Hydrogeology and Groundwater Quality Atlas of Malawi

Detailed Description, Maps and Tables

Water Resource Area 9

The Songwe River Catchment

Ministry of Water and Sanitation

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Contents

Acronyms and Abbreviations

BAWI	BAWI Consultants Lilongwe Malawi
BGS	British Geological Survey
BH	Borehole
BY	Billion Years
°C	Degree Celsius
CAPS	Convergence Ahead of Pressure Surges
DCCMS	Department of Climate change and Meteorological Services
EC	Electrical Conductivity
FB	Fractured Basement
ITCZ	Intertropical Convergence Zone
l/s	Litres per second
Km^2	Square Kilometre
Km^3	Cubic Kilometre
m	metre
m^2	Square metre
MASDAP	Malawi Spatial Data Portal
masl	Metres above sea level
mbgl	Metres below ground level
MBS	Malawi Bureau of Standards
m/d	Metre/day
m^2/d	Square metres per day
m^3/s	Cubic metre per second
mm	Millimetre
mm/d	Millimetre per day
MoWS	Ministry of Water and Sanitation (current)
MoAIWD	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development (pre-2022)
MS	Malawi Standard
MY	Million Years
N-S	North- south
SWS	Sustainble Water Solutions Ltd Scotland
SW-NE	Southwest-Northeast
QA	Quaternary Alluvium
UNICEF	UNICEF
UoS	University of Strathclyde
WB	Weathered Basement
WRA	Water Resource Area
WRU	Water Resource Unit
µs/cm	Micro Siemens per centimetre

Review of Malawi Hydrogeology

Groundwater in Water Resource Area 9 is interpreted within the same context as presented in the Hydrogeology and Water Quality Atlas Bulletin publication. A general description of the Hydrogeology of Malawi and its various units is provided here to remind the reader of the complexity of groundwater in Malawi and its nomenclature. The various basement geologic units have variable mineralogy, chemistry, and structural history that may be locally important for water quality parameters such as Fluoride, Arsenic and geochemical evolution. Therefore, translation of geologic units to potential hydrostratigraphic units was based on the 1:250,000-scale Geological Map of Malawi compiled by the Geological Survey Department of Malawi (Canon, 1978). Geological units were grouped into three main aquifer groups for simplicity.

These groups are assigned here as the national Aquifer Identifications consisting of 1) Consolidated Sedimentary units, 2) Unconsolidated Sedimentary Units overlying Weathered Basement, and 3) Weathered Basement overlying Fractured Basement (**Table 1**). Consolidated sedimentary rocks of the Karoo Supergroup (Permian – Triassic) comprise the Consolidated Sedimentary Aquifers in Malawi (**Figure 1a**). Karoo sedimentary rocks possess dual porosities (primary and secondary porosities) although cementation has significantly reduced primary porosity in those units.

Throughout Malawi, localised fluvial aquifers and sedimentary units in the Lake Malawi Basin are ubiquitous (**Figure 1b**). Colluvium has been deposited across much of Malawi on top of weathered basement slopes, escarpments and plains (**Figure 1b**). The unconsolidated sediment aquifer type represent all sedimentary deposits of Quaternary age deposited via fluvial, colluvial, alluvial, and lacustrine processes. Most sediments were either deposited in rift valley or off-rift valley basins, along lakeshores or in main river channels.

Table 1. Redefined Aquifer groups in Malawi with short descriptions.

Aquifer Group	Description
Consolidated Sedimentary Units (**Figure 1a**)	Consolidated sedimentary rocks of various compositions including sandstones, marls, limestones, siltstones, shales, and conglomerates. Groundwater is transmitted via fissures, fractures, joints, and intergranular pore spaces.
Unconsolidated Sedimentary Units overlying Weathered Basement (**Figure 1b**)	All unconsolidated sediments including sands, gravels, lacustrine sediments, colluvium, alluvium, and fluvial sediments. Groundwater is transmitted via intergranular pore spaces. Name indicates that all sediments are generally deposited onto weathered basement aquifers at variable sediment depths.
Weathered Basement overlying Fractured Basement (**Figure 1c**)	Weathered basement overlying fractured basement at variable depths. Groundwater is stored and transmitted via intergranular pore spaces in the weathered zone, and mainly transmitted via fractures, fissures and joints in the fractured zone.

Weathered metamorphic and igneous rocks overlying fractured rock regardless of age comprise the basement aquifers in Malawi (**Figure 1c**). It should be recognised the Fractured basement only transmits water locally and depends on storage in the overlain weathered zone of saprolite (known as the weathered basement aquifer), except where basement rock forms steep topographical highs (mountains/plutons/rift escarpments). Groundwater flow regimes are highly variable in fractured basement aquifers as there is no primary porosity and secondary porosity is dominant. Weathered basement aquifers behave similarly to unconsolidated sediments hydrogeologically, but generally possess lower hydraulic conductivities and storage except locally where highly fractured and weathered. Weathered basement aquifers are generally hydraulically connected to the underlying fractured zones. The weathered zone can provide significant groundwater storage and often recharge the underlying fractured bedrock.

To facilitate detailed IWRM review of aquifer units, water tables, geologic units, land use, topography and rivers, water quality and borehole yield data, there are a series of Annexes provided with this atlas that provides detailed evaluation at Water Resources Area (WRA) level and detailed maps at Water Resource Unit (WRU) across all of Malawi. All lithological units, including those too small to view on a map were assigned a unique GIS code (not published) for groundwater management purposes. A common example in Malawi are small carbonate occurrences (usually marble) which are too small to be regarded as karst aquifers. Those occurrences are generally within the basement rock matrices and thus included as basement rock.

