



The Research Connect

A CENTRE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

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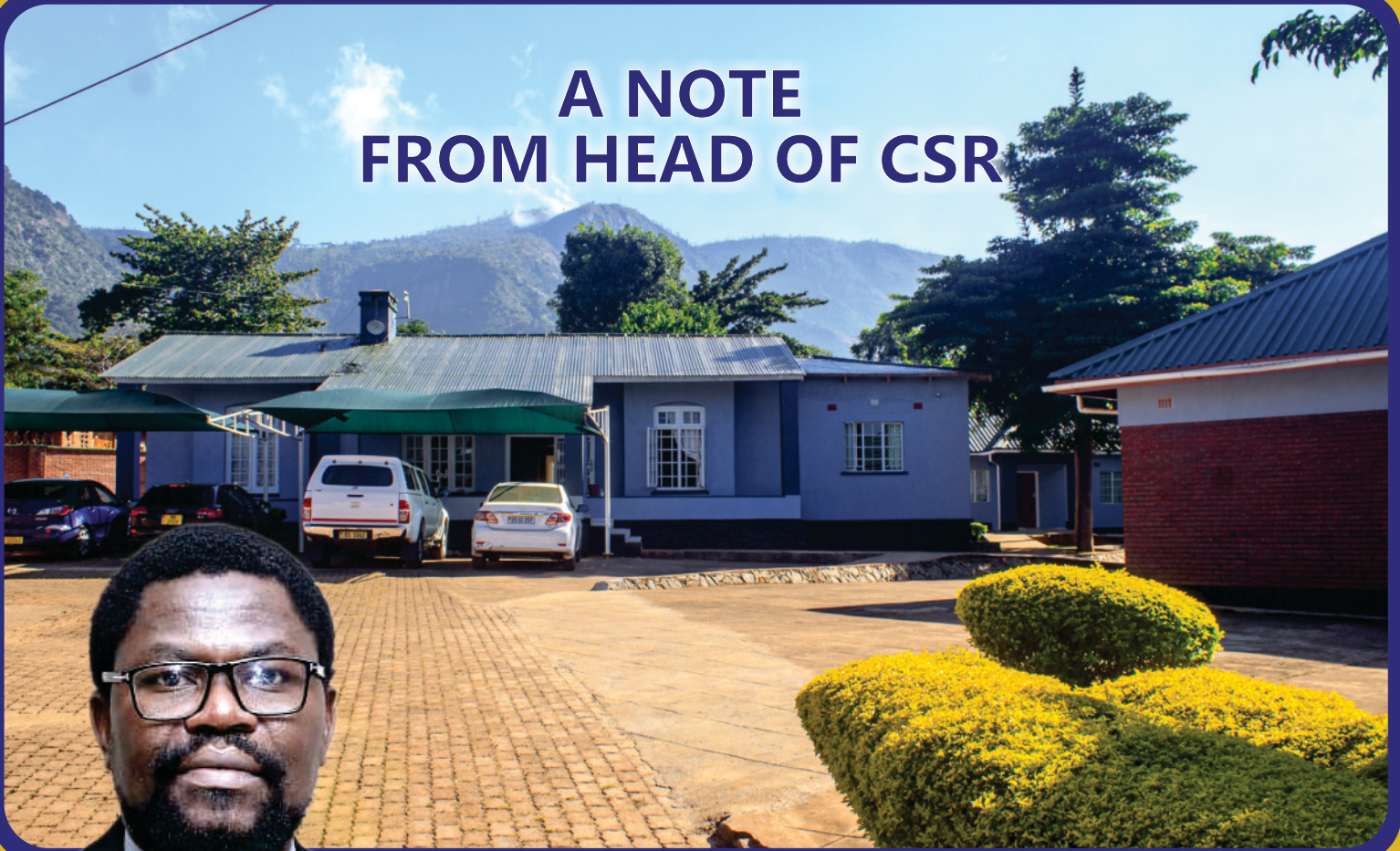


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A NOTE FROM HEAD OF CSR



Joseph J Chunga - Head of CSR

Welcome to *The Research Connect*, Volume 2, Issue 1.

This edition captures an exciting and energetic period in the Centre for Social Research's work—one defined by transformative research, strengthened partnerships, and renewed institutional momentum. Across our four thematic pillars, CSR continues to generate evidence that informs policy, deepens public understanding, and supports development efforts in Malawi and across the region.

In these pages, we spotlight key developments from the last quarter of 2025 to March 2026, including major updates from ongoing projects such as REIMAGINE, PROMOTE, KIX, AMR, and the Labour Trafficking initiative. We also bring you insights from national and international conferences and seminars and highlight the reflections of our interns—voices that speak to CSR's commitment to nurturing the next generation of researchers.

Our growing investment in capacity building, professional development, and staff achievements reflects an institution that is not only expanding its expertise but also sharpening its relevance. Coupled with our revitalized digital presence and vibrant team-building and wellness initiatives, CSR continues to evolve into a more connected, outward-looking, and resilient research community.

We hope this issue offers a compelling window into the work driving CSR's mission forward.

Thank you for reading, engaging, and walking with us on this research journey.

ABOUT CSR

RESEARCH ON GOVERNANCE, INSTITUTIONS AND CITIZENSHIP

The Centre for Social Research (CSR) is a leading research centre in the University of Malawi. Established in 1979, the Centre's mandate is to “conduct cutting-edge academic and applied social science research and capacity building for knowledge generation and public policy development in partnership with local and international institutions.”

OVERVIEW

In order to fulfill its mandate, CSR has built its strategic direction and work around four thematic research pillars namely; Governance, Institutions and Citizenship, Poverty and Economic Wellbeing, Public Health and Society as well as Social Inclusion and Equity. In this Issue, we showcase our Governance, Institutions and Citizenship thematic pillar.

