

FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS START WITH ME

AN ABC GLOSSARY OF ELECTION WORDS AND TERMS

FORWARD

The will of the people as expressed in genuine, democratic free and fair elections is the basis of authority of any democratic government. The authority can not be established unless voters make a free and informed choice among political contestants.

The terms and words defined in this book shall enable the readers to understand the electoral process better and knowledge to be gained shall encourage them to participate in the electoral process.

It is the duty of every citizen to actively participate in the electoral process as that is the only time when all citizens who have reached the voting age individually are asked to make a democratic decision on which candidate should represent them in the Local Assembly, National Assembly or to be their Head of State.

While it is impossible to have democracy in a country without genuine elections that are free and fair, the democratic process extends beyond Election Day. Democratic governance requires an active and informed citizenry and this book will play a vital role in providing citizens with basic knowledge they need to exercise their right to take part in government and public affairs.

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INTRODUCTION

Although elections have been held in Malawi since Independence struggle in the early 1960's, Candidates and Voters are often confused by certain terms that are used to describe the electoral process. They therefore assume that those terms should be known only by those officials conducting elections.

It would not be surprising that even some elections officials and agents cannot fully define the words and terms associated with elections in Malawi.

Due to such a gap of knowledge, both the voters and candidates sometimes break elections rules and in some other instances do not demand for the application of the law because they are not aware of their rights as well as the duties assigned to various individuals and groups during elections.

This pocket size book defines some of the common terms associated with elections in Malawi and hopefully it will assist voters, candidates and election officials to understand the electoral process better so that they can participate in the creation of free and fair elections.

We wish to register our gratitude tofor funding the publication of this book and their continued support in the consolidation of the democratization process in this country. We also thank the Malawi Electoral Commission through the Chair Person for approving the production and publication of this pocket size book and we also thank the consultants and printers who were engaged at various stages.

SOURCES

The terms and words appearing in this book are some of the commonly used terms and words in the electoral process. Sources include:

- a) *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, ninth edition, Oxford University Press 1995.
- b) CORE (Co-operative for Research and Education), Election Management Series, Eight Manuals Johannesburg 1997.
- c) *Democracy for All, Street Law* (South Africa), Lawyers for Human Rights (South Africa).
- d) *National Institute for Citizen Education in the Law* (USA) 1994.
- e) *Glossary of Electoral Terms and Related Concepts*, Namibian Institute for Democracy 1997.

- f) Hague R.M. Harrop, and S.Bleslin, *Comparative Government and Politics, An Introduction*, London, Macmillan 1992.
- g) *An ABC of Elections in Kenya* 1997.
- h) *The Constitution of the Republic of Malawi* 1995
- i) *The Malawi Electoral Laws* (Parliamentary and Presidential Elections Act 1993, Local Government Elections Act 1996 Electoral Commission Act 1998).

ACCREDITATION

Official recognition of an organization or individual by the Electoral Authority (Commission) based on fulfillment of specific criteria, which denotes approval of their status as civil society election monitors or observers (local and international).

ADVOCACY

The sustained effort organized by CSOs, in co-operation with other like-minded groups or individuals for systematic, peaceful change to policy or other conditions which affect people's lives. It involves citizens in the process of change, in pursuit of a collective good without personal or organization gain.

ALLIANCE

Joining of two or more groups in pursuit of common interests.

ASSEMBLY

A multi-membered body, which considers questions of public policy and constitutional powers to make laws. Assemblies (or legislatures) have one core, defining function: they give assert, on behalf of a political community that extends beyond the executive authority, to binding measures of public policy.

AUTHORITY

Basically the right to make lawful commands. Authority enables rules, or those empowered by them, to secure compliance on grounds accepted as legitimate by those affected. The bases of authority may vary e.g. charismatic, legal rational, traditional.

BALLOT

The act of voting, electing a representative by using an indicator to show who your favorite candidate or party is.

BALLOT BOX

The container in which ballot papers are inserted by voters. A ballot box has an aperture at the top, which is just big enough for the insertion of a ballot paper and small enough not to allow any papers to fall out.

BALLOT PAPER

A specially designed paper to be marked by a voter and put in a ballot box. It contains names of the candidates, party names and symbols. A voter or an elector is supposed to put the mark against the name of a candidate he or she wants to elect.

BICAMERAL

Two chambered usually of assemblies common examples are Upper House of Lords and Lower House of Commons: the Upper House of Senate and Lower House of Representatives.

BILL OF RIGHTS

The section of a country's constitution, which lists the rights and freedoms, guaranteed to all its citizens. It protects the people against abuses of power by the government or other groups or individuals.

BRIBERY

To persuade a person to act, often illegally or dishonestly, in another's favour by a gift of money, services, e.t.c.

BY-ELECTIONS

Elections held to replace elected representatives who have died, resigned, defected or have been incapacitated to a point of being unable to perform their work. It is an act of electing elected representative to fill a seat, which has become vacant otherwise than by dissolution of parliament or local assemblies.

