



NATIONAL LAW LITERACY PROGRAMME

Taking the law to the people

Concept Note

September 2026

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1. Preamble

The Law Commission (the Commission) is a public institution established under Chapter XII of the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi (the Constitution), with detailed provision under the Law Commission Act (Cap 3:09). The functions of the Commission, as stipulated under the Law Commission Act, are to review the Laws of Malawi and make recommendations relating to the repeal, amendment, and development of laws and to promote public awareness of the Laws of Malawi. In recent years, the Commission has conducted awareness activities on various pieces of legislation, especially on child and gender-related laws in selected districts. Awareness activities are aimed at empowering communities with information on the promotion and protection of human rights.

Despite these efforts, the Commission's own awareness activities have been constrained by limited resources, particularly in districts not covered by its development partners. Apart from this, some laws have undergone amendments and there is a need to conduct mass awareness campaigns on these amendments. Furthermore, it has been established that knowledge gaps also exist on other laws that have not been targeted by the Commission due to resource constraints, including laws related to land, road traffic, mining, governance, business, and climate change, among other pieces of legislation. It is against this background that civic education efforts need to be intensified.

2. Problem Statement

Various studies have exposed gaps in legal knowledge and the impact of these gaps on the utilisation and enforcement of laws among citizens and law enforcement officers, respectively. Despite Malawi's commitment to promoting the rule of law, democratic governance, and access to justice under Malawi 2063 and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, significant gaps remain in citizens' awareness of and access to the country's formal legal system.

Findings from the National Statistical Office's Justice and Accountability Survey (JAS) 2025 reveal that while 73.2% of Malawians are aware of the rule of law, awareness of specific categories of law differs considerably. Only 52.0% of respondents reported awareness of statutory laws, the Acts of Parliament that govern critical issues such as child protection, education, youth development, gender equality, cyber safety, labour, marriage, juvenile justice, and access to public services. Awareness is substantially lower in rural areas than in urban areas, demonstrating persistent inequalities in legal literacy and access to formal legal information¹.

The survey further reveals an even greater challenge regarding access to legal information. While 80.4% of respondents reported having access to customary laws, only 59.2% reported access to constitutional laws, and just 31.0% reported access to statutory

¹ https://justice.gov.mw/sites/default/files/2025-12/Justice%20and%20Accountability%20Survey%20Report_Ministry%20of%20Justice.pdf

laws, making statutory legislation the least accessible category of law in Malawi. This disparity suggests that although many Malawians rely on customary law and traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, they have limited opportunities to consult or obtain the statutory laws that govern many aspects of modern life. The challenge is particularly pronounced in rural communities, where access to statutory and constitutional laws is considerably lower than in urban areas, further widening inequalities in legal empowerment and access to justice.

There is evidence that the lack of awareness of the laws affect the implementation of democratic governance programmes and access to justice for all. For example, according to the JAS report, 70% of citizens experienced human rights violations. The JAS Report finds that some victims do not report violations of the law or human rights to authorities. Regarding sexual violence, research shows that in 2013, 60 % of Malawians who had experienced sexual violence in their childhood, reported to someone after experiencing the violence. However, only 10% of those who reported received services (see Violence Against Children and Young Persons Survey (VACS) Report, 2013).²

The inability to report human rights violations and failure to provide services to victims of the violations has been attributed to lack of knowledge of the laws that support human rights in Malawi.³ That undermines the attainment of good governance, which is recognized as a key enabler under Malawi 2063 agenda. Therefore, limited legal awareness among citizens and duty bearers may undermine Malawi's capacity to realize the Malawi 2063 vision and also the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

3. Proposed Intervention

Pursuant to its public awareness mandate, the Commission, through its Civic Education Section intends to implement a five (5) - year National Law Literacy Programme with the goal of enhancing democratic governance and access to justice through public awareness of the Laws of Malawi among the general public. Under the programme, the Commission will conduct intensive public awareness campaigns on the Laws of Malawi which have been categorized into the following:

- (a) economic laws;
- (b) governance laws;
- (c) social laws;
- (d) national security laws; and
- (e) public services laws.

