

# Malawi hosts international telecommunications workshop

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Malawi has hosted a telecommunication services workshop at its lakeshore district in Mangochi with calls to various rival telecommunications operators to share services so that consumers can access them at affordable charges.

Africa Advanced Level Telecommunications Institute (AFRALTI), a grouping of nine African countries of Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Lesotho and Seychelles, which deals with telecommunications consultancy, project management and training, organised the workshop, which brought together technicians and engineers from Malawi, Zambia, Kenya and Uganda.

Various telecommunication service providers honed skills on radio planning and frequency management in the hope of reducing interference.

Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) Director General Allexon Chiwaya who opened the workshop said he hoped it would resolve signal interference wrangles his organisation has been receiving from rival service providers.

“But since planners and engineers are here they will now be better equipped to work more professionally and efficiently,” he said.

The engineers and technicians from telecommunication stakeholders also discussed infrastructure sharing between rival service providers with the aim of reducing costs.

“Problems to do with interference are already happening not only in Malawi but also in other countries in the region,” said workshop facilitator Jared Baraza of AFRALTI.

“Spectrum is arguably the most vulnerable resource in telecommunication industry and if engineers are equipped with skills on managing radio spectrum then these problems would be reduced,”

He said the workshop, which is also discussed a unified licensing framework, would result in easy penetration into the industry by new entrants.

Baraza said engineers should understand innovations in digital technology, citing the introduction of digital broadcasting as the most crucial.

“There is movement from analogue to digital broadcasting, thus we want engineers from various stakeholders to understand

the innovations so as to provide quality and efficient services,”

If effectively used, issues discussed could lead to sharing of services between various rival telecommunications operators in the country.

If implemented, Celtel and TNM limited for example would transmit their signals from one tower, hence reducing costs, sharing generator power in the event of outages, and so on. This means that service provided to the ordinary man would also be cheaper.

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