This pillar is inspired by the National Research Agenda (NRA) in pursuit of the country's aspirations as espoused in the Malawi 2063. Specifically, we build on Research Pillar 5 of the NRA on Effective Governance Systems and Institutions, which underscores the primacy of research in strengthening institutional capacity, inclusive governance, citizen participation, accountability, openness and transparency.

CORE RESEARCH FOCUS AREAS

Under the Governance, Institutions and Citizenship pillar, our research focuses on the following areas:

- **Citizen Participation and Engagement:** Studies on civic and

legitimacy, and reform of public institutions, including legislatures, civil services, and oversight bodies.

- **Decentralization and Local Governance:** Studies on local government performance, fiscal decentralization, and accountability in subnational service delivery.

- **Social and National Cohesion:** Research on trust, inclusive identity, conflict mitigation, and cooperation for peace and national unity.

- **Citizenship, Rights and Inclusion:** Analysis of civic freedoms, representation, access to justice, and the inclusion of marginalized groups.

- **Governance and Service Delivery:** Studies on how governance systems influence the quality, equity, and accountability of public services.

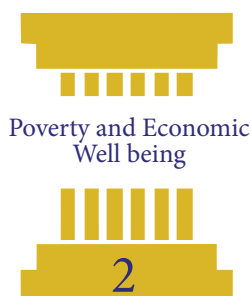
SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS

- ◆ **Afrobarometer Surveys:** Since 1999 CSR has been a national partner of the Afrobarometer Network which provides reliable data on African experiences and evaluations of democracy, governance, and quality of life.

- ◆ **Political Economy of Governance in Malawi:** CSR conducted an in-depth analysis of governance incentives, institutional bottlenecks, and systemic factors shaping Malawi's governance



Governance, Institutions and Citizenship



Poverty and Economic Well being



Public Health and Society



Social inclusion and equity

political participation, inclusion, and the effectiveness of citizen-led accountability and participatory mechanisms.

- **Elections and Democratic Processes:** Research on electoral systems, voter behavior, election administration, and reforms to strengthen transparency, credibility, and accountability.

- **Corruption, Integrity and Accountability:** Analysis of corruption drivers, institutional designs, incentive structures, and the effectiveness of anti-corruption and oversight mechanisms.

- **Public Opinion and Developmental Attitudes:** National and subnational surveys on democracy, governance, service delivery, economic conditions, and quality of life.

- **Policy and Political Economy Analysis:** Assessment of how political incentives and institutional arrangements shape policy design, implementation, and effectiveness.

- **Institutions and State Capacity:** Research on the performance,

landscape.

- ◆ **Governance & Anti-Corruption Surveys:** corruption perceptions, institutional trust, governance performance, and accountability systems to inform anti-corruption efforts.

- ◆ **Baseline Study for MEC Strategic Plan 2023–2025:** CSR produced foundational data to guide implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of MEC's strategic priorities.

- ◆ **Election Observation 2025:** CSR served as an accredited observer during the 16 September 2025 General Elections and monitored voter registration processes to strengthen electoral transparency.

The Centre has a team of highly qualified and experienced research staff with specialisation in all our thematic areas. We are dedicated and committed to fulfilling our vision of leading in social science research and building capacity for scholarship and public policy engagement in Malawi, the region and beyond.

RESEARCH BRIEFS

REIMAGINE trains community health workers in Malawi



Mr Alfonso (left) and Mr Kuntembwe (far right) facilitating an HSA workshop

The Recognizing and supporting informal mHealth in Africa through grassroots Interventions (REIMAGINE) project in January this year implemented the second stage of its intervention phase by training Community Health Workers (CHWs). The training equipped CHWs on how they can use their personal mobile phones for work purposes in line with the co-developed guidelines and ethical principles while lessening their personal workload burden associated with phone use.

REIMAGINE is a 30-month multi-country research project bringing together teams from Malawi, the United Kingdom, Ethiopia, and Ghana. At its core, REIMAGINE aims to co-develop, deploy, and evaluate an intervention that recognises and supports CHWs in Malawi, Ghana, and Ethiopia to “informally” use personal mobile phones to support their work. Across these countries, CHWs have been quietly but creatively using their own phones to do their jobs such as making calls to clients, sending messages, tracking stock, collecting data, and submitting reports often without formal guidance or support. We refer to this everyday practice as “informal mHealth.”

The project intervention responds directly to this reality. It includes the co-development and implementation of phone-use guidelines, targeted training, and small financial compensation to cover phone-related costs. These interventions target 212 community health workers per country, all working in hard-to-reach rural communities. Beyond that, the project also seeks to work closely with governments and key stakeholders to develop clear pathways for national scale-up.

In Malawi, the REIMAGINE project is being implemented in Likangala and Chingale health clusters in Zomba District, as well as Kandeu and Tsangano clusters in Ntcheu. To date, the project has co-developed guidelines with CHWs to support

their workplace mobile phone use and validated them with CHWs and district and national stakeholders. It has also trained CHWs on how to use their phones professionally and ethically in relation to the guidelines and rolled out a modest monetary stipend to partially offset phone-use costs incurred by CHWs

At the onset of the project, the multi-country research team held an inception workshop at the University of Malawi in Zomba, Malawi. In the same spirit, from 15 to 21 February 2026, the team convened again at the University of Cape Coast (UCC) in Ghana to finalise data analysis plans and discuss the implementation of the post-intervention research phase. The meeting also provided an opportunity for peer learning on data analysis of pre-post studies using the “R” statistical package. The Ghana workshop was spiced up with a courtesy visit to the UCC's Vice Chancellor, who applauded and encouraged the collaborative initiative, noting the positive impact in the academia between the participating countries since the early 2000s.

