



The Research Connect

A CENTRE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

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A NOTE FROM THE HEAD OF CSR

As the Centre for Social Research (CSR) celebrates 45 years of a remarkable journey, I warmly welcome you, our esteemed readers, to the inaugural issue of *The Research Connect*, CSR's triannual newsletter.

This publication marks a new chapter in our institutional storytelling. It offers a vibrant platform to share the exciting developments unfolding at CSR, including groundbreaking research, academic milestones, social initiatives, employee wellness, and community outreach within UNIMA and beyond. Each issue will blend scholarly insights with human stories, reflecting the dynamic spirit of our work.

Through *The Research Connect*, we invite our collaborators, stakeholders, and the nation to walk with us as we explore new frontiers of engagement. Our work spans four thematic areas: Governance, Institution and Citizenship; Poverty and Economic Well-being; Public Health and Society; and Social Inclusion and Equity. We remain committed to producing research that is academically rigorous and transformative in shaping public policy and national development.



Joseph J. Chunga —Head of CSR

In this edition, we aim to deepen readers' appreciation of CSR's mandate, functions, and strategic direction in a rapidly evolving operational environment. We also begin a journey of celebrating our many collaborators who have contributed to what CSR is now, with special recognition to UNICEF and Afrobarometer for their enduring support.

I extend heartfelt thanks to our editorial team for their dedication in bringing this newsletter to life. With their commitment and your continued readership *The Research Connect* will reach you every four months with fresh insights and stories that matter.

Enjoy the read.



A NOTE FROM THE VICE CHANCELLOR

It is with deep gratitude that I extend heartfelt appreciation to all partners who have supported the University of Malawi (UNIMA) over the years, and the Centre for Social Research (CSR) in particular, since its founding in 1979.

As UNIMA clocks 60 years, we remain steadfast in our commitment to fostering excellence in research and innovation—key pillars in driving growth and transformation towards achieving Malawi 2063. This *Research Connect* will be highlighting some of the CSR's remarkable initiatives, made possible through the technical and financial support of our valued partners.

Among the highlights in this issue is the power of collaboration, exemplified by the launch of the Vice Chancellors Forum, hosted by UNIMA with CSR serving as the secretariat. This landmark initiative, in partnership with UNICEF, brings together leaders from Malawi's public and private universities to foster strategic dialogue and strengthen cooperation across the higher education sector. We also spotlight the university's commitment to stakeholder engagement and policy-oriented research, illustrated by CSR's work in conducting Afrobarometer surveys.



Prof. Samson Sajidu - Vice Chancellor

This initiative enhances the university's role in generating evidence-based insights that inform public policy. Equally noteworthy is the success of the CSR Internship Programme, which offers young graduates practical experience in research and evaluation. This initiative reflects our dedication to nurturing the next generation of researchers and thought leaders. These collective efforts are instrumental in promoting evidence-informed thinking and advancing Malawi's developmental aspirations. As we continue to build and strengthen partnerships with like-minded stakeholders, funders, and collaborators, we look forward to future engagements that further our shared commitment to knowledge, research, and innovation. Together, let us connect with excellence and work towards a brighter, more prosperous future for Malawi.

A NOTE FROM DRIPS



Dr. Maurice Monjerezi - DRIPS

The Directorate of Research and Innovation and Postgraduate Studies (DRIPS) serves as the central coordinator of postgraduate education and research at the University of Malawi. Using an inclusive framework, it promotes collaboration and provides essential support to academic staff, students, and innovators across the departments, units, and research centres. DRIPS strives to create a vibrant research environment that encourages innovation, maintains postgraduate standards, and supports Malawi's national development objectives.

Guided by strict ethical standards, we focus on both research outputs and efficient knowledge

sharing. I am pleased to present *The Research Connect*, a new platform dedicated to showcasing the innovative work from our most established research centre, the Centre for Social Research (CSR). *The Research Connect* highlights pioneering ideas, shares impactful stories, and invites collaboration, co-creation, and larger ambitions.

We trust this publication will inform, inspire, and foster new collaborations with CSR and the wider UNIMA research community.

ABOUT CSR

The Centre for Social Research (CSR), founded in 1979, is a semiautonomous research arm of the University of Malawi. With over 45 years of experience in the research industry, CSR has established a competitive edge in delivering high-quality, impactful research. Its mandate has progressively evolved from an initial focus on appraising, monitoring, and evaluating development programmes and projects initiated by the Government of Malawi with support from UNICEF, to driving innovative research and strengthening capacities for evidence-based policymaking.

