

# New Faces, Same Challenges?

An Assessment of the Government of Malawi's  
Performance 2020-2025

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# List of Abbreviations

<b>ACW</b>	African Citizens Watch
<b>AIP</b>	Affordable Inputs Programme
<b>CONGOMA</b>	Council for Non-Governmental Organisations In Malawi
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation
<b>DDP</b>	Democratic Progressive Party
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization
<b>FISP</b>	Farm Input Subsidy Program
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology
<b>JCE</b>	Junior Certificate of Education
<b>MCP</b>	Malawi Congress Party
<b>MEAP</b>	Malawi Electricity Access Project
<b>MEC</b>	Malawi Electoral Commission
<b>MK</b>	Malawian Kwacha
<b>NACS</b>	National Anti-Corruption Strategy
<b>NAP</b>	National Action Response Plan
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>NYS</b>	National Youth Service
<b>SCT</b>	Social Cash Transfer
<b>TPD</b>	Total Public Debt
<b>UTM</b>	United Transformation Movement

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# Introduction

The 2025 Malawi Barometer report is based on the Malawi Citizens Watch Tracker. It is designed to provide a comprehensive and factual assessment of the Government of Malawi's performance in fulfilling its electoral promises. The report tracks 204 promises made by the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) during its 2020 campaign (See Annexe 1), categorising them into five (5) key sectors: Economy, Governance, Corruption, Climate Change, and Social Services. By systematically documenting government actions and triangulating data from reliable sources—including ministries, media platforms, and international organisations—the Barometer aims to offer an objective evaluation of the regime's progress over its five-year term.

The purpose of this report extends beyond accountability; it seeks to empower citizens, civil society, and policymakers with evidence-based insights ahead of the 2025 elections. This performance report helps

illuminate the gaps between political rhetoric and actual delivery, especially in critical areas like economic reform and poverty alleviation. Ultimately, the Barometer serves as a democratic tool to foster transparency, encourage informed voting, and strengthen governance in Malawi.

The African Citizens Watch (ACW) [platform](#) is a project within SIVIO Institute's Centre for Civic Engagement. It is a platform that tracks the extent to which governments convert electoral promises into policy actions. The tracking of governments started with Zimbabwe in 2018 and expanded in 2022 to now include Malawi, Zambia, South Africa and Botswana. The tracking process potentially contributes to a better understanding of how governments remain committed to election promises even after winning. The main question that we ask is, '*Are elected governments committed to the promises they make during the election campaigns?*' We mostly use the manifesto as the basis of tracking.

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The core mission of ACW is to promote transparency, accountability, and performance-driven governance. By scrutinising the strategies governments use to implement their campaign promises, ACW provides insights into whether these commitments align with their actual performance in national development. The platform potentially enables citizens to make voting decisions on the basis of past performance. It allows policymakers and researchers to have a better grasp of the progress made by the government, or lack of it.

In this report, we focus on how the Government of Malawi, led by President Lazarus Chakwera, has been able to convert the electoral promises made in the run-up to the elections. There were a total of 204 promises made, and of these, 14 have been fully implemented, 138 are in progress to be completed, and 10 have been broken.

As the country prepares for another round of elections, this report examines whether the government has been able to deliver on the promises it made and the expectations placed on it, or was it a case of new faces but the same challenges?

The report covers the period from

June 2020 to May 2025, before Malawi's next election in September 2025. The Government of Malawi framed its tenure and approach as a "systemic surgery," acknowledging the hardships endured by Malawians while emphasising the long-term benefits that will follow this.

The report is divided into five (5) sections. First, we provide a broader contextual analysis of policymaking and implementation in the past five (5) years. Governments do not operate in a vacuum and are not devoid of any legacy or historical issues or challenges that have a bearing on their performance. We then discuss the methodology behind the tracker and the assessment of performance. We discuss the performance of the Government of Malawi using the five (5) themes in the tracker (Economy, Governance, Climate Change, Corruption and Social Services). In this section, we have added short stories about performance in certain areas to enhance the monitoring discussion by casting a spotlight on best and bad practices alike. The report concludes by outlining some of the key lessons learnt based on what the Government of Malawi achieved or did not achieve during this period.

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# Background

Malawi's path to its current government was anything but conventional. The 2019 general election, initially meant to reaffirm democratic stability, instead plunged the nation into political turmoil. Malawians went to the polls on 21 May 2019 to elect the President, National Assembly and local government councillors. Incumbent President Peter Mutharika sought re-election for a second and final term under the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), facing opposition from Lazarus Chakwera of the MCP and Saulos Chilima of the United Transformation Movement (UTM). Saulos Chilima had been a member of the DPP and President Mutharika's Vice President before quitting the ruling party in 2018 after a fallout between the two. The electoral atmosphere was therefore tense, fuelled by widespread dissatisfaction over governance, economic stagnation, and allegations of corruption. This election was also the first one to be conducted under the new 2018 Political Parties Act, which regulates the funding of

parties and bans the practice of giving handouts during election campaigns (Government of Malawi, 2018).

The Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) announced Peter Mutharika's victory with 38.6% of the vote on 27 May 2019 (Africanews, 2019). Lazarus Chakwera and Saulos Chilima had received 35.4% and 20.2% of the vote, respectively, according to this announcement. The two opposition leaders and civil society groups swiftly rejected the results, citing irregularities including the infamous use of corrective fluid (commonly known as Tipp-Ex) on official vote-tabulation sheets by the MEC. Protests erupted nationwide from 2019 until 2020, with demonstrators demanding electoral justice and transparency. The legal battle that followed was unprecedented. On February 3, 2020, Malawi's Constitutional Court annulled the election, citing widespread irregularities and ordering a fresh vote within 150 days (Burke & Pensulo, 2020).



The landmark judgment that experts hailed as a step forward for democracy set the stage for a rerun election in June 2020. In the run-up to this election, there emerged an electoral coalition of opposition parties led by the MCP and the UTM - the Tonse Alliance (Bertelsmann Stiftung, [2022](#); Nation Online, [2024a](#)). It was agreed that Lazarus Chakwera would run as President, with Saulos Chilima his running mate and automatic designate for Vice President. Lazarus Chakwera, now backed by this coalition of opposition forces, emerged victorious. His ascent to power was not the result of a routine electoral cycle but rather a testament to Malawi's evolving democratic resilience, marked by citizen activism, judicial independence, and a rejection of electoral malpractice.

It is against this backdrop that we (SIVIO Institute) felt it necessary to expand our ACW initiative, which tracks the performance of governments, to cover the Government of Malawi.

After the overturning of the 2019 election outcomes and the ruling in 2020 by the High Court for new elections, resulting in a loss for the incumbent and a win for the opposition, there was much pressure on the new government to deliver. Malawi was the second country, after Kenya in 2017, to annul a presidential election, but the first where the opposition won the rerun. It therefore raised a key question as to whether a new political party in government would translate to improved performance and delivery by elected officials.

This report helps us answer the above question. We use the data we have collected through the Malawi Citizens Watch [Tracker](#) to provide an analysis of the government's performance during its first term of office. It assesses the extent to which it was able to fulfil the electoral promises outlined in the MCP [manifesto](#) and any other major policy pronouncements it made in the period under review (Malawi Congress Party, 2019).

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# Context

In the period under review, Malawi's economic growth has been fragile, with real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth slowing to 1.8% in 2024 due to severe drought and acute foreign exchange shortages. The poverty rate rose to 71.2%, and the number of people living in poverty is expected to increase in 2025, with an additional 417,000 people falling below the US\$2.15 per day threshold (World Bank, 2025).

The country has struggled with high inflation rates, exchange rate volatility, and fiscal constraints, which have undermined economic stability. Inflation is expected to remain above 30% due to a weaker agricultural recovery and high money supply growth. The severe foreign exchange shortages have limited imports, evidenced by the fuel crisis that the country has experienced over the last two years, and constrained economic activity. The scarcity of foreign exchange has hindered the country's ability to

recover from economic shocks.

Furthermore, the country continues to have a high debt burden. In February 2025, the Ministry of Finance in the 2025/2026 budget policy statement announced that Malawi's public debt stood at MK16.19 trillion [US\$10.18 billion] (85% of GDP) as of September 2024 (Government of Malawi, 2025). When President Chakwera took office in June 2020, the country's Total Public Debt (TPD) stock amounted to MK 4.1 trillion [US\$3.76 billion] or 65% of Gross GDP, up from MK 3.7 trillion in June 2019 (Ministry of Finance, 2021).

The economy still relies heavily on rain-fed agriculture. Agriculture accounts for approximately a quarter of Malawi's GDP and employs about 64% of the labour force (African Development Bank, 2023). It is also a major source of export earnings, particularly for tobacco, sugar, and tea. More than 80% of the country's population relies on rain-fed smallholder agriculture for food, making it susceptible to

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climate-related shocks, such as droughts and cyclones, which can significantly impact agricultural output and food security. During the period under review, the country has suffered successive natural disasters, including

five (5) tropical cyclones (Ana in January 2022; Gombe in March 2022; Freddy in February 2023; Chido in December 2024; and Jude in March 2025) and a drought in March 2024.



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# Methodology

To track and assess the performance of the Government of Malawi, we utilised a combination of data-driven analysis and independent research to create the Malawi Citizens Watch Tracker. This process entails systematically tracking, verifying, and scoring the Government of Malawi's progress on its policy promises. The approach ensures transparency, objectivity, and sectoral comparability by applying a standardised scoring system to each promise, then aggregating results by sector.

To build the tracker, policy promises were extracted from the official

MCP election manifesto. In their term of office, if the Government of Malawi made other key policy pronouncements, these were added to the promises being tracked. This serves as the authoritative source of campaign commitments. The promises are categorised into five (5) key sectors: Economy, Governance, Corruption, Climate Change, and Social Services. Actions taken by the government to fulfil each promise are tracked using a variety of reliable sources, as shown in the figure below.



FIGURE 1 Overview of Sources Used to Track Government Performance in Malawi

A tangible action that we record on our tracker comprises a set of activities spearheaded by the government, even in partnership with the private sector, multilateral agencies or bilateral partners, but there has to

be a direct government contribution. While using the sources mentioned above, we record only published developments; if the government has done something but unfortunately did not publish it, our tracker

will not have knowledge of the action.

