

# BETTER TOOLS FOR DATA COMMUNICATION

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# 1. Main challenges

# THE NATION

## COMMENT

### Govt should stop experimenting with lives of employees

Old habits die hard. Government has once again made headlines for delaying salaries for employees at the Ministry of Health headquarters and medical personnel in central hospitals.

The malignant cancer has been there before the introduction of the decentralised salary payment system now reputed for creating pain than good in the civil service. In December, teachers in the Shire Highlands Education Division (Shad)—especially those from Thyilo, Mulanje and Chitralulu—also went home empty-handed due to what the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development spokesperson Mulihaabe Mughogho described as a technical problem in the new system.

This time around the payment system suffered another hitch after a mistake occurred in deducting a loan from a Ministry of Health employee. Whatever the reasons one gives, employees are entitled to receive their salaries at an agreed date in a month. A salary is non-negotiable.

We cannot agree more with the Civil Servants Trade Union (CSTU) which laughed off at the reason government gave yesterday and attributed the delays to their incompetence on the part of officials managing the system.

How can a mistake in a loan deduction degenerate into a crisis of this magnitude, leading the majority of civil servants to ransom?

Government should stop experimenting with the lives of its employees considering that this is not the first time the system has wreaked havoc in the civil service.

Government should not treat its employees with contempt, but with empathy and accord them the respect and dignity they deserve.

When it was introduced, civil servants were told that the system would improve efficiency in salary payments. Is this the efficiency government was talking about? ■

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## Payroll devolution causes salary delays

◀ PAGE 1

embarrassment of being poked mid-way into March. This is because a mistake on deduction of a loan repayment of an officer at the Ministry of Health has caused the delay in payment of February salaries.

The Ministry of Health headquarters and central hospitals are the latest to be hit with salary

delays as a result of the devolution of the payroll from central government to district councils.

The latest hitch and its reasons have caused the Civil Servants Trade Union (CSTU) to describe it as a display of incompetence of officials' incompetence.

Until yesterday, there was a mystery on how the ministry's headquarters and central hospitals could have been affected

## Malaria drugs in short supply in hospitals

◀ PAGE 1

Karungu District Hospital, have been running without any essential drug after the Central Medical Stores Trust (CMST) stopped supplying due to budget exhaustion.

The development is putting lives of many Malawians at risk as experts say malaria is the biggest cause of morbidity and mortality in Malawian

children under the age of five.

The disease is also the cause of four in every 10 deaths (40 percent) of children under the age of two.

The World Health Organisation also says children under five suffer an average 97 malaria episodes per year, while adults suffer 61 such episodes. Statistics show that about

500 000 malaria patients are treated every month in public and Christian Health Association of Malawi (Cham) health facilities, claiming around 110 lives on average each day.

This is worse than HIV and Aids deaths which according to the 2015 HIV and Aids estimates, stood at 27 000 deaths per year translating to about 74 deaths per day.

Chikumba confessed that the drug was not being dispensed because authorities at such health facilities have failed to comply with the requirement that demands them to reconcile how the drugs are used.

"We are aware that some public health facilities may not have anti-malarial drug

▶ PAGE 3

## 38 College of Medicine students risk withdrawal

MERCY MALIKWA  
STAFF REPORTER

About 38 foundation year students at the College of Medicine (CoM) could be forced to withdraw this year for either failing to pay K250 000 tuition fees or balance of the same.

Last week, needy students who received partial loans from Higher Education Students Loans and Grants Board (HESL&GB) were not allowed to sit for the second mid-semester examinations though later they were allowed to sit the examinations.

One of the needy students, Moses Witte, who is studying towards attaining a bachelor's degree in pharmacy, said he has a balance of K400 000 which he does not know where it will come from.



PHOTOGRAPH: JAMES CHIPWANDA

Some of the affected students at College of Medicine yesterday

He said he was not considered for a loan despite applying, adding that a well-wisher from his church, Kanjeda Seventh Day Adventist (SDA), paid K125 000 in the first semester.

"This money only allowed me to register for the first semester, but come second

semester, my parents could not afford to raise the balance. We are already struggling to source funds for accommodation, stationery and meal allowances," said Witte.

CoM dean of students Associate Professor Fauel Lampia, while not giving

the exact figure of the needy students, confirmed that there are students who, since the onset of the 2016/17 academic calendar, have not paid anything to the college while others only managed to pay K200 000 which was

▶ PAGE 4

## Health Crisis

by an exercise which in the past two months was being carried out between Capital Hill and district councils.

After the devolution of the payroll to councils, only salaries for civil servants in the ministry's headquarters, Ministry of Nutrition, Mezu Central Hospital,

the anomaly yesterday. Ministry of Finance public relations officer Alfred Kurēngule explained that the technical matter arose because the payroll system was sensitive to errors.

