

**Assessment of Public Employment Services in Malawi: *Modernising
Employment Services as a Functional Institution***

Final Draft Report

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ALMP	Active Labour Market Policies / Programmes
ARLAC	African Regional Labour Administration Centre
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 19
DC	District Commissioner
DCWP	Decent Work Country Program
DLO	District Labour Officer
DHRMD	Department of Human Resource Management and Development
DPW	Director of Public Works
ECAM	Employers Consultative Association of Malawi
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV/AIDS	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ITC	International Training Centre
LDF	Local Development Fund
LGFC	Local Government Finance Committee
LMI	Labour Market Information
LMIS	Labour Market Information System
LRA	Labour Relations Act
MASAF	Malawi Social Action Fund
MCTU	Malawi Congress of Trade Union
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MK	Malawi Kwacha
MNSSP	Malawi National Social Support Policy
MoEPD	Ministry of Economic Planning and Development
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoL	Ministry of Labour
MoLGRD	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
MSME	Malawi Small and Medium Enterprises
NELP	National Employment and Labour Policy
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NREGS	National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
NSO	National Statistical Office
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PrEA	Private Employment Agencies
PES	Public Employment Services
PWP	Public Works Programme
RLO	Regional Labour Officer
RIDP	The Rural Infrastructure Development Programme
SDI	Staff Development Institute
TEVET	Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training
TLAC	Tripartite Labour Advisory Council
UBR	Unified Beneficiaries' Register
UNIMA	University of Malawi
VDC	Village Development Committee

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The overall economic situation in Malawi is posing various challenges for the proper functioning of the country labour market. Due to economic hardships, partly aggravated due to covid-19 pandemic effects, and reform processes that initially lead to high retrenchment numbers, there are very few job vacancies available or created. Worse still fewer vacancies are notified with the public employment services by employers, as this is not mandatory in Malawi. This labour market situation is worsening day by day with a fast growing labour force due to huge numbers of university, college and school graduates as well as school drop-outs entering the labour market annually. The situation has potential to derail Malawi backward yet Malawi wants to be an inclusively wealthy and self-reliant industrialized upper middle-income country by 2063 while hoping to attain, through wealth and/or employment creation, the low middle-income status by 2030.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO), in context of its support for technical assistance to developing countries for the development of their pro-employment policies, requested services of a consultant to undertake a quick but comprehensive review/assessment of the state of employment services in Malawi. This is the consultancy assessment report. The assessment report's overall objective was to undertake a rapid comprehensive assessment of the public employment services (PES) in Malawi with a view to developing, through national consensus, a concrete action plan for revitalising the PES into a fully-fledged and functional institution, through a phased approach in the medium to long term.

The assessment report contains a set of recommendations and proposed action plan to implement the recommended strategy, which is to establish job centres and to revitalize the public employment services in the country. This recommended strategy is aimed at improving and modernizing public employment services in Malawi, the services that would bring about good coordination between the public and private service providers. In this regard, the report also provides key recommendations on how to deliver employment services at the local level, in particular the rolling out of job centres as per the government plan. The recommendations are mainly, based on key findings of this public employment services assessment.

Public employment services are one of the regular components of most national labour administration systems. They are either incorporated in the Ministries of labour or organized in a semi-autonomous public agencies often supervised jointly by the Governments and the social partners. While public employment services exist in most countries of the world, they naturally have more of an impact in urban areas with formal jobs. The role of public employment services is also substantially enhanced if the services can, apart from the traditional job broking, also offer additional attractive services, such as vocational counselling, referrals to training or retraining programmes or, but rarely in Africa, payment of unemployment benefits to job-seekers. As these conditions hardly exist in any sub-Saharan African country of course with exception of South Africa, the functioning of employment services in Malawi discussed in this assessment report should be understood from this comparative perspective.

The Malawi public employment services are under the department of labour services within the Ministry of Labour. The network of district labour offices implements their mandate across the

country. However, the performance of the Malawi public employment services has not been so impressive for the past few decades. The services have been faced with several challenges ranging from absence of proper regulating frameworks, poor infrastructure through to inadequate human as well as financial and material resources. The following paragraphs summarise this Malawi PES state of affairs.

Assessment Key Findings

The assessment finds that there are no specific PES policy and legal framework to guide and regulate the delivery of PES in Malawi. The assessment observes that both the National Employment and Labour Policy and the Employment Act that would have been the key relevant government documents to incorporate specific guidelines and provisions to guide and regulate PES issues do not instead provide for anything about PES issues including its delivery modalities. Furthermore, the assessment finds that while the National Employment Labour Policy (NELP) takes a holistic approach to the implementation of the employment agenda by identifying and elaborating linkages and complementarities between the NELP & other sectoral policies, the policy, however, is silent on the role of public employment services in reducing unemployment in Malawi.

With respect to PES structure and functions, the assessment shows that PES structure within the Ministry department of labour services is not well defined such that the department structure does not clearly show linked PES functional levels from top-down. The assessment also shows that links between the PES at headquarters and in the regional and district labour offices are not well coordinated. Furthermore, the assessment reveals that the Malawi PES structure does not have any established job centres providing employment services apart from the existing understaffed regional and district labour offices in the country. In terms of PES functions, the assessment shows that the Malawi PES provide registration of job seekers and vacancies as well as placement of job seekers, which are incomplete set of employment service functions as some other key employment service functions such as labour market information, regulatory service, among others, are not provided. It also shows that the provided services are inadequately provided due to lack of required capacity in terms of human resource, financial and infrastructure wise.

In terms of human, financial and material resource capacity, the assessment reports inadequate, insufficient and poor office infrastructure, respectively in almost every regional/district labour office across the country. In Malawi, there are regional and district labour offices in all the three country regions and twenty-eight districts, respectively. Each of these regions and districts performs, is supposed to perform, all labour and employment services. This network of labour offices delivering employment services in the country is an opportunity for the Malawi PES. However, the assessment finds that all the said regional / district labour offices are operating under deteriorating conditions. They are seriously understaffed and usually with unqualified or undertrained staff. For instance, on average there are 2 to 3 technical labour officers in each of the 28 country district labour offices creating average vacancy rate of 63 %. There is nothing like specific PES staffing structure in Malawi both at the Ministry headquarters and at regional/district level. Financially, the district labour offices are decentralised to the extent that they depend financially on district authorities, even though these labour offices are technically still supervised by the ministerial headquarters. The assessment finds that funding level or

allocation for the Malawi PES is currently far less than what would be enough to support the delivery of PES in the country. Regarding the physical infrastructure, Malawi PES do not have the required offices and equipments within which, or for which, PES can be performed effectively. Necessary equipment is often scarce. The offices especially the regional and district labour offices are not suitable to provide all the required employment services. The offices are usually small and congested with job seekers having no specific waiting rooms or shelters except in some cities where there are separate employment centres. It does not come as a surprise that under these circumstances and regarding the results of the traditional placement function, PES in Malawi are generally perceived as performing poorly.

Regarding institutional and systems coordination, the assessment finds that institutional and systems coordination for PES are weak in Malawi. Public employment services are responsible for implementing national employment and labour market policies and therefore need to form alliances and networks with other institutions. The Public Employment Services and the Private Employment Agency (PrEA) partnerships/relationships are more important in the context of developing countries yet such partnerships are reported to be either uncoordinated or absent in Malawi currently. If regular contacts with employers (or private employment service providers) were managed Malawi PES would be in a position to follow the changes in labour demand both in general and in the specific needs of their individual clients.

Regarding PES and service delivery, the assessment finds that, with constrained resources, Malawi PES, through labour offices, actively offer job seekers with the service of registration in the official files, which is of course done manually. Job seekers are also provided with information (advertising) about available vacancies (as far as the labour office is informed about such vacancies by employers) and with some assistance in case of interviews with potential employers. The assessment reports that the number of placed job seekers is, however, very low. Such low number cannot have a significant impact on employment rates. Nevertheless, the assessment notes that PES is a public service, which can be useful at the local level even if the total performance numbers are low provided some degree of awareness within the population about the availability of such a service is present.

Furthermore, the assessment reports that Malawi PES is facing such serious constraint for effective placement of job seekers because the country public employment services in their traditional way of operating seem to be disconnected from the increasing sectors in informality. The increasing sectors in informality employment reflect the poor governance of public institutions in the sense that their influence over local market developments is weakening. For Public Employment Services this has far-reaching implications. Contacts with the employers in this sector are not established and potential job opportunities are ignored as a result. For job seekers in the informal sector, PES are hardly accessible and the services offered are not very attractive. In addition, Malawi PES do not implement any other active labour market programme (ALMP) apart from the Jobs for the Youth and the recent graduate youth internship programmes. The assessment notes that placement of job seekers, despite being of lower numbers, is a basis on which a more significant public employment service could be built. This is possible under the condition that the number of officials is increased; that they are better equipped to reach out to both public and private enterprises; and that they collaborate more extensively with their local partners, such as technical schools. Furthermore, wider utilisation of new technologies in the

future could make this service much more relevant and accessible. This could result in more confidence among employers and job seekers and an increase in the number of filled vacancies.

Finally, the assessment finds that Malawi's LMI is still underdeveloped and that the newly established labour market information system (LMIS) is yet to be operationalised. In this regard, the assessment notes and acknowledges that the established LMIS in the Ministry is one significant step ahead towards reorganising Malawi PES with respect to the function of labour market information. The assessment, therefore, underscores the importance for the Government to put in place strategy for ensuring maximum use of the system in addition to capacitating district labour offices regarding the provision of useful information on the developments of the labour market. Statistics on labour force, types of labour available, sectoral distribution of labour and the employment structure by occupational and industry, among others, should be the targeted LMI to be generated and fed into the LMIS in addition to the little current collected information on job seekers, vacancies, placements and workplace establishments.

Recommendations

Revamp and strengthen structure re-organisation of the Malawi Public Employment Services

Develop clear PES policy framework and strategy. Through a participatory process and consensus building, discuss and develop clear PES objectives, scope and coverage of its mandate, level of devolution of administrative and financial decision-making powers, broad means of delivery, among others. Define PES organizational structure, beginning at the Ministry headquarters down to the district labour offices in the councils. A separate section (unit) under the Labour Commissioner should be assigned with the responsibility. The section should comprise of the head of PES; sectional heads for key functions of registration and matching, labour market information, employer services, etc). Clarify the policy framework link to the NELP. Government should consider recognizing the PES as secretariat and should have a strong link with the technical and vocational training department. The Ministry should take the initiative to elaborate on the standing orders (internal rules) of the newly defined PES structure. The PES should be a lead agency as well as a service provider. It should facilitate and coordinate all employment service functions and activities. Extend the function of public employment services in the field on labour market information and vocational counselling while creating a strong link between district labour offices and training institutions in their districts.

Create legal framework for PES and other employment service providers

Enact a legislative Act establishing and providing for the mandate, functions, organisational structure, officers, financing of the PES as well as regulating PES partnerships and collaboration with, and/or regulating operation of, other public and private employment service providers. Establish the Employment Services Advisory Committee (ESAC) as TLAC sub-committee, which should be vested with powers to advise the Minister of Labour on employment services and to ensure a smooth and well coordinated implementation of laws governing employment services in the country. The Committee's membership can include the Ministry of Labour nominated and appointed officials, representatives of trade unions, employers organizations and experts on PrEAs. Consider ratification of the Employment Service Convention No. 88 of 1948

and Private Employment Agencies Convention No. 181 of 1997. Note that this ratification recommendation is also emphasised in the Malawi Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP). Ratification can be done in the long term after undertaking analysis gap to ascertain ratification implications on part of the Government functional machineries.

Strengthen the human resource capacity for the Public Employment Services

Strengthen human resources capacity (develop a capacity building strategy). The Ministry should consider undertaking a comprehensive analysis of the human resource (HR) and training needs of its staff including all employment service officers to better understand their professional roles. The Ministry of Labour, in consultation with the Ministry of Local government, should also consider recruiting more qualified staff to fill vacant posts in the district labour offices. The Ministry of Labour should develop a training plan and mobilize resources for its implementation. In the medium to long term, the Ministry should develop systems for continuous learning, professionalize PES functions and promote career growth to attract and retain quality staff. For purposes of transparency and accountability, the Ministry should ensure that staff are recruited on merit in accordance with existing government guidelines. Proper training of labour officers is to be undertaken to continue building their capacity. Since resource constraints are a major issue in the way of continuous training, the Ministry is encouraged to partner up with local public service training institutions to create tailor made courses relevant to the needs of the PES staff. This will greatly ease the burden of heavy costs normally related to training done outside the country.

In the long term due to the complexities of some employment service functions such as the labour market, counselling and regulatory functions, the Ministry should ensure that labour officers are adequately trained in these areas to have their capacity well built. Finally, the Ministry is encouraged to take advantage of the courses provided by the African Regional Labour Administration Centre (ARLAC) and International Training Centre of the ILO (Turin Centre) in the area of employment and labour market and to develop the capacity of its officials. The Ministry may also wish to explore the possibility of entering into a partnership agreement with the University of Malawi, also in order to offer training relevant to its labour officials.

Ensure a sustainable system for financing the Malawi PES

Review government budgeting system to define and incorporate specific employment service code as a stand-alone sub programme into the government budgeting system. Ministry of Labour should lobby with Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (MoEPD) to effect this recommendation. The Ministry should consider allocating as additional resources from the national PES budget to support specific PES activities in the district labour offices. This can help improve prioritisation of funding allocations for PES activities as well as improve the coordination between the district labour officials and the ministry headquarters regarding the implementation of ALMPs by PES such as the graduate internship programme. Intensify and strengthen the resource mobilization strategy as the establishment of job centres will require additional funding for the Malawi PES. This will directly help to ensure the sustainability for financing the operations of PES particularly the job centres. Incorporate a provision in the TEVET Act on the training levy/skills financing model requiring a percentage of the training levy fund to be used for financing of the PES and ALMPs.

Establish and roll out job centres in Malawi

Construct or identify a building to be used as a job centre. The building should be centrally located with easy access by the network of public transport. It should also have good safety environment requirements. The centre should be well spacious to accommodate centre facilities such as the office rooms, meeting room for interviews and group training/counselling services, computer room for job seekers, reception office with information area as well as space for toilets and other centre facility requirements.

Recruit or identify, from the available PES employment officers, at least 9 staff members to work at the job centre. Six of them should be professionals with one to be the job centre manager, two employment officers, one employer advisor and/or public relations officer, one LMI and ICT services technician, one guidance and counselling officer. The other three should be two receptionists and one messenger as support staff. Upgrading a job centre into a one-stop shop job centre will require at least four additional staff members of whom one should be a youth officer, one small and medium enterprise (SME) and/or entrepreneurship development officer, one gender and social welfare officer and the other to be a skills development officer. This means that a fully fledged one-stop shop typical job centre in the context of Malawi need to at least have 13 staff members to deliver the job centre functions/activities without any effect from the problem of understaffing.

Procure office equipment that should include items such as the furniture, computers, television (TV) screens, stationery and others depending on the available resources. Develop PES manual to contain operational guidelines for PES or job centre officers in absence of policy and other guidelines including ethics code of conduct for PES personnel. Design or revise PES registration forms to accommodate all PES issues that would help to generate appropriate labour market information to feed into the country established LMIS. Develop appropriate messages to advertise the job centre establishment. This job centre advertising strategy should also include erecting a proper and visible signage (post). Conduct meeting with social partners such as Malawi Congress of Trade Union (MCTU) and Employers Consultative Association of Malawi (ECAM) including other relevant stakeholders (PrEAs representatives) to appraise them regarding the establishment of the job centre. Conduct orientation meeting with the Ministry of labour management team members and all the country regional and district labour officers to inform about the operations of the established job centre. Develop or utilize resource mobilization strategy for job centre funding sustainability considering that the Malawi PES (Ministry of labour) may not have, enough, budget for job centres within the Ministry's budget.

Strengthen partnerships with other employment service providers

Conduct a recent comprehensive study on employment service providers and services provided. Revisit recommendations made in a mapping study of employment service providers conducted in 2012. Ministry of Labour should need also to liaise with the National Statistical Office to conduct next national labour force survey to update the recent past 2013 conducted labour force survey. Launch consultations on how to link up services and collaborate. Develop and implement a strategy for deliberate linkage of the PES and PrEAs and/or consider developing an employment service network. Strengthen PES linkages to the ALMPs such as the public works

programmes etc. These ALMPs would allow easy access to PES collaboration and partnership with public, private institutions offering training, entrepreneurship and counselling services. The ALMPs activities could benefit greatly from the services of the PES, which in turn would benefit from the resources and clients at the former's disposal. In the absence of unemployment benefits, access and link to the ALMPs activities would be an incentive for job seekers to register with the PES – thus creating a database of job seekers and employment opportunities. This would also help the ALMPs to set a sustainable system of identifying participants who have been screened and profiled by the PES and thus save time and resources spent in calls for applications. Work with ECAM to support establishment of satellite employment centres within its network and to establish an employer strategy. Job centres can only be useful if they offer vacancies to job seekers. Mobilization of vacancies therefore is a critical step. Promote collaboration with PrEAs and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). There are many PrEAs and NGOs that provide employment services and other ALMPs. Collaboration could include pooling of vacancies and job seekers, joint training, contracting out of services, adoption of common standards, etc. The channels of efficient cooperation between public and private employment agencies should be identified and fostered. Partnerships between the PES and PrEA would help to minimize irregularities in the recruitment process and equip emigrant workers with necessary information. Engage with training providers to understand skills available on the labour market and offer services for its graduates.