We have established the five (5) categories of promise assessment as follows:

1

**In Progress**

This is where the actions towards fulfilment of the promise have started, but are not comprehensive, and more should be done towards fully implementing the promise.

2

**Implemented**

This is where the government actions have completely dealt with the promise, and work has been done to full capacity.

3

**Not Commenced**

This is where there has not been any movement towards fulfilling the promise.

4

**Modified**

This is when the government, due to other circumstances, has amended the promise to include/ remove other things but towards the same goal.

5

**Broken**

This is where government actions have gone directly opposite to what they initially promised.

All reported actions are triangulated and fact-checked across multiple sources before being recorded on the Malawi Citizens Watch [Tracker](#).

Each promise is assigned a status and corresponding score based on its implementation progress.

TABLE 1 Overview of Promise Score

Status	Description	Score
Implemented	Promise fully delivered as stated in the manifesto	14
In Progress	Partial fulfilment; measurable progress but not fully completed	1–13
Broken/ Not Commenced	No action taken or promise explicitly abandoned	0



FIGURE 2 Promise Assessment Scoring

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Each promise is scored based on how comprehensively these resources and actions have been deployed. A higher score within the 7–13 range indicates substantial progress, with most critical resources and steps in place, while a score lower than 7 reflects limited action or partial fulfilment.

For each sector, the average score is calculated by summing the scores of all

promises classified under that sector and dividing by the total number of pledges in the sector. This approach enables sector-by-sector comparison and highlights areas of relative strength or weakness in government performance. The overall government assessment score is determined by aggregating sectoral averages, providing a comprehensive snapshot of progress across all policy domains.

# Findings: What Has Government Achieved?

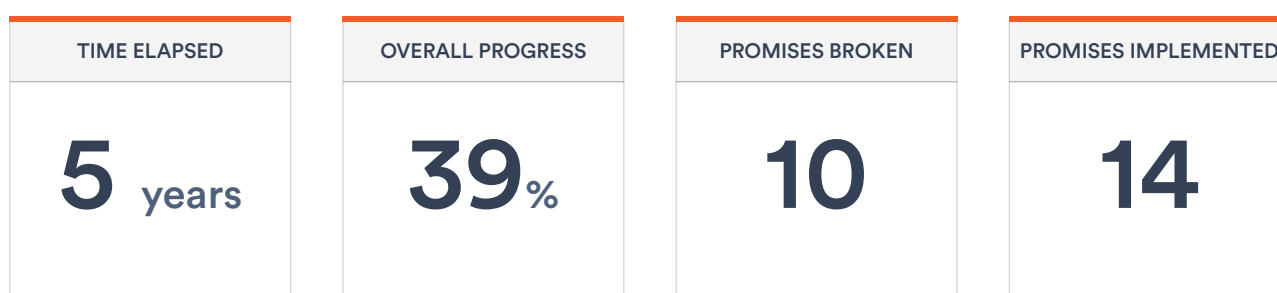


FIGURE 3 Overview of Government Achievements

The Government of Malawi made a total of 204 promises, which were clustered into five (5) categories, i.e., Economy, Governance, Climate Change, Corruption, and Social Service. The assessment of the Government of Malawi's performance reflects a range of complex and interrelated challenges that have shaped the current government's time in office. With an overall score of 39%, the Government of Malawi has had a below-average performance towards the commitments in building a thriving nation. The country has

faced significant economic challenges, including fuel and forex shortages, hyperinflation, and stagnant economic growth. Beyond domestic issues, the government's implementation of actions unfolded within a shifting regional and global landscape. The period between 2020 and 2025 was marked by economic volatility in Southern Africa, as nations grappled with post-COVID-19 pandemic recovery, inflationary pressures, and supply chain disruptions. Malawi faced the additional burden of fuel and forex shortages, hyperinflation, and stagnant

growth. Diplomatic efforts saw Malawi strengthening ties with key international partners, particularly in climate adaptation financing and infrastructure development, yet concerns remained about external debt sustainability.

Across all sectors, a combination of completed actions, ongoing initiatives, and unfulfilled commitments is observed. Some promises have been fully implemented, such as the

[reintroduction](#) of the Junior Certificate of Education (JCE); others are in progress, such as investments in infrastructure (e.g. the MK3 billion investment in Blantyre's roads) and improvements in access to clean water. However, others remain stalled, broken, or not commenced, particularly in areas such as reducing presidential powers in appointments, depoliticising recruitment, and strengthening border security.

TABLE 2 Overview of Sectoral Progress

Sector	Number of Promises	Number of Actions	Not Commenced	Implemented	Broken	In Progress	Assessment Score
Economy	89	230	19%	8%	4%	69%	44%
Governance	43	73	21%	12%	9%	58%	42%
Corruption	4	26			25%	75%	35%
Climate Change	6	16	17%			83%	41%
Social Service	62	147	24%	3%	2%	71%	33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>39%</b>

It is important to note that the President ascended into office at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The administration faced the dual challenge of rebuilding a nation recovering from the pandemic's severe impacts while simultaneously advancing its policy agenda, a balancing act that proved to be a double-edged sword.