The project is led by Prof Kate Hampshire at the University of Durham (UK), with partners from Sheffield Hallam University (UK), the University of Malawi (led by Prof Alister Munthali), the University of Gondar in Ethiopia (led by Prof Tadesse Awoke Aleye), and the University of Cape Coast in Ghana (led by Prof Simon Mariwah).



Kuntembwe, Mwase-Vuma and Alfonso in Ghana



Some participants share lighter moments at the validation workshop

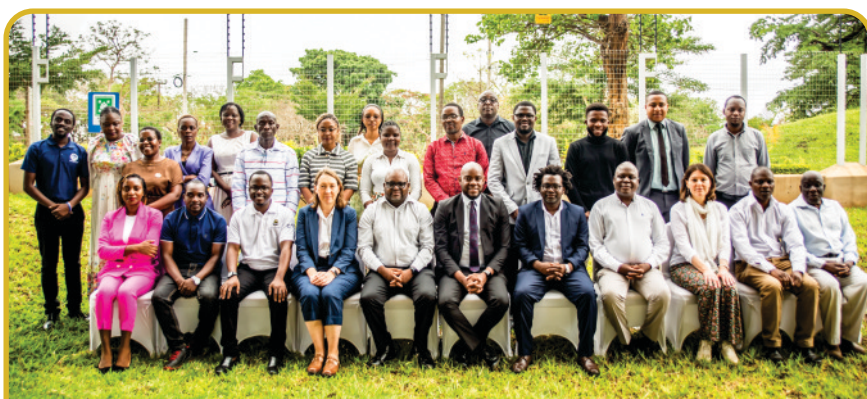
Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) Project hosts validation workshop

CSR with its partners from Newcastle University and the University of Southampton in collaboration with the Antimicrobial Resistance National Coordinating Centre (AMRNCC) hosted a validation workshop for the project titled “Confronting Antimicrobial Resistance in Malawian Poultry Farming: Policy and Practice” at the Lifestyle Boutique Hotel in Lilongwe on Wednesday, 11th November 2025.

The workshop attracted frontline workers from various departments under the One Health approach—including experts from human health, animal health, environmental health and government agencies in Malawi (the Malawi Bureau of Standards (MBS), the Pharmacy and Medicines Regulatory Authority (PMRA) and the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MoTI). The aim of the validation workshop was to share key research findings with a broader audience and strengthen multisectoral coordination and dialogue on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in Malawi.

Key findings of the project include: Shifting preferences among the consumer, with urban populations favouring local chickens over broilers, while broilers remain popular for their affordability, the industry faces significant antimicrobial resistance (AMR) risks, limited knowledge among farmers, agro-vets, and retailers, coupled with widespread misdiagnosis, inappropriate antimicrobial use—including self-medication in poultry—insufficient extension workers services, and weak regulatory enforcement. These exacerbate the threat and lack of veterinary labs, standard treatment guidelines, and district-level diagnostic services further limit effective management of AMR.

Experts recommended urgent interventions, including: targeted AMR awareness campaigns for farmers, agro-vets, retailers, and consumers/general public. regular inspections of agro-vet shops, development of standard treatment guidelines for poultry production, establishment of quality assurance systems, including antimicrobial residue testing, functional inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms under the One Health framework.



Participants at the AMR validation workshop



KIX Dissemination conference participants, Crossroads, Lilongwe

KIX Project shares findings

Centre for Social Research (CSR) on 16 June 2025 disseminated findings of the Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) project at the Crossroads Hotel in Lilongwe. The KIX is Lifting Barriers: Educating Boys for Gender Equality project, implemented in collaboration with the University of East Anglia. It is being implemented in partnership with UNESCO, Equipundo, and the University of East Anglia, and is supported by the Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (GPE KIX) programme. It is a joint initiative with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada. The study aims to generate contextually grounded evidence on how gender norms and expectations held by boys, teachers, school personnel and community members affect education trajectories of boys in Malawi. This will inform the design, adaptation and scaling of a gender transformative school intervention to address boys' disengagement from education. Participatory data collection methods were used to understand boys' lived experiences and to examine the factors contributing to absenteeism and school dropout. The study was conducted in 10 schools across four districts in Malawi: Blantyre, Chikwawa, Dedza, and Mzimba. It is part of a broader three-year GPE KIX project; which includes the development and piloting of a gender-transformative, school-based intervention model, as well as an engagement with curriculum developers and teaching and learning material designers. If successful, this pilot will serve as a foundation for future interventions in Cambodia and Lesotho.

The project works closely with research partners and Ministries of Education in Cambodia, Malawi, and Lesotho to understand capacity requirements and pathways for scaling effective interventions. It is currently in the implementation phase of the school-based intervention, with a planned evaluation to assess effectiveness, feasibility, and scalability upon completion.

During the dissemination conference, the findings highlighted multi-level and intersectional factors influencing boys' disengagement in education. Key factors included limited parental support, peer pressure, low educational aspirations, household poverty, harsh disciplinary practices, bullying, restrictive gender and cultural norms, and a lack of positive male role models. Disengagement was found to intensify in contexts where boys are expected to assume adult economic responsibilities prematurely, constraining their ability to remain engaged in formal schooling.



