NATIONAL MEDIA INSTITUTE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA (NAMISA) AND
THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING MODEL FOR MALAWI

By
Francis Chikunkhuzeni and Alaudin Osman

6 May 2013
Table of Contents

Acknowledgements 3
Executive Summary 4
Acronyms and Abbreviations 6
1. Introduction and Background 7
2. Information Gathering and Processing Methods 18
3. Issues with Public Service Broadcasting in Malawi 20
   3.1. Conceptual issue 20
   3.2 Structural Issues 22
   3.3 Institutional Issues 27
   3.4 Implementation Issues 28
4. Role of PSB in Other Countries 31
5. Public Service Broadcasting Model for Malawi 33
   5.1. Constitution 33
   5.2. Mandate 33
   5.3. Obligations 34
   5.4. Governing Principles 34
   5.5. Governing Structure 34
   5.6. Programming 36
   5.7. Financing 36
6. Reform Plan of Action 37
7. Conclusion 39
8. References 40

Tables

Table 1: The Role of PSB in other Countries 42
Table 2: Logical Framework for PSB in Malawi 37

Appendix

Appendix 1: MBC Editorial Handbook
Acknowledgements
We are deeply grateful to the following persons and organisations for offering us invaluable information, opinion and expertise in the process of developing this model:

Tikhala Chibwana          Times Group of Companies
Alfred Ntonga             Nation Publications Limited
Dalitso Nkunika           Malawi Institute of Journalism
Wiseman Chirwa            Chancellor College, University of Malawi
Emmanuel Kondowe          Malawi Commission for UNESCO
Anthony Livuza             Ministry of Information and Civic Education
Maclan Kanyang’wa        Polytechnic, University of Malawi
Benson Tembo               Malawi Broadcasting Corporation
Dalitso Chimala            Malawi Broadcasting Corporation
Daniel Kalaya             Malawi Broadcasting Corporation
Fegus Lipenga             Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority
Jolly Kalero              Malawi Congress Party
Clement Chiwaya           United Democratic Front
George Chaponda           Democratic Peoples’ Party

Huge thanks also go to all people who retrieved and shared various documents, offered a range of support and spared time for insightful comments on the model, when it was presented at the National Broadcasting Conference. All materials obtained from other sources are clearly acknowledged in the report and bibliography.

We are also deeply indebted to the Malawi Chapter of the Media Institute for Southern Africa (NAMISA) and Ministry of Information and Civic Education for according us the opportunity to contribute to the transformation of the media landscape in Malawi through this initiative.

While we would like to acknowledge the expert and experiential input into the development of the ‘Public Service Broadcasting Model for Malawi’ from the above individuals and organisations, all imperfections in this report are of course our responsibility.

Francis Chikunkhuzeni and Alaudin Osman
Blantyre, 4th May 2013.
Executive Summary

Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) is undergoing continuous changes due to technological developments, policy shifts towards economic and political liberalisation and re-alignment of governance structures from national to trans-national or international power-blocks in a rapidly globalising world. The concept has withstood over 80 years of recurrent criticism for, among other reasons, being paternalistic, docile to ruling elite, ineffective in resource utilisation, irrelevant in programming remit and partisan to government interests. However, PSB, world-over still forms a significant part of the national and international broadcasting systems and remains the vanguard of the public utility value of broadcasting.

From the 1990’s many African and Post-communist states have witnessed a wave of advocacy for the transformation of state or government broadcasters into public service media institutions. The rationale for change is anchored in the anticipated value of the public service utility to democracy, culture and development. In Malawi, a variety of formal advocacy initiatives to reform MBC from a state-controlled broadcaster to a public service broadcaster date as far back as early 1990s. Over two decades of ad hoc and systematic advocacy for positive change of MBC have passed without significant results.

Recently, another window of opportunity opened up. The National Media Institute of Africa (NAMISA) and the Ministry of Information and Civic Education, with financial support from the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA), have embarked on a project to reform the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) from a mouthpiece of the government of the day into a true public service broadcaster premised on regional and international instruments such as the African Charter on Broadcasting. The model, presented here, is an attempt to sketch out a workable institutional structure and to develop a roadmap for this transformation. This model was tabled at a National Conference on Broadcasting Reform on 9th March 2013. Based on this model, the Conference, which brought together local and international experts, developed an implementation plan for MBC reform and constituted a technical committee comprising media institutions to oversee the process.

The model conceptualises PSB as a distinct form of broadcasting which is broader than the remit of MBC. Based on inputs from stakeholders and literature review, it clearly spells out the future mandate of PSB in Malawi, explains internal and external governance structures, outlines key obligations, provides programme
principles and remit, and specifies the financing structure. The model pays attention to the prevailing legal, social, cultural and economic environment in which MBC operates in order to chart its reform framework as a dominant PSB provider in future.
**Acronyms and Abbreviations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MBC</td>
<td>Malawi Broadcasting Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSB</td>
<td>Public Service Broadcasting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAMISA</td>
<td>National (Malawi) Chapter of Media Institute for Southern Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISA</td>
<td>Media Institute for Southern Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>National Consultative Committee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. **Introduction and Background**

Currently, Malawi has one national government broadcaster, the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), which is a statutory body. MBC remains the dominant mass medium in the country because of high illiteracy, urban-based newspaper circulation and the somewhat limited geographical area within which other radio stations operate. MBC broadcasts on one television and two FM radio channels.

In 1998 MBC was, through the National Communications Sector Policy (1998) and its enabling Communications Act (1998), reconstituted to operate as a public broadcaster. While the policy and legal framework give an external appearance of an appropriately constituted public service broadcasting institution, the internal operating order in MBC remains entrenched in partisan political programming. That the formal reconstitution of MBC as public broadcaster has not changed its broadcasting tradition of political bias in favour of the ruling political party, has been thoroughly documented in almost every research on media in Malawi, including MISA (2002), Chipangula (2003), Commonwealth Observer Group (2004), Patel (2005) and Kaonga (2008). As Manda observes “... entertain and educate they [MBC stations] do, but inform fairly and equitably they do not because they are biased towards the ruling party and government officials...” (Manda 2006:4). The question however remains: why and how is it possible that MBC remains undemocratised under liberalised national policy and legal frameworks, which are backed by a national constitutional guarantee for media freedom and international conventions, protocols, treaties and sanctions?

History has significant explanatory value for contemporary practice in MBC especially, because change is essentially constituted by a dynamic interplay of inertia and passage; neither of which would be possible without the other. While history alone is not sufficient explanation of contemporary broadcasting practice in MBC, no account of the prevailing state of affairs would be complete and adequate without consideration of vestiges from the past. Contemporary transformative processes at MBC are being constrained by institutional legacies, especially cumulative broadcasting policies whose residual effects were aimed at social control.

1.1. **Colonial Government Broadcasting Policy**

History of broadcasting media in Nyasaland is short and informative in explaining its mandate and financing structure. From inception radio broadcasting in
Nyasaland began as an economic surrogate of other territories and was characterised by government involvement. British economic and political interests motivated the introduction of radio broadcasts to Nyasaland. Radio broadcasts were emanating from Lusaka, Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), to cater for British miners (Head 1974).

An examination of radio programming history since broadcasting commenced in Lusaka to cater for both Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Nyasaland reveals that radio was principally used for political propaganda purposes to veil economic exploits of the settler communities. The Central African Broadcasting Station in Lusaka was used to publish war-related propaganda to Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia. Since the target audience was Africans, programmes were made in vernacular languages (Powel 1972) leading to an African oriented programming. Similarly during the Federation of Rhodesias and Nyasaland, radio was used as a propaganda tool to perpetuate the existence of colonial power. Nyimba (1996) says programming then was characterised by suppression of all opposing political views especially from African nationalists. The primary goal of radio broadcasting inherited from the colonial authority was social control through political manipulation. It is not surprising that the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) governments took full control of broadcasting and used it for their political ends.

In terms of financing, although there was no broadcast equipment installed in Nyasaland until 1960, the administrations of Southern Rhodesian (Zimbabwe), which had its own radio station, and Nyasaland were persuaded to contribute to the operational cost of the radio station in Lusaka because of its orientation towards vernacular programmes. Later with the formation of the Central African Federation, comprising Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Nyasaland (Malawi), broadcasting and its financing became centralised, with the broadcasting headquarters in the Southern Rhodesia town of Salisbury (Harare). Radio receiver and listener licence fees were other sources of revenue contributed by Nyasaland towards the Federal broadcasting system. When Nyasaland seceded from the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, She inherited impoverished federal broadcasting facilities on her soil. This equipment consisted of a 20-kw shortwave transmitter and a 250kw medium-wave transmitter. From inception, the broadcasting system generated commercial revenue to supplement government subvention and donor-aid funds. Continuing the model of the Federal Broadcasting Corporation, the Nyasaland Broadcasting Corporation, and later the Malawi broadcasting Corporation,
slowly developed some capacity to use commercial advertising and programme sponsorship as supplementary source of funds for broadcasting.

In addition to inheriting poor broadcasting infrastructure, Nyasaland suffered further repercussions of seceding from the Federal Broadcasting System because all advertising contracts reverted to the broadcasting headquarters in Southern Rhodesia. Nyasaland Broadcasting Corporation therefore had to depend heavily on government funding and external aid to establish and develop domestic radio services, which began in 1961.

1.2. Single-Party Government Broadcasting Policy

The single-party government initially maintained the colonial structure of financing broadcasting, with Prime Minister Hastings Banda insisting in Parliament that MBC should continue receiving radio-receiver licence and listener fees after attaining independence. However, in 1966 listener fees were abandoned because it was unpopular among many listeners and the cost of collection was too high. The loss of revenue from the end of listener fees was cushioned by a strategy to attract more advertisements, through increase in entertainment programme and opening news bulletins to prime-time sponsorship. Mackie (1972) summaries the funding sources for MBC in the 1970s as follows:

These included the sale of production services to agencies and to other broadcast services, commercial representation for Malawi’s mobile cinema circuit, production of advertising films, selling space in MBC publications and even the unusual expedient of leasing transmitter facilities during certain time periods to outside contractors. In July 1972, an American firm began an international service using MBC’s 100 kw short-wave transmitter. The service called Lakeland Radio, broadcast daily musical programmes pre-recorded in the United States for one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening (Mackie, 1972: 138-139).

However, even with the expansion of commercial revenue base, MBC did not reduce dependence on government financial support. While in 1970 advertising revenue was approximately 35 percent, in 1988 it was 33 percent of the Corporation’s revenue (MBC 1988 and 1970). Head (1972) attributes this decline to perpetuation of civil service mentality in broadcasting, government interference, lack of advertising efficiency, limited revenue potential, a system that divorces earnings from expenditure, and failure to take advantages of commercial opportunities because the BBC upon which MBC was modelled was neither experienced in or sympathetic to commercialism in broadcasting.
In terms of programming, Uledi-Kamanga et al. (1992) point out that although the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation, like the British Broadcasting Corporation, was established in 1964 to inform, educate and entertain, it took on extra features. The first major pre-occupations for MBC were to:

1. establish a unique identity as an ‘African’ radio, free of any influence from the colonial past, and
2. find ways of using radio as an important tool in the task of national building (Uledi-Kamanga et. al. 1992: 1).

In 1969 the MBC Act made it a legal requirement for the Corporation to support a political party in power (MCP) as the country was a single party-state. President Kamuzu Banda articulated the domestic and international roles of MBC when he launched a powerful radio transmitter donated by the Federal Republic of Germany. The policy was clearly that radio was at the service of government to inform people of Malawi and to counter political dissent from abroad:

[T] he government can tell its people through the broadcasting system what the government is doing. It can tell the people anything it wants to tell them effectively. This is one of the reasons I have asked for this transmitter. The transmitters we had were not powerful enough to reach our people everywhere. Worse still there were not powerful enough to reach the people outside this country. For example, as his Excellency the ambassador for the Republic of Germany has stated, propaganda against us in other countries; lies against us in other countries- we could not answer that propaganda because our transmitters were not powerful enough to reach countries far away from our borders. Now through this transmitter, we will be able not only to reach our people from Karonga to Nsanje, Nkhotakota to Mchinji, not only to tell our people in Johannesburg, in Salisbury what is going on here, now, but also to counteract all lying propaganda against us, against government and the people of this country (Kamuzu Banda 1970).

In 1973 the Criminal Procedures and Evidence Code was amended to make it an office to communicate false statements which could be published outside the country. The MBC Act was amended in 1991 to provide sweeping powers to the minister responsible to direct the inclusion or exclusion of any broadcast content on any radio station. The Act also required any prospective investor into broadcasting to apply to MBC for licence. In this case MBC was both service provider and regulator in broadcasting.

1.3. **Transitional Government Broadcasting Policy**

Reform of government broadcasting towards the ideal of public service broadcasting has its roots in political contests during political transition in Malawi. In
the run up to a national referendum on choice of government system in 1993 and multiparty elections in 1994, the role of MBC became a contested issue between the ruling MCP and political opposition. Pressured into opening up the media landscape, the MCP maintained a tight grip on MBC and President Hasting Kamuzu Banda directed MBC operations.

The private press should be free to cover the news and events of these (national referendum campaign) meetings. No one should dictate the press, because it is a free press. The MBC will also be expected to report the news and events on both sides of the referendum campaign. I will, however, not allow MBC to allocate for anyone to make partisan broadcasts, or anyone to place paid political advertising on the radio. The Malawi Congress Party does not do this and I have no intention of changing that traditional practice now, for either the MCP or for the dissident groups (Kamuzu Banda 1992).

However, when 63 percent of Malawians in June 1993 voted in favour of change from a single-party to a multiparty system of government, it became necessary to change the constitution of the country to accommodate political pluralism. As such, in December, when the single party parliament met for the first time after defeat in the referendum, it conferred legal mandate to National Consultative Council, NCC, and National Executive Council, NEC, as representative bodies to run political transition in Malawi. The NCC functioned like parliament while NEC had functions of an executive branch of government but overall administration of the country remained under the authority of the incumbent MCP government. In the NCC the members had equal voting power, thereby reducing the power of MCP to equate that of any other member. Although the MCP was still in control of government machinery and public resources, it could not veto any decision by made NCC and NEC because its power was greatly constrained by results of the referendum which favoured political change and efforts to restore international legitimacy among donors who had cut development support to Malawi. In September 1993 the NCC drafted a written code of conduct for MBC, which defined the role of MBC as a public broadcaster, compelled to give access to political parties for political campaign.

The guidelines in this code were supplied by Campaign Against Censorship and adopted by NEC after consultation in the NCC. This code of conduct was further refined and adopted by the Electoral Commission as a binding code of conduct for MBC during official campaigning which began in March 1994. Among other provisions it guaranteed editorial autonomy to MBC journalists in the processing of news; protected them from arbitrary disciplinary action resulting from involvement in
publishing political news materials; protected confidentiality of news sources; set guidelines for according political leaders equal access to the public medium; and emphasised the supremacy of public good over partisan interests. The code required MBC to give equal air-time and prominence to competing political parties in elections news. MBC assumed a new role of informing and motivating voters. MBC introduced new programmes as a response to the code of conduct, including political-party debates, press conferences, campaign bulletins, songs, jingles, poetry and drama on elections. The coverage of election results was live and reporters were deployed to all district centres.

In 1994 Malawian journalists adopted a nine-point declaration called the Mangochi Declaration, in which among other things, they called on the MCP government to open and guarantee access to political opposition at MBC.

1.4. Neo-authoritarian Government Broadcasting Policy

When Malawi changed from a one-party to multiparty system of government, the UDF government was reluctant to review the MBC Act (1991). Yet before it took reins of power, in January 1994, its political adviser, Collins Chizumila, had led a National Consultative Committee (NCC) delegation to MBC to protest the biased treatment of opposition political parties by MBC (Seule 1994). After winning elections in April 1995, MBC Chief editor, D. Chimera, posted a memo in the newsroom instructing staff to play down stories that attacked government failure to maintain security in the country. He told MISA: “We are not as independent as you think. We are still funded by government, so there is a limit to how far we can go in being independent” (MISA 1995:unpapgenated). In August, current affairs principal producer Albert Ndalama was forcibly retired for running an excerpt of a leader of political opposition, Gwanda Chakuamba, alleging President Muluzi and his party had misappropriated money meant for poverty alleviation. Minister of information, Brown Mpinganjira, is alleged to have demanded tapes of the speech and issued strict instructions to drop the item on the evening news bulletin (MISA 1995). The UDF took advantage of the MBC Act (1991) and had to be pressured into accepting a review.

a) MBC Board Recommendations on Review of Act

Reminiscent of the initial process followed by the BBC, the MBC took it upon itself to define principles of public broadcasting through proposed changes to the legislation that governed its operations and functions. With financial support from
GTZ-Democracy, private lawyers in consultation with MBC management proposed changes to the MBC Act (1991). The proposal was in February 1997 presented to a national consultative conference composed of over 130 delegates who included politicians, lawyers, media workers, religious leaders and traditional authorities.

Proposed amendments to the Act aimed at eliminating structural constraints that inhibited editorial independence in public broadcasting. The MBC Board recommended that an editorial board be established to insulate journalists from editorial interference. The editorial board consisting of 6 professionally qualified persons from various disciplines to ensure broad and fair coverage of news would be appointed by an MBC Board of Directors. Section 16 of the proposed amendment to the 1991 Act spells out the responsibility of the proposed board:

The Editorial Board shall have the responsibility of, from time to time, giving general directions on editorial policies of the Corporation and to protect journalist freedom and independence and shall be chaired by the Director General (MBC 1996:9).

Section 17 of the proposal removed the ministerial prerogative on broadcast content by recommending that all “content of programmes for broadcast within Malawi shall be within the exclusive jurisdiction of the Corporation through its Board of Directors and Editorial Board.” This proposal was an attempt to revert to the 1963 Ordinance and recommendations of Chalmer’s Report (1962).

Another structural proposal to wade off political interference in editorial policy related to appointment procedures of the MBC Board of Directors. The recommendation of the MBC Board was that the Board should be accountable to parliament and not the executive branch of government. Section 4 of the proposed amendment to the Act reduced the power of the executive branch of government on MBC:

There shall be a Board of Directors for the Corporation, which shall be selected from Malawian citizens of high integrity by a Selection Panel appointed by the Public Appointments Committee of Parliament. The Selection Panel shall prepare a shortlist of candidates from persons nominated by civic organisations, the general public and by members of the Panel….The interview for selection of candidates …shall be conducted in sessions open to members of public….The successful candidates shall be appointed to the Board by the President…. (MBC 1996:8)

In this proposal the President would have ceremonial powers in appointing members of the Board of Directors. Neither the president nor minister would have power to
remove any Board member. Members of the Board would have guaranteed tenure of office for four years unless the National Assembly passed a motion of removal on grounds of gross incompetence, gross misconduct, corruption and mental or physical infirmity.

Preferences of the MBC Board in the proposal evidently value the social utility of the state-funded media and attempt to secure editorial independence, especially from political interference as a response to historical and prevailing political interference. The inclusion of a broad-based representative Board selected through transparent and competitive processes demonstrated a desire to create public confidence and trust in the public body. While the MBC Board preferred to retain powers to license other broadcasters, the overriding concept of public broadcasting in the proposal was evidently social service provision within an operating environment insulated from political interference.

The National Consultative Conference on the Review of the MBC Act endorsed all but few recommendations of the MBC Board. The consultative conference did not support the proposition for an editorial board on grounds that it would be a mechanism for instituting self-censorship. It recommended instead a written and well publicised editorial policy and code of conduct for the Corporation. It also recommended that MBC, as an interested party in broadcasting, relinquishes licensing powers to an independent broadcasting authority.

A rift in the position of the UDF-led Government and the majority of delegates at a review conference was apparent when a so called ‘Cabinet Paper’ preferred retention of ministerial controls over policy and appointments of MBC Board of Directors and senior staff. The conference, including opposition MCP, rejected the proposal by cabinet as effectively aimed at sustaining the tradition in state-funded media of giving a dominant voice to the executive branch of government and ruling party while excluding the voice of political opposition.

After the conference these recommendations were shelved by the Ministry of Information prompting NAMISA to source funds for lobbying various stakeholders and government to review the Act (1991). Unlike German government sponsorship, which was subject to intergovernmental agreement, MISA was independent from the Malawi Government.
b) Process of Reconstituting of MBC

At the time NAMISA was conducting consultations, Government had began a parallel process to review not just the MBC Act but policy for the entire communications sector comprising telecommunication, postal and broadcasting services. The process involved a task force comprising government official who consulted a narrow range of stakeholders through workshops. Secretary to Information explains the composition of the task force and the consultative process followed:

We set up a taskforce which comprised two lawyers, one of them was Law Commissioner, Justice Elton Singini, and another from the ministry of Justice Mr. Allan Chinula.; an administrator from the ministry of information, project coordinator, Evance Namanja, who is now director general of MACRA. The team comprise persons with a bias in administration, telecommunications postal services, law and finance…A British Consultant, who had wide range experience in communications sector, was seconded to Malawi for duration of the project. We also carried out a series of consultative workshops to get input from various stakeholders including representatives from posts, telecommunications, dealers in communications ware, Chancellor College, key ministries and general public (Senior Official of the Ministry of Information. 2005 Interview, 20 February). (Chikunkhuzeni 2010)

In addition, the Law Commission solicited input into the proposed law. Recommendations from the consultative process which the Malawi Law Commission published in a report were subjected to Cabinet alterations. Cabinet retained executive powers over policy, appointment of board of directors and senior employees of MBC and MACRA. When the Bill was presented to Parliament, the Legal Affairs Committee invited submissions from stakeholders. Submissions from CILIC, Media Taskforce, Africa Bible College and other stakeholders preferred removal of executive power over these statutory bodies to secure their independence from politicians. A motion to insert these recommended provisions was defeated by UDF-led majority vote in the National Assembly (Parliament 1998). Numerous conferences have recommended review of the Communications Act (1998) and subsequent submissions have been made the Law Commission on the same provisions by the Article IXX and Malawi Chapter of MISA but to no avail.
1.5. Lessons from History

Several observations and lessons could be drawn from previous efforts to reconstitute MBC into a public service broadcaster. These lessons inform a workable roadmap for reform and the model of public service broadcasting for Malawi.

1. From inception to date, MBC has developed a political culture of positive bias towards a political party and government in power. This political propaganda function is a result of an accumulation of policies and laws that have legitimated such conduct from colonial to multiparty government systems. The policies and laws can be changed but the political culture remains resilient. The PSB model should aim at dissolving this culture through radical reform in the governance structure.

