

School of Law, Economics and Government

Department of Economics



OUR RESEARCH IN 2025

Annual Book of Abstracts

OUR RESEARCH
IN 2025

Annual Book of Abstracts

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We are a thriving department combining expertise with modern facilities equipment to create an outstanding environment for learning and department.

OUR PROGRAMS

Accredited by The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), our undergraduate and postgraduate are industrial-relevant with the right balance of theory and practice.

- Doctor of Philosophy in Economics
- Master of Arts in Economics;
 In conjunction with African Economics Research Consortium (AERC)
- Master of Science in Health Economics and Policy (*Coming soon*)
- Master of Science in Economics and Data Science (*Coming soon*)
- Bachelor of Arts in Economics
- Bachelor of Arts in Development Economics
- Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Finance (*Coming soon*)
- Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Banking (*Coming soon*)
- Bachelor of Arts in Banking and Finance (*Coming soon*)

About Us

Foreword

Welcome to 2025 Book of Abstracts for the University of Malawi Department of Economics, Our Research in 2025.

On behalf of the Department of Economics at the University of Malawi, I am pleased to present the 2025 Book of Abstracts. This volume showcases the Department's ongoing commitment to rigorous, policy-relevant research that addresses key development challenges at both national and global levels.

The abstracts featured in this collection span a broad range of themes, including economic growth and development, poverty and inequality, agriculture and food security, health economics, macroeconomic policy, and applied and theoretical econometrics. Together, they reflect the diversity of research interests within the Department and a strong emphasis on empirical analysis and methodological rigor.

I commend the authors for their scholarly contributions and dedication, and I trust that this Book of Abstracts will serve as a valuable resource for researchers, students, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

Have a great time reading!

Associate Professor Gowokani Chijere Chirwa
Head of Department
Department of Economics
University of Malawi

From the editors' desk...

From the editorial team, we welcome you to this edition of our annual books of abstracts.

This new edition includes hyperlinks to where the full articles can be accessed (URLs and DOIs), all embedded directly in the titles. As usual, contributors from the Department of Economics are indicated in bold, clearly distinguishing departmental authorship and acknowledging their scholarly contributions.

This edition also introduces a few changes in the design. Our aim is to encourage readers not only to skim through the abstracts, but to engage fully and read through to the end.

Stay updated, stay academic!

Editorial Team

Gowokani Chijere Chirwa, PhD
Emillian Mlagha-Mtekateka
Norah Mwase
Rejoice Mpinganjira
Eric Dinga

Agglomeration and Export Survival amid Institutional Challenges: Evidence from Malawi using a Shared-Frailty Survival Analysis.

Banda, T., & Chigaru, F. (2025) *Journal of Industry, Competition and Trade*

Introduction

Increased exports have the potential to spur economic growth and reduce poverty in sub-Saharan Africa. While existing literature extensively examines trade creation and the introduction of new export products, many developing countries still face the challenge of short-lived export spells. Increasing the lifespan of existing exports is a cost-effective and viable way to maintain export contribution to economic growth, especially for countries with institutional challenges. Using Malawi as a case study, we analyse export data from 117 trading partners over 20 years (2003-2022) employing a shared frailty survival model with a Weibull proportional hazard distribution.

ENQUIRY

We investigate the determinants of export survival, with a specific focus on the role of agglomeration in destination markets.

4.5%

Our findings indicate that agglomeration significantly enhances the survival of Malawi's exports, with spatial concentration of economic activities in importing countries reducing the hazard of export failure by approximately 4.5 percentage points.

This effect remains robust across different trading partner samples and is particularly pronounced in Sub-Saharan African destinations.

Relevance

The findings reveal substantial heterogeneity in export survival across destinations and product types, highlighting the importance of strategic market targeting. These findings provide evidence for policy formulation in countries pursuing export-oriented growth amid institutional constraints.

On Multicointegration

Cassim, L., & Leman, E. (2025) *Communication in Statistics - Theory & Methods*

Abstract

We develop a one-step test for multicointegration of $I(2)$ series while allowing for threshold adjustment to the steady state in both layers of cointegration. Our results suggest that the limiting distributions of the estimators and test statistics associated with multicointegration depend on the cut-off point of the asymmetric response. We demonstrate the application of the test using military expenditure and price data for the United Kingdom for the period 1960-2022. We then suggest, in a step-by-step manner, modeling choices that a practitioner would have to make depending on the outcome of the multicointegration test.