Mr Alfonso (Right) engaging with one of the workshop participants

PROMOTE Project holds dissemination workshop

After four years of action and passion for Adolescent mothers in Blantyre city, CSR and APHRC conducted the final dissemination of the PROMOTE Interventional study at Crossroads Hotel in Lilongwe on 5th November 2025. The workshop attracted critical stakeholders including government ministries and departments, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as well as the media. The PROMOTE Project was designed as a Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial to test the effectiveness of conditional cash transfers, subsidized childcare and life skills training on adolescent mothers' schooling, sexual and reproductive health, and mental health outcomes in Malawi. This is a project that CSR and APHRC have been implementing in high density areas of Blantyre namely; Ndirande, Bangwe, Chilomoni, Zingwangwa, Kachere, Mbayani and Nkolokoti since 2022, with support from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

The project was coined based on the findings from another study conducted in 2021 on the lived experiences of pregnant and parenting adolescents, which revealed that most of such girls were out of school although they wished to return to school but were constrained by financial problems and other challenges such as lack of child support. PROMOTE project was therefore, designed to test if three interventions

(cash transfer, subsidized childcare and life skills training) can encourage adolescent mothers to go back to school or enrol for vocational skills training. A total of 288 adolescent mothers were recruited during the baseline survey in 2022, and were all assigned to the three arms of the study. It managed to establish seven mother clubs, where adolescent mothers were learning life skills topics guided by the PROMOTE life skills curriculum. The sessions were delivered by selected Community Health Workers. The project also paid tuition fees for the teen mother's children in day care centers and nursery schools around Blantyre City as one way of easing the pressure off the teen mothers. The majority of them lamented that lack of childcare support prevented them from going back to school. As the project came to an end, the adolescent mothers praised it as a model for knowledge and skills development.

They said through their participation in the project they had managed to learn more about sexual and reproductive health, nutrition, child care but also had the opportunity to get support for school and for their children to go back to school. Others have started businesses and learnt skills such as tailoring and hair dressing and they are already making money from such skills. "We wish the project had stayed longer," said one participant from Ndirande. Realizing the potential of the interventions, the study team at CSR and APHRC are working hard to solicit additional funding to conduct a full randomized controlled trial (RCT) to inform policy and programming in adolescent mothers' education and health outcomes. From CSR, the study was led by Prof. Alister Munthali, Dr Chrissie Thakwalakwa, and Mr Witness Tapani Alfonso.



Participants at the PROMOTE Dissemination workshop



From Left to Right: Dr David Ansong, Mr Witness Alfonso, Dr Maxton Tsoka, Lisa Johnson, and Mr Joseph Chunga

CenHTRO and CSR launch Labour Trafficking prevalence report

The Centre for Social Research (CSR) continues to generate knowledge aimed at improving the livelihoods of the youth and young adults in Malawi. In 2023, CSR partnered with the Centre on Human Trafficking Research and Outreach (CenHTRO) based at the University of Georgia(USA), to conduct a baseline survey on the prevalence of labour trafficking among the youth and young adults (18-37 years) in Blantyre and Mangochi districts.

After successful completion of the baseline survey, on 10th November 2025, the two institutions led by the Director for CenHTRO, Prof David Okech, organized a workshop where survey findings were disseminated. The workshop, graced by Malawi's Chief Justice Rezin Mzikamanda, brought together different stakeholders including the Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Homeland Security, officials from the Judiciary, Malawi Police, Immigration department, and representatives from different diplomatic missions..

The event also marked the launch of the Financial Capabilities intervention phase of the project. Developed from findings of the baseline survey, this phase will test the feasibility of a financial intervention aimed at reducing labour trafficking among youth and young people in

Blantyre and Mangochi districts. The intervention is led by Dr David Ansong (University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill), Dr Moses Okumu (University of Illinois Urbana–Champaign), and Dr Lissa Johnson (Washington University in St. Louis), and is being implemented by Catholic Relief Services (CRS).

During the workshop, the Director of CenHTRO, Prof Okech, thanked CSR for doing a good job in collecting high quality data and assisting in the designing of the study and interventions. “We owe this good report to the good work by the CSR team at the University of Malawi, our research partner who went far and beyond to collect high quality data for this project. We appreciate their commitment and professionalism and do not take it for granted”, he said. the CSR team includes The Head Mr Joseph Chunga, Prof Maxton Tsoka, Mr Witness Tapani Alfonso and Mr Sam Manthalu.



Chief Justice Rezin Mzikamanda (Right) receives the report from Prof David Okech

MENTORSHIP



Dr Beatrice Kasambwe Ng'oma (MD)

To ensure a meaningful internship experience, the Center for Social Research (CSR) is excited to share about the role of our new Intern Liaison Officer (ILO), Dr Beatrice Kasambwe Ng'oma (MD). Dr Ng'oma (MD) will coordinate a structured mentorship program that will be intern-led, intentional, and goal-oriented. The structured coordination aims to cultivate CSR intern's research skills, promote their personal and professional development, and empower interns to conduct rigorous research while applying both quantitative and qualitative methodological principles.

The mentorship programme will be guided by the following pillars: goal and vision setting; clearly defined roles and responsibilities; a strong mentor-mentee matching process; measurable outcomes and structured engagement; and effective communication through direct and constructive feedback.

The success of the programme will be measured by tangible research outputs, development and contribution to manuscripts; abstracts submission to conferences; grants development; and grant writing skills. Additional indicators will include mentor feedback, lectures delivered by interns, literature reviews, and project reports.

This initiative represents an exciting journey for CSR, as the institution is committed to nurturing and developing a new generation of researchers. Research interns at CSR continue showcasing how the mentorship programme has shaped their personal and professional growth. Here are some of their reflections and experiences.



Faith Chilimtsidya

“Growth has been in the areas of data analysis and academic writing. I only had the knowledge ... but right now, I can boldly say that I have gained the practical aspect of it. My self-awareness and confidence have grown as well.”



Masautso Mulowa

“Being an intern at CSR has been a deep dive into the world of research, where curiosity met purpose and ideas turned into impact.”



Lusungu Chirwa

“What inspires me at CSR is the sense of purpose, knowing that every effort plays a role ... And that gathering evidence, engaging with communities or analyzing policies, contribute directly to addressing challenges such as inequality.”



Redson Mwandama

“As a Master's student in Economics I have actively engaged in research for the past 3 years...this experience has sharpened my research skills but also exposed me to inspiring researchers in Malawi. I continue to learn and grow both professionally and personally.”