2. Governments use unruly practices to frustrate reform processes. Unruly practices are those in which people in positions of authority exploit gaps between institutional rules and their implementation to consolidate or gain power and control over MBC. Government officials and politicians-in-power directly interfere with MBC operations through informal policy via ‘orders-from-above’. Orders-from-above are evidence of the perversity of policy-by practice, which overrides official or written policy. As such legal reform is not sufficient to transform MBC from a government mouthpiece to public service broadcasting.

3. The policy reform process provides institutional bias in favour of interests of politicians-in-power. Institutional bias has power to mobilise or manipulate circumstances that may favour one set of policy preferences over another. The UDF Government and politicians systematically deployed resources to systematically sway parliament and cabinet towards inserting provisions that benefit them at the expense of public interest.

4. The procedure followed in coming up with the National Communications Policy (1998) and Communications Act (1998), has structural biases. Government used legitimate bureaucratic structures (cabinet and parliament) to overturn reforms proposals that reduced its influence in public media. The lobby led by MISA was ignored and so were preferences and recommendations of the MBC Board and members of staff, who had demanded a review of the law that governed their operations. Caution should be taken to circumvent the traps set by legitimate structures of government.
5. A written editorial policy for MBC (attached as appendix 1) is an ineffective tool for securing editorial autonomy and integrity as suggested by the resolution of national broadcasting conference in the 1994. PSB editorial independence requires an effective governance structure, such as an editorial board, as proposed by the MBC Board following the success of the code of conduct enforced by the NCC during political transition.

6. Editorial and economic autonomy is possible, but windows of opportunity to effect reform have been lost. Radical reform is successful during political and economic crises, when windows of opportunity open up. However the mode of transition from colonial to nationalist one-party then multiparty political system, was speedy and no structural changes took effect. Rather each transition was smooth and orderly with a proper handover of practices, personnel, skills, structures and facilities from one MBC team to another. The minimal adjustments or disruptions to operations of MBC ensured continuity and further entrenchment of MBC into political structures. Reform initiatives should exploit windows of opportunity like when political party-in-power is in minority in parliament or periods in run-up to political elections.

7. MBC financing structure has traditionally remained the same for over a generation. Efforts to reduce dependence of MBC on government support should be informed by failure of these traditional sources of revenue to secure economic independence. A broad, secure and sustainable source of financing PSB should be introduced.

8. MBC wishes for editorial and economic autonomy, as articulated in recommendations of the Chalmer’s Report (1962), MBC Board submissions (1997) and MBC Editorial Handbook (2008) developed with GTZ and Gender Links support, should be incorporated into the PSB model.

9. Sustained lobby and advocacy by both domestic and international pressure groups can effectively initiate and support radical change of MBC into a PSB.
2. Information Gathering and Processing Methods

To develop a working model of public service broadcasting for Malawi and a roadmap for reform, two principle techniques of gathering data were used, namely key-informant interviews and document review, which involved collection and analysis of documents and records. Before selecting a technique, consideration was made as to its capacity to generate data that shed light on the proposed model and roadmap. As such, the capacity of the technique to help develop a workable model and action plan was paramount. The two methods were interlinked in that documentary analysis informed the direction of interviews and interview data also fed into further exploration of documents. While document analysis examined historical factors that structure MBC and performance of PSB in other countries, interviews established experiences with and evaluation of MBC service mandate. Semi-structured interviews were used so that interviewees could relate their experiences, perceptions and understanding of PSB and MBC. In addition, this combination of methods was used as triangulation in order to gain deep understanding of MBC reform prospects. As Curtin and Fossey (2007) contend, information from different methods can be used to corroborate, illuminate and elaborate the research.

The study combined two sampling techniques. The principal sampling technique was purposeful sampling. However, during fieldwork allowance was made for snowball sampling to give flexibility in determining what documents and which interviewees, not considered in the initial sample, could be included. Purposeful sampling involved the selection of small, information rich informants and documents (Wimmer and Dominick 2006 and Deacon et al. 2007). Although it was at our discretion to identify appropriate informants, Morse’s (1994) guidelines were applied to make the selection of informants systematic.

A good informant is one who has the knowledge and experience the researcher requires, has the ability to reflect, is articulate, has the time to be interviewed, and is willing to participate in the study (Morse 1994:128).

With regard to selection of documentary sources of data, we followed criteria developed by May (2000) and Deacon et al. (2007) to assess quality of documentary evidence, namely: authenticity, credibility, representativeness (typicality) and meaning (clarity and comprehensibility). The main source was official documents which have been openly published by government.
Both documentary and interview data were analysed using the same technique. The difference in ways of obtaining material did not necessarily affect mode of analysis as both sets of data were conceptualised in the same way. The technique for analysis data was meaning condensation, a form of content analysis.
3. Issues with Public Service Broadcasting in Malawi

From consultations with stakeholders and literature review, it is apparent that for any meaningful and effective reform to take effect, several issues have to be resolved. These issues arise at different levels ranging from understanding of the precise meaning of PSB to challenges in the professional practice at MBC. For each set of issues, we offer clear suggestions on how such may be resolved. The suggestions are building blocks for a workable PSB model and, like the lessons from MBC history, be regarded as an integral part of the PSB model under construction here.

3.1. Conceptual Issues

The existing policy framework and legislation do not define PSB; and inadequately define public broadcasting services. The gap in the conception of PSB opens up opportunities for impunity by the executive of political party-in-power; direct political interference in MBC operations; and open defiance of established authority by MBC management, staff and Board of Directors. PSB should not be equated with public broadcasting services (PBS), national broadcasting, state or government broadcasting. Public broadcasting service is any broadcasting targeted for public consumption. Such programmes may not necessarily be driven by a public service ethos. On the contrary they are often driven by a top-down communication system in which covert elite interests are driven into the masses for ideological alignment. State and government broadcasting services are illustrious examples of public broadcasting services that are managed and controlled by either the state or the government to propagate state or government interest in the public domain. PBS is supply-driven, while PSB is demand driven. PSB conceptualises broadcasting as a public utility driven by a public service ethos. It is driven by a philosophy of an ideology targeted at betterment of every level of society, rather than just to inform and entertain.

The National Communications Sector Policy (1998) provides a framework for the reconstitution of MBC, without committing it to the public service ethos. While the aim of the policy is to ensure that a full range of modern broadcasting services are accessible to all Malawians and to reconstitute MBC so that it meets the expectations of Malawians under a ‘new political dispensation’, it vaguely defines public broadcasting services as “those provided by MBC on the basis of statute, or by others if they also accept comparable service obligations” (Ministry of Information1998:
It prescribes six roles of MBC, namely: to observe democratic principles and norms, represent Malawi internationally, entertain, inform and educate. But the strategy for securing these roles is through executive control over MBC, as the policy states that in order “to guarantee its character as the national public broadcaster, MBC’s Board of Directors will be appointed by the President in accordance with the provisions of the Communications Act, 1998.” (Ministry of Information 1998:27).

As a reflection of the open definition of PBS in the policy document, the Communications Act (1998) also inadequately defines it. Public broadcasting service is defined as:

“(a) any broadcasting service provided by MBC; or
(b) any broadcasting service provided under a licence which stipulates—
   (i) national or local transmission of the broadcasting service;
   (ii) the provision of regular news bulletins; and
   (iii) access to the service for public information announcements or programmes” (Government of Malawi 1998:10).

This definition equates anything MBC broadcasts to PBS and, by extension, includes all radio stations that broadcast regular news bulletins and public announcements. It fails to satisfactorily and adequately distinguish PBS from private commercial or community broadcasting based on role and content, because the concept of PBS is, by its very nature, too open and broad.

In contrast, the concept of PSB is definitive, although it takes on many forms across the world. As defined by UNESCO, PSB is “broadcasting made, financed and controlled by the public, for the public…” (UNESCO, 2008). The primary mission and mandate of PSB is public service with the primary aim of positively transforming society and enriching the quality of people’s lives. In this vein, MBC should be transformed into a positive change agent, whose guiding philosophy should be to induce, initiate and institute positive change at every level of society and in all aspects of life. Equally important in conceptualising PSB is not to equate it with an organisation, but rather view it as a role and content genre of broadcasting driven primarily by a public service ethos, which may entail generation of commercial revenue to fulfil. Private commercial broadcasting is primarily driven by a commercial ethos of profit maximisation, which does not preclude a secondary or subsidiary role of provision of public service programming. In other words, while MBC should be mandated and bound by PSB obligations, the remit of PSB is broader than MBC, which should only be one of the principle constituencies of PSB. Other players should, together with MBC, constitute PSB in Malawi. This is in line with
organisational models of PSB, which may range from a centralised unitary institution, as is with current structure of MBC, to a decentralised network of discreet broadcasting units. The one unitary entity model has failed to respond to reform in Malawi. The PSB model for Malawi should assume a decentralised organisation structure comprising a network of discreet functional broadcasting units under the overall umbrella of the Malawi Public Service Broadcasting Trust (MPSBT). This will require MBC to shed off some of its functions to other broadcasters set up by other authorities. Since PSB is demand-driven in contrast with than the supply-driven PBS, it is likely to result in high responsiveness to the fulfilment of the public service mandate through public satisfaction measurements and targeted financing.

3.2. Structural Issues
For the PSB model to be workable, key institutional issues have to be adequately addressed. These relate to the economic, political and cultural pre-requisites to reform. The political, economic and cultural environment should of necessity be conducive and supportive of the reform initiative. Stakeholders identified lack of political will, indifference to current state of affairs, absence of grassroots participation in advocacy for change at MBC, politically biased legal and financial systems, and a weak media self-regulatory system as major constraints to any reform towards PSB.

The most intriguing question we faced from stakeholders was how the current initiative would lead to reform when past efforts have merely been talk without action. Stakeholders pointed out that a tradition has been established in Malawi where politicians in opposition complain about the biased conduct of MBC while political parties-in-power abuse MBC. But neither of the two sides is willing to change the status quo. The political party-in-power does not want change which will dislodge its control over MBC, while the opposition parties are not in a hurry to reform MBC as they anticipate to abuse and manipulate it when they get into power. The result is total lack of political will from both sides of the political divide.

Lack of political will to reform MBC has lead to total resignation to fate among other stakeholders. Such stakeholders are aware of the unjust and undemocratic broadcasting practices at MBC and see no effective solution to the problem. The expected drivers of change recount many efforts made in the past that have not yielded any transformation and see no change in sight. Lack of political will and
resignation to fate are driven by a myth that direct control over MBC by a political party gives it overwhelming voter support during elections. However, the magic-bullet-effect of propaganda style broadcasting over voters or hypnotising-effect of the hypodermic needle of MBC broadcasts over political opposition views is not supported by evidence of the success of incumbency in political elections. Political parties-in-power have lost elections when in full control of MBC.

Lack of political will and resignation of policy movers is compounded by a state of indifference to the practice at MBC by the grassroots. Citizens in Malawi are not organised into advocacy groups to voice out concerns about the conduct of MBC. Media literacy and advocacy among rural communities, including among traditional leaders, is non-existent. The combined effect of lack of direct participation by grassroots and involvement of citizen representatives in the lobby for democratic reform is that MBC continues ‘business as usual’ with impunity even when the Communications Act (1998) and court decision compel it to be representative, balanced, fair and accurate in programming.

The commercial viability of media institutions is structured to a large extent by the macro-economic environment. One of the pre-conditions for establishing a successful and effective PSB is a reliable funding mechanism. The dual funding structure, in which MBC relies on commercial and public revenue, renders it prone to both political and commercial dictates. Cash budgeting, in which MBC receives subvention each month dependent on revenue collected by government, has led not only to inabilities to implement long-term projects but also to an accumulation of unsettled debts, adding a further strain on operations. MBC has not received funding for long term projects for over four years and its monthly funding fluctuates significantly with funding levels depending on the whims of Treasury. The current form of public financing of MBC renders it amenable to political interference from both the party-in-power and opposition political parties. Commercial revenue also poses professional dilemmas to MBC.

While MBC has generated revenue from commercial revenue since inception, the introduction of neo-liberal policies in the early 1990s has pushed the national broadcaster towards adoption of market discipline, including maximisation of revenue and cutting costs in a liberalised competitive environment. The result is that economic factors, in addition to political factors, play a significant role in programming decisions. The impact of commercialisation of MBC is that programming reflects the
interests of advertisers and sponsors, disregards programming for citizenship, children and juvenile rights, erosion of cultural identity programming, and discrimination on grounds of economic status has increased. There is also evidence of reduction in programme diversity and range as many programmes are bent on satisfying the appeal for pass time, relaxation, escape and entertainment rather than serious content. Producers are under pressure suite interests of financiers by eliminating programme ideas or elements that repel or upset financiers or place audiences in an unreceptive mood for commercial promotions. MBC is a double jeopardy as the current financing system renders it prone to direct, and subtle and pervasive, influences of both politics and economics. A more robust and efficient financing system is proposed for the future of PSB in Malawi; a system that provides for political and economic autonomy.

The new financing system fixes quotas for each source of funding and introduces a broader and more reliable source of public revenue than is currently available. The PSB should move from the MBC mixed model of funding limited to commercial-public financing, to a hybrid funding model in which the bulk of funds are from a trust fund. The PSB should continue getting revenue from government and commercial sources but to secure autonomy from political and commercial interference and to promote competition in the broadcasting market such revenue should be limited to half of the total revenue base. The other half should be sourced through competitive bidding from the Trust Fund. The composition of PSB funding should be 30% Government through Parliament, 20% Commercial revenue, 50% Trust Fund revenue.

Effectively the new financing system maintains the current range of commercial activities but limits the proportion to 20% of total revenue; reduces state funding to 30% of total revenue and creates a Public Media Trust Fund to mobilise, manage and disburse revenue to public media service providers including MBC, independent content producers, media training institutions and commercial broadcasters. The Trust Fund should be populated by a levy on electricity (or any dirty product such as condoms, alcohol or tobacco). The main aim of the Public Media Trust Fund is promote high-quality PSB programming in Malawi by among other things:

- Populating and managing funds for PSB
- Introducing an open and competitive tendering process to support programming with public service broadcasting values
• Promoting affiliate systems through the Public Private Partnerships Framework between public service broadcasting and private/community broadcasting

• Encouraging formation of networks of production houses with PSB values

• Monitoring and evaluating PSB performance using suitable standards, performance measures and criteria

• Offering general guidance on the good corporate governance and management of funds for PSB

• Setting a multi-year purpose remit, strategies and budgetary allocations for PSB

Another issue relates to the practical difficulties change agents face in legal reform processes. That the Communications Act (1998) requires review has been a cry for over a decade. However, the only two mechanisms for amending or repealing the law are too costly, in terms of time and money, to be of any practical use. The Communications Act can be changed through an Act of Parliament or declaration of a competent court. As explained above attempts to change it through an Act of Parliament has failed in the past. Private member’s Bills in relation to media laws have also failed. To date no judicial interpretation has been obtained to invalidate the Communications Act (1998) as being in contradiction to the Constitution of Malawi. The process is both expensive and time consuming.

A sanguine strategy for introducing and advocating for change utilising existing structures is therefore required. This involves the use of the Parliamentary Committee on Media and Communications to table a report on transforming MBC into a PSB. To effect this NAMISA and the Ministry of Information and Civic Education should invite representatives of all political parties represented in Parliament to a meeting on MBC reform. Recommendations of the meeting should be tabled to the Parliamentary Committee of Media and Communications, which after deliberation should table a report in Parliament. Furthermore, the introduction of PSB should become an electoral issue debated and committed to by political parties and candidates. As a long term strategy, media literacy as a tool for creating a critical mass of critical and aroused citizenry should be incorporated into the secondary and primary school education curricula. Public media are watchdogs which require public watchdogs to perform effectively.

The final key issue raised by stakeholders was the media weak self-regulatory structure. The Communications Act (1998) provides that MBC and other broadcasters
are regulated by MACRA. The performance of MACRA in enforcing the law and the
code of conduct for broadcasters has been politically biased in favour of MBC support
of any political-party-in-power. To insulate the PSB from political entrenchment
characteristic of MACRA and MBC, MACRA should be stripped of its regulatory
powers over broadcast content. MACRA be reformed into a technical regulator of a
new signal distribution organisation, set up along the lines of SENTEC of South
Africa. Such an arrangement has advantages for the growth of PSB; because it
reduces broadcasting costs to content production by delink signal transmission from
programme production. The Media Council of Malawi (MCM) should take on content
regulation in print, broadcast and online media.

However, the MCM needs total overhaul. The self-regulation capacities of
MCM are underdeveloped and partially effective. From inception the Council was not
only a donor driven project but also lacked focus as it attempted to achieve too many
objectives. It effectively assumed all responsibilities of media organisations preceding
its establishment such as JAMA, MISA-Malawi, Media Worker’s Union, and
Publishers Association. Initially it had 15 objectives which included upholding and
maintaining freedom of the media, monitoring media policy and its implementation,
ensuring media strictly comply to code of conduct and practice, adjudicating in media
related complaints, mediate in disputes between media employers and employees,
auditing media circulation, offering media consultancy services, establishing a legal
fund, developing community media, and researching media standards, ownership and
control structure, and general media development (Media Council of Malawi 1998).
The Council is capable of only performing administrative functions as it has no
technical capacity to set and manage media policy, political capacity to assert media
over other social organisations, and institutional capacity to set regulatory rules and
effectively implement them. As a voluntary organisation, media units are not
compelled to subscribe and given the animosity between private media and
government, public media were effectively excluded from effective membership. The
Council does not only lack enforcement powers, but also lacks linkage mechanisms to
the State regulatory framework.

At the same time as self-regulation remains feeble, government regulation of
the public media has been strengthened to the extent that there are duplications of
functions and unclear limits of mandates. Broadcast media content is not only
regulated by courts of law and Censorship Board, but also MACRA, which enforces a
code of conduct for broadcasters. While the Parliamentary Committee on Media and Communication was initially defended on the grounds that its role was confined to looking at the interests of the media in the House (IFJ 1995), its functions have extended beyond the august House. It has summoned journalist, news sources and public media managers to appear before it. The Committee remains acquiescent when media workers have been physically harassed by members of parliament within the precincts of parliament and was conveniently silent when parliament unilaterally decided to ban an edited version of a TV reality show, Big Brother Africa, on Television Malawi. Ironically the Censorship Board condemned the ban and advised parliament to refer such matters to the Board. The High Court lifted the ban after a citizen contested it. In practice the Committee is not confined to policy monitoring but is also involved in content regulation.

From above it is clear that broadcasting in Malawi has multiple authorities dealing in content regulation, yet formal institutional linkages among them hardly exist. There is need not only to strengthen the MCM self-regulation capacities but also to audit and streamline broadcast media content regulation institutions set up by government for the MPSBT to function appropriately.

3.3. Institutional Issues

Another set of issues stakeholders raised related to the formal constitution of MACRA and MBC through the Communications Act (1998). The Act enables a major media policy shift in Malawi because it reconstitutes the role of the State in relation to the private sector in communications. It liberalises and re-regulates the Communications Sector, comprising telecommunications, posts and broadcasting. In principle, it should have shifted the role of the State from provider and direct regulator of communications services to that of facilitator through the creation of a conducive environment for private investment.

The Communications Act (1998) provides for the establishment of a communications regulatory body, MACRA, to signifying rolling back of state intervention in the sector. On the contrary, the state retains control over communications regulation because Section 14 of this Act (1998) gives the minister responsible for communications powers over policy decisions. This provision is a realisation of a policy statement which accords the president of the country the
prerogative to appoint and fire any boards of directors and senior employees in communications statutory corporations, namely MBC and MACRA.

Thus, the State has adapted the diction of liberalism without necessarily rolling back its own power in the media. Instead liberalisation of the sector has opened opportunities for rewarding political loyalists (including its religious variants) and for political dominion in media ownership and editorial practice. Boards of directors in MACRA and MBC are appointed for political strategic placements rather than professional merit. For example, in 2007 it took the High Court to rule that the MACRA Board of Directors was illegally constituted (Nyirenda 2008).

For the PSB to be effective and successful, legal reform is necessary. The Malawi Public Service Broadcasting Trust should be constituted as an independent and transparent statutory body, which shall perform roles in public interests to set overall strategic direction and priorities for the operational management of the fund and programming. MPSBT shall report to Parliament for legislative oversight including allocation of funds and monitoring of the fulfilment of mandate as well as the appointment of Board of Trustees. The Office of President and Cabinet shall provide policy direction over Trust as it does with any other public utility. As pointed out above, the role of MACRA should be confined to technical regulation of broadcasting as content regulation should be the mandate of the MCM.

The internal governing structure of MPSBT shall comprise two boards, namely Board of Trustees and editorial board. While membership to the Board of Trustees should be based on citizen representation, the editorial board should base on professional competence. The editorial board aims to strengthen editorial independence and integrity while the Board of Trustees aims to offer strategic direction and preserve the credibility, independence and integrity of PSB in Malawi. Both boards should be constituted through open and transparent selection processes and their terms of tenure shall be guaranteed by statute.

3.4. Implementation Issues
The general realisation after consulting stakeholders is that it is not enough to change the law or copy PSB models from other countries. The domestic interplay of power is so pervasive and insidious that even the most noble intentions will be subverted if serious attention is not paid to dynamics of power in the operations of media in general and MBC in particular. Recruitment of personnel at MBC is often
based on political qualification rather than professional qualification. Some members of staff are blacklisted and redeployed to peripheral units; staff demand money for broadcast coverage as news sources pay for publicity; ministerial events never begin without an MBC reporter; MBC news values have narrowed down to prominence i.e. “big bwana/dona” syndrome; and a culture of fear hovers over the workplace. When MBC was denied public funding by parliament, government instituted informal funding mechanisms which included guaranteeing bank loans, bank-rolling operational costs and intensification of ‘congratulatory and solidarity’ announcements for which parastatals, government ministries and departments, and private companies loyal to the political party-in-power had to pay MBC for airtime (Kanyang’wa 2009). MBC has no business acumen as it can replace adverts and sponsored programmes with live broadcasts and uncut re-broadcasts of presidential functions. MBS has no functional distinction between Radio One and Two broadcasts. In general reporting is event based rather than issue based analytical and in-depth investigative reporting. The list of operational issues at MBC is too long to exhaust; and questions should be asked as to why this situation continues unabated.

