

JUMA conducts media study in Malawi

 By [Gregory Gondwe](#)

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According to a report compiled by the Journalists Union of Malawi (JUMA), the prevailing conditions endured by media practitioners in the country are demeaning, exploitative and not befitting professionals. The study showed that the reasons most journalists in Malawi are exploited are because a majority are young and single.

"[This] does not make these [people] less responsible as the majority have [to] buy food, electricity, water, transportation, and tuition for their brothers and sisters, to mention a few," argues the study which compels media owners to rectify the situation.

Low earnings

Among others, the study has found that by May 2010, 28% of reporters in Malawi earned less than MK10 000 per month (less than US\$66.7). On the other hand, 14% earned between K10 000 and K20 000/month and only 3% of reporters earn more than K70, 000 (US\$467).

The majority (80%) of reporters earned less than K40,000 (or less than US\$267) per month which, according to monthly data collected by the Centre for Social Concern was well below the monthly cost of living for average families living in the cities of Blantyre, Lilongwe, Mzuzu and Zomba.

The JUMA study proposes that, for journalists to work and execute their professional obligations without excessive worry over the escalating cost of living, a minimum take-home salary of K50 000/month (over US\$330) for all journalists working in Malawi be introduced.

Working without contracts

The JUMA study also established that while 52% of journalists reported to have signed employment contracts, approximately 36% of journalists still worked without contracts.

"Some reporters had been retained by some media houses as interns for more than ten years, which is against the spirit of Section 26 of the [Malawi] Employment Act of 2000, of which 54% of those who had not signed any contracts were not even aware," says the report.

It was established that 46% of those who had signed employment contracts reported that their contracts were not clear on this media-related professional requirement.

Editorial policies

"Some 43% of the respondents reported that they were not aware of the existence of any written editorial policies or if the said policies did exist at all in their media houses," said the report.

On the positive side, the study established that 72% of those aware of the existence of editorial policies in their media houses were satisfied with the contents of their editorial policies and that most respondents (86%) belonged to professional media associations.

Journalism education

The study found that, unlike in the past when the vast majority of journalists were untrained, at least 30% have journalism diplomas, 19% have bachelors degrees, while 2% have Masters-level education.

The study, gathered the data through semi-structured questionnaires to 25 active journalists in Malawi while the list of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA-Malawi) membership was the sampling frame.

The study was financed by NORAD through the Cultural Scheme of the Copyright Society of Malawi.

ABOUT GREGORY GONDWE

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