Enhance utilisation of technology to support diversification in delivery of the PES

Strengthen communication mechanisms (including those using technology) to improve awareness of the PES among potential clients and the public. Develop specialized services designed to meet the needs of the many SMEs that are not expanding, and the few large and medium-sized enterprises that provide the bulk of employment. Provide customized services by ensuring that all PES staff, not just the placement and customer relations officers, are dedicated to serve PES clients. Ensure that career and vocational counsellors, as well as employment officers, have a full grasp of the national and local labour market, so as to provide relevant labour market information to job seekers. Diversify models of service delivery and other structures to reach out to women, rural youth, and people with disabilities, as well as other vulnerable groups. Government should consider using technology to expand its services to the youth and job seekers in areas not served by the job centres. The projects currently undertaken in the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology to expand internet network coverage is a step ahead in the right direction. However, more investment is required to install servers and develop a nationwide online jobs portal that would, in the medium term, provide matching services. Commit resources for development of appropriate labour market information and intelligence. Consider establishing mobile services to the job centres to be established to deliver employment services. Explore how the LMIS system and job portal developed by Techno Brain can be used in job centres. Optimise use of ICT in the design and delivery of services taking into account the low digital connectivity of the population.

Strengthen the collection and analysis of labour market information

In the long term, develop and use the job portals to collect, analyse and disseminate administrative data on registered labour market participants. Develop the portal to automatically produce custom reports and use the information to design new programmes. Set and capacitate

the LMIS team to undertake detailed analysis of wider labour market information from various sources and convert it into useful information for informed policy and programme development. Government through MoL should regularise labour force surveys as an annual activity. Implementation of labour force surveys annually will ensure sustainable collaboration with other actors, such as the National Statistics Office, TEVETA, etc. thereby help in addressing the LMI update gaps. Commit enough resources for the implementation modalities and performance management of the newly established LMIS.

Assessment of Public Employment Services in Malawi: *Modernising Employment Services as a Functional Institution*

1. Introduction

In any developing country, employment services are instrumental as they can potentially contribute to unemployment reduction and employment creation through their role of facilitating the matching of demand and supply of labour, improving the employability of job seekers and facilitating employment creation by enterprises. The Malawi Government recognises such important role that employment services can play and commits itself to explore different ways of revitalising its public employment services (PES) in order to improve the country's employment service system. However, despite government's commitment, PES in Malawi have deteriorated and continue deteriorating. They face many challenges, which range from weak institutional capacity and service delivery to lack of trust and confidence from the clients.¹

Although employment services can be delivered by both public and private institutions and/or organisations, they have, however, been largely provided by public institutions in Malawi, being incorporated as part of the Ministry of labour's core functions until after the year 2003 when Malawi saw the emergency or proliferation of private employment agencies and organisations providing employment services to clients. The emergency of private employment service providers, in absence of proper regulations and coordination, further contributed to the already deteriorating public employment service system in the country.

In the context of deteriorating PES system, a thorough review of the PES in Malawi becomes justifiable to provide information that would enable government and its partners make informed decisions regarding the way forward. Therefore, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), in context of its support for technical assistance to developing countries for the development of their pro-employment policies, requested services of a consultant to undertake a quick but comprehensive assessment of the state of employment services in Malawi.

This is the consultancy assessment report. The assessment report's overall objective was to undertake a rapid comprehensive assessment of the PES in Malawi with a view to developing, through national consensus, a concrete action plan for revitalising the PES into a fully-fledged and functional institution, through a phased approach in the medium to long term. To achieve this overall objective, the assessment terms of reference developed immediate objectives, which were as follows:

1. to provide an updated status of the PES in Malawi, the role it plays and the potential role it can play, especially in line with the Government's one million jobs creation agenda, Malawi Vision 2063 and its first 10 year implementation plan;

¹ Concept Note: Strengthening Employment Services in Malawi written by Michael Mwasikakata of the labour markets and youth branch employment policy department, ILO Geneva, 13th September, 2020.

2. to develop a practical phased action plan for the development of PES and the necessary institutional reforms needed;
3. to provide recommendations, based on the regional and international experience on how to roll out employment services in Malawi, beginning with the job centre in Blantyre; and
4. to contribute to capacity building within the Ministry of labour and its affiliated institutions, social partners and other stakeholders.

The assessment report concludes with a set of recommendations and proposed action plan to implement the recommended strategy aimed at improving PES in Malawi in a coordinated manner between the public and private service providers in an effort towards modernising employment services as a functional institution. The recommendations are mainly, based on key findings of the PES assessment. In addition, consolidated contributions from government officials and social partners contacted during the course of undertaking the assessment as well as recommendations of some selected reports and studies undertaken on employment services in Malawi were taken into account when consolidating recommendations in this PES assessment report.

In terms of methodology, the assessment used the desk review and document analysis method that was triangulated with the interview and commentary incorporation methods. With this methodology, the assessment critically reviewed and analyzed various documentary reports or studies and/or publications regarding employment services as part of the labour administration system. The documents included mostly Government reports and those of ILO that concern policy and delivery of labour and employment services. Remote interviews with selected key stakeholders including the Malawi congress of trade unions (MCTU) and Employers' Consultative Association of Malawi (ECAM) were involved to verify some emerging trends of the Malawi PES as well as to inform the development of a practical phased action plan for the development of the Malawi PES. Finally, various commentaries provided by key stakeholders including ILO were incorporated into this assessment report.

2. The National Context

Malawi is a small, least developed and densely populated country with an estimated Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita (PPP) of \$1,568 in 2020 (World Bank: WDI)². The landlocked country had registered robust economic growth averaging around 7.5 % between 2006 and 2010 (MGDSII: 7). From 2010 to 2020, the country, however, experienced fluctuating levels of GDP growth within the range of 3 - 5.5 %. First, the country experienced some economic shocks in 2012, which led into reduced GDP growth before it recovered to 5.2 % in 2013. The GDP remained above 5 % level before dropping again to 3 % in 2015 due to adverse weather conditions that swept 63,000 hectares of crops leading to a 30 % drop in crop yield production (IMF, 2015).

Second, Malawi's GDP growth went up, again, to 5.2 % by 2018 before it fell down to 5 % in August 2019³. The good performance of the economy in 2019, despite its slight fall, emanated

² <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.CD>

³ Government Annual Economic Performance Report, 2020. Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development. Lilongwe: Malawi. p. 8.

from a number of factors, which included favourable rains and reduced effect of the fall armyworms; the stability in the exchange rate; reduction in interest rates and inflation; improvement in the electricity gas and water sector; and continued good performance of the wholesale and retail trade sector⁴.

Finally, the momentum experienced in 2019 had been expected to continue in 2020 before the intensification of Covid-19. GDP growth estimate for 2020 was, however, revised downwards from 5.5 % estimated in February 2020 to 1.9 % after taking into account the effects of Covid-19 pandemic on the economy⁵. This implies that the pandemic was expected to erase an equivalent of 3.6 % of 2020 output that would have been attained in absence of the virus. The spread of the virus was expected to have significant effects in different sectors including the world of work (the labour market / employment) sector and agriculture.

Moving forward, Malawians' development aspirations are contained in the country visions. Malawi's first vision 2020 was adopted in 2000 as a government guiding development document to enable the country achieve and address what Malawians had aspired to, by the year 2020. Among other challenges to be addressed, the vision 2020 had spelt out to reduce unemployment rate, promote enterprise development, reduce poverty, raise agricultural incomes to achieve fair and equitable distribution of income and wealth for the betterment of Malawians. However, the unemployment and poverty levels were still high in the country by the year 2020, thereby implying that Malawi through its vision 2020 had not achieved much. Planning continues. Malawi vision 2020 is replaced by vision 2063 that spells out new, and/or renewed, Malawian wants.

With this vision 2063, Malawi wants to be an inclusively wealthy and self-reliant industrialized upper middle-income country by 2063. Along with this vision aspiration, Malawi also aspires to have a high-performing and professional public service [inclusive of public employment service]. Further, Malawi is hopeful that if her economy grows at an annual average rate of 6 %, Malawi would attain the low middle-income status by 2030⁶. The vision articulates enablers that will propel the country towards achieving economic independence inclusive of wealth creation, self-reliance and a high quality of life for all its citizens. Improved public employment services have potential to contribute towards wealth creation, self-reliance and achievement of high quality of life for citizens. This is possible because PES, among others, have potential to address challenges of unemployment and underemployment, thereby bringing about full or better employment, which is instrumental to change living standards of individuals for the better and thus creating wealth amongst them, which will in turn contribute towards overall wealth creation of the nation.

However, note that the dependence of the Malawi economy on agriculture and rain fed agriculture makes it vulnerable to the vagaries of weather. This is worsened by lack of product and export diversification where tobacco accounts for over 60 % of total export revenues. Agriculture continues to dominate the sector contributions to GDP despite its declining contribution trends from 28.2 % in 2017 to 26.9 % in 2020 from where it was projected to

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁶ Malawi Vision 2063 – Brief English Version, p. 3.

slightly decline further to 26.5 % in 2021.⁷ It is therefore, not surprising that impressive records in terms of growth have not automatically translated into less poverty and more benefits for the poor.

Employment creation has proven to be one of the most effective means to redistribute the benefits of growth and reduce poverty. With a high population growth rate of 2.8 % and declining mortality rates, the increase in the population is enormous and almost 80 % of the population is below the age of 30 with a median age of 17.1 % (ILO, 2015; World Bank: WDI).

The labour market situation mirrors the economic and demographic landscape described above. Compounded by the absence of comprehensive social protection measures, the supply of labour has been consistently high at almost 90 % of the working age population between 15-64 years (being in the labour force) of which 72 % are in employment. Such high levels of employment to population ratio signify the compulsion to work, as people cannot afford to be openly unemployed in the absence of welfare support measures. The latest and only labour force survey of 2013⁸, estimated unemployment rate at 20.4 % using the broad definition (6.6 % strict definition) and is highly urban and female dominated. The quality of employment is highly questionable when only 11 % of the employed are in formal employment, implying informality levels of up to 89 %. While there is an observed structural shift of employment away from agriculture (from a share of around 80 % to 64 %) mainly into services (28.5 %) the structural change is most likely productivity reducing as over half of service employment is in petty trading. On the other hand, industry occupies a small share (7.4 %) of total employment. Moreover, 65 % of the employed are in low-end occupations of agricultural and sales workers as compared to only 3.5 % professionals. Six out of ten people are in vulnerable employment. It is no coincidence, therefore, that 50.7 % of the Malawi population is poor with 25.2 % of them being moderately poor Malawians whose needs include employment opportunities, skill building trainings, among others (Mwamlima, 2014 cited in Malema, 2017: 849).

Furthermore, the Malawi employment structure shows that the youths are in more precarious position in all aspects as compared to adults. A whopping 28 % of the 15-24 aged youths are openly unemployed and 22 % are neither in employment, education nor in training (Gondwe, et al., 2020), thereby representing a time bomb as experience elsewhere has shown.

The Malawi Government has, over the years, recognised the precarious economic and labour market position and has put in place a number of economic, social and labour market policies/programmes. These have included the formal apprenticeship programme, vocational and livelihood skills training programme/initiative, youth entrepreneurship development fund now the national economic entrepreneurship fund, social cash transfer programme, rural infrastructure development programme, public works programme, and recently the graduate youth internship programme, among others. In the absence of an objective impact evaluation of these initiatives, it is difficult to determine their effectiveness apart from the fact that the overall social and

⁷ Annual Economic Report 2020, p. 8.

⁸ National Statistical Office, (2014). Malawi Labour Force Survey 2013. Malawi Government, Zomba: National Statistical Office, Malawi.

economic indicators they were supposed to address have not shown any significant improvements or have even worsened.

One of the key challenges, however, has been the tendency to pursue policies in a piece meal fashion without situating them in a comprehensive and overall economic and social policy framework that would peddle the country on a capability driven factor accumulation and productivity enhancing structural transformation. For example, the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy, while it represents a forward looking development plan, it does not take into account human capital development policies that would enable its realisation. Moreover, in some of the promising youth employment initiatives, their efficacy was partly compromised by political patronage.

Malawi Government has also, with technical assistance from the ILO, developed a comprehensive employment policy, the National Employment and Labour Policy (NELP), which was adopted in 2017. The policy provides a framework for policy coherence and institutional coordination which has so far been lacking and promises great potential if implemented with the involvement of all key stakeholders. For instance, the policy sets to address some policy strategic gaps by ensuring the incorporation of employment objectives and targets in the MGDS and other employment related sectoral policies.

More recently, however, the Government has placed emphasis on skills development and entrepreneurship through reforms in technical and vocational training, which saw the establishment of the TEVET Authority and the drive to establish community technical colleges to develop technical skills at the local level and build social capabilities from the grassroots. In pursuit of this policy objective, government has requested ILO for technical assistance to build capacity for development and implementation of this policy initiative. The ILO has been supporting the Government and social partners in the implementation of the Skills for Trade and Export Development (STED) focusing on value chains in horticulture and oil seeds. A new skills project was expected to start soon to build on the work started.

To be effective, skills development initiatives need to be complemented and linked to skills utilisation systems, including employment services. Employment services are more than ever vital, given government's commitment to skills development. In a market of information asymmetries and other market failures, employment services represent the missing link as part of broader active labour market policies that are empirically known to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of labour market matching of supply and demand. Note that poor and highly underdeveloped Public Employment Services in addition to a weak overall labour market information system militate against an effective analysis of the labour market and development of appropriate and evidence based employment and labour market policies to bolster effective and sustainable transition of the labour force from unemployment and underemployment to sustainable and productive employment. Hence, is the need to improve PES in a country such as Malawi.

3. PES Policy and Strategy in Malawi

Public employment services in Malawi have a long history, having existed as part of the Ministry of Labour's labour administration system where the employment services are in most cases located within regional and district labour offices. The labour officers in these labour offices responsible for all labour services functions such as dispute settlement, labour inspections and labour relations are also the employment services staff. No specific PES policy and regulation that guide and regulate the delivery of PES in these regional and district labour offices are available. Furthermore, there is no clarity on how the private employment services providers are regulated by PES. The implication is that delivery of employment services in Malawi lacks policy guidance. It is clear that, while PES policy and strategy in other developing countries such as Namibia and Rwanda are rooted in the countries' overarching visions and national development strategies, this is not the case with Malawi PES. To some extent, this lacking PES policy guidance appears to have implication regarding funding of PES activities and how PES can contribute to the government delivery of services.

Nonetheless, public employment services, once fully implemented, can play a critical role in facilitating the implementation of government's development agenda(s) such as the one million jobs creation agenda. It is established and known that employment services do not create employment in themselves. However, they contribute to unemployment reduction and employment creation by facilitating the matching of demand and supply of labour, improving the employability of job seekers and facilitating employment creation by enterprises – including self-employment and entrepreneurship development. The following two sections elaborate more on the status of PES policy and regulatory frameworks in Malawi.

3.1. PES Policy Framework

The National Employment and Labour Policy whose overall goal is to promote the attainment of full employment and decent work in the country inclusively governs the public employment services in Malawi. The policy under its key priority area one – the economic growth and employment – sets some monitoring and evaluating parameters with respect to its objective: “to make employment creation central to economic, fiscal, monetary, trade, investment, sectoral and social policies”. While the policy covers issues of employment creation, it notes, as its evaluation baseline, that there has been “no policy with explicit employment objectives and targets”. Consequently, incorporation of employment objectives and targets in the MGDS and other sectoral policies and having number of policies that incorporate employment objectives and targets, were identified as NELP policy performance output and indicator, respectively by the end of 2021, which is NELP expiry year. Therefore, this implies that there is no specific PES policy to guide the delivery of PES in Malawi as clearly shown by this policy strategic gap, that NELP sought to address by 2021.

While the NELP takes a holistic approach to the implementation of the employment agenda by identifying and elaborating linkages and complementarities between the NELP & other sectoral policies, the policy, however, is silent on the role of PES to collaborate with PrEAs in reducing unemployment in Malawi.

