



institute of  
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and research

**IPOR**

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**Rain or Shine, IPOR  
enumerators push a  
vehicle out of mud  
during field work.**

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## Editor's note

Dear Stakeholder!

I would like to welcome you to the maiden edition of IPOR newsletter! This will be a quarterly newsletter, that highlights quarterly activities implemented by the Institute. As a research and consulting institution, IPOR's overarching objective is to promote positive change through the power of ideas. This is achieved by among other things, identifying, encouraging, promoting and advocating for evidence-based insights in development programming and policy development through research, advisory services and training. Therefore, through this publication, we intend to engage with you, by bringing IPOR to you with an understanding that we will learn from each other



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through your feedback from the content shared in this publication. I wish you a good reading as you go over our first edition. Your feedback is welcome through email or write us on our social media platforms shared in this newsletter.

**Steve Chilundu**  
Editor-in-Chief

# The Director's Message



This first edition of the IPOR newsletter comes at a time when the country has just embarked on the implementation of the Malawi 2063, the country's current long-term development blueprint. The specific objectives of IPOR, among others, include serving as an informed and independent voice in policy processes through the promotion of sound solutions to national and local policy questions mediated through independent thinking, open debate, reasoned arguments and highest standards of research. This augers well with the spirit of the Malawi 2063, which challenges us to embrace reforms and do things differently, if we are to realise the vision. One thing that is clear is that data driven decision making will be key in the attainment of the Malawi 2063. We at IPOR are well positioned to undertake research and consulting services that will contribute to attainment of this vision. This publication serves as a platform between IPOR and you,

“One thing that is clear is that data driven decision making will be key in the attainment of the Malawi 2063.”

our stakeholder, to share what we do at the Institute and take in your feedback that will help us serve you better at all times. Enjoy the reading and please make a date with us every quarter to stay updated about IPOR's top notch research work.

**Prof. Blessings Chinsinga**  
Director of Strategy and Management (IPOR)



## RaMMPS project registering steady progress

The Rapid Mortality Mobile Phone Surveys – RaMMPS project is registering steady progress on the ground with over 11, 000 respondents interviewed against the target of 20, 000 respondents by end March 2023.

IPOR in collaboration with its partners, is conducting the RaMMPS study between December 2021 and June 2023. The partners on this project include researchers from the Malawi Epidemiology and Intervention Research Unit (MEIRU), New York University-Abu Dhabi, and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

According to RaMMPS' Field Manager, Funny Muthema, the study aims at gathering data in settings where mortality surveillance systems are weak or interrupted.

Through this study, the researchers are assessing the impact of COVID-19 on mortality in Malawi and other four countries namely: Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Mozambique.

Muthema explained that during the study, a team of enumerators from IPOR call and interview randomly selected Malawians on their mobile phones.

The participants in this study are men and women aged between 18 and 64, whose telephone

numbers have been randomly selected using sampling services of Sample Solutions Bv of the Netherlands. All cellphone numbers in Malawi are eligible to be randomly selected and called through this study.

Muthema said: "Selected respondents are asked to participate in a short interview, which takes about 20 minutes. Participation in the study is voluntary and there is no penalty for refusing to take part. We believe that participating in the study will help us on this project better understand how COVID-19 has affected the lives of Malawians, including experience of illness and deaths within households.

"We also understand that remembering and discussing illness and deaths amongst relatives may trigger feelings of sadness and emotional distress. If that happens, we make provision for respondents to talk to a licensed counsellor at no cost". Consistent with IPOR high ethical standards, information about respondents is treated with utmost confidentiality.

Although survey respondents do not receive any material or financial incentives, participants benefit indirectly as data helps in the formulation of policy, programs and project interventions.

However, we appreciate our respondents for their time in participating in the survey with a token of airtime.



The Institute of Public Opinion and Research (IPOR), on behalf of the Malawi National Commission for UNESCO commissioned a study on the Contribution of the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) to National Development.

IPOR's CCI Project Manager, Mervin Kadzuwa said the study, which is ongoing seeks to find out the contribution of the cultural and creative industries to Malawi's core development agenda.

He said the study is using a mixed research design, incorporating qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and data analysis techniques.

Kadzuwa said: "Three approaches are being used for data collection: desk review, telephone surveys, and key informant interviews with stakeholders from the cultural and creative industries.