MBC operates in a social formation in which power is structured around political factions. In this social formation, political mobilisation is not based on economic class interests or ideological differences among political parties, but rather perceived membership entitlements in belonging to a particular political faction. Media organisations owned by politicians are at the service of political factions to which owners belong and editorial policies are from time to time prone to shift according to owners’ political objectives and strategic alliances they form with other factions. MBC is controlled by political factions under the central command of the ruling political party. Thus, private commercial and community media are either included or excluded from entitlements accruing from membership of the dominant political faction, leading to a structural dichotomy between pro- and anti-establishment media which in turn may result in editorial policy shifts in support of or in opposition to the ruling political party faction. The overarching structural fracture is therefore political polarisation in editorial policy. The ruling party forms the dominant patron-client network, while opposition sympathisers form undercover counter-hegemonic networks. Furthermore, this editorial bifurcation of media is further splintered by oppositional political factions, which are ever present within MBC. Thus, MBC comprises various forms of opposing factional struggle, rivalry, antagonism and
tension. Many accounts bear testimony to the pervasiveness of fissuring effect of political factionalism in MBC.

Patron-client networks constitute an exchange system in which material and economic resources are traded with political support. In what we might term economic patronage, as flip-side of political patronage, the MBC is a material and economic resource exchanged for political support. The economic value of MBC does not only lie in the monetary exchange value accrued from sale of airtime to advertisers or sponsors, but also in the perceived strategic importance of MBC as a stepping stone to public office. MBC is not only under pressure to operate as efficient public enterprise but the strain is intensified when politicians expect their parties to be patronised in broadcast content.

Although it is apparent that media practitioners regard political factionalism as negatively impacting on media professionalism, why does such practice continue unabated? Patron-client relations generate mutual, but inequitable, benefits through informal exchanges between concerned parties. It creates legitimate expectations for material and social benefits among loyalists, who are aware of their subordinate positions, but actively participate in the maintenance of this relationship because they accrue material and symbolic values from the system. Furthermore, membership to any network or alliance of faction is fluid and mainly dependent on perceived entitlements and real material gains, including social security attachment, clients obtain from patronage. As such a shrewd media practitioner may navigate and enjoy entitlements of different dominant factions by switching allegiances. Clients are therefore not coerced to belong to patron-client network, but consent to a dependent relationship.

While factionalism undermines established authority, especially when shadow-state factions hamper the functioning of the MBC as a public utility, the polyarchial structure of patron-client networks also promotes a form of democracy, in which competition among rival factions and members of a faction constitutes an informal check on MBC operations. The polyarchical structure of neo-patrimony in a multiparty system of government has opened a window of opportunity for visibility of social injustices at MBC. Cases of corruption, violation of human rights, disregard of provisions of the Constitution, and other social injustices have often been leaked to and published in alternative media.
While MBC is circumscribed by allegiance to a ruling party political fraction, it has an ever-present opposition from within. As such political patronage gives an external appearance of unity within the operations of MBC, but group dynamics remain exclusionary and conflictual. By default, this conflict and competition inherently opens spaces for reform, especially when the political party-in-power does not enjoy a parliamentary majority.

Dealing with informal institutions is tricky and complicated as they do not only hinder and undermine change but in some aspects they may even trigger reform, support and sustain it. The most important lessons for the reform initiative are:

(a) the need to acknowledge the existence of informal institutions and exploit their dynamics for positive transformation;
(b) to substantially re-structure MBC to change its institutional culture so that it responds to the dictates of public interests rather than private interests;
(c) to systematically implement change management as an integral part of reform, where all staff should be re-oriented through sustained training sessions that change their mindset and improve their professional mobility. With the establishment of a professional editorial board to monitor and secure their professional integrity, chances of change in MBC performance are high;
(d) to institute and implement transparency and meritocracy in all recruitment, promotion and human resource management practices;
(e) to establish key performance indicators for every employee of MPSBT and MBC as a benchmark for performance appraisal, career development and human capital development strategies; and
(f) to introduce open competition for government advertising revenue in order to curb informal financing of MBC. Government and its agencies should equitably pay for commemorative announcements on all radio stations including but not limited to, as is currently the case, MBC.

4. The Role of PSB in other countries
PSB plays a range of roles in nation states and internationally. These vary from statehood roles through political, cultural, economic and social functions to international diplomacy work. The focus varies from country to country depending on historical, cultural and political drivers of each PSB evolution. While it is impossible
to sketch out a complete explanation of the role of PSB in every country, this section only presents a selection of cases that informed the development of the Malawi model.

As Smith (2011) observes, many countries in Africa, the Arab World and Asia are making efforts to move from state or government controlled broadcasting towards high quality broadcasting that is impartial, independent and supportive of local cultures, democracy and development. While the PSB is an ideal and norm to be attained, various countries are at different levels towards realising genuine PSB status. The core roles of PSB are constituted by its public utility value.

In countries such as the USA, PSB is a valuable repository of civic and economically excluded genres where the broadcasting system is driven by commercial and market forces. In many European, Asian and African countries, broadcasting systems were predominantly developed by state or government investment and market forces have just been introduced through liberalisation policies in the past two decades. In the latter, the role of state and government broadcasting services has been severely criticised in favour of market-driven broadcasting sector development. The argument is based on market forces satisfying demands of broadcasting services and opening up choice to individual consumers. The assumption is that market forces of demand and supply would provide all services the PSB is traditionally expected to provide.

Indeed, many services and products of PSB nature are available on commercial broadcasting systems. However, as pointed out above, the operational logic of commercial broadcasting is distinct from that of the PSB. The operational logic of private commercial broadcasting is private accumulation; they invest money into broadcasting to make more money, part of which is reinvested to realise further profit margins. The primary goal is profit maximisation. They may carry public service broadcasts as long as such do not corrode their profitability. These broadcasts are done as a subsidiary to the profit maximisation goal. On the other hand PSB has an operational goal of public service. PSB may engage in commercial activities and realise surplus revenue. The primary aim is to sustain adequate resources for effective operation or to finance growth in the demand of services and for new opportunities. The logic therefore is to broadcast and make money so as to broadcast. In short, realisation and fulfilment of civic and human rights, as it has been argued elsewhere, should not be left to market forces. The first key role of PSB is to complete the range
of programme diversity available in a broadcasting system through pluralism, which includes public, community and commercial broadcasting. For details on the various roles PSBs play refer to Table 1 below.

PSB also plays significant roles in nation building, cultural and identify formation, democracy building, and facilitation of a commonwealth of forms of life, taste and opinions. In politics the PSB provides a forum for debates, market place of ideas, and critical reflection on policies. PSBs in Japan, Canada and UK have long traditions in this role. The Special Broadcasting Services in Australia, South African Broadcasting Corporation and Canadian Broadcasting Corporation are strong examples of the role of PSB in the preservation and promotion of national cultures and identities, including minority groups. The BBC in the UK has played a significant role in nation building by equalising public life through common access to broadcasting services. This is also evident in broadcasting services that aim to project a positive image of a nation abroad and interpret international events for citizens. PSB has also played roles in leading public taste and fostering knowledge through education. Almost all the PSBs surveyed and summarised in Table 1 have an educational remit in programming.

5. The Malawi Public Service Broadcasting Model

In cognisance of the African Charter on Broadcasting (2001), which calls on all members states to transform state and government broadcasting services to PSB, this model provides a clear mandate enshrined in public service; mechanism for transparency and accountability; legal and structural guarantees of independence from vested interests; a broad-basket of financing resources; a governance structure that promotes professional autonomy; and a PSB model in which MBC would only be one of many competing stakeholders.

5.1. Constitution

The Malawi Public Service Broadcasting Trust should be established as a guardian of public interests, for the purpose of promoting public service in broadcasting to Malawian citizens. The MPSBT would set overall strategic direction and oversee the overall operational management and implementation of the Trust and its funds.

5.2. Mandate

Provide programming services in public interest in order to consolidate democracy, promote economic and social development as well as nationhood and culture through
news and programmes that empower the citizens of Malawi to demand their rights and discharge their responsibilities.

5.3. PSB Obligations

- To operate independently of political and economic influence and by maintaining transparency and accountability to the public
- To promote and consolidate democracy by engaging citizens on their right to speak and debate on matters of public interest
- To promote social and economic development by inducing and initiating as well as instituting positive change at every level of society and in all aspects of life
- To produce programmes that reflect and promote the wide diversity of Malawi’s political and cultural life
- To uphold the Constitution and Laws of Malawi and promote human rights including minority rights
- To offer continual service to all publics in Malawi

5.4. Governing Principles:

(a) MPSBT should exist on trust for the sole purpose of fulfilling the public service mandate, which should be evaluated on account of fulfilment of mandate and public satisfaction.

(b) MPSBT should be accountable to and controlled by citizens of Malawi through representatives in Parliament and on the Board of Trustees.

(c) MPSBT should be independent and operate autonomously especially from vested economic and political interests.

(d) MPSBT would have regard for principles of corporate governance and guidance required in the management of affairs of public utilities.

5.5. Governing Structure

To secure accountability, transparency and citizen representativeness MPSBT would have a clear external and internal governance structure. The external governance structure would comprise accountability-reporting lines based on existing bureaucratic structures and requirements. The MPSBT should be directly accountable to Parliament through the Office of the President and Cabinet, which provides policy direction to all public bodies in Malawi. MBC as a PSB content provider should report to the MPSBT.
5.5.1. External Governing Structure

Parliament would have legislative oversight including allocation of funds and performance evaluation of MPSBT fulfilment of mandate. It would appoint the Board of Trustees and periodically appraise their performance against key performance indicators. While the OPC would have policy direction over the Trust as a public utility, MACRA’s role would be limited to technical regulation, namely issuance of licence, monitoring and enforcing compliance with technical specifications. The Media Council of Malawi as an independent self-regulatory institution would assume the role of an external Broadcasting Complaints Commission to arbitrate content disputes and discharge citizen complaints, whenever internal complaints resolution mechanisms have failed.

5.5.2. Internal Governing Structure

The MPSBT Board of Trustees should comprise citizen representatives from each of the following organisations: civil society organisations, copyright society of Malawi, Board of Engineers, media organisations, Accountants Board, faith-based organisations and Law Society of Malawi. The Board of Trustees should be appointed through an open and transparent selection process in which positions should be advertised in domestic media; interviews should be conducted in the presence of observers; the Public Appointments Committee should select suitable candidates and forward these to the President who should endorse the candidates. It should set the strategic direction and principles of PSB in Malawi as well as preserve its credibility, independence and integrity. The Board of Trustees should also mobilise finances and oversee effective and efficient utilisation of these resources by PSB providers. The Board should appoint the Director General of MBC and periodically appraise his/her professional performance. The Director General would be accountable to the Board for day-to-day operations of MBC as a PSB provider. The Director General would also be appointed in an open and transparent selections process, when the position would be advertised and an independent professional panel should shortlist and interview candidates to identify a suitable candidate. The Public Appointments Committee of Parliament should scrutinise the suitability of the candidate before appointment by the Board of Trustees. In this arrangement the MBC is only an implementing arm of MPSBT and would have to compete with other implementers.

As part of the internal governing structure the MBC should have an editorial board, which should be accountable to the Board of Trustees. It should consist of
seven professionally qualified media persons and one lawyer. The editorial board should have the responsibility of, from time to time, giving professional directions on PSB editorial policies in MBC and to protect journalists’ freedom and independence. It should be chaired by the Director General and shall also be responsible for resolving and arbitrating in broadcasting content complaints. The Board should be appointed through an open and transparent selection process, which shall be similar to the appointment process of the Director General. It should develop standing orders of operations. It should be responsible for directing editorial and creative output and ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory requirements by broadcasters.

5.6. Programming

In line with the mandate of MPSBT, all programmes financed by the Trust would be to promote public purpose. As such programming should:

- Serve public interest for the common good;
- Contribute to the formation of national consciousness, community and individual identity;
- Generate universal appeal through a wide range and diversity of services and products, while respecting the needs and demands of special and minority interests;
- Reflect the whole range of prevailing political, scientific, cultural philosophical and technological trends and opinions;
- Respect and promote human dignity, rights and freedoms;
- Ensure that news and current affairs, is comprehensive, in-depth, critical, independent, accurate, balanced, fair, ethical and legal;
- Reflect and promote varieties and richness of the national culture and languages;
- Facilitate the commonwealth of forms of life, tastes and opinions in order to empower citizens to actively and voluntarily participate in political processes and development initiatives;
- Maintain editorial integrity and independence; and
- Meet high professional standards.

5.7. Financing

One of the requirements for an effective and successful PSB is adequate, reliable and sustainable financing. To this end MPSBT would have to establish a Public Media Trust Fund to mobilise, manage and disburse revenue to public media service providers such as MBC, Education Trust, NICE Trust, independent content producers, media training institutions and commercial broadcasters who produce PSB content. To populate the Fund a levy on electricity, receivers, or duty tax on alcohol, cigarettes and condoms should be introduced. In addition, the Public Media Trust
Fund would be allocated to PSB providers including MBC using an open and competitive tendering process. The administration of the Fund would also promote affiliate systems through the Public Private Partnerships Framework between public service broadcasting and private/community broadcasting; and encourage formation of networks of production houses with PSB values.

The establishment of a signal distribution organisation could significantly cut costs for and delink signal transmission from programme production, along the lines of SENTEC in RSA.

6. Reform Plan of Action

Transformation of state/government broadcasting to PSB cannot be done without an all-inclusive coalition which of necessity must include government, civil society organisations and ordinary members of society (Smith 2011). In this regard, it would therefore be necessary to map out a clear road to reform. As pointed out in sections that explain the legacy of state/government broadcasting and issues raised by stakeholders, the reform process requires sustained advocacy and systematic monitoring and evaluation. Some interventions may be immediate and possible in the short term, while others, especially those related to culture and systems would require long term interventions, unless change is effected by revolution. Table 2 provides a logical frame for the implementation of the Public Service Broadcasting Model for Malawi.

Table 2: Logical Framework for PBS in Malawi

| 1. Goal | To transform MBC from government mouthpiece to public service broadcasting in accordance with international practice and standards | Assumptions: |
| | | • Political and Economic Stability in Malawi and SADC |
| | | • Continued Support from Malawi Government, Open Society for Southern Africa, MISA, NAMISA and other Media freedom advocates |
| | | • Support from politicians, MACRA and MBC staff, management and Board of Directors. |
| | | • Support from grassroots |
| | | Risks |
| | | • Policy makers do not understand and buy-in on the need for reform |
| | | • Politicians withdraw support for reform |
| | | • Government continues to use bureaucratic bias to frustrate reform |
| 2. Purpose | To contribute to economic, social, cultural and political development through public revenue financed broadcasting. | |
| 3. Specific Objectives | 1. To establish PSB in Malawi |
| | 2. To institute professional autonomy in PSB |
| | 3. To guarantee sufficient and sustainable financing of PSB |
| | 4. To develop programming remit driven by public service ethos |
| | 5. To engage publics in public affairs |
6. To provide high quality programming to all sections of the Malawi society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| To establish PSB in Malawi | • Review National Communications Sector Policy  
• Review Communications Act  
• Draft National Broadcasting Policy  
• Draft National Broadcasting Policy Implementation Strategy  
• Draft National Broadcasting Policy Action Plan  
• Draft National Broadcasting Act  
• Consult nation-wide on draft documents above  
• Lobby public opinion, opinion-movers, policy-makers, legislators, traditional leaders, civil society and political leaders to buy-in on the need for reform  
• Submit draft documents to bureaucratic processes, Cabinet and Parliament for formal adoption of policy and its instruments and enactment of Broadcasting Law in Malawi.  
• Engage NAMISA task team to quickly draft proposed legislation  
Engage legislators on a direct mode of presenting reform to parliament for debate |
| To institute professional autonomy in PSB | • Constitute an independent, transparent and representative Board of Trustees  
• Consult and draft internal PSB operational policies and guidelines including editorial policy, advertising policy, programme guidelines, elections guidelines and gender policy  
• Constitute an independent professional editorial board according to Law  
• Review staff recruitment and human resource development policy  
• Draft staff recruitment and human resource development policy to include meritocracy, flexible employment tenure terms, performance base remuneration and audits  
• Prepare and implement in a transparent manner a new staff structure for efficient, effective and cost-effective operations  
• Re-organise MBC from a unitary organisation into thematic production units at district, regional, national and international level to form a network of discrete but interrelated programme production units for PSB |
| To guarantee sufficient and sustainable financing of PSB | • Constitute a PSB Trust Fund  
• Secure Parliamentary allocation of funding, which is responsive to inflation and other macro-economic factors.  
• Draft rules, regulations and guidelines for disbursement of revenue for PSB programming  
• Draft a multi-year financial strategy and implementation plan for sustenance of PSB in Malawi  
• Pool revenue to populate Trust Fund  
• Introduce a robust Funding Mechanism Reform to provide for long term financing needs of PSB. |
| To develop programming remit driven by public service ethos | • Draft, publish and enforce adherence to PSB programming principles  
• Monitor and evaluate efficiency and effectiveness of PSB financing by implementing partners and beneficiary of MPSBF  
• Draft and adopt internal monitoring and evaluation system in MBC  
• Strengthen the regulatory capacity of Media Council of Malawi to deal with broadcasting content complaints.  
• Set up internal professional forums in MBC to discuss challenges and solutions to the implementation of PSB mandate.  
• Re-orientation through training the skills, attitudinal and behavioural competence, to remove culture of fear in management and staff of MBC |
| To engage publics in public affairs and MPSBT | • Strengthen the capacity of CBOs and civil society organisations as watchdogs of PSB performance  
• Introduce media literacy in secondary and primary school education  
• Localise and decentralise PSB programme production by empowering communities to |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Produce programmes, engage in dialogic debates and publicise ideas through interactive public media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Form partnerships, pressure groups and networks for reform advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Organise public meetings, lectures and debates on need for reform, means of transformation and sustainability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Write a special communiqué to the President on MBC backsliding on opening up space for publicity and debate of various ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Make reform of MBC a general election campaign declaration by political party leaders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To provide high quality programming to all sections of the Malawi society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Draft and consult on effective modalities of promoting independent content producers of PSB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Delink PSB from government and commercial interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Constitute a Signal Distribution Organisation to enable PSB implementing partners focus resources on programme content production only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Migrate to digital broadcasting to take advantage of spectrum efficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Institute universal access through technological and technical availability of signals to all geographical and interest-group sections of Malawi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Innovate and invest in cheap and efficient information and communication technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Draft guidelines for promoting programme diversity and range including powerless-poor majorities, economically and socially excluded sectors and minority interests.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. **Conclusion:**

The model presented here has built in accountability and transparency mechanisms that delink PSB from either commercial or political interference and provides for a robust financing framework that guarantees growth and sustainability as well as autonomy from vested interests. It provides a clear mandate, core values, programming remit and principles that emphasise programming for all, regardless of age, linguistic, religious, ethnic or minority status. Editorial impartiality is secured through an independently appointed Board of Trustees and editorial board, whose term of office is guaranteed by legislation. It aims at universal accessibility by almost the entire population and complies with international standards and protocols.

When successfully implemented, this broadcasting sector will play a significant role in the development of a critical, aroused and informed society. It would become an indispensable instrument for enlightenment on economic development, fight against corrupt practices, employability skills, health, literacy, entrepreneurship, climate change, gender and financing techniques, to mention but a few. MPSBT will be a vital embodiment of the freedom of expression as its interactive and citizen-engagement feature would improve the enforcement of good governance and innovation. It is our belief that once constituted MPSBT will contribute to democratisation process in Malawi, not only through fair election.
coverage, objective and accurate news reporting and programming for public purpose, but also by enabling Malawians understand themselves and the international community as well as offering the international community a window to appreciate Malawian culture and life styles.