CAPACITY BUILDING



The CSR greatly values capacity building in line with its mission “to promote and conduct cutting-edge academic and applied social science research and capacity building for knowledge generation and public policy development in partnership with local and international institutions.”

CSR researchers attend IMPreSS training

Through our longstanding partnership with UNICEF, four CSR researchers (Ms. Janine Kayange, Dr Beatrice Kasambwe Ng’oma, Mr. Witness Alfonso and Mr. McPherry Kuntembwe) benefited from a six-week course sponsored by UNICEF and facilitated by Key Aid Consulting titled *Intermediate Moderated Programme for Evaluation Systems’ Strengthening (IMPreSS)*, “*Evaluation Matters for Decision-Making.*”

The six-week moderated training equipped participants with practical and immediately applicable skills in evaluation design, management, analysis, and utilisation. Structured around four thematic modules, the programme enabled participants to deepen their understanding of evaluation terminology, standards and logic, while engaging in the real-world application of evaluation frameworks. It also strengthened their capacity to plan and manage evaluations effectively. Importantly, the course fostered peer learning and cross-institutional collaboration—key elements for strengthening shared ownership of evaluation systems and embedding an evaluation culture within the public sector.

Speaking on the sidelines of the training, UNICEF’s Research and Evaluation Specialist, Dr Abiba Longwe said her organisation’s collaboration with CSR strengthens a framework for joint work in research, evaluation, and knowledge management, drawing on CSR’s academic and applied research expertise and UNICEF’s mandate to promote the survival, protection and development of children. The partnership reinforces evidence-informed planning and integrated programming in Malawi, ensuring that credible evidence contributes to improved outcomes for children.



Dr Abiba Longwe, Research and Evaluation Specialist

Mr Mcpherry Kuntembwe attends a course in monitoring and evaluation in global health

Beyond this programme, additional capacity-building opportunities also benefited CSR staff. Mr McPherry Kuntembwe earlier completed a professional development course, *Monitoring and Evaluation in Global Health*, offered by the University of Washington, as well as a short course on *Why Data Rights Matter* delivered by the CALP Network and Oxfam.

Mr Charles Mbewu attends a refresher course

CSR also prides itself on strong accounting practices. To further strengthen the organisation’s financial management, Mr Charles Mbeu, CSR accountant, recently attended a university-wide accounting refresher course on relevant accounting packages in Mangochi.

CAPACITY BUILDING CONT..

Dr Mwase-Vuma attends intensive grant writing retreat

Dr Mwase-Vuma (front row, left) during Grant Writing Retreat

In February 2026, Dr Tawonga Mwase-Vuma, Research Fellow at the Centre for Social Research (CSR), University of Malawi, participated in the Discovery Research Support Hub (DRSH) Grant Writing Retreat held at Malawi Liverpool Wellcome (MLW) in Blantyre. Held from 23rd to 27th February, the week-long programme brought together early- and mid-career researchers for intensive proposal development, budgeting workshops, expert mentorship, and peer networking. Funded by Wellcome, the DRSH initiative seeks to strengthen research leadership across Malawi and the broader SADC region. Dr Mwase-Vuma's participation reflects CSR's continued commitment to building competitive, internationally engaged research capacity.

Dr Beatrice Kasambwe Ng'oma attends EMT training

Dr Beatrice K. Ng'oma receiving a certificate after EMT training

Dr Beatrice Kasambwe Ng'oma attended the Malawi Emergency Medical Team (EMT) Development Workshop, which was held from 9th to 13th March 2026 at the LION Research Center in Lilongwe. The five-day workshop was organized by the Malawi EMT in collaboration with the UK Emergency Medical Team, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and the World Health Organization Country Office, with support from the Ministry of Health.

The workshop focused on strengthening Malawi's preparedness and capacity to respond effectively to health emergencies. During the training, Beatrice participated in in-depth discussions on the World Health Organization EMT Core Standards, covering key areas such as health emergency operations, logistics, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), human resources, and training.

The workshop also included a practical table-top exercise simulating an EMT deployment scenario, which enabled participants to apply their knowledge in a realistic context. In addition, the training supported the development of a clear roadmap and action plan toward the verification of Malawi EMT Type 1 Fixed and Mobile teams, contributing to the strengthening of national emergency medical response systems.

CONFERENCES



Ms. Janine Kayange

Mr. Seth Evans

CSR researchers present at National Public Health Research Dissemination Conference at BICC

On 31 October 2025, two of our colleagues Ms. Janine Kayange and Mr. Seth Evans presented at the National Public Health Research Dissemination Conference held at the Bingi International Convention Centre under the theme of “Non-Communicable Diseases”. Ms. Kayange’s presentation, titled “Practical Considerations for Conducting Movement Behaviour Research with Preschool-Aged Children in Malawi: Lessons from the SUNRISE Malawi Study,” highlighted key insights and practical lessons drawn from implementing the SUNRISE International Study of 24-hour movement behaviours (physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep) in early childhood. More details about the SUNRISE study can be found by following this link: <https://www.sunrise-study.com>

Mr. Evans made a presentation on behalf of Dr Tawonga Mwase-Vuma titled “Compliance with the global 24-hour movement guidelines among pre-schoolers in Malawi: The SUNRISE Malawi Study.” The presentation shared findings suggesting that physical activity transition is underway in Malawi, particularly in urban settings. A high proportion of children meet the global 24-hour movement guidelines, with rural children being exceptionally more physically active than urban children.



Dr Elita Chamdimba

Dr Chamdimba attends International Conference on Legal and Healthcare Pathways to Inclusion

From 23-24 October 2025, Dr. Elita Chamdimba virtually attended and presented at a conference hosted by the University of the Free State, South Africa. Her presentation focused on disseminating art-based data from her research which included drawings and poetry generated by children and young persons with albinism. These visual data shed light on three key themes that emerged from the study findings: (i) family and friends are a site for belonging; (ii) mixed supports exist in education settings; and (iii) health and un/safety intersect at community level.