This evolution has enabled CSR to become a recognised centre of excellence in cutting-edge academic and applied social science research. Since its inception, CSR has completed over 600 research, evaluation, and consultancy projects, covering all stages of the research process—from study design and training data collectors to fieldwork, report writing, and the dissemination of findings to a broad spectrum of stakeholders.

PROGRAMME PORTIFOLIO

The CSR's strategic direction and work is built around four thematic pillars.

- ✓ Governance, Institution and Citizenship
- ✓ Public Health and Society
- ✓ Poverty and Economic Well being
- ✓ Social inclusion and equity

These pillars are informed by the National Research Agenda in pursuit of the country's aspirations as espoused in the Malawi 2063.



VISION

Leading centre of excellence in social science research, capacity building for scholarship and public policy engagement in Malawi and sub-Saharan African.



MISSION

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.

WHY WE EXIST

- ✓ To undertake applied social science research in order to generate robust evidence on pressing development problems.
- ✓ To promote scholarship, policy dialogue and exchange of knowledge.
- ✓ To engage in critical social science research that challenges the status quo through and by systematically connecting research endeavors into local, national and international contexts.
- ✓ To carry out research that is relevant to and rooted in local communities, disseminate and publish the results in national, regional and international outlets.
- ✓ To develop and deliver specialised short training courses on social science and related research, targeting early career and senior staff in academia, local and central government agencies, and voluntary and independent organisations.

CORE VALUES

- ✓ Excellence
- ✓ Professionalism
- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Accountability
- ✓ Innovation
- ✓ Integrity
- ✓ Teamwork

OUR COLLABORATORS

Over the 45 years of its operations, CSR has built strong partnerships both locally and internationally. We pride ourselves in the partnerships we have cultivated and the strength and diversity of our collaborations in delivering impactful research. Our network spans a wide spectrum including prestigious research and academic institutions, government ministries and agencies as well as various local and international development partners — as illustrated below.

In this edition of *The Research Connect*, we begin our celebration of enduring partnerships by spotlighting two long-standing collaborations—with UNICEF and Afrobarometer.



FOUR DECADES OF PARTNERSHIP WITH UNICEF

The first and longest-standing CSR partnership began over four decades ago. In 1979, with financial support from UNICEF, CSR was established with the mandate of evaluating government programmes and projects. Over the years, this partnership has thrived through deeply impactful collaboration, actively engaging universities, public sector partners, think tanks, and young people to deliver robust, multifaceted initiatives driven by diverse stakeholders. These collaborative efforts have created platforms for leading high-quality, credible, collaborative, and home-grown evidence and policies, all in support of achieving Malawi's long-term development vision, Malawi 2063.



Vice Chancellors forum with CSR staff.

To bolster efforts toward the implementation of Malawi 2063 and advance the national research agenda, UNICEF entered into a memorandum of understanding with the University of Malawi. One of the most strategic initiatives under this agreement has been the establishment of a high-level forum of Vice Chancellors from all public and key private universities in Malawi. This initiative has also involved critical stakeholders such as the National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE) and the Ministry of Education. The vision of the Vice Chancellors Forum is to create a space for reflection, mutual learning, and analysis around strategic, policy-level, and evidence-based development issues.



Dr. Mussarat Yusuf with Young Evidence Champions

The memorandum of understanding has further contributed to the development of emerging researchers through initiatives such as outcome harvest workshops for junior faculty from the eight universities supported by UNICEF. UNICEF has also supported the Young Evidence Champions programme, which involved recruiting interns who were then deployed across the schools of the University of Malawi.

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... “from page 5”

In terms of reach and policy impact, UNICEF has enabled CSR to realize its goal of policy engagement and responsiveness to policy needs. Recent projects, such as those examining the impacts of the Covid-19 and cholera outbreaks and giving voice to children, have been significant.

Together, the partnership has gathered evidence on social protection policies and programmes, including operational research that explores alternatives to beneficiary targeting approaches. Evaluations have been conducted from the 2006 pilot of the Malawi Social Cash Transfer programme (MSCTP) to the current, ongoing, long-term impact evaluation of the programme.