**References:**


Kamuzu Banda, K. (1992a). President’s Address to the Nation. 5 July


MISA. (1995). *So this is Democracy?* Windhoek: MISA


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Country</th>
<th>Role of PSB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td><strong>Two PSB organisations for Nation Building, Education and Multiculturalism</strong>&lt;br&gt;• ABC promotes informational and nation building by&lt;br&gt;  o Providing within Australia innovative and comprehensive broadcasting and television services of a high standard as part of the Australian broadcasting and television system consisting of national, commercial and public sectors.&lt;br&gt;  o Providing educational programming&lt;br&gt;  o Providing programmes that contribute to a sense of national identity&lt;br&gt;  o Providing programmes that inform and entertain, and reflect the cultural diversity of the Australian community&lt;br&gt;  o Providing programmes that promote and encourage international awareness of Australia, and Australian outlooks on world affairs, by transmitting information and entertainment programmes to foreign viewers&lt;br&gt;  o Providing programmes to enable Australian citizens living or travelling outside Australia to obtain information about Australian affairs while abroad.&lt;br&gt;• SBS promotes multiculturalism by:&lt;br&gt;  o contributing to meeting the communications needs of Australia’s multicultural society, including ethnic, Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander communities; and&lt;br&gt;  o increasing awareness of the contribution of a diversity of cultures to the continuing development of Australian society; and&lt;br&gt;  o (c) promote understanding and acceptance of the cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity of the Australian people; and&lt;br&gt;  o d) contribute to the retention and continuing development of language and other cultural skills; and&lt;br&gt;  o (e) as far as practicable, inform, educate and entertain Australians in their preferred languages; and&lt;br&gt;  o (f) make use of Australia’s diverse creative resources; and contribute to the overall diversity of Australian television and radio services, particularly taking into account the contribution of the ABC and the public broadcasting sector; and&lt;br&gt;  o (g) contribute to extending the range of Australian television and radio services, and reflect the changing nature of Australian society, by presenting many points of view and using innovative forms of expression.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>“provide radio and television services incorporating a wide range of programming that informs, enlightens and entertains.”&lt;br&gt;CBC is mandated to&lt;br&gt;• be predominantly and distinctly Canadian,&lt;br&gt;• reflect Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences while serving the special needs of those regions,&lt;br&gt;• actively contribute to the flow and exchange of cultural expression,&lt;br&gt;• be in English and French, reflecting the different needs and circumstances of each official language community, including the particular needs and circumstances of English and French linguistic minorities,&lt;br&gt;• strive to be of equivalent quality in English and French,&lt;br&gt;• contribute to shared national consciousness and identity,&lt;br&gt;• be made available throughout Canada by the most appropriate and efficient means and as resources become available for the purpose, and&lt;br&gt;• reflect the multicultural and multiracial nature of Canada.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Country</td>
<td>Role of PSB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| France         | _programming must be_  
|                | • diverse and pluralistic,  
|                | • of high quality and innovative,  
|                | • and respect human rights and democratic principles as defined in the Constitution;  
|                | • represent the diversity of French society and culture, and promote the French language and, as appropriate, regional languages,  
|                | • project the Francophone and French culture to the world.  
|                | • contribute to developing and disseminating artistic and intellectual work,  
|                | • fostering civil, economic, social, scientific and technical understanding, and an understanding of foreign languages, the environment, sustainable development and media literacy  
|                | _Programme range should include:_ information, culture, knowledge, entertainment and sport, and favour democratic debate, exchanges between different parts of the population, and the promotion of social values, national cohesion, cultural diversity, citizenship and the fight against discrimination.  
| Japan          | • provide abundant, high quality domestic programming for the public welfare, which can be received all over Japan  
|                | • conduct international broadcasting  
|                | • to enhancing the level of civilisation and preserving excellent features of the past,  
|                | • promoting a sense of nationhood  
|                | • serving minority groups, or providing educational material  
|                | • promote international friendship and economic interchange by promoting an understanding of Japan and Japanese culture, and providing entertainment to Japanese nationals abroad.  
| Poland         | • producing programming for reception abroad in Polish and other languages;  
|                | • meeting the democratic, social and cultural needs of local societies;  
|                | • encouraging artistic, literary, cultural, scientific and educational services, with a special emphasis on Polish achievements;  
|                | • promoting knowledge of the Polish language;  
|                | • serving the needs of national, ethnic and linguistic minorities, including through broadcasts in minority languages;  
|                | • producing educational programming;  
|                | • providing “reliable information about the vast diversity of events and processes taking place in Poland and abroad”;  
|                | • encouraging development of citizens’ views and the formation of public opinion, as well as enabling citizens to take part in public life through providing them with a diversity of information and critical reflection of social events; and  
|                | • serving various other interests, such as promoting respect for Christian values, strengthening family ties, fostering healthy attitudes and combating social pathologies.  
|                | • “facilitate direct presentation and explanation of the State policy by supreme State authorities”  
|                | • to enable political parties, as well as national trade unions and employer’s organizations, to present their policies and positions on major public issues
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Country</th>
<th>Role of PSB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| South Africa    | • make services available in all official languages, reflect both the unity and cultural and multilingual diversity of South Africa, and enrich the country’s cultural heritage, both traditional and contemporary.  
• strive to be of high quality in all languages, providing significant amounts of news and public affairs programming that meets the highest standards of journalism, and is fair, impartial, balanced and independent from government, commercial and other interests.  
• provide significant amounts of educational programming, both curriculum-based and informal, national and minority sports programming, and  
• programming targeting children, women, the youth and the disabled.  
• broadcast both its own programmes and those commissioned from the independent sector.  
• safeguarding and enriching the cultural, political, social and economic fabric of the country, operating in the public interest, and strengthening the spiritual and moral fabric of society. |
| United Kingdom  | • to serve the public interest and to promote the Public Purpose through information, education and entertainment  
• to sustain citizenship and civil society,  
• to promote education and learning,  
• to stimulate creativity and cultural excellence,  
• to represent the UK and bring it to the world and the world to it,  
• to help promote the benefits of emerging communications technologies and play a leading role in the switchover to digital television  
• provide accurate and impartial news and analysis of current events and ideas,  
• promote understanding of the UK political system, including Parliament,  
• promote media literacy, stimulate interest in a wide range of subjects and issues,  
• provide specialist educational content,  
• enrich cultural life through “creative excellence in distinctive and original content”,  
• foster interest in cultural activities among new audiences,  
• provide appropriate coverage of sport, including sport of minority interest,  
• reflect and strengthen cultural identity through original content,  
• promote awareness of different cultures and viewpoints, including different religious beliefs,  
• make people in the UK aware of international issues and bring high-quality international news coverage to international audiences. |
Appendix 1:

MBC EDITORIAL HANDBOOK
The MBC Editorial handbook was compiled and edited by the MBC News and Current Affairs department staff, with the financial and technical help of GTZ – July 1997. This handbook was updated and revised in 2006/2007 with the Financial and Technical assistance of Gender Links (GL), based in South Africa.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 Freedom and Responsibility of the Media in Malawi
2.0 The Role of MBC
3.0 News and Current Affairs Programme Principles
4.0 The MBC and the Law
   4.1 Freedom of Expression and the Press
   4.2 The MBC Act (1991)
4.3 Code of Conduct (1993) for MBC
4.4 Legal Ramifications of Radio Journalism
   4.4.1 Privacy
   4.4.2 Protection of Sources
   4.4.3 Defamation
   4.4.4 Libel
   4.4.5 Slander
   4.4.6 Defence to Defamation
      4.4.6.a Justification
      4.4.6.b Privilege
      4.4.6.c Absolute Privilege
      4.4.6.d Qualified Privilege
4.5 Contempt of Court
4.6 Trespass
4.7 Other Legal Issues
4.8 Legal Advice
4.9 Legal Implications of Complaints
4.10 Court Reporting
4.11 The Court System in Malawi
   4.11.1 Malawi Supreme Court of Appeal
   4.11.2 The High Court of Malawi
   4.11.3 Magistrates Courts
   4.11.4 Tribunals
4.12 Criminal and Civil Courts
5.0 Ethics in Broadcast Journalism
5.1 MBC’s Information Philosophy
5.2 Journalistic Principles
   5.2.1.1 Accuracy and Speed
   5.2.1.2 Bias
   5.2.1.3 Fairness and Balance
   5.2.1.4 Diversity
5.3 Credibility
6.0 Production Standards
6.1 Information gathering
   6.1.1 A definition of News
   6.1.2 Types of Stories
      6.1.2.1 Reporting Techniques
   6.1.3 Types of Interviews
      6.1.3.1 News Conferences
      6.1.3.2 Conferences/Seminars
      6.1.3.3 Handouts, Press Releases
      6.1.3.4 Speeches
      6.1.3.5 Natural Disasters
      6.1.3.6 Accidents
      6.1.3.7 Parliamentary Reporting
      6.1.3.8 Official Statements
      6.1.3.9 Sources
      6.1.3.10 Quotations
      6.1.3.11 Delivery
   6.1.4 Research
6.1.5 Privacy
6.1.6 Protection of Sources
6.1.7 Rights of Participants and Interviewees
6.1.8 Coverage of Demonstrations and Acts of Violence
6.1.9 Clandestine Methods
   6.1.9.1 Hidden Microphones
   6.1.9.2 Misrepresentation
6.2 Information Processing
   6.2.1 News Writing for MBC
      6.2.1.1 Conversational Style
      6.2.1.2 Language and Colour
         6.2.1.2.1 Guidelines on Language for Programmes on HIV and AIDS
      6.2.1.2.2 Gender-sensitive Language
      6.2.1.3 Verb Tenses
      6.2.1.4 Structure of Story-Lead and Body
      6.2.1.5 Names of Persons
      6.2.1.6 Sounds
      6.2.1.7 Cues
      6.2.1.8 Additional Guidelines for Writing Radio News
   6.2.2 On-Air Staff
      6.2.2.1 Hosts and Interviewers
      6.2.2.2 Reporters
6.2.3 Editing
6.2.4 Blend of Production Forms
6.2.5 Good Taste and Language
   6.2.5.1 Gender violence/violence against women
   6.2.5.2 Children and Violence
   6.2.5.3 HIV and AIDS
6.2.6 Open-Line Programme
6.2.7 Right of Reply
7.0 Newsroom Management
   7.1 Functions of Departments
   7.2 Copy Tasting and New Gathering
   7.3 Information Co-ordination
   7.4 News Desk
      7.4.1 Reading-in
      7.4.2 Briefing
      7.4.3 Research
      7.4.4 Writing
      7.4.5 Quality Standards
      7.4.6 Re-Writing
   7.5 Reporting
      7.5.1 General Guidelines
      7.5.2 Special Guidelines-Covering elections in another country
      7.5.3 Editorial Procedures
   7.6 Current Affairs
   7.7 Household Matters-Good Governance
      7.7.1 Deadlines-Embargoes
      7.7.2 Logs
      7.7.3 Handovers
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The GTZ provided Financial and Technical support through provision of a consultant who helped in the initial formulation of the first handbook in 1997. MBC is most grateful for this support.

Gender Links, based in South Africa provided Financial and Technical support for the revision of this handbook in 2006 and 2007. The services rendered by Agnes Odiambo who facilitated the review workshop and those of Pat Made who compiled the document have been very central in the production of this handbook.

MBC Management (both Executive and Non Executive) rendered a very big supporting role in the formulation of this document.

The Training Manager, Mr. George Ngaunjie, coordinated the whole review process. His contribution to the production of this document has been very
outstanding. The supporting role of all members of the Training Department is also being recognised.

Special thanks go to the following members of staff who forms a committee that finally worked on the revised document to give its shape; Mr. Joshua Kambwiri, Mr. David Kamkwamba, Ms Sellina Khonje, Mrs Marie Kambeja, Mr. Malani Msowoya and Mrs Theacra Huwa.

We would also like to thank MBC News and Current Affairs and Programmes members of staff for the contribution they made in reviewing the two documents.

1. FREEDOMS AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MEDIA

Freedom of expression is a cornerstone of Malawi’s democracy, and freedom of the press receives strong protection in our new constitution since even in a pluralistic society, freedom itself does not develop without the unhindered flow and exchange of ideas, opinion and information.

To date, the MBC is the most powerful and influential media institution in the country that does not only share these constitutional liberties, but must also recognise the obligations that come with it.

The freedom of the press guaranteed in the Constitution embraces independence and freedom of information, expression of opinion and criticism. Broadcast media practitioners, especially the editorial staff, in pursuing their profession, must remain constantly aware of their responsibility towards the general public, which includes women and men, and their duty to uphold the prestige of the MBC as a public broadcaster.

MBC news staff must perform their editorial duties to the best of their abilities and belief and must not allow their work to be influenced by personal
interests or prejudices and biases (such as racial, religious, gender, ethnic, political and so forth) or extraneous motives.

The MBC must not dishonour the public’s confidence in its information programmes, and it should remember that where credibility might have been compromised, it would be difficult, if not impossible to regain such trustworthiness.

The MBC must be trusted upon as a steward of the principles of fair, balanced, accurate and thorough reporting. In addition to abiding by these cornerstones of democratic and committed journalism, as a public broadcaster, the MBC must be accountable to the public. The above principles must govern daily practice in order to achieve the highest standards of excellence and integrity; and, there should also be a healthy competitiveness of the MBC’s products.

The MBC should be proudly serving the free formation of individual and public opinion by tolerating a wide range of views – from both women and men from all walks of life – for those are the values of a pluralistic society.

2. THE ROLE OF MBC

In Africa, as in other developing environments, the broadcast medium of radio has become an indispensable tool for informing and educating societies. With its ability to transcend barriers of illiteracy and distance, it has also proved to be an effective means for forging national unity and development in the broadcast sense possible to include democratic, economic, social and cultural advancement.

In Malawi, the MBC has adopted this crucial role and its importance has often been likened to that of a country’s information clearing-house. A 2005 Gender and Media Audience Study (GMAS) report on a survey of 91 women and 89 men in Lilongwe, Blantyre and Mzuzu City, for example, found that 94 per cent of the women interviewed, and 98 per cent of the men of different ages and educational background, cited radio as their main source of news in Malawi. (1) In the on-going democratization process, however, the MBC is no more playing the role of a mouthpiece. Rather than being official, the MBC information policy should be authoritative.

This in no way diminishes the station’s position as the key media in Malawi. While the town dweller can crosscheck MBC reports with accounts in the newspapers, people in the rural areas solely depend on the radio for their
information, education and entertainment needs. The general feeling among Malawians is that ‘It has not happened until you have heard it on MBC’.

Though this reputation may be enviable it also places a heavy responsibility on the MBC staff. Apart from our very basic programming obligation to educate, inform and entertain, we should strive to be seen as the nation’s principal media forum of fair ideological and political debate, and reach as well as represent:

**The geographically isolated;**  
The economically, socially and culturally deprived, including women, children and other marginalized groups;  
The various national, ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities; and  
People with disabilities.

The MBC must endeavour to provide essential information to these groups that will allow them to become full participants in the national democratic and poverty alleviation process. In our information programmes we should increasingly employ formats that promote immediacy, national debate and dialogue, which is the essence of radio, including live discussions, live telephone interviews and correspondents’ reports.

---

Topics such as reproductive health and HIV and AIDS, gender equality and its links to sustainable development, women’s rights and women’s advancement, and environmental issues, among others, must be given broad coverage. We should also aim at creating a well-informed electorate and contribute to sensitizing government and other stakeholders to the needs of the electorate.

This is why the guarantee of the public’s right to information in the Constitution requires a public broadcasting system, which reflects both external and internal pluralism. External pluralism means the multiplicity of views from both women and men in all sectors and ordinary citizens broadcast by the MBC. Internal pluralism was started with the creation of an MBC board whose composition is designed to provide for diversity of opinion.

The MBC, therefore, seeks to carry out its role in the vein of a public broadcaster by embracing the following characteristics of a public broadcaster in its editorial operations and programming:

- Public service broadcasters generally transmit programming that aims to improve society by informing listeners;
- The stations’ broadcasts are accessible nationwide;
- They cater for all interests and tastes;
They have a concern for national identity and community which leads to the commissioning of programs within the country, rather than from abroad;

They are detached from vested interests of advertisers and government;

Applicable to existing media laws, regulations and professional membership

3. NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS PROGRAMME PRINCIPLES

All news information processed by the MBC should be treated on merit, but must be compatible with Malawi’s Constitution. Since the MBC is the country’s principal broadcaster, priority in information programmes, such as bulletins, should follow the order of domestic news first, then focus may shift to the neighbouring Southern African region, Africa nest and then to the rest of the world.

MBC news and current affairs programmes aim at being authoritative, but are not official. MBC news is fast and timely, but accuracy must never be compromised, or sacrificed to speed. The rule of thumb is: Get it first, but first, get it right!

MBC news is comprehensive. It seeks to provide a balanced view in all essential walks of life in Malawi, Africa and the world, with the news put in a proper context so that listeners understand the significance of events.

The language used in MBC’s news and all editorial programming should be simple, clear and unambiguous; understandable to all Malawians, in particular to the less educated; and the language used should not promote or foster gender, racial, religious, ethnic or other forms of discrimination, stigma and stereotypes.

MBC news is impartial and balanced. During any conflict we endeavour to give to give the views of all sides involved, and we attribute facts, statements and opinions clearly to their sources. If fair balance cannot be given within each programme, it must be done within a day’s news or the next immediate programme cycle to ensure all sides can respond to an event or allegation.

The MBC does not campaign on behalf of anyone, nor should the individual MBC journalists or other MBC staff. Credibility depends not only on accuracy or fairness, but also upon avoidance by both the organization and its editorial staff, of associations or contacts that could give rise to perceptions of
partiality and partisanship. To maintain the MBC’s credibility, news staff must avoid publicly identifying themselves in any way with partisan statements or actions.

In its news programmes and services, the MBC is bound by Malawi’s Constitution. It contributes to the free and democratic basis order of the nation and promotes its cohesion.

The MBC news programmes also respect the moral and religious convictions of the population; and, the MBC, through its editorial content and information and newsgathering processes, will promote political, economic, social, and gender justice. The MBC will promote and observe, through its programmes and editorial processes, the protection of minorities including people with disabilities, living with HIV and AIDS, children and women.

The MBC is committed to truth in its programmes and to the principle of integrity. Information broadcast must not be distorted to justify a conclusion. Also broadcasters should not take advantage of their power to present a personal bias, i.e. racial, ethnic, gender, religious, political and so forth. The MBC shall promote international understanding, advocate peace and social justice, defend democratic liberties, and help to establish equality between women and men.

The MBC’s editorial staff must ensure that:

- The important political, religious/philosophical, human rights, gender justice, among other societal forces and groups, in the country can adequately express themselves in programmes;
- That both women and men, and not just men, especially those in positions of power or formal authority, have access to expression in MBC’s news and programmes;
- That programmes do not one-sidedly serve a party or group, a community of interests, a denomination or a particular worldview (i.e. a male worldview, among others);
- That adequate and fair exposure is given in its coverage to the views of women and men, groups or agencies that are mainly concerned with or affected by any issue.

In its information broadcasts, the MBC respects and protects the dignity and rights of the individual. Evaluating and analysing individual contributions must meet the requirements of journalistic fairness and in their entirety reflect the multiplicity of opinions. The aim of all information broadcasts is to inform in an unbiased manner and thereby contribute to citizens’ forming their own opinions.

All broadcasters relevant to information and opinion formation must be thoroughly and fairly researched. Claims of fact must be checked with due care appropriate to the circumstances.

Particular care must be given to information programmes during election or referendum campaigns. These series require close and meticulous attention
to overall political balance. Quantitative checks are normally employed, but must be supplemented by the exercise of qualitative judgements in order to prevent imbalance through manipulation of events.

It must be expressly stated whether opinion surveys conducted for broadcasting are representative in approach. Commentaries must be clearly separated from news and must be identified as such, including the name of the commentator.

In its comprehensive coverage of a wide range of subjects, the MBC endeavours to probe and keep before the public eye positive aspects of our society, as well as ‘questionable ones’, and trends or events that are important, but not necessarily spectacular or sensational. In other words, for the MBC, the criteria for a story, event or information having news value or being newsworthy is more than just the traditional news pattern of ‘doom and gloom’ and the ‘out of the ordinary’.

4. THE MBC AND THE LAW

Freedom of expression and aspects and of the press

Freedom of opinion, expression, information and the press are enshrined in the Constitution of Malawi.

Section 34 on Freedom of Opinion reads: Every person shall have the right to freedom of opinion, including the right to hold opinions, without interference, receive and impart opinions.

Freedom of expression, found in Section 35 reads: Every person shall have the right to freedom of expression.

Freedom of the press, found in section 36 reads: The press shall have the right to report and publish freely within Malawi and abroad and to be accorded the fullest possible facilities for access to public information.

Freedom of information, found in section 37 reads: Subject to any Act of Parliament, every person shall have the right of access to all information held by the State or any of its organs at any level of Government in so far as such information is required for exercise of his (or her) rights.

THE MBC ACT (1991)
The Act establishes MBC as a corporate body, regulates its powers, functions and duties.

The MBC is under duty to “carry on radio and television broadcasting services for the information, education and entertainment of radio listeners and television viewers in Malawi” (see Section 12 (a) of the Act). According to Section 13(b), the MBC is empowered to “lay down the main lines of programming policy” in order to achieve this aim. This is the major area that gives the MBC its editorial independence, which means the right of journalists, and editors to make decisions on the basis of professional criteria and principles, and that are consistent with the Malawi Constitution on freedom of speech and with international media standards.

**Code of Conduct (1993) for MBC**

In September 1993, a Code of Conduct for MBC was agreed between the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) and the Presidential Commission on Dialogue (PCD). The aims of the MBC, according to the Code, are:

To inform the public of events of importance and interest in an accurate, fair and comprehensive manner;
To educate the public or sectors of the community in Malawi on matters of public interest; and
On the instructions of the government, to broadcast non-partisan educational material covering such areas as health, education, agriculture and environment.

**Legal Ramifications on Radio Journalism**

There are many legal provisions that may influence a reporter’s work, or may even restrict her/him in the search for information and/or publication or airing of information. Some of the common problems that may crop up in the daily work include the following:

**Privacy**

The Constitution of Malawi protects individuals’ rights to privacy.

**4.4.1 Protection of Sources**

The protection of the identity of sources in stories where the revelation of the source’s identity could lead to harm is a standard practice in journalism. However, it is important for the media to build its credibility on the integrity of its sources, therefore
it is preferable that sources agree to be ‘on the record’ and verifiable. It is extremely important to verify with other sources of information that is provided by a source that declines to be identified, to ensure that the MBC is not used as a conduit for false and misleading information.

4.4.2 Defamation

Defamation is the act of harming the reputation of a person through libel or slander. Defamation can occur through the circulation of a statement by someone that contains untrue, defamatory references to another person or corporate body. The fact that the person who makes such a statement is named in a story or quoted correctly, does not absolve the MBC from liability and legal action.

4.4.3 Libel

This is any malicious information, publication that damages or may cast doubt on the good name, character, professional skills, credibility or creditworthiness of a person, group, and class of people, company or organization. Even if you merely report what someone else, including a policeman, said, you could commit libel. Using “alleged” is no protection against libel suits. Ignorance of the law is no protection. If the statement is in any permanent and visible form, it is libel, e.g. written or radio broadcast, film or television.

4.4.4 Slander

If a malicious or defamatory is in a transitory form, e.g. the spoken word, it is slander. The distinctions between libel and slander are as follows: Firstly, libel may be a criminal case as well as a tort (civil), whereas slander is actionable as a criminal offence only in certain specified circumstances, e.g. a petition. Secondly, whereas libel is in all cases per-se (without proof of damage), slander is, with certain exceptions, only actionable if it is proved that the plaintiff sustained special damage as a result of the publication of the slander.

4.4.5 Defence to Defamation

4.4.6.i Justification
When facts are stated, which can be justified as true, although defamatory of and concerning a plaintiff, no remedy will lie for publication of the defamatory statement. For example where one indeed stole, you can publish that he is a thief as true. This cannot be defamation.

4.4.6.ii Privilege

It is a good defence to show that the occasion on which a statement is made is privileged. The types of privilege include:

4.4.6.iii Absolute Privilege

For example, a fair and accurate report in any broadcast of proceedings publicly heard, before any court exercising judicial authority, or of proceedings in Parliament is absolutely privileged, i.e. it is absolute defence. Members of Parliament are under absolute privilege while speaking in parliamentary proceedings and can never be taken to court. Judges may also say anything to members in a court process and they may never be taken to court.

4.4.6.iv Qualified Privilege

1. Fair and accurate reports of parliamentary proceedings. However, the privilege will be lost if it is proved by the plaintiff that the publication is not fair and accurate in so far as the debate concerned the plaintiff’s reputation.

2. Fair and accurate reports of judicial proceedings which the public may attend. This applies to the proceedings of any court of justice, high or low. Reporters must recollect that any comment as distinct from fair and accurate reproduction must be postponed until the decision is given; otherwise they may make themselves liable to the penalties for contempt of court or an injunction, for immediate comment is likely to prejudice the minds of the jury in a jury and might conceivably influence the judge.