Dr Chamdimba Presents at International Conference on Albinism

Dr. Elita Chamdimba presented at a conference in Lancaster held from 16–17 September 2025. Her presentation highlighted the lived experiences of children with albinism in Malawi. Her findings showed the complex realities of children living in institutional care facilities, drawing attention to both the advantages and disadvantages of institutionalization for their well-being, identity, and belonging.

SEMINARS



Dr. Elita Chamdimba presenting at CSR Seminar

Dr. Chamdimba presents about Scotland-Africa partnership

Dr Elita Chamdimba presented on a scoping project conducted in August - November 2024 which mapped and analysed Scotland-Africa research collaborations within the Scottish higher education sector. Her presentation highlighted the sector's keenness for Scotland-Africa collaboration, as well as persistent challenges faced in partnerships. A detailed report of this scoping project can be accessed here: <https://rse.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/RSE-Africa-Working-Group-Report-2024-final.pdf>. It shows that sustaining meaningful and relevant partnerships is often constrained by layered challenges, including logistical, institutional, and funding-related barriers.



Seminar participants pose for a group photo

Dr Ng'oma presents on Antimicrobial resistance in poultry

On 4 December, the Centre for Social Research (CSR) hosted a seminar at the School of Law, Economics and Governance at UNIMA titled "Confronting Antimicrobial Resistance in Malawi's Poultry Farming: Policy and Practice in the Post-Pandemic Context."

The seminar featured a panel of key experts, including Dr Kasambwe Ng'oma a researcher from the CSR, Dr Peter Mwale from the Central Veterinary Laboratory, Dr



Dr. Beatrice Kasambwe Ng'oma presenting at CSR Seminar

Collins Mitambo from the Antimicrobial Resistance National Coordinating Centre, and Mr. Clifford Mwale from the Pharmacy and Medicines Regulatory Authority.

Bringing together members of the public, students, researchers, and academics, the seminar adopted a panel discussion format that fostered lively and engaging exchanges. Discussions centred on the persistent and growing challenge of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in Malawi, particularly within poultry production systems. Panelists emphasised the need for a coordinated, multisectoral response to effectively address AMR.

The audience's contributions highlighted the significant impact of AMR on poultry production and pointed to important gaps in research. For example, participants called for further studies in beef and fish production systems, including investigations into antimicrobial residues in these food products. Overall, the seminar was both timely and insightful, aligning with the global campaign theme "Act Now: Protect Our Present, Secure Our Future." For more details on findings from the recent antimicrobial resistance study at CSR, see page 5 of this newsletter.

SEMINARS CONT..

McPherry Kuntembwe Presents on Sustainable Low-Cost Digital Solutions in Informal mHealth

On 27 March, McPherry Kuntembwe delivered a seminar titled “In Pursuit of Sustainable Low-Cost Digital Solutions: Leveraging on What Works in Informal mHealth,” examining how mobile health initiatives can become more sustainable in low- and middle-income countries by building on existing practices.

Drawing on a large survey of community health workers (CHWs) in Malawi, Ghana and Ethiopia, the presentation showed that while many donor-funded mHealth projects struggle to scale or endure, CHWs routinely use their own mobile phones to support daily tasks. These informal mHealth practices—such as communicating with patients, managing logistics, calculating dosages and supporting childbirth—are far more common than formal digital health tools and play an important role in improving care and coordination.

The seminar also highlighted the hidden costs for CHWs, including financial strain, burnout, ethical concerns and gaps in digital skills. It concluded by presenting an ongoing collaborative project with partners from Africa and the United Kingdom, piloting a participatory, low-cost intervention co-designed with CHWs across six remote rural sites, with strong emphasis on co-creation and stakeholder engagement.



McPherry Kuntembwe presenting



Dr Tanja Hendriks

Assistant Professor at the Institute of Security and Global Affairs (ISGA) and African Studies Centre Leiden (ASCAL), Leiden University

Taking a Risk on Disasters: Changing Humanitarian Interventions Amidst a Changing Climate

On 27 February 2026, Dr Tanja Hendriks delivered a CSR talk examining how humanitarian responses to disasters are evolving in the context of climate change. The presentation explored a shift from traditionally reactive, short-term emergency responses towards more proactive approaches focused on preparedness, mitigation and resilience.

The talk highlighted the growing use of **anticipatory action** in humanitarian governance, which relies on predictive data such as climate models and weather forecasts, alongside funding mechanisms based on insurance-style triggers and thresholds. While presented as a more sustainable and cost-effective way to manage disasters, this future-oriented approach also represents significant political and moral changes in how humanitarian risks are understood and governed.

Drawing on ethnographic research in Malawi, the presentation examined how these new forms of speculative humanitarianism are experienced in a disaster-prone and donor-dependent context. Based on nine months of fieldwork and interviews with state and non-state actors, the talk explored how decisions about risk, responsibility and desirable futures are negotiated in policy and practice, and raised critical questions about whose risks are prioritized, by whom, and why.

The Missing and Unmentioned Truths in the Erratic Availability of Drugs and Supplies in Malawi Health Facilities

On 30 January, Dr. John Kadzandira delivered a seminar titled “The Missing and Unmentioned Truths in the Erratic Availability of Drugs and Medical Supplies in Malawi Health Facilities,” examining persistent shortages in Malawi’s public health system.

Dr. Kadzandira reviewed commonly cited causes of drug stock-outs, including lengthy procurement processes, weak logistics information systems, inadequate infrastructure, unpredictable funding and shortages of pharmaceutical staff. He argued, however, that these factors do not fully explain the scale of the problem. Challenging prevailing narratives, he noted that theft by health workers accounts for only a small share of shortages, while political interference and corruption within procurement and distribution systems are far more significant yet often overlooked drivers.