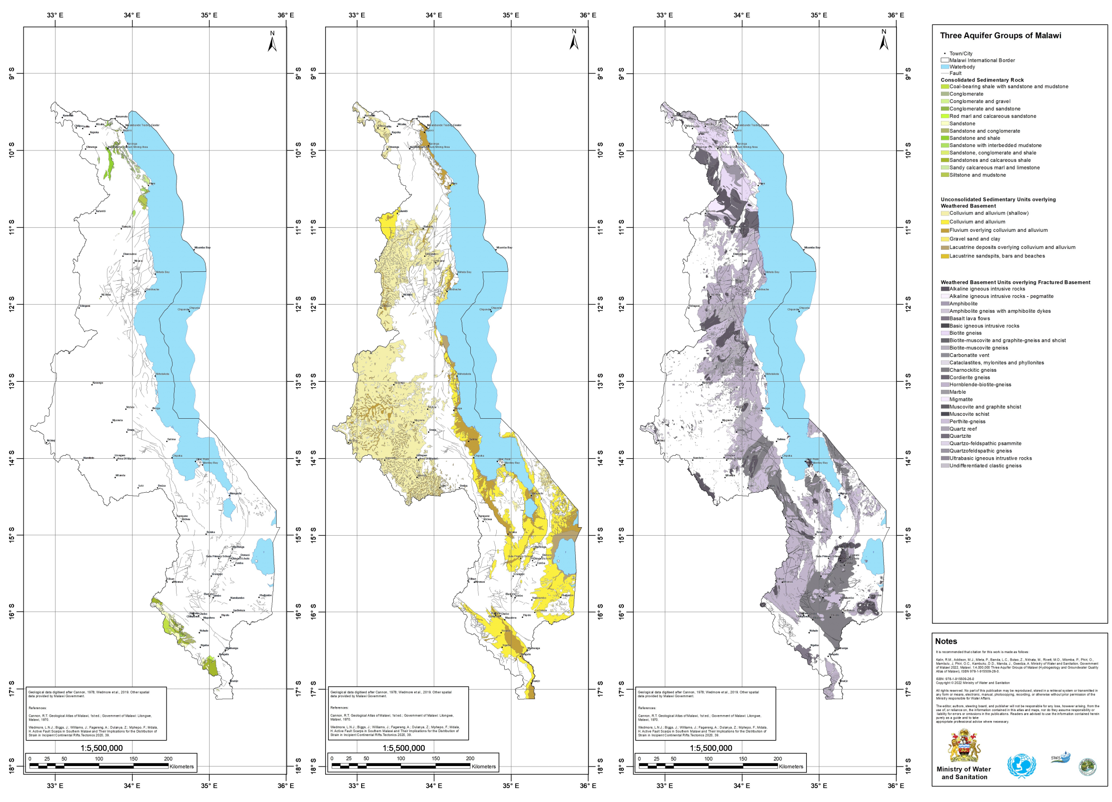


Figure 1a, b, c.   Aquifers of Malawi described together with geologic framework (a) the left most figure provides details of consolidated sedimentary units, (b) the centre figure shows unconsolidated fluvial, aeolian and lacustrine water bearing units overlying weathered basement, and (c) right most figure shows weathered basement (including saprolite) units overlying fractured basement that are highly variable as water bearing units. [Available as Map at A0 size]

Nomenclature: Hydrogeology of Malawi

The hydrogeology of Malawi is complex. Some publications and maps in the past have highly generalised this complexity resulting in an over simplification of the interpretation of groundwater resources and short cuts in the methods and means of groundwater exploration, well design and drilling, and management. This atlas makes an attempt to conceptualise the hydrogeology of Malawi while revising the nomenclature and description of the main aquifer groups.

Weathered Basement overlying Fractured Basement

Weathered basement overlying fractured basement is ubiquitous across Malawi (**Figure 1d**) and will occur at variable depths. The areal distribution of these units will be topographically and geographically controlled, with defined "aquifers" being localised and non-contiguous. Groundwater is stored and transmitted via intergranular pore spaces in the weathered (most probable areas of high groundwater storage in the saprolite / saprock) zone, and also transmitted via fractures, fissures and joints in the fractured zone (most probable areas of highest hydraulic conductivity, K). The units may have limited storage, and the volume of groundwater available will be strongly dependant on the recharge catchment and interactions with surface water and rainfall-runoff at higher elevations. Therefore, detailed pump test analysis (sustainable yield determination) must be carried out for any large-scale abstractions combined with continuous monitoring of water levels and water quality (given possible geogenic sources and fast transport of groundwater contaminates e.g. e-coli from pit latrines).

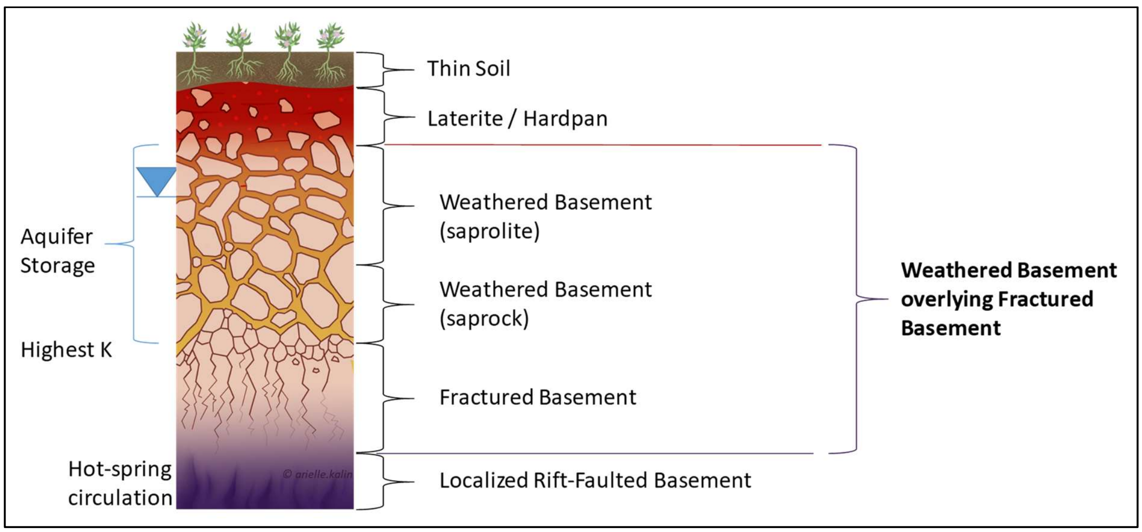


Figure 1d. Conceptualised stratigraphy of Weathered Basement overlying Fractured Basement aquifer group (not to scale).

Unconsolidated Colluvial and Alluvial Sedimentary Units overlying Weathered Basement

This sub-group of Unconsolidated Sedimentary Units overlying Weathered Basement (**Figure 1e**) is dominated by colluvium and alluvium. In these units groundwater is transmitted via intergranular pore spaces and where connected to lower Weathered and Fractured Basement, provides groundwater storage to the combined system. As the revised name indicates, these sediments are generally deposited onto weathered basement aquifers at variable sediment depths. Interbedded low-conductive clays and hard-pan is possible and where this stratigraphy occurs in the valleys along the East-African rift system in Malawi, there is the potential for semi-confined to confined groundwater in deeper various unconsolidated or weathered basement units. Where confined conditions occur it is very important to make sure the artesian pressure is sealed at the well head, and that the pressure in the system is monitored continuously (as a means to managed abstraction).

With the potential for semi-confined deposition, there is the likelihood of 'perched' aquifers, water bearing units that are stratigraphically overlying deeper systems. It is critical that each water strike and interim yield is measured during development, and that independent monitoring of each unit (for water quality and water levels) takes place. There is a high probability in Malawi of one or more of these units having higher saline / evaporated water, and the design and installation of rural water points and higher-yield 'Solar' or 'Submersible' pumps are set to only abstract water from the most appropriate and sustainable water bearing unit(s). To date there is not available information on vertical flow directions and recharge as there are no dedicated groundwater monitoring infrastructure installed to evaluate these more complex systems.