There are some other sectoral policies with a bearing to employment. For instance, there is the National Youth Policy (2013) which seeks to promote and encourage decent employment for

young people in Malawi. The policy also focuses on empowering youth economically by linking youths to skills development, access capital, job creation initiatives and by modernizing agriculture to make it attractive to youths. Furthermore, Malawi seeks to create a favourable environment for equal employment opportunities and benefits for women and men, in both the formal and the informal sector. This policy strategic objective is highlighted as a main objective in the revised National Gender Policy (2013) which was originally implemented in the year 2000. In addition, there is the Malawi Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) Policy and the National Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training (TEVET) Policy. The latter policy aims at promoting the development of formal and informal skills in both the private and public sectors in all areas. With an effective coordination, which unfortunately is not clearly elaborated in the NELP, in the implementation of these policies, Malawi would still be in a position to improve her delivery of PES in absence of PES specific policies.

It is therefore, clear that the issue of employment in Malawi is well supported by policies and other strategies. Unfortunately, there is little coordination among the various policy holders, with high potential for duplication of efforts and competition. It is high time the established National Employment Committee (NEC) became functional to drive the much-needed coordination.

In context of policy implementation, the national development plans and strategies, through employment policies, should inform PES at the broader macro level. In turn, delivery of PES should contribute towards implementation of the national development plans and strategies. How such a relationship is to be accomplished, has to be clearly defined in the PES policy in relation to the employment service strategies spelt out in the development plans. Malawi formulated and adopted the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS I) as a national development blue print. MGDS I was implemented from 2006 to 2011. The overall goal of MGDS I was to reduce poverty through sustained economic growth and infrastructure development. Malawi, during the implementation of the MGDS I, achieved gross domestic product growth that averaged 7.1 % against the target of 6 % indicating the country's over performance. However, there was no any clarity in the strategy with regard to how contributions of the employment services might have influenced the country's positive performance. This was despite government's recognition that employment creation in a country is one of the key macroeconomics performance indicators.

As part of recognizing the role of employment in a country, Malawi government decided to include the issue of "labour and employment" as one of the sub-thematic areas to contribute towards achievement of the country's sustainable economic growth in the MGDS II that was implemented from 2011 to 2016. However, MGDS II did not explicitly recognize and identify the important role that PES and PrEA can play in fighting unemployment especially the youth unemployment. Furthermore, although labour and employment issues were featured in the MGDS II, the financing and implementation of the employment services across the lifespan (period) of the second MGDS did not improve. As a result, the country did not realise its expected outcome of improved labour and employment statistics as spelt out in the strategy. This is because the Ministry of Labour would need substantial funding if it is to register its utmost efficient and effective performance delivery with respect to PES such as the generation and management of the labour market information statistics.

Malawi is currently implementing its third country development blue print, the MGDS III, from 2017 to 2022. Despite the fact that MGDS III formulation and implementation overlap(ed) with the NELP implementation, issues of PES are not enshrined in this third country development strategy. To this extent, NELP identified this as a policy strategic gap to be filled as per the above set performance indicator of number of policies that incorporate employment objectives and targets in the MGDS III by the year 2021. Technically, this may not be achieved since the NELP will expire one year earlier before MGDS III expires in 2022. This absence of PES clarity in the MGDS III implies that PES in Malawi are still being implemented without guiding strategy despite government's current increased attention on job creation. This policy status justifies urgent need for rethinking on the way the country can manage and improve its PES.

3.2. PES Legal Framework

There is not any law that governs the establishment of PES in Malawi but it is rather an administrative arrangement that places PES within some departments in the Ministry of Labour. This means that all activities under PES including the establishment of public employment service offices are a matter of administrative arrangement. As a result, PES, to a large extent, get the least attention due to multi-tasking of labour officers⁹. The relevant labour legislative Acts such as the Employment Act, No 6 of 2000 (CAP 55:01) and others do not provide for the existence of PES and private employment agencies (PrEAs). The employment Act focuses only on basic conditions (minimum standards) of employment. Only the Labour Relations Act (LRA) touches a little on employment when elaborating the functions of Tripartite Labour Advisory Council (TLAC) as it provides that TLAC shall advise the Minister of Labour on all issues relating to labour and employment, including the labour market and human resources development, among others. This means that employment services in Malawi and PES in particular are provided without the appropriate legal and regulatory framework. A study conducted by Mussa (2012) found that all PrEAs are registered as businesses and therefore operate using their business licences. Without this proper legal and regulatory environment, the likelihood of abuse and exploitation of workers is enhanced and subsequently failure by government (PES authorities) to hold PrEAs accountable.

Regulating the private employment agencies as well as promoting cooperation with them is part of PES functions, often through the responsible Ministry. However, in absence of legal framework for employment services in Malawi, the existing and proliferation of PrEAs operate without being directly regulated by relevant laws that would govern the overall employment services in Malawi. They register with the registrar general just like any other ordinary business. There is no law governing licensing to operate as labour recruitment agencies. The laws that can be applied as part of regulating the PrEAs in Malawi are the Immigration Act of 1964 that supports the policy statement on employment of expatriates and provides for the employment permit guidelines (i.e. contains subsidiary legislation for the employment of expatriates). The Trafficking in Persons Act of 2015 is another legislative Act to indirectly regulate PrEAs. It prescribes penalties for perpetrators of trafficking for labour exploitation. In addition, labour export guidelines developed in 2016 are the most widely applied when handling labour export cases but they do not have the force of law.

⁹ This is according to PES presentation delivered by the Deputy Labour Commissioner at a workshop meeting in Salima, June, 2021.

This PES regulatory framework gap poses some challenges with regard to the delivery of PES in Malawi. For instance, the activity of vacancy registration or notification is important as it provides data on the employment opportunities in the district into the labour market information system. However, the fact that employers are not legally required to notify or to place their job vacancies at labour offices is one PES regulatory framework gap to be addressed. This has implication as a number of existing employment vacancies in the district would not be captured and known for placement, thereby affecting the effectiveness of the employment services. This challenge can be addressed by putting in place, the country employment legislative policy with clear defined guidelines requiring all employers in need of employing workers to be placing their vacancies at labour offices. This policy should therefore be backed by possible amendments to be made within the relevant existing labour legislative Acts. Note that, registration and placement of job seekers and vacancy registration when effectively managed have the potential to address the problem of gap links within the labour markets where employers in need to fill their vacancies are unable to link timely with the unemployed job seekers.

4. PES Structure and Functions

The recent increasing number of clients demanding for PES and the emergency and proliferation of PrEAs and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) providing employment services in Malawi are some of the key driving forces for the improvement and/or expansion of the Malawi PES structure and functions. The current PES structure and functions faced with several challenges cannot adequately meet such clientele increasing demand.

4.1. PES Structure

PES in Malawi is structured in such way that the Ministry of Labour, at the top, is responsible for policy and legal frameworks. The Labour Commissioner heads the department of labour services and is responsible for the operation, performance and management of PES (among other labour service functions), as well as for monitoring and evaluation of PES performance. Down the department within the Ministry's headquarters structure, there is an employment service unit headed, or to be headed, by the Chief labour officer. The unit is responsible for discharging all employment service activities within the Ministry's mandate.

The immediate PES structure level down the Ministry is within the regional labour office. Malawi is administratively grouped into three regions, which are the North, Centre and South. In this regard, there are three regional labour offices which are headed by three country designated Regional Labour Officers (RLOs). Each regional labour office is responsible for overseeing district labour offices (DLOs) that fall within its jurisdiction. The setup of PES structure at the regional labour office level is, supposed to be, like that at the Ministry headquarters level. The North has 6 district labour offices; the centre has 9 and the south has 13 district labour offices.

While it is proper for the district labour offices, for purpose of policy direction, to be operating directly under the overall supervision of RLOs, practically this is not the case in Malawi, with the decentralisation policy. As a result, DLOs are also in most instances reporting direct to the Ministry where their reports are independently processed like those coming from the regional

labour office (the urban district labour office). With this decentralisation setup, the country three regional labour offices seem to be rendered void. No wonder, the 2015 Ministry of labour functional assessment report¹⁰ sanctioned by ILO recommended for the abolition of regional labour offices and proposed that regional technical officials be moved to the Ministry headquarters to strengthen the labour services department, especially with respect to its capacity to manage district labour offices. The report further recommended that the funding of district labour offices be reviewed to establish their national priorities and to provide them with appropriate funding from the Ministerial budget.

Further, down the structure, there are district labour offices located in each of the 28 districts across the country. District labour offices are headed by the designated District Labour Officers who are responsible for the management and operation of PES, among other labour services functions. DLOs together with their technical staff members carry out the day-to-day operations and delivery of employment services including the placement of job seekers just as they carry out any other labour services activities.

With the current Malawi PES structure, there is no clarity with regard to structural coordination in the delivery of employment services. For instance, there seems to be a nearly total separation between employment services and the TEVET branch of the Ministry. Similarly, close cooperation at the national level seem to be absent, while there is total separation of the same in the field labour offices.

As part of improving PES, Malawi, through Ministry of Labour, has committed herself to establish job centres in all the 28 country districts starting, first, with four urban job centres in Blantyre (south), Lilongwe (centre), Mzuzu (north) and Zomba (east) in the medium term. The establishment of Blantyre job centre (whose organisational chart is appended in this report) is currently under way with partial assistance (technical/financial assistance) from ILO. The choice of the initial job centre in Blantyre was based on the level of clientele demand for employment services as studies¹¹ have shown more demands for employment services in Blantyre as compared to any other urban centres in the country.

4.2. PES Functions

There are normally at least four major technical functions to be undertaken by public employment services according to the ILO Convention No. 88 of 1948, the Employment Service Convention and its associated Recommendation. These are provision of good information about the labour market (labour market information and counselling services); job search assistance and placement services; administration of unemployment insurance benefits; and administration of labour market programmes including referrals to them. These are in addition to PES, undertaking the related administrative function depending on their level of development and the prevailing institutional framework. PES must also perform the regulatory role for the private

¹⁰ Ministry of Labour. (2015). Technical Memorandum on the Functional Assessment of the Ministry of Labour and Manpower Development of Malawi. Lilongwe, Malawi.

¹¹ Mussa, R. (2012). Mapping Study for Public and Private Employment Agencies in Malawi. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, Unpublished Report), Lilongwe, Malawi.

employment agencies. With respect to this regulatory role, PES must increasingly regulate, often through the responsible Ministry, the private employment agencies while promoting cooperation with them. The range and depth of services normally increase gradually as the capacity of the PES and more resources are made available for them.

Currently, there are neither job centres nor bureaus delivering PES in Malawi. Suffice to note that Malawi had one employment exchange bureau in Blantyre during the one party state before 1994. The bureau was closed and its operating model is undocumented. Therefore, the performance/delivery of PES in Malawi is done in all the regional and district labour offices mostly in their capacity as employment offices. Particularly, these labour offices deliver three types of services (see section 5.2 for details) which are registration of job seekers, registration of vacancies and placement of job seekers in employment. Rarely do these labour offices perform other core functions of PES such as the counselling services, labour market information and administration of labour market programmes. As for the administration of unemployment benefits, Malawi, like most other sub-Saharan African countries except South Africa, does not yet have capacity to consider incorporating this function in her PES and has never administered the same ever since Malawi became independent in 1964.

As regards to provision of these employment services in Malawi, Mussa (2012) found that the most common service provided, of those PES under offer, is job search and placement with 93 % of the country labour offices providing the service. On the other hand, 92 % of PrEAs were reported to be providing the service. The study also found that all PES provide advertising and recruitment services with only 77 % of the PrEAs providing the same service. However, Mussa's study results show that PES do not provide any training and up skilling services, whereas 62 % of PrEAs offer this training and up skilling service. These results have implications for the Malawi Government policy/decision makers. The results, among others, reveal that improving PES by way of extending services to be provided by well regulated and coordinated private employment service providers would help complement the delivery of PES in Malawi.

In terms of labour market information generation through labour force surveys, Malawi PES mainly collaborate with the National Statistical Office (NSO). This is because NSO with its statutory mandate to conduct surveys in the country, remains key through the periodic surveys conducted that have modules on employment such as the welfare monitoring surveys as well as the integrated household surveys. In this regard, the 2013 Malawi labour force survey was conducted by the National statistical office in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour. However, PES alone, depending on its capacity, can be regularly conducting own sanctioned labour market surveys to generate the required labour market information to feed into its newly established Labour Market Information System (LMIS). The established LMIS has been developed to have private and public portals (versions). The public version will be accessible by all and can be used for its job matching functionality as well as for labour market information. The public will be able to access the LMIS interface tool using their internet enabled devices or on internet enabled computers at schools, colleges, training institutions, libraries and district labour offices. On the other hand, the private portal version will be the back-end of the system. It will be accessed by the system administrators, which include the MoL, district labour offices, TEVETA and other bodies or organisations to be granted access right by MoL. For what kind of data and how the data will be collected and fed into the LMIS (see section 5.2.3). Nevertheless,

this assessment still recommends the MoL to liaise with the National Statistical Office to conduct the next national labour force survey to update the recent past 2013 conducted labour force survey.

The development and installation of the LMIS presents an opportunity for enhanced collection and analysis of labour market information, which, in due course, will be providing labour market intelligence and thus, acts as one-step ahead towards modernising PES in Malawi. What is therefore needed is for the Ministry through PES to link up LMIS with other relevant information systems e.g. YOSMIS under the Ministry of Youth and Sports as well as the TMIS under the Ministry of Labour, the system that is housed by the TEVET Authority.

Labour market information can play a critical role in many spheres of public and private decision-making. Such information includes levels of employment, how these change over time and their distribution across sectors. It will also include the outcomes of graduates from different levels and types of education, in terms of both employment rates and wage levels. This information could also be further broken down, for example, by gender, region, sector, nationality, etc., providing a detailed characterization of the labour market and its sources of heterogeneity and inequality.

In this context, the delivery of high quality labour market information will require the intervention of the Government in mobilizing resources from taxation to fund labour force surveys, skills surveys (focused on education and firms' training needs, for instance), and tracer studies (following recent graduates of different education and training institutions). In this regard, Malawi PES need to carry out tracer studies of graduate interns in Malawi to feed the upcoming LMIS. In addition, regardless, LMI to be generated by PES through use of LMIS, this assessment still recommends the MoL to liaise with the National Statistical Office to conduct the next national labour force survey to update the recent past 2013 conducted labour force survey. In this regard, it is further recommended for government to consider regularising labour force surveys as an annual activity.

5. Trends in Service offer and Delivery

This section presents a detailed analysis of the employment services currently provided, and what would be provided, by the public employment services in Malawi with reference to the delivery of public employment services at the local labour offices in the three regional and twenty-eight district labour offices across the country. Specifically, the section presents the type and sequencing of services delivered to clients. Thereafter, the section presents technology and PES delivery, building strategic and operational partnerships followed by performance management process. The section concludes that despite notable employment service activities being undertaken, the Malawi PES, however, still need a lot of capacity strengthening in all areas of service delivery.

5.1. Sequencing of Services Provided to Clients

The following is a typical sequence of services provided to clients through public employment services as presented in Mwasikakata & Martins (2017).

1. *Intake and registration.* Job seekers can be registered either online, through self service facilities at the employment centre, or face to face with centre staff. Normally employment assistants deal with the registration. They provide general information on services provided and how to use them and deliver group information sessions. Job seekers who already have employable skills and/or experience may not need further services beyond this stage, and may start looking for jobs in the system.
2. *Assessment, profiling, individualized counselling and work plan.* The registration assistants have to refer job seekers that need the centre's services to employment officers/case workers who undertake an assessment of their readiness for employment, profile them accordingly, provide career counselling and develop a personal work plan for return to employment. Depending on the job seeker's profile the work plan may include individual counselling (vocational, employment) and referral to labour market programmes provided, either within or outside the public employment service centre.
3. *Performance management.* A system for ensuring that the desired results are being achieved, that the provision of services is equitable and inclusive, and meets clients' requirements has to be in place for managing performance of the employment service centres or the job centres.

5.2. Services Provided to Clients

5.2.1. Registration of Vacancies, Job Seekers and Placement of Job Seekers

A mapping survey conducted in Malawi reported that the most common employment service provided by 92 % of the country labour offices delivering PES is job search and placement (Mussa, 2012). The survey also reported that advertising and recruitment are performed at every surveyed labour office. However, the survey reported that there is no employment service for which all providers (both PES and the private service providers) have adequate capacity and that capacity was found to be varying with service offered. The capacity constraints faced by PES are largely a reflection of the fact that they are under-staffed, under-resourced and under-funded.

For the service of registration and placement of job seekers, labour officers in Malawi register all those individuals who avail themselves at the district labour office seeking for employment where a designed registration for employment register is used. Every registered job seeker who fails to secure employment within 3 months from his/her registration date is required to renew his /her registration. On the other hand, the placement of job seekers into employment involves selection of the qualified and successful registrants by the employer usually after conducting interviews.