² <https://cdn.togetherforgirls.org/assets/files/Malawi-VACS-report.pdf>

³ *Ibid*

A comprehensive list of the laws is attached as appendix 1.

4. Expected Outcome and Impact of the Programme

Overall, the National Law Literacy Programme is expected to significantly increase public awareness and understanding of the laws of Malawi. As already noted above, national awareness levels stand at 52%,⁴ indicating a 48% knowledge gap among citizens. The Programme aims to reduce this knowledge gap by at least 30% within the five-year implementation period. Improved knowledge of the laws of Malawi will empower citizens to understand and exercise their rights while fulfilling their legal responsibilities. Increased legal awareness is expected to enhance citizens' ability to identify violations, demand accountability from duty bearers, and seek appropriate legal redress. Furthermore, enhanced legal literacy will enable more meaningful public participation in governance processes, including engagement in law reform initiatives.

The National Law Literacy Programme is expected to contribute to strengthened effective governance systems in line with the Malawi 2063 Development Agenda. In particular, the Programme will result in increased citizen participation in governance processes, improved transparency and accountability among duty bearers, and enhanced public engagement in policy and law reform processes. Through improved dissemination and understanding of policies and legislation, the Programme will contribute to positive mindset change, reflected in increased compliance with the law and more responsible civic behaviour. Additionally, improved public awareness of environmental, mining, and natural resource legislation will lead to strengthened community participation in environmental management and sustainable resource utilization.

These outcomes will collectively support progress toward national aspirations of self-reliance and inclusive wealth creation as articulated in the Malawi 2063 First 10-Year Implementation Plan (MIP-1). In addition, it is expected that the Programme will enhance personal and national development thus contributing to the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

5. The Approach

To achieve the goal of the Programme, the Commission will implement the following activities:

(a) Message Development (Simplification, Translation and Pretesting)

The Commission will develop messages from the targeted laws. The process of message development will take three phases. The first phase is the simplification of the pieces of legislation. During this phase, the Commission will identify and isolate relevant sections

⁴ Justice and Accountability Survey (JAS) Report of 2025

from the pieces of legislation earmarked for dissemination. The Commission will then remove jargon from the identified sections and present the sections in a language that can easily be understood by a layman.

The Second phase is the translation phase. During this phase, the simplified messages will be translated into the major local languages. Specific attention will be on languages that are widely spoken such as *Chichewa, Tumbuka and Yao*. Translating messages into these local languages will facilitate understanding of the laws by ensuring that the intended meaning and context of the laws are accurately conveyed to the local masses, most of who do not understand English.

The final phase will be the pre-testing phase. During the stage, the Commission will run the messages with selected members of the intended audience to determine the efficacy of the messages among the intended audiences. The process will ensure that the messages are culturally appropriate and resonate with the intended audiences. The pretest will also enable the Commission to check if the messages did not lose its intended meaning during the simplification and translation phases. The final messages will be disseminated through community engagement meetings, libraries and both main stream media and social media.

(b) Printing of Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) Materials

The Commission will package the messages into various information, education, and communication (IEC) materials before printing. The IEC materials will be in the form of brochures, posters and booklets. The IEC materials to be printed will also include Comic Books for children and braille for the visually impaired. The Commission will also print a piece of cloth, banners, t-shirts and golf-shirts which will carry various messages.

(c) Community Outreach Programmes

The Commission will conduct community mass awareness meetings across the country. First, the Commission will hold legal literacy sessions with various stakeholders at the community level including, community leaders, youth and women representatives. Next, the Commission will hold meetings with the wider community mainly targeting such events as market days which attract people from various parts of a given area. The legal literacy sessions and community meetings will also serve as legal clinics in which the Commission will work in partnership with the Legal Aid Bureau to register legal issues from members of the public and, where needed, provide the necessary support. The Commission will disseminate IEC materials during the awareness campaigns.