Qualifications:

- If proceedings are not public, qualified privilege does not apply.
- Privilege does not apply if law or order of court forbids publication.
- Privilege will not apply to publish obscene matter.
- Privilege does not apply to all foreign courts unless public interest so requires.

3. Certain fair and accurate reports published in newspapers or broadcast from a station such as the following:

- Statements privileged without explanation or contradiction
Fair and accurate reports of proceedings in public of legislatives in any part of the commonwealth countries
Fair and accurate reports of judicial proceedings of courts in the commonwealth countries
Fair and accurate copy of or extract from any register kept in pursuance of any Act of Parliament which is open to inspection by the public
A Notice or advert published by or on authority of a court
Statements privileged subject to explanation
Fair and accurate reports of the findings or decisions (in relation to members or persons subject by contract to the control of the association) of certain association or committees
Fair and accurate reports of the proceedings of any public meeting
Fair and accurate reports of the proceedings of any meeting or sitting in Malawi
Fair and accurate reports of proceedings at a general meeting of a public company
A copy or fair and accurate report or summary of any notice or other matter issues for information of the public by or on behalf of any government department, officer or state local authority, or chief officer of police.

Fair Comment

It is a defence to an action for defamation that the statement is fair comment on matters of public interest.

Comment and Not Facts

A comment is an expression of opinion based on facts

Fair Comment

To establish the defence it requires the following: fair and honestly made; on facts truly stated; comment must not convey imputations of evil or corrupt motives.

Public Interest

There is no exhaustive list that can be given as to what is referred to as public interest. For example, a matter affecting people at large, e.g. public officials, public figures, public issues.
4.5 Contempt of Court

It is prohibited to make statements that unduly criticise the judiciary. Also, to refuse to answer questions in court is contempt of court. This is relevant for journalists when they refuse to disclose sources.

4.6 Trespass

Journalists may be liable to damages where they interfere with the rights of real estate owners, i.e. they may be liable for trespassing if they enter into private land to check out a story.

4.7 Other Legal Issues

The following is a list of Acts (Statutory Law) that should be looked at to realise where additional legal problems might arise for journalists. In cases of doubt, Editorial Management and/or the Corporation’s lawyer should be consulted:

1. National Assembly (Powers and Privileges) Act, Section 8
2. Courts Act, Sec 60
3. Penal Code, Sec 46, 184(1)(c) – 50, 60, 113, 130, 179, 182
4. Criminal Procedure and Evidence Code, Sec 366
5. Prisons Act, Sec 81, 84
6. Army Act, Sec 60
7. Police Act, Sec 22, 23, and 39
8. Official Secrets Act, Sec 3, 4
9. Preservation of Public Security Act, Sec 3
10. Protected places and Areas Act, Sec 4, 5, 8
11. Births and Deaths Registration Act, Sec 16
12. Adoption of Children Act, Sec 8
13. Children and Young People’s Act, Sec 8
14. Statistics Act, Sec 7
15. National Archives Act, Sec 17
16. Public Health Act, Sec 31
17. Taxation Act, Sec 94
18. Customs and Excise Act, Sec 138
19. Banking Act, Sec 41
20. Exchange Control Act, Sec 8
21. Malawi Bureau of Standards Act, Sec 27
22. Malawi Institute for Management Act, Sec 3
23. Copyright Act, Sec 47
24. Protected Flags, Emblems and Names Act, Sec 3
25. Control of Goods Act, Sec 3
26. Censorship and Control of Entertainment Act, Sec 23
27. Education Act, Sec 47
28. Commercial Advertising Control Act, Sec 4
29. Posts and Telegraphs Act, Sec 19, 44
30. Anatomy Act, Sec 17
31. Mental Treatment Act, Sec 65
Other legal repercussions for journalists are discussed under the Court Report Section of this chapter.

4.8 Legal Advice

In cases of controversy and malicious statements where legal difficulties may arise, any reporter/editor/producer should consult with her/his superior actually well before the story is broadcast. Given the circumstances the editorial manager will decide whether to seek legal advice from the MBC’s lawyers.

4.9 Legal Implications of Complaints

A member of the public with sufficient interest could apply to the courts for any action against MBC since it can sue or be sued as a corporate body.

As a public body, MBC can also be sued for judicial review in case of complaints bordering on administrative justice, i.e. where MBC has not been fair in affording free rights of reply to personal attacks of the freedom to be heard when one is condemned.

A person may also apply for an injunction against MBC wither to person certain duties required by the law or restrain it from performance of acts injurious to an individual. These constraints protect the interests of listeners in access to a balanced range of opinions on the radio.

4.10 Court Reporting

In legal cases, accuracy is, of course, particularly important. Also fair play should be observed at all times. Court reports should give a fair summary of both prosecution and defence testimony. They should always give the age of the accused and in the case of foreigners, a home address, or at least the hometown. If you begin reporting a court case you must always let your editor have the final result, even if it does not come for weeks or even months. The following checklist should be observed:

1. Full names of accused persons (avoid initials)
2. Age of accused person
3. Offence for which s/he is being tried
4. Name of court and location
5. Full names of the prosecutor and the defence counsel
6. The cases of both petitioners and defendants
7. Full name of judge or magistrate
8. Judgement/Conviction/Sentence
9. Correct date on which the offence was committed

Court Reporting is generally allowed in all cases except in cases concerning minors and other cases concerning State Security where permission has to be sought from the Court to publish the court proceedings.
Avoid descriptions. Report only statements that were made during the trial.

An accused person who has been convicted and sentenced in a lower court might appeal to a higher court and be acquitted. Not to report the acquittal would be unfair to the person and to the public.

**DO NOT** report the victim’s name in rape cases or other indecent assaults on women and children. To do so would expose an innocent victim to additional embarrassment. And, avoid naming children.

Reporters covering the courts should also be sensitive to how they report on cases of gender based violence, especially cases of violence against women like domestic violence. Reporters should avoid reporting on any sensational cases without placing the issue of gender violence into the context of the magnitude of the problem in society and treating the issue as a violation of women’s human rights, especially the rights to life and to bodily integrity. Court reporting on domestic violence and other cases of gender violence should adhere to the principles of good journalism, especially the reporting of the facts without embellishment through the use of adjectives that create hype, or the use of language and phrases that perpetuate the myths of violence, such as ‘women asked for it’.

4.11 The Court System in Malawi

4.11.1 Malawi Supreme Court of Appeal

At the apex there is the Malawi Court of Appeal (MSCA), which is the highest and final court of the Justices of Appeal (JAS) and Chief of Justice. It has appellate jurisdiction (i.e. it only receives appeals)

4.11.2 The High Court of Malawi

This has unlimited original jurisdiction over civil and criminal cases (i.e. cases can be originated in this court or it has power to receive cases directly). The court (HC) has also appellate powers (i.e. it has power to receive appeals from magistrate courts. It is composed of Judges and the Chief Justice).

4.11.3 Magistrates Courts

These are lowest cadres of the court system. They are based in various towns, districts or areas. They entertain various criminal and civil cases that are not serious enough to commence in the High Court. However, committal proceedings for murder or manslaughter can commence in magistrate courts for procedure only. These courts are staffed by professional lawyers or lay magistrates (non-lawyers).

4.11.4 Tribunals
These are not true courts as such but they have some quasi-judicial powers (i.e. they are not strictly courts, but they exercise some powers of courts sometimes.)

Examples of Tribunals in Malawi are:

- The National Compensation Tribunal, which awards compensation to victims of atrocities of the previous regime.
- The Labour Tribunal, which is to hear complaints at the work place.
- The Land Tribunal, which hears and settles complaints relating to land matters.
- The Rent Tribunal, which in the United Kingdom settles complaints about rentals (housing).

4.12 Criminal and Civil Courts

There are no clear distinctions between criminal and civil courts in Malawi but such distinctions are available in the United Kingdom where there are separate courts. In Malawi, any court can receive criminal or civil cases. So the differences are notable in Criminal and Civil Cases.

Differences between Criminal and Civil Cases:

Criminal cases are against the State. Civil cases are against individuals.
Criminal cases are commenced by the State through the Police prosecutors, State Advocate or Director of Public Prosecution (DPP), e.g. Republic vs. Banda. Individuals commence civil cases, e.g. (Banda vs. Banda)

The aim of criminal case is to punish the offender (i.e. offender goes to prison or pays fine to the government). The aim of a civil case is to seek compensation (i.e. offender pays damages to individual)

Terminology in criminal case for starting a case is through laying a charge to the police. Starting a civil case is through filing a statement of claim in the court directly or through a lawyer.

The defending party, in a criminal case is known as Accused /Suspect. In civil case, the defending party is known as the Defendant or Respondent.

The complaining party in a criminal case is known as the Prosecutor, State or Republic or DPP. In a civil case, the complaining party is known as the Plaintiff or Petitioner.

In criminal cases an accused is arrested, detained and charged for an offence. There is no arrest, detention or charge in civil cases. When someone is taken to a police station, it does not necessarily mean the person has been arrested. The person may be allowed to go home after interrogation, and if the radio has described her/him as having been arrested, the person has the right to sue the MBC for libel. You rather say someone has been detained, or taken to the police station or is helping police with investigations.
In criminal cases an accused is taken to court for plea, and applies for bail or is remanded in prison. In serious criminal cases, an accused is said to be indicted (i.e. being charged). In civil cases such procedure is non-existent.

Criminal cases are commenced on a criminal summons known as charge sheet or indictment. Civil cases are commenced on civil summons known as Writ, Originating Summons, Notice of Motion, or Petition.

Source of criminal law is usually from written law such as Statutory law (law passed by Parliament), e.g. Penal Code. Sources of civil law are from common law, e.g. agreements between individuals, torts, marriages, etc.

4. Ethics in Broadcast Journalism

5.1 MBC's Information Philosophy

The MBC is the national broadcaster of Malawi and plays a key part in informing, educating and entertaining the public. After 30 years of one-party rule, the station has been endeavouring to spearhead media efforts of reform. Its overriding ethical principles therefore, are respect for the truth and accurate, unbiased and diverse dissemination of information to all Malawians. Taking no editorial position in its overriding programming, the MBC aims to ensure the full exchange of facts and opinions to further both the democratization process, the awareness and protection of the political, economic and social rights of women and men, and national policies including poverty alleviation.
5.2..Journalistic Principles

All news staff of the MBC have a duty to maintain the highest professional and ethical standards. The MBC in its news and current affairs programmes aims at fair and honest reporting with information conforming to reality; it is neither misleading nor false. All language must be decent and clear, and production techniques disciplined. Thorough and careful research, form the bases of the MBC’s news output.

The MBC respects the private life and personal sphere of the individual. If a person’s private behaviour, however, touches on public interests, it may be discussed in MBC news programmes. In such cases, care will be taken to ensure that publication does not violate the personal rights of individuals who are not involved.

MBC reports on cases, which are under criminal investigation, or subjudice must be devoid of all preconceived opinion. Before and during such proceedings we must not make any observation that can be construed as partisan or prejudicial to the issue. An accused person must not be presented as guilty before legal judgement has been pronounced.

In reports on medical issues care will be taken to avoid undue sensationalism, which could arouse baseless fears or hopes in the listenership.

The following media principles, therefore, underpin and are essential to the editorial operations of the MBC. All editorial staff adhering to these principles can best safeguard Media Freedom.

5.2.1 Accuracy and Speed

The information carried and spoken in all programmes must be factual. This is the cornerstone of the media’s credibility. If the accuracy of the information is doubted or found to be misleading and false, then the producer’s, as well as the MBC’s, credibility is tarnished.

Information accepted for broadcasting must be checked for accuracy with the entire thoroughness circumstances permitting. It’s meaning must not be distorted even falsified by any kind of editing. This involves both a scrupulous attention to detail as well as care. The content of documents must be faithfully reproduced. If unconfirmed reports or assumptions are used, they must be identifiable as such. It is contrary to journalistic decorum, however, to publish unfounded allegations of a defamatory nature.

To err is human, and even the most conscientious news staff make a mistake. Published news reports or assertions subsequently found to be incorrect must be corrected promptly and appropriately. A fair opportunity for reply should also be given to organizations and individuals.
While aiming and disseminating news fast as possible, accuracy must never be compromised for speed. It is essential to get information confirmed by a second source, or even more sources, before airing.

Accuracy in action means:

- Ensuring that the information provided has been recorded according to what those interviewed have said; that facts are checked and double-checked – especially statistics;
- Ensuring that events and issues are not misrepresented by providing background and context to ensure that the entire programme is true to the issue, situation or event;
- Providing an explanation of information of information, terms, issues, etc. Do not assume that the audience knows,
- Ensuring that information is not distorted to justify a conclusion.

Research for all programmes must be thorough and great attention must be paid to details such as dates, statistics, and spelling of names, titles, among others. The ‘devil is in the detail’ is a reminder that what may seem like small points can become the basis on which a story’s entire accuracy is questioned. If the name is wrong or the statistics used out of date or interpreted wrongly, the audience may wonder if any of the information provided in the programme or editorial content is true. Check and re-check all information.

Do not exaggerate. Avoid judgements and assumptions. If there is a gap between recording a programme and putting it on air, check to make sure the information, facts are still relevant, current and have not been overtaken by events. In the same vein, a programme that is being repeated on air may need to be amended, because facts and details may have changed.

5.2.11 Bias

While media practitioners will have their own views and opinions, they must not yield to bias or prejudice when performing their editorial duties. At the core of media freedom is editorial independence, which means independence from external and internal forces such as:

- Government
- Political parties and interests
- Business and commercial interests, including those of advertisers
- Friends of media practitioners
- Media practitioners own prejudices, superstitions and biases (gender, HIV and AIDS, racial, ethnic, religious, class, among others).
Bias and prejudices of any form therefore taint the media’s credibility and integrity.

5.2.11 Fairness and balance

The MBC’s guiding principle in presenting controversial issues is the concept of fair balance. This applies to single programmes and programme series. Continuing news and current affairs programmes must present a balance overall view of conflicting matters to avoid the appearance of promoting particular opinions or being manipulated into doing so by events. In all information programmes, especially during election and referendum campaigns, editors must avoid a cumulative bias or slant over a period of time and must be mindful of the MBC’s obligation to present the broadcast possible range of subjects and ideas.

Balance also refers to the duty of the MBC to provide a balance of voices and perspectives in the information provided and in its programming. Key to this is a balance of voices of women and men in society and the avoidance of relying on only the voices and perspective of one sex, racial, religious, ethnic, class, among other groups, to dominate in the editorial content.

To achieve fairness and balance in programming, it is important to ensure the following:

- That more than one perspective or one voice is included;
- That more than just the views of men, and the views of only men and women who are in positions of power of formal authority are included in programmes and the news;
- That the ‘missing voices’ – i.e. the voices of those most affected by an issue, event – are included;
- That language that reinforces or fosters stereotypes, stigma, and discrimination is excluded;
- That women and men are not tagged only according to traditional gender roles;
- That all sides of an issue or event are presented and not just the dominant or prevailing view;
- That the gender perspective is included in the coverage or programming of all issues.

5.2.1V Diversity

A variety of views and a variety of voices, both women and men and other vulnerable groups, are important to maintain diversity one of the central components of a democratic society.

Apart from comprehensively reporting on Malawi’s society, the MBC must reflect the nation and its regions to national and regional audiences, while serving the special information needs of the region. News programming cannot be confined to what the largest listenership wants to know, but rather, it must include, through the MBC’s own editorial discretion, what the public
(both women and men) is entitled and needs to know. The MBC aims at employing an increasing number of the country’s languages to serve the multifaceted population.

5.3 Credibility

The MBC has the credibility of an authoritative source of information. This reputation must not be compromised. While serving the public’s right to know, MBC news staff must observe certain limits including, among others:

- The protection of confidential sources of information
- The avoidance of unnecessary identification in legal cases, and prejudicial or pejorative reference to a person’s race, colour, religion, gender, HIV status or to any physical or mental illness or handicap.

Dishonest methods must not be employed to acquire news and information. In order to maintain the station’s credibility, MBC staff must always identify as such to interviewees and other potential information sources.

The acceptance or granting of any kind of privilege, which could impinge on airing or editorial discretion, is not compatible with our concept of a respectable and reasonable broadcaster. Anyone accepting bribes for the dissemination or suppression of news is guilty of dishonourable and unprofessional conduct.

5. Production Standards

The news desk, reporters and current affairs producers are all involved in putting together the MBC’s information programmes, especially bulletins and magazines. This section deals first with the principles of the news gathering process, and then with processing the information compiled from various sources.

News staff should never forget that their contribution to radio is the backbone of MBC’s total output and not just winning and holding an audience through up-to-date information. Dedication to fundamental journalistic values discussed earlier in this handbook, is therefore, indispensable. Certain skills and techniques, however, should assist in bringing about as much professionalism as possible to support those objectives.

6.1 Information Gathering

How does the radio know what it knows? Many sources contribute to the MBC’s news gathering, including, among others, interviewees, handouts, spokespersons, newspapers, news agencies, and first and foremost its own news and current affairs staff, i.e. reporters. They are not only assigned to cover a story that has been diarized, most of the reporters work ideally would be based on their own initiative, i.e. their own observation and instinct,
contains and investigations. It is preferable, and should become standard news practice, to be pro-active and act on an issue or event, rather than to react to it.

So how does the reporter know what is news? Since this handbook also serves as reference for trainees, the following are some ideas about the basics of the trade.

6.1.1 A Definition of News

There are many definitions of news, including the following:

News is a prompt “bottom line” recounting of factual information about events, situations and ideas (including options and interpretation) calculated to interest an audience and help people cope with themselves and their environment.

News is what is new, what is happening now, as well as being a new angle or insight into an old issue. It is also important to view any event, issue, policy that affects a large majority of the population – women and men – and which has an impact on their daily lives as having news value.

Some of the key criteria or elements to used in the news gathering process are:

- **Timeliness** – news should be new
- **Consequence** – the more people affected, the greater the news
- **Prominence** – if the President breaks a leg, the reader is interested
- **Rarity** – the first woman in space, for example, is news
- **Proximity** – we are more concerned about things near us
- **Conflict** – we pay more attention to clash than routine
- **Change** – human nature either resists or welcomes change
- **Action** – doing is more dramatic than talking about it
- **Concreteness** – a body in the street is more noteworthy than abstract discussion about dangerous crime
- **Personality** – people like to read about people as they like to gossip

But there are more aspects influencing the news gathering process including:

- **Celebration** – anniversaries, civic events, awards, parades, demonstrations, milestones
- **Adventure** – readers identify with daring men and women
- **Mystery** – enigma intrigues people
- **Drama** – hero vs. human, hero vs. nature, hero vs. self
- **Ethics** – people want to know about what’s right, wrong, just
- **Self-improvement** – home maintenance, food, finances, travel, health, beauty, fashion, career path and general advancement for women, men
News, therefore, is about names, events, ideas and change. And news is often an account of something rare and out of the ordinary. Examples of what is news include the following, among others: the number of flood victims is far smaller than originally estimated by the authorities; a scientist has developed a drug that successfully fights an incurable disease; Parliament votes for tax cuts; the President breaks a leg; the human rights of women and girls are violated solely because of their sex and gender; the impact of the AIDS pandemic on food security, the education and health sectors; and so forth.

6.1.2 Types of Stories

*News*

News of important public events or issues such as actions of governments, social, economic, gender relation’s trends, education, and international relations. News is also stories and events about celebrities, offbeat incidents, and other items that are of interest to the readers.

*Straight news* reports are the presentation of untarnished facts without attempt to analyze, interpret or capture the human interest angle; *news analysis* is when reporters get behind then news to analyze and interpret the effect of the event or issue on the lives of women and men through the voices and perspectives of experts, officials and those most affected by the event or issue reported. News analysis explains the
significance of an event, traces its origins and indicates how the story might develop. It should always restate the key news elements in the programme/insert. Spot news is a report of a sudden happening, such as a fire or jury verdict or a parliamentary decision, as oppose to trend stories.

**Chronology**

This report takes the format of a storyfied list of events, accompanying a specific event (e.g. if say an air crash occurs, a programme would offer for reasons of comparison a list of major air crashes over a certain period of time, or it would list highlights of a development in chronological order)

**Curtain raiser**

Programme broadcast before an event outlining the main developments ahead, including venue and the time of main events. It would emphasize issues and personalities.

**Advancer**

Broadcast two or three days before an event (e.g. a conference) explaining the background.
Profile

Programme on a personality including all biography background, particulars, achievements, etc. (e.g. if a new minister is introduced after being elected)

Obituary

Programme on a prominent person who has just died, describing his or her life, achievements, etc. Obits of important people should have been prepared and archived and must be ready for transmission upon the person’s death.

6.1.3 Reporting Techniques

Interviews

Interviews are a vital tool of journalism and programme making. An interview should have a clear focus. Do not invite people to appear simply because they are a major players in the news.

Interviews should be well informed and well prepared. Interviews may be searching, sharp and questioning, but not partial, or discourteous. Some general guidelines on the interview are as follows:
Interview Pointers

Know what you want from an interview before you start.

Do as much research as you can before the interview.

Simple questions are the best.

In programmes or stories about events, build up a chronology of what happened.

Check names and positions.

Get too much information rather than too little.

If in doubt, describe your understanding of a situation to those being interviewed.

Ask questions to get information, not opinions or reactions.

Try to avoid asking clichéd questions.

Probe for anecdotes.
Ask for all jargon, technical information to be explained.

Listen to the answers.

Review the answers.

Source: The Universal Journalist, second edition, David Randall, University of Cape Town Press, Cape Town, 2000

Prior Agreement on Questions for the Interview

The MBC’s policy is that if the interviewee refuses to give an interview unless the questions are rigidly agreed upon in advance, or unless certain subjects are avoided, then the producer should consider whether it is worth proceeding with the interview.

Even-handedness in Interviews

Anyone expressing contentious views should be rigorously challenged. If the interview becomes emotive, the interviewer should maintain his or her professionalism and should not become emotional. While it is often known that politicians have a particular stance, it should not be assumed that ‘experts’, such as academics, journalists, human rights activists, religious leaders, traditional leaders,
among others, and organizations in civil society, the private sector, at community level, are impartial.

**Fair Treatment of Interviewees**

It is important for interviewees to know why they are being invited for an interview; what subjects will be covered and an outline of what they will be asked to speak on; the context of the programme and the role they will be expected to play.