Prior to this selection, the labour officers provide the employer(s) with a list of job seekers with required qualifications and thereafter, the employer is required to provide feedback on the results of the interviews to the labour officers for the purpose of data recording and updating of job seekers registers. This is the current arrangement although some employers reluctantly fulfill feedback provision. The job placement process is further enhanced by labour officers' activity of

job canvassing. Job canvassing involves labour officers, particularly the employment service officers, to visit some potential employers to lobby them to offer employment to suitably qualified registered job seekers. During the visits, labour officers also collect, (as part of their data collection work), information on the demand for labour as well as provide advice on the available skills and legal requirements regarding the employment issues, among other things.

Furthermore, the job placement activity is being complemented by another labour officers' activity of vacancy registration. With this latter activity, it is within the government procedures that for the public employment services (with respect to registration and placement) to be complete, there is need for the registration of both job seekers and vacancies so that the already registered job seekers can easily fill some of the registered vacancies provided they are qualified to meet the vacancy requirements.

For vacancy registration, an employer who wishes to recruit through the district labour office is required to complete a prescribed vacancy notification form at labour offices as part process of vacancy registration. The activity of vacancy registration or notification is important as it provides data on the employment opportunities in the districts into the labour market information system. However, the only challenge is the fact that employers are not legally required to notify or to place their job vacancies at labour offices hence a number of existing employment vacancies in the districts would not be captured and known for filling, thereby affecting the effectiveness and quality of the employment service delivery. This challenge can be addressed by putting in place, the country employment policy with clear defined guidelines requiring all employers in need of employing workers to be placing their vacancies at labour offices. This policy should, therefore, be backed by possible amendments to be made within the relevant existing labour legislative Acts or to enact a new Employment Services Act as is the case in Namibia with her enacted Employment Services Act of 2011. Note that, registration and placement of job seekers and vacancy registration when effectively managed have the potential to address the problem of gap links within the labour markets where employers in need to fill their vacancies are unable to link timely with the unemployed job seekers.

The fact that registration and placement of job seekers is performed by almost every field labour office in the country (92 %) is an opportunity that would be cultivated to improve delivery of PES in Malawi also by taking advantage of the established LMIS. What would be required is to revise the current job seekers' registration forms and those of vacancy registration to align the forms with required contents to suit the modern job and vacancy registration forms. Some countries such as Phillipines use such modern job and vacancy registration forms for which Malawi can either adopt or adapt.

5.2.2. Career Guidance and Counselling

Labour (employment) officers in Malawi rarely perform the career guidance and counselling to job seekers. Otherwise, they would be required to conduct career talks, at the employment service (job) centres, at schools and colleges within their work jurisdictions, to students to help them make informed decisions about their right careers to choose and pursue. For the Malawi context, self-employment, including the much advocated rural self-employment, can be promoted as a result of effective career guidance and counselling. On counselling particularly,

the officers would be required to conduct either individualised or group services, that is, conduct counselling activities on those individuals entering the labour market as well as those already in the labour market working, to enable them make informed decisions on the alternative jobs available. These are some of basic career guidance and counselling activities that can be easily performed by district labour officials, as part of improving the delivery of PES, in context of Malawi where technology is still underdeveloped to support some other advanced career guidance and counselling activities. To effectively deliver these guidance and counselling services, labour officers are required to have a wider knowledge on the requirements of particular careers and their demand on the labour market. They are also required to have sound knowledge of the labour market itself, to travel and to have interpersonal relationships with employers. Both, travelling while at work and acquiring of knowledge through trainings, call for adequate financing of the PES activities.

5.2.3. Labour Market Information

Labour market information (LMI) is any information that can assist people in making informed decisions about the labour market. It includes all quantitative or qualitative data and analysis related to employment and the workforce. For instance, LMI on occupations or industry can help someone to make important decisions about study/training, about his/her first job or next step in career. The ILO defined some indicators to constitute LMI. Countries may adapt their specific indicators with guidance of the ILO indicators. Labour market information has to be collected and fed into the labour market information system (LMIS)¹².

In Malawi, labour market information has been defined¹³ to be inclusive of the following, among others:

- names and details of businesses and/or workplaces with their locations and contact details, number of employees, job vacancies, projected workforce needs, number of employees trained, number of employees retrenched;
- job seeker profiles indicating personal/contact details, work experience and educational background;
- data imported from the TMIS indicating total number of TEVET graduates in a year with their courses;
- data imported from the educational management information system (EMIS) indicating number of graduates and other school leavers to be entering the job market; and
- information on the number and types of accidents in workplaces, number of cases resolved and number of recorded prosecutions.

This labour market information is to be collected and fed into the LMIS by Government ministries using existing data sources; by district labour officers visiting businesses/workplaces and collecting data; by the general public inputting their data on any owned businesses; and/or through setting up a job seeker profiling. The public shall be accessing the public version of the LMIS through internet-enabled devices or at the district labour offices. In addition, data shall be

¹² LMIS is a management information system database for labour market data, which is used to collect, analyse and disseminate data.

¹³ July 2019, Labour market information system factsheet produced by the Malawi STEP, EU funded project.

imported from other systems such as the TEVET - TMIS and EMIS. Note that better communication and linkage with vocational training centres could also contribute to better information within the Ministry about the needs of the labour market, and could empower district labour offices in providing students and job seekers with occupational guidance that is based on their knowledge of the labour market situation and of the available training possibilities.

There has been not any established LMIS in Malawi until 2021. However, the Malawi Government through Ministry of Labour has established the LMIS, which is awaiting operationalisation any time soon. This implies that the country, currently, does not have any organised or managed LMI in form of database, although the Ministry through its district labour offices collect some labour market information on job seekers, vacancies as well as information on placement of job seekers. However, the collected LMI on registered job seekers does not include job seeker's educational background. Similarly, little labour market information collected on names of workplace establishments is available but rarely does it include information on the number of employees trained or the number of employees retrenched. Labour officers also collect information on the number and types of accidents in workplaces and number of cases resolved/settled. All this implies that Malawi, coupled with absence of LMIS, has underdeveloped labour market information.

Notwithstanding the country's underdeveloped labour market information, the labour market information is important and thus, provides another potential area to be explored in attempt to build capacity of district labour offices regarding provision of useful information on the developments of the labour market. Labour officers engaged in job broking could provide the Ministry and local authorities with invaluable information on profiles of job seekers and available vacancies. They could also provide information about labour market developments and trends within their districts. The report notes and acknowledges the newly established labour market information system in the Ministry as one significant step ahead towards reorganising Malawi PES with respect to the function of labour market information. What is needed is for the Government to put in place strategy for ensuring maximum use of the system in addition to capacitating district labour offices to provide useful information on the developments of the labour market. Statistics on labour force, types of labour available, sectoral distribution of labour and the employment structure by occupational and industry, among others, would be the targeted LMI to be generated and fed into the LMIS.

5.3. Inadequacy of (Challenges faced by) Malawi PES in Delivery of services to Clients

Malawi PES is facing serious constraint for effective placement of job seekers because the country public employment services in their traditional way of operating seem to be disconnected from the increasing sectors in informality. The National Statistical Office labour force survey revealed that 89 % of the 5.5 million employed people in Malawi were in the informal employment (NSO 2013). The increasing sectors in informality employment reflects the poor governance of public institutions in the sense that their influence over local market developments is weakening. For public employment services this has far-reaching implications. Contacts with the employers in this sector are not established and potential job opportunities are ignored as a consequence. For job seekers in the sectors in informality, PES are hardly accessible and the services offered are not very attractive to them. In addition, Malawi PES do not implement any active labour market programme (ALMP) apart from the recent graduate youth

internship programme, although they (ALMPs) are, however, implemented by different institutions across the public and NGO sectors, albeit without any coordination with, or link to, the country PES.

Moreover, there are more youths than adults in Malawi, who are looking for employment. This implies more demand for PES services. In addition, as the sectors in informality are increasing in Malawi, PES has a noble role to serve this informality sector. This is because the sector is the most disorganised sector difficult to be served by some profit making employment service providers due to transportation challenges and other factors, a thing, which PES as government public office cannot run away from serving their employment needs. This PES underserved informality sector is widely located in the country both in urban and in rural areas. PES can use this opportunity to make links with PrEAs and ALMPs so that they can collaborate their service delivery to target more of these clients from disadvantaged groups. In addition, PES can use the existence of this growing informality employment to justify its service expansion while mobilising resources from government as well as from donors. Furthermore, PES can use this challenge as an opportunity to reorganise itself through extending its working structure to cover more of these clients and thus, improve its service delivery. In this regard, PES has to programme some outreach advertising of its services to such disadvantaged groups of clients to make them aware of what PES can do to them so that they can start availing themselves for the services.

The only service that labour offices can currently claim to be offering to job seekers, utmost, is registration in the official files, which is also done manually, as well as providing them with information about available vacancies (as far as the labour office is informed about them by employers) and with some assistance in case of interviews with potential employers. The number of placed job seekers is, however, low, probably several hundred in the whole country¹⁴. This is a number, which cannot have a significant impact on employment rates. However, PES is a public service, which can be useful at the local level even if the total numbers are low. There is apparently some degree of awareness within the population about the availability of such a service.

This placement service, however limited, may be is a basis on which a more significant public employment service could be built, under the condition that the number of officials is increased; that they are better equipped to reach out to both public and private enterprises; and that they collaborate more extensively with their local partners, such as technical schools. Furthermore, wider utilisation of new technologies (see details on technology and PES service delivery) in the future could make this service much more relevant and accessible. This could result in more confidence among employers and job seekers and increase in the number of filled vacancies.

Another challenge faced by the Malawi PES is with respect to its service delivery to the **disadvantaged groups of clients** such as the youth, women, disabled, informal sector and others. Studies conducted in Malawi show that PES fail to adequately reach and serve these groups of clients. On the other hand, the studies show that while PES fail to adequately serve the women mostly those in the domestic work sector, PrEAs serve these women for domestic work far much

¹⁴ The exact number was not communicated to the mission and no Annual report of the Ministry is available.

better than the services they get from PES. Furthermore, most of the ALMPs target members of some of these disadvantaged groups as beneficiaries.

5.4. Technology and PES Delivery

Malawi PES currently provide employment services of registration of vacancies, job seekers and placement of job seekers. They also provide advertising and recruitment services. None of these services is provided through use of any technology means apart from just ordinary use of phones, emails, WhatsApp, Facebook and other Facebook connected technological platforms to share employment vacancies. The services are all done manually using office forms and registers except that computers are sometimes used to print the forms. Rarely do labour officers fill these registration forms on computers. However, the fact that forms can be printed or filled using computers as well as using phones to share vacancies does not mean or qualify use of technology to deliver services unless the way how such technologies (phones, emails, WhatsApp, Facebook) are used is redefined so that their usage can help PES to meet its service delivery objectives..

Use of technology to deliver PES entails connecting service delivery to up-to-date online (internet/intranet) services that support a well-functioning labour market, creates transparency and supports decision making. In other words, digitalizing PES delivery means using technology to deliver PES. For example, use of online job portals for job search, placement software, LMIS or information and communication technology (ICT), among others would mean and qualify use of technology to deliver PES. Technology helps to improve in PES delivery by creating new channels to deliver services and improve processes as well as new possibilities to collect and analyse data. It also lead to adoption of data-driven PES, analytics and performance management. In Germany, research shows implementation of a new placement software increased employment rate and the quality of placements.

The level of ICT service penetration in Malawi is low compared to the country demand for the ICT service. According to the Government Economic Annual report¹⁵, by 2020, while the proportion of population covered by a mobile network was 84 %, only 36 % was the proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone. The proportion of population covered by a mobile network of 4G was 34 % indicating relatively lower strength of the country mobile network. On the other hand, the proportion of individuals using the internet was 35 %; the number of telecentres / public internet /information access centres was 30 %; and the number of post offices converted into one-stop public service delivery centres was 2 % against over 580 post offices located in different parts of the country both in rural and urban areas. With this data, it implies that ICT service penetration in Malawi is relatively lower. Improved networks such as the network of post offices equipped with good technological infrastructure while providing one-stop public services have proved to be instrumental to help in the delivery of public services. This means if the PES collaborate with the such equipped networks, their service delivery is bound to improve. For instance, India¹⁶ PES as part of public-public partnerships in employment

¹⁵ Government Economic Annual Performance Report, 2020, P. 223. Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, Lilongwe, Malawi.

¹⁶ Abraham, V., & Sasikumar, S.K. (2017). Good Practices in Using Partnerships for Effective and Efficient Delivery of Employment Services and Active Labour Market Policies in India. International Labour Office, Geneva, Switzerland. P. 59.

services uses her network of 155,015 post offices located across the country to reach out to the unconnected employment service beneficiaries.

Malawi PES is currently developing the LMIS which is almost finished. The country has got a good network of post offices. The internet connectivity rate is growing steadily especially amongst government institutions as the Ministry of information and technology is implementing a number of projects to improve internet connectivity in the country. Malawi PES should take these developments as opportunities to improve delivery of employment services in the country.

5.5. Building Strategic and Operational Partnerships

In this report, building strategic and operational partnerships refers to engaging or consolidating working partnership between the PES and all other employment service providers including other public entities and NGOs that implement ALMPs as well as private employment service providers that also include the private employment agencies. In other words, this section assesses both the public–public as well as the public–private partnerships in employment service delivery.

Globally, much of the available literature on the public employment services acknowledges huge benefits on part of PES for building strategic and operational partnerships between the public employment services and the private employment service providers. While this is the case, this assessment report finds the relationship between the Malawi PES and the country private employment service providers not well coordinated or completely absent. Among other factors, the absent coordination is due to absence of clear PES legal framework. This lack of coordination may be viewed as a lost opportunity for the Malawi PES, which, however, can be easily regained at less, or no cost, provided the PES put commitments to recognise and collaborate with such PrEAs. For example, if regular contacts with employers including the private employers were maintained, PES would be in a position to follow the changes in labour demand both in general and in the specific needs of their individual clients.

The labour market obviously demands the opposite of what the Malawi PES currently provide. Efficient, client-oriented, pro-active and resourceful public employment services are needed at a time when none of this is given. PES mainly provide unskilled workers and are not able to fill vacancies requiring good skills and high qualifications. It is impossible for employment services to follow closely the developments in labour demand and what they provide if the supply side is not what is needed by a modernising private sector.

Developing countries often lack the resources to expand public employment services and fund comprehensive labour market programmes. Networking with public, private and NGO sectors thus provides the PES with an opportunity to expand its services, increase outreach, and build capacity and expertise to serve all categories of people in the labour market, especially the disadvantaged. Many institutions provide labour market programmes in which the PES could play a facilitating role and leverage some resources to expand its services, particularly implementation of active labour market policies.

As it has been presented in the ALMPs section below, the Malawi government has been implementing a number of ALMPs within the Malawi policy framework for social protection programmes. These programmes are being implemented across different institutions, while being coordinated by the Ministry of Gender as the policy holder of the Malawi National Social Support Policy. Therefore, getting the beneficiaries of all those ALMPs into work would be a medium-term goal for collaboration with the Ministry of Gender.

The non involvement of district labour officials and the Ministry of Labour headquarters PES officers in the district supervisory committees and national steering committee, respectively, during the implementation of ALMPs is evident that the Malawi PES do not collaborate and work in partnerships with key organizations in the public sector, like is the case with the private sector and private employment agencies or non-governmental organizations. However, these are potential areas for which PES can collaborate with various stakeholders.

In this regard, the assessment report finds no any signed memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of Labour and those Ministries that implement ALMPs such as the public works programme implemented by the Ministry of Local government and the social cash transfers implemented by the Ministry of Gender. It is such memorandum of understanding that would constitute the public-public partnerships with respect to delivery of PES with proper collaborative arrangements where the Malawi PES would be the source or supplier and custodian of most clients or beneficiaries of the said public works programme.

There is little collaboration among the providers of these ALMPs, nor is the PES linked to them. In this regard, the Malawi PES authorities (Ministry of Labour) should undertake a complete mapping of all labour market policies provided in the market, by geographical area, capacity, access requirements, etc. and disseminate this information by all available means, including information sessions, career counselling, electronic jobs portal, etc. PES should also forge partnerships with the service providers, in order to increase services to job seekers and to build its capacity for service delivery. Finally, like in other countries in Africa and elsewhere, there are many labour-related programmes and initiatives in progress. These programmes, conducted by many different stakeholders, vary in size and have different target groups. In this context, it can be of enormous value to have an information hub of the multiple labour market programmes available in Malawi. Experience around the world shows that the PES and private employment agencies can complement each other. The ILO Employment Private Agencies Convention No. 181 of 1997 recommends collaboration between private and public employment services while ensuring that the latter maintains authority over policy, resources and coordination of the labour market.

5.6. Performance Management

In this section, performance management refers to the management of PES performance. However, some details about the concept “performance management” have been presented before the actual presentation of how Malawi PES performance is being or should be managed.