Additionally, the partnership has advanced research dissemination by organizing conferences that employ innovative approaches to communicate research findings. These initiatives have fostered inclusive engagement among academics, policymakers, community leaders, and young people as active contributors to the dialogue



25 YEARS OF CSR-AFROBAROMETER PARTNERSHIP



Since the inaugural round of surveys in 1999, CSR has been proud to serve as Malawi's National Partner within the Afrobarometer network. Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan survey research initiative that generates reliable data on African citizens' experiences and assessments of democracy, governance, and quality of life. CSR has successfully completed a total of 10 survey rounds. Marking 25 years of amplifying the public's voice in policy and national discussions, this partnership has made a significant impact on Malawi's national discourse. CSR's collaboration with Afrobarometer is rooted in a shared commitment to ensuring that research findings inform public policy.

Over the years, CSR has actively engaged a diverse range of stakeholders. These engagements have included presenting to members of parliament on Malawians' evaluations of parliamentary performance and the most pressing issues citizens believe the government should address. CSR has also worked closely with institutions such as the Malawi Police Service, sharing Malawians' perspectives on the prevalence of corruption.

Regular interactions have taken place with political parties, development partners, civil society organizations, academia, and the



Round 10 donor briefing meeting, Lilongwe

media to ensure that research findings reach those shaping Malawi's future. ... Cont. to page 8

...from page 7



Field team celebrating round 10 !!!.

Through the Afrobarometer project, CSR has played a pivotal role in building the capacity of researchers in Malawi. Hundreds of research assistants have been trained in survey methodologies and data collection. Staff members have benefitted from advanced training in social research and statistics, including sessions at the Afrobarometer support unit at the University of Cape Town. In addition, CSR has provided training for journalists, equipping them with the skills to understand research methods, analyze data, and report on research findings both within Malawi and internationally.

Reflecting on the partnership with CSR, Project Manager, Afrobarometer Eastern Africa, Samuel Balongo, had this to say:



Samuel Balongo,
Project Manager, Afrobarometer Eastern Africa



It is a privilege to reflect on the enduring and vital partnership between Afrobarometer and the Centre for Social Research (CSR) in Malawi. Our shared aspiration at Afrobarometer is not merely to collect data, but to amplify the voices of ordinary citizens — ensuring that their lived experiences and aspirations directly inform public policy and democratic discourse.

The Afrobarometer journey across the continent has been one of demonstrating that the lived realities of citizens are the most meaningful measure of governance performance. In Malawi, CSR has been central to this mission. Having successfully implemented all ten Afrobarometer survey rounds — from Round 1 through Round 10 — CSR's consistency and excellence reflect a deep institutional commitment to credible, high-quality, and impactful research. This is no mean feat and stands as a testament to CSR's professionalism, dedication, and enduring partnership in advancing evidence-based governance.

Beyond implementation, CSR has also been exemplary in translating data into influence — leading the dissemination of findings to carefully selected stakeholders and fostering evidence-based conversations that shape national and regional policy priorities. From high-level policy dialogues to community-level engagements, their work has ensured that citizen voices resonate where they matter most.

As we conclude Round 10 and prepare for Round 11, we celebrate this remarkable collaboration — one that continues to advance Afrobarometer's vision: A world in which African policy and governance are guided by the values and experiences of African citizens.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

The Centre for Social Research actively disseminates its research findings through multiple platforms, ensuring that its work informs both national and global dialogues. One key avenue is participation in international research conferences, where CSR research fellows proudly present insights from their studies. Highlighted below are some of the most recent conferences where CSR's research was shared.



12th EDCTP Conference 2025, Kigali, Rwanda

Dr Beatrice Kasambwe Ngo'ma shared results from the Experience of Care Survey, a central component of the Innovative Management Practices to Enhance Hospital Quality and Save Lives in Malawi (IMPRESS) Project, jointly implemented by KUHeS and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. Her presentation, part of the parallel session "Harnessing Community Engagement to Enhance Research Quality, Health Systems, and Health Outcomes," showcased how participatory approaches can strengthen both healthcare delivery and research impact.

Centre for Migration Diaspora Citizenship & Identity Online Conference, University of West of Scotland

On 12th September 2025, Dr Elita Chamdimba presented at a conference hosted by the University of West of Scotland under the theme of migration, transnational identity(ies) and sense of belonging. Her presentation was titled 'Identity, belonging & lived experiences of (dis)placed Malawian children and young persons with albinism.'