Interviewees should be given a fair chance to set out their full response to a question. Some interviews are not meant to be challenging, but to inform, explain or entertain. People interviewed as eyewitnesses or as experts may need to be encouraged, rather than challenged.

Some interviewees may ask in advance to see the line of questioning. While this request is not unreasonable, it should be pointed out that only a broad outline can be given, because the interview will depend on the dialogue that emerges between the interviewer and interviewee(s). The details or precise questions should not be provided in advance.

**Interviewing women**
In many cultures, because of gender roles and how women and girls are socialized, women may be less eager to speak openly and honestly in the public space. In interviews where both men and women are present, women may fall silent and leave the discussion to men, especially on issues that are deemed culturally sensitive and they may fall silent on controversial issues for fear of being labeled or tagged by the public.

Understanding gender roles (especially why women may tend to be silent or less forthcoming during an interview), gender relations as well as knowledge and awareness of how the cultural and social factors of the society work together to ‘silence’ women’s voices is important for the interviewer to break through women’s walls of silence. What is not being said is as important as what is said.

**Right of refusal**

Anyone has a right to be interviewed. Therefore, it is not always necessary to mention a refusal on air. However, where the audience might reasonably expect to hear counter-arguments or where an individual, a specific viewpoint or party is not represented, it may be appropriate to explain that the person or entity concerned “was invited to appear on the programme, but declined”.
2.3 Types of Interviews

POLITICAL INTERVIEWS and ELECTION COVERAGE

Politicians and other contributors sometimes try to place conditions on a programme before agreeing to take part. Any arrangement reached must not prevent the programme from asking questions that audiences would reasonably expect to hear asked.

Election coverage

The real test of a broadcaster’s commitment to impartiality is in the way it reports on elections and election campaigns. It is during elections in particular that a station’s commitment to objectivity, accuracy, fairness, impartiality and balance is scrutinized closely and evaluated assiduously.

A public service broadcaster will, during an election campaign, make time available to the officially recognized political parties so that they can explain their policies directly to the electorate whose support they are seeking.

All parties will seek to influence editorial decisions at election time. Producers must not let themselves be intimidated by the politicians. Complaints will be made, but
politicians should be told that any complaints would be dealt with at a higher level. All complaints must be written and addressed to the Director General.

Several principles apply at election time:

- The public is entitled to hear the principal points of view of the various parties on all questions of importance.

- Broadcasting must not fall under the control of individuals or organized pressure groups that are influential either because of their wealth or because of their special position.

- The full exchange of opinions is one of the safeguards of free institutions and of democracy. The right to hear alternative policies and points of view is inherent in the concepts of balanced reporting and impartiality, which are part of the broadcaster’s duty.

At every election, the campaigning parties are issued with a detailed guide, which outlines the allocation of free time on radio, television, the conditions for broadcasting, and the technical standards to be observed.

News decisions at election time have to be driven by the news judgement of the broadcasting journalists who must ensure that attention is given to a thorough examination of the views, policies and campaigns of all the main political parties.

News staff must familiarize themselves with the law on election broadcasting – regulating matters like party election broadcasts, time on air to be made available to
the various political parties, the duration and scheduling of party election broadcasts and political advertising during election periods.

As a general guide, the government and the official opposition parties are allocated equal time on air for their broadcasts. If parties are in coalition, either as government or as the official apportion, they will be given an equal allocation of time. It will be up to the parties, which are in a coalition to divide the time between as they see fit.

Smaller parties must also receive coverage during the campaign. The amount of time they will be given for the election broadcasts will be less than the main government and opposition parties, but will be proportionate.

The broadcaster will maintain the same ratio for the allocation of broadcasts among the parties in each of the country’s official languages where appropriate.

The question of editorial control over the party election broadcasts must be spelled out clearly. In countries such as Australia, Britain, Canada, and New Zealand, the parties make their broadcasts themselves at their own expense and are responsible for their content. But they have to abide by ground rules laid down, such as observing the law – for example on libel and incitement to racial hatred and violence – and observe the Corporation’s own guidelines on taste and decency. They must ensure that their party broadcasts are not used as a vehicle for personal attack as distinguished from criticism of a party and its policies. The MBC should have the right to take out any material submitted for broadcast if, in its opinion of the broadcaster, it is of a defamatory nature, containing unacceptable abuse of political opponents.
It may be necessary for MBC to offer orientation and production facilities; otherwise the technical quality of the broadcasts may be well below standard.

**DOOR STEPPING**

Journalists regularly catch people in the news as they enter and leave buildings and put questions to them even though there has been no prior arrangement for an interview. This is a legitimate part of newsgathering known as door stepping.

**PHONE-INS**

Using the telephone can enhance programmes by allowing the public to give their own point of view or to interact with programmes. Phone-in programmes are an accepted and important means of broadcasting individual points of view and of allowing the listeners and viewers to question politicians and other public figures. Both factual and entertainment programmes use phone-in programmes to provide individual contributions or to get an immediate response from members of the public.

- Topics for discussion must be clear and generally perceived by target audience as a social issue affecting them.

- Phone-in programmes are generally live. The aim is genuine spontaneity.
• The producer must be constantly alert to the possibility of callers breaking the law by making outspoken remarks, wild unsubstantiated allegations or causing widespread offence in matters of taste or decency.

• To minimize the risks, a station needs to have a system whereby staff screens potential callers before allowing them to be put through to the programme. Callers should not normally be put straight on air.

• Staff should also ensure that the phone-in does not become a focus or platform for organized pressure groups or ‘irresponsible’ individuals.

• All programmes including phone-ins must be well trailed before broadcast for broader participation.

The presenter/moderator should take special care to maintain fairness, impartiality and balance and to ensure that a wide range of views is broadcast. They must be able to extricate the programme when difficult situations arise, cutting short a caller politely and firmly.

Some broadcasters offer back up information for the audience to phone-in programmes and use telephone help lines to follow up and provide extra advice and support for problems covered in the phone in or other programmes. There is a range of services such as fact sheets, booklets, and telephone help lines. The broadcaster must take care not to promote any one particular organization, charity agency, manufacturer or supplier. Where possible, give details of a range of organizations, which are in position to offer help or advice.
VOX POPS (CLIPS OF VIEWS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC)

These are not an indication of wider public opinion, but their value is that they allow different sides of an issue in question to be expressed through the voices of the man and woman in the street. But it should be made clear that they are an expression of a point of view, not an indication of the weight or opinion on either side. Great care is needed with political questions and the various voice clips should be assembled in such a way as to ensure both sides of an issue are covered.

Statements gathered from people chosen at random should be presented solely to illustrate the range and texture of popular opinion on a topical issue. There should not be any suggestion – explicit or implicit – that the views broadcast in such a survey reflect wider public opinion.

HARD EXPOSURE INTERVIEW

This type of interview investigates a subject; it is usually brief to illustrate a news item, e.g. Why did the air crash happen; how could it have been prevented.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

This type puts interview in the picture; similar to the hard exposure interview, but the informational interview includes some background to explain an event, e.g. the crashed plane had a record of mishaps; the airline was involved in accidents before, etc.
THE EMOTIONAL INTERVIEW

This interview aims to reveal the interviewee’s state of mind: survivors of an air crash tell the audience about their ordeal.

Do’ and Don’ts

- Avoid the term ‘exclusive interview’ for its imparts no information – a reporter’s interview is by definition exclusive; if it is a group interview one would say so.
- Never insinuate that your interviewee is the culprit or the guilty party.
- Do not debate with the interviewee
- Do not put words in his/her mouth
- Refrain from making statements
- Do not voice your opinion
- Do not bicker with, bully or heckle the interviewee
- Do not talk over a subject
- Avoid leading questions
- Do not jump to conclusions
- Never be rude
- Be firm, but polite to him/her
- Don’t be afraid to ask controversial or delicate questions
- Ask specific questions; pin the interviewee down on something concrete
- Do not try to impress the interviewee, or, even worse, scare or intimidate him/her
- Do not try to get information from an interviewee by making promises
- Verify all information; ask” “Is that correct?”

6.1.3.2 News Conferences

News conferences often begin with a statement by the person(s) who has called the media. The a question-and-answer session starts. In case of an important event, two reporters should cover it if there is no live coverage. The first rushes to a nearby telephone after the speaker has said something very important (e.g. if a president has
returned from a foreign trip and announces a major result unknown so far). While she/he is on the phone, her/his colleague continues to cover the news conference. Both reporters, after the conference ends, determine what news is and write/report the story including inserts.

6.1.3.3 Conferences/Seminar

When covering important events such as international conferences, party congresses or big sports competitions which last for many hours or some days, a reporter should not wait for the event to be over. S/he should rather report it in part or series, reflecting the various stages of the event: the beginning, climax or fresh major developments in the course of the event, and the end plus results. These occasions would rather be staffed with more than one reporter. Hard facts are usually more important than protocol, which tends to bore an audience. Also in most cases the result (or failure) of a meeting is the story and not the fact that it has taken place.

6.1.3.4 Handouts, Press Releases

All get the same handouts, but a good reporter produces a better story on a subject. Go back to the source and ask for explanations, background. The PR person, who has written the handout, does not ask himself/herself the questions you need to ask a reporter. You will certainly get more out of the handouts when you ask him/her on the basis of the document. Check the contents with him/her; ask other sources so that you get things into perspective. Guard against propaganda, or sheer advertising.
6.1.3.5 Speeches

The reporter would normally not get the text of a speech, so she/he must take notes and/or have a tape recorder running. She/he then finds out what the essence, the message of the speech is and presents it in her/his lead. This is supported by one or various quotes. In the body of the story, the reporter then narrates the speech using reported speech technique. When she/he writes the story, she/he would normally not say at the beginning where the speech was delivered. She/would rather serve some facts for later paragraphs.

A speech story with an unusual angle may look like this:

An American bone specialist has told a medical conference that the ideal astronaut would have no legs. Dr Robert Heaney from Creighton University said, astronauts on the orbiting Skylab space station suffered a significant loss of calcium and density in the bones of legs. This is why legless people would make ideal astronauts, the expert told 150 participants during the two-day event in New York also dealing with....

If a reporter is handed the text of a speech before it is actually delivered, s/he may file it under embargo. S/he should then check the speech delivered against the embargoed text. Very often s/he will that the two versions differ, sometimes significantly. That in itself may be worth mentioning in the story.

6.1.3.6 Natural Disasters
This is an action story which may people are interested in since many of them may have been affected themselves. Assign more than one reporter to see the damage done, check with the meteorological office, the police, the fire brigade, hospitals in the case of casualties and all those who can contribute to a colourful to account. Don’t use adjectives to describe a situation, give the facts. Don’t tell, show! The listeners will find out for themselves why something is dramatic. Let bus drivers who were caught in floods or engine drivers report their ordeal, or let pilots tell the story how they escaped a hailstorm that holed their aircraft.

6.1.3.7 Accidents

A crash occurs unexpectedly, so avoid chaotic reporting. Try to have someone getting to the scene to see for herself/himself and interview eyewitnesses, survivors. Ask the airline’s or railway company’s headquarters what happened, talk to the police, fire brigade, rescue commandos. Check the facts time and again; be sure you get accurate names and correct descriptions of what happened. Guard against allegations, stick to the facts, but employ graphic language and get excellent quotes. Be careful when reporting someone’s assessment of the cause of the crash. Find more than one source for it.

Explain situations and add background. More generally speaking, enable the listener to grasp the full significance of a situation, and see it in proper perspective:
• The motive for a crime
• The cause of a riot
• The political and economic circumstances that let to a coup d’etat
• The social and economic factors that resulted in a higher standard of living, etc.

6.1.3.8 Parliamentary Reporting

To cover parliamentary proceedings is the privilege of any journalist in a democracy. MBC listeners count on us for balanced and unbiased accounts on the work of the legislature as reported in bulletins and magazines such as Today in Parliament.

Draft laws (bills) and the pros and cons during parliamentary debates are the essence of parliamentary reporting, as are the passing of laws, the actual votes and preceding actions. Reporters should be permanently assigned to parliament so that they can follow and understand these often complicated proceedings. Only if professional journalists are reporting parliament, the democratic public will be properly informed. All parties represented in parliament should be covered, in particular differing opinions during debates. MBC programmes should truly mirror the state of affairs, even if it appears inconvenient to some. In the absence of live coverage of parliament MBC news and current affairs programmes must endeavour to fully illustrate unfolding debates with all drama involved including even controversial interjections. Since a reporter is the public’s delegate she/he must be admitted to all public-hearings of the house.

6.1.3.9 Official Statements
Official announcements, statements, messages and communiqués should be treated on their merit. If it appears to be a mere formality, go back to the source and check whether there is anything substantial in it. Being an official statement is not necessarily in itself news. Its value is decided by its essence.

6.1.3.10 Sources

Sources men and women in positions of formal authority and power; men and women in civil society; men and women experts; men and women citizens; men and women most affected by issues and events – are the primary suppliers of information all forms of media content. The media principles provide the best general guidelines for identifying and handling sources.

By accessing the voices of men and women citizens from all walks of life in the Malawian society, MBC can exercise everyone’s right to freedom of expression. By denying a voice in programming to certain segments of society – such as women, people living with disabilities, elderly women and men, among others – the media infringes upon these groups right to freedom of expression.

Reports, research studies, surveys, new publications of political, economic, social, religious, cultural, gender issues also are sources of information for media programmes.

Over-reliance on one type of source can yield biased and misleading information.
Any person providing authentic, official information from government, political parties, organizations, embassies, companies, authorities; persons who have participated in news events or observed these events – eyewitnesses, politicians, pilots; and persons who are affected by events, such as a mother or father of a soldier who has defected, etc. Or persons who remember – old timers who recall the city’s worst fire…

Sources also include public records and reports (drafts) of all kinds that reveal trends in government, business, crime and the weather, to name a few.

Never rely on your own memory! Never take something for granted! Never assume something is correct because it came from an official. Get a source and name the source!

**When to Source**

You should source every story clearly and explicitly for two reasons: to enable your listeners to form their own judgement of its credibility and to protect the MBC’s reputation if a story is challenged.
Any contentious statement must be rigorously source. On the other hand you should not blunt the impact of the story, and particularly of a lead, by excessive and intrusive sourcing if the facts are not in dispute.

However well sources a story is, you must ensure that it is credible, impartial and legally safe.

Ideally you should source every statement in every story unless it is established fact or is information clearly in the public domain like a first hand court report or this example:

A heavy explosion shook Harare on Thursday and a thick column of smoke rose over the area of the city’s police headquarters.

An event of this kind would clearly be public knowledge. But if the explosion were in a town where there were no journalists able to write freely, you would need a source, for example:

A heavy explosion shook the centre of Lhasa on Thursday and a thick column of smoke rose over the area of the city’s police headquarters, according to reports from residents of the Tibetan capital telephoned to Beijing.

A story giving casualty figures should be sourced since such information would not be public knowledge.
However, if an event is not contentious it may be legitimate to begin a story with a paragraph that does not contain a source, as long as the sourcing is clearly given high in the story.

There is no need to source statements of the obvious, e.g. Destruction of half its air force is a serious blow to Ruritania, a military analyst said.

**Grading of Sources**

A member of our staff or another reliable eyewitness is the best source. Next best is a named source. The weakest sources are unnamed ones. Responsibility for reporting what they say is yours alone. Unnamed sources rank as follows in order of strength:

**Authoritative source** – exercises real authority on the issue in question. A defence minister is an authoritative source on defence matters, but her/his competence as a source is limited to her/his field of activity.

**Official source** – has access to information in her/his official capacity. But her/his competence as a source is limited to her/his field of activity.
**Designated sources** – these are diplomatic sources, conference sources, intelligence source or sources in the mining industry. As with the official source they must have access to reliable information on the subject in question.

**Tips on sources**

A source identified by name as well as position carries more weight, *e.g.* Police spokesman John Smith rather than a police spokesman. But we use this technique for stories of substance and contentious statements, not for routine information of a secondary nature.

Cite a source, not sources, if you have only one informant.

Quote a diplomat, not diplomatic sources, and official, not official sources. Unless the information has been expressly given on an unattributable basis write *police said* rather than *police sources said*.

Be as specific as possible, *e.g.* an official *who was at the meeting* rather than *an official source, an array officer at the scene, rather than military sources*. German Defence Ministry officials rather than NATO sources. Do not use plain analyst at first reference; explain their area of expertise, *e.g.* political analysts, military analysts, share analysts.
Use the phrase *that declined to be named* when you have to make clear that a source insisted on confidentiality. Do not confuse confidentiality and anonymity. As long as you know the identity of the sources, refusing to use his or her name, protects the person’s privacy or confidentiality. The source is known and therefore is not anonymous. You need not use *who declined to be named* as a tag every time you quote a diplomat or banker.

If your information comes from various unnamed sources you need not to source each item. Give a generic sourcing, e.g. interviews with members of the different guerrilla groups showed a deep split on the issue. Some wanted…

Avoid the vague reliable sources, well-informed sources, quarters, circles or observers.

- Expression of Opinion and Vituperative Attack.

If quoting unnamed sources on one side of a conflict about what is happening on the other side, use them only for facts and not opinions.

If an informant wants to make a vituperative attack on an individual, organization or country, *she/he must speak on the record*. You should waive this rule only if the source is a senior official making a considered policy statement that is obviously newsworthy. Your story must make clear both that the informant has volunteered the
information and that she/he is an official. If she/he will not speak on that basis you should consider carefully whether or not to use the story.

Such a story might begin: *Ruritania on Wednesday accused Slobbovia of practicing genocide against its ethnic minorities.* The second paragraph would then read something like this: *In a press briefing a government official, who declined to be identified said…*

- **Hopes and Fears**

  Do not use phrases that suggest you are taking sides in a dispute, *e.g. Hopes that OPEC would set a lower benchmark price for oil.* You must make clear whose hopes these are.

  But you can share unsourced the hopes and fears of common humanity, *e.g. Fears were mounting that 132 miners trapped…*

- **Circumstances of Statements**

  Make clear how information is obtained, *e.g. said in a statement, told reporters in answer to questions or said in a letter to shareholders.*

  Do not use passive sourcing, *e.g., it was announced, it was believed, it was understood.*
Always try to match a press report rather than simply pick up from the newspaper. If you do quote such a report, tell the reader the result of your attempts to verify it.

Do not use reports or unconfirmed reports as the bases for a story. You can quote an acceptable source commenting on them, e.g. The minister said he could not confirm reports that 100 people had died…

6.1.3.11 Quotation

Quotes personalize stories and give them immediacy. Here are some guidelines when handling quotes:

- Never begin a broadcast news story with a quote
- Avoid unnecessary broken quotes
- Avoid long direct quotes, but break them up by naming the source if it becomes necessary to use one (the spokeswoman went on to say; she continued; turning to another subject, she… she added that…)
- Since you cannot really say when using a quote, “quote – unquote”, you may want to look at phrases such as in her words, as she put it, or what she termed or called. These expressions plus your intonation tell your audience the beginning and the end of the quote.
- Selective use of quotes can be unbalanced. Be sure that the quotes you use are representative of what the speaker is saying and that you describe body language (a smile or wink) that may affect the sense of what is being reported.
- Quotes are sacred. Never change them.
- But you should delete routine obscenities
- Where you are quoting the same source for a lengthy statement you need not repeat the source paragraph by paragraph as long as there is no doubt who is speaking.
- When translating quotes from another language into your own, you should normally do so in an idiomatic way rather than with pedantic literalness. However, if a statement is tendentious and likely to be the subject of close analysis give a literal translation.
6.1.3.12 Delivery

Advance organization of story filing; check your phones; know your tools

6.1.4 Research

All programme research carried out by MBC news staff should contribute to easy understanding of complex matters. Since it helps putting news into perspective it must be performed under careful editorial supervision. The MBC’s archive, and all available outside sources should be consulted in the process. Research results used in information programmes must add to the fairness and accuracy of coverage. Material from sources not clearly identifiable must be avoided. Partisan interest must be labeled and balanced.

6.1.1 Privacy

An MBC reporter who chases a story must always respect the individual’s right to privacy. It means protecting a citizen’s personal and private life from intrusion of exposure to the public view.

However, when a person becomes involved in a news event, voluntarily or involuntarily, she/he forfeits the right to privacy. Similarly this holds true for a person somehow involved in a matter of legitimate public interest.
6.1.5 Protection of Sources

Although the MBC respects confidential sources there may be cases where the protection of sources is not a legal right. Courts, however, should weigh the public interest carefully before enforcing an order to break journalistic confidence. MBC’s legal counsel would strive to request a hearing in camera if the order were insisted upon.

Journalistic integrity and accuracy normally require an interviewee’s identity and credentials to be known to the audience. In cases of anonymous programme participants where voices may be distorted in order to avoid personal hardship or to protect personal safety, the value of the information must outweigh objections. The prior consent of the Director of News and Current Affairs must be obtained in these very rare instances.

6.1.6 Rights of Participants and Interviewees

In all News and Current Affairs Programme, fairness must rule interviews with members of the general public who may be ignorant of certain journalistic practices like on and off the record as well as deep background procedures. Also, the interviewee must be told before the interview what the interview will be about and for
which purpose it will be used. If a person refuses to be interviewed the MBC will have to respect this position as a right without exaggerated explanation.

In cases of telephone interviews, the person interviewed must be told so in advance and his/her permission must be sought before the interview is transmitted. If topics are a matter of public controversy, balance is essential.

At any rate, all live or recorded interviews must have the consent of the interviewee.

The MBC will exercise special care in covering the following events: protests and demonstrations in the form of marches, the occupation of places including squatting, picket lines, sit-ins, hunger strikes and other initiatives by groups or individuals. Also the reporting on hostage taking, terrorism, riots and civil disorder places heavy responsibility on the Corporation.

Since a lot of events are staged with publicity in mind, the potential for manipulation of coverage is often in-built. In cases of demonstrations and other protests where crowds are involved a second estimate on turnout on top of the organisers’ is mandatory.

Utmost editorial guidance is required to steer clear of abuse of the freedom of the press that may be manipulated to serve the interests of pressure groups. MBC teams’ presence must not mean a provocation in anyway or add to the impact of originators’
ideas and objectives. Events should receive the coverage they deserve given normal journalistic yardsticks and principles.

6.1.9 Clandestine Methods

Journalistic are paid for publishing facts and events and not normally about undercover activities. The MBC’s audience places its confidence in the radio’s news staff, because of their ethical and professional standards.