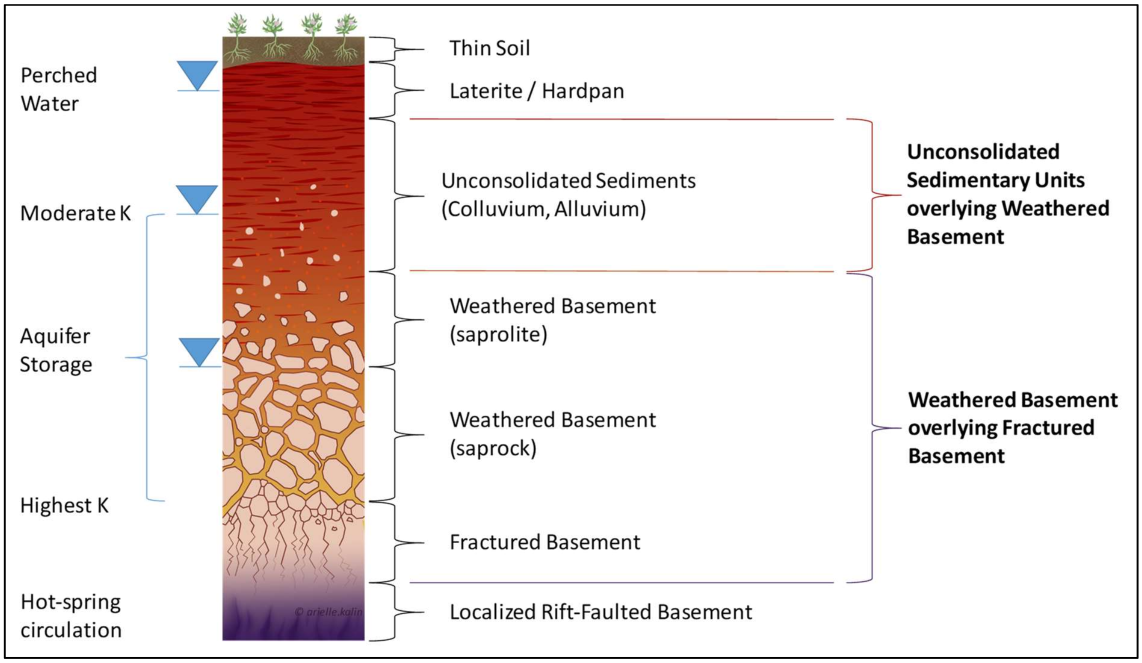


Figure 1e. Conceptualised stratigraphy of Unconsolidated Sedimentary Units (Colluvium and Alluvium) overlying Weathered Basement, showing the potential for vertical heterogeneity and distinct aquifer units (not to scale).

Unconsolidated Fluvial Sedimentary Units overlying Weathered Basement

This sub-group of Unconsolidated Sedimentary Units overlying Weathered Basement (**Figure 1f**) contains unconsolidated sediments including water deposited silts, sands, gravels, lacustrine sediments, and fluvial sediments. Surface water is strongly linked with groundwater in Malawi, and much of groundwater flow is controlled by surface topography. Given the long dry season in Malawi, the water resources of Dambo (wet lands) and rivers depend on groundwater discharge during dry months to provide any flow or potential agricultural activity. The storage of groundwater in the upper unconsolidated sediments may or may not be in hydraulic connection with underlying weathered basement, and the storage potential will be dependent on the available porosity of the unconsolidated sediments and saprolitic zones. The underlying fractured basement may have higher hydraulic transmissivity, but will depend on the overlying storage. To date there is little or no available information on vertical flow directions and recharge as there are no dedicated groundwater monitoring infrastructure installed to evaluate these more complex systems, and as before it is highly recommended that site specific detailed hydrogeologic evaluation, pumping tests and water quality monitoring precedes any 'Solar' or 'Submersible' pumping system and that a robust monitoring programme is implemented with such investments.

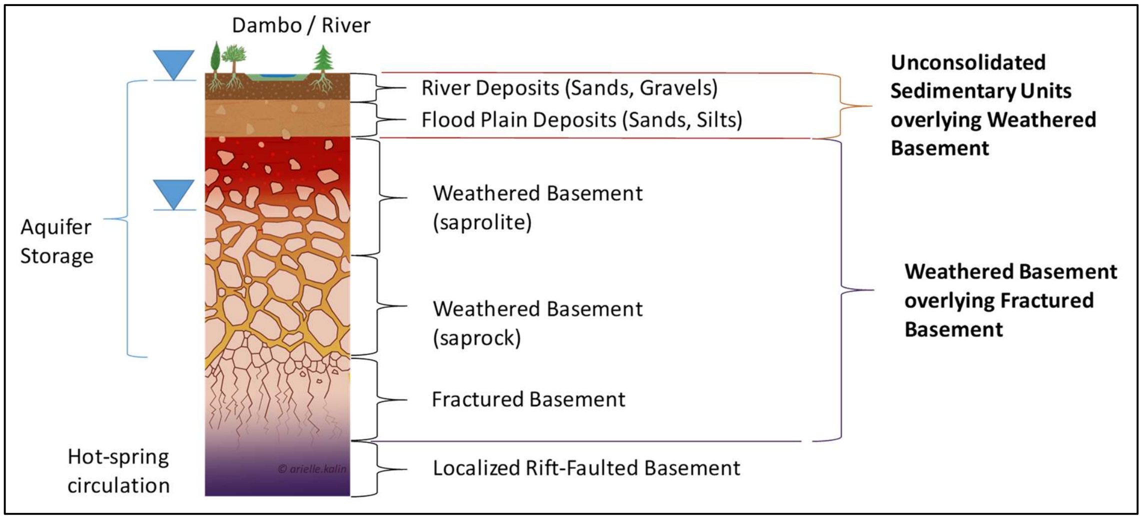


Figure 1f. Conceptualised stratigraphy of Unconsolidated Sedimentary Units (Fluvial deposits) overlying Weathered Basement, showing the potential for vertical heterogeneity and distinct aquifer units (not to scale).

Idealised Cross Sectional Representation of Hydrostratigraphic Units (Aquifers)

In reality, an Aquifer is a hydrostratigraphic unit that stores and transmits groundwater. Therefore, to manage groundwater resources in Malawi for the benefit of water use, environment, agriculture and food security, health and well-being, and as a tool for Climate Change adaptation and resilience, it is important to conceptualise these units in 2-D, 3-D and 4-D (include changes over time). The reality of each hydrostratigraphic unit / group is far more complex than many simple assumptions that currently drive groundwater exploration and exploitation in Malawi (**Figure 1g**).

It is important to recognise that fracture flow in the basement rocks will be localised and the groundwater found in this zone is released from storage in weathered basement, or other overlying higher porosity sedimentary units. Therefore, groundwater flow will be largely controlled by topography and the underlying structural geology (either regional stress fields or East-African rift faulting controlled).