School of Humanities and Social Science Conference, University of Malawi

On 7 August 2025, Ms Lusungu Chirwa delivered a presentation on behalf of Dr Elita Chamdimba, showcasing research findings on Decolonising Sustainability through Indigenous Umunthu Ethics. The presentation emphasised the role of a Research Advisory Group of persons with albinism in shaping inclusive and contextually grounded participatory research.



10th International Society for Physical Activity & Health (ISPAH) Congress, Paris, France

Dr Tawonga Mwase-Vuma presented findings from the SUNRISE Malawi study. His presentation highlighted compliance with WHO global guidelines on physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep among preschool children in Malawi. The findings show that about 60% of children in Malawi meet these guidelines, with a higher proportion of these being rural-based children.



CSR SEMINAR SERIES

The Centre for Social Research hosts monthly seminars to foster informed dialogue and evidence-based policymaking. These seminars bring together researchers and practitioners to discuss recent projects relevant to Malawi's development. They provide a platform for sharing insights, experiences, and best practices in research. The goal is to facilitate knowledge sharing, discussion, and collaboration.

Lifting barriers: Educating boys for gender equality case study

Janine Kayange shared findings from the Lifting Barriers: Educating Boys for Gender Equality case study, led by the Centre for Social Research and the University of East Anglia with support from KIX and Canada's IDRC. The study explored how gender norms and expectations affect boys' education engagement in Malawi. Findings highlighted key challenges such as limited parental support, cultural practices, lack of role models, family responsibilities, harsh discipline, and bullying.



Janine Kayange



Rebecca Priti Foster

Energy justice in Malawi: the everyday experiences of low-income women living with insecure energy access in Blantyre's urban periphery

Rebecca Priti Foster, a CSR research affiliate from University of Cambridge, presented her qualitative research project which explores the everyday experiences encountered by individuals residing in low-income households with insecure energy access. The research examines the socio-economic, cultural and environmental variables characterising energy access to contribute to the concept of energy justice while informing policy agendas and interventions aimed at fostering inclusive and resilient energy transitions.

Kumbukani Chilombo and Diverson Chirwa presented on Malawi's economy. The presentation indicated

The State of Malawi's Economy: Challenges and Pathways to Resuscitation

that Malawi's economy faces significant challenges despite development initiatives. They argued that a multi-faceted approach is needed to overcome obstacles. Economic diversification and agricultural transformation can reduce reliance on weather-dependent agriculture. Strengthening governance and anti-corruption measures are critical. Furthermore, success hinges on sustained political commitment, transparency, and a long-term vision. Effective implementation is key to a more inclusive and resilient economy.



Kumbukani Chilombo

Diverson Chirwa

CAPACITY STRENGTHENING AT CSR

The Centre for Social Research continues to play a pivotal role in strengthening research capacity across a range of activities, including teaching, writing workshops, short-courses, mentorship, tailored professional training and more. CSR research fellows contribute to University of Malawi's students by teaching courses. Beyond the university, CSR also delivers short-term professional training courses annually, designed to meet the needs of government institutions, development partners, and civil society organisations. Some of the flagship offerings are the short courses in Proposal Development and Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL), which equip participants with practical tools to design and write strong, competitive proposals. Participants also gain hands-on experience with software such as SPSS, STATA, Excel, NVivo, and Dedoose to enhance data analysis and reporting capacities.

As a team, CSR remains dedicated to conducting cutting-edge research and contributing to interdisciplinary scholarship. Therefore, CSR facilitates internal writing groups which hold regular workshops that foster mentorship, collaboration, and accountability in academic writing. CSR also actively encourages staff to pursue professional development opportunities externally.



Participants at UAPS Scientific Writing Workshop attended by Mr Witness Alfonso, Nairobi.

For instance, Mr Witness Alfonso attended the 2025 UAPS Scientific Writing Workshop in Nairobi. This workshop, facilitated by seasoned researchers and evaluation specialists from the American Institutes for Research (AIR), brought together successful PhD students from across Africa who are members of the Union for African Population Studies (UAPS). He described the workshop as “a very good capacity-building initiative for me. Being selected among the few successful applicants out of many was a great feeling. The workshop offered a rare opportunity to enhance my research skills; particularly in data analysis, grant writing, and publishing which are essential for both my academic and professional growth.”

