members always look forward to the interaction with sportsmen from other countries. "The SAUSSA games are more about social and interaction, rather than being a purely competitive event. People forge relationships with athletes from other countries, and get the chance to showcase some of their

own cultural activities," she said. She thanked UNIMA management, as well as the Political and Administrative Studies Department, for supporting the sportsmen and women financially.

The organisation has already begun preparing for the 2023 games, which will be held at North-West University in Potchefstroom, South Africa. The exact dates will be announced soon.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS



As UNIMA community, we acknowledge that the loss of loved ones can have a huge impact on the those left behind. What we can offer in unison are condolences to the bereaved. Over the past few months, a number of members of staff have lost loved ones.

We offer our condolences to Mr Charles Somanje of the Examinations Unit, who lost his father. We similarly offer words

of comfort to Mr Pellani Kankuzi of the Centre for Social Research upon the loss of his son. During the same period, Dr. Lewis Bande lost his father. Mr Yohane Chakasika also lost a daughter within the same period. It is also during this time that Mr Manyengo lost his mother.

UNIMA also mourns the passing of a UNIMA BSc Informatics student, Chisomo Msukwa, who lost his life in a road

accident. A UCE student, Mr. Pearson Mtuma also passed away early this year.

As a community, we also sadly bid farewell to a colleague, Mr Elwyn Mwafulirwa, a member of staff in the Physics Department in December, 2022.

We ask the Lord to bring comfort to the bereaved families and peace to the deceased.