Assessment of agricultural diversification strategies and rural household food security in Malawi

Gondwe, A., Chilora, L. K., **Chiwaula, L.**, & Goeb, J. (2025) Scientific African

Introduction

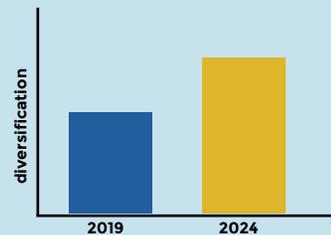
While the potential benefits of diversification are widely recognised, evidence of the emergence of specific diversification strategies among farm households and their relationship with household welfare remains elusive. We employ the Malawi Rural Agricultural Livelihoods Panel Survey (MRALS) data and econometric techniques to address this objective.

Enquiry

- ✓ In this study, we addressed this gap by first identifying patterns in agricultural diversification among rural households in Malawi and defining the predominant agricultural diversification strategies used.
- ✓ Second, we analyse the extent to which household food security and total household farm income vary across particular agricultural diversification strategies.
- ✓ Third, the study identifies the diversification strategies or patterns that are the most important for income generation and enhancing household dietary diversity.
- ✓ Fourth, we assess the factors associated with household participation in specific agricultural diversification strategies.

Findings

Our analysis reveals a growing trend in diversification, as evidenced by an increase in the share of households growing or keeping more than one type of crop or livestock between 2019 and 2024. Overall, the study finds that agricultural diversification is positively associated with household per capita income and household dietary diversity.



Relevance

Finally, the study suggests diversification strategies which policymakers should consider to enhance rural household welfare. We further suggest other factors which need to be considered when promoting these strategies.

Monetary policy shocks, agricultural growth, and food inflation in developing agrarian economies: misled central banks?

Cassim, L., & Leman, E. (2025) Macroeconomics and Finance in Emerging Market Economies

Introduction

This paper assesses the response of the agriculture sector and food inflation to monetary policy implementation in Malawi, a typical low-income agrarian economy.

✓ Enquiry

Using the Bayesian Structural Vector Auto-regressive (B-SVAR) model on data from 1986 to 2023.

✓ Findings

We find rather interesting picture where tight monetary policy reduces the growth of the sector and fuels both food and overall inflation.

✓ Relevance

In essence, the implementation of unconventional monetary policy to tackle inflation by reducing the policy rate can spur growth of the agriculture sector, which would translate into an increased supply of food on the market and controlled food and overall inflation.

The economic implications of noncommunicable diseases on food security and resilience in Malawi

Moyo, R., & Chirwa, G. C. (2025). *Journal of Agriculture and Food Research*

✓ Introduction

Malawi is facing an increase in Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and ongoing food insecurity. Recent reports from the Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC) indicate that approximately 4.2 million people are expected to experience high levels of acute food insecurity. Additionally, NCDs are now the second leading cause of death among adults in Malawi, accounting for 16% of all fatalities, with a prevalence of 17% in males and 14 % in females. Despite the increasing prevalence of NCDs, their specific impact on nutritional status within the context of food security and resilience remains inadequately understood. The study estimated a Propensity Score Matching (PSM) model on a sample of 11,434 households from the Fifth Malawi Household Integrated Survey (IHS5).

✓ Enquiry

We assessed the economic implications of NCDs on food security and resilience by utilizing the household dietary diversity score, the food consumption score, and a reducing coping strategy index (rCSI).

- ✓ Households with NCD-affected members experienced challenges in accessing a balanced diet, with a decrease in the food consumption score of approximately 0.764 units compared with nonaffected households
- ✓ Additionally, these households demonstrated an increase in their rCSI score of approximately 1.162 units, suggesting reliance on different coping strategies to address food insecurity.
- ✓ The results also indicate that affected households struggled to obtain nutritious meals, with a reduction in their household dietary diversity score of approximately 0.117 units.