Mr Sam Manthalu and Mr Raphael Nedi recently took part in the 2025 Afrobarometer Summer School in Cape Town, a prestigious platform for researchers across the continent to strengthen skills in survey design, data analysis, and policy engagement. This summer school combined theory and practice with lectures and tutorials delivered by leading academics, and practical sessions for participants to present progress and receive feedback from facilitators and peers. Reflecting on



Mr. Sam Manthalu (at the back, first from left) and Raphael Nedi (at the back, fourth from left) at Afrobarometer Summer School, Cape Town

his summer school experience, Mr Manthalu remarked: “It was a refreshing summer school where I gained new skills and established new professional networks with delegates from other countries. The climax of the program came when my dispatch won a cash award for the best presentation.”

These wide range of capacity-focused activities are a demonstration of the CSR's heavy investment in strengthening research capacity for CSR staff, practitioners, policymakers, and scholars. Through these initiatives, CSR remains committed to nurturing a culture of research excellence and evidence-based practice.

MENTORSHIP AT CSR

Mentorship is a vital part of the Centre for Social Research's contribution to research capacity building. Specifically, mentorship through internships reflects our commitment to nurturing the next generation of researchers. Over the years, CSR has invested in developing young scholars through a range of internship and graduate programmes.

The earliest internship initiative was financially supported by National Commission for Science and Technology (NCST) in 2013. This enabled CSR to recruit its first cohort of interns who were guided, trained, and equipped with strong mixed-methods research skills.

Building on this foundation, in November 2022, CSR partnered with UNICEF and the University of Malawi (UNIMA) to launch the Evidence Champion Programme. This initiative was designed to strengthen research and evaluation capacities among recent graduates, cultivating a cadre of young researchers committed to evidence-based practice. Under this programme, 20 graduates were enrolled, with six placed at CSR.

In addition, through the Malawi Ministry of Labour's Graduate Programme, CSR has hosted multiple cohorts of government-deployed interns. These placements have provided opportunities for meaningful engagement, including hands-on research experience, writing workshops, and mentorship support.

These interns gain critical experience in data collection, analysis, literature reviews, and the adaptation and translation of research tools. They also acquire technical proficiency with platforms such as SurveyToGo, SurveyCTO, and ODK for data collection, NVivo and Dedoose for qualitative analysis, and STATA, SPSS, and Excel for quantitative work. Here are some of their reflections and experiences.

Quotes from Interns



Being an intern at CSR has helped me practice qualitative research from the root to the leaves – that is from the research proposal, formulating data collection tools, data collection, data analysis and research dissemination. This knowledge will always live in me and I can proudly say that CSR has built a confident researcher in both qualitative and quantitative research. One thing I like about working at CSR is my mentors always gave me leadership position to develop my leadership skills, for example working as a project supervisor and working as a research dissemination coordinator.

Faith Lembemo



Being an intern at CSR is a life-changing journey; it means discovering your capabilities and gaps while developing new skills in the field of research and academics.

Diverson Chirwa



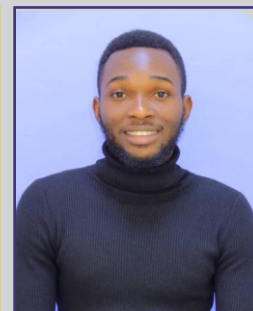
Personally, I would say it has unlocked my inner self because before CSR it was so hard for me to express myself. Mostly, I would just write down my feelings, fears and insecurities. But now coming here, the nature of job requires me to be friendly as research requires building a conversation with respondents in a manner that is not like an interrogation. Additionally, I have learnt different ways of communicating, handling people, setting boundaries and facing people. So, for me it's a win, a good progress.

Grace Marley



Being at CSR has been truly transformative. I have acquired valuable skills that I never imagined I would. When I joined, I had limited exposure to data analysis, but through hands-on experience and guidance, I have developed practical skills in tools such as SPSS and NVivo. Equally impactful has been the time spent in the field. Direct engagement with communities made me understand the complexity of the challenges people face especially in rural areas. This has deepened my empathy and a sense of purpose in the work we do.

