

## MBC rebrands amid suspicion

The Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) a state-controlled television and radio broadcaster has since last Friday, 18 March 2011, rebranded its television and radio services.

 By Gregory Gondwe <sup>22 Mar 2011</sup>

In July last year, MBC, which was previously operating as radio 1 and radio 2, merged with Malawi Television and adopted the name MBVTV and MBC Radio 1 and MBC Radio 2.

Workers from the radio service are, however, looking at the rebranding as efforts to kill the spirit that has seen the radio grow to where it is for close to five decades now.

However, with the rebranding, the acronym MBC will only refer to the television services while the radio services have now rebranded to Radio one and Radio 2FM.

Director of Current Affairs and Programmes Chimwemwe Banda told a local weekly that they decided to rebrand because they find it unrealistic to call TV services MBC TV when people already know they are watching television.

### The time is ripe

"[The] time is ripe for MBC to emulate some of the advanced media houses around the world," said Banda in an interview with *Sunday Times*.

She said BBC does not refer to its TV station as BBC TV but simply BBC.

"The same applies to Al Jazeera and SABC; they do not use TV at the end of their acronyms in order to differentiate radio from TV service," she said.

On 5 July 2010 president Bingu wa Mutharika appointed former acting director general of the defunct Malawi Television (TVM) Bright Malopa to become director general of the newly created MBC institution.

Malopa became MBC CEO while MBC's TV section is now being headed by Timpuza Mwansambo while Chimwemwe Banda, who was Malopa's former deputy at TVM, has been demoted to her current position.

### New development

The rebranding, Banda said, will not in any way affect the merger as terms and conditions will remain the same.

"[This] rebranding is a new development for us," she said "In fact this will make it sound more of a real merger as it now offers a new face.

With the rebranding all the services that are offered by the institution will now be identified by the services they offer.

Radio one will be providing all the local programmes that will be 95% in vernacular languages while the remainder will be in English. Radio 2FM will be catering for the youth with radio programmes that will be

packaged with western music and youth biased productions.

## **Panic**

The merger of the MBC and Malawi Television has caused panic across the work force as for months on end they junior workers have not been told their fate.

On 10 January 2011 MBC which is still restructuring since it merged its radio and television services, announced a reshuffled editorial structure where different personnel have now filled positions of authority.

In its second step of the merger process government hired the media institution's management team.

Malopa announced two months ago that some of the workers will be relocated to other government departments as they are trying to reduce the work force to be in line with standard national broadcasters' like the SABC.

MBC has a combined work force of close to 2000 and it intends to reduce to about 800.

## **Rebranding regarded as 'not being in good faith'**

While the radio has been around for 47 years the Television services have been in existence since 1995 and workers from the radio section feel that the merger is going in favour of the television section where more programmes and personnel that used to run on the radios have now been shifted to the television section.

Since for all the years the radios have been known as MBC, the general feeling is that the rebranding is not in good faith.

"We feel that everything is now moving to the TV service. We are not clear what is our fate, the radio is ...being reduced to this?" *Sunday Times* quotes a radio service staff member, who questioned the rebranding.

## **ABOUT GREGORY GONDWE**

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