Drawing on administrative health records and a review of published and unpublished literature, the seminar showed how systemic failures result each year in the destruction or write-off of medical supplies worth billions of Malawi Kwacha. The discussion underscored the need for stronger governance, accountability and urgent reforms to ensure reliable access to essential medicines nationwide.



Dr. John Kadzandira (2nd left) presenting

STAFF NEWS



Dr Tawonga Mwase-Vuma

The CSR family is delighted to celebrate the recent graduation of Dr Tawonga Mwase-Vuma. Tawonga earned his PhD in Physical Activity and Public Health from the University of Strathclyde (UK). His doctoral research focused on "Compliance with Global 24-Hour Movement Behaviours in 3-4 Year-Olds: A Low-Income Sub-Saharan African Perspective." Please join us in congratulating him on this prestigious achievement.

Dr Elita Chamdimba

We are very thrilled that one of our Research Fellows, Dr Elita Chamdimba was selected as a member of the Malawi-Scotland Partnership (MaSP) Board.



Prof Alister Munthali

In the same vein, CSR is pleased to share the appointment of Professor Alister Munthali to the Malawi Council for Disability Affairs (MACODA) Board as Chairperson. Professor Munthali is our foremost disabilities research expert and has led multiple research projects and publications on the topic and we believe that his experience will help shape a well-informed strategic direction for the Council. Congratulations Prof.



Ms Janine Kayange

The CSR family is equally delighted to celebrate with Ms. Janine Kayange who successfully graduated with a Master of Education (M.Ed. degree in Policy, Planning and Leadership at the University of Malawi (29 August 2025). Her master's research examined the experiences of learners with intellectual disabilities in mainstream schools, providing insights into the barriers that limit their inclusion and the opportunities that can enhance their meaningful participation.

While in the final stages of her M.Ed. studies, she enrolled in an online Master of Public Health (MPH) programme at the University of Wolverhampton in the UK. She also successfully graduated on 29 January 2026. Her MPH research explored the factors that influence health-promoting behaviours among women, contributing to a deeper understanding of wider determinants of health and inequalities. Congratulations.



Prof. A Munthali

STAFF NEWS CONT..



Introducing Dr Lamulo Nsanja

I am a Development Economist and applied researcher with over 16 years of experience working at the intersection of research, policy, and development practice in Malawi. Before joining CSR, I spent more than a decade with KfW Development Bank, where I served as Senior Country Economist and later Portfolio Manager, leading analytical work, impact assessments, and policy dialogue. My work has focused on evidence informing policies and programmes in social protection, health, nutrition, education, and public finance and economic management.

“I bridge rigorous academic research with practical policy relevance, making evidence useful, timely, and credible for decision-makers.”

Path to CSR

What drew me to CSR is its unique position as Malawi's leading social science research institution, with both academic credibility and deep engagement in national policy processes. CSR sits at a rare but powerful intersection, where rigorous research directly informs government policy, development programming, and public debate.

After many years working on the donor side, I wanted to return more deliberately to evidence generation and intellectual leadership, while remaining closely connected to real-world policy challenges.

I was also drawn by CSR's emphasis on multi disciplinary and mixed-methods research. Many of the development challenges Malawi faces, including poverty, inequality, youth unemployment, and gender disparities, cannot be understood through one discipline or method alone.

Adding Value at CSR and the wider University of Malawi community

First, I strengthen research quality and credibility, including mentoring junior researchers, improving analytical standards, and advancing quality assurance processes across studies.

Second, I enhance CSR's policy engagement and visibility by helping position CSR research more strategically within national policy dialogues, ensuring findings are both published and communicated effectively for usefulness.

Third, I see value in supporting postgraduate training, supervising students, and fostering a culture of applied, problem driven research.



Dr. Nsanja Socialising with colleagues

TEAM BUILDING



Winning Team celebrating

The wellbeing, fitness, and mental health of staff members at the Centre for Social Research (CSR) remains vital for high productivity in our work. Team building has, over time, formed an important part of staff engagement at CSR. Opportunities for team bonding were intentionally woven into moments when staff came together for retreats, workshops, institutional activities, and significant project milestones. These often-created spaces where collaboration extended beyond professional roles, allowing staff to connect, reflect, and recharge collectively.

Recently, a half-day team building took place on the 18th of December 2025 at the Onyamata Farm in Thom Alan, Zomba. This was a time of physical and mental wellbeing for CSR staff members. Staff members got involved in a range of activities led by Alick Bwanali, such as aerobics, football, sack-race, bawo, and dance. Additionally, we also had a quiz that focused on physical features in Zomba as well as historical figures connected to the University and CSR among others. This fun time fostered social interactions, reflection and relaxation among staff members.

As CSR continues to grow and adapt to changing work demands, the need for a more consistent and deliberate approach to staff well-being has become increasingly evident. Specifically, the CSR Team Building coordinators are revitalizing the social and wellbeing initiatives by transitioning it into a structured and regular programme where sessions will take place once every month, creating dedicated time for staff to step away from daily responsibilities and engage with one another in meaningful ways. This revamped programme is designed to nurture both the body and the spirit. Activities will include; walks, aerobics, light sports, hiking, or fitness sessions. By offering diverse forms of engagement. The initiative aims to be inclusive, responsive, and supportive of the different needs and interests of CSR staff.



PUBLICATIONS

Pereira, A., Chunga, J., Kafumba, J., Tsoka, M., & Barrington, C. (2026). Exploring relationship pathways to prevent intimate partner violence among young women in Malawi. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 1–11.

