



WFD



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY



The cost of politics in Malawi

Dr Michael Wahman

PARLIAMENT BUILDING

November 2019

COST OF POLITICS IN MALAWI: SUMMARY RESULTS

The Malawi Candidate Survey (MCS) studies the costs of seeking and holding parliamentary office in Malawi. It follows similar studies conducted by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) in Ghana, Nigeria, and Benin. This presentation will focus on the costs associated with running for parliament. High costs of politics limits political representation, curtails competition, and spurs corruption. Although the importance of money in politics is well known among Malawian politicians, stakeholders, and political analysts the MCS is the first attempt to quantify and specify the costs of politics in Malawi.

The project is a collaboration between Michigan State University (United States), Aarhus University (Denmark), the Institute for Policy Interaction (Malawi), and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) (United Kingdom).

METHODOLOGY

The Cost of Politics study is based on both quantitative and qualitative data. We conducted interviews with 375 randomly selected parliamentary candidates standing in the 2019 Malawi parliamentary election. Sampling was designed to ensure country-wide representation and the final sample was representative of the full population in terms of party, success-rate, region, and gender. Interviews were conducted by the Institute for Policy Interaction (IPI) in the period June-September 2019. The quantitative survey was combined with 23 semi-structured interviews with candidates from all major parties as well as independent, from all regions, and 12 out of 28 districts.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO RUN FOR PARLIAMENT?

The average parliamentary candidate in the 2019 election spent a total of 14.8 million MKW (\$20,200) seeking election (in primaries and general elections combined). This number include all candidates, even those with little or no chance of being elected. Looking only at candidates that won more than 20% of the vote, the average is **27 million MKW (\$36,700)**. This amount equals 140% of an MPs annual salary.

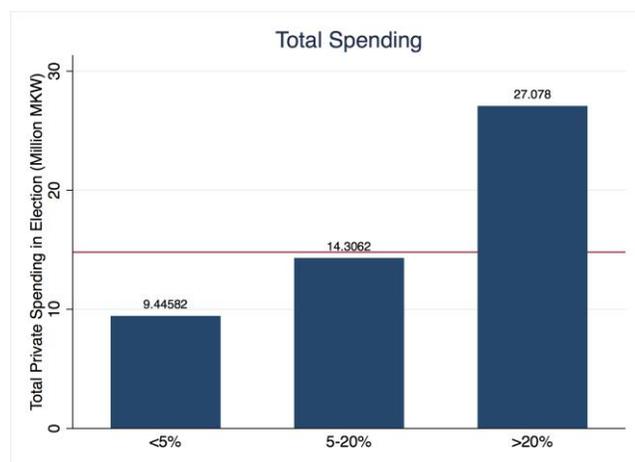


Figure 1: Source (MCS), N=374

- 62% of candidates spent more than they had expected in the campaign.
- Male candidates spent 14% more than female candidates.
- Candidates running for DPP spent 48% more than candidates running for UTM and 61% more than candidates running for MCP.

- Southern region candidates spent 46% more than in Central region and 53% more than in Northern region.

HOW DO CANDIDATES SPEND MONEY?

Candidates spent large sums of money in both primaries and general elections. The average candidate spent 5.2 million MKW in primaries (\$7,100) (if they had to compete) and 11.7 million MKW (\$15,900) in the general election. Both primaries and general election campaigns are costlier in Southern region than other regions.

- Candidates standing in party strongholds spent more in primaries than other candidates.
- The most expensive primaries are those for DPP in Southern region
- Most important costs in primaries are costs associated with *constituency development projects, meeting party structures, organising the primary* (including transporting delegates), and *buying party materials* (including t-shirts and cloth for delegates)
- In general elections candidates spend the most on *organising rallies and other campaign activities, engaging in constituency development projects, procuring party material, and monitoring elections.*