CAMPAIGN

The act of trying to convince the public to vote for your party or you as a candidate if you are standing in the elections.

CANDIDATE

A person who has offered herself or himself to contest or stand for a seat in a parliamentary, civic, presidential or any other kind of elections.

CIVIC EDUCATION

Includes both voter education and information, but deals also with the basic principles on which the democratic system of government is built and to which all citizens (not only voters) must adhere. It focuses on the rights and responsibilities of citizens as provided in the constitution, and how to protect and defend those rights and fulfill those responsibilities. Like voter education, it offers an understanding of the roles of different levels and branches of government, both the elected officials as well as public servants and particularly stresses the concept that government is meant to serve the people. Civic education emphasizes the need for citizens to participate actively in all aspects of public life, and to hold elected officials and public servants accountable to the people at all times, not just around election time.

CIVIL SOCIETY

The term civil society refers to voluntary groups, organized or unorganized, existing between the individual and the family on the one hand and the state on the other. Civil society is independent, flexible and dynamic. It does not depend on a particular interest or individual donor for support or to shape its agenda

CIVIL SOCIETY ELECTION MONITORING

Civil society election monitoring may be defined as ongoing, organized action, which is impartial and non-partisan, and aimed at ensuring adherence to the ethics, laws, regulations and codes of conduct governing the electoral process. Civil society monitoring organizations derive their mandate from and are accountable to the civil society. In recent years, electoral authorities (Commissions) have been permitting civil society monitoring in order to increase the credibility of elections.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

These are organizations established by like-minded individuals to:

- a) Actively addressing the varied and complex needs of society.
- b) Establishing mechanisms by which governments, commercial organizations are held accountable to the public.
- c) Promoting pluralism and diversity.
- d) Protecting and strengthening cultural, religious, ethnic, linguistic and other identities.

- e) Motivating individuals to act as citizens and register vote and participate actively in the political arena.
- f) Creating and providing an alternative to government agencies for provision of services or benefits.

CIVIC CANDIDATE

A person who has offered herself or himself to contest in local government elections. He or she has to fulfill the following conditions:

- a) Is a registered voter
- b) Has attained the age of twenty-one years.
- c) Is able to speak and to read the English language well enough to take an active part in the proceedings of the council.
- d) Is not owing allegiance to foreign country.
- e) Is not an undischarged bankrupt, having been adjudged or otherwise declared bankrupt under any law in force in Malawi.
- f) Is not a serving member of the Defence Force or Malawi Police.
- g) Is not the holder of the Public Office or a Member of Parliament.
- h) Is of sound mind.

CONSTITUENCY

An area represented by a Member of Parliament.

COUNCILLOR

An elected representative of a ward. He or she becomes a member of local council, town council, municipal council, city council, district council (in Malawi these are now called Assemblies).

COUNTER FOIL

The part of the ballot paper that is left with the election officials as a record that the particular ballot paper was issued.

COALITION

Temporary combination of parties that retain distinctive principles. This process usually takes place when political parties are under threat that individually they can not win against a common enemy. The concerned parties sign memorandum of understanding to establish a common campaign front so that all their supporters should vote as one block.

COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

Where an organization, political party or government takes a decision, all members of that organization, party or government share accountability for the decision taken. This responsibility would not be only to their constituency or membership but also to the general public.

CONSENSUS DEMOCRACY

A political system in which power is diffused throughout the government and the parties. Executive authority is shared amongst members of a formal or informal coalition, drawn from various parties. The executive does not dominate the legislature as it does under majority democracy. There is multi-party, rather than a two-party system. The party system reflects several dimensions of cleavage rather than only one. Elections are typically held under proportional representation rather than first-past-the post.

CONSTITUENT

Voters or others who live in a particular area or district and or vote for a particular legislator at local, provincial/regional, or national level, and to whom that legislator is accountable.

CONSTITUTION

The written body of fundamental principles or established precedents according to which a state is acknowledged to be governed. Is the supreme law of the country that establishes the rights, powers and responsibilities of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of the government.

It generally:

- a) Allocates powers amongst the different levels of the government: national, regional/provincial, local.
- b) Enumerates the rights of citizens in relationship to each other and to the government, often in a bill of rights.
- c) Sets out the procedure for making amendments.

CORRUPTION

Moral deterioration that encourages use of corrupt practices such as bribery or fraud aimed at undermining good governance. It promotes selfishness amongst individuals.

COURT INJUNCTION

It is a judicial process restraining or stopping a person or a group of people from proceeding with the action. In the electoral process if a party or candidate feels injustice has been done, the aggrieved party obtains a court injunction to enable the judiciary to review the alleged injustice through a court of law.

DEMARCATION

The art of marking a boundary or limits. This term and "delimitation" are used interchangeably to refer to the determination of boundaries for the purpose of allocating political authority and responsibility to legislatures (local governments or parliamentarians), and thus for the election of representatives to serve in those governments.