✓ Relevance

The findings highlight the importance of integrating health, agriculture, and social protection policies. Expanding initiatives such as the Affordable Input Subsidy (AIP), school feeding programmes and food nutrient fortifications, which not only serve as a social protection measure but also improve food security and nutrition, can have a substantial impact on long-term health outcomes.

Unlocking youth opportunities in the forest sector: The role of green jobs in generating youth employment in Malawi

Munthali, M. G., Nankwenya, B., Nyirenda, Z., Chilora, L., **Chiwaula, L.**, Chirombo, B., & Troosters, W. (2025) Forest Policy and Economics

✓ Introduction

Green jobs offer significant potential to address high youth unemployment rates in low-income countries. Utilising data from the 2023 Malawi Green Corps Survey, this study employed the Propensity Score Matching (PSM) approach to assess the impact of green jobs on the welfare of youths in Malawi. The study randomly sampled 989 youths (628 project beneficiaries and 361 non-beneficiaries) from 10 districts in Malawi.

2027
youths

The findings reveal that the project successfully recruited 2027 youths into green jobs focused on forest, soil and water conservation. Further results indicate that participation in the project positively impacted the youth's income and entrepreneurship development.

✓

The estimations indicate an increase in the current income of the youths involved in green jobs by approximately MK108,000.

42%

The results also show that the project increased the proportion of youths engaged in businesses by 42 %, further strengthening the connection between green jobs and entrepreneurial development.

✓

Results further demonstrated the need for long-term planning of green jobs to have a meaningful impact on poverty reduction.

✓ Findings

The findings reveal that the project successfully recruited 2027 youths into green jobs focused on forest, soil and water conservation. Further results indicate that participation in the project positively impacted the youth's income and entrepreneurship development. The estimations indicate an increase in the current income of the youths involved in green jobs by approximately MK108,000. The results also show that the project increased the proportion of youths engaged in businesses by 42 %, further strengthening the connection between green jobs and entrepreneurial development. Results further demonstrated the need for long-term planning of green jobs to have a meaningful impact on poverty reduction.

✓ Relevance

These findings underscore the transformative potential of green jobs in providing decent employment opportunities for youths in Malawi. Consequently, this study recommends that the

government and other stakeholders develop strategies and policies to effectively engage youths in the green sectors, ensuring sustainable development and economic resilience.

Spatial spillover effect of multi-dimensional poverty in Malawi

Ntodwa, E., & Chirwa, G. C. Humanities & social sciences communications

Introduction

High and persistent levels of multidimensional poverty pose a significant challenge in Malawi. Finding effective methods to eradicate poverty in all its forms remains a key policy concern. Economic and human geographical theories suggest that poverty persists due to spatial dependence and the resulting neighbourhood or spillover effects; the level of multidimensional poverty in one area is affected by that in neighbouring areas. Using the Alkire-Foster method, a local multidimensional poverty index was constructed based on the needs and characteristics of Malawi. This research employs a spatial lag model to determine whether poverty levels in a cluster influence neighbouring areas.

Enquiry

This study investigated the spatial patterns of multidimensional poverty in Malawi using data from the 2019 Integrated Household Survey.

Findings

- 61% Results show that as of 2019/2020, 61% of individuals in Malawi lived in multidimensional poverty.
- 51% On average, those affected experienced deprivation in 51% of the weighted indicators.
- ✓ The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) was lower in urban areas (0.148) compared to rural areas (0.342).
- ✓ Key findings reveal the significant spatial dependence of multidimensional poverty, indicating that poverty clusters geographically. Importantly, increased education in one area is correlated with reduced poverty in surrounding areas.
- ✓ Additionally, climate shocks do not only increase multidimensional poverty in the directly impacted clusters but they have ripple effects on neighbouring clusters.

Relevance

These results suggest that targeted anti-poverty interventions, particularly educational investments in poverty hotspots, could effectively reduce poverty in Malawi.

Assessing the cost implications of integrating and scaling up HIV services for key populations in Kenya and Malawi

Salas-Ortiz, A., Opuni, M., Figueroa, J. L., Sánchez-Morales, J. E., Banda, L. M., Olawo, A., **Munthali, S.**, Korir, J., DiCarlo, M., & Bautista-Arredondo, S. (2025).