In addition, IEC materials will be strategically placed in libraries across the country to enhance community-level access to information on the laws of Malawi. These libraries will include those under the National Library Service and National Initiative for Civic

Education (NICE) Trust. Specifically, the Commission will enter into a partnership with the National Library Service and NICE Trust to create Legal Literacy Corners within their libraries from which the public can access information on the laws of Malawi. Some of these materials will be placed in school libraries under the Civic Education Hubs at the Traditional Authority (TA) level, which are established and managed by the Department of Civic Education; and Telecenters under the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA).

(d) Tradition and Social Media Campaign

The awareness messages will be packaged into radio programmes and jingles which can be aired repetitively on radio and television stations. In that regard, the Commission will run a weekly interactive radio and television programme titled “*Lamulo Langa*” (My Law) on selected radio and television stations. The programme will allow the Commission to reach out to a lot of people including those in hard-to-reach areas. In addition, the interactive programme will allow the Commission to receive queries on the administration or gaps in the law and respond instantly. Further, the Commission will use the interactive programmes to gather feedback on how the public engages with the law and isolate areas that need law reform or can inform existing law reform programmes.

The Commission will create content related to the pieces of legislation to be posted on social media platforms of the Commission such as on Facebook, X, YouTube, LinkedIn, TikTok and Instagram. In addition, the Commission will engage telecommunication companies in Malawi on how to send the messages through their SMS platforms. This approach will allow the Commission to reach to members of the public who are actively using mobile phones and social media, especially the youth.

(e) Capacity Building (Training of Legal Literacy Champions)

The Commission will train Legal Literacy Champions (LLCs). The LLCs will be identified through their role and position of influence and will be trained to champion legal literacy in their communities or spheres of influence. This activity will target Area Civic Education Coordinators (ACECs) from the NICE Trust and Civic Education Hub Committee from the Department of Civic Education. In addition, the Commission will train public relations officers and communication officers from public institutions, especially those institutions that are directly charged with the implementation of particular pieces of legislation. Further, the Commission will build the capacity of media personnel, including producers of radio and television programmes and social media influencers, to spread information on the laws through their media platforms. Furthermore, the Commission will train CSOs working in the governance sector to support their work and also to empower them to raise awareness of the laws of Malawi in their areas of operation.

(f) Curriculum Review and Development

One of the key approaches of the Programme is the integration of legal literacy into the education system to ensure that learners acquire knowledge of the Laws of Malawi from an early age. To achieve this, the Commission will contribute to the review and development of the national curriculum to facilitate the integration of information on the Laws of Malawi across all levels of education, including early childhood, primary, secondary, and tertiary education. In implementing this initiative, the Commission will work closely with the Ministry of Education and the Malawi Institute of Education to ensure the effective incorporation of legal literacy into the curriculum.

6. Innovation

The Commission will develop and launch a *Lamulo Langa* (my law) Mobile Application to be used in facilitating legal literacy among members of the public, especially, the youth. The application will use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to interact with users to respond to questions and provide user specific information on the laws of Malawi.

7. Partnerships

To ensure smooth and effective implementation of the programme, the Commission will work with various stakeholders at all levels including at the national, district and community levels. These stakeholders include:

- (a) Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies;
- (b) Non-Governmental Organisations;
- (c) Development Partners;
- (d) Private Sector;
- (e) Institutions of Higher Learning;
- (f) Community, Traditional and Religious Leaders; and
- (g) Local and community organisations and structures.

Specifically, the Commission will establish partnerships with the National Library Service and NICE Trust to operate Legal Literacy Corners in libraries and Civic Education Hubs; the Department of Civic Education and the National Social Mobilisation Committee to support dissemination of IEC materials; the Legal Aid Bureau to run joint legal clinics; the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) to host Legal Literacy Corners in its Telecentres; the Ministry of Education and the Malawi Institute of Education on curriculum integration; and telecommunications companies and media houses on SMS dissemination and broadcast content, among other things.