DEMOCRACY

Democracy means rule by the people. It is the form of government where sovereignty and political authority are derived from the people, who give their mandate through a popular vote. However, in a democracy, political authority, even the authority of the majority, is limited by legal and institutional means.

In a constitutional democracy, these limitations are primarily found in the separation of powers dividing government into several branches (executive, legislative and judicial) and in the establishment of checks and balances on the powers exercised by those different branches. Equally important is the protection of the minority's rights to challenge the majority and of the individual's fundamental rights to conscience, free expression, free association and due process of law.

DIRECT ELECTIONS

Where elected representatives are directly voted into office by the mass electorate and not by lower-level representatives, as is the case with indirect elections.

DISCRIMINATION

Deliberate unfavorable treatment based on prejudice, especially regarding race, sex, religion, culture, sexual orientation, age, e.t.c.

DOMINANT PARTY STATE

Where a single party controls politics for a considerable period of time. Although opposition parties do exist, they are tolerated only as long as they show no signs of winning any elections that matter. Dominant parties use patronage, control of the media and ballot rigging to maintain their position in a formally competitive party system.

DISPUTED VOTE

A vote, which is held in dispute by one or more political parties, or candidates for any number of reasons.

ELECTIONS

The choosing of leaders or representatives through voting by voters. There are many kinds of elections including those for social clubs, co-operative societies but here we are interested in three kinds of elections thus Presidential, Parliamentary and Civic Elections or Local Government

elections. Presidentials elections are when the voters choose the president, parliamentary elections are when voters choose a member of parliament and civic elections are when voters choose a councilor.

ELECTED DICTATORSHIP

Where an elected government with a large majority can effectively do what it likes, within the confines of a desire to be re-elected at the next election.

ELECTORAL PROCESS

It is a combination of all activities involved starting from planning of an election to announcement of results of a particular election. Some of those activities are:

- a) Planning
- b) Demarcation of boundaries for constituencies and wards
- c) Sourcing of voters material
- d) Registration
- e) Monitoring
- f) Campaign
- g) Inspection of voters roll
- h) Delivery of voter's materials
- i) Voting
- j) Counting of votes
- k) Tabulation of results
- l) Announcing of results

ELECTORAL COMMISSION (AUTHORITY)

A group of people chosen to manage the electoral process. This is the national electoral commission (or authority) tasked with overall responsibility for managing and conducting elections, whether national, regional/provincial, or local, in accordance with the electoral law and regulations. Ideally, in a democracy, to ensure that elections are run in an impartial fashion, the electoral authority should be independent of the government of the day.

In Malawi according to the present Act of 1998 the Commission is headed by a chairperson and such other members not being less than six as may be appointed in accordance with an Act of Parliament. Functions and powers of the electoral Commission are:

- (1) In addition to the broad functions and powers conferred on the Commission by the Constitution and, subject to the Constitution, the Commission shall exercise general direction and supervision over the conduct of every election and without prejudice to the

generality of such functions and powers, it shall have the following further functions:

- a) To determine the number of constituencies for the purposes of elections.
- b) To undertake or supervise the demarcation of boundaries of constituencies.
- c) Subject to the Local Government Elections Act, 1996 and any other written law relating to local government elections, to undertake or supervise the demarcation of wards for the purpose of local government elections and to determine the number of such wards but so however that in demarcation of wards the Commission shall have regard to population density, geographical features, easy communication and the wishes of the people and shall ensure that the wards boundaries do not cross local authority boundaries.
- d) To organize and direct the registration of voters.
- e) To devise and establish voter's registers and ballot papers.
- f) To print, distribute and take charge of ballot papers and voters registers.
- g) To approve and procure ballot boxes and other voter materials.
- h) To establish and operate polling stations.
- i) To establish security conditions necessary for the conduct of every election in accordance with any written law governing elections.
- j) To promote public awareness on electoral matters through the media and other appropriate and effective means and to conduct civic and voter education on such matters.
- k) To promote and conduct research on electoral matters and any matter pertaining to its functions and to publish the results of such research.
- l) To perform the functions conferred upon it by or under any written law
- m) To take measures and to do such other things as are necessary for conducting free and fair elections

(2) For purpose of discharging the function and exercising the powers conferred upon it by the Constitution, Electoral Commission Act or any other written law relating to elections, the Commission shall freely communicate with the Government and any political party or any candidate, person or organization.

ELECTORAL CLERKS

Clerical staff appointed by the electoral commission during the elections.

ELECTORAL LAW

The prevailing law of the country passed to set national policy for the preparation and conduct of elections.

ELECTORAL COURT

A special court that hears cases arising from elections differences or disputes. The special court is normally the High Court sitting for the purpose of hearing election cases. Or a court established by law or by the constitution to judge cases regarding alleged violations of the electoral law, regulations or codes of conduct.