Health Policy and Planning

Introduction

Limited research has been conducted on strategies to improve the efficiency of HIV services for key populations (KPs). Using data from the Linkages Across the Continuum of HIV Services for Key Populations Affected by HIV (LINKAGES) program in Kenya and Malawi, we exploit the variation in services provided to assess correlations between different service delivery configurations and their costs. We apply log-log fixed-effects regression models to analyze relationships between the total costs of four HIV services and the volume and range of services delivered

Enquiry

This study investigates ways to enhance healthcare delivery efficiency, focusing on HIV services for KPs. We explore two strategies: expanding service volume and offering multiple HIV services within a single health facility.

Findings

- ✓ We find that service volume increases correlate with higher total costs, albeit less than proportionally, consistent with possible economies of scale.
- ✓ Negative correlations between service integration and total costs suggest that integrating HIV services for KPs could lead to reduced total costs for some service combinations

Relevance

These results indicate potential strategies to increase the efficiency of HIV services for KPs, which can inform strategic planning and program execution in Kenya, Malawi, and similar countries.

The relationship between management practices and health facility performance: Evidence from low-resource, community-based facilities providing HIV services to key populations

Salas-Ortiz, A., Opuni, M., Figueroa, J. L., Banda, L. M., Olawo, A., **Munthali, S.**, Korir, J., Thirikwa, B. N., Bula, A., Persaud, N., & Bautista-Arredondo, S. (2025) [PLOS One](#)

Introduction

Management practices are deemed especially critical to performance in resource-constrained settings.

However, empirical evidence is limited for community-based organizations (CBOs) that provide health services. We collected data on 67 management practices from 45 CBOs in Kenya and Malawi and classified them into six domains—community engagement, financial management, operations management, people management, performance monitoring, and target setting. We calculated the scores for each domain, adjusting them for contextual characteristics to control for observed differences across organizations. Using ordinary least squares and quantile regression models, we explored the relationship between management and performance.

✓ Enquiry

- ✓ We studied the association between management domains and performance among organizations delivering HIV services to key populations.
- ✓ We assessed organizational performance using cost efficiency, service volume, and outreach service quality.
- ✓ We also estimated the relative contribution of each management domain to the explained variation of all performance indicators via a Shapley decomposition approach.

✓ Findings

Better management was associated with lower unit costs for antiretroviral therapy (ART) (\$-1,124 $p < 0.05$), HIV testing services (HTS) (\$-45 $p < 0.05$), and sexually transmitted infection (STI) screening, (\$-30 $p < 0.01$). Higher management scores correlated positively with HTS volume (2,806, $p < 0.001$) and outreach quality (258, $p < 0.05$). Financial management was the most important domain, explaining 13–49% of performance indicator variation, performance monitoring explained 31% of outreach quality variation, and target setting explained 23–34% of service volume variation.

✓ Relevance

These findings suggest that targeted capacity building in management practices, especially financial management, performance monitoring, and target setting, could improve the provision of HIV health services to key populations by CBOs.

Conceptualising the primary health care workforce: A meta-narrative-inspired review of stakeholder perspectives in Denmark

Hald, A. N., Enemark, U., **Mwale, M. L.**, & Burau, V. (2025). Health Policy

✓ Introduction

Primary healthcare (PHC) systems across Europe are under increasing pressure. In response, research has focused on how to develop and support PHC workforces. However, studies often neglect how stakeholders conceptualise the PHC workforce, even though this may influence reform processes. Denmark offers a relevant case due to the involvement of many stakeholders and longstanding tensions over workforce organisation.

We conducted a meta-narrative-inspired literature review, following RAMESES guidelines. The review included 49 sources (1980–2025), drawing on peer-reviewed articles, organisational documents, professional journals, policy texts, and political news. Documents were screened, appraised, and synthesised using an iterative narrative analysis. We identified dominant stakeholders, primary narratives, and key areas of policy contestation relevant to the PHC workforce.

✓ Enquiry

This study investigated the spatial patterns of multidimensional poverty in Malawi using data from the 2019 Integrated Household Survey.

✓ Findings

Across 45 years of reform and policy debate, three primary narratives have structured stakeholder perspectives: a medical narrative emerging in the mid-1960s, a health economics narrative gaining prominence during the 1990s, and a community narrative growing since the early 2010s. These narratives compete across and within stakeholder groups, most visibly in debates over governance, task-shifting, and whether recipients are framed as patients or citizens.