"The preliminary findings show that artists in the country value, and are committed to the arts and artistic industries. This can be deduced from the fact that most

## UNESCO partners IPOR on creative industries' study

artists are members of unions and associations".

However, Kadzuwa said artists believe that unions and associations do not effectively perform their duties and that although most artists do not know Malawi's Cultural Policy, they think it is essential that a policy framework drives the sector.

The preliminary outcome also shows that artists believe the government has a big responsibility to prop up and promote artists and their industry.

In particular, the preliminary findings in the study indicate that artists think forming a National Arts Heritage Council (NAHEC)

would go a long way in promoting the arts and creative industry; examples and comparisons were made with National Sports Council, which has a budget and, therefore, the capacity to fund sporting activities.

Cultural and creative industries (CCIs) comprise arts and crafts, advertising, design, entertainment, architecture, books, media and software.

These are increasingly becoming fundamental ingredients for advancing human development because they empower people to take responsibility for their development and initiate innovations that propel inclusive and sustainable growth.

# Savings groups speak highly of Metaketa V study



Some Village Savings Loan (VSL) groups participating in the Metaketa V study in Zomba and Mzimba Districts have praised IPOR for capacity building trainings on how they can demand desired development projects using existing structures at the local authority level.

The Malawi study is part of a coordinated set of field experiments across five countries (Evidence in Governance and Politics - EGAP's Metaketa V), that is aimed at developing and testing interventions to increase

the quantity and quality of women's non-electoral forms of political participation.

The on-going Metaketa V study is testing whether women's participation in Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) increases their political participation and whether participating in trainings, meant to foster collective efficacy, offers additional benefits.

The intervention randomizes trainings to women's village savings and loan associations

(VSLA). The treatment is a series of collective efficacy training sessions delivered to women participants in VSLAs.

At the group level, those in the treatment will attend facilitated sessions designed to engender a sense of gender-based collective efficacy.

Ultimately the project will evaluate the effect of both the individual and group-level treatments on women's political interest and engagement around local public goods and services provision.

# Communities key in afforestation drive - IPOR

The Institute of Public Opinion and Research – IPOR, says involving communities in the afforestation drive is key towards achieving sustainable environmental management at the grassroots level.

The sentiments from IPOR's Director of Research and Operations, Dr. Boniface Dulani, follows the donation of tree seedlings to communities within Traditional Authority Malemia in Zomba district.

Dulani said: "Our belief is that by involving local communities in the afforestation projects, they will take care of the trees that are being donated and planted and they will look after them".

"We are encouraged that communities would like to be part of the solution in arresting rampant deforestation. It is our resolve to support the government in the reforestation by working with the communities who have expressed interest to take care of their own environment".

IPOR donated tree seedlings to communities around Zomba and Malosa Forest Reserves to the tune of K6, 630, 000.

The tree seedlings donation benefited villages in their quest to participate in the afforestation drive in the districts, following the depletion of trees in

the surrounding forests.

Speaking on behalf of the communities, Senior Chief Malemia expressed gratitude to IPOR for the donation saying it will go a long way in supporting the afforestation drive in the area.

He urged the communities to take care of the seedlings to ensure high survival rate that will result in achieving the goal of the donation and the country's environmental conservation efforts.

The idea of donating tree seedlings emerged from a study entitled Gender, Deliberation, and Natural Resource Governance: Experimental Evidence from Malawi that IPOR, together with Ohio State University, Vanderbilt University and the International Food Research Institute (IFPRI) conducted to study the effects of women groups on deliberations around environmental governance.

The study's initial results suggest that women's relative influence in group deliberations increase when there are more women in the group and that when women make up the majority of a group's membership, they are more likely to have their pre-treatment policy preferences win in a group vote.



**From (L) Dulani, IPOR's Director of Training and Programmes Dr. Michael Chasukwa, Senior Chief Malemia during the tree seedlings symbolic handover ceremony.**

# Rapid deforestation worries Machinga district council



**(From L) Chalira, group village headman Nkula and Mwabvula during a symbolic handover of tree seedlings.**

Machinga District Council has expressed worry with the rapid deforestation in the district, a development that is said to be contributing to natural disasters affecting livelihoods.

Machinga District Forestry Officer, Harry Chalira, made the remarks in Machinga when the Institute of Public Opinion and Research (IPOR) disseminated the results of the Gender, Deliberation and Natural Resource Governance: Experimental Evidence from Malawi study.