First, for Malawi PES, performance management should be understood in context of how the Ministry of labour and/or labour/employment officers manage the deliverance (the performance) of the public employment services in the country. In this first regard, the management of PES

performance should be discussed with reference to the Ministry's performance targets and indicators as laid down in the Ministry's strategic objectives and performance indicators policy documents (if any) on the delivery of employment services. Otherwise, *Performance Management* is defined as a continuous process that identifies, measures and develops the performance of employees in an organization. The process entails the existence of employees who perform/deliver their prescribed services/duties and that it is this performance/deliverance that must be managed in the process of performance management. In this respect, performance management is viewed as a systematic assessment of the performance of an employee with an aim to help employees achieve desired results and improve their overall performance of their organization, PES in this case. Thus, PES performance refers to the performance achieved by all PES officers delivering employment services.

Second, the Malawi PES performance can be measured with respect to its delivery of employment services to clients against two basic identified performance management indicators. These are number of jobs created in the economy disaggregated by sex, age and sector; and number of job seekers placed in employment. These performance indicators are according to the government programme based budgeting system performance monitoring and evaluation indicators. Other indicators covering other functions of PES (which are not currently provided) are not yet developed into the system. This assessment had intended to collect and analyse performance data with respect to these two indicators for the past five years to determine performance level and trends for the Malawi PES. However, there is no organized data from the Ministry of Labour annual reports to provide such information (data), hence the assessment has not reported anything to support its assessment of the Malawi PES with respect to its performance. Thus, there is need for Malawi PES to put in place proper tools for managing the generated employment data.

Nevertheless, in terms of Malawi PES delivery in general, the assessment has shown that the Malawi PES deliver incomplete set of employment service functions as some of the key employment service functions such as labour market information, regulatory service, among others, are not provided. It also shows that the provided services are inadequately provided due to lack of required capacity in terms of human resource, financial and infrastructure wise. With the establishment of the LMIS in the Ministry, there is hope for PES to manage and use this facility to its maximum advantage.

Whatever the different reasons for the poor performance of PES are, in the end PES are caught in a vicious circle. Poor performance contributes to the bad image and is taken as a justification for further budget cuts. This reduces resources even further and has a negative impact on the working morale and the motivation of the personnel. Once they reach this stage, public employment services are no longer able to react in a flexible manner to labour market developments and steer themselves out of inactivity. Based on these trends, Malawi PES need to strive to improve and strengthen its performance in all areas of its service delivery.

6. Labour Market Policies, Institutional Framework and Coordination Mechanisms

Mwasikakata & Martins (2017: 27) explain the difference between active labour market policies versus passive labour market policies with examples and summarise that:

Active labour market policies (ALMPs) consist of policies that aim at reintegrating the unemployed or underemployed into productive work as fast as possible by enhancing their employability and improving the efficiency of matching in the labour market. ALMPs therefore require beneficiaries to participate in labour market activities. Passive labour market policies, on the other hand, aim at replacing the incomes of the unemployed and /or the poor who cannot support themselves. They do not require participation in any activity on the part of the beneficiary. ALMPs can be categorized into five groups: employment services, labour market training, entrepreneurship and self-employment support, employment subsidies (wages, recruitment and retention in employment) and direct employment creation through public works.

Malawi has been implementing active labour market programmes since its independence in 1964 and most intensively after the attainment of multiparty democracy in 1994. The ALMPs are implemented within the Malawi policy framework for social protection programmes. The policy framework within which the public works programmes and other social protection programmes draw their implementation background in Malawi are the MGDS and the revised Malawi National Social Support Policy (MNSSP) of 2012. Malawi government developed the revised Malawi National Social Support Policy within the framework of MGDS II, which was approved by cabinet in 2012. The implementation and/or operationalisation of this policy is through the National Social Support Programmes (2012-2016) that mainly comprise of six separate social support programmes such as the Public works programme (PWP), Social cash transfer (SCT), School meals programme (SMP), Village savings and loans (VSL) / Community mobilization and savings investment programme (COMSIP), Microfinance (MFI) and Fertilizer input subsidy programme (FISP) now the Affordable Input Programme (AIP).

Selection of beneficiaries for each of the six social support programmes currently uses the country unified beneficiary registry (UBR) database available on <http://ubr.mnssp.org>. Data collection for this registry database was based on the country poverty ranking levels as reported by Mwamlima (2014) cited in Malema (2017) which indicated 50.7 % of the Malawian population as poor. This study grouped poor Malawians into three categories. First, the 10 % out of 50.7 % as ultra poor Malawians who are incapacitated to the extent that they cannot provide labour in return for their income hence they are the ones to be considered with social cash transfer and school feeding programmes (the passive labour market programmes). Second, the 15.5 % as ultra poor Malawians but with labour capacity to provide in return for their income thereby entitling them to benefit from public works programmes (the active labour market programmes), among others. Third, about 25.2 % as moderately poor Malawians whose needs include employment opportunities, skill building trainings among others and hence are eligible to benefit from social protection programmes (also the active labour market programmes) such as inputs subsidy, public works programmes, micro-finance, village savings loans etc. In this regard, it became clear that the majority poor Malawians, that is, 40.7 % (i.e. 25.2 % - moderately poor plus 15.5 % - ultra poor) are the ones who constitute as beneficiaries for the Public works programmes currently implemented in Malawi.

As has been widely noted in the literature, public works programmes in developing countries are mainly geared towards poverty alleviation, especially for vulnerable groups. In Malawi, the

guiding policy principles for eligibility for the labour-intensive public works include preference to single mothers with school going children, disadvantaged groups, other women and people with disabilities. Like in other developing countries, the labour-intensive public works programmes prioritise the local sourcing of labour.

The public works programme (PWP) was set up by the Malawi government way back in the early 2000s as one of the social protection measures to support the country's on-going macroeconomic stabilization programmes. The setting, according to Charman (2013), was based on the Malawi government's original strategic paper prepared for the World Bank that had placed PWP as a "highly suitable countercyclical intervention" for regional and self-targeting. It was agreed and emphasized that "the bulk of subsequent PWP interventions, building upon the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) experiences, [were to use] a minimum wage as a self-targeting mechanism and required the beneficiaries to perform specific tasks such as road clearing on the basis of national task rates".

Public Works Programme involves labour-intensive public works and has been implemented through local development fund (LDF) and other partners in all the 35 local councils in the country as a compulsory program. One of the primary objectives of the PWP is to increase income for poor households and reduce their food insecurity through the provision of employment opportunities in such PWP's labour intensive activities. This PWP, like the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) in India (Rani & Belser, 2012 cited in Malema, 2017) is described as one of the employment guarantee schemes in Malawi.

Public works programme was initiated by Malawi Government with financial support from the World Bank and other development partners to create employment opportunities for income transfer and in the process build economic infrastructure through labour intensive activities. The programme activities include construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of economic infrastructure such as roads and small irrigation systems and improved natural resource management through afforestation, terracing and rainwater harvesting among others. All these public works are geared to generate significant employment opportunities. The programme works are also geared to establish infrastructure in previously disadvantaged areas simultaneously providing opportunities for poverty alleviation and a substantial reduction in child labour that perpetuate poverty. Projects such as building roads, tree planting, providing water and electricity are labour-intensive and thus provide jobs during both the construction and maintenance phases.

Furthermore, by 2017, the Government of Malawi had secured funding from the World Bank for the implementation of the MASAF IV project whose overall goal was to strengthen safety nets systems in Malawi and the project's specific objectives were: to increase incomes and food security of poor households and create productive community assets; to enhance livelihood support capacities of households through savings and investment promotion activities and to improve coverage of targeted benefits for the extreme poor through social cash transfers. It is within this MASAF IV project in which PWP is being executed.

The programme employs over 200 poor persons from each village development committee area (VDC) who are below the poverty line. As such there are thousands and thousands of Malawian PWP employees who work at particular times in each year.

The labour intensive activities or interventions being undertaken under this PWP scheme¹⁷ include: afforestation activities; construction of village access roads; development of small scale irrigation facilities; land resource conservation such as storm drains and aquaculture activities. For instance, the programme coverage in the two years of 2012/2013 and 2015/2016, PWP employment scheme benefited a total of 602,652 and 449,991 household employees (the beneficiaries), respectively and used respective totals of Mk 8.7 billion (US\$34.8 million) and Mk3.2 billion (US\$4.4 million) towards payments of wages (Malema, 2017).

In terms of implementation arrangements, there are three levels involved: the community, local Councils and national levels. At community level, a sub-committee of the VDC is responsible for day to day supervision of the programme works, among other duties. At local Councils' level, a supervisory team comprising of the Director of public works (DPW); the District Forestry Officer (DFO); the District Agricultural Development Officer (DADO); the District Community Development Officer (DCDO) and the District Trade/Agri-business Officer (DT/AO), is responsible to ensure proper supervision of the projects to ensure high quality infrastructure. This supervisory team focuses on adherence to technical standards and construction guidelines, and norms including consolidation of all requirements for identified savings groups. Finally, at national level, there is LDF Technical Supervisory Team (LDF-TST) which is responsible for coordinating the various activities concerning the programme implementation management. It must however, be noted that for the 2015/2016 PWP, beneficiaries were identified using the country newly developed Unified Beneficiaries' Register (UBR) database unlike before 2015 when beneficiary identification was done by communities at community level.

As can be seen from the preceding paragraph, both the district labour officers at the district level and Ministry of labour headquarters (PES employment services officers) are not part of the programme supervisory teams. Furthermore, there is currently no framework for collaboration with the PES and the Ministry of Local government and rural development does not see any areas for collaboration. This is a missed opportunity for both, as there are efficiency gains to be made through collaboration. For example, in South Africa the PES is increasingly involved in supplying workers for public works projects from its databank on the portal.

Other ALMPs have been, and are being, implemented scattered among different institutions (Gondwe, 2020) in the public sector such as the Rural Infrastructure Development Programme and Graduate Youth Internship Programme, among others.

The Rural Infrastructure Development Programme (RIDP) project was initiated by Malawi Government with funds from European Union to contribute to the reduction of poverty in Malawi in line with the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy II. The programme is designed to improve the livelihood of rural population through infrastructure development using labour intensive methods, and the interventions in roads and irrigation infrastructure are being implemented based on district development plans. RIDP works are contracted by government to independent contractors who in turn employs people but still it is Government that determines the program wages. Currently, the implementation of RIDP component 1 (Small Scale Rural

¹⁷ Malawi Government, "Public Works Sub Project Implementation Guidelines," Ministry of Finance, Technical Support Team, Local Development Fund, Lilongwe, 2012.

Infrastructure) commenced on 1st August, 2011 and currently, activities are being undertaken under Programme Estimate 2 running for a period of 18 months (1st February 2013 to 31st July 2014). The 17 beneficiary districts of RIDP are: Blantyre, Chikhwawa, Dedza, Dowa, Kasungu, Salima, Machinga, Mangochi, Mchinji, Mzimba, Rumphu, Mulanje, Nkhotakota, Ntcheu, Thyolo and Zomba (Nation News paper, 21 February, 2014).

The government introduced the Graduate Youth Internship Programme to provide work-integrated experience to graduates as a bridging program from schooling to work in order to improve their employability. The program was designed to engage interns for a maximum period of two years, however this has been revised to a maximum of one year in order to give a chance to fresh graduates so that as many graduates as possible benefit from the programme. The internship program does not in any way provide for automatic entry into civil service as some interns perceive. Outgoing, incoming and serving interns are encouraged to always apply for vacancies in the public or private sector. The programme is implemented by the Ministry of Labour. The programme started from 2018/2019 financial year. By 2020, the Ministry had 4,000 interns in different Ministries, Departments and Agencies from which 2,700 interns were carried over from the 2018/19 financial year while 1300 interns were newly allocated interns during the 2019/2020 financial year. Government continues implementing this program to enable new graduates gain relevant experience. This assessment finds that there is no proper collaboration between the Ministry headquarters programme officers and the field district labour officials regarding supervision of the interns. In this regard, it is recommended that Government through Ministry of labour (PES) should conduct a tracer survey with respect to programme beneficiaries. In addition, there is need for the Ministry to put in place proper collaboration mechanisms which would include allocations of some financial resources by the central government for the supervision of in terms in the districts as it is reported that some of them abscond from work for weeks, thereby defeating government purpose regarding interns and work experience as well as that of acquiring employability skills.

7. Private Employment Agencies and Other Employment Service Providers

This section, first, defines PrEAs and discusses the differences between PrEAs and PES as presented by Mwasikakata & Martins (2017: 31 - 32). Thereafter, the section presents PrEAs in Malawi and their activities. Finally, the section presents on possible coordination of PrEAs and PES and concludes with some recommendations of how the two employment service providers can complement each other. The presentation under this section is with respect to the consultancy terms of reference that require the assessment report to pay particular attention in the review to the development and role played by PrEAs¹⁸ and other non-public employment service providers with respect to services provided, the policy and legal framework applicable to them,

¹⁸ Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) in this regard are defined to include all non-public service providers supplying any of the four core employment service functions: matching services and counselling, labour market information, administration of labour market programmes and provision of employment related social assistance programmes.

opportunities and challenges they face as well as potential opportunities for collaboration in provision of employment services with PES¹⁹.

The term private employment agencies covers a potentially wide range of private-sector organizations that conduct intermediation activities between labour supply and labour demand. PrEAs may include private employment agencies delivering recruitment and placement services; temporary work agencies (hiring workers to deliver services in other firms); private training providers (enhancing the skills of workers of other firms); private employment providers (which may deliver employment-related services to governments, services such as placement support to specific groups of jobseekers or welfare eligibility assessments), as well as typically more niche services such as head hunters or consultancy firms.

In virtually all cases, PrEAs will provide services that meet the human resource needs of firms and be paid by the latter. The success and profitability of PrEAs will therefore depend not only on the extent to which they work with a good portfolio of businesses, but also on their access to a large number and potentially diversified range of job seekers, who can eventually be placed with their clients.

On the other hand, each PrEA firm will have a limited geographical presence, perhaps based on a handful of establishments across the country or even smaller, based on a single establishment. In addition, each firm may also have a stronger focus on a specific part of the labour market, such as senior management, middle management or technical positions. In some cases, firms will also specialize in particular industries, such as finance or mining. The above description highlights a number of clear differences between PES and PrEAs.

These include not only the national dimension of PES, covering all sectors, all regions, and all worker profiles, while PrEAs tend to be active only on subsets of each of those dimensions. The differences also include a greater focus of PrEAs on private sector firms, while PES tend to engage more with job seekers. The latter is particularly clear in developed countries that offer unemployment benefits to a number of job seekers, but it also applies in developing countries where unemployment benefits may not be available. These differences between PES and PrEAs indicate a clear potential for complementarity in their actions. While PES tend to focus more on job seekers and have access to a large number of worker registrations, PrEAs tend to engage more with employers that have vacancies to fill. While PES have a national perspective, and therefore will generally have a particular expertise in any specific industry, region, or job type, PrEAs assemble a potentially large number of firms and even larger number of establishments that may have developed stronger relationships with a rich and diversified network of employers and their vacancies.

Many PES around the world have, therefore, been open to, and/or implement, different types of partnerships with PrEAs. These partnerships include programmes in which specific groups of job

¹⁹ This is in view of the realisation through various studies in the developing world - for example - the World Bank (MENA region) and American Development Bank (in Latin America) – that perhaps the only feasible way to go round the weak financial capacities in government to finance employment services and labour market programmes effectively is to partner with non-public service providers from the early stages as soon as basic capacity and system have been built in PES.

seekers (either with more specific needs or of a more general profile) are referred to private providers for additional support in their transition to employment (as in the UK, the Netherlands, or France). PES can even focus on regulation, monitoring and contract awarding activities while the PrEAs only deliver employment services to job seekers (Australia). Other countries establish a public monopoly of employment services but promote partnerships with PrEAs in terms of vacancy registration (including from temporary work agencies) and training provision (Germany).

PES-PrEAs partnerships may be regarded as even more important in the context of developing countries. If the PES can only draw on a limited number of public job centres and employment officers across the country, the scope for substantive links with employers and their vacancies will necessarily be limited. This would impair the ability of the PES to provide job opportunities to job seekers, in particular those who may be in a more fragile situation, such as the long-term unemployed and the youth. On the other hand, links with PrEAs can bridge the gaps with employers and ensure that a much larger share of their vacancies are made available to virtually all job seekers, in particular those enrolled in the online job portals, even if the number of PrEA job centres is also limited.

7.1. Private Employment Service Providers (including PrEAs) in Malawi

Private employment service providers resurfaced in Malawi from early 2000. Particularly, the first PrEA was registered in 2003 as a business by the registrar general of companies (Mussa, 2012). The emergency of these private employment service providers had been preceded by some driving factors worthy describing in this report. Following the multiparty democracy in 1994, Malawi privatized some of its state (public) functions including security functions. As a result, unemployment rate increased due to redundancies and/or retrenchments. Furthermore, the problem of unemployment was compounded as a result of numerous secondary school leavers who exited their secondary education, in the late 2000s, into the labour market looking for employment, most of whom were the products of the government free primary education introduced in 1994. Associated with the unemployment problem was the increasing failure by PES to provide much demanded employment services to the many jobless individuals flooding urban areas looking for job opportunities, thereby prompting some business minded individuals to explore the provision of employment services as a potential business area in Malawi. Hence, the emergency of PrEAs in 2003.