The management of groundwater resources in Malawi must move from simplistic idealised considerations of a ubiquitous fractured basement across the country, to a recognition of the compartmentalisation, storage and transmission controls on groundwater resources (**Figure 1g**).

The development of the 2022 Hydrogeology and Groundwater Quality Atlas therefore sought to bring to groundwater management in Malawi a better appreciation of the complexity of groundwater occurrence, and to enhance the maps at national and local scale in such a way as to bring an enhanced appreciation of this complexity to the users of hydrogeologic information.

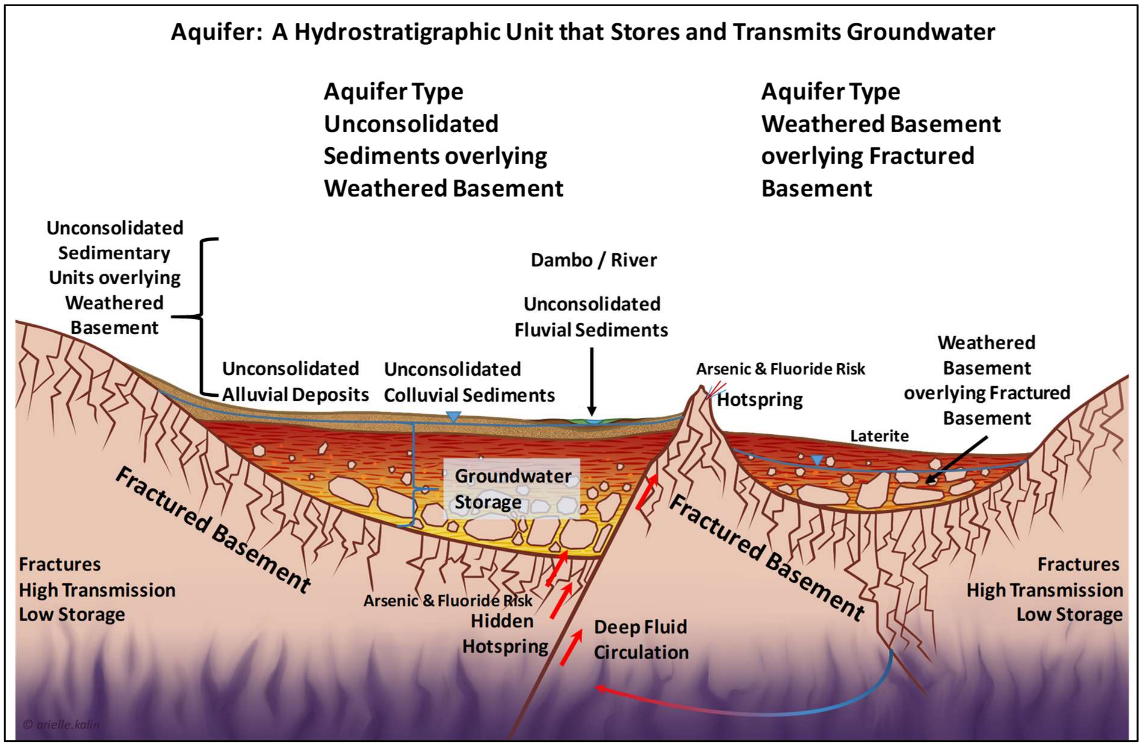


Figure 1g. An idealised cross-section of an Unconsolidated Sedimentary Units overlying Weather and Fractured Basement (left) acting as one hydrostratographic unit (Aquifer), and in the same geographic region but hydraulically separated, groundwater in Weathered basement overlying Fractured basement.

While every attempt has been made to update the conceptual understanding and appreciation of the complexity of the Hydrogeology in Malawi, the editor, authors, steering board and publisher advise any Donor, NGO/CSO or water resources professional to undertake detailed field investigations, providing the conceptual understanding with all results to the Ministry and the NWRA for consideration for determination of the sustainable groundwater abstraction rates at each site.

Boreholes should be designed on site specific hydrogeological conditions. The Government of Malawi has specific guidelines for groundwater abstraction points which must be followed by those implementing groundwater supplies. It is a requirement by the Ministry of Water and Sanitation / NWRA that these guidelines are followed. They include study and testing of the local aquifer conditions, appropriate drilling methods, pump testing and monitoring, and permitting; all of which should be reviewed and followed by the Donor, NGO/CSO and their water resources professional before design and implementation of any groundwater abstraction. This includes any solar / mechanical / submersible groundwater abstraction points. The agency that provides the investment ultimately has the responsibility to assure all appropriate legislation, regulations and standard operating procedures are carried out by their agents and contractors. The following is a list of the current standard operating procedures:

1. Malawi: Technical Manual for Water Wells and Groundwater Monitoring Systems and Standard Operating Procedures for Groundwater, 2016 105pp https://www.rural-water-supply.net/en/resources/details/807
2. Malawi Standard Operating Procedure for Drilling and Construction of National Monitoring Boreholes 2016 15pp https://www.rural-water-supply.net/en/resources/details/807
3. Malawi Standard Operating Procedure for Aquifer Pumping Tests 2016 15pp https://www.rural-water-supply.net/en/resources/details/807
4. Malawi Standard Operating Procedure for Groundwater Level Monitoring 2016 7pp https://www.rural-water-supply.net/en/resources/details/807
5. Malawi Standard Operating Procedure for Groundwater Sampling 2016 16pp https://www.rural-water-supply.net/en/resources/details/807
6. Malawi Standard Operating Procedure for Operation and Management of the National Groundwater Database 2016 12pp https://www.rural-water-supply.net/en/resources/details/807
7. Malawi Standard Operating Procedures for Groundwater Use Permitting 2016 24pp https://www.rural-water-supply.net/en/resources/details/807
8. Malawi Standard Operating Procedure for Drilling and Construction of Production Boreholes 2016 26pp https://www.rural-water-supply.net/en/resources/details/807

Therefore, the editors, authors, steering board and publishers will not be responsible for any loss, however arising, from the use of, or reliance on, the information contained in this atlas and maps, nor do they assume responsibility or liability for errors or omissions in the publications. Readers are advised to use the information contained herein purely as a guide and to take appropriate professional site specific advice as needed.

Water Resource Area 9 (WRA 9): The Songwe River Catchment

Water Resource Area (WRA) 9 in northern Malawi (**Figure 2a**) occupies an area of 3,730 Km^2 most of which is Karonga district. It is subdivided into two Water Resource Units 9A and 9B (**Figure 2b**). The area is topographically diverse with highlands mostly in the west and lowlands occupying the eastern side. Notable protected sites in the area include the Mafinga Hills Forest Reserve and Misisi Forest Reserve. The highlands bear headwaters for most riverine inflows that drain the area to Lake Malawi. The catchment has seasonal flash flooding resulting from topographic setting and occurrence of longer seasonal tropical convergence zone precipitation and adjective storms from moisture carried from the Mozambique channel. Surface water and groundwater in the Songwe basin are Transboundary in nature and as such it is important to include transboundary discussions and negotiations when implementing IWRM in WRA 9. The WRA 9 is mainly drained by the Songwe River flowing from Tanzania to Lake Malawi in an easterly direction, while forming an international border between Malawi and Tanzania. It one of the major inflow rivers into Lake Malawi. The Songwe tributaries from the area include, Makeye and Kaseye. The other major riverine inflow draining the area is the Lufira River that receives flows from its tributaries from the area; Namiseche and Mbalizi Rivers.