ELECTORAL OFFICIAL

Any official formally appointed by the electoral authority to perform a designated role in the electoral process, e.g. election commissioner, returning officer, presiding officer, registration officer, polling officer, counting officer e.t.c.

ELECTORAL REGULATIONS

The rules established, usually by the electoral authority, to permit implementation of the electoral law in terms of specific processes required to prepare for and conduct the elections and to regulate the behaviour of all stakeholders.

ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The method used to translate votes received by a candidate or political party into an allocation of seats in a national/provincial legislature or a local council or other type of government structure. There are many systems to choose from, perhaps the most common of which are the first-past-the-post system and the proportional representation system. Sometimes, these systems are combined.

ELECTORATE

The body of all eligible voters in a political entity e.g. a district, province or nation, or it may be all the members of an organization.

ELECTION MONITORS

These are charged with the responsibility of observing the voting process from voter registration to counting of votes and the announcement of the winners. Election monitors can be both local and foreign. The aim is to try and ensure the environment of free and fair elections.

ELECTION OFFENCES

These are actions that violate rules that govern elections. The following are some of election offences:

- a) Giving a bribe to influence voters.
- b) Registering twice as a voter.
- c) Voting twice in the same election.
- d) Giving false information when registering as a voter or when presenting nomination papers as a candidate.
- e) Buying or selling registration certificates.
- f) Putting anything else other than a ballot paper into a ballot box.

ELECTORAL PROMISES

Parties and candidates usually pledge some course of action if voted into office. These are called Electoral Promises and may be part of a party's or candidate's manifestoes or policy.

FACTION

An unorganized group with a reasonably stable membership inside a larger body. Factions are most common in political parties.

FIRST PAST THE POST

Also known as the Plurality or Westminster Electoral System. This system provides for the candidate or party with the largest number of votes in each constituency to win the election. If there are more than two candidates or parties, then the winner may be elected with less than a majority (51%) of votes, i.e. a plurality of votes.

FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS

Elections in which all laid down rules are followed. In such elections the following take place:

- a) Unhindered registration of voters
- b) Access to the media by all candidates and parties.
- c) Orderly voting.
- d) Lack of bribery and violence during the campaign period and on Election Day.
- e) Non-monopoly use of state resources by one contesting party.

GENERAL ELECTIONS

It is a process where voters are asked to choose a president and Member of Parliament on the same day simultaneously.

GERRYMANDERING

The manipulation of boundaries, e.g. of a voting ward or district, so as to give undue influence to some political party, race, class or other interested groups.

GOVERNMENT

The constitutional authority of the state. It is generally accepted that the executive, legislative and judicial branches of such an entity are separated and not linked together.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Rights that universally belong to all people regardless of their sex, race, colour, language, national origin, age, class, sexual orientation, religion or political beliefs. These rights imply an obligation of government's political parties and any group/individual to respect the human rights of others. They have been codified in several international charters and declarations such as the Universal Declaration of Human Right (1948) and the African Charter on Human People's Rights (1981). Individual countries have included some or all of these rights in their constitution and/or bill of rights.

IDENTITY DOCUMENT

A document issued by a government to identify the citizens and residents of the country, through a unique identification number and a photograph. It is often used to identify eligible citizens for the purpose of voter registration, and/or to provide proof of identity at voting stations

IDEOLOGY

The basic values and ideas, which people hold about the nature of society, and role of politics and government within it.

IMPARTIAL

Can be used interchangeably with non-partisan. Treating all sides in a contest (e.g. an election) or a dispute equally and fairly, or not working for the advancement or defeat of a particular political party or candidate.

INDELIBLE INK

Ink that voters dip their fingers in after voting in a general election. It does not rub easily and therefore helps to stop people from voting twice for one election.

INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE

A person competing in an election either on his/her own behalf or on behalf of a grouping, which is not a registered or formal political party.

INDIRECT ELECTIONS

A system of elections of two or more levels, where representatives are chosen by those who are themselves directly elected.

INTEREST GROUP

An organized group which seeks to influence public policy and will benefit directly from the outcome.

INTERPRETERS

The returning officer may appoint people who know the local language and the official language to help ease the process of voting.

INTIMIDATION

To inspire with fear, through the threat or use of violence, or other action, with a view to influencing the conduct of others, for example to influence an individual to vote for a particular party or candidate against his/her will.

INVALID VOTE

A vote, which can not be included in the tally because the ballot was damaged or improperly completed.

ISSUE OF WRITS

It is a legal order by the Speaker of National Assembly for an election to be held in a constituency where such a vacancy exists.

JOINT ELECTIONS

An election in which voters are asked to choose the president, the Member of Parliament and the councilor on the same day. In this election there are three different ballot papers for the three offices.

LEADER OF OPPOSITION

The head of the opposition party in Parliament that has most seats.

LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

A qualified form of democracy based on popular elections and representative government but with a strong concern for individual rights. The concept of a liberal democracy is in essence protective. Government derives from and is accountable to the people, but its powers are limited in various ways, so that the rights of individuals and minorities are balanced against majority rule.