Currently, there is no any policy and legal framework applicable to the private employment service providers in Malawi. Malawi government has delayed to think of regulating these private employment service providers probably due to some contributing factors such as the business sector being new coupled with the country PES capacity in terms of policy development. Nevertheless, Malawi government through the Ministry of Labour is showing commitments to start its consultations with stakeholders leading to the development of policy and/or legal frameworks to regulate the current unregulated private employment service providers. Some studies²⁰ done in the country have hinted/recommended for the Malawi government to amend some of the existing relevant labour laws such as the Employment Act to incorporate some provisions to regulate the private employment service providers. Recommendations have also

²⁰ Mussa (2012) P.

been made for the government to review / revise the 2017 National Employment and Labour policy to have additional policy areas providing direction for the delivery of employment services by the private employment service providers. In this regard, this assessment report builds on these recommendations and urges the PES authority to speed up in kick starting of the looming consultations considering the fast increasing in the number of these private providers in Malawi. Information through any simple google search about “Private employment agencies or service providers in Malawi” shows a good number of registered PrEAs as businesses operating in many districts across the country.

In this regard, this assessment checked some of these private employment service providers to find out the type of employment services they are offering to their clients (job seekers, employers and the public, if any). The following table shows the results.

Table 1: Private Employment Service Providers and their Services they Provide to Malawians

S/N	Name of PrEA	Target Clients	Services Provided
1	Job Centre Limited with two locations in Blantyre and Lilongwe	Job seekers, student interns and employers	Writing job descriptions and person specifications, writing and designing advertisements, production of application packs, carrying out preliminary interviews, recommending shortlists, managing interview schedules, attending and facilitating interviews & scoring, and taking up references.
2	My Jobo	Malawi’s job seekers, artisans, skilled trades and employers.	Placement, recruitment, matching, advertising, job search and career counselling.
3	Careersmw	Employers, job seekers	Training service to clients, employment advisory services, recruitment of staff .
4	TEC HR Consulting Limited	Job seekers	Employment agency specializing in placements of temporary, seasonal/periodic and permanent placements.
5	Imac Interim	Employers, Job seekers	Trainings on entrepreneurship
6	Interim Management & Consultancy	Employers, Job seekers	Trainings on entrepreneurship
7	Unireal Services & Supplies	Employers	Trainings
8	Workforce Recruitment Services	Job seekers, employers	Recruitment, placement and advertising.
9	The Employment Connections	Job seekers, employers	Placements, advertising and career guidance.
10	Kussah Employment Agency	Job seekers, employers	Placements, advertising and career guidance.

Like PES, PrEAs also face some challenges in the delivery of employment services. The following were some of the challenges faced by PrEAs according to Mussa (2012). Economic challenges. The economic problems that the country is facing has a huge negative impact on PrEA due to fact that most private companies scale down their operations and recruitment. Since PrEA operate as businesses they face all the common challenges related to the business environment such as: high tax rates, corruption, poor access to and high cost of finance. PrEAs lack suitable training equipments. They are also faced with issues of HIV/AIDS screening and discrimination. Some employers especially those going to PrEAs, demand that potential employees be screened for HIV first before they can be employed. This creates problems as the private employment service providers have no legal basis for doing so as it is discriminatory with respect to the country standing labour laws.

There are some potential opportunities for collaboration in the provision of employment services between the PrEAs and the Malawi PES. First, most of the employers served by PrEAs are individual employers mostly from the informal private sector, the sector that is highly underserved by the Malawi PES. Second, currently there is no public institution or “Mother Body” as an umbrella organization, which brings together PrEAs and PES to share ideas as well as advocate and lobby policy makers. These are the potential areas for PES to collaborate with the private employment service providers so that its service delivery can be improved towards the less served informal sector as a result of good coordination as well as to be able to exercise its regulatory control over the PrEAs once proper regulatory framework is put in place. Collaboration between PES and PrEAs can help to improve the relationship between the two.

The status quo is that Malawi PES has not yet entered into any cooperative agreement with any private agencies. Experience in many emerging economies in Latin America and Asia, for example, shows that cooperation with other service providers may help budget-constrained developing countries to expand services, improve their quality, as well as their outreach to job seekers in remote areas from the labour market (either due to geographical location or in terms of employability). Malawi PES should therefore consider ways of building relationships with the private providers by developing a framework for collaboration. This however, requires the Malawi PES to build its capacity to manage the collaboration.

8. Management of Resources

This section, supposedly, presents the state of PES resource management with respect to the management of human, financial and material (infrastructure) resources. In terms of human resources, staffing structure level, distribution of functions among PES staff as well as staff recruitment and training are covered. On the other hand, issues of funding allocations and availability of infrastructural / material resources are covered under the financial and material resources. It must, however, be stated that in context of Malawi where PES are not separately established but rather incorporated as part of the Ministry with no separate human and/or financial resources allocated to them, this management resource section has presented the human and financial resource status of the Ministry and its field labour offices. Although the presentation uses the term of Malawi PES human or financial resources, such presentation must, however, be understood to mean resources for all the Ministerial functions.

8.1. Human Resources

The capacity of the PES determines the number and level of services offered to clients and, in turn, its effectiveness and efficiency in contributing to national employment and labour market policy goals (Mwasikakata & Martins, 2017). This current PES assessment, however, notes that such PES capacity with reference to the Malawi PES, to some extent, is weak for such determination. Like is the case elsewhere, it is without doubt that increases in the resources allocated to the PES to deliver the recommendations made in this assessment report would help deliver strong social, public and private returns to the Malawians in need of the public employment services.

It has been observed that services to job seekers and employers cannot be improved if the staffing capacity is either too low or inexperienced or untrained. The status of the Malawi PES staffing level is far from required staffing level standards. This is a reality even if such PES staffing standards have not been stated in this report for purposes of comparison.

It has been indicated above that the Malawian public employment services are under the department of labour services and that their mandate is implemented by the network of regional/district labour offices. However, at both levels, that is, the headquarters and field/local levels, the number of staff is extremely limited, with hardly any specialisation among the officers deployed in district labour offices. In other words, there is no distribution of functions including employment service functions among these officers. Moreover, the district labour offices are decentralised to the extent that they depend financially on district authorities, even though these labour offices are technically still supervised by the ministerial headquarters. For instance, on average there are 2 to 3 technical labour officers in each of the 28 country district labour offices. There is nothing like specific PES staffing structure in Malawi both at the Ministry headquarters and regional/district level. As has been discussed under the PES structure and functions, this absence of specific PES staffing structure seems to be in tandem with the fact that Malawi has not yet established any employment services bureau or something related to that which would be a mandated public employment institution responsible for programming and implementation of PES in Malawi.

Apart from just having 2 or 3 technical labour officers, the district labour offices do not have support staff (except the guards and messengers or the typists who are available but not in all labour offices). This implies that the already inadequate staffed technical labour officers discharging all labour services functions including the employment services are also responsible for administrative tasks at the district labour office. It must also be noted that there is no any other extended labour office structure into the district rural areas beyond the district labour office located at the “Boma” (district centre) as is the case with structures of other government Ministries in the districts. This understaffing level in Malawi, particularly at the district level, shows the extent to how constrained are the labour officers delivering the labour services to the general public including the employment services, the subject in this assessment report.

The overall implication of the reported inadequate human resources in the country employment services (labour) offices is that of total compromise in the delivery of Malawi PES. This compromise would be to the extent that even the seemingly more active labour offices in cities and urban townships of Blantyre, Lilongwe, Mzuzu, Zomba, Kasungu, Karonga, Salima, Mangochi, among others, would remain with no any other option but to continue with further deterioration of the provided employment services.

In the long term due to the complexities of some employment service functions such as the labour market, counselling and regulatory functions, the Ministry should ensure that labour officers are adequately trained in these areas to have their capacity well built. Finally, the Ministry is encouraged to take advantage of the courses provided by the African Regional Labour Administration Centre (ARLAC) and International Training Centre of the ILO (Turin Centre) in the area of employment and labour market and to develop the capacity of its officials. The Ministry may also wish to explore the possibility of entering into a partnership agreement with the University of Malawi²¹, also in order to offer training relevant to its labour officials.

8.2. Financial and Material Resources

Funding level or allocation for the Malawi PES is currently far less than what would be enough to support the delivery of PES in the country. The Ministry of labour receives its operational annual budget, which is shared among all its five ministerial departments, which includes the department of labour services under which PES fall. This total operational budget is usually far much less than 1 % of the total annual country budget. For instance, the Ministry received operational annual budget of Mk2, 486,162,738.00 (0.14 % of total annual budget) and Mk2, 899,888,720.00 (0.13 % of total annual budget) for the 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 financial years, respectively. This shows no improvement in the budgetary allocations taking into consideration of the Kwacha depreciation to the United States dollar. Although these percentages may not have been accurately determined but it is still unlikely that the PES annual budget allocation can be more than 0.5 % of the country total annual budget. Mwasikakata & Martins (2017) provide some relevant benchmarks in respect of PES funding levels. These authors state that the OECD indicates that amongst its member countries, expenditure on Active Labour Market Policies (including PES) corresponded to an average of 0.3 % of GDP by the year 2013. Yet the 0.13 % for Malawi is not only for ALMPs including PES but is the MoL total annual budget of the country total annual budget.

The same funding inadequacy applies to the funding that goes to the district councils that includes operational funding for PES in the district council labour offices. Note that with the decentralisation policy, all the district councils in Malawi receive their monthly operational funding directly from the treasury through the Local Government Finance Committee (LGFC) under the supervision of the Ministry of Local Government and rural development. With this funding setup, the District Commissioners (DCs) are the controlling officers. This means, they control their own budgetary votes to the effect that all the district labour offices, financially, report to the DCs. This implies that prioritisation of PES and their funding allocations are likely to vary from one district to the other depending on the particular district council's priorities with regard to prioritisation and implementation of service delivery.

Regarding the physical infrastructure, Malawi PES do not have the required offices and equipments within which, or for which, PES can be performed effectively. The offices especially the regional and district labour offices are not really suitable to be used as employment service offices. The offices are usually small and congested with job seekers having no specific waiting

²¹ Malema, K. M. (2014). A Proposal for the Introduction of the Post-Graduate Diploma in Labour Administration Studies within the Department of Political and Administrative Studies in the Faculty of Social Science at Chancellor College-University of Malawi.

rooms or shelters except in some few labour offices such as Mzuzu, Lilongwe and few others where job seekers have at least some improvised waiting shelters provided by the city or district council authorities. Nonetheless, such improvised shelter facilities are without required amenities such as the toilets where the PES clients can relieve themselves in times of need. For instance, at the Mzuzu employment service office, there is no reception room and there are only two officers deployed to work there. Worse still, the officers deployed to work at this Mzuzu employment services office are not technical labour officers or designated labour officers as employment services officers. They are actually messengers and the telephone exchange operator(s) who have been temporarily assigned such role of performing the technical employment activities of the office for more than five years now. This is due to low level of staffing at the Mzuzu regional labour office. This situation at the Mzuzu employment service office cannot be ruled out to be the case in some other employment service (labour) offices in the country. The implication with such status is that some of the PES such as the guidance and counselling/training which require good office facilities and other materials including well trained or equipped human resource personnel cannot be effectively or can be ineffectively provided.

Apart from lobbying for an increase in the budgetary allocation from the treasury, the Malawi PES authorities should explore more ways of increasing its resource base, including accessing funds set up for financing training and other ALMPs (training levy) and the social security fund. This suggestion would be in line with Schulz & Klemmer (1998: 9) who observed that:

Efficient and modern PES are not available at no cost [and] that funds have to come either from taxes, an insurance scheme or a levy on salaries. Employment services can raise additional funds but they have to develop unconventional ideas. This could include nominal charges for some services or the attachment of profit centres providing additional services in non-core [PES] functions.

As Malawi will keep on improving and expanding PES, it will be necessary into the future for policy makers to start thinking in the direction of Schulz & Klemmer with regard to supplementary resource mobilisation for PES in the country.

For instance, the TEVET Authority administers the training levy, which, technically, the PES could draw upon for resources to implement skills development and employability enhancement for job seekers that face barriers in the labour market. While these levies are typically designed to fund skills interventions, there is a significant overlap or complementarity with the activities of the PES. As indicated above, PES can be instrumental in providing diagnostics of the labour market, including issues of skills mismatch. Even more importantly, the facilitation of labour-market matching, which is a fundamental goal of the PES, is a key stepping stone towards the promotion of training and, more generally, all forms of work-based learning. This matching is therefore a key source behind the collection of a training levy and it would be appropriate for part of the revenues from the levy to be allocated to the PES.

PES in Malawi can be improved and modernised irrespective of resource constraints. In this regard, the main precondition to modernise PES should not so much be the question of resources but rather the political will, that is, the prioritisation of labour matters, and PES in particular, and the acknowledgement of the role of PES in this regard.

9. Recommendations

This section presents suggestions in form of recommendations for consideration by the Government and validation by stakeholders to assist them in the development of a roadmap for strengthening employment services in Malawi. The recommendations are as follows:

9.1. Revamp and strengthen structure re-organisation of the Malawi PES

The assessment shows that there is no specific PES policy to guide the programming and implementation of employment services in Malawi. It also shows that PES structure within the Ministry department of labour services is not well defined (i.e. the department structure does not show PES functional levels from top-down). The assessment also shows that links between the PES headquarters and the regional and district labour offices' employment services are not well coordinated. Some Ministry of labour officials were of the view that employment services in the district labour offices should be replaced by the newly job centres to be established, whereas others were of the alternative view. The consensus was reached not to replace them in the interim but to revamp them as the country continues with the piloting of cities' job centres. The PES generally implements government employment policies and ensure the best organization of the labour market, in cooperation with other stakeholders, towards full and productive employment. In this regard, the assessment makes the following recommendations to be considered by government to strengthen capacity of PES in Malawi.

1. Develop clear PES policy framework and strategy. Through a participatory process and consensus building, discuss and develop clear PES objectives, scope and coverage of its mandate, level of devolution of administrative and financial decision-making powers, broad means of delivery, among others.
2. Define PES organizational structure, beginning at the Ministry headquarters down to the district labour offices in the councils. A separate section (unit) under the Labour Commissioner should be assigned with the responsibility. This section should comprise of the head of PES; sectional heads for key functions of registration and matching, labour market information, employer services, etc).
3. Clarify the policy framework link to the NELP. Government should consider recognizing the PES as secretariat and should have a strong link with the technical and vocational training department. The Ministry should take the initiative to elaborate on the standing orders (internal rules) of the newly defined PES structure. The PES should be a lead agency as well as a service provider. It should facilitate and coordinate all employment service functions and activities.
4. Extend the function of public employment services in the field on labour market information and vocational counselling while creating a strong link between district labour offices and training institutions in their districts.

9.2. Create legal framework for PES and other employment service providers.

The assessment shows that Malawi does not have any specific law that establishes the PES system; regulates PrEAs or establishes mechanisms for their cooperation. A clear legal framework that would clearly mandate PES; regulate the operations of PrEAs to bring about competitiveness; safeguard workers' protection and promote cooperation between the PES and PrEAs, is essential. The Employment Act that regulates minimum standards of employment does not provide anything to do with the regulation of PES. Even the Labour Relations Act that mentions labour market (one employment service key concept) as one of the issues to constitute TLAC's advisory scope to the Minister, does not provide anything else about labour market beyond this mentioning. To implement this recommendation of legal framework creation, government could either amend the relevant existing labour laws to incorporate provisions to regulate PES or it could enact a full piece of legislative Act. This assessment proposes the following strategies to be done to regulate PES by implementing the recommendation using the second option of enacting new piece of legislative Act.

1. Enact a legislative Act establishing and providing for the mandate, functions, organisational structure, officers, financing of the PES as well as regulating PES partnerships and collaboration with, and/or regulating operation of, other public and private employment service providers.
2. Establish the Employment Services Advisory Committee (ESAC), which should be vested with powers to advise the Minister of Labour on employment services and to ensure a smooth and well coordinated implementation of laws governing employment services in the country. The Committee's membership can include the Ministry of Labour nominated and appointed officials, representatives of trade unions, employers organizations and experts on PrEAs.
3. Consider ratification of the Employment Service Convention No. 88 of 1948 and Private Employment Agencies Convention No. 181 of 1997. Note that this ratification recommendation is also emphasised in the Malawi Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP). Ratification can be done in the long term after undertaking analysis gap to ascertain ratification implications on part of the Government functional machineries.