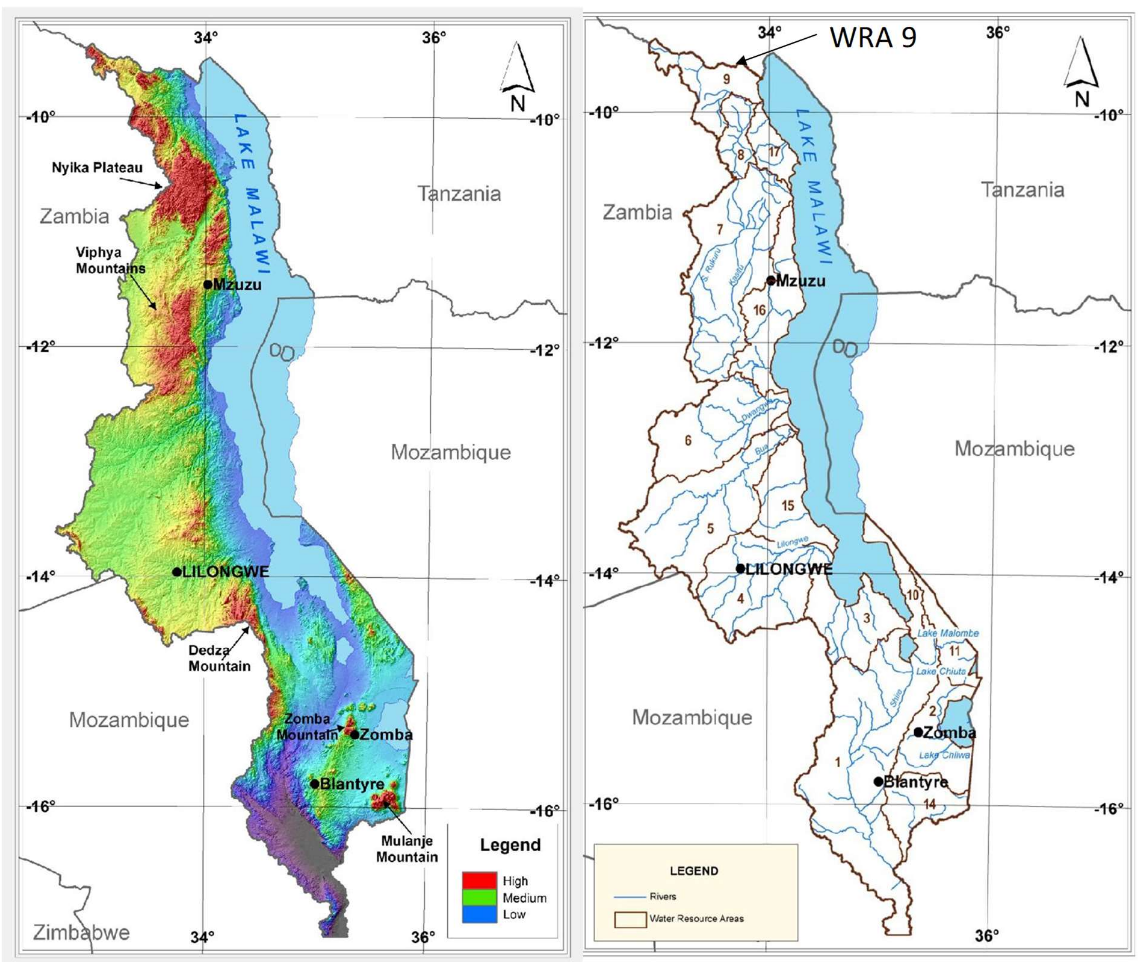


Figure 2a. Location of WRA 9 with major rivers and topography shown.

