

## **Navigating the Enabling Environment**

*A Policy Diagnostics Framework for Malawian Enterprise Development (2000–2026)*

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### **ABSTRACT**

Malawi's enterprise development landscape has been characterised by persistent constraints to growth, despite numerous policy interventions. A fragmented understanding of the multi-layered enabling environment—encompassing regulatory, institutional, and infrastructural dimensions—has hindered effective policy formulation and implementation. This article develops and applies a novel policy diagnostics framework to systematically analyse the evolution of the enabling environment for enterprise development in Malawi. It aims to identify the critical, interlinked policy failures and institutional bottlenecks that have stifled business growth. The analysis employs a qualitative policy review and framework synthesis. It triangulates data from legislative documents, national development strategies, institutional reports, and secondary case studies to construct a longitudinal assessment of policy coherence and implementation gaps. The diagnostics reveal a predominant theme of policy volatility and inconsistent implementation, particularly in access to finance and business registration. A critical finding is that over 60% of surveyed policy initiatives lacked dedicated budgetary allocation, severely undermining their execution. Regulatory reforms were frequently offset by contradictory practices in adjacent policy domains. The Malawian enabling environment remains sub-optimal due to systemic incoherence, not merely isolated policy weaknesses. The proposed framework demonstrates that sustainable enterprise development requires integrated policy design and robust implementation mechanisms that address inter-departmental fragmentation. Policymakers should adopt the diagnostics framework for ex-ante policy impact assessment. Establish a permanent, cross-ministerial unit to monitor policy coherence and implementation fidelity. Future interventions must mandate and ring-fence budgetary provisions prior to legislative approval. enabling environment, policy diagnostics, enterprise development, Malawi, business environment, policy coherence, institutional analysis This article provides a novel, integrated policy diagnostics framework that maps the causal linkages between different layers of the enabling environment, offering a practical tool for policymakers to identify and remedy systemic, rather than symptomatic, constraints to business growth.

**Keywords:** *Policy Diagnostics Framework, Enabling Environment, Enterprise Development, Sub-Saharan Africa, Business Environment Reform*

<b>Article Highlights</b>	<b>Policy Recommendation</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Framework identifies systemic policy incoherence, not isolated weaknesses.</li><li>• Over 60% of policy initiatives lacked dedicated budgetary allocation.</li><li>• Regulatory reforms were frequently offset by contradictory adjacent policies.</li><li>• Sustainable development requires integrated design and robust implementation.</li></ul>	<p>Establish a permanent, cross-ministerial unit to monitor policy coherence and implementation fidelity, mandating ring-fenced budgets prior to legislative approval.</p> <p><i>This analysis offers a practical diagnostic tool for policymakers.</i></p>

## ABSTRACT-ONLY PUBLICATION

This is an abstract-only publication. The complete research paper with full methodology, results, discussion, and references is available upon request.

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