Chalira said: "Deforestation in Machinga is at a very high scale, it is surpassing the national rate which is at 2.8 percent, this is because of charcoal and timber production, including firewood. The livelihoods are being affected by the deforestation as you know that it comes with disasters such as floods".

He praised IPOR for

disseminating the results of the study to communities who participated as respondents, saying it was the first of its kind noting that a lot of organisations have been conducting several studies in the area but have never considered disseminating the results to the study participants.

Chalira therefore commended IPOR for donating trees to 16 villages that participated in the study under Traditional Authority Nkula in the district, adding that government alone cannot manage to curb deforestation, therefore called for partnerships.

In his remarks, IPOR's Controller of Finance and Administration, Wyson Mwabvula, said the study had shown the willingness of communities to willingly invest the little sums of money they were given towards afforestation.

He said: "There's more that we can do together with the communities. We need to plant

and take great care of the trees so that in the long run, we should have a green vegetative cover as a nation".

As part of the study design, study respondents were offered a cash sum of K2 000 and were invited to willingly donate towards a community tree seedling fund, from the amount if they so wished.

The study results show that from a total number of 3, 872 study respondents, 76 percent donated to the seedlings fund with an average contribution of K175 per person.

A total of K658 820 was donated from the communities, demonstrating people's commitment to contribute towards finding a solution to the problem of deforestation.

Therefore, as part of the organisation's corporate social responsibility, Ipor decided to contribute a further six million towards the tree seedling fund.



# OSISA grant to strengthen IPOR' operations

IPOR is pleased to announce that it is a recipient a \$50, 000 (about K51.3 million) grant to implement the Strengthening Governance Systems and Operations for Delivery Quality Services project from the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA).

The grant, which runs from January to December 2023, will focus on strengthening governance systems and operations of IPOR by supporting several activities.

The activities will include; holding team building sessions and board meetings; developing strategic plans; acquiring ICT equipment for the administration of surveys; website management and staff compensation, particularly those on internship.

Commenting on the grant, IPOR's Director of Training and Programmes Dr. Michael Chasukwa, hailed OSISA, describing the support as

timely.

Chasukwa said: "The rationale of the grant is to strengthen governance systems and enhance office operations for IPOR. This is because strong governance systems and effective office operations will lead to delivering outputs to the satisfaction of stakeholders. Stakeholder satisfaction is one of IPOR's sustainability strategy".

The OSISA support is important at this time when IPOR is actively participating in various governance fora and activities.

For instance, IPOR regularly interacts with the Anti-Corruption Bureau having developed the National Anti-Corruption Strategy for Malawi to provide technical backstopping to some of its key activities.

IPOR further conducts opinion surveys that inform electoral stakeholders including Malawi Electoral Commission as far as identifying conflict hot-spots is concerned for conflict prevention and management.

Therefore, as Malawi is geared up for the next elections, there is a need for IPOR to start conducting opinion surveys to inform electoral processes' decisions.

In a statement, OSISA and its partners said they have developed the integrated One Africa strategy to better maximise resources and impact in African countries including Malawi.

Reads the statement in part: "We need to more strategically deploy the resources we are entrusted to manage. This means changed thinking, ways of working and partnerships".



## IPOR staff cherishes team building exercise

During the weekend of 28 - 29 January, 2023 IPOR held its annual team-building exercise in Mangochi.

Director of Strategy and Management, Professor Blessings Chinsinga, said the main aim for the team building exercise was that IPOR would like to build a winning team.

He acknowledged that building a winning team is critical for the success of the organisation, therefore the team-building exercise was essential in creating cohesion.



Chinsinga said: "Ultimately, the idea is to make IPOR competitive both locally and internationally. The team building exercise remains part of ensuring

that work is enjoyed. Team IPOR believes that work must be enjoyed, not endured, and that work can be enjoyed only if the Ipor team, work as a unit".

IPOR's Research Associate, Loveness Soko, described the team building exercise as an opportunity to informally interact with everyone at the

Institute, including senior management team, to build professionally friendly synergies that makes work exciting at all times.

## Hunger, employment top list of Malawian needs - Afrobarometer

The Afrobarometer says hunger, employment, economy and the accountability of the political leadership, remains critical issues that people want their government to address to eradicate poverty.

Speaking in an interview, on the sidelines of the Afrobarometer R10 Questionnaire Committee meeting, that took place in January 2023 in Lilongwe, Afrobarometer Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Joseph Asunka, said through their surveys, the people feel they can sustainably exit from poverty, if the government worked on the stated factors.