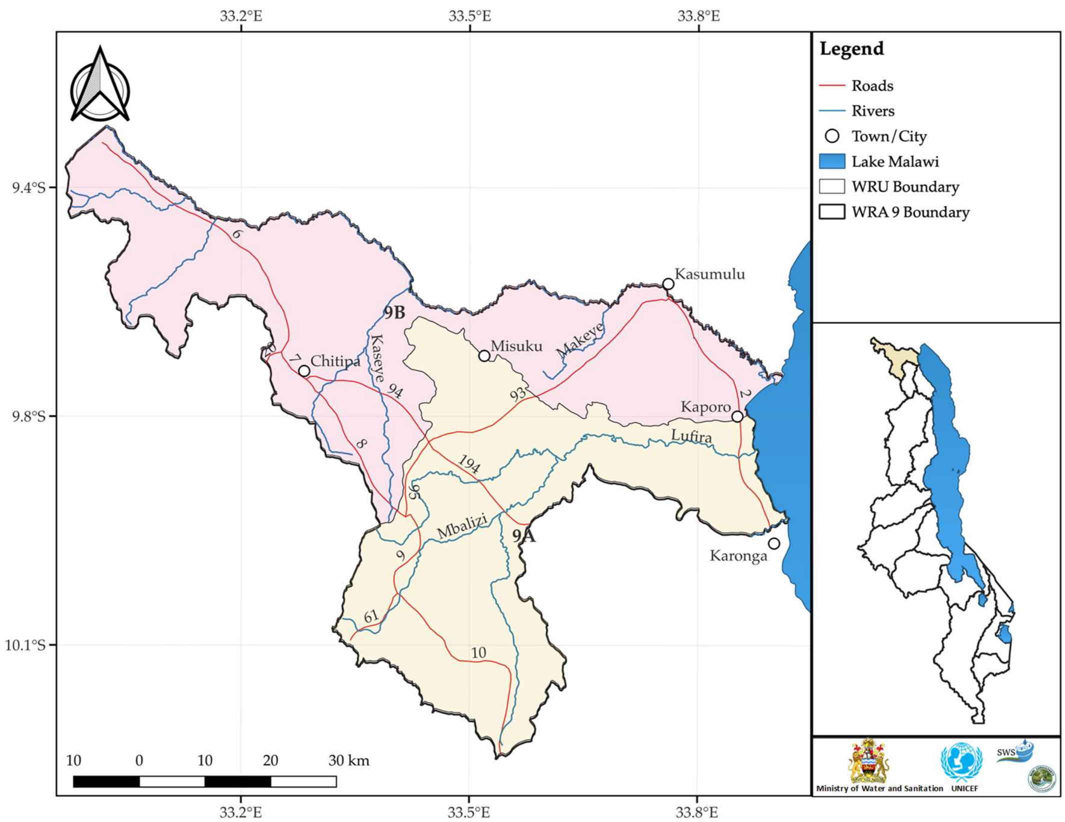


Figure 2b. Water Resource Area and Water Resource Units

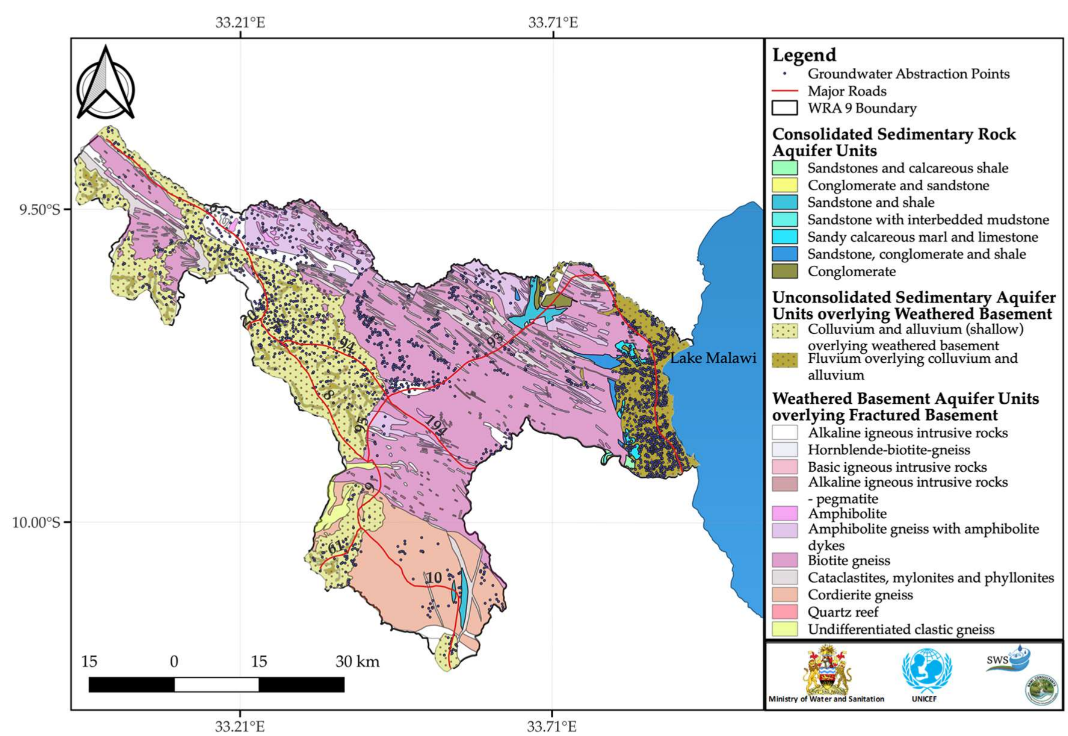


Figure 3. Distribution of groundwater abstraction points in WRA 9.

Groundwater Abstraction in WRA 9

Public abstraction points for groundwater are numerous in WRA 9 (**Figure 3, Table 2**) and it should be noted there are likely some unaudited private groundwater abstraction points. Of the 3,365 known groundwater abstraction points, 88.9% are improved sources. The mid-point distribution of water point yield (at hand pump) is between 0.25 and 0.35 l/s (**Figure 4a**), however it should be noted that this is an expected range of the Afridev, Maldev, Elephant, and India MK3 hand-pumps that dominate the WRA, and likely does not represent the aquifer potential, rather a combination of aquifer properties, borehole construction quality, and hand-pump efficiency. For all groundwater supplies in WRA 9, only 67.5% are fully functional (defined as providing water at design specification).

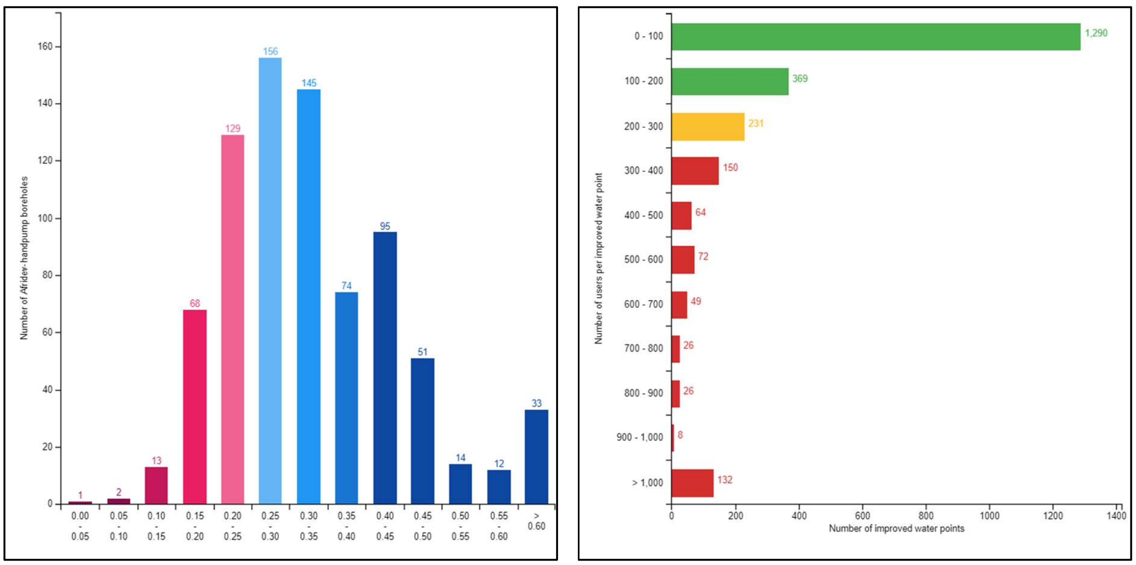
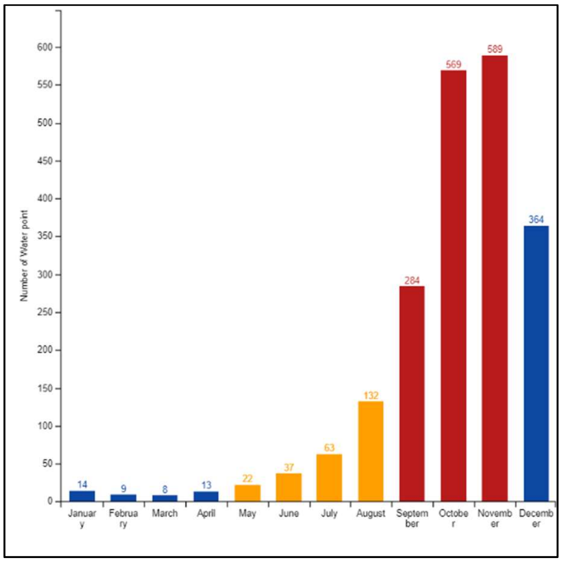
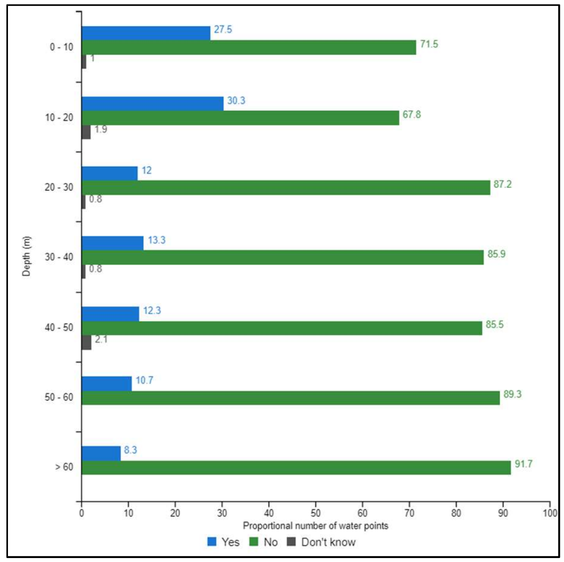