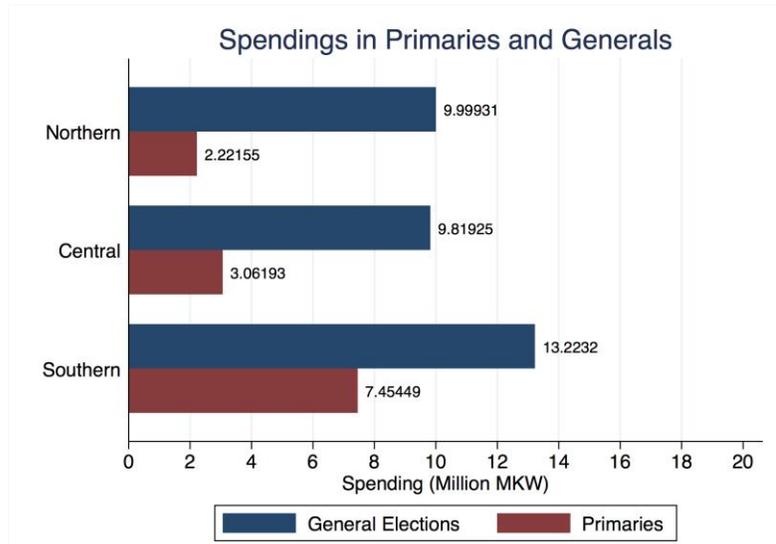


Figure 2: Source (MCS), N=374. Primary averages exclude candidates who did not run in competitive primaries.

HOW DO CANDIDATES FINANCE THEIR CAMPAIGNS?

Malawian campaigns are mostly self-funded; the average candidate drew 83% of their campaign resources from personal resources.

- Candidates standing for DPP received a larger share of their campaign resources from their party than candidates from other parties, but DPP campaigns are also, generally, more expensive (particularly in primaries).
- Candidates receive very little contributions from social groups and business interests

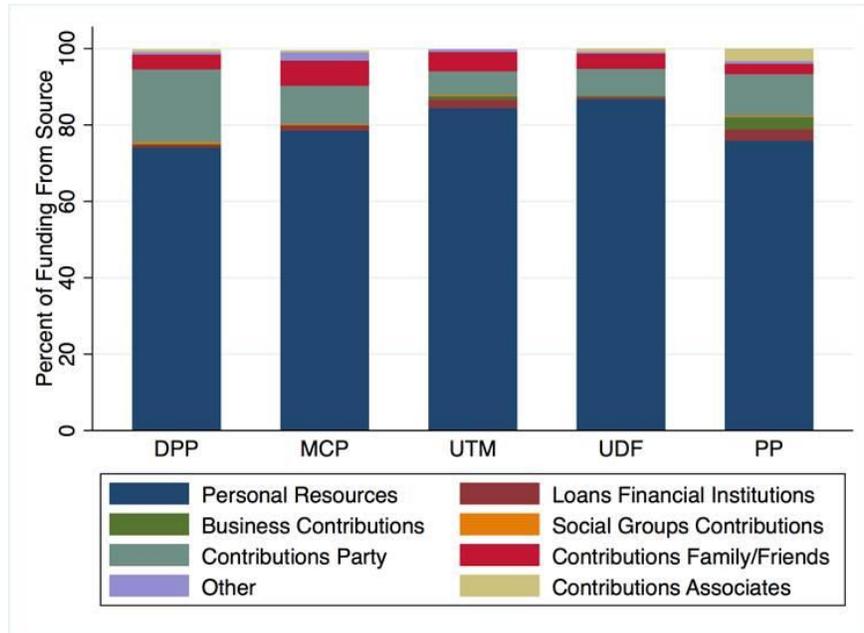


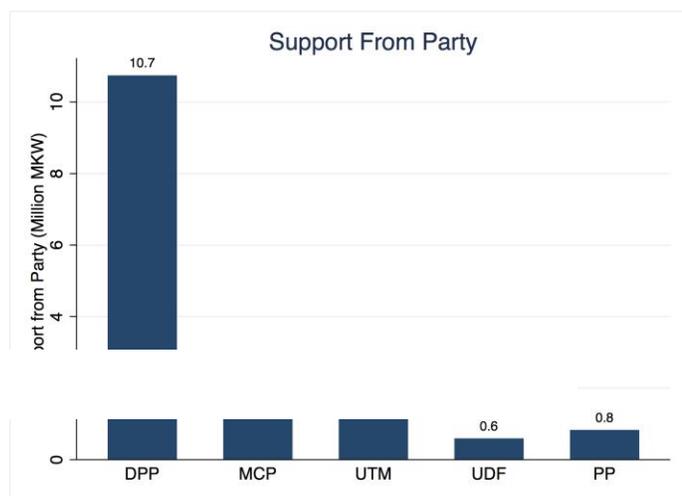
Figure 3: Source: MCS, N=226

PARTIES ARE NOT HELPING MUCH

The average candidate (non-independent) received 3.3 million MKW (\$4,500) worth of support from their party (in cash, goods, and services). However, the variation between parties is large.