LOBBY

An organized attempt by members of the public to influence action to be taken by legislators or other government decision-makers on a particular issue or bill.

MAJORITY DEMOCRACY

Sometimes referred to as the Westminster model. A single party forms the government and wields extensive executive powers until the voters offer their verdict at the next election. Thus only the self-restraint of the ruling party stands between majority democracy and elected dictatorship.

MANIFESTO

A document issued by a political party or a candidate to explain its or his or her principles, policies and ideology. It also explains the strategies the party or candidate will use to implement the intended programmes.

MONITOR

An individual with some knowledge of the community, who agrees to provide an impartial presence for the entire election process with the objective of ensuring that all relevant electoral legislation, regulations and code of conduct are obeyed, thus creating the conditions for a free and fair election. Monitors not only observe, but also investigate report on and frequently pronounce judgment on the actions of stakeholders throughout the electoral process. They play a more activist and interventionist role than an observer. Monitors work in association with a civil society organization, which has been accredited by the electoral authorities to monitor elections.

MULTI-PARTY ELECTIONS

Presidential, Parliamentary and Civic elections involving more than one registered political party.

MULTIPLE ELECTIONS

An election within which all Parliamentary seats, Civic seats and the Presidential are voted for at the same time in a general election. Sometimes it is referred to as Tri-Partite Elections.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Also called Parliament. It consists of elected members who elect their own Speaker as their head.

NOMINATIONS

This is the election of candidates who vie for presidential, Parliamentary and Civic elections. The Electoral Commission appoints the nomination day and potential candidates present their nomination papers. If only one candidate is validly nominated for any seat the candidate is declared elected.

NOMINATION AGENTS

People representing candidates during the nomination process.

NOMINATION DAY

The day appointed by the electoral commission for candidates to present their papers so that they can be allowed to stand for the elections. The candidates personally present the papers designed for the purpose and within the specified time frame.

NOMINATION FEE

Money paid by the candidate for their nomination. The figures differ depending on the type of seat one vies for from one country to another.

NOMINATION PAPERS

Special forms to be filled by candidates and presented to the returning officer on Nomination Day.

NOMINATED MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

People appointed by the President to be Members of Parliament. The law as it stands in Malawi now does not allow this kind of a thing. All Members of Parliament are elected by the people in their respective constituencies. In countries where this arrangement is allowed demands that the people appointed must fulfill all the qualifications required of parliamentary candidates.

NON-PARTISAN

Can be used interchangeably with impartial. Treating all sides in a contest (e.g. an election) or a dispute equally and fairly, or not working for the advancement or defeat of a particular party or candidate.

OATH OF SECRECY

An official oath taken by election officials binding them to perform their duties as required by the law during the entire election process.

OBSERVER

Generally a representative of an international or local organization who is authorized to observe the preparation for and conduct of an election with a view to assisting in ensuring that the integrity of the electoral process is respected. The observer role involves noting and reporting matters of concern to an appropriated authority, but is a much more passive role than that of a monitor.

OMBUDSMAN

A post of Scandinavian origin, independent of government, created to investigate cases of bureaucratic mismanagement or cases where individuals or groups feel that they have been mistreated by government. In effect, a bureaucratic watchdog. Such a post may also be used in the private sector.

ONE-PARTY STATE

A political system in which the laws allow for only one party and where it is illegal to form or belong to any other party. This system is generally considered to be inconsistent with principles of democracy.

OPERATION CENTER

A communication and operations center where information from monitors, electoral authorities and security services is collected and analyzed in order to identify problem areas during the preparations for and conduct of an election. It may also provide a meeting place for representatives of these stakeholders who must decide what action should be taken to resolve any problems, conflict or violence, which arise.

OPPOSITION PARTIES

The parties that are not in the government. The opposition parties are charged with the responsibility of checking the government so that it provides the best services to the people.

PLURALISM

It is a form of rule in which many people and interests are involved in decision-making, with different people and interests influential in different areas of policy. Where elitism focuses on rule by a minority, pluralism emphasizes rule by minorities, i.e. no single group dominates decision-making.

PARALLEL VOTE TABULATION

A tabulation of the vote which is conducted by stakeholders other than the electoral authority itself, e.g. by monitoring organizations. It need not be comprehensive, but rather is a mechanism for determining through a reasonable sample whether the official count reflects the actual voting patterns

PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATE

A person who has offered herself or himself to contest parliamentary elections. For the parliamentary race one has to fulfill the following conditions:

- a) Is a citizen of Malawi by birth or descent.

- b) Has attained age of twenty one (21) years.
- c) Has not been convicted by a competent court of a crime within the last seven years.
- d) Is not a serving member of the Defence Force or Malawi Police.
- e) Is not a holder of a public office (civil servant).
- f) Is of sound mind.
- g) Is a registered voter.
- h) Is not owing allegiance to foreign country.
- i) Is not an undischarged bankrupt having been adjudged or otherwise declared bankrupt under any law in force in Malawi.