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Mwandama, R. and Chilombo, K. W. (2025) "Improving Child Health in Malawi: Wealth, Education, and Infrastructure", *Advanced Research in Economics and Business Strategy Journal*, 6(2), pp. 226-243. doi:.

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Mwandama, R., & Dunga, S. "Strategic Behavior and Social Safety Nets in Malawi: A Game-Theoretic Analysis of Poverty Program Participation." *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 6, no. 14 (2025): 3537 – 3549,

<https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.20256142>.

Chamdimba, E., & Chinkondenji, P. (2025). Albinism, gender, and schooling. In *The sage encyclopedia of education and gender* (Vol. 2, pp. 11-13). SAGE Publications, Inc.,

<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071926697.n10>

Mwandama, R., & Chilombo, K. W. (2025). Improving child health in Malawi: Wealth, education, and infrastructure. *Advanced Research in Economics and Business Strategy Journal*, 6(2), 226 - 243.

<https://doi.org/10.52919/arebus.v6i2.103>

Mphemo, K. Y. G., Muula, A. S., Sadalaki, J., Alfonso, W.T., & Mfutso-Bengo, J. (2025). "The Bible teaches about circumcision of the heart, not the flesh. This [VMMC] is not for us". Factors behind resistance to voluntary medical male circumcision among the Chewas of Dowa in Central Malawi. *Advances in Sciences and Arts*, 2(1).

<https://doi.org/10.37872/2025.0201.12>

International evidence shows Intimate Partner Violence is common among adolescents and young women, highlighting the need for early prevention. Based on 39 in-depth interviews with Malawian women aged 19–29 in households receiving Social Cash Transfers, the study finds that cash transfers were not directly linked to changes in relationships or IPV. Instead, IPV was driven by threats to male masculinity and perceived violations of gender norms, with varying triggers by violence type. Women sought help less often for IPV than other issues, underscoring the need for complementary, targeted interventions.

Using Malawi's 2019–2020 Integrated Household Survey, this study examines determinants of child nutrition. Multilevel analysis shows household wealth as the strongest positive predictor, while recent illness significantly worsens malnutrition. Boys face higher stunting risk, and nutrition declines with age before modest improvement. Maternal education has positive but insignificant effects, suggesting benefits mainly at secondary level or higher. Community access to ADMARC markets and improved water shows weak associations. Findings call for policies boosting wealth, reducing illness, and maternal education.

Malawi has introduced social protection programmes such as the Social Cash Transfer Programme (SCTP) and the Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP) to reduce poverty. However, their effectiveness is often undermined by misreporting, where households give false information to qualify for benefits, and by elite capture, where community leaders favour relatives or allies. The purpose of the study was to examine how these strategic behaviours shape participation and resource allocation within social safety nets.

This entry provides an overview of albinism, gender, and schooling, especially regarding cultural belief systems in African contexts that affect schoolgirls. Albinism causes shortage of melanin in one's body, and directly impacts the educational experiences of learners, particularly rural-based girls. Albinism also causes health challenges including visual impairments. Schoolgirls have historically experienced challenges in accessing formal education, and albinism adds an intersecting identity exacerbating schooling barriers. Focusing on girl-centered education interventions and supports for schoolgirls with albinism, the entry interrogates existing forces that exacerbate their educational marginalization.

This paper investigates the roles of maternal education, household wealth, and community infrastructure in determining child nutrition outcomes in Malawi using data from the fifth Malawi Integrated Household Survey (IHS5) conducted in 2019–2020. Employing multilevel linear mixed models to account for the hierarchical structure of the data, the study analyses standardized z-scores for height-for-age (HAZ), weight-for-age (WAZ), and weight-for-height (WHZ) as indicators of stunting, underweight, and wasting, respectively. The findings reveal that household wealth is a strong positive predictor across all nutrition measures, while recent child illness consistently exacerbates malnutrition.

Globally, the estimated prevalence rate of male circumcision is around 38.7% with half of the circumcisions conducted for religious and cultural reasons. In Malawi, research shows that only 28.0% of the men aged 15–49 are circumcised. This figure includes 18.0% circumcised by traditional practitioners and 9.0% by medical professionals revealing how much resistance this process has met among Malawian males. Comparing the progress of the voluntary male medical circumcision between the Southern and Central region, much resistance and low uptake is recorded and experienced in the Chewa dominated Central Region. What factors have contributed to this resistance? A qualitative research approach that interviewed 118 participants (78 males and 44 females).

DIGITAL PRESENCE

Connect With CSR in 2026 and Beyond

CSR has been present on social media platforms for several years. From 2026, we are giving this presence new energy through a strengthened and more intentional communication strategy, designed to bring CSR's work to life and closer to the people who matter most.

This revitalized approach focuses on more regular, consistent, and engaging communication across our digital platforms. By actively sharing updates on research activities, publications, events, partnerships, and milestones, CSR aims to make its work more visible and accessible to both internal and external audiences.

An enhanced social media presence will allow CSR to engage more meaningfully with researchers, students, partners, policymakers, and the wider public, while ensuring timely dissemination of information and clearer storytelling around our impact. Ultimately, this renewed strategy strengthens CSR's institutional profile, positioning the Centre as a dynamic, responsive, and influential research hub within the University and beyond.

We invite you to connect with us, engage with our work, and be part of the conversation. Follow CSR online to stay informed, share insights, and explore our research and activities:

EDITORIAL TEAM

- Elita Chamdimba (Coordinator)
- Alick Kadango Bwanali (Editor)
- Dennis Chikoko
- Gerald Mbando
- Witness Alfonso
- McPherry Kuntembwe
- Joseph J. Chunga
- Leonard Mhone (Designer)



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As we move forward, our digital platforms will play a central role in amplifying CSR's voice, celebrating our achievements, and strengthening connections across our growing network. Join us as we re-energize CSR's digital presence in 2026 and beyond.