The [departure](#) of UTM from the Tonse Alliance in July 2024 had a profound impact on governance and policy implementation. Initially, the alliance promised economic reforms, anti-corruption initiatives, and job creation,

but internal conflicts and power struggles undermined its ability to deliver on these commitments. With the coalition weakened, decision-making became more centralised within the MCP, raising concerns about policy continuity, particularly in areas such as economic management and public sector reforms. The breakdown of the alliance also eroded public trust, as citizens increasingly questioned the government's ability to fulfil its promises.

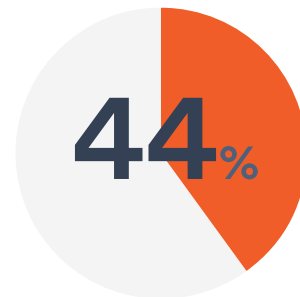
This political turbulence contributed

to the government's low performance score. Despite these challenges and a slow start, the Government of Malawi was able to make progress on a number of promises. The assessment

score is further explored and broken down across the five (5) sectors as detailed in the rest of the report.

## Economy

Assessment Score



Malawi's economy can be characterised as agriculture-dependent, structurally challenged, and vulnerable to external shocks. The country relies heavily on tobacco, tea, and sugar exports, making it susceptible to global commodity price fluctuations. Persistent issues such as currency instability, inflation, and fiscal deficits have hindered sustainable growth, while climate change impacts, like droughts and flooding, pose significant risks to food security. Despite efforts to diversify, industrial and service sectors remain underdeveloped, limiting job creation and economic resilience. This context shaped the policy decisions made during the period under review.

The Economy sector constitutes 44% (89/204 promises) of the total promises made by the Government of Malawi. A total of 222 actions were undertaken by the government in this sector, and substantial progress has been made since 2020.

This government achieved its best performance in this sector with an assessment score of 44%. Seven (7) promises have been fully implemented. Work has begun on sixty-one (61) out of 89 promises, while nothing has been done on seventeen (17) promises. The government has broken four (4) promises under this sector.

TABLE 3 Economy Subsector Analysis

	Subsector	Number of Promises	Number of Actions	Assessment Score
Economic Growth and Development	Management of the Economy	20	40	38%
	Agriculture and Food Security	11	36	47%
	Energy Access and Security	8	27	40%
	Trade Commerce and Industrial Development	13	24	40%
	Mining and Resource Governance	11	21	50%
	Tourism	7	23	53%
Infrastructure Development	Road Transport Network	5	18	49%
	Water Transport	3	2	15%
	Air Transport	4	6	52%
	Information Communication Technology	5	16	54%
	Urban Development and Planning	2	9	54%
<b>Total</b>		<b>89</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>44%</b>

The economic promises focus on infrastructure development, fiscal policies, and private sector support. Some highlights include:

- Expanding broadband internet access to all government offices and public facilities.
- Constructing a mega dam with the capacity to generate 2,000 megawatts of power.
- Promoting industrial growth through special economic zones and village factories.
- Increasing access to electricity to 60% of the population within five years.
- Enhancing trade policies by establishing designated markets for Malawian merchandise.

Some of the actions carried out are highlighted in the table below:

TABLE 4 Key Actions Taken by Government to Fulfil Economic Promises

Promise	Action	Status
Develop a tourism marketing plan	The Government of Malawi launched a 20-year Malawi National Tourism Investment Masterplan (2022 – 2042) on 21 August 2022. The Masterplan is a guide on how Malawi will implement 10 priority tourism projects across the country as one way of transforming the country through tourism development.	Implemented
Review and improve the National Export Strategy	The Government of Malawi launched the <a href="#">National Export Strategy II (2021-2026)</a> on the 17th of December 2021.	Implemented
Increase access to electricity to 60% within the next five years	Using the Malawi Electricity Access Project (MEAP), the Government of Malawi has been able to connect <a href="#">90,550</a> households to the grid by January 2025.	In Progress
Reduce the level of domestic and external debt from the current MK 3.5 trillion to less than MK 1 trillion within the next five years	The Government of Malawi overspent by MK500.6 billion in the 2024 -25 financial year, which ended on the 31st of March 2025. The Economic and Fiscal Policy Statement published on the 1st of June 2025 states that at the end of June 2024, the total public debt stock was MK15.2 trillion (81% of projected FY2024/25 GDP), equivalent to US\$8.75 billion.	Broken
Create a favourable environment for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to participate in the economy and contribute to national development	The Government of Malawi has assented to the controversial Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) (Amendment) Bill. The bill defines the roles of the NGO Board and Council for Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi (CONGOMA), besides demanding accountability for funds. CSOs had urged President Chakwera not to assent to the Bill, arguing it is aimed at gagging the operations of CSOs and undermining human rights and democracy.	Broken

## CASE STUDY 1 Agriculture - Universal Farm Input Subsidy Program

In the 2020 campaign, the MCP pledged to introduce a universal Farm Input Subsidy Programme that would reach every smallholder farmer across Malawi. This move marked a fundamental shift from the Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP) model toward inclusive agricultural support, promising not just affordability but dignity for farmers long excluded from consistent aid.

The Affordable Inputs Programme (AIP), launched in October 2021, was a bold translation of this promise (Nation Online, 2021b). Targeting over 3.7 million households, it distributed subsidised fertiliser and hybrid seed at a dramatically reduced price. The initial rollout sparked optimism, maize productivity surged, national surpluses were recorded, and food security appeared to stabilise in vulnerable regions.