However, investigative reporting may at times justify legally backed covert methods in order to track down the activities of unlawful behaviour if the information in question is of such importance that it cannot be obtained through normal journalistic practice. Prior consent must be secured from the Director of News and Current Affairs if those practices should be employed. The Director will in turn consult with the Corporation’s legal counsel.

6.1.9.1 Hidden Microphones

This technique must not be used unless the public’s right to know by far outweighs normal legal considerations. Occasions of this kind may include for instance programmes on the selling of drugs or child prostitution, sex work and so forth.

6.1.9.2 Misrepresentation
If a member of MBC’s new staff acts in her/his journalistic capacity towards any kind of interviewee in order to obtain information for a programme she/he would identify as such. A misrepresentation may be legitimate in rare circumstances, for example, during research/investigation of schemes to defraud the public (e.g. so-called pyramid schemes that aim at extracting money from unassuming ordinary citizens), or corruption. In these cases, an MBC reporter may not declare his/her profession but seek information as an ordinary member of the public.

6.2 Information processing

News and current affairs programmes are aired to vast audiences whose composition is very complex. Attracting their attention is highly competitive and requires broadcasters to master processing skills that are different from the print media. It is important to keep cite of the fact that this complex audience includes both men and women and their information needs and interests do vary. It should not be assumed that men are the majority of, MBC’s listeners and viewers. Programming aimed at women not only widens the MBC’s audience and market potential, but also helps the Corporation to fulfill its public interest role in accordance with the media principles of balance, diversity and fairness.

6.2.1 News Writing for MBC

6.2.1.1 Conversational Style
To formulate news stories for a radio audience is about writing for the ear, to tell something in a conversational style. But first you need to catch the listener’s attention and that is difficult enough since unlike newspaper-reading, listening to the radio is often done in a subconscious manner: listeners may be working, driving a car, eating or even reading.

So you need to alert people’s brains and prepare them for the information that you want to tell them. You are actually competing for their attention. To receive this attention, radio news must be attractive, that is new, interesting, colourful, easy to understand, and important to the audience’s needs.

Always remember that listeners may not have caught the first couple of words of news broadcast because they did not pay attention. This is why you need to warm them up by telling them what comes next, and to constantly reinforce facts and sources.

Now what is conversational writing style? It is writing in a straightforward direct way, similar to the way you speak. A good teller of news is brief, direct and simple. Avoid a clumsy presentation of facts and complicated sentences. Use familiar words. Don’t try to impress upon others by choosing far-fetched expressions where a plain phrase would do. Complicated syntax confuses and even irritates audiences. Don’t forget: you are competing for the listener’s attention that you need to catch and hold! She/he must be able to understand your news the first time round; there is no chance to repeat.
Keep sentences short. They should not be longer than 30 or so words and a word should not have more than three syllables. And don’t start a sentence with long, modifying clauses: *Amid growing fear*…*despite complaints from*…You should also avoid the placement of many confusing clauses between the subject and the verb: *The Prime Minister, after having come under attack from the opposition for telling a story in Parliament according to which his daughter had been involved in a traffic accident, announced today that he would introduce legislation to curb speeding in villages.* Rather: *The Prime Minister has announced today that he will introduce a bill in order to curb…He was reacting to attacks from opposition*…

6.2.1.2 **Language and Colour**

Use plain, lucid and forceful language that one would also employ in ordinary polite speech. On short words, the Economist’s Style Guide has this to say:

“They are often Anglo-Saxon rather than Latin in Origin. They are easy to spell and easy to understand. Thus prefer ‘about’ to ‘approximately’, ‘after’ to ‘following’, ‘let’ to ‘permit’, ‘but’ to ‘however’, ‘use’ to ‘utilise’, ‘make’ to ‘manufacture’, ‘plant’ to ‘facility’, ‘take part’ to ‘participate’, ‘set up’ to ‘establish’, ‘enough’ to ‘sufficient’, ‘show’ to ‘demonstrate’ and so on. Underdeveloped countries are often better described as poor. Substantive usually means real or big.”
Simple must not mean being dull. Adjectives like dramatic don’t add to a news item. The drama must rather be in the telling: if a helicopter flies through a blizzard to rescue a sick child then the story tells itself – there is no need to nudge the listener in the ribs by saying it is a dramatic mercy dash.

Detail is the heart of colour, not adjectives; fat man is fat man, but a 285-pound man is better; if the house is luxurious, try to estimate its price; if the fur coat dazzles, say if is mink or sable; if the mural is painted in bright greens, say that instead of brightly coloured.

Reporting on HIV and AIDS, and also awareness of the need for gender-sensitive reporting, present challenges to broadcasters in the use of language that does not perpetuate stereotype, stigma or discrimination. The following two sections provide further guidelines on language and pointers on what to use and what to avoid.

6.2.1.2.1 Guidelines on Language for programmes on the AIDS Pandemic

It is important to pay particular attention to the language used in programmes on HIV and AIDS, because incorrect or sensational language can promote stigma, discrimination, stereotypes, and create hype. Many organizations have developed guidelines for language in reporting on HIV and AIDS. Below are two examples, which are fairly universal and which producers should pay attention to in their programmes’ content.
HIV/AIDS Reporting – Language Guidelines 2

- Use language that is inclusive and does not create or reinforce a “them/us” mentality.

- Do not use language that is drawn from the context of war – i.e. ‘the scourge’

- Use language that is value neutral, gender sensitive and empowers, rather than disempowers. (For example, avoid the term ‘victims’, and instead use ‘survivors’).

- Become fluent in HIV and AIDS terminology and then use language that is appropriate for the audience.

- Use descriptive terms, which are preferred by the persons themselves who are often referred to in reporting on HIV and AIDS (for example, sex workers instead of prostitutes)

- Do not use words like “body fluids” in relation to HIV transmission because some fluids like saliva, sweat and tears do not transmit HIV. It is better to specify the fluids that can transmit the virus such as blood, semen, vagina fluid, breast milk.

- Use the word ‘patient’ when referring to an individual who is in hospital or the story focuses on their medical treatment as opposed to someone living with HIV and AIDS.

- “Having more than one sexual partner” is preferred to promiscuous which has a negative meaning and attaches stigma.

- Avoid using the host of acronyms that have crept into the language of HIV and AIDS such as PLWHA (People Living with HIV and AIDS).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LANGUAGE</th>
<th>Because</th>
<th>Use instead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avoid</td>
<td>No-one ‘carries’ the virus or HIV-positive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disease</td>
<td>person/man/</td>
<td>Woman with HIV/ AIDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDS virus which</td>
<td>The virus exists whether or not HIV, the virus</td>
<td>The individual has developed causes AIDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDS test</td>
<td>the test does not confirm HIV (antibody)</td>
<td>Whether an individual has Developed symptoms of AIDS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Catch AIDS**  
IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO CATCH AIDS  
Contract

| HIV or | Become HIV
|--------|----------------|
|        | Positive

| Full-blown AIDS | There is no partly-blown AIDS | AIDS

| Innocent | No-one chooses to contract | Do not use the
|----------|-----------------------------|------------------|
|          | HIV                        | Word

| Safe sex | No sex with a partner is 100 | Safer sex
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent safe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scourge/plague/</th>
<th>The words are sensationalist, Disease, epidemic,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Killer disease</td>
<td>create alarm and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Illness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

**Gender - Language Guidelines (3)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What to avoid/sexist term</th>
<th>Alternative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘He’ and ‘Man’ as generic for all people</td>
<td>Male and female; he and she; women and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>Chair, chairperson, moderator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firemen</td>
<td>Fire fighters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishermen</td>
<td>Fishers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forefathers</td>
<td>Ancestors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreman</td>
<td>Supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentleman's agreement</td>
<td>Unwritten agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mankind man</td>
<td>Humanity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man power</td>
<td>Labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man made</td>
<td>Hand made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man hours</td>
<td>Work time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man to man</td>
<td>One to one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man on the street</td>
<td>Citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masterful</td>
<td>Skilful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middleman</td>
<td>Intermediary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsman</td>
<td>Reporter, journalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ombudsman</td>
<td>Public Protector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spokesman</td>
<td>Spokesperson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watchman</td>
<td>Guard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning woman</td>
<td>Hotel worker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.2.1.3 Verb Tenses

Compared with newspaper style, in broadcasting we often prefer the present tense verbs rather than past tense forms to add immediacy to copy:

The government has given its full unanimous backing to a proposal from the opposition, which is calling for a resumption of parliament to overcome the present stalemate. An official spokesman said that the cabinet had taken the position at the end of last night’s session.

However, you should not use present tense verbs to describe past events that are over. The past tense is even necessary in many instances:

Avoid: A fire, which swept through an apartment block in central Blantyre last night killed four people and injured five others. Police said…

Use instead: A fire swept through an apartment block in central Blantyre last night killing four people and injuring five others. Police said…
Note that in the second example that by suing the gerund form of the verb (‘ing’ ending), we have not only brought about more immediacy but also used a grammatical format that makes the sentence flow more easily.

Likewise, you can use a mixture of tenses:

*The Finance Minister, Honourable…. (Place here the name of the current finance minister), is preparing a position paper on the current problem of energy financing which he will deliver in parliament next Friday.*

*The UDF politician said today the report would outline his government’s official policy*... 

Avoid passive voice and use the more action-oriented voice:

E.g.: *Parliament passed the Bill*; and not: *The Bill was passed by Parliament.*

6.2.1.4 Structure of Story – Lead and Body

You must get to groups with the essence of any story – you must make a choice. And then you put the most important thing of your item at the top of it: you put it in the lead – introductory paragraph. The lead needs back-up, explanation that is provided
in subsequent paragraphs. But guard against more than one thought in each paragraph in order to smoothen the flow of the text.

The order of your story must be logical, clear and in the right sequence: facts, source, and background. A routine item would not exceed 40 seconds, i.e. up to **10 lines maximum**. To help organize the lead and the body of a story, observe the six basic questions below as a mental checklist:

Who?
What?
Where?
When?
Why?
How?

**6.2.1.5 Names of Persons**

Names make news and that is why they grab the listeners’ attention. Well known names like that of a country’s president and other leaders should normally be put at the beginning of a story that reports a speech held by such a person or a function/event that she/he has performed:
His excellency the President, Dr. Bakili Muluzi, has told the nation to tighten belts in order to cope with the present drought. In a live radio broadcast the Malawian leader…

Such editorial privilege is normally not accorded to anyone else in the public office.

There are times, however, when you may want to delay the name until the second sentence:

Malawi has expresses its gratitude to the world community for helping tens of thousands of victims left hungry and homeless after the recent floods in the Lower Shire Valley.

His Excellency the President, Dr. Bakili Muluzi said today had the United Nations not provided food and shelter so rapidly after the disaster, many more people may have died.

Addressing the foreign diplomatic corps in Lilongwe, the Malawian leader…

Often you may want to delay the name of a newsmaker until after an identifying phrase in order to prepare the listener’s ear from the story. Because in broadcasting, if you lead with a name, before the listener is ready for it, he or she may miss the name wondering for the rest of the story who you are talking about. This may help:
The Attorney General will announce tomorrow whether the State will appeal against the High Court’s judgement in the Press Trust case.

Dr. Cassim Chilumpha told reporters outside the court building in Blantyre that his office was busy studying the verdict which...

There are cases, as in major air on train crashes, in which it is preferable not to use names at all in particular when the story includes no persons relevant to Malawi. In such stories, rather concentrate on the number of passengers, because names would be meaningless in the country. If, however, the passenger list contains Malawian names, they would be given prominence in an news bulletin. *The use of names in Court Reporting is discusses under legal matters*

You may substitute titles for names, especially in cases where the name is obscure, difficult to pronounce, or not needed for understanding a news item:

The Finance Minister, Honourable Aleke Banda, has announced that Mr. Hopeful Chipaka, chairman *(rather chairperson)* of the Agriculture Marketing Board, has succeeded Mr. Wilf Mbanga, chairman *(rather chairperson)* of the Cotton Sellers Association, as chairman *(rather chairperson)* of the president’s Business Advisory Council.
If office holders complain about the non-use of their names and titles, they should be made to understand the problems most listeners (and voters for that matter) have with understanding protocol. Many will leave the matter to the broadcasters’ professional judgement if it is properly explained to them.

6.2.1.6 Sound

Listen to your output in order to avoid awkward sounds and phrases. Read things back aloud to catch errors and sloppy writing.

6.2.1.7 Cues

Prepare the listener for what is coming in a dispatch, actuality, package or interview. It should be the bait to hook the audience’s interest. When you cover disasters or other developing stories, keep facts like casualty figures in the cue and off the dispatch so that they are not easily overtaken by events. Cues must adhere to the same strict accuracy and sourcing principles that go for news items; guard against editorializing, slipping in comment as fact.

Cue writing requires variety since nothing is more boring for the listener than constantly being treated to the same cue format. Not only should the size of the introduction be chosen according to the topic and the news value of the event or issue, the accentuation in order to promote understanding of the insert to follow should also be chosen using the same criteria.
Background and paraphrasing the actuality, e.g. highlighting the “meat” of an interviews, will help the audience to warm up to what is in the pipeline. This needs careful consideration by the cue’s author and it is simply not enough to barely announce the coming interviewee. Something to remember: a reporter should assist the producer in putting the cue together by supplying a brief note on the contents of an interview, where the meat is, and essential information to put the item in context.

6.2.1.8 Additional Guidelines for Writing Radio News

Make sure you understand the subject. If a reporter submits a story that does not make sense, but it is still passed on to the audience – how will the audience understand. (Point of clarification: To whom is the pointer addressed – news presenter, producer??? Is it not important also to stress that the reporter too should understand the subject and should not submit stories that are not coherent? This should be made clearer in the final edit of the handbook) So check time and again and be well informed. Read as many newspapers and agency copy (which is available in-house) as you can digest – and listen to the International competition. This will help you to stay on top of developments at home and abroad.

Try to place the source of your information at the beginning of the sentence (most of the time at the beginning of the news item). Remember to balance sources in terms of sex (both women and men and not heavy reliance on either all men or all women as
sources in an item) and perspectives and viewpoints (everyone does not think alike and there is more than one side to a story or issue).

Never start a story with a key statement and leave the source to the end of the item.

Employ a variety of techniques in naming and identifying the source:

E.g.: An American bone specialist has told a medical conference that the ideal astronaut would have no legs. Dr. Robert Heaney from Creighton University said, astronauts on the orbiting Skylab space station suffered a significant loss of calcium and density in the bones of legs. This is why legless people would make ideal astronauts, the expert told 150 participants during the two-day event in New York also dealing with… According to the physician…

Avoid the negative aspect of a story: it may make a news item boring:

E.g. The lawyer said he will drop plans to press legal charges, rather than he will not press legal charges; OR, the Chief Justice said he was canceling plans to travel to Blantyre rather than he said he would not go to Blantyre.

Do not start your story with statistics. If you say: “20 people were killed in a train crash outside Salima today…” listeners may miss this information since they were not yet ready for it. Instead: “A train crash outside Salima has left 20 people dead…”
Figures and statistics have a meaning for the economist and the scholar. To the general audience they may convey little unless you can make them significant by linking them to everyday experience or relating them to citizens’ needs and interests. For example, if Parliament decides to put up taxes on alcohol by 10 per cent, then it is better to say *a bottle of beer will cost MK1.20 more as of tomorrow* rather than *Parliament has voted to increase the price of alcoholic beverages.* Another example of this is when reporting that a new hotel in Blantyre will be 100 metres high, it would be better to illustrate that the skyscraper will have more than 30 floors, exceeding Blantyre’s tallest existing building by 20.

The journalist may often find it hard to introduce a secondary new law to the public in an informative, news format. To find the news angle of the law, a journalist should become well versed with the new law and its implications. Will certain segments of the population be affected more than others? If so, why? Does the new law have stringent measures that need further debate and consultation? Is the new law a radical reversal of the way things are done? These are just a few examples of the type of questions that may guide the reporter towards a catchy news angle to report on the law.

Avoid editorial judgement disguised as interpretation. For example: “The passing of the *long overdue tax bill* was welcome news today as politicians for another round of…”
To carry news items and cues smoothly from one to the next, you can use the technique of “coupling pins” or “transes”. Such devices can be words or phrases to better the flow of a programme. However, they must be used logically. To list a few:

*Meanwhile,* Parliament in Zomba…

*Accepting the government’s view,* the opposition…

*Back in Blantyre,* the Honourable Minister…

*At the same time,* a spokeswoman for the employees association…

There can also be a mental coupling pin to arrange a matching sequence of news items.

### 6.2.2 On-Air Staff

#### 6.2.2.1 Hosts and Interviewers

Balance and fairness is the essence for all MBC programmes. It is therefore of paramount importance that MBC staff who host programmes, interview personalities or ordinary citizens treat guests fairly and refrain from advocating person views. MBC staff must not be unduly critical to some, while others are accommodated more comfortably. Unfair treatment of programme participants, especially those that have no or little exposure to media techniques – women, for example *(Refer to Interviewing Women in Section 2.2 on Interviews in this Handbook)* – will irritate the audience and cause a severe lack of confidence in the broadcaster.
6.2.2.2 Reporters

MBC Reporters must never adopt a partisan stance on a matter of public controversy to avoid a show of bias. Professional methods and careful investigation should guide the preparation of background to developments, including explanations and interpretation to put news into context.

There is no room for personal opinion. Information provided by reporters should help the audience to understand complex news developments and to form their own educated opinions on topics from all walks of life.

6.2.3 Editing

The re-writing of texts and abbreviating of recorded material is indispensable in journalism, because of the limitations of space or time in any media. Professional editing and selecting bring about a compression of reality without which no broadcasting station could operate. The MBC’s audience, however, has a right to a representation of the essential truth without distortion.

Exceptional care must be exercised in the following circumstances:

- For interviews, the editing of questions and answers must not change the original meaning of the interview;
• The audience must not be under the impression of listening to a discussion if no such discussion was recorded;
• The use of file material must be clearly labeled either before airing or during the programme where appropriate;
• The abuse of special effects may compromise accuracy and integrity. Technology must not distort reality.

6.2.4 Blend of Production Forms

Although the audience can expect the MBC to transmit actuality programmes with adequate immediacy, documentary programmes may combine several radio forms in order to reconstruct and simulate reality for better understanding. In this case, actuality may be mixed with dramatized depiction of personalities of events. The dramatized portion, however, must be clearly marked and identified to the audience.

6.2.5 Good Taste and Language

All MBC programmes must be produced along the principles of good taste and decent language. Discipline in programme making must be employed to respect and reflect the generally accepted values in Malawi society regarding such matters as vulgarity, profanity and sexual behaviour. Routine obscenities should be eliminated.

Violence should not be exploited or dwelled upon in a way that would distort its validity or overemphasize its importance. Its presentation should certainly not be used for trivial reasons, or for the exploitation of women and children as sex objects masquerading in the form of entertainment (see gender violence and children and violence below). Also, to air private grief may at times be justified as a legitimate
programme purpose. But it must not be sensationalized and personal privacy must be respected.

The audience for broadcast information is composed of different groups and notions of good taste vary substantially among them. Where matters of taste are concerned, therefore, care must be taken not to cause gratuitous offence to the audience.

Broadcasters should be mindful of public morals and of the social values of local viewers. For instance, themes on sex and promiscuity should be treated with caution. Explicit sexual sequences, themes on sex and promiscuity should be treated with caution. Explicit sexual sequences are not allowed. Information, themes or sub-plots on alternative lifestyles (e.g. homosexuality, bi-sexuality, and incest) should be treated with caution. The portrayals of these issues should clearly not promote, justify or glamorize such lifestyles. Explicit sequences on alternative sexual behaviour should not be broadcast. In general language that portrays nudity is not allowed except in exceptional circumstances.

So instead of banning completely anything, which might give offence, broadcasters need to:

- Give the audience clear and adequate warning beforehand when they believe material may upset things.
- Be very careful in their scheduling of such material. Do not let material that listeners might find threatening or shocking intrude unexpectedly.
• Make sure material that is unsuitable for children is not broadcast at a time when they are likely to be listening.

While a station will do everything possible to minimize what audiences might find distasteful or tasteless, a public broadcaster nevertheless does have a duty to deal frankly with controversial topics, HIV and AIDS for example, and cannot avoid tackling issues because of the risk of offending certain people. The key is scheduling (“A good rule of thumb is to avoid taking the audience by surprise”). Advance warning means viewers can make their own choices about what they want to see and hear, and any offence caused can be kept to a minimum. People are likely to respond less negatively to violent and distressing scenes if they have been alerted in advance.

Producers also should be mindful not to develop programmes that portray women as sex objects. In the Malawi Gender and Media Audience Study, 49 percent of the women respondents and 46 percent of the men respondents said that they find sexual images of women “uncomfortable”, while 48 percent of the women and 47 percent of the men said they find such images “insulting”.

6.2.5.1 Gender Violence/Violence against women

Issues of gender violence and violence against women should not be reported in a sensationalist way, trivialized, nor should the editorial or other content of programmes in a subtle or overt way place the blame on those who have been violated and abused through any form of gender-based violence. Gender violence – violence and abuse
against another that arises out of unequal power relations and the use of violence to exercise power over another – can take the forms of physical, sexual and emotional or psychological abuse. While men and boys can be violated through various forms of gender-based violence, women and girls are primarily the ones most affected by gender violence, because of the unequal power relations between males and females leading to females’ low status in the public and private spaces.

Violence of any form is a human rights violation and should also be discussed, and reported on from this perspective. The following are a guidance to help producers in preparing programmes and reports on gender-based violence, specifically violence against women.
**Guidelines for covering Violence against Women**

1. Violence against women should be recognized as equally significant as other crimes.
2. Perpetrators of violence should be named wherever legally possible.
3. Violence against women stories should be based on a variety of sources and wherever possible include the views of those affected themselves in a way that does not lead to further victimization and suffering.
4. The media, including the public broadcaster, has a public education function. This includes reporting on positive role models for women and debunking myths around violence against women such as women “ask” to be raped, most rapists are outsiders, sex workers are objects and male perpetrators are motivated by some bizarre love or lust for their victims.
5. All news stories should include analysis and contextualisation of event.
6. Stories about violence against women should be diverse and reflect a variety of women’s experiences, for example, rural, disabled, and so forth.
7. Information about services should be made available.
8. Comprehensive guidelines to avoid the use of sexist language should be developed and monitored by media organizations and the ombudsperson (or whatever entity is established to play a similar role).
9. Adverts should conform to gender sensitive criteria to be developed and monitored by media organizations and regulatory authorities.