Asunka said: "In terms of the key policy priority areas, for many rounds of our surveys, people want their government to address the issue of unemployment, management of the economy, that is the common issue in all the countries.

"Governments may find our survey results both positive and negative, but if Governments chose to agree or disagree with our results, that's up to them. The data that we capture is the citizens' voice and they must respect it regardless".

The sentiments from Asunka follows the high-level visit by the Afrobarometer executive team for a meeting in Lilongwe, to deliberate on the Round 10 surveys with an initial strategic meeting on questionnaire

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development for 2023.

The strategic discussions focused on previous questionnaires, topical trending issues, and ensuring the questionnaire is unambiguous and unbiased, with the next steps to involve more extensive conversations with Afrobarometer's four core partners and over 30 national partners.

Director of Surveys for Afrobarometer, Dr. Boniface Dulani, said the Afrobarometer high-level meeting is key as it will dwell on topical issues to be tackled during the next round of surveys that will start in the second half of 2023.

He said: "In our context, the majority of Malawians do not want the government to provide for them, but all they want is employment

to sustain their livelihoods. Another key issue in Malawi is about hunger because food, clothing and shelter, are needs. If we satisfy these basic needs, our path to development will be sustainable".

The questionnaire development also came at a time when some African countries are geared to have general elections.

The Afrobarometer

questionnaires include standard questions that are tracked over time, covering signature topics – democracy and governance – and many others, including corruption, access to services, infrastructure, Government and leadership performance, poverty and living conditions among others.

## THES project to impact higher education in Malawi

In this interview, **IPOR's** Director of Strategy and Management Professor Blessings Chinsinga briefly unpacks the THES project (Question and Answer – **Q & A**: Excerpts).

**Q. Tell us more about the Transforming Higher Education System (THES) project?**

**A.** In the THES, which is a USAID five-year funded project, we are using a concept that we are calling The Bridge. This comprises matters relating to application and enrolment, matters relating to student life, and matters relating to job placement. Our view is that as we are implementing these three components of the project, different lessons will be learnt. We expect that as lessons emerge, we will continuously keep on engaging stakeholders so that issues being uncovered while the project is being implemented can actually be acted upon. Ultimately, our expectation is that at the end of the implementation of the project, there will be a synthesis of the insights that we will have learnt from the project and

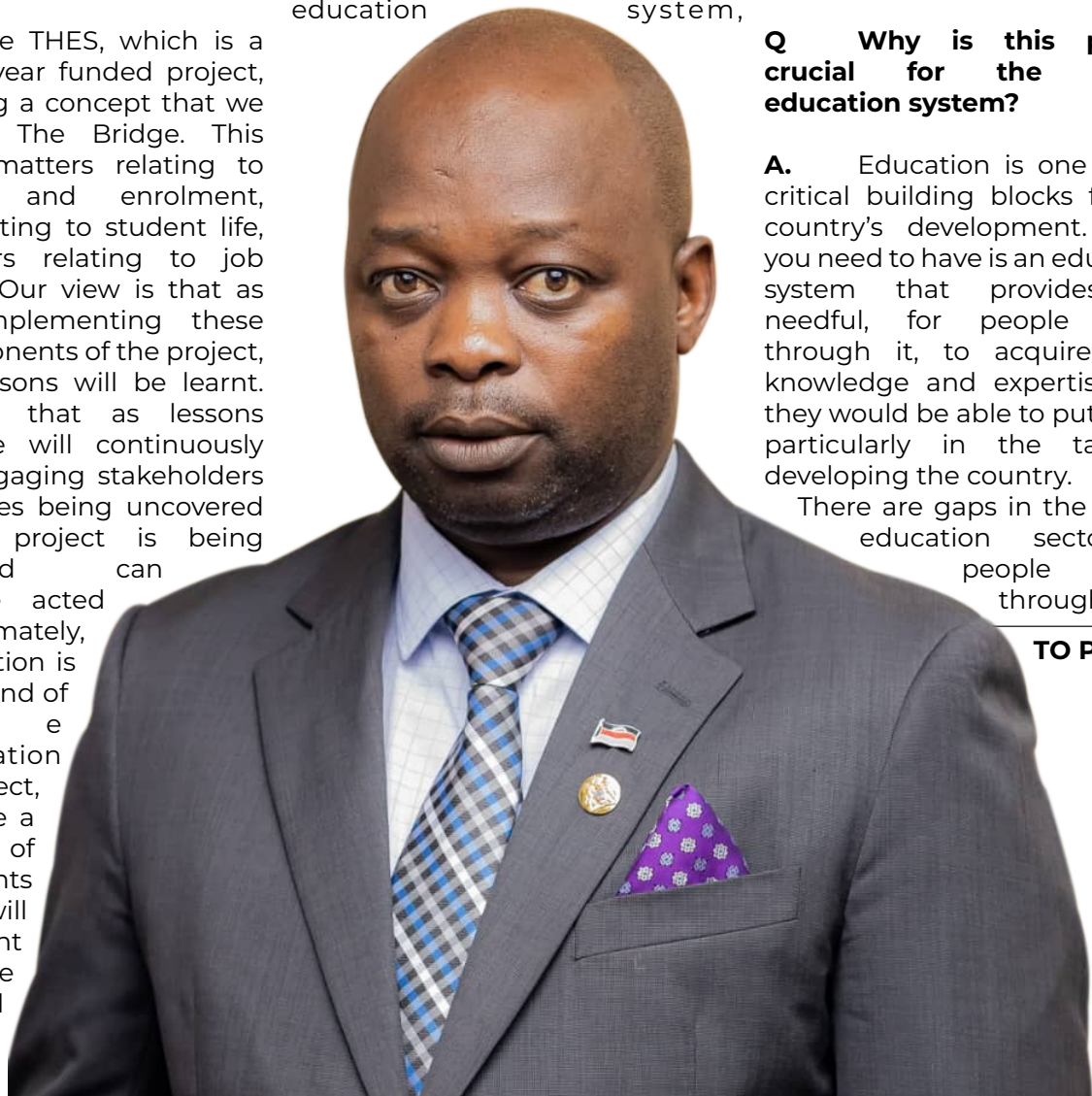
those insights will be pushed into the policy processes with the aim of transforming the higher education system,