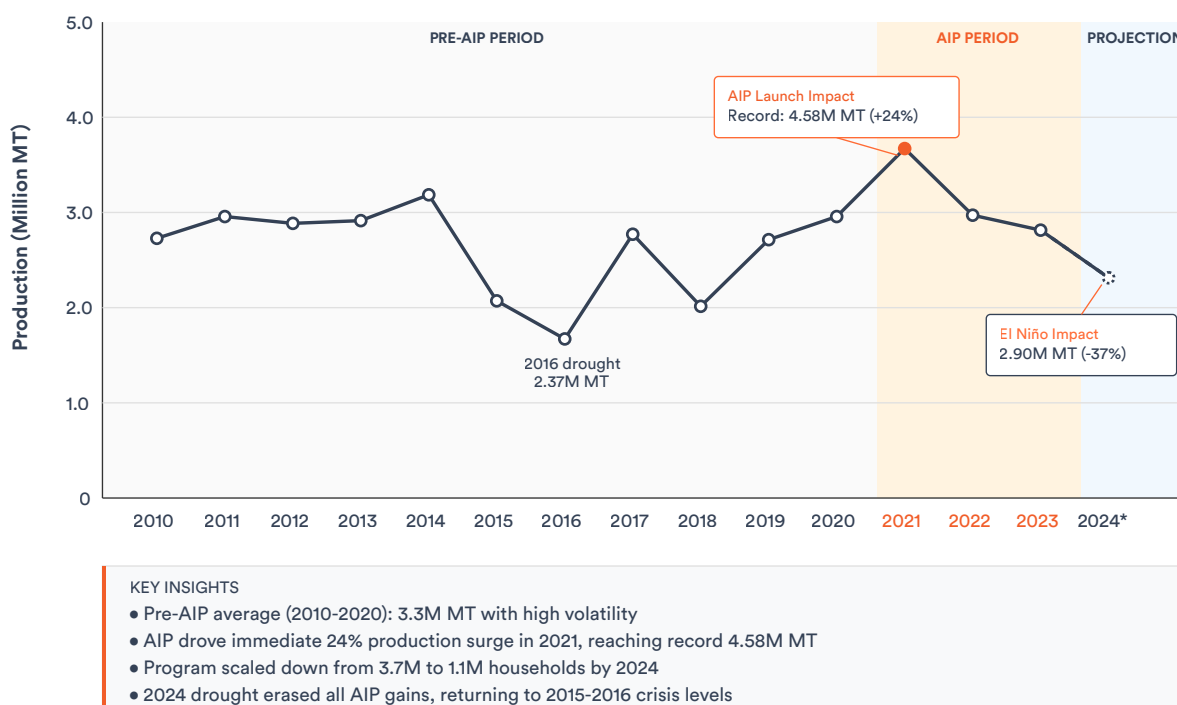


FIGURE 4 **Maize Production in Malawi (2010-2023)**

Source: Food and Agriculture Organization. (2024). FAOSTAT: Crops and livestock products [Data set]. FAO. <https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/QCL>; \*2024 projection from Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee

Yet, the program quickly revealed the tension between ambition and logistical reality. By the 2022/23 season, delivery delays and exclusion concerns emerged, particularly around village-level targeting and voucher redemption. While AIP still reached over 2.5 million households, redemption rates dropped, and criticisms mounted over corruption and inefficiency (Benson et al., 2024).

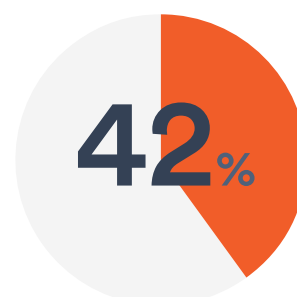
Climate shocks added another layer of fragility. In 2023/24, a devastating drought linked to El Niño affected approximately 2 million households, undermining the gains made during earlier seasons. The government responded by bundling AIP with climate risk insurance, signalling a strategic pivot but also reflecting the mounting cost of sustaining the subsidy at scale (African Development Bank, 2024).

By 2024/25, the fiscal strain became untenable. AIP scaled down to reach just 1.1 million households (Office of the Ombudsman, Republic of Malawi, 2024), and the policy discourse began shifting toward hybrid models incorporating organic inputs, targeted distribution, and resilience measures. The promise of universality had catalysed national change, but it also exposed the urgent need for systemic reform in subsidy design and agricultural planning.

Ultimately, AIP under President Chakwera's tenure stands as a case of policy boldness grappling with structural constraints. It improved maize yields and temporarily enhanced food security, but also revealed the fragility of rain-fed, monocrop-dependent agriculture, and the complex dance between political will and implementation reality.

## Governance

Assessment Score



Malawi's governance landscape can be characterised as a transitioning democracy grappling with institutional weaknesses and political volatility. Since the advent of multi-party democracy in 1994, the country's governance dynamics have been shaped by complex power struggles, persistent concerns about corruption, and a strong presidential system that centralises decision-making authority. The annulment of the 2019 election results and the outcomes of the second round of elections in 2020 generated

considerable public expectation for improved governance characterised by robust anti-corruption measures, economic stabilisation, and enhanced public service delivery, given that the opposition party had won. The Government of Malawi made 43 commitments under the Governance sector and undertook a total of 124 actions in the period under review, giving a score of 42%. By the end of May 2025, five (5) promises had been successfully implemented.