---


### 6.2.5.2 Children and Violence

There is some evidence in circumstances resembling real life is more upsetting for children than violence in a fantasy setting. Children may feel particularly distressed when violence occurs than violence in familiar figures. For instance, violence in the home between characters depicting their parents, or towards characters or pets with
which the child can sympathize, should be avoided. Children can be particularly upset and distressed by violence involving animals.

The dangers of imitation are very real among children. Extra care should be taken for example over karate chops, or the use of weapons that are easily accessible such as ropes, knives, bottles or hammers. Producers should also remember the danger of suffocation from plastic bags and of fire from playing with matches. Criminal acts, if broadcast, should not be lessons in “how to do it”.

Children’s play is often influenced by what they listen to on radio. In making programmes for children, or likely to be popular with them, depicting actions or techniques which could lead to dangerous imitation should be avoided. The BBC guidelines on children’s programmes states:

- Smoking and drinking should generally be avoided in children’s programmes. Likewise pop stars, sportsmen, popular entertainers and others likely to be admired by children should not smoke and drink when being interviewed in children’s programmes.

- Inventive and unusual methods of inflicting pain and injury should not appear in children’s programmes – particularly when capable of easy imitation with objects readily available in the home such as knives or hammers.

- Where hazardous activities such as climbing or motorcycling are portrayed in programmes aimed at children, warnings should be given of the dangers of trying to imitate without experts supervision.

6.2.5.3 HIV and AIDS

HIV and AIDS is the one area where broadcasters may find themselves in conflict with accepted ideas of taste and decency. For example, a public service broadcaster may hesitate to talk about condoms. Yet, all experts agree that the use of condoms is the most effective way of preventing the spread of the disease.

Certain basic principles need to be observed in broadcasting about HIV and AIDS, and by following these principles and guidelines, broadcast journalists, producers and editors can ensure taste and decency when reporting on the pandemic, while at the same time providing informative, insightful and thorough stories and programmes on the pandemic and its impact on the loves of women, men, girls and boys, all sectors of the Malawian society and on the country’s economy. Programmes and campaigns should:
• Dispel ignorance – provide the facts, what it is, how people get it and can prevent it. Many people who are at risk may not know what HIV and AIDS is or how it is spread. There is a need for programmes to simply set out the facts. Broadcasters have a responsibility to tell the truth.

• Separate the truth from, myths, disinformation and lies. For example, there is no justification for claims that condoms are unsafe or full of holes. Likewise, the myth that women are the carriers of the virus also must be debunked. But it is true that you can safely have a meal with someone who is living with HIV or with AIDS and without contracting the virus.

• Be clear – in order to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS people’s behaviour may well have to change. Broadcasters need to tell audiences in what ways they can prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS by changing their behaviour (for example men need to wear condoms for their own protection and the protection or women, razor blades and needles need to be sterilized or, even better, used only once during medical treatment, health care workers need to take precautions against accidental infection).

• Use doctors and experts and experts as advisors regularly.

• Focus more on ‘risks’ versus ‘harms’ reporting. ‘Harms’ reporting focuses on the harmful effects of the HIV infection, such as along-term suffering and media studies in Britain have shown that this type of reporting gives a sense of helplessness to the readers. ‘Risks’ stories, on the other hand, highlight the risk-behaviours that could result in HIV infection and includes information on how to prevent such infection. Reporting on ‘risks’ can also reveal information on how HIV can be transmitted to people not necessarily engaged in high-risk behaviour, such as gender violence in the form of rape, which puts women and girls at risk.

• Advise audiences to beware of bogus cures.

• Be factually accurate – audiences need to know about available drugs, ways of caring for people with HIV and AIDS, ways of living with people who have HIV and AIDS.

• Research the latest developments thoroughly – new medical findings will continue to emerge and need to be communicated to people reliably. Broadcasters should be skeptical of announcements of AIDS cures.

• Make programmes about how people living with HIV and AIDS are coping, allowing them to tell their story and how they are being helped.
• Maintain a sense of proportion. It is important to tell the facts without exaggeration and to avoid value judgements. Stigma and the fear of discrimination are preventing people from coming forward and getting tested and this is contributing to the spread of HIV and AIDS.

• Facts on VCT and its benefits reduce stigma and discrimination.

• Aim to reach the target audience. Health campaigns are often effective if they target different sections of the population at different times in different ways. For example a programme for married women about HIV and AIDS may be very different in style and content from a programme for teenage boys. It may also reach more of its target audience if it is scheduled at a particular time of a day.

• Take a range of approaches and draw on other countries’ experience. For example, South Africa believes it is vital that teenagers and parents should talk to each other about HIV and AIDS, and is making programmes to encourage that to happen.

Broadcasters will have to think about how they put across this message with taste and discretion. They may need to use cautious language, but the message cannot be dodged. “Silence is death,” said former Secretary General, Kofi Annan. “There is no embarrassment in saving lives”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Action Plan (MAP) Guiding Principles for Ethical Reporting on HIV and AIDS &amp; Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy is critical, since important personal and policy decisions may be influenced by media reports. Journalists should be particularly careful to get scientific and statistical information right. Facts should be painstakingly checked, using credible sources to interpret information, verify facts and make statistics and science accessible and relevant to wide audiences. Sources should be named as often as possible. Stories should be written in context.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Misconceptions should be debunked, any claims of cures or treatments should be reported with due care. Journalists should look at all stories critically.

Clarity means being prepared to discuss sex, cultural practices and other sensitive issues respectfully but openly. Care should be taken to ensure
language, cultural norms and traditional practices relating to, for example, inheritance and sex are understood and accurately reported taking into account universal human rights.

Balance means giving due weight to the story, and covering all aspects, including medical, social, political, economic, and other issues. Balance also means highlighting positive stories where appropriate, without underplaying the fact that HIV and AIDS is a serious crisis.

Journalists should hold all decision makers to account in their handling of the pandemic, from government to the pharmaceutical industry and advocacy groups. They should be engaged with, but not captive to, any interest group.

Journalists should ensure that the voices and images of people living with and affected by HIV and AIDS are heard and seen. The human face of the pandemic should be shown. They should take care that the voices heard are diverse, and include those of women and men, vulnerable and marginalized people.

Journalists should respect the rights of people with HIV and AIDS. Vulnerable people should be treated with particular care. Journalists should seek informed consent before intruding on anyone’s privacy. They should seek to understand the possible consequences for individuals who participate in their report, and to ensure those individuals are clear about the consequences. Only in cases of overwhelming public interest can somebody’s HIV status be reported against their wishes or should journalists hide their professional identity.

Journalists should be aware of and seek out the gender dimensions of all aspects of HIV and AIDS, from prevention, transmission, to treatment and care as this will add to the depth and context, as well as reveal new areas for reporting.

Particular care should be taken in dealing with children. They should only be identified if the public interest is overwhelming, and then only if no harm to them is foreseeable and they and any parents or guardians have given informed consent. Children have the right to participate in decisions affecting their lives. They also have the right to be heard and journalists should ensure that the particular concerns they face are covered.

Discrimination, prejudice and stigma are very harmful, and journalists should avoid fuelling them. Particular care should be taken not to use language, or images, that reinforce stereotypes.

6.2.6 Open-Line Programmes

Although open-line programmes are designed to give the audience greater participation in broadcasting, care must be taken to safeguard fairness, integrity and balance of programming. This must include a wide range of
views, both women and men as sources and participants in the programmes and the impartiality of the programme’s host.

A number of traps must be avoided: in order to exclude (or minimize) violation of MBC policy, i.e. standards of balance and decency, telephone callers should be screened before airing to identify irresponsible groups or individual participants. If possible, a mechanical delay should also be employed. In addition, the names of all speakers should be kept on record.

The MBC is responsible for balancing any open-line programme so that it cannot be perceived to be one-sided by the audience. A summary of the opinions offered must under no circumstances tally the comments that may have been suggested for a particular point of view in a controversy. The MBC must in no way manipulate its listenership.

6.2.7 Right of Reply

It is fair journalistic principle to offer remedial action if a significant unfairness has occurred. If the MBC has made a grave error, a correction must be issued adequately, clearly, and promptly. Such action may even involve an apology or a retraction, in which case the legal department must be consulted.

The MBC also may accept counter-versions by individuals affected by wrong assertions made by the MBC in an informative programme. The counter-version must be restricted to the facts and must not contain any critical comment. It also must not be unreasonably long and will be broadcast immediately in the same programme at the same time of day as the original programme, or if this is possible, at a time of equal value.

This shall not apply to accurate reports on public sessions of Parliament and other legislative bodies, local authorities and the courts.

All complaints must be written and addressed to the Director General.

6. Newsroom Management

MBC News and Current Affairs Department

7.1 Functions of Departments

News desk = Editing and compiling of news bulletins. Writing news comments that are separate from the newscasts.

Reporting Unit = Coverage of news events resulting in news copy and/or voice casts. Reporters’ material will be passed on to the Newsroom.

Current Affairs = Production of actuality and magazine programmes.
7.2 Copy Tasting and News Gathering

These two areas are designed to help establish the essence of a day’s news development that will from the core of our reporting. The daily editorial conference each morning will examine (‘taste’) existing news material and other diaries information in order to set in motion the news gathering process and outline bulletins’ skeleton sequence for the day’s core shift. Material and procedures need to be updated and adapted according to development and breaks.

7.3 Information Co-ordination

Once the core development has been outlined (as far as planning permits of course) the desk, reporters, outlying offices and current affairs producers will be informed so that they can take the necessary measures to ensure adequate handling and coverage. This would normally be the duty of the Assistant Controller of News and Current Affairs, the Chief Editor, the Chief Reporter of the Chief Producer, on a rotating basis. The co-ordination will help streamline the department’s operation and will produce a better cohesion of news and current affairs for the benefit of the audience.

7.4 News Desk

7.4.1 Reading – in

Each staffer must adhere to the read-in rule: When she/he arrives for the beginning of the shift, up to 30 minutes should be given to her/him to read the predecessor’s output and their key source material to know the day’s subjects well and to avoid any doubling-up.

7.4.2 Briefing

Before a story is handed to the news staff for handling, they must be briefed by the shift leader on what they are expected to produce, including a sentence on the topic’s background.
7.4.3 Research

If necessary, research must be done before the actual writing of the news item starts. Intelligence is available from the library, agency copy, publications found in the newsroom and on the Internet. Checking of the accuracy of information obtained from the Internet is extremely important, especially if the information is not from established and well-known sites such as the UN agencies, for example.

7.4.4 Writing

Now the staffer can concentrate on writing the news item according to the following format:

Slug

Very brief description of content of item: in news developments, e.g. Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), there must be a master slug like DRC/Muluzi
Introduction/Lead

Summaries content and whets appetite for more. The news lead generally answers the questions Who, What, When, Where.

Body

Rest of story of news item: one thought per paragraph, often each sentence is one paragraph. Each paragraph should be clearly indented for clarity of reading.

Source

At the bottom of each news item, the author should clearly identify the source of the story and add her/his own initials for easy reference. News sources should be both women and men, and the focus does not always need to be on prominence and those in positions of formal authority. Ordinary citizens often do extraordinary deeds, such as heroic acts, philanthropic acts, and so forth, which are newsworthy.

7.4.5 Quality Standards

After finishing a news item and before presenting it to the shift leader for further processing, the author should read copy aloud to check whether it fits radio language standards, including gender-sensitive and other specific language standards outlined
in this editorial handbook. She/he must carefully review her/his text and make sure that the copy is clean, i.e. factually correct, free of redundancies, proper spelling of names, titles and the rest of the text. The shift leader should refuse acceptance of a proposed story if it does not conform to these binding quality parameters.

7.4.6 Re-Writing

If the shift leader is unhappy with the delivered news item she/he can ask for a re-write. A re-write may also become necessary in the course of a news cycle when there is no new development, but the item needs a fresh angle.

7.5 Reporting

7.5.1 General Guidelines

The Reporting Unit plays a crucial role in feeding both the Current Affairs section and the Newsroom. To achieve excellence in reporting quality, the following guidelines should be observed:

1. Since reporters usually operate away from their base, it is very important that the stories they file are accurate and balanced in terms of views, perspectives, and sources. Callbacks for clarification should thus become superfluous.

2. Before proceeding for any assignment, a reporter should ensure that she/he is well organized by doing the following:
• Proper research on the topic to be covered (see section 7.4.3 in this handbook)
• Check to see if the equipment to be used is in order. The tape recorder must be checked, batteries, tapes, notebook, etc.

3. A reporter must always keep to time, or better still 30 or more minutes ahead of time to allow for preparations.

4. It is important for reporters to compile a personal directory of key telephone numbers.

5. Reporters should strive to develop reliable contacts that can become valuable sources of information or trips for leads to follow. However, a reporter should never be too close to a source because one day the source may ask for a favour that an honest reporter would not do.

6. Reporters should make every effort to scrutinize handouts and written statements, because the story often is not in the official text. Follow-up interviews to seek additional information or clarification can produce surprising results.

7.5.2 Special Guidelines – Covering elections in another country

To give reporters a picture of a real assignment, the following has been designed for MBC staff that has been asked to cover the general election in a neighbouring country.

News and General Reporting Preparations

A. What to do at home, before you travel
Get a precise brief: Establish with your editor what he or she expects you to deliver, and when to avoid fuss and confusion at home and undue demands on you on the spot.

Search available archives for material on the subject and country to be reported; also read books and additional documentation; get the country’s daily/weekly press or clippings, tune into radio/TV programmes.

See knowledgeable sources at home on the mission’s subject such as journalist colleagues who have written about the issue and who have been to the country, host country’s embassy, foreign ministry sources, and so forth.

When reporting on elections, learn about the type of voting concerned and related subject like the type of electoral system in place in the country, and so forth; try to isolate essential issues you want to concentrate on.

Get accredited before arrival where possible; ask for the official election office or equivalent; arrange for trip and visas.

Seek information on filing methods; get necessary credit cards for communications or arrange funding otherwise. Where possible, co-operate with befriended radio/TV station, news agency or ask an international agency within the country to guarantee assistance. The best story is useless if you cannot file it.
Make sure the hotel you are booked in suits your needs. Does it have a phone in the room? Fax? E-mail at hand? Is located centrally to facilities you may use? Also make sure you have the right attire in your luggage to manage weather and formal occasions.

Check equipment: tape recorder, microphone, batteries, computer and printer (ink, ribbon, paper) notepad, pens, dictation set, dictionary, radio, information, material and so forth.

B. Upon and after arrival in the Host Country

During transfer from airport (or other point of entry) to hotel, be a keen observer: check road signs, yard posters, talk to fellow passengers on forthcoming events, interview taxi/bus driver (all of this is valuable first-hand information and cannot be taken away from you if you get into political/security trouble and internal affairs decide your premature departure…)

Get installed in hotel and confirm arrival with your organization and/or give your embassy (press attaché) a ring.

Arrange filing facilities and funding (hotel, PTT, courier services, airlines, media, embassies)
Find out which watering holes, i.e. bars/restaurants colleagues/competitors frequent to make sure you are in on latest gossip (even if it is not used, it is often worth knowing, e.g. to avoid traps). Also, your hosts may use these places as information exchanges and you thus avoid missing out on mainstream developments.

The following are important sources to inform you about events:

Chief Election Officer

Government and Opposition Party Representatives

Campaign Officers

Information Ministry

Election Bureau

Trade Union(s)

Employers Association/Federation

Investment Board

National Bank

Local Journalists

Election Observers (UN)

Resident Foreign Representatives of International Organisations such as IMF, World Bank, UN agencies, and so forth
Other International relief or donor organizations such as OXFAM, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), among others

Chief representatives of national/international corporations

Diplomatic missions

Police, Military HQ (they may have a press officer)

Chief Justice and/or Law Society

Human Rights organization(s) and/or campaigners

Pressure groups (e.g. Amnesty International, Article XIX, among others)

When dealing with sources reporters should always go to the top first and get it from the horse’s mouth!

Try to see the top representatives of a country and organizations. It is easier and less time-consuming to be referred downwards if needed, than the other way around.

C. At Work in the Field

You will probably start with an advancer for your station (depending on whether you have arrived one or two days before the actual event), to be followed by a curtain-raiser, incorporation official statements, information from your sources, quotations from local media and documentary material. You will most probably also use your own impressions as first-hand ingredients and colour.
Your coverage should observe the principles of balance, honesty, fairness and choice.

A good journalist reports the issues and does not decide them. To report as comprehensive as possible, you may include the following:

- Follow the local press and TV debates
- Attend campaign rallies and ask for the rules
- Talk to candidates about essential issues and go with them on a campaign tour/Go up-country and follow the electoral process
- See local polling stations and ask to see ballot boxes and papers
- Ask election officials to describe the reporting line for election results and compare with rules
- Ask to be present where results are counted centrally
- Ask official observers if any intimidation or violence have occurred

Apart from advancers and curtain raisers, you could also file analyses and portraits of certain candidates who are internationally known. There could also be in-depth pieces explaining crucial political issues and setting out the background to developments, interviews and/or diaries, chronologies, features on other topics of the country. The reporter should be busy using his or her time for as many stories, ideas and impressions as possible, some of which may materialize as reports at a later stage.

D. On Election Day

You may wish to sum up the political situation in the country, look ahead and canvass politicians’ views on the future. Fresh angles are normally better pegged on developments expected rather than past events although they should stated somewhere in the text. Non-news people will comment on the elections and their results, analysts
provide insights to changes. Interviews with the losers, winners will be high on the agenda.

Throughout the reporting mission, the reporter on the spot will keep close contact with her/his organization to ascertain that the coverage is flawless. She/he will also be grateful for the occasion encouragement/praises since foreign reporting often is a lonely fight against odds and opposition.

E. Back Home

A critical review of the job is required and a comparison with opposition copy goes without saying. The reporter must archive the material properly and keep his or her notes. If there are gaps in his or her file, now is the time to close them.

7.5.3 Editorial Procedures

The Chief Reporter chairs the morning meetings before the Chief Reporter decides which assignments to cover. He or she briefs the reporter on how best a particular event could be handled. All assignments must be logged in the diary that must be constantly updated.

Reporters are encouraged to come usually communicate with the Chief Reporters are encourage to come forward with their own initiative in suggesting competitive stories. Routine is always second best.
Reporters outside head office usually communicate with the Chief Reporter by phone or fax to outline major events in the pipeline. The Chief Reporter will offer advice on coverage priorities.

After the early morning meeting, the Chief Reporter will go about his or her own assignments, and will also monitor his or her staff’s assignment progress.

Some reporters are based at Broadcasting House to receive stories from the field, which are passed on to the Chief Reporter for scrutiny; the same applies to voice casts from reporters in the field.

Before the end of the day a final meeting is convened to assess whether the day’s coverage was adequate. The same meeting will plan the next day’s activities.

7.6 Current Affairs

Following the morning editorial conference, there will be a briefing between Current Affairs and the Reporting Unit to determine what material producers can expect from the reporters. This will help the producer to gain a better picture of the subject matter so that when editing interviews or other reporting material, she or he can do a better job.
In order to maintain the objective of the newsreel programme, i.e. to put the day’s news in context, the newsreel content should be congruent with the news items carried on the same day. There must be close cooperation between Current Affairs and the Reporting Unit that all material recorded between 7.30 am and 5.00 pm should actually be used on that day. Later recordings should be used the following morning.

To ensure a diverse magazine programme as well as proper and fast editing of interviews, reporters should strive to return straightforward recordings of short duration (anything up to two minutes) rather than six minutes of tape when the whole programme only allows for 10 minutes.

Producers and reporters must liaise to bring about the most professional cues. It is suggested that the reporter knows exactly where the meat of an interview is so that the producer can concentrate on the core spots instead of searching for highlights.

Material for weekend of Current Affairs should be offered properly cleaned and edited so that duty staff has no problems in handling the programme.

### 7.7 Household Matters – Good Governance

#### 7.7.1 Deadlines – Embargoes
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>DEADLINE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning bulletin</td>
<td>05.30 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch hour bulletin</td>
<td>12.00 Noon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening bulletin</td>
<td>17.30 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late evening bulletin</td>
<td>17.30 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite all these deadlines the editor may use discretion in consultation with the head of department.

In order to safeguard a smooth operation, all deadlines and embargoes must be strictly observed.

7.7.2 Logs

A logbook should be introduced and kept by all shift leaders to register important practical, editorial and staffing matters. It can also serve as a collection of evidence for other departments, and general editorial meetings.

7.7.3 Handovers
Time should be set-aside during the brief handover of shifts. Key news issues, staff
behaviour and general problems (the fax does not work again; have alerted technical
department; check entry in log book), etc may be touched upon.

7.7.4 Shift and Output Reviews

At the end of each shift, a brief assessment of what has been achieved should be
carried out. Problems should not be swept under the carpet – for the benefit of the
next shift that can try to do better. The Controller of News and Current Affairs should
be tasked to regularly offer an output review that may compare the MBC’s news
performance with the print media and the national/international broadcasting
competition to guarantee its competitiveness.

7.7.5 Standing Instructions

The News and Current Affairs department, as a matter of international routine, has
prepared a number of obituaries to adequately react in case of the sudden death of key
personalities of the country. These brief programmes are deposited with the
Controller of News and Current Affairs and must under no circumstances be
broadcast without the prior consent of the ADG and/or the Director of News and
Current Affairs. None of the obituary scripts must be stored in the editorial computer
system to avoid misuse.
7.7.6 **Emergency Drill**

News Breaks

In the event of a major newsbreak, the following procedure should be followed to guarantee fast and decisive action:

1. The Duty Editor will take full charge of the situation
2. She or he will alert the Chief Reporter (or deputy) immediately, after the news break and then inform the department’s management about developments, action taken, etc
3. The Duty Editor will now make or order enquiries (depending on the staffing situation) to confirm the story. In doing so, she or he will endeavour to contact the relevant sources.
4. If the story merits a news flash, the Duty Editor will air the information after confirmation; otherwise the story will be carried in the next bulletin/summary

**However, prior to it’s release the news flash must be authorized by the Director of News and Current Affairs or a specially designated person in his absence.**

In view of the above, weekend, stand-by, holiday and other emergency telephone numbers (including those of cellular phones), plus abode of senior editorial management must be listed in the news desk’s log book, before the close of business each Friday to guarantee a smooth editorial operation on weekends and public holidays.