

Strengthening Multi-sectoral Coordination on Antimicrobial Resistance: A Landscape Analysis of Initiatives in Malawi

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Key messages

- **Cross-Sectoral Priority Setting:** Establishing cross-sectoral priorities is essential to strengthen collaboration between AMR stakeholders. Improved coordination among diverse actors, including government agencies, grassroots organizations, and civil society, can bridge gaps in the current fragmented AMR landscape.
- **National Budgetary Commitment:** International funding plays a vital role in supporting AMR activities, there is a critical need for increased national budgetary prioritization to ensure the sustainability and timely implementation of AMR interventions in Malawi.
- **Decentralized and Effective Coordination:** There is a need to enhance decentralized coordination of AMR activities to achieve more responsive and timely outcomes. While the current centralized structure, led by government agencies, plays a key role, fostering greater collaboration with local actors—such as grassroots organizations—can further strengthen efforts, particularly at the community level where these organizations have shown to be highly effective in driving behavioural change.
- **Regulatory Gaps:** Public communication and awareness campaigns have made significant progress, but there is room for improvement in regulatory efforts. Promoting responsible antimicrobial use and ensuring the availability of high-quality medications will help address existing gaps.

Our approach

- **Study Period and Location:** The study was conducted between May and June 2023 in three major cities of Malawi: Mzuzu, Lilongwe, and Blantyre.
- **Data Collection:** Data were gathered through individual interviews with key stakeholders, including AMR and health focal persons from government ministries, parastatals, academic and research institutions, international and local NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs), and cooperatives (see Figure 1).
- **Data Analysis:** The data were analyzed using thematic and descriptive analysis to identify key trends and insights.

Outcomes

- **Relationships and Coordination:** Community-based organizations (CBOs) play a crucial role in AMR efforts due to their direct relationships with farmers and patients. These personal connections are essential for gathering information on surveillance and disease reporting. However, knowledge and resource sharing primarily occur within close-knit partnerships, limiting broader collaboration.
- **Financial Resources:** Many organizations, including state-owned entities, rely heavily on international donors for financial support. National budget allocation for AMR-specific activities remains minimal, with limited funds channeled through the Ministry of Health, insufficient to cover all necessary AMR interventions.
- **Priorities:** The priorities of AMR initiatives often depend on the source of funding, which may not always align with national priorities. For instance, a substantial portion of the agricultural budget is directed towards fertilization programs to boost crop production. As a result, AMR-related activities in animal health frequently rely on supplementary or bilateral funding to be implemented.

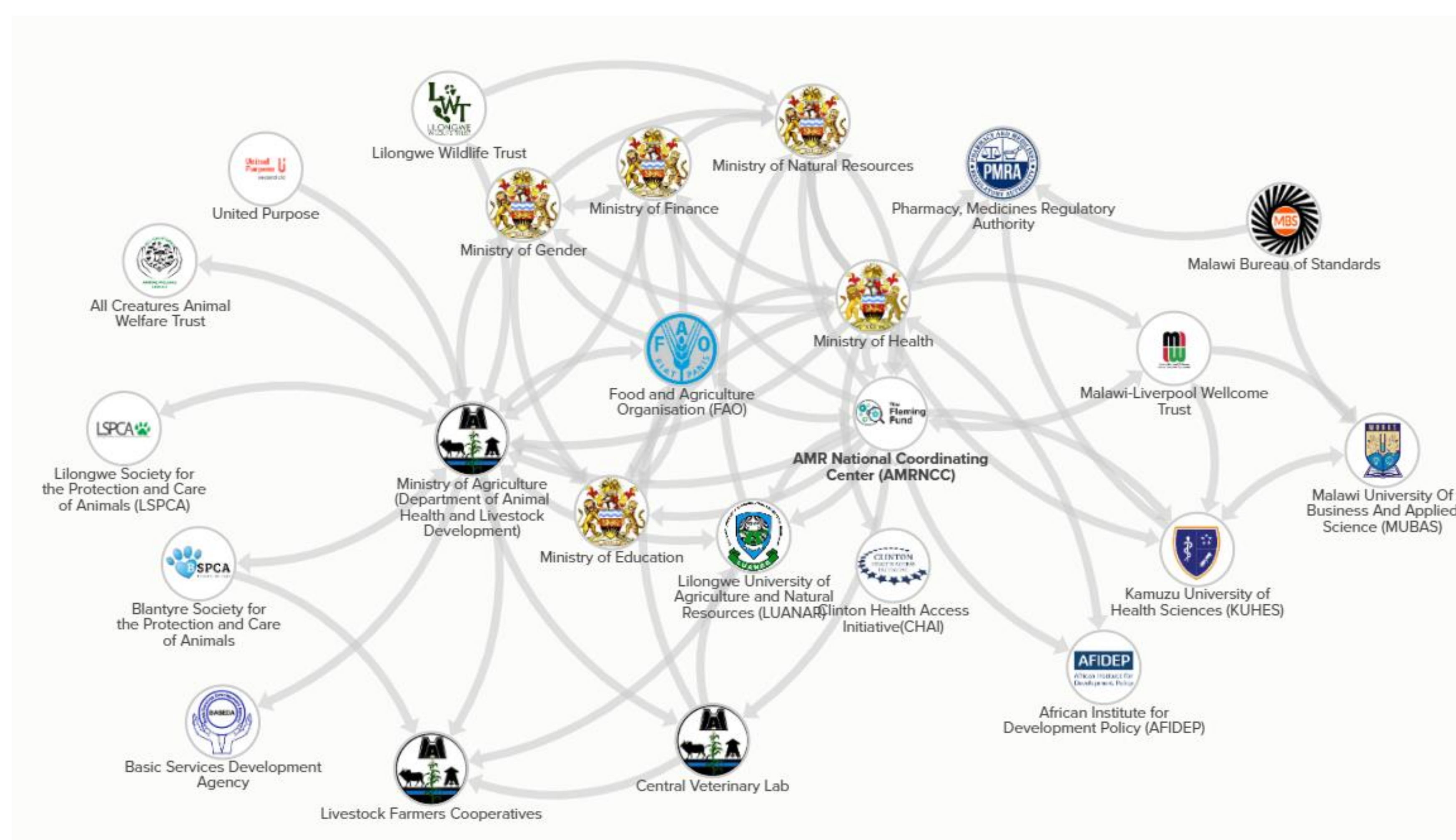


Figure 1: Government and non-governmental agencies involved in the study

Conclusion

- **Dependency on External Funding:** AMR initiatives in Malawi rely heavily on external funding due to insufficient government budget allocations, which limits the sustainability and scope of these activities.
- **Agricultural Prioritization Over AMR:** The prioritization of other agricultural programs, such as fertilization efforts, often sidelines AMR-related activities, particularly in the animal health sector.
- **Limited Community Reach by Central Agencies:** Central government agencies have less direct engagement with communities compared to community-based organizations (CBOs), which are more effective in reaching and influencing local populations.

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