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| COUNTRY | Malawi |
| COUNCIL/MEDIA HOUSE | Radio Maria Malawi |
| Baseline score | |
| Latest score | 61 |
| Audience | Roman Catholic Church members/general public |
| Key characteristics | Christian radio station; all programmes are done in Chichewa |
| Contact person | Charles Malunga |
| Designation | National Coordinator |
| Contact details | 00265 999 643 199 |

Radio Maria Malawi owned and run by The Roman Catholic Church of Malawi is one of the oldest religious radio stations in the country. The radio started in 1999. Situated in Malawi's Southern district of Mangochi, the radio is part of the global Radio Maria family. The Radio Maria broadcasting initiative started in Italy in 1998 by a group of Catholics, both priests and lay people. It aims to evangelise the Good News of Jesus Christ to all people of good will.

Radio Maria Malawi like its sister radio stations in 55 countries across the globe is not commercially funded through advertisement. The radio lives solely by means of the generous donations of its listeners and the contributions of its volunteers. The radio has a nationwide coverage and it targets people of all ages particularly members of the Roman Catholic Church.

Of the eleven media houses that Gender Links is working with in mainstreaming gender, Radio Maria Malawi emerges to be among the radio stations that are willing to doing so. For instance, the media house has developed a gender policy that is meant to govern its day to day endeavours as they relate to gender equality issues. Staff members of the station are in full agreement with Gender Links that mainstreaming gender in the undertakings of the radio station is a positive step towards achieving gender equality in the country.

"I believe the media has the power to influence people's way of living and if we [Radio Maria Malawi] lead by example in mainstreaming gender in our programmes and day to day activities, it will be easy for our listeners to adopt the gender equality concept and apply it in their lives as well", says Archangel Palasimo, a volunteer at the station.

The station, whose some of its current staff members have benefitted from Gender Links training workshops boasts that they always use gender sensitive language in their news broadcast. News at the radio is always compiled in vernacular and terms such as Mneneli (spokesperson) as opposed to spokesman/woman, wapampando (chairperson) as opposed to chairman/woman and wapolisi (police officer) as opposed to policeman/woman are used in their bulletin.

Besides having women special programmes such as *Bwalo la amayi* (women's forum), gender is regarded as a beat on par with other beats such as economics and politics, and

male journalists cover gender issues as well. On the other hand, management of the station encourages both - male and female employees to challenge gender stereotypes. For instance, in 2012, for the first time in the history of the radio station in Malawi, management recruited a female as the head of the technical department for the radio. Thus was an effort aimed at demonstrating that women are able and can deliver if given a chance.

However, while the radio is arguably doing well in mainstreaming gender in its content through programmes, gender equality is far from being reached at board and management levels. For instance, there is only one woman in the board compared to seven male members. This represents a meagre 13 percent of women representation - far below the 50 percent being advocated for by the 2008 SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. The case is the same at management and editorial levels where the representation of women is very low compared to their male counterparts. For instance, there is only one female journalist in the newsroom against four men.

However, this is not by design. The radio has struggled to retain staff, both females and males because they all work on voluntary basis. This leaves most staff members with no choice when an opportunity for a paying job arises somewhere apart from quitting.

Meanwhile, the Radio Maria Malawi National Coordinator has suggested that the radio should resuscitate the gender committee because it is a best tool to monitoring and ensuring that the radio is mainstreaming gender in its undertakings.

"Having a committee specifically for gender will help us take gender issues seriously," Malunga said adding that it would make less sense for the radio to have a gender draft policy that has not been adopted. "Since I am new here, I never knew that the radio has a draft gender policy. However, a policy is never effective until when it adopted by authorities and enforced by management. Through this [gender] committee, I will take the draft policy to the board and see how we move forward," Malunga.

The new gender committee will also be responsible for organising gender training workshops to keep staff members at the station abreast of gender issues. It emerged during the meeting that staff members were not aware of the regional and/or international commitments to achieving gender equality except the (Malawi) gender national action plan.

Radio Maria Malawi gender committee is a Gender Links' inspired initiative. It was formed to steer any gender related issues at the station including the drafting of a gender policy. However, the committee has been inactive for some time because some of its key members have left the station for other commitments.