Period	PHC Narrative
1960s	Medical
1990s	Health Economics
2010s	Community

✓ Relevance

Stakeholders in Denmark conceptualise the PHC workforce differently depending on the narratives they invoke and the reform context in which they act. Reforms are more likely to gain traction when engaging these perspectives. Narrative-informed approaches can help anticipate resistance and support more effective PHC workforce development.

The Impact of Financial Inclusion on Multidimensional Poverty among Females In Malawi

Misomali, C., & Chirwa, G. C. Social Indicators Research

✓ Introduction

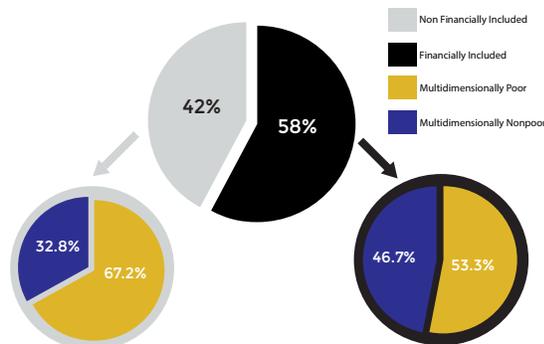
Financial inclusion and multidimensional female poverty are pressing issues globally, and they are especially significant in Malawi. Recent data indicate that both multidimensional poverty (non-monetary) and money-metric poverty remain disproportionately concentrated among females in Malawi. This persists despite numerous government programs aimed at addressing these issues. Although multidimensional poverty has shown a declining trend and financial inclusion has been increasing, women continue to be excluded than men. Previous studies suggest a positive link between financial inclusion and reductions in money-metric poverty. However, this relationship of nonmonetary aka multidimensional poverty, remains insufficiently explored in low-income contexts such as Malawi. Understanding the relationship between them is essential to addressing these challenges effectively.

Enquiry

This study assesses the effect of financial inclusion on multidimensional poverty among women.

Findings

Among the 23,862 females we analysed, approximately 58% were financially included. Within the financially included group, 53.3% were classified as multidimensionally poor. In contrast, 67.2% of the non-financially included group were identified as multidimensionally poor.



Results from the matching estimator suggest financial inclusion reduces multidimensional poverty among females.

5.9% This indicates that financial inclusion decreases the likelihood of experiencing multidimensional poverty among females by 5.9 percentage points.

Relevance

The findings indicate a need to invest in financial services catering to women. This investment is likely to reduce multidimensional poverty levels among women. Additionally, it is crucial for empowering women, reducing inequality, and eradicating poverty in Malawi.

Financial Stability Index for SADC Banks: Estimation, Property, and Inference

Senzani, S., Mangani, R., Silumbu, E., **Chaweza, R.** (2025) *Journal of Applied Mathematics*

Introduction

Monitoring the financial stability of commercial banks is crucial for assessing their long-term viability. Traditional stability indexes are typically constructed by identifying key financial and macroeconomic determinants and applying regression-based methods. However, these approaches lack flexibility, as they require recalibrating stability measures when market conditions evolve. Additionally, existing methods struggle to capture complex interdependencies between bank-specific financial indicators and external macroeconomic factors. The paper uses data from five Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries and compares three alternative modeling strategies: a mixture copula-based framework, a hybrid framework integrating copulas with autoregressive distributed lag (ARDL) models, and an extended hybrid framework incorporating both ARDL and a neural network.

Enquiry

To address these challenges, this study proposes a novel framework for constructing financial stability indexes using a Kullback–Leibler divergence (KLD)–inspired dynamic model.



Additionally, the study derives theoretical properties of the index, including sensitivity measures that quantify how stability responds to variations in financial and macroeconomic indicators. This flexible approach allows for incorporating diverse financial stability determinants without redefining existing stability proxies while also capturing entity-level characteristics and pairwise dependencies through multivariate dynamic models and Frank copulas.



Findings

The results demonstrate that the hybrid KL-ARDL and KL-NN models effectively differentiate between performance of banking industries in weak and stable economies, with the KL-ARDL model performing best.