PARTY LIST

Under a voting system based on proportional representation, each political party is entitled to nominate as many candidates as there are seats to be filled in the legislature. These nominations are prepared in order of preference. Following the election, each party is allocated a number of seats in proportion to the votes it received. The candidates who fill those seats are chosen in the order found on the party list.

PARTY COLOURS AND PARTY SYMBOLS

Colours and symbols used by political parties and sometimes Independent Candidates in an election. A party or a candidate is allowed to choose its colours and symbols as long as they are not obscene or can cause public unrest. A Party cannot use colours and symbols that are already being used by another party or candidate.

PARTY PRIMARY NOMINATION

The selection of candidates by political parties for presidential, parliamentary and civic elections. A political party is expected to select one candidate for each of the post. Some parties prefer to use the secret ballot in nominations while others use queuing system.

POLITICAL PARTY

A group of individuals sharing a given political ideology and pursuing common political interests and goals who came together to seek political power so as to influence or control governmental machinery. In Malawi all political parties have to be registered under political parties registration Act of 1993.

POLITICAL CULTURE

What people think about politics—their beliefs, values and emotions. It does not refer to actual political behaviour indeed behaviour may conflict with prevailing attitudes.

POLITICAL PARTY

A formally organized group of people sharing common political policy preferences over a wide range of issues. Their declared purpose is to seek political power through representation in the legislature and control of government alone or in coalition with other parties. To participate in elections and to secure a specific name and symbol, political parties must register officially with the electoral authority. Political parties should perform several vital roles in democracies:

- a) They formulate policies and programmes on the basis of the priorities and wishes of their constituencies/members.
- b) They represent their constituencies by arguing for those policies and programmes in the legislature, the executive and in other public forums.
- c) Through open competition and institutionalized political bargaining, they seek to reconcile conflicting interests in the society.
- d) They recruit and train future political leaders.
- e) They educate the electorate---their existing and potential supporters---on current issues.

POLITICAL SYSTEM

Broadly the political arrangement of a society, embracing all factors influencing collective decisions. The political system thus includes processes of recruitment and socialization, party's, voters and social movements, which are not a formal part of government.

POLL

The process of voting that is casting, recording and counting of votes in an election.

POLLING AREA

One of the places in a constituency where the process of casting recording and counting of votes in an election takes place.

POLLING STATION

Any room, structure, vehicle, vessel allocated for the process of casting, recording and counting of votes in an election. The following are allowed in a polling station:

- a) Candidate's agents and observers
- b) Election officers
- c) Security officers
- d) Those assisting the blind and physically challenged persons
- e) Voters registered or those intending to vote at that particular station.

POLICY

A course or principle of action (usually written) designed to promote, maintain or prevent some state of affairs, and adopted or proposed by government, a party or other stakeholders, which establishes the general, guidelines or framework for decision-making by various levels of government. Policy may be made in consultation with other stakeholders, e.g. civil society organizations, business, labour, or individual experts.

PRESIDING OFFICER

An officer chosen by the Returning Officer after consulting the Electoral Commission to supervise elections in a polling station. The Presiding Officer sees to it that there is order at polling station and every stage of the polling process is done accordingly. Some of the duties of the Presiding Officer are to:

- a) Ensure that only those allowed to enter the polling station do so.
- b) Ordering the security officers to remove from the polling station anybody whose conduct is likely to disrupt the polling process.
- c) Ordering the security officers to disperse people who are likely to prevent entry and exit of voters from polling stations or who are intimidating or interfering with the polling process.
- d) Report in case of a riot, excessive violence, floods or other natural calamities for a postponement or adjournment of the elections.
- e) Safekeeping and delivery of voting materials like ballot papers and boxes, record papers and spoilt ballots to the returning officer.

PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

A person who has offered himself or herself to contest presidential elections. For the country's presidential race one has to fulfill the following conditions:

- a) Is a Citizen of Malawi by birth or descent.
- b) Has attained the age of thirty-five years.
- c) Has not been convicted by a competent court of a crime within the last seven years.
- d) Is not a serving member of the Defence Force or Malawi Police.
- e) Is not the holder of the Public Office or Member of Parliament.
- f) Is of sound mind.
- g) He/She is a registered voter.
- h) Is not owing allegiance to foreign country.
- i) Is not an undischarged bankrupt, having been adjudged or otherwise declared bankrupt under any law in force in Malawi.

PRESIDENTIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS ACT

An Act of Parliament that sets out rules and regulations on the whole election process.

PRESSURE GROUPS

It is a group of persons seeking to coerce legislature or government by concerted action, propaganda and like methods. In Malawian scenario these groups came about because the law at that time did not allow any other political party to exist other than the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) that was governing the country. This scenario saw pressure groups in the name of Alliance for Democracy (AFORD) and United Democrat Front (UDF) coming out to pressurize the government to introduce multiparty system of government.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

An electoral system in which all parties gain seats in proportion to the number of votes cast for them. Rather than having single-member constituencies the whole country or other designated area constitutes a multi-member constituency. See party list.