9.3. Strengthen the capacity of human resources for the Public Employment Services

In the absence of a clear national PES structure, its capacity is largely depended on the functionality of the district labour offices offering employment services in the country. Human resources, both in terms of quantity and professional quality, are the success factor of an effective public employment service. Development of human resource capacity for officers at the district level, therefore, needs to be prioritised. There are already employment services provided within the district labour offices, which need to be suitably equipped and redesigned for the purposes of delivering employment services.

1. In the short term, increase public employment service staff.
2. In the long term, strengthen human resources capacity (develop a capacity building strategy). The Ministry should consider undertaking a comprehensive analysis of the HR and training needs of its staff including all employment service officers to better

understand their professional roles. The Ministry of Labour, in consultation with the Ministry of Local government, should also consider recruiting more qualified staff to fill vacant posts in the district labour offices. The Ministry of Labour should develop a training plan and mobilize resources for its implementation. In the medium to long term, the Ministry should develop systems for continuous learning, professionalize PES functions and promote career growth to attract and retain quality staff. For purposes of transparency and accountability, the Ministry should ensure that staff are recruited on merit in accordance with existing government guidelines.

3. Proper training of labour officers is to be undertaken to continue building their capacity. Since resource constraints are a major issue in the way of continuous training, the Ministry is encouraged to partner up with local public service training institutions to create tailor made courses relevant to the needs of the PES staff. This will greatly ease the burden of heavy costs normally related to training done outside the country.
4. Furthermore, in the long term due to the complexities of some employment service functions such as the labour market, counselling and regulatory functions, the Ministry is advised to ensure that labour officers are adequately trained in these areas to have their capacity well built. Finally, the Ministry is encouraged to take advantage of the courses provided by the ARLAC and International Training Centre of the ILO (Turin Centre) in the area of employment and labour market and to develop the capacity of its officials. The Ministry may also wish to explore the possibility of entering into a partnership agreement with the University of Malawi, also in order to offer training relevant to its labour officials.

9.4. Ensure a sustainable system for financing the Malawi PES

Malawi government, for the past decade, has been formulating and implementing its financial budgets using the programme based budgeting system. With this budgeting system, budget estimates are prepared or formulated based on programmes developed and approved by the Ministry of economic planning and Development with consultations of relevant ministries. This means that only approved programmes and their sub programmes have to be budgeted for. “Labour, employment and manpower development” is the approved programme for the Ministry of Labour that includes budget for PES (employment services). While labour relations and vocational training (manpower development) activity codes are well defined in the government budgeting system, there are no specific activity codes defined for employment services. This entails that employment service activities are lumped together within the labour relations budgetary allocations.

This poses challenges for the district labour offices, responsible to formulate their own annual budgets, to estimate realistic budget allocations for the employment service activities considering that such allocations are to be identified by sub-programme codes such as “employment and labour relations services, workers’ compensation services, and child labour elimination services”. In other words, it becomes difficult to allocate substantial budget for the employment services combined with labour relations services whose performance (labour inspection) mainly forms part of the district performance appraisal. The less attention given to employment service activities at the district (which seems to be a reflection of situation at the headquarters),

automatically, demeans the important role employment services can play for the development of the district and let alone the country. Moreover, it makes district labour offices not to care about allocating enough funds for PES or even to prioritise some PES activities for that they are not appraised on them. This current state of affairs regarding PES financing requires prompt government strategic actions, which form as part of this assessment recommendations.

1. Review government budgeting system to define and incorporate specific employment service code as a stand-alone sub programme into the government budgeting system. Ministry of labour should lobby with Ministry of economic planning and development to effect this recommendation.
2. The Ministry should consider allocating as additional resources from the national PES budget to support specific PES activities in the district labour offices. This can help improve prioritisation of funding allocations for PES activities as well as improve the coordination between the district labour officials and the ministry headquarters regarding the implementation of ALMPs by PES such as the graduate internship programme.
3. Intensify and strengthen the resource mobilization strategy as the establishment of job centres will require additional funding for the Malawi PES. This will directly help to ensure the sustainability for financing the operations of PES particularly the job centres.
4. Incorporate a provision in the TEVET Act on the training levy/skills financing model requiring a percentage of the training levy fund to be used for financing of the PES and ALMPs.

9.5. Establish and roll out job centres in Malawi

The establishment of a job centre requires initiative from the employment service authorities and is dependent largely on the commitment of the employment officers to learn and to be more flexible. It also requires the government's political will to start the establishment process while believing that employment services could have a positive impact on the labour market functioning. Finally, it requires a sustainable level of financial funding resources from government or employment services fund to meet the minimum requirements. The Malawi Government, acknowledging that access to information on labour and employment information by both potential employees and employers is proven to be a challenge in Malawi has committed to establish job centres in every district councils and cities to improve the Malawi PES structure. With initial funding from ILO, government has commenced the establishment process of the first pilot Blantyre job centre, which will be expected thereafter to be upgraded into a one-stop shop job centre along with other job centres in other cities in the long term. In this regard, this assessment outlines the following strategies recommended for immediate implementation for the job centre to become fully established and operational.

1. Construct or identify a building to be used as a job centre. The building should be centrally located with easy access by the network of public transport. It should also have good safety environment requirements. The centre should be well spacious to accommodate centre facilities such as the office rooms, meeting room for interviews and

group training/counselling services, computer room for job seekers, reception office with information area as well as space for toilets and other centre facility requirements.

2. Recruit or identify, from the available PES employment officers, at least 9 staff members to work at the job centre. Six of them should be professionals with one to be the job centre manager, two employment officers, one employer advisor and/or public relations officer, one LMI and ICT services technician, one guidance and counseling officer. The other three should be two receptionists and one messenger as support staff. Upgrading a job centre into a one-stop shop job centre will require at least four additional staff members of whom one should be a youth officer, one small and medium enterprise (SME) and/or entrepreneurship development officer, one gender and social welfare officer and the other to be a skills development officer. This means that a fully fledged one-stop shop typical job centre in the context of Malawi need to at least have 13 staff members to deliver the job centre functions/activities without any effect from the problem of understaffing.
3. Procure office equipment that should include items such as the furniture, computers, TV screens, stationery and others depending on the available resources.
4. Develop PES manual to contain operational guidelines for PES or job centre officers in absence of policy and other guidelines including ethics code of conduct for PES personnel.
5. Design or revise PES registration forms to accommodate all PES issues that would help to generate appropriate labour market information to feed into the country established LMIS.
6. Develop appropriate messages to advertise the job centre establishment. This job centre advertising strategy should also include erecting a proper and visible signage (post).
7. Conduct meeting with social partners such as MCTU and ECAM including other relevant stakeholders (PrEAs representatives) to appraise them regarding the establishment of the job centre.
8. Conduct orientation meeting with the Ministry of labour management team members and all the country regional and district labour officers to inform about the operations of the established job centre.
9. Develop or utilize resource mobilization strategy for job centre funding sustainability considering that the Malawi PES (Ministry of labour) may not have, enough, budget for job centres within the Ministry's budget.

9.6. Strengthen partnerships with other employment service providers

The monopoly of the PES in the provision of employment services was formally ended at the international level with the adoption of the ILO Private Employment Agencies Convention No.

181 of 1997. The role of private providers in promoting efficient adjustment in the labour market has been fully recognized. Developed countries have sought partnerships with private and non-profit providers after their PES were already advanced, in search of efficiency and cost effectiveness. Partnerships also increase the capacity of the PES by accessing specialized expertise from private organizations and NGOs, benefiting from less bureaucracy in these organizations and also expanding the services available to job seekers and employers and offering a wider choice. The caution, however, is the need for a strong PES to manage the partnerships and avoid worker exploitation. Obviously, this calls for concerted efforts by PES and district councils (inclusive of labour offices) to collaborate with employers' and workers' organizations as part of strengthening partnerships.

1. Conduct a recent comprehensive study on employment service providers and services provided. Revisit recommendations made in a mapping study of employment service providers conducted in 2012.
2. Ministry of Labour need also to liaise with the National Statistical Office to conduct next national labour force survey to update the recent past 2013 conducted labour force survey.
3. Launch consultations on how to link up services and collaborate. Develop and implement a strategy for deliberate linkage of the PES and PrEAs and/or consider developing an employment service network.
4. Strengthen PES linkages to the ALMPs such as the public works programmes etc. These ALMPs would allow easy access to PES collaboration and partnership with public, private institutions offering training, entrepreneurship and counselling services. The ALMPs activities could benefit greatly from the services of the PES, which in turn would benefit from the resources and clients at the former's disposal. In the absence of unemployment benefits, access and link to the ALMPs activities would be an incentive for job seekers to register with the PES – thus creating a database of job seekers and employment opportunities. This would also help the ALMPs to set a sustainable system of identifying participants who have been screened and profiled by the PES and thus save time and resources spent in calls for applications.
5. Work with ECAM to support establishment of satellite employment centres within its network and to establish an employer strategy. Job centres can only be useful if they offer vacancies to job seekers. Mobilization of vacancies therefore is a critical step.
6. Promote collaboration with PrEAs and NGOs. There are many PrEAs and NGOs that provide employment services and other ALMPs. Collaboration could include pooling of vacancies and job seekers, joint training, contracting out of services, adoption of common standards, etc. The channels of efficient cooperation between public and private employment agencies should be identified and fostered. Partnerships between the PES and PrEA would help to minimize irregularities in the recruitment process and equip emigrant workers with necessary information.

7. Engage with training providers to understand skills available on the labour market and offer services for its graduates.

9.7. Enhance utilisation of technology to support diversification in delivery of the PES

The International Labour Organisation is implementing the strengthening public employment services in English speaking Africa project for which Malawi and Namibia are the two beneficiary countries. Under this project, two Malawian officials participated in a two-week employment academy training programme held at the ILO Turin International Training centre (ITC) in May 2019. The overall aim of this ILO project centres around use of technology in helping to improve the delivery of employment services to clients. Therefore, Malawi PES need to utilize benefits from such a project and optimise use of ICT in the design and delivery of services taking into account the low digital connectivity of the population. Moreover, ILO Convention No. 88 requires PES to ensure the optimal organization of the labour market to achieve full, productive and freely chosen employment. In the developed countries, PES coordinates the implementation of employment policy and is part of the institutional coordination and implementation framework. As a long-term goal, the PES needs to become a trusted partner of employers and job seekers, an information hub, a labour market driver and a facilitator of innovation in an ever-changing world of work. Obviously, the above objectives cannot be achieved by job centres alone. Investment in the utilisation of technology to support diversification in delivery of the public employment services is highly encouraged.

1. Strengthen communication mechanisms (including those using technology) to improve awareness of the PES among potential clients and the public.
2. Develop specialized services designed to meet the needs of the many SMEs that are not expanding, and the few large and medium-sized enterprises that provide the bulk of employment.
3. Provide customized services by ensuring that all workers, not just the placement and customer relations officers, are dedicated to serve employers.
4. Ensure that career and vocational counsellors, as well as employment officers, have a full grasp of the national and local labour market, so as to provide relevant labour market information to job seekers.
5. Diversify models of service delivery and other structures to reach out to women, rural youth, and people with disabilities, as well as other vulnerable groups.
6. Government should consider using technology to expand its services to the youth and job seekers in areas not served by the job centres. The projects currently undertaken in the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology to expand internet network coverage is a step ahead in the right direction. However, more investment is required to install servers and develop a nationwide online jobs portal that would, in the medium term, provide matching services.
7. Commit resources for development of appropriate labour market information and intelligence.

8. Consider establishing mobile services to the job centres to be established to deliver employment services.
9. Explore how the LMIS system and job portal developed by Techno Brain can be used in job centres.
10. Optimise use of ICT in the design and delivery of services taking into account the low digital connectivity of the population.

9.8. Strengthen the collection and analysis of labour market information

Public employment services use labour market information for counselling and empowering job seekers to make informed choices about their lifelong careers and learning. They also use this information for advising employers and for making internal decisions regarding the programmes and services to offer. On the other hand, as the PES grows, and its activities and clientele expand, it can generate enormous amounts of administrative data, which provide real time labour market intelligence. This information can also be used to assess the impact of government programmes to combat unemployment or enhance skills and employability. Advances in technology have made storing, retrieving and processing such information much easier. The PES also needs to build capacity to analyse data from other sources and present it as useful information for its clients.

1. In the long term, develop and use the job portals to collect, analyse and disseminate administrative data on registered labour market participants. Develop the portal to automatically produce custom reports and use the information to design new programmes.
2. Set and capacitate the LMIS team to undertake detailed analysis of wider labour market information from various sources and convert it into useful information for informed policy and programme development.
3. Government through MoL should regularise labour force surveys as an annual activity. Implementation of labour force surveys annually will ensure sustainable collaboration with other actors, such as the National Statistics Office, TEVETA, etc. thereby help in addressing the LMI update gaps.
4. Commit enough resources for the implementation modalities and performance management of the newly established LMIS.

10. Proposed Action and Resource Mobilisation Plan

Table 2: Action Plan for Strengthening the PES in Malawi

Outcome 1: Enhanced policy and legal framework for effective delivery of employment services and Active Labour Market Policies									
Strategic Objective	Outputs	Lead implementing Institution	Budgets (Mk)	Time Frame in years (21-30)					
Strengthen Malawi PES capacity in terms of structure re-organisation	PES policy and strategy developed through a participatory process	MoL, Social partners & PrEAs		■	■				
	Organizational structure and functional model of PES adopted	MoL		■	■				
	Institutional framework for PES clarified and link to NELP established	MoL		■	■				
Develop a legal framework to regulate the operations of the PES and other employment service providers	A law establishing and providing for the mandate, functions, organisational structure, officers, financing of the PES and regulating its partnerships and collaboration with, and/or regulating operation of, other public and private employment service providers enacted	MoL & Social partners		■	■				
	Code of ethics / conduct developed through consensus building and participatory processes	MoL & Social partners		■	■				
	Relevant ILO Conventions, especially C88, and C181 ratified	MoL & Social partners				■	■		
Outcome 2: Strengthened capacity in Government and other stakeholders to ensure effective delivery of employment services and ALMPs									
Strengthen the human resource capacity for the Public Employment Services	A comprehensive analysis of the HR and training needs undertaken & an Employment Service-HR development plan developed, adopted and implemented	DHRMD & MoL		■	■				
	Qualified staff recruited to fill job centres' posts & vacant posts in Regional / District labour offices	MoL & MoLRD		■	■				
	PES professionalization plan developed and implemented	MoL		■					
	Institutional capacity, including PES facilities developed	MoL		■	■	■			
	PES staff / officers adequately trained and equipped with required knowledge & skills to deliver PES services	MoL, SDI, UNIMA, ARLAC & ITC/ILO		■	■	■	■	■	
Ensure a sustainable system for financing the Malawi PES	Government budgeting codes for MoL and PES in particular to provide for specific employment service code as a stand-alone sub programme in the government budgeting system reviewed and enhanced	MoL & MoEPD		■					
	Budget allocation to the PES at central and local government level increased	MoL & MoF		■	■	■	■	■	
	Alternative sources of funding (such as training levy/skills financing fund) identified and secured	MoL, TEVETA & Social partners		■	■				
	Resource mobilization strategy for sustainable financing of the Malawi PES including funding for the established job centres developed and implemented	MoL, Social & development partners (ECAM, etc)		■	■				

Outcome 3: Enhanced labour market information services, increased responsibilities of the PES job centres within the given framework and increased motivation to produce measurable outputs timely for effective delivery of employment services									
Establish and roll out job centres in Malawi	Job centres established, equipped and functional in the country cities during the first implementation phase	MoL							
	PES operational guidelines manual developed for use by PES or job centre officers in absence of other guidelines including ethics code of conduct for PES personnel	MoL							
	PES registration forms accommodating all PES issues for generating appropriate labour market information developed	MoL							
	Job centres established, equipped and functional in all country districts during the second implementation phase	MoL							
	Job centres in the country cities upgraded as one-stop shops in Malawi in the long term	MoL							
Outcome 4: PES become the preferred or competitive provider of employment services, lead agency of the labour market and coordinator of labour market policies									
Strengthen partnerships with other employment service providers	A mapping study of private employment providers and ALMPs undertaken and report disseminated	MoL							
	Collaboration and partnerships between PES, NGOs and the PrEAs established and implemented	MoL & Stakeholders							
	A strategy for deliberate linkage of the PES and PrEAs developed and implemented	MoL & Stakeholders							
	A network of employment service providers established and Directory of PrEAs/Others generated and maintained	MoL & PrEAs							
	Functioning of NEC with respect to its coordination role activated	MoL & Stakeholders							
	Engagements with training providers to understand skills available on the labour market and offer services for its graduates undertaken	MoL, Public Universities (i.e. UNIMA, etc)							
Enhance utilisation of technology to support diversification in delivery of the PES	Communication mechanisms to improve awareness of the PES among potential clients and the public strengthened	MoL							
	Specialized services to meet the needs of the many SMEs that are not expanding, and the few large and medium-sized enterprises that provide the bulk of employment designed	MoL							
	LMIS system and job portal developed by Techno Brain to be used in job centres explored & utilised	MoL & Techno Brain Consultants							
	Use of ICT in the design and delivery of services optimised	MoL							
Strengthen the collection and analysis of labour market information	Administrative data generated, collected, analyzed and reports produced automatically through the portal	MoL							
	Capacity of LMIS set team strengthened to undertake detailed analysis of wider labour market information from various sources and convert it to useful information for informed policy and programme development	MoL & Development partners							
	Collaboration among LMI actors, including link to the wider LMIS, developed	MoL & Social partners							
	Implementation of labour force surveys annually regularised	MoL & NSO							
	Systems to measure objectively the impact of PES services and other employment programmes on employment and other outcomes developed and implemented	MoL							