Socioeconomic inequalities in immunisation of 12-23 months old children in Malawi: A decomposition analysis.

Naphiyo, B., Chirwa, C. G., & Mazalale, J. (2025) Frontiers in Public Health



Introduction

Given the benefits of the Expanded Program on Immunisation (EPI) to Malawians' health and, consequently, Malawi's economic development, coverage and equity in immunisation are necessary to track. In the 2019–20 Malawi Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), immunisation coverage of basic vaccines among 12-23-month-old children was at 72%. However, disaggregated immunisation coverage in some groups of children was below or above 72%. This study uses secondary data sets from three of Malawi's national representative cross-sectional surveys: the Malawi MICS 2013–14, the Malawi MICS 2019–20 and the Malawi Service Provision Assessment (MSPA) 2013–14. The MSPA 2013–14 was used to estimate the shortest distance between a MICS 2019–20 cluster and a facility offering immunisation services. The study utilized the concentration index to measure socioeconomic inequality and the Wagstaff decomposition to measure the marginal contributions of socioeconomic factors to inequality.



Enquiry

The disparities compelled the need to investigate the extent of socioeconomic inequalities drivers in child immunisation in Malawi.



Findings



The study found no socioeconomic inequality in 2013, but pro-rich inequalities existed in 2019 (0.065 for basic immunisation, 0.09 for age-appropriate immunisation), statistically significant at $p < 0.01$.



Wealth, maternal education and place of residence were significant factors contributing to the pro-rich inequalities in 2019.



Relevance

The results call for interventions that improve affordability and accessibility of vaccines and interventions that educate caregivers of the benefits of child immunisation to ensure equity. The

results, therefore, suggest that to improve equality in health outcomes, the Government of Malawi needs to embrace wider policies that do not only address the consumption of healthcare services but also policies that affect socioeconomic determinants of health.

An Examination of Inequality of Opportunity in the Use of Family Planning Services Among Women in Malawi.

Ndovi, T., Chirwa, G.C., Chiwaula, L. (2025) *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Social Problems*

Introduction

Equal access to family planning methods is fundamental to achieving health-related sustainable development goals in Malawi. Family planning is known to avert maternal deaths, improving a woman's health status. Malawi increased the contraceptive prevalence rate to 48.6% in 2020 from 38.1% in 2012. However, there persist cases of a high maternal mortality ratio of 349 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. The question remains as to why these adverse outcomes exist. Several studies in Malawi have established the existence of inequalities in sexual and reproductive health interventions with a focus on health status as an intrinsic component but did not consider the inequality of opportunity that contributes to the existing inequalities.

Enquiry

Using data from the 2015–2016 Malawi Demographic Health Survey (MDHS) and 2013–2014 Service Provision Assessment (SPA), this study examined inequality of opportunity in family planning services.

Findings

- Specifically, using the human opportunity index (HOI), the study established that modern contraceptives are inequitably distributed among women at the national level and respective sub-group analysis.
- Further, age, marital status, number of living children, and sex of the household head had a higher marginal contribution toward inequality of opportunity in family planning methods.

Relevance

As such, this calls for government-targeted interventions to improve access to family planning services, such as extending the implementation of the community health strategy to those in the urban areas and increasing awareness of the importance of family planning services to teenage women.

Tax and Noncommunicable Diseases Attributable to Tobacco and Alcohol Consumption in 5 Sub-Saharan African Countries.

Moyo, M., Nyirenda, T., Matanje, B. L., & Chirwa, G. C.(2025) *Frontiers in Public Health*

✓ Introduction

Increased taxation on alcohol and tobacco is among the cost-effective measures used to deal with the burden of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) globally. Despite adopting such efforts, the impacts of taxation on alcohol and tobacco are yet to be fully understood. The study adopted the System Generalized Method of Moments (SGMM) to explore the relationship between levels of taxes and NCD mortality rates. The SGMM allowed the inclusion of the dependent variable as an explanatory variable, assuming reverse causality was assumed.

✓ Enquiry

The study's objective is to find empirical evidence regarding changes in the NCD mortality rate associated with changes in the tax rates of tobacco and alcohol.