8. Inclusivity

The approach of the Commission under the programme will be guided by the concept of leaving no-one behind. Building on the braille and comic book materials described under the IEC Materials activity above, the Commission will also produce materials in large print and, during meetings and the airing of television programmes, use sign language interpreters to reach persons with visual and hearing impairments.

9. Expected outputs, outcome, impact and indicators

9.1 Anticipated outputs and indicators

Outputs	Indicator
Messages simplified, translated and pre-tested	Number of themes completed
IEC materials produced and distributed	Number of IEC materials produced and distributed
Community outreach and legal clinics delivered	Number of sessions held
Law Literacy Corners established in National libraries, NICE offices, Civic Education Hubs, and MACRA Telecentres	Number of Law Literacy Corners established and operational disaggregated by center.
Legal Literacy Champions and duty bearers trained	Number of library staff, ACECs, and hub committee members trained and oriented

9.2 Anticipated outcomes and indicators

Outcomes	Indicator
Increased citizen awareness, understanding and confidence to exercise legal rights	Percentage of citizens aware of statutory laws
Increased citizen access to legal information	Percentage of citizens able to access statutory legal information

9.3 Anticipated impact and indicator

Impact	Indicator
Strengthened democratic governance, access to justice and rule of law- Malawi 2063 / MIP-1, SDG 16	Percentage of citizens who report having exercised or defended a legal right

10. Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL)

The Commission will integrate the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) system into the National Law Literacy Programme to ensure systematic tracking

of progress, promote transparency, enhance accountability, and facilitate continuous learning and improvement throughout the implementation period.

(a) Monitoring

The Commission will implement continuous monitoring to track programme performance against set objectives, outputs, and indicators.

The findings will be compiled into quarterly and annual progress reports to guide programme adjustments and maintain alignment with expected results.

(b) Evaluation

The Commission will conduct a midline evaluation midway through implementation to assess the programme's effectiveness, efficiency, and relevance. The midline evaluation will identify key achievements, constraints, and lessons to inform mid-course corrections and improve delivery for the remaining period. In addition, the Commission will conduct an endline evaluation at the end of the programme to assess impact, sustainability, and value for money. The evaluation will measure changes in awareness and understanding of the laws of Malawi, behavioural shifts among citizens and duty bearers, and contribution towards national and global development frameworks such as Malawi 2063 and the SDGs.

(c) Accountability

The programme will uphold accountability to stakeholders, particularly beneficiaries, through the establishment of feedback and complaint mechanisms at community and institutional levels; regular sharing of programme information through reports, community meetings, and media channels; and engaging beneficiaries, partners, and stakeholders in planning, implementation, and review processes. The feedback will inform programme decisions and help to put in place measures to strengthen trust between the Commission and the public.

(d) Learning

Learning will be central to the MEAL system to promote adaptive management and continuous improvement. In that regard, the Commission will document success stories, case studies, and best practices from programme activities; facilitate reflection and learning sessions with partners and communities after key phases; and use evidence from monitoring and evaluation to inform future programming and policy recommendations on legal literacy. Learning outcomes will be disseminated through reports, workshops, and knowledge-sharing platforms.

10. Sustainability of the Programme

To ensure sustainability of the programme, the Commission will train stakeholders that have the capacity to further share the information on the laws of Malawi in their communities and spheres of influence. These include the ACECs from NICE Trust, Civic Education Committees who are based at the T/A level and members of the media. These stakeholders have the potential to share information on the laws of Malawi beyond the

project cycle. In addition, the Commission will produce self-study materials such as brochures and comic books. These materials will be placed in various libraries across the country where people will have access to the materials even beyond the end of the programme. The Commission will, from time to time, revise the IEC materials to align them with current developments in the law and replace outdated materials with up-to-date materials in the libraries. Apart from this, the Commission will work with various partners in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the programme to ensure sustainability.