TABLE 5 Governance Subsector Analysis

Subsector		Number of Promises	Number of Actions	Assessment Score
Governance and Public Administration	Governance	19	81	46%
	Public Administration	10	14	28%
Homeland Security and Foreign Policy	Homeland Security	10	23	50%
	Foreign Policy and International Relations	4	6	36%
Total		43	124	42%

Governance commitments centre around transparency, institutional efficiency, and administrative reforms and include:

- Depoliticising public service recruitment and appointments.
- Establishing a Cyber Crime Prevention Unit to

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strengthen security.

- Reducing the presidential convoy to fewer than 10 vehicles.
- Ensuring the President appears before Parliament for accountability.
- Strengthening border security and modernising police stations.

There has been mixed success in governance reforms:

**Implemented:** Maintained the abolition of the tertiary education quota system. Instituted reforms

such as the establishment of the Malawi School of Government and more frequent presidential appearances before Parliament.

**In Progress:** Efforts to depoliticise civil service appointments and revamp the Public Finance Management System are underway, but concerns remain over transparency.

**Not Commenced or Broken:** Reducing presidential powers in appointments has not materialised, and traffic obstruction when the presidential convoy is passing continues despite promises.

## CASE STUDY 2    **Review of the Land Act to Safeguard Malawian Ownership**

Land ownership in Malawi is a critical governance issue, deeply tied to economic security, social justice, and national sovereignty (Jiva, [2024](#)). Historically, Malawi's land sector has faced challenges such as insecure tenure, inequitable access, and the risk of land loss to foreign and elite interests. The 2016 Land Act and related reforms aimed to modernise land governance, but public concerns persisted over loopholes that could undermine indigenous ownership and tenure security (Food and Agriculture Organization, [2016](#)).

The MCP identified land governance as a sector requiring urgent reform. Their electoral manifesto publicly pledged to review the Land Act, emphasising the need to protect Malawian ownership of land and address widespread public discontent with existing laws. In March 2022, the National Assembly passed the Land (Amendment) Bill of 2022, which prohibits the granting of land to persons who are not citizens of Malawi and seeks to resolve land-related issues among Malawians (Kondowe, [2022](#)).

As part of the implementation effort, the Government of Malawi has launched a national review of all foreign-owned land to ensure compliance with the amended laws. Secretary to the President and Cabinet, Colleen Zamba, emphasised that land ownership must align with Malawi's legal protections and national interests (Nation Online, [2023b](#)). While this marked a clear commitment to President Chakwera's directive, the amendments have stirred anxiety among estate owners, the Asian business community, and real estate agents who fear diminished investor confidence and unclear future provisions. Sensitisation campaigns by the Ministry of Lands aimed to clarify these reforms, especially in rural areas, with further institutional structures such as land committees and tribunals still in development to support smooth enforcement and citizen understanding.

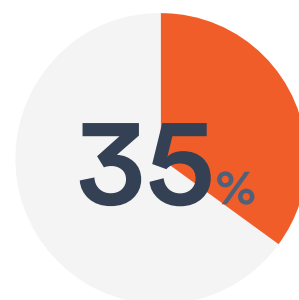
The Government of Malawi emphasised recalibrating Malawi's land governance framework to confront long-standing inequities and structural loopholes. Central to this effort was the closing of legal gaps that previously enabled speculative land holding and foreign acquisition, undermining indigenous ownership and national sovereignty. By reinforcing legal protections for smallholder farmers and vulnerable populations, particularly in rural areas, the government signalled its intent to safeguard the rights of those historically marginalised in land allocation processes.

By September 2024, the Parliament passed two more land-related bills (Fukula, [2024](#)), including the Property Evaluation Bill, which will ensure that there is proper evaluation of land and property, protect people from unfair pricing of land and property, and establish a Commissioner of Evaluation office and a tribunal to manage complaints concerning land and property-related issues.

These reforms reflect complete fulfilment of the promise. The legislative amendments directly address concerns over foreign land ownership and reinforce national sovereignty over land resources. While some stakeholders have raised concerns about investor confidence, the government has emphasised the importance of protecting indigenous land rights and ensuring orderly land administration.

## Corruption

Assessment Score



Malawi's fight against corruption is reinforced through legal and institutional commitments. Some of the key promises made include:

- Establishing special Anti-Corruption Courts for swift justice.

- Reviewing strategies to improve accountability in mining licenses and governance.
- Investigating and prosecuting illegal allocation of urban land.
- Strengthening financial transparency in public institutions.

TABLE 6 Corruption Subsector Analysis

Sub-sector	Number of Promises	Number of Actions	Assessment Score
Corruption	4	26	35%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>35%</b>

During the period under review, the country had to deal with a number of corruption scandals (Nzangaya, 2024), including the government's involvement in suspicious fuel deals with clients who do not meet the requirements. These and other cases have exposed deep-rooted financial mismanagement. Despite the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Courts, implementation gaps persist, with corruption continuing to affect public procurement, law enforcement, and service delivery. Efforts to strengthen anti-corruption frameworks have been met with resistance, highlighting the challenge of balancing political will with institutional independence.