✓ Findings

- ✓ There appears to be a negative relationship between increased taxes and the rates of NCDs.
- ✓ Specifically, we provide empirical evidence supporting the negative association between taxes on alcohol and tobacco cigarettes and the mortality rates from NCDs, which aligns with the propositions advocated by the World Health Organization (WHO).
- ✓ Additionally, the interaction between alcohol taxes on spirits and beer indicates a possibility of complementarity, consistent with taxation principles.
- ✓ Notably, we also observed that higher tobacco cigarette prices are negatively associated with NCD mortality rates.

✓ Relevance

The results indicate that increasing taxes on major health risk factors is necessary to reduce non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Implementing these tax increases will likely help achieve Sustainable Development Goal 3.4, which aims to reduce NCD mortality by one-third by the year 2030.

The impact of multidimensional poverty on antenatal care service utilisation in Malawi.

Chatata, A., & Chirwa, G. C. (2025) Health Economics Review

✓ Introduction

Poverty remains a key barrier to accessing essential maternal health services, particularly in low- and middle-income countries like Malawi. Despite the recognised importance of antenatal care (ANC) in ensuring healthy pregnancies as well as improving maternal and child health outcomes, ANC services remain underutilised by many women living in poverty. This underutilisation is not solely driven by a lack of financial resources but also by a range of non-monetary factors that constitute multidimensional poverty, such as limited access to education, healthcare services, and infrastructure. While much of the existing literature focuses on monetary poverty, this study explores how multidimensional poverty impacts ANC utilisation. By examining how various deprivations intersect to limit access to ANC, this

research contributes to understanding the broader issue of healthcare inequality. Multidimensional poverty was constructed using the Forster-Akire method of the Oxford Poverty and Human Initiative (OPHI). We use data from the 2015–16 Demographic Health Survey (DHS), which includes information on women aged 15–49 who gave birth within five years of the survey. To mitigate selection bias, we use Propensity Score Matching (PSM) techniques for our principal analysis.

Enquiry

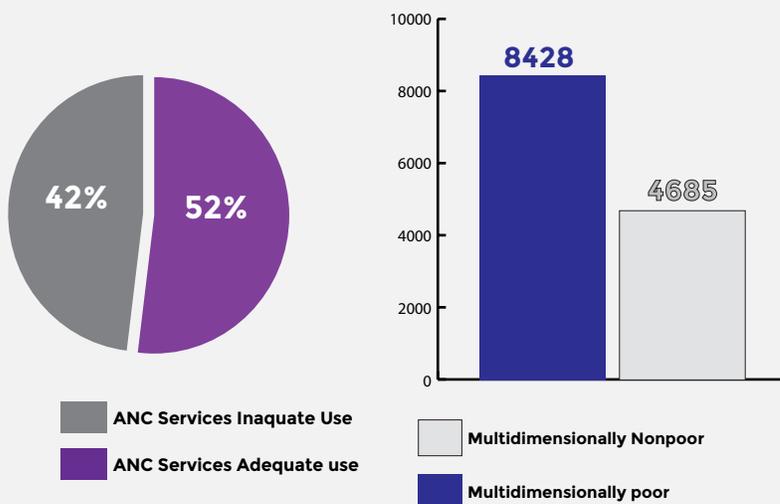
We assess the impact of multidimensional poverty (non-monetary) on antenatal care use in Malawi.

Findings

Our findings reveal that 52% of women adequately utilised ANC services. About 8,428 women were identified as multidimensionally poor, and 4,685 were classified as non-poor.

The results of our PMS analysis show a significant negative relationship between ANC utilisation and multidimensional poverty ($B = 0.52$; $P < 0.008$), indicating that multidimensionally poor women are less likely to use ANC services.

Similarly, the timing of ANC visits also showed a negative relationship with multidimensional poverty ($B = 0.26$; $P < 0.04$), highlighting that multidimensionally poor women are less likely to attend ANC visits within the recommended first trimester.



Relevance

The findings suggest that there is a need for sustainable investments in poverty alleviation programs to address and reduce multidimensional poverty as well as raise awareness of sexual and reproductive health concerns among adolescents and women in Malawi to improve maternal health outcomes.

Does the perceived feeling of being empowered in decision-making influence voting in Malawi?