Johnstone Kanyada



CSR STAFF

The CSR team comprises researchers, administrative staff and interns working collaboratively to advance the Centre's mission. Our researchers represent an interdisciplinary group drawn from diverse fields, including public health, social work, political science, economics, health systems and policy, among others. In addition, CSR benefits from strong collaborations across the University of Malawi, drawing expertise from the Schools of Humanities and Social Sciences, Education, as well as Law, Economics and Government. In the pages that follow, this edition of the newsletter shines a spotlight on the dedicated team behind the CSR, honours long-serving members, and celebrates recent staff achievements

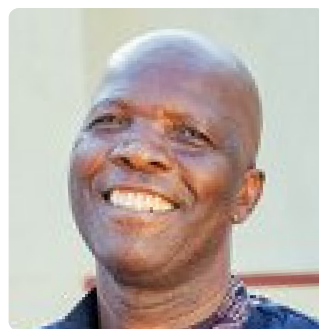
Research Staff



Joseph J. Chunga
Head of CSR



John Kadzandira, PhD
Research Fellow



Maxton Tsoka, PhD
Associate Professor



Alister Munthali, PhD
Professor Emeritus



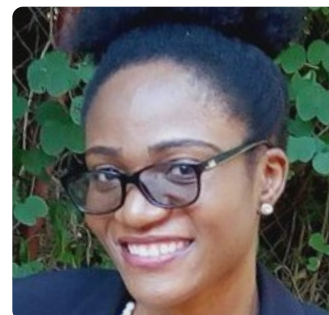
Juba Kafumba Ngongondo
Research Fellow



Elita Chamdimba, PhD
Research Fellow



Tawonga Mwase-Vuma, PhD
Research Fellow



Dadirai Mkombe Mpando
Research Fellow



Janine Kayange
Project Coordinator



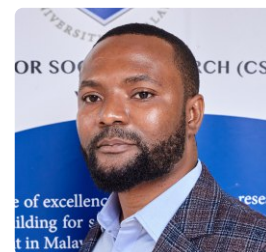
Sam Manthulu
Systems Engineer



Beatrice Kasabwe Ng'oma
Junior Research Fellow



Witness Alfonso
Research Fellow



McPherry Kuntembwe
Research Fellow

Administrative Staff



Charles Mbewu
Accountant



Richard Thom
Clerical Officer



Pelani Kankuzi
Documentation Officer



Angela Chitungu
Secretary



Charles Neliyo
Office Assistant



Harry Majawa
Driver

Interns



Maureen Mwanza



Redson Mwandama



Seth Evans



Humphreys Macheso



Masautso Mulowa



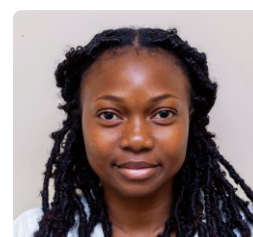
Faith Chilimtsidya



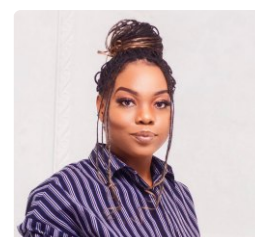
Gerald Mbando



Kumbukani Chilombo



Asante Grace Marley



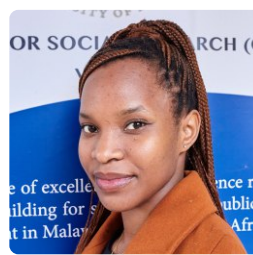
Cynthia Amin



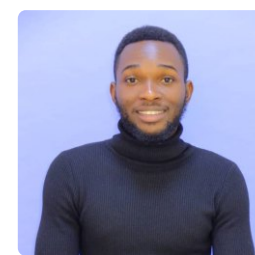
Dennis Samuel Chikoko



Diverson Chirwa



Lusungu Chirwa



Johnston Kanyanda

CSR HONORS LONG SERVING STAFF

In recent years, CSR has witnessed colleagues transition into retirement or new professional chapters. To honor them, CSR organized a farewell function to celebrate Professor Alister Munthali, Associate Professor Maxston Tsoka, Dr Peter Mvula, and Mr Massy Chiotcha. During the event, Dr Emmanuel Ngwira, Executive Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, presented each with a commemorative trophy in recognition of their exceptional contributions.



Dr Peter Mvula

Dr Peter Mvula began his journey with CSR in 1987 as a Staff Associate. He was promoted to Research Fellow in 1991 and later advanced to Senior Research Fellow in 2009. During his tenure, he also served as Deputy Director, and retired in 2018 after 31 years of dedicated service.



Associate Prof Maxton Tsoka

Associate Professor Tsoka joined CSR from the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development on 1 September 1995 as a Research Fellow. He rose through the ranks to become Associate Research Professor in 2013. He officially retired in 2021 after 25 years of dedicated service. CSR is grateful that he graciously accepted to continue contributing to various projects beyond his retirement.