so that it is in sync with the development and aspirations of this country.

**Q. Why is this project crucial for the higher education system?**

**A.** Education is one of the critical building blocks for the country's development. What you need to have is an education system that provides the needful, for people going through it, to acquire skills, knowledge and expertise that they would be able to put to use particularly in the task of developing the country.

There are gaps in the higher education sector as people go through the



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three key stages, firstly is the application and enrolment, secondly the academic life of students once they are enrolled and finally there are gaps when it comes to finding employment. Therefore, what we are trying to do, is to understand the challenges that students experience when they want to get into the university and the idea is to make that process easier so that whoever is qualified can actually get into the university. When they are in the university, they have to experience learning that is transformative, learning that adds value to their knowledge base, skills and expertise.

Additionally, when they get out of the university, we want the industry out there to be satisfied with the quality of graduates that we are producing. This is why through THES project, we are engaging students, we are engaging people who teach at the university and we are engaging employers so that we can have a common understanding of what needs to be done in order to transform our higher education system so that it serves its national purpose.

**Q. If the current gaps in the higher education systems are left unchecked, what will be the implications?**

**A.** If the current situation is left unattended to, it means the higher education system will be producing graduates which the employment world doesn't need and that will be a total waste. Of course, we are not claiming that the reforms would produce 100 percent of the knowledge, the skills and expertise required in the employment world, but what this project will do is to narrow the gap so that what we produce at the end of the day, are graduates that are able to hit the ground running and that will be the win-win situation for the industry and the graduates themselves including the higher education system.

## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY CORNER

### Chwayula Fund ropes in 24 Unima students

The Edward Chwayula Trust (ECT), has in the 2022/23 academic year, taken on board 24 students from the University of Malawi as beneficiaries of monthly up-keep of K60, 000 per student to facilitate their smooth stay and learning. IPOR runs the Edward Chwayula Trust which supports needy students at the University of Malawi, as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Director of Strategy and Management at IPOR, Professors Blessings Chinsinga, urged the 24 students to exercise high levels of discipline both in their studies to pass with better grades and personal conduct to ensure they are sustained on the list of beneficiaries of the ECT during their academic journey at Unima. A good number of students have so far been supported with their upkeep at the University since the 2017 academic year when the ECT started operating.

The fund was established to honour Edward Chwayula, who untimely passed away on April 17th, 2016 while working as an enumerator on the Governance and Local Development Project, a collaborative venture between IPOR, the Program on Governance and Local Development at the University of Gothenburg, and the Chr. Michelsen Institute.