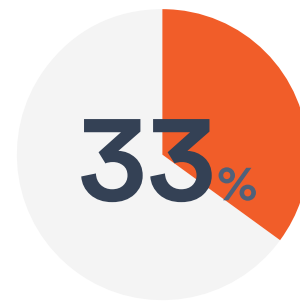
Corruption remains a major challenge despite notable actions. This includes:

- The creation of the Financial and Economic Crimes Division in the High Court (Mthembo, 2024) ensuring the prosecution of corrupt officials and increasing transparency in procurement processes.
- Efforts to investigate and prosecute those involved in illegal allocation and development of urban land are in progress, as Minister Kezzie Msukwa was arrested for the suspected illegal allocation of plots to Sattar, a corruption suspect (Nation Online, 2022).

However, concerns remain around allegations that persist regarding questionable government contracts (Nzangaya, 2024) and unfulfilled promises to reduce corruption at the executive level.

## Social Services

Assessment Score



Malawi's social services sector has been a focal point for development efforts, with policies aimed at enhancing health, education, youth empowerment, and improving access to infrastructure. Historically, gaps in education facilities, healthcare accessibility, and urban sanitation have posed significant challenges, particularly for marginalised communities. The government's commitments, such as Information

and Communication Technology (ICT) integration in schools, improved sanitation systems, and youth development initiatives, reflect a push toward inclusive growth. While notable progress has been made, financial constraints and implementation hurdles continue to affect the full realisation of these programs. This was the worst-performing cluster for the government with an overall score of 33%.

TABLE 7 Social Services Subsector Analysis

Subsector	Number of Promises	Number of Actions	Assessment Score
Education	17	29	29%
Water and Sanitation	4	23	45%
Gender Equality and Social Inclusion	10	16	24%
Social Protection	5	13	41%
Youth Development	10	26	45%
Housing	2	13	49%
Health	14	16	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>33%</b>

Social welfare promises made were meant to improve health, education, and infrastructure for Malawians:

- Constructing a state-of-the-art netball complex to support youth development.
- Expanding public university infrastructure and introducing an

academic exchange program.

- Ensuring every secondary school has a fully equipped ICT laboratory.
- Making water accessible to every Malawian, especially in rural areas.
- Revamping sanitation systems in urban centres to improve public health.

Significant progress has been made in education, health, youth development, and gender inclusion:

- **Implemented:** Malawi's reintroduction of JCE (Nation Online, 2021a), infrastructure expansion for secondary schools, and ICT labs in rural schools have been key achievements.

- **In Progress:** The National Youth Service Program has begun, focusing on job creation and vocational training (Chiwayula, 2022a).
- **Challenges:** While social cash transfer programs have expanded (Chiwayula, 2022b), funding allocation remains insufficient to fully meet the demand.

### CASE STUDY 3 Progress in Protecting Persons with Albinism in Malawi

For years, Malawi has witnessed a disturbing wave of attacks, abductions, and killings targeting people with albinism, driven by harmful myths and the illicit trade in body parts for ritual purposes (Africanews, 2021). These atrocities sparked national and international outrage, prompting calls for urgent government intervention and stronger legal protections. The Government of Malawi made the protection of persons with albinism a key human rights commitment, vowing to end the attacks and ensure their safety, dignity, and full inclusion in Malawian society.

Before President Chakwera's election into office, the Government of Malawi had in 2014 developed and adopted a National Action Response Plan (NAP) on Albinism Atrocities as an operational plan to guide all national initiatives aimed at addressing the attacks perpetrated against persons with albinism in a concerted manner (Malawi Human Rights Commission, 2021). The Response Plan also aimed to act as a resource mobilisation tool for all national efforts to end atrocities. It signified national political commitments and policy framework to end the high level of human rights violations perpetrated against persons with albinism.

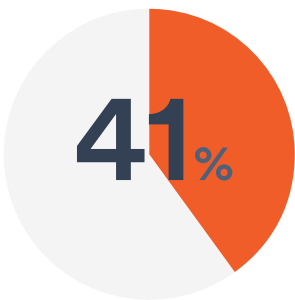
In their electoral promises, MCP committed to funding and operationalising the National Action Plan on persons with albinism; empowering community policing initiatives; and guaranteeing security for people with albinism. In the 2022/23 national budget, the government allocated K300 million for the implementation of the Action Plan for the Protection of People with Albinism (Malawi Government, 2022). This marked a significant step toward institutionalising protection mechanisms and addressing long-standing vulnerabilities. In contrast, by June 2022, budget adjustments were made, with the allocation later reduced to K200 million, raising concerns about sustained funding and prioritisation.

To offer more security to the people with albinism, the government constructed 57 houses for persons with albinism across Malawi to enhance physical security and reduce exposure to attacks (Malawi Voice, 2024). Government officials have publicly reaffirmed their commitment to protecting persons with albinism, citing improved security and reduced incidents of violence (Nkhoma, 2024).

Although the promise has not been fully realised, measurable progress has been made. The allocation of funds, construction of secure housing, and public reaffirmation of commitment reflect partial fulfilment. However, budget cuts and limited transparency around community policing suggest that continued monitoring and citizen engagement are essential to ensure full delivery.