11. Appendices

Appendix 1: List of Laws

THEME	LIST OF ACTS
<i>ECONOMIC LAWS</i>	
1. Conservation and Extraction of Natural Resources	(a) The Constitution (b) Environmental Management Act (c) Mines and Minerals Act (d) Petroleum (Exploration and Production) Act (e) The Fisheries Management Act (f) The Parks and Wildlife Management Act (g) The Public Health Act (h) The Forest Act (i) Water Resources Act (j) Atomic Energy Act (k) Explosives Act
2. Land/Real Estate Ownership, Use and Management	(a) The Constitution (b) Land Act (c) Customary Land Act (d) Registered Land Act (e) Physical Planning Act (f) Land Survey Act (g) Deeds Registration Act (h) Adjudication of Title Act (i) Sectional Titles Act (j) Property Valuation Act (k) Local Government Act
3. Environment, Public Health and Climate Change	(a) The Constitution (b) The Environmental Management Act (c) The Urban Development Act (d) Physical Planning Act (e) The Fisheries Management Act (f) The Parks and Wildlife Management Act (g) The Public Health Act (h) The Pharmacy and Medicines Regulatory Authority Act (i) Local Government Act (j) The Forest Act (k) Water Resources Act (l) The Disaster Risk Management Act (m) HIV and AIDS (Prevention and Management) Act

	(n) Communications Act
4. Employment, Industrial Relations and Pensions	(a) The Constitution (b) Employment Act (c) Labour Relations Act (d) Pensions Act (e) Occupation, Safety Health and Welfare Act (f) Workers' Compensation Act (g) Public Service Act
5. Commercial Transactions and Business Relations	(a) The Constitution (b) Companies Act (c) Consumer Protection Act (d) Insolvency Act (e) Partnerships Act (f) Business Registration Act (g) Taxation Act (h) Financial Services Act (i) Sale of Goods Act
6. Competition and Consumer Protection	The Competition and Fair-Trading Act
7. Construction and Infrastructure Development	(a) Construction Industry Regulation Act (b) Real Estate Management Act (c) Public-Private Partnership Act (d) Physical Planning Act (e) Sectional Titles Act
8. Intellectual Property	(a) Patents Act (b) Copyright Act (c) Trademarks Act (d) Registered Designs Act
9. Tourism and Wildlife	(a) Tourism Act (b) Fisheries Management Act (c) Parks and Wildlife Management Act (d) Forestry Act
GOVERNANCE LAWS	
10. Governance, Human Rights and Rule of Law	(a) Constitution of the Republic of Malawi (b) Ombudsman Act (c) Human Rights Commission Act (d) Legal Aid Act (e) Law Commission Act (f) Corrupt Practices Act

	(g) Public Officers' Declaration of Assets, Liabilities and Business Interests Act (h) Access to Information Act (i) Public Finance Management Act (j) Finance Management Act
11. Access to Justice	(a) The Constitution (b) Legal Aid Act (c) Local Courts Act (d) Child Care, Protection and Justice Act (e) Gender Equality Act (f) Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (g) Courts Act (h) Bail (Guidelines) Act (i) Persons with Disability Act (j) Ombudsman Act (k) Malawi Human Rights Commission Act (l) Courts (High Court) (Civil Procedure) Rules, 2017
12. Access to Information, Data Protection and Cybersecurity	(a) The Constitution (b) Access to Information Act (c) Data Protection Act (d) Electronic Transactions and Cyber Security Act (e) Communications Act (f) HIV and AIDS (Prevention and Management) Act
SOCIAL LAWS	
13. Equality and non-discrimination	(a) Constitution of the Republic of Malawi (b) Disabilities Act (c) Gender Equality Act (d) HIV and AIDS (Prevention and Management) Act (e) Older Persons Act (f) Penal Code (Amendment) Act of 2016
14. Marriage Divorce and Family Relations	(a) The Constitution (b) Marriage, Divorce, and Family Relations Act (c) Adoption of Children Act (d) Deceased Estates (Wills, Inheritance and Protection) Act (e) Child Care, Protection and Justice Act (f) Trafficking in Persons Act

