

**NICE strategies for high voter turnout**  
**By Wanangwa Tembo**

A two-day National Initiative for Civic Education Public Trust (NICE) quarter five regional meeting ended on Thursday 8th May 2014 with a call for the institution's officers to use the most effective strategies of voter mobilization to achieve a high voter turnout in the forthcoming tripartite elections.

Closing the meeting, NICE regional Civic Education Officer for the north Enock Chinkhuntha asked the district civic education officers to intensify mobilization activities in order to achieve the set 94 percent voter turnout.

"We have a few days remaining before the actual voting; so there is need to use the most effective mobilization strategies. As civic educators, we have to take our work as a mission and prepare for any challenges. That will help us reach out to everyone including those in the hard to reach areas, thus, achieving a high turn out for the polls," said Chinkhuntha. He said NICE remained a formidable force in civic education and commended the officers for their commitment to their work which he said has helped achieve remarkable outcomes. He however asked them to avoid conducting activities in the traditional designated places saying there was need to penetrate to new areas in order to spark interest of the electorate to increasingly participate in the elections.

"Let us try as much as possible to vary venues and diversify approaches in the way we conduct our activities. We should use every available opportunity to send our messages."

"Additionally, we can employ a tripartite approach whereby we can be conducting three activities at the same time with a DCEO, ADCEO [assistant DCEO] and ACECs [area civic education coordinators] conducting separate activities so that we maximize the utilization of the time that we have,"

Chinkhuntha.

The RCEO also asked the officers to be extra sensitive in their activities to minimize errors that could be misunderstood and misinterpreted to be political. He said the Public Trust has engaged musicians and other artists to help drum up mobilization of voters. The artists to shake up the north include Mzuzu gospel legends Katawa Singers, Body Mind and Soul Band, Lusubilo Band of Karonga and Mbakwiza Drama Group among others. The meeting was organized to reflect on the status of voter mobilization process in the region; equip officers with skills and knowledge on elections monitoring; and strategizing on the most effective mobilization approaches that can enhance voter turn out and reduce null and void votes. Malawians go to the polls on **20 May** to elect councilors, Members of Parliament and the president in a tripartite arrangement.

NICE urges MEC to timely supply electoral materials

By Wanangwa Tembo  
The National Initiative for Civic Education Public Trust (NICE) has said the Malawi Electoral Commission should ensure that all polling materials are dispatched in good time to hard to reach areas in order not to disturb the voting exercise on **20 May**. During the voter registration and verification, MEC failed to supply materials in time especially in the hard to reach areas which delayed the commencement of the exercises. Chitipa has hard to reach areas such Mughona, Chanya and Chatu in Chitipa East and Bale in Chitipa Wenya constituency.

Speaking during a quarter five regional meeting for NICE officers in Nkhatabay on **Wednesday**, district civic education officer for Chitipa Amos Ngoma feared the delay in dispatching voting materials will affect the voting day activities in the areas. Materials during voter registration were ferried by foot. MEC hired community members who had to walk for long distances to reach places. Service providers also had to reach the places by foot which delayed the whole exercise. The feat was repeated during verification exercise which saw verification in some centres starting two days later, hence raising fears that the trend would continue during the actual voting day.

"May I request to the MEC to ensure that this time voting materials and staff should reach polling centres in good time to avoid experiences we met during the registration and verification exercises when materials reached the centres late and delayed the whole process," said Ngoma. Chitipa has five constituencies and at least 105 502 people were registered in the district's 144 centres.

During voter registration in October last year, MEC commissioner Mezuwa Banda acknowledged the mobility challenges in some places in the northern-most district. He said traditionally, MEC

was to employ helicopters but was crippled with budgetary cuts. He however said choppers would be used in the actual voting exercise owing to the sensitivity of the exercise itself. Other perceived hard to reach areas include Chitheka in Nkhata bay West and Kabua in Mzimba South East constituencies.