### IPOR Donates To Zomba Police

The Institute of Public Opinion and Research (IPOR) donated computers, printers and stationery to Zomba Police Station worth about K6 million as part of the Institute's corporate social responsibility activities. Speaking during the handover ceremony, Director of Strategy and Management, Prof. Blessings Chinsinga, described the donation as a recognition of the reality that Government alone, amid competing public needs, may not have adequate resources to provide all the necessary needs that facilitate effective delivery of public services.

Chinsinga said: "The donation of information technology related equipment recognises that our law enforcers need to be part and parcel of contemporary technological advancements, where transactions are going digital. "IPOR hopes that the equipment will facilitate quicker and timely service delivery, to ensure that those who seek police services do not complain of slow service delivery".

He said IPOR expects that the equipment will be put to good use and maintained to last long as Zomba is among the country's developing cities, therefore, the Institute will be encouraged to hear success stories about efficient service delivery. Chinsinga emphasized that the donation of computers, printers and stationery to Zomba Police Station affirms IPOR's commitment to contributing towards making Zomba a safe city.

IPOR's other ongoing corporate social responsibility activities include the Edward Chwayula Trust which provides upkeep support to students at the University of Malawi. In 2019 IPOR donated to Zomba City Council a skip-bin truck worth US\$36,000 and an additional eight skip bins worth US\$16,000.

# IPOR Socials FC here to stay



IPOR Socials FC was established in September 2022 with the aim of accoring staff members an opportunity to gain physical fitness by playing football matches through friendly invitational games.

IPOR believes that health and wellness is key for staff members to stay focused especially in the current era of opportunistic and non-communicable diseases, prevalent partly due to unbalanced diet and lack of physical exercises.

Similarly, the IPOR Socials football outfit is part of the organisation's branding by way of bringing the organisation to the rural and urban areas to be known to the community and the public in general as a Research Institute and consulting entity.

IPOR Socials Team Captain, Jacob Saikolo, who is Data Manager at the Institute, said as a team, they would like to visit many areas in different districts, especially in the southern region as their first priority. He said the team has all the resources and materials such as home and away full kits of jerseys, sky blue for home and red for away games, including other supportive kits and supplies.

Saikolo said: "We are a team of passionate and dedicated individuals who have come together to play and enjoy the beautiful game of football. Over the past year, our club has been motivated by a shared desire to improve our skills, build strong team camaraderie, and compete at a high level.

"Our experience as a team has been both challenging and rewarding. We have faced tough opponents, overcome setbacks, and learned valuable lessons along the way. Through it all, we have remained committed to our goals and have grown as individuals and as a team".

As a club, Saikolo said they are driven by a strong sense of community and love for the game, a shared passion for football that brought the team together and continues to be motivated to strive for excellence on and off the field.

"We are excited to continue our journey and look forward to the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead", Saikolo said. So far, IPOR FC has played with teams from Zomba and Machinga districts and plans are underway to extend the friendly games to surrounding districts.



## IN PICTURES



IPOR staff during team building exercise engage in blindfolding games



IPOR staff participated in Poppy week, supporting soldiers who dedicated their lives in World War I



Metaketa V study field training



IPOR staff enjoy a boat ride on Lake Malawi during team building exercises

# New staff and positions at IPOR

In 2023, IPOR welcomed Mr. Steve Chilundu as Communications Officer, taking over from Ms. Chimwemwe Kasakula, who assumed the position of Liaison and Engagement Officer.

Kasakula had been IPOR's Communications Officer from 2021 before assuming her current new position.

IPOR management promoted Ms. Loveness Soko, Mr. Mervin Kadzuwa, Mr. Jaulos Gaddi and Mr. Chisomo Magawa from being interns to full time employees after getting satisfied with their performance.

On another note, IPOR bid farewell to one of its long serving Senior Research Associate, Mr. Witness Alfonso. Mr. Alfonso, who joined IPOR in 2016, left to join Centre for Social Research (CSR) of the University of Malawi as a Junior Research Fellow.

In his remarks, Mr. Alfonso expressed his sadness at leaving the IPOR family, but was also happy at the same time that he had joined another research institution that is located a stone throw away from IPOR for new challenges.

IPOR's Director of Research and Operations, Dr. Boniface Dulani thanked Mr. Alfonso for his many contributions that have helped IPOR to grow to the institution that it is today.



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