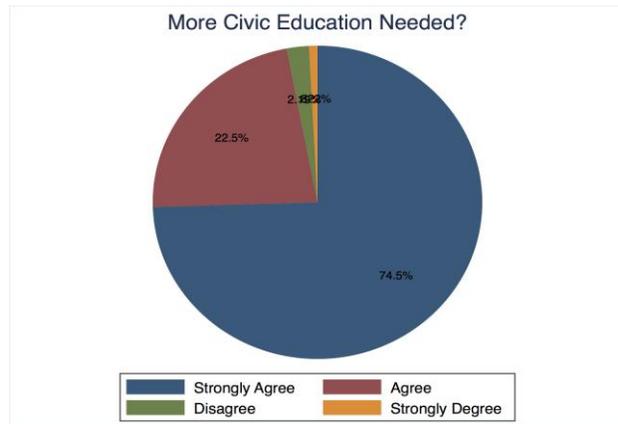
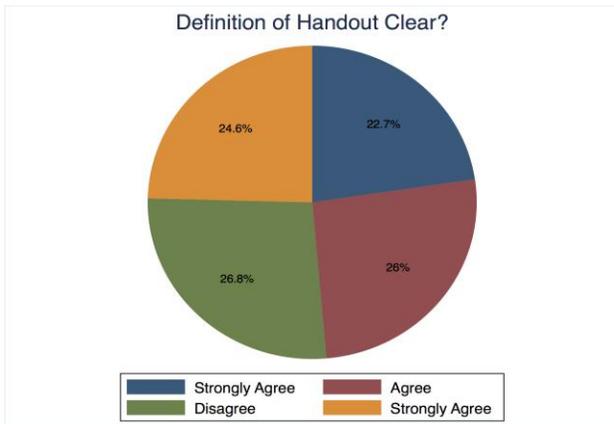
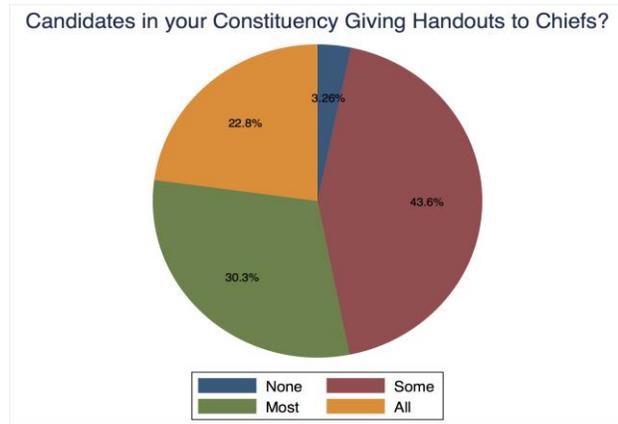
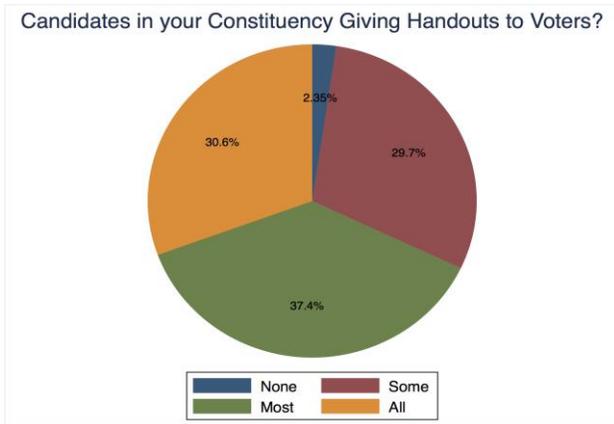
- The average DPP candidate received more than 5 times as much support than the party as the average UTM candidate (the opposition party that gave the most support).
- Most opposition party candidates received little from their parties, save from a small amount of campaign material and possibly reimbursement for nomination fees.
- The support given to government party candidates may give government party candidates a systematic

advantage.



THE HANDOUT PROHIBITION IS NOT WORKING!

Despite the enactment of the 2018 Political Parties' Act and the Prohibition of handouts, more than 96% of candidates state that at least one candidate in their constituency used handouts to voters and chiefs in their campaigns. As many as 95% of all candidates either “strongly agree” or “Agree” with the statement that more civic education is needed to inform voters on the implications of the handout prohibition and a majority of candidates (53%) believe that the distinction between a handout and legitimate distribution of campaign material is not clear.



CANDIDATES ARE ASKING FOR REFORM

Our findings should inspire discussions on potential reform. Several potential policy reforms find support among candidates:

- 81% of candidates are in favor of reduced registration fees
- 56% of candidates are in favor of a spending cap for campaigns
- 66% of candidates are in favor of state funding for political parties.