Chirwa G.C., Pondani, E. and Mbwere .G. (2025) *Malawi Journal of Social Science*

Introduction

In any democracy, voting is a legal and recommended means of electing leaders. However, people’s perceptions regarding whether they are empowered in decision-making may affect their willingness to participate in a general election. We use multiple correspondence analysis to create an index that

captures people's self-expression. The analysis uses a matching approach (propensity score and doubly robust estimators) to assess the relationship between the perception of self-expression and participation in voting. A probit model complements this by evaluating the robustness of the results to changes in the methodological analysis.

✓ Enquiry

This paper assesses community perceptions of them being empowered and whether this is associated with voting.

✓ Findings

✓ The results show a positive association between self-expression and whether people voted in the previous general election in Malawi.

✓ Relevance

Regarding policy, in order to avert voter apathy in general elections, it may be essential to improve people's self-expression in their communities. Future research should consider using longitudinal data to answer the research question at hand.

Smallholder farming commercialisation and food security in Malawi: do land rights and intrahousehold bargaining power matter?

Manja, L. P., Zingwe, D. E., & Kamangila, A. E. (2025) Agriculture & Food Security

✓ Introduction

The role of agricultural commercialization in improving household food security has been widely documented. Convinced of its importance, in 2020, the Government of Malawi adopted agricultural productivity and commercialization as one of its three key pillars in the pursuit of Agenda 2063. Nonetheless, the importance of institutions in this nexus remains understudied. In this paper, we investigate the role of the interaction of engendered land rights regimes and intrahousehold bargaining power in dictating the agricultural commercialization–food security nexus in a male-dominated society of Malawi.

✓ Enquiry

We examine the effect of engendered land rights regimes and spouse bargaining power on commercialization of smallholder farming. Then, we analyze the effect of commercialization on food security factoring in the role of land rights regimes and intrahousehold power.

✓ Findings

✓ The study results show that households under a matrilineal land holding regime are less likely to commercialize and that an increase in spouse bargaining power increases the likelihood of commercialization.

- ✓ We also find spouse bargaining power to be instrumental in improving food security, especially for households under a matrilineal land holding regime.
- ✓ Interestingly, we find that an increase in commercialization is likely to improve food security for households under a matrilineal land holding regime if there is more spousal bargaining power.

✓ Relevance

Effective policy formulation and implementation around issues of agricultural commercialization and food security requires a fair understanding of the dynamics at play both within households and across different traditions. The results indicate that collaborative decision-making between the household head and spouse holds significant importance in the maximization of food-security-returns from commercialization. This is especially true for matrilineal societies.

Land rights and the impact of farm input subsidies on poverty convergence in Malawi.

Mwale, M. L., & Kamninga, T. M. (2025) *Journal of Land and Rural Studies*

✓ Introduction

Notwithstanding the globally significant progress in reducing poverty over the last two decades, many people still live in poverty. Consequently, social protection remains key to welfare sustainability. In this article, we used longitudinal data from Malawi to examine the impacts of farm input subsidies on poverty convergence. Convergence is coined here as the reduction in the persistence of poverty over time.

✓ Enquiry

- ✓ We specifically estimated the response of poverty convergence in a current period to farm input subsidies that were provided in a prior period to understand if the programmes build sustainable welfare resilience among poor households.
- ✓ We analyse the convergence in two opposing land rights regimes: matrilineal settlements, where only women hold rights to land, and patrilineal settlements, where only men hold rights to land. Matrilineal and patrilineal settlements offer varying incentives to household heads, who are often men, of investing in familial land.

✓ Findings

- ✓ We find that farm input subsidies lead to poverty convergence only in settlements where men hold rights to land and receive the subsidies on behalf of their households. Poverty convergence is non-responsive to the subsidies in settlements where men receive the subsidies on behalf of their households, while women, together with their extended families, hold rights to the land.
- ✓ We further find that the impact of farm input subsidies on poverty convergence is significant in a year when Malawi faced drought, suggesting that the subsidies built sustainable resilience against an unanticipated climatic shock in poor households.

 **Relevance**

The article calls for anti-poverty policies to target poor people while paying attention to their landholding traditions if shared prosperity is to be achieved.

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