Mr Massy Chiotcha

Mr Massy Chiotcha joined CSR on 4 December 1989 as a Data Entry Clerk under a UNHCR-UNICEF project. In 1990, he pursued further studies in Data Processing and Control Procedures at Data Processing Department Training Centre. When the position of Data Manager was established at CSR in 1994, he was appointed to the role and served in that capacity until his retirement. He officially retired on 8 August 2024, marking 35 years of loyal service to CSR.



Professor Alister Munthali

Professor Munthali joined CSR from the Ministry of Labour on 2 January 1996 as a Research Fellow. He was promoted to Senior Research Fellow in 2006, Associate Research Professor in 2010, and Research Professor in 2017. He also held leadership roles as Deputy Director (2005–2007) and Director (2012–2016). After 27 years of dedicated service, he retired in 2023. CSR is proud to continue benefiting from his expertise through his involvement in various projects.

Making his remarks during the function, Head of CSR, Joseph Chunga expressed gratitude to the retirees for their distinguished service to UNIMA and, in particular, to CSR. "It was an honour working with all of you in your different capacities, each of which contributed to the growth of CSR into the Centre it is today," he said. CSR celebrates their outstanding contributions and the legacy of excellence that continues.

STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS



Dr Elita Chamdimba

On 11 April 2025, Dr Elita Chamdimba successfully defended her PhD viva at the University of Strathclyde and graduated on 1 July 2025 with a Doctorate in Social Work. Supervised by Prof. Daniela Sime and Dr. Gillian MacIntyre in the school of Social Work and Social Policy, her PhD

research amplified the voices of children and young persons with albinism in Malawi by exploring the lived experiences within family, education, health and community settings. Congratulations, Dr Elita Chamdimba for the huge milestone!

Dr Tawonga Mwase-Vuma
Dr Tawonga Mwase-Vuma was also selected for the 2025 Bill Kohl Peer Review Academy. This mentorship program is a cornerstone of scientific research, ensuring the quality and legitimacy of published work. Under the



Bill Kohl Peer Review Academy Dr Mwase-Vuma is receiving training with senior peer-review mentors and engaging in the review of at least two manuscripts over a one-year period. Well done, Dr Mwase-Vuma!

Mr Sam Manthalu

In January 2025, Mr Sam Manthalu was recognized for delivering the Best Dispatch Presentation at the Afrobarometer Summer School, which brought together over 20 participants from across Africa. Sam's exceptional presentation skills on his working paper focusing on mobile phone, internet, and social media usage among Malawians, earned him a cash prize at the summer school. Congratulations, Mr Sam Manthalu, on this well-deserved achievement!



TEAM BUILDING

In addition to producing high-quality research, CSR also prioritises the wellbeing, fitness, and mental health of its staff. The Centre intentionally fosters a healthy and balanced work culture by organising regular “Fit and Fun” activities such as aerobics sessions, team-building exercises, long walks, outdoor games, social gatherings, braais, and more. These activities not only promote wellness but also strengthen teamwork and camaraderie among staff.

Through these activities, CSR staff dive into the warmth of our community every once in a while, where we laugh and connect alongside activities that keep both body and spirit in top shape. These moments are time to unwind and feel the earth beneath your feet during our fitness walks, like the 20-kilometer journey from CSR to Jali on a Saturday, or the soul-nourishing hikes up Zomba mountain with mesmerizing views. We also celebrate social Fridays where we interact over drinks and barbeque. These are just examples of some the ways that we keep fit and have fun.



CSR @ **45**



PUBLICATIONS

This section features recent publications from our community, celebrating scholarly work in refereed academic journals alongside policy-oriented outputs. We highlight research, analysis, and contributions that advance knowledge and inform practice. Here is a curated selection of our 2025 publications

Otukpa, E. O., **Alfonso, W.T.**, Ajayi, A. I., Kabiru, C. W., Kairu, C. W., Maina, B. W., ... & Ouedraogo, R. (2025). [Empowering community health workers in Malawi to deliver gender-responsive life skills training for adolescent mothers to overcome social exclusion](#). African Journal of Reproductive Health/La Revue Africaine de la Santé Reproductive, 29(6s), 36-47.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

October-December

- Monthly Seminar Series

November

- Writing retreat
- Promote study dissemination
- KIX project intervention launch

December

- Proposal Development short course
- Team building event
- End of year retreat

EDITORIAL TEAM

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- Gerald Mbando
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