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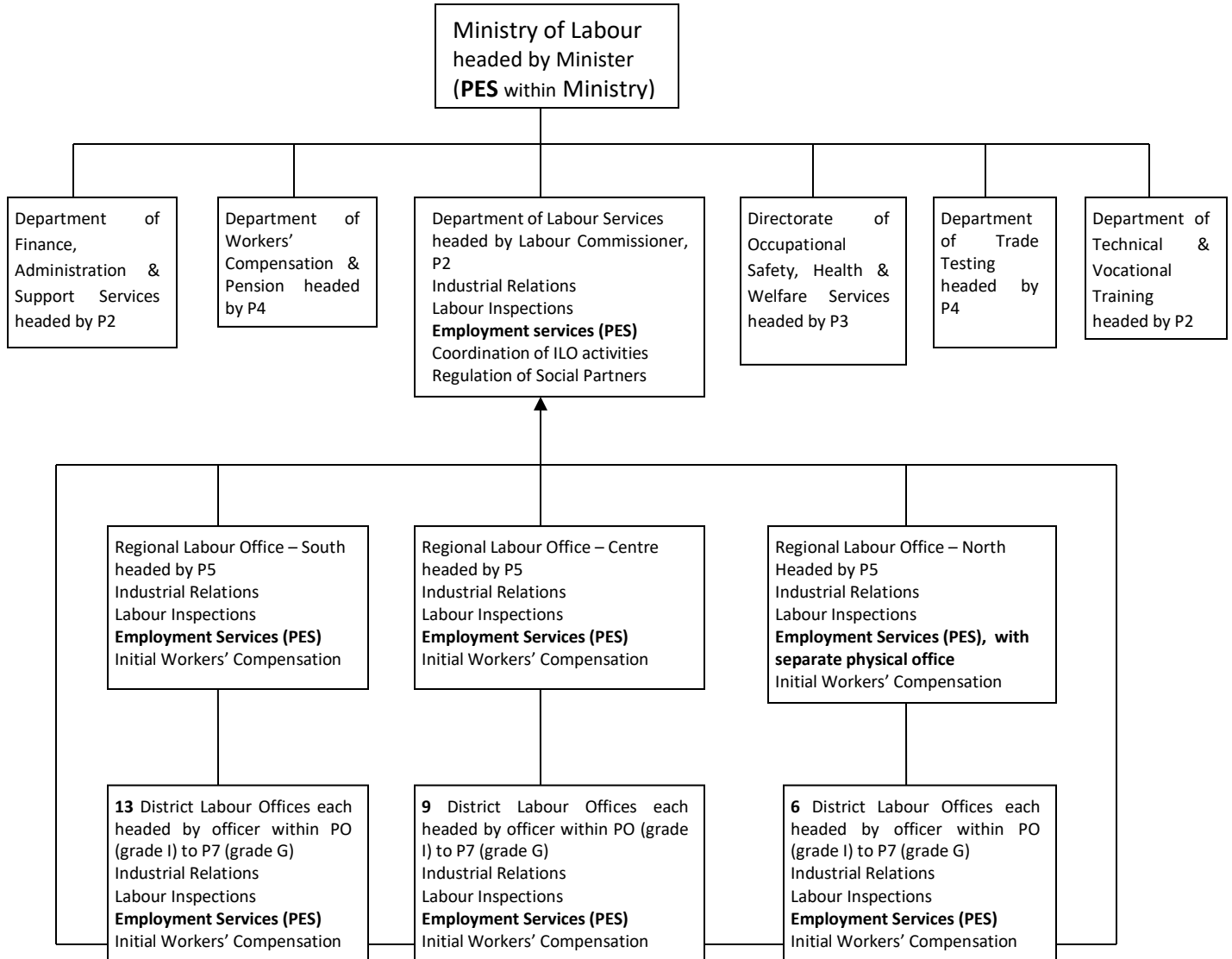
Attachments / Appendices

Appendix 1: List of Key Contacts / Consultations

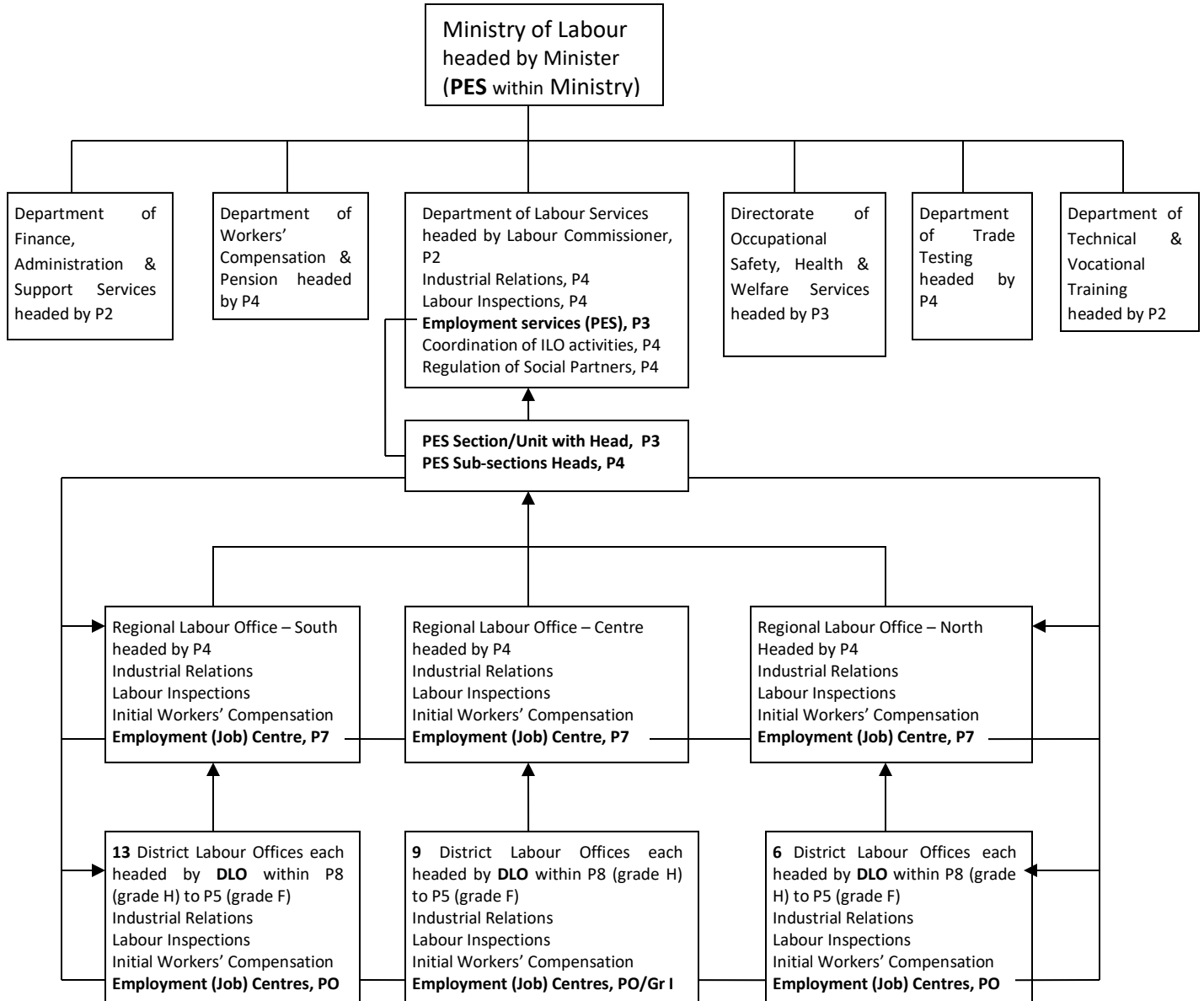
S/N	Name of Contacted Person	Position	Office / Institution
1	Wafwile Musukwa **	Deputy Labour Commissioner	Ministry of Labour
2	Jimmy Mkandawire Mlomboji **	Statistician – Planning Depart.	Ministry of Labour
3	Chisomo Kalogwile **	Labour Officer - Employment	Ministry of Labour
4	Jessie Ching'oma **	Deputy Director	MCTU
5	George Khaki **	Executive Director	ECAM
6	Lenius Daiton **	Regional Labour Officer	Regional Labour Office - South
7	Veronica Linyama *	Regional Labour Officer	Regional Labour Office - North
8	Frank Adini *	District Labour Officer	Blantyre District Labour Office
9	Edward Shaf *	District Labour Officer	Mulanje District Labour Office
10	Joseph Sambo **	District Labour Officer	Thyolo District Labour Office
11	Innocent Banda **	District Labour Officer	Zomba District Labour Office
12	McDirex Chavala **	District Labour Officer	Salima District Labour Office
13	Howard Chidothe **	District Labour Officer	Mchinji District Labour Office
14	Russell Mhone *	District Labour Officer	Mzimba District Labour Office
15	Lanwell Mkisi **	District Labour Officer	Nkhatabay District Labour Office
16	Macknon Mogha *	District Labour Officer	Chitipa District Labour Office
17	Kyong Woon Kang **	Employment Specialist	International Labour Organisation
18	Michael Mwasikakata **	Employment Specialist	International Labour Organisation

Key: Name with * means contacted but did not provide comments, whereas name with ** means contacted and provided comments.

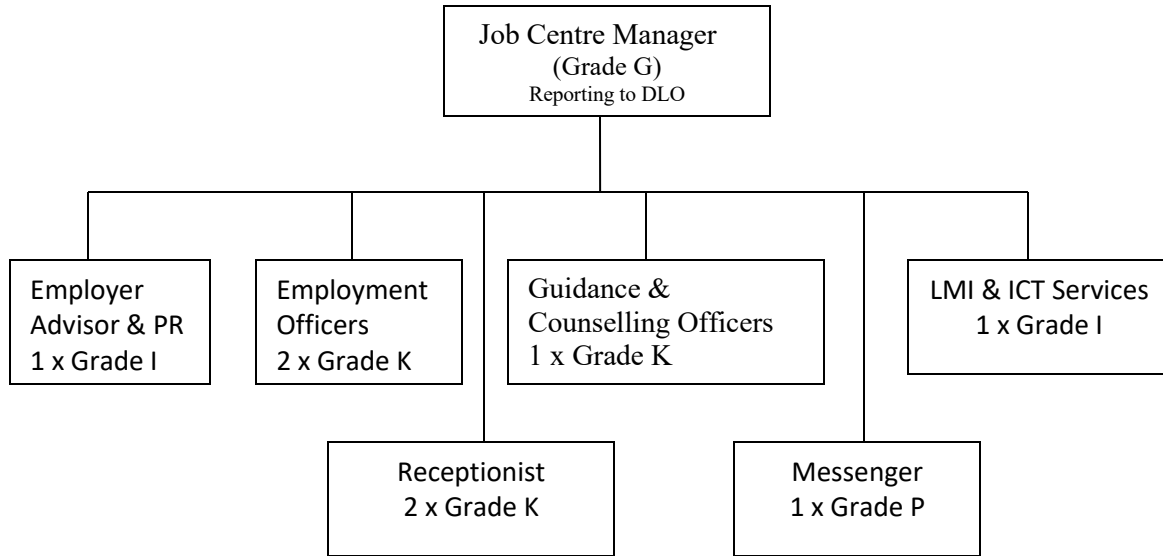
Appendix 2a: Malawi MoL (PES) Organizational Chart



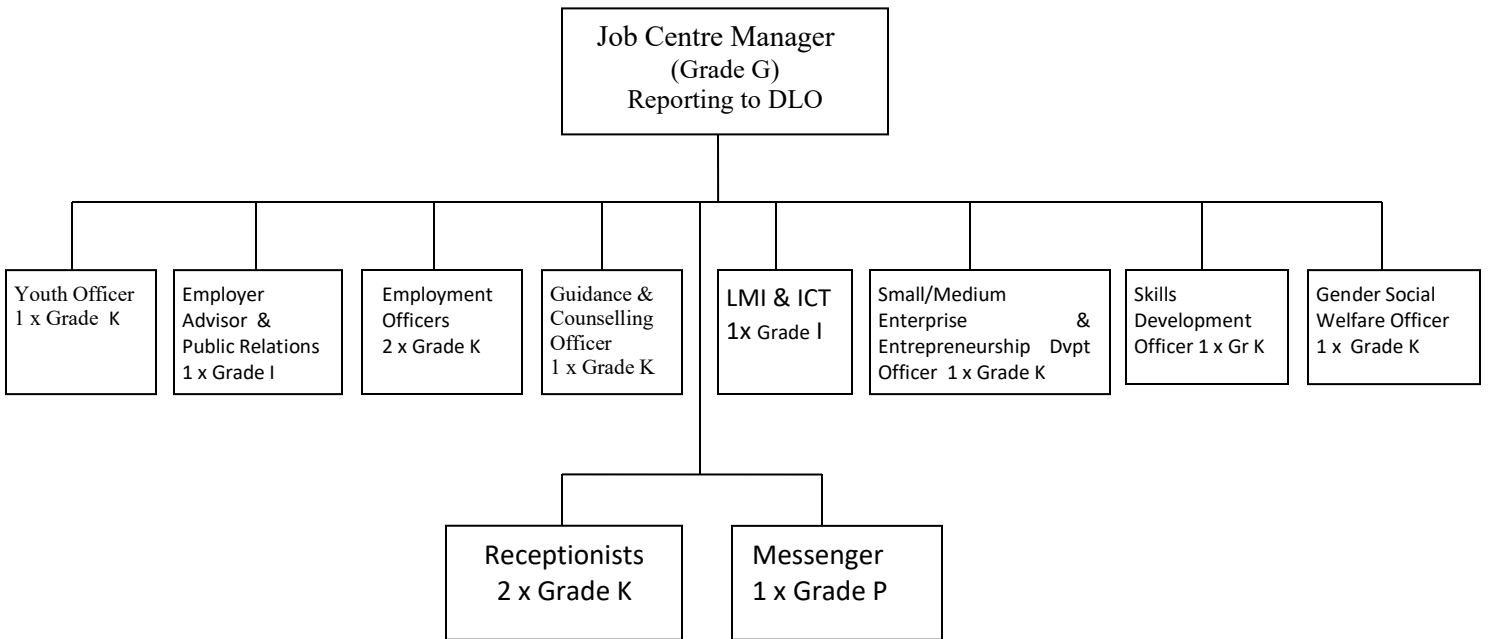
Appendix 2b: Proposed Malawi MoL (PES) Organizational Chart



Appendix 2c: Malawi PES Blantyre Job Centre Organisational Chart (A)



Appendix 2d: Malawi PES Blantyre One-stop Shop Job Centre Organisational Chart (B)



Appendix 3: List of Other Employment Service Providers in Malawi

Table 1: Private Employment Service Providers and their Services they Provide to Malawians

S/N	Name of PrEA	Target Clients	Services Provided
1	Job Centre Limited with two locations in Blantyre and Lilongwe	Job seekers, student interns and employers	Writing job descriptions and person specifications, writing and designing advertisements, production of application packs, carrying out preliminary interviews, recommending shortlists, managing interview schedules, attending and facilitating interviews & scoring, and taking up references.
2	My Jobo	Malawi's job seekers, artisans, skilled trades and employers.	Placement, recruitment, matching, advertising, job search and career counselling.
3	Careersmw	Employers, job seekers	Training service to clients, employment advisory services, recruitment of staff .
4	TEC HR Consulting Limited	Job seekers	Employment agency specializing in placements of temporary, seasonal/periodic and permanent placements.
5	Imac Interim	Employers, Job seekers	Trainings on entrepreneurship
6	Interim Management & Consultancy	Employers, Job seekers	Trainings on entrepreneurship
7	Unireal Services & Supplies	Employers	Trainings
8	Workforce Recruitment Services	Job seekers, employers	Recruitment, placement and advertising.
9	The Employment Connections	Job seekers, employers	Placements, advertising and career guidance.
10	Kussah Employment Agency	Job seekers, employers	Placements, advertising and career guidance.