PROPOSER

A person who signs nomination papers to endorse a candidate as fit for presidential, parliamentary and civic elections. A proposer must be a registered voter in an area in case of parliamentary and civic elections or a registered voter in a district in case of a presidential election.

PUBLIC OPINION POLL

It is a scientific technique to measure the views and attitudes of the mass public by administering questionnaires in interviews using a representative sample size. It is a means of determining the collective views of people on a particular issue or issues or on the political parties competing in an election. The accuracy of an opinion poll depends on the design, the size of the sample, the representativeness of the sample and the honesty of the interviewers and respondents.

REGISTRATION

This is a process of preparing a voters roll or electors register. A prospective voter is entered into the roll and in only one constituency. In Malawi only a person who has attained the age of eighteen (18) years is allowed to register as a voter or elector.

REGISTRATION OFFICER

A person appointed by the Electoral Commission to register voters in an election. He/she supervises the registration of electors, the compilation of voter registers and the inspection of these registers by the members of the

public and other interested parties. The registration officer may be assisted by registration assistants.

RECOUNTING OF VOTES

A candidates or a counting agent may require the Returning Officer or Presiding Officer to have the votes recounted or again recounted. Sometimes the officer may do this on his or her own initiative.

REGISTRATION CENTRE

A particular area where a person may register as a voter.

REGULAR INSPECTION

One may inspect the register of voters to make sure that it is correct. This may be done after the Electoral Commission announces to the public that the register is ready for inspection. A person can challenge the registration officer through the Electoral Commission if he or she notices some irregularities in the voters roll.

REFERENDUM

The process of referring a political or policy question to the entire electorate for a direct decision by general vote. Such votes may be legally binding or may serve to advice the legislature, which is left to implement the will of the people.

REJECTED BALLOT PAPERS

Ballot papers that are counted as invalid due to one or other voter's fault. When counting the Returning Officer or Presiding Officer marks every rejected ballot paper with the word "rejected". All such papers are then recorded showing reasons for being rejected after counting of votes.

REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

Due to the size of populations, distance and time it is impractical in modern society for every citizen to participate directly in the daily business of the government (direct democracy). Therefore voters elect representatives whom they can trust to make decisions on their behalf in the legislature. To ensure that these representatives continue to reflect the will of the people who elected them, they are held accountable in periodic elections. These representatives are expected to base their decision on a combination of the consulted opinions of the people, their own best judgment and convictions and the positions of their political parties. The balance amongst these elements remains a subject of controversy.

RETENTION AND INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS

The keeping of all the documents relating to an election in safe custody by the Returning Officer or the Electoral Commission .Any member of the public may scrutinize these documents within a specified allowed period. Before and after scrutiny, a witness supervises the breaking of the seal and resealing of the documents.

RETROSPECTIVE VOTING

Casting one's ballot in response to government performance. The phrase conveys much of the character of contemporary voting behaviour. Voters form an overall assessment of the government's record and, increasingly vote accordingly.

RETURNING OFFICER

An officer appointed by the Electoral Commission to oversee elections in a district. The Returning Officer provides Presiding Officers with the following materials:

- a) A copy of register of electors so that their voters Certificates/Cards can be checked against it when they go to vote.
- b) Indelible ink to mark fingers of voters who have voted so that they do not vote twice for one election and any other related voting material.

RIGGING

Influencing elections through illegal means such as:

- a) Double voting.
- b) Insertion of ballot papers marked outside polling stations in ballot boxes.
- c) Deliberately miscounting of votes.
- d) Deliberate counting of spoilt votes.
- e) Voting by illegally imported voters.
- f) Obstruction of agents or observers.
- g) Rubbing the marks by voters and remarking.
- h) Monopoly use of state resources such as public media, vehicles, finances by one contesting party.
- i) Buying of voter registration certificates.
- j) Intimidating voters during the voting day.
- k) Deliberate instigation of violence during the entire campaign period.
- l) Circulation misleading voting process documents.

RUNNING MATE

He/she is a vice presidential candidate whose name appears on the same ballot paper alongside the presidential candidate.

SEALING BALLOT BOXES/PAPERS

At the end of the polling, the Presiding Officer has to seal ballot boxes in such a way that votes cannot drop out and agents and observers witness the sealing. In other countries candidates/agents are allowed to put their own seal on the locked ballot boxes or the packets containing the documents.

SECRET BALLOT

The act of a person voting secretly for a candidate of his or her choice by casting a vote. Not even a court of law is allowed to compel a voter to disclose whom she or he voted for.

SPOILT BALLOT PAPER

An unacceptable vote. If you vote for more than one candidate or write on your ballot paper so that your chosen candidate is not clear or if the ballot paper does not have the official mark, your vote will not be counted. It will be spoilt ballot paper. If you spoil your ballot paper report this to the Presiding Officer and ask for another one.