15. Child Care and Protection	(a) The Constitution (b) Child Care, Protection and Justice Act (c) Adoption of Children Act (d) Penal Code (e) Gender Equality Act (f) Marriage, Divorce, and Family Relations Act (g) Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (h) Trafficking In Persons Act
16. Wills and Inheritance	(a) The Constitution (b) Deceased Estates (Wills, Inheritance and Protection) Act (c) Pensions Act (d) Courts Act (e) Trustees Act (f) Administrator General Act (g) Legal Aid Act (h) Estate Duty Act
NATIONAL SECURITY LAWS	
17. Security Services	(a) Malawi Defence Force Act (b) Police Act (c) Prisons Act
18. Immigration and Residence	(a) The Constitution (b) Refugees Act (c) Citizenship Act (d) Immigration Act (e) National Registration Act
19. Human Trafficking and Abduction	(a) The Constitution (b) Penal Code (c) Trafficking in Persons Act (d) Child Care, Protection and Justice Act (e) Adoption of Children Act
20. Crime and Criminal Justice	(a) Constitution of the Republic of Malawi (b) Penal Code (c) Courts Act (d) Police Act (e) Criminal Procedure and Evidence Code (f) Prisons Act (g) Bail (Guidelines) Act (h) Financial Crimes Act

	(i) Corrupt Practices Act (j) Child Care, Protection and Justice Act
PUBLIC SERVICE LAWS	
21. Ways, Road Traffic and Safety Services	(a) The Constitution (b) Railways Act (c) Public Roads Act (d) Inland Waters Shipping Act (e) Civil Aviation Act (f) Road Traffic Act (g) Public Roads Act (h) Roads Authority Act (i) Road Traffic (Construction, Equipment and Use) Regulations (under the Road Traffic Act) (j) Road Traffic (Prescribed Offences and Penalties) Regulations (under the Road Traffic Act) (k) Local Government Act
22. Public Sector	(a) The Constitution (b) Public Service Act (c) Official Secrets Act (d) Corrupt Practices Act (e) Declaration of Assets Liabilities and Business Interests Act (f) Ombudsman Act (g) Access to Information Act (h) Local Government Act
23. Education and Training	(a) The Constitution (b) Education Act (c) Legal Education and Practitioners Act (d) Higher Education Students' Loans and Grants Act (e) National Council for Higher Education Act (f) University of Malawi Act (g) Kamuzu University of Health Science Act (h) Malawi University of Science and Technology Act (i) Malawi University of Business Studies Act (j) Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources Act (k) Mzuzu University Act (l) Malawi National Examinations Board Act (m) Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training Act

Appendix 2: A Summary of the Programme Budget

The following is an estimated budget for the 5-year National Law Literacy Programme:

#	Item	Budget (K)	Budget (USD)
1.	Production of Messages (<i>Simplification, translation and pre-testing</i>)	267,829,254.00	152,957.88
2.	Printing of IEC Materials	184,370,000.00	105,294.12
3.	Community Outreach Programmes	1,104,177,756.00	630,598.38
4.	Production and Airing of Radio Programme and Jingles	92,680,000.00	52,929.75
5.	Social Media Management	1,440,000.00	822.39
6.	Innovation (Development of <i>Lamulo Langa</i> Mobile App - Consultancy Fees)	69,727,000.00	39,821.25
7.	Capacity Building (<i>Training of Legal Literacy Champions</i>)	183,957,817.34	105,058.72
8.	Curriculum Review and Development	65,000,000	32266.13
8.	Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning	43,728,214.00	24,973.28
9.	Launch of the National Law Literacy Programme	71,385,468.00	40,768.40
10.	Logistical Support	786,500,000.00	449,171.90
	Grand Total	2,805,795,509.34	1,602,396.06

Exchange Rate 1USD = 1751 (07/09/2026)

A detailed budget and implementation plan is can be accessed upon request for further reference