Figure 4a and 4b. Distribution of abstraction point yield (l/s) in WRA 9 (4a) and (4b) Distribution of the number of users per groundwater supply, green and yellow signify those abstraction points that fall within the Ministry of Water and Sanitation recommended population served by the abstraction point. [Data from the 2020 National Water Point Survey]

Government guidelines recommend no more than 250 users per hand pump water point and 120 for protected shallow well, and the degree to which this is exceeded points to a need for additional investment (as new or rehabilitated groundwater abstraction points). The data in **Figure 4b** shows the guidelines are mostly met from a population point of view. Most of the groundwater supply points provide water to 250 or less users per water point, however there is a preponderance of dug wells which have a contamination risk and may not meet the water quality guidelines. Given the high rainfall and groundwater recharge potential, this WRA could be considered for higher yielding borehole installations such as Solar pumps.

The 2020 National Water Point Survey data provides proxy information on annual water table variations as during the height of the hot-dry season, 17.5% of groundwater abstraction points do not provide sufficient water (September through November) most likely due to water table declines (**Figure 5a and 5b**). Shallow boreholes and dug wells (protected and unprotected) are the most heavily impacted, impacting the functionality of these water supplies. There is a strong correlation between the depth of the groundwater water supplies and the decline in seasonal water availability, and is assumed this is due to shallow dug well supplies or improperly installed boreholes that are more at



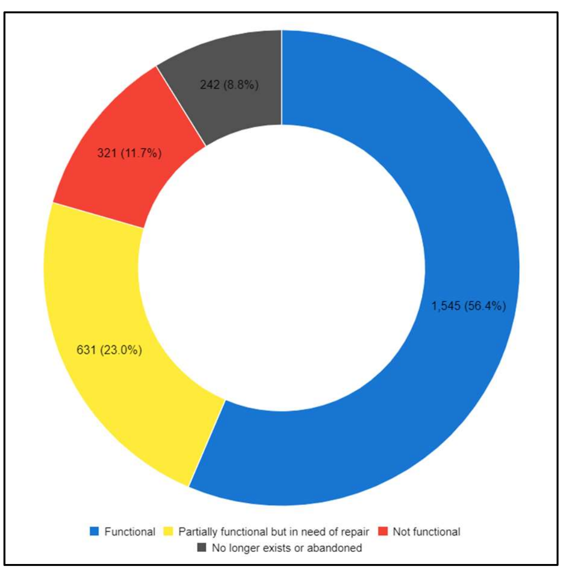


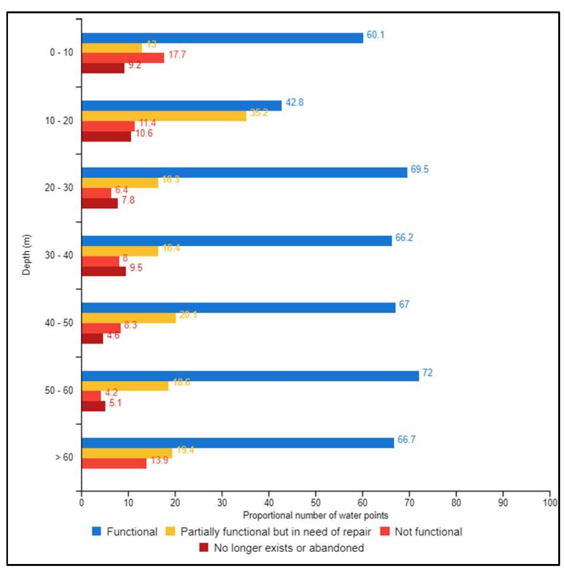
risk to lowering water tables resulting in lower functionality during the dry season.

Figure 5a and 5b. Number of groundwater abstraction points in WRA 9 that do not provide adequate water (as a proxy for groundwater availability / water table or storage decline). (5b) Shows shallow groundwater abstraction points are most vulnerable to seasonal changes in groundwater (yes response indicated the water point goes dry) [Data from the 2020 National Water Point Survey].

Figure 6a and 6b. Functionality (as percentage operational at design specifications) of groundwater abstraction points in WRA 9 [Data from the 2020 National Water Point Survey] and (6b) the functionality of groundwater abstractions points with depth of the installation. [Data from the 2020 National Water Point Survey]

The operational status of groundwater abstraction points is also linked to issues of infrastructure (e.g. pump / borehole) as well as aquifer stress. There are only 56.4% of groundwater abstraction supplies which are operation at design parameters, and the distribution of functional, partly functional, non-functional and abandoned groundwater abstraction points is relatively constant with depth of





abstraction point (**Figure 6a and 6b**). This indicates groundwater supply is impacted by both infrastructure quality and aquifer stress, and there is a need to undertake evaluation of stranded groundwater assets in WRA 9 (after Kalin et al 2019).

Table 2. Number and Type of Groundwater Abstraction Sources in WRA 9 [Data from the 2020 National Water Point Survey]

Type	Number of Groundwater Abstraction points
Borehole or tube well	1,181
Protected dug well	1,780
Protected spring	31
Unprotected dug well	245
Unprotected spring	128

Description of Water Resources WRA 9

Water resources management according to the Water Resource Act (2013) Malawi is devolved to sub-basin Water Resource Units (WRUs), and Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) should be managed at this sub-basin scale. The Water Resource Area (WRA) 9 in northern Malawi constitutes two (2) Water Resource Units (WRU); WRU 9A, and 9B (**Figures 7a, 7b, 7c**).