"One person had a loan which was over-deducted leaving his salary in the negative. The process could not be completed because of that anomaly," he said.

Kurēngule added: "The system is such that when there is a single error it cannot run. This happens even if it's a single file affected."

Ministry of Health spokesperson Adrian Chikumba also confirmed the delayed salary payments, attributing the problem to the delinking of the district health offices' (DHOs) payroll

▶ PAGE 3

## APM launches cancer centre construction in Lilongwe

JACOB NANKHONYA  
STAFF WRITER

President Peter Mutharika yesterday launched the construction of a Cancer Treatment Centre in Lilongwe by outlining a number of projects in the health sector to improve service delivery.

The projects include construction of Blantyre, Zomba and Dowa hospitals and a modern military hospital for Malawi Defence Force equipped with an air ambulance.

Speaking at the groundbreaking ceremony of the centre, to be located at Kamuzu Central Hospital (KCH), Mutharika said government will allocate money for more projects in the next financial year.

"We are concluding evaluation process for Phalombe District Hospital and next year, the project of the hospital is commencing. I will also tell the Minister of Health to put provisions in the next budget for Blantyre District Hospital," he said.



PHOTOGRAPH: JACOB NANKHONYA

Mutharika said the cancer centre will reduce the cost and number of patients sent outside for treatment by 50 percent.

He said: "We will no longer send our cancer patients outside Malawi. As such, this Cancer Treatment Centre will cut

down the cost of sending patients abroad by at least 50 percent.

"I want us to stop exporting patients. Instead, we must begin exporting medical care services. Time has come for other nations to come to Malawi for medical

care."

The cancer centre is being constructed with a loan from Opec Fund for International Development (Ofid) to the tune of \$13 million (about K10 billion). The next budget for Malawi Government will also make financial

## Workers' salary delay further

◀ PAGE 2

from headquarters. "We are hoping by next week, this will be sorted out," he said.

But in a memo dated March 7 2017 addressed to hospital directors, directors in the ministry and staff the ministry indicated that February salaries would delay further.

The Ministry of Health would delay further the de-linking of the district health offices payroll from headquarters.

"I want also to see full support given to the Christian Health Association of Malawi [Cham]. Let us honour our service agreement with Cham because these are the people that reach our people's lives where there are no government health facilities," he said.

For years, there has been a sour working relationship emanating from failure to pay Cham for the patients from government hospitals. ■

▶ PAGE 4

## Govt confirms shortage of anti-malaria drugs

◀ PAGE 2

especially LA. But this is due to poor reporting by responsible officers because they are supposed to account for every stock they receive as per requirement from those who provide the drugs," explained Chikumba.

Over 90 percent of Malawi's drug budget has over the years been funded by donors such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the British Department for International Development (DfID).

In the absence of proper reconciliation, Chikumba said it becomes difficult for the ministry to determine exactly how they used the drugs for more than six months when they are supposed to do that on a



PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREW MUKHOMBA

Patients being assisted at the Accidents, Emergency and Trauma Centre last evening

monthly basis. Health rights activist Maazko Matemba said it was unfortunate that issues of lack of essential medicines

keep on emerging when this was supposed to be the baseline of the country's health services.

▶ PAGE 4

## BRIEF

### Nankhumwa warns council officials against corruption

Minister of Local Government and Rural Development Kondwani Nankhumwa has appealed to district commissioners (DCs), chief executive officers (CEOs) and top council officials to avoid embezzling funds meant for various development projects. The minister said this yesterday in Mangochi where he presided over the 2017 Local Government Authorities' Conference, which was attended by DCs, CEOs, council chairpersons, the academia and council directors. Nankhumwa said government is committed towards decentralisation through the public service reform. "We are serious and committed to turning around things. But this cannot be achieved if we have corrupt officials within the system. Hence, let me implore all council officials to avoid stealing government funds," said Nankhumwa. In an interview, Malawi Local Government Association chairperson Wild Ndiwo, who is also Blantyre City mayor, emphasised that the purpose of the conference, saying it came at time government is repositioning itself.—AYAMBA KANDODO, CORRESPONDENT

# Tradeoffs between data collection and service delivery

*“A clinician is supposed to produce good data, but he has other responsibilities ... so if there are many patients he will record data after work, so people sometimes spend the night, extra time, even weekends to feed the data.”*

**Facility Medical Officer**

# Broken link between data collection (indicators) and data use

*“If someone modifies livestock farming, builds a good house, takes children to school, and increases from one meal to three meals [per day] ...these are changes that you can notice...though we rarely reach that outcome level...”*

