

# TAKING AIM AT ARCHIVAL PRACTICE: CONSTRAINTS AND CHALLENGES OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF MALAWI

By clement Mweso

# Taking Aim At Archival Practice

- ▶ Legal framework on which National Archives operates:
- ▶ The national Archives Act of 1975
- ▶ Printed publications act of 1969

# The Challenges

- ▶ Since 1964 the country has had no national records management policy
- ▶ The one-party state left a legacy of archival practises that are inherent in current archival practices
- ▶ Impediments for researchers to access public archives and other materials
- ▶ The lack of access to information Act
- ▶ Insufficient funding to National archives of Malawi
- ▶ Lack of commitment of senior public officials in records management
- ▶ Poor infrastructure for archival services
- ▶ Huge backlog of records in the records centres

# Review of legal framework

- ▶ The National Archives act needs to be reviewed to be in line with developments in the field since first act was enacted
- ▶ For example in the prevailing act no provision for electronic records management
- ▶ There are no enforcement mechanisms for public bodies to comply with the Act
- ▶ Lack of access to information act also has negative implications

# Impediments for researchers to access archives

- ▶ Lengthy process for researchers to get accredited to view public archives
- ▶ Backlog of records in the records centre that require to be appraised to public archives
- ▶ There is no playback equipment to allow researchers to access reel to reel film archives

# Insufficient funding & Lack of commitment by senior public officials

- ▶ National archives receives insufficient funding from treasury for its operations
- ▶ Lack of systematic planning and execution of core functions due to limited funding
- ▶ There is also general lack of commitment from senior public officials in implementing records management programmes
- ▶ Most senior public officials regard records management as inconsequential and transient activity

# Way forward

- ▶ Review the legal framework that govern the National Archives
- ▶ The legislation that gives mandate to National archives needs to be strengthened to promote better management and access to government records
- ▶ There is urgent need to reduce the backlog of records to improve quality of information retrieval and reference services
- ▶ There is need to invest in purpose built infrastructure suitable for archival purposes
- ▶ Develop and implement a records management policy
- ▶ Reconstitute the National Archives advisory council