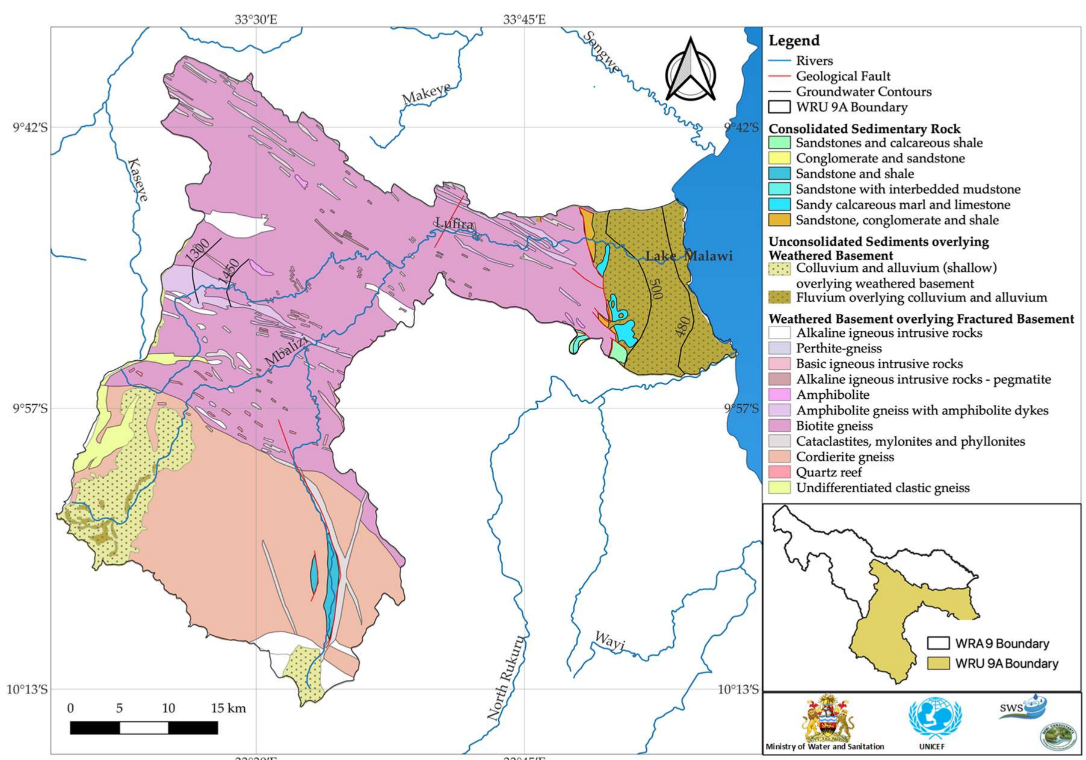


Figure 7a. Map showing the hydrogeologic units and water table for Water Resource Unit 9A wtihin Water Resource Area 9 (Ruo River catchment).

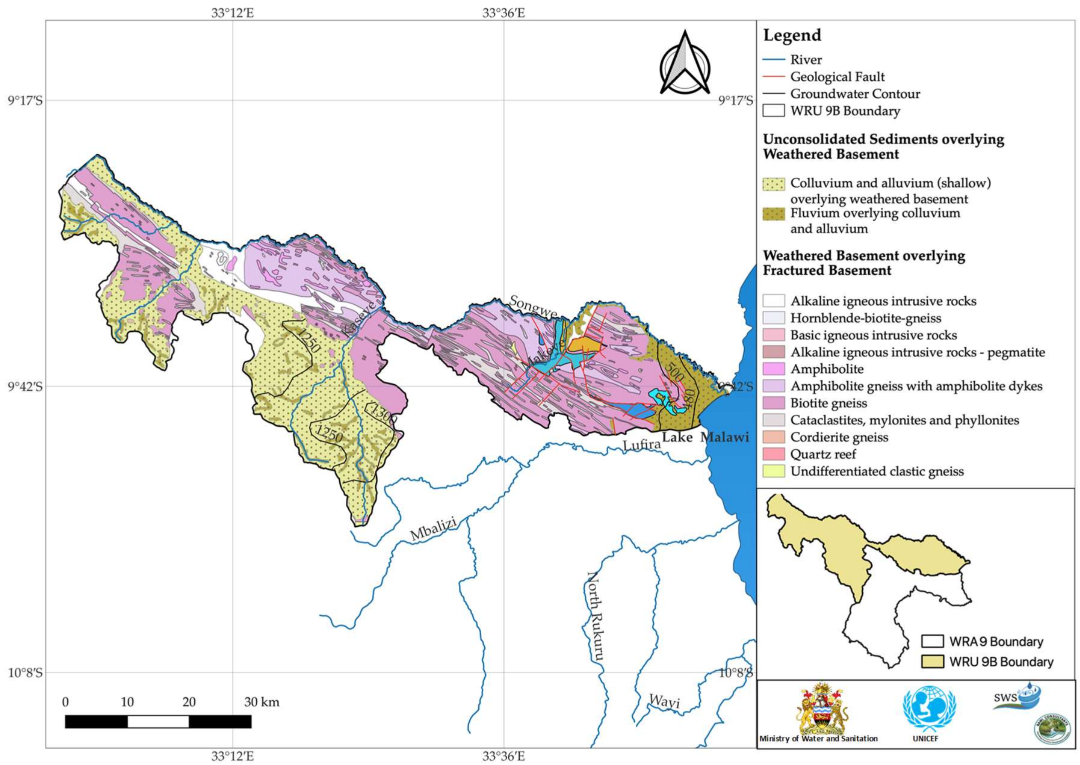


Figure 7b. Map showing the hydrogeologic units and water table for Water Resource Unit 9B wtihin Water Resource Area 9 (Songwe River catchment).

Topography and Drainage

The catchment has diverse relief, dominated by the East African Rift System (EARS) valley and plains. Much of the catchment is dominate by high plains and mountains to over 2,000m dropping rapidly to plains surrounding Lake Malawi. Flash floods are likely during heavy rains. (**Figure 8**).

WRA 9 is mainly drained by the Songwe River flowing from Tanzania to Lake Malawi in an easterly direction, while forming an international border between Malawi and Tanzania. It one of the major inflow rivers into Lake Malawi. The Songwe tributaries from the area include, Makeye and Kaseye. The other major riverine inflow draining the area is the Lufira River that receives flows from its tributaries from the area; Namiseche and Mbalizi Rivers.

Geology – Solid

WRA 9 solid geology is dominated by a complex and highly deformed mix of Precambrian to Lower Palaeozoic basement rock (**Figure 7a and 7b**). Regionally folded outcrops of biotite gneisses, amphibolite gneisses, and syenites occur throughout the area, cut by amphibolite dykes of unknown age. Linear NW-SE trending outcrops of Post Mafingi cataclasites, mylonites, and phyllonites occur within folded biotite gneiss. The region is highly fractured in the north and east.

Geology – Unconsolidated deposits

Solid geology in low-lying areas is overlain by extensive occurrences of sandy soils and small isolated dambos of fluvial sediments in the northwest. Alluvium and colluvium are found as valley detritus along the rift escarpment, leading to variable thickness of unconsolidated alluvium, river and lacustrine deposits along Lake Malawi.