STAKEHOLDERS

It includes all the individuals, actors, groups, organizations, or sectors of a community who are directly or indirectly affected by an issue or an action.

TENDERED BALLOT

A ballot cast by a voter who appears not to be eligible to cast a vote at a particular polling station, e.g. his/her name does not appear on the voters' roll for that station. She/he may be permitted to cast a ballot but on a tendered basis, which means that the electoral authority will still have to confirm whether or not that person is legally entitled to vote at that station. This will only be decided after the close of voting.

In some cases, accepted tendered ballots are only counted if there is a very close vote between candidates/parties. Otherwise, they are set aside.

UNICAMERAL

One chambered, usually of assemblies (as it is the case in Malawi at present where senate has not been functional since the re-introduction of multi-party system of government).

VERIFICATION

The process of establishing the truth or correctness of something. In the context of elections, this might mean verifying a person's registration or

register by confirming their identification documents or their address. It might also apply to verification of the vote tally during the count by asking political party agents to sign the tally or by comparing the official tally with a parallel one submitted by a monitoring organization.

VOTER APATHY

It is an environment of loss of interest by voters to vote. It prevails where parties engage in violent activities or do not address the real issues affecting the electorate.

VOTER EDUCATION

An interactive and continuous process aimed at developing public understanding of key concepts of governance in a democratic system – the structure and relationships with government, the responsibilities of public officials, and how to hold those officials' accountable for the policies they make as well as their implementation or delivery. These concepts then help to explain the need for public participation in elections through registering to vote, nominating candidates, attending campaign meetings, asking pertinent questions to candidates, and ultimately, voting.

Voter education therefore means developing democratic values amongst the entire population so that the necessary atmosphere of openness and tolerance of multi-party political activity will exist. It also entails developing a complete understanding of the election management process and what conditions are required to ensure free and fair elections.

VOTER INFORMATION

The basic information regarding registration and voting procedures—who qualifies to register and to vote, where and how to register, when to vote, which ward/district to vote in, which polling station to vote at, how the voting procedures work, and so on. This information is part of voter education, but it does not deal with the issues of where voting fits in the overall system of democracy, that is the question, “why vote?”

VOTER REGISTRATION

The process by which a record is made of citizens eligible to vote. It protects the right of individual citizens to vote by confirming their eligibility and it protects the electoral system from those who might wish to vote fraudulently by providing a means of identifying legitimate voters. Voter registration is, therefore, a cornerstone of free and fair elections.

VOTERS ROLL

The official register or list containing the names, addresses, birth dates, and identification numbers of all registered voters. The voters' roll is then used to assign each voter to a particular district, constituency or wards, and polling station. The accuracy and user-friendliness of the voters' roll on Election Day will have a major impact on the management of voting processes in the polling stations.

VOTER

A person who has registered as an elector and holds a valid election certificate or card. To qualify in an election as a voter one must have the following:

- a) Be a citizen of Malawi or if not a citizen you have to be ordinarily resident in the Republic for seven years.
- b) Has attained the age of eighteen years.
- c) Is ordinarily resident in that constituency or was born there or is employed or carries on a business there.
- d) Is not under any law in force in the Republic adjudged or otherwise declared to be mentally incompetent.
- e) Is not under sentence of death imposed by a court having jurisdiction in the Republic, either before or after the appointed day.
- f) Is not disqualified from registration as a voter on the grounds of his or her having been convicted of any violation of any law relating to elections passed by parliament and in force at the time of, or after the commencement of the Republican Constitution but such disqualification should be valid only with respect to registration for the election in question and the person so disqualified shall be qualified to be registered as a voter in the next or any subsequent election.

VOTING

A process of electing a candidate of your choice. In a secret ballot elections the common activities are as follows:

- a) You stand on the queue if there many people before you.
- b) You get to the first table here your certificate or card will be presented for verification.
- c) You get to the next table where you will be given the ballot paper.
- d) You get to the polling booth where you will be alone to choose.
- e) You cast your vote in a ballot box after you have chosen.
- f) You get to the last table where one of your fingers is dipped in an indelible ink to show that you have voted.
- g) You get back to wherever you came from out of polling center.

VOTING MONITORS/AGENTS

These people are nominated by political parties or candidates to witness the whole voting process on their behalf. The names and address of the monitors or agents are sent to the Returning Officer in advance for record and planning purposes. Normally two monitors or agents are allowed per party or per candidate.

VOTING OFFICER

These are officials appointed to assist the Presiding Officer in the polling station. There will be a number of Voting Officers in each polling station. Each will be assigned specific tasks by the Presiding Officer.

WARDS

This is an area represented by a Councilor.

X-MARK OR V-MARK

The mark a voter is required to put on a ballot paper against the name of his/her favourite candidate. The mark must be made in the provided space or box and should not be too big to spoil your vote or too small for not be seen.