# Climate Change

Assessment Score



Malawi faces significant climate risks, including extreme weather events such as cyclones, droughts, and floods. These challenges have intensified food insecurity, disrupted livelihoods, and strained disaster response

mechanisms. The government has recognised the urgency of climate resilience, emphasising capacity-building programs to equip communities with the knowledge and tools needed for adaptation.

TABLE 8 Climate Change Subsector Analysis

Sub-sector	Number of Promises	Number of Actions	Assessment Score
Climate Change	6	16	41%
Total	6	16	41%

A key focus has been climate-smart agriculture (Nation Online, 2023c), which integrates irrigation technologies and winter cropping to mitigate the impact of erratic rainfall. Climate Change constitutes 3% of the total promises made, and the climate-related pledges focus on environmental resilience and sustainable development. These include:

- Enhancing local government, communities and institutions’ capacity to deal with climate change effects
- Empowering local governments to manage climate change risks.
- Investing in riverbank protection, afforestation, and disaster management.
- Helping smallholder farmers build resilience against climate shocks.

- Finalising and implementing a national climate change policy framework.

The government has made progress on environmental resilience and disaster management. In terms of the promise around capacity-building programs for climate change, the government and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) signed a US\$52.3 million project agreement to help the country cope with the devastating effects of climate change (Nation Online, 2024b). The government was expected to contribute US\$9.4 million towards the project, with FAO and the Green Climate Fund contributing the balance.

In 2024, the Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services provided training to journalists across Malawi to improve their understanding of weather conditions to effectively communicate climate change issues

to the public and support government efforts to put in place early warning signs and promote actions for a safer Malawi (MBC Online, [2024](#)).

The Ministry of Agriculture launched a Catchment Conservation campaign in Zomba to help farmers in the adoption of alternative farming practices in response to climate change (Likaka, [2023](#)). This was part of efforts to help smallholder farmers build resilience against climate shocks.

No action has been taken towards the promise of finalising and implementing the national climate change policy framework. While actions around fulfilling comprehensive riverbank protection, afforestation initiatives, and enforcement of environmental regulations have been limited. Under this action, Lilongwe Water Board employees, by February 2024, had planted 2,000 trees around its wastewater treatment plant out of a targeted 8,000 trees (Mhone, [2024](#)).



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# Lessons Learnt: Key Takeaways

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## Policy Implementation is Deeply Affected by the Macro-Economic Context

Policy implementation does not happen in a vacuum. Over the past five (5) years, Malawi's policy landscape has been influenced by a series of economic shocks. The COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters (droughts and floods), and global disruptions such as the war in Ukraine have all increased the country's economic fragility. These events strained public finances, disrupted supply chains, and caused inflationary pressures that hindered the government's ability to meet its policy commitments. This highlights the importance of basing policy promises on realistic economic assessments and contingency planning.

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## The Gap Between Political Rhetoric and Governance Reality

A recurring theme has been the disconnect between campaign promises and actual delivery. While

political manifestos often contain ambitious goals, the realities of governance—limited fiscal space, bureaucratic inertia, and shifting priorities—often hinder implementation. For example, the promise to reduce the presidential convoy to 10 vehicles was contradicted by the procurement of 14 new vehicles (Nation Online, 2023a). Similarly, the pledge to reduce public debt to below MK1 trillion was not only unmet but reversed, with debt ballooning to MK15.1 trillion by August 2024 (Mmana, 2024).

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## Need for Realistic and Context-Aware Campaign Promises

Political actors must align their campaign promises with the prevailing socio-economic realities. Overpromising in a fragile economic environment sets the stage for inevitable disappointment. Future political campaigns should prioritise feasibility, costed plans, and timelines that reflect the country's capacity and constraints.

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# Conclusion

Overall, this assessment report highlights the disparity between campaign promises and policy implementation. The Government of Malawi has made some strides in aligning its governance agenda with its electoral promises, particularly in economic policy, social services, and climate action. However, challenges persist in translating commitments into policy execution. While there have been efforts to stabilise the economy, enhance infrastructure,

and address corruption, systemic governance constraints have slowed progress. Strengthening institutional accountability, fostering inclusive stakeholder engagement, and reinforcing sustainable development policies will be crucial to ensuring long-term effectiveness. The administration's ability to navigate these challenges will define its legacy in shaping Malawi's economic resilience, governance integrity, and environmental sustainability.

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## About SIVIO Institute

SIVIO Institute (SI) is an independent organisation focused on ensuring citizens are at the centre of processes of sivio-economic and policy change. It aims to contribute towards Africa's inclusive socio-economic transformation. It is borne out of a desire to enhance agency as a stimulus/catalyst for inclusive political and social-economic transformation. SIVIO's work entails multi-disciplinary, cutting edge policy research, nurturing citizens' agency to be part of the change that they want to see and working with communities to mobilise their assets to resolve some of the immediate problems they face.

SIVIO Institute has three centres/programs of work focused on; (i) civic engagement, (ii) philanthropy and communities (iii) economic development and livelihoods. In the process SI addresses the following problems:

- Inadequate performance of existing political and economic systems
- Increasing poverty and inequality
- Limited coherence of policies across sectors
- Ineffectual participation in public processes by non-state actors
- Increased dependence on external resources and limited leveraging of local resources