**--Agriculture Extension Officer**

# Data use is neither required, recognized nor rewarded.

RING PROJECT ~~STOCK~~ LIVESTOCK.  
Stock level as at 27/11/2015

Community	# of Beneficiaries	Total no. of animals received	Births	Deaths	Still Births	Remarks
1 Salamba	56	280	3	54	3	
2 Chanzemi	25	125	29 <sup>31</sup> <sub>25</sub>	9+2 <sup>11</sup> <sub>25</sub>	14	
3 Baglaha	20	100	14	14	7	
4 Lokaga	29	140	27	22	6	
5 Juni	25	125	38	9+2 <sup>11</sup> <sub>10</sub>	5+1 <sup>4</sup> <sub>6</sub>	
Total as at 27/11/15	154	770	113	111	36	

# So why bother?



# Lack of tools

- There is a demonstrated demand for better tools and trainings to equip local-level data users with the skills to analyze and apply results data in their work



# Summary of challenges

- Are there ways to ensure that the information is made more useful (both on the demand and supply side)?
- Why the disconnect?



## 2. The case for 2 data tools

# Aid Management Platform

- The Aid Management Platform, managed by the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning & Development, is the Government of Malawi's official source of statistics and data about foreign aid spending.



# Open Schools Kenya

- Open Schools Kenya (OSK) is a project that was piloted in Kibera, Nairobi through a Gates Foundation Grand Challenge grant on data interoperability, obtained by Map Kibera Trust, GroundTruth Initiative, Development Gateway, and Feedback Labs





## 3. The Aid Management Platform - Malawi

# CASE of AMP Public Portal

<http://malawiaid.finance.gov.mw/portal/>

The screenshot displays the AMP Public Portal interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the AMP logo, links for HOME PAGE, USER GUIDES, and REPORTS, and a Login button. The main content area features a map of Malawi with three regions highlighted in red circles, indicating the number of activities: Northern Region (162), Central Region (270), and Southern Region (221). The map also shows various provinces and districts. On the left side, there is a sidebar with navigation options: PROJECT DATA (with a description: 'View where projects are being implemented throughout the country.'), STATISTICAL DATA, FILTER, SHARE, and SETTINGS. A legend in the bottom right corner explains the red circle icon as representing the 'Number of activities at this Region'.

AMP HOME PAGE USER GUIDES REPORTS Login

Region , 01/07/2000 - 30/06/2021 Open Street Map

**PROJECT DATA**  
View where projects are being implemented throughout the country.

- Country
- Region
- District
- Project Sites

**STATISTICAL DATA**

**FILTER**

**SHARE**

**SETTINGS**

Map Data: Northern Region (162), Central Region (270), Southern Region (221)

**Legend**  
Region  
# Number of activities at this Region

Data Sources

# AMP features

- It makes detailed information on development programs fully open to the public for the first time
- geocoding component that helps development partners to enter data on the precise locations
- *“Greater transparency of development activities would help Malawi to guard against further corruption and waste in the use of development resources,” - Minister of Finance Maxwell Mkwezalamba, 2013*

# What about tool use?

- We have begun systematic documentation of AMP use cases at subnational level. So far:
  - Some CSO's are working at subnational level with the District councils to ask track aid-effectiveness (eg. Malawi Economic Justice Network - MEJN) by engaging with ward representatives.
  - Questions about quantity and quality of data have been triggered.
  - The Ministry of Finance has undertaken training/publicity of the tool at the districts; but now are seeking creative/effective ways to have further use at district level.



# Does aid go to those most in need? (2014 study using AMP data)

- The allocation of funding varies by year - in terms of whether it was given to those with the poorest health conditions
- Aid appears to be going to more populated areas; poorer areas are less likely to receive aid than their wealthier counterparts
- Giving aid to population centres, where people are relatively better off generally but where many poor people also reside in concentrated numbers, may enable aid to have more impact.



## 4. The Open Schools Kenya Platform

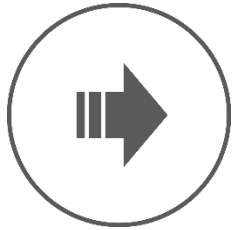


# OSK Features

- A first “living” datasets (after a long time) about education (school location, fees, class size, or building types, # of students/teachers, sanitation and health facilities), combining citizen-sourced and government data about schools in Kibra.
- Users can access profile information and compare services, view pictures, for over 350 government and independent schools in Kibra.
- Platform built using open data principles.

# Highlights from use

- The map has is used by community and government administration for resource planning purposes for schools, WASH facilities, etc.
- Maps were printed from the application and distributed to headteachers – has created trust
- Tool is addressing emerging challenges – a road was to be built across Kibra that might put close to 3000 students out of school (poor feasibility was previously done)



## 5. Way Forward

# By building better tools

- We:
  - Surface important narratives that might be missed by different audiences.
  - Stimulate demand for data (through easy-to-use tools).
  - Highlight the gaps visually:
    - Of data quality
    - Of problem area itself

# Summary

- Training and capacity building is key: it will equip local-level data users with the skills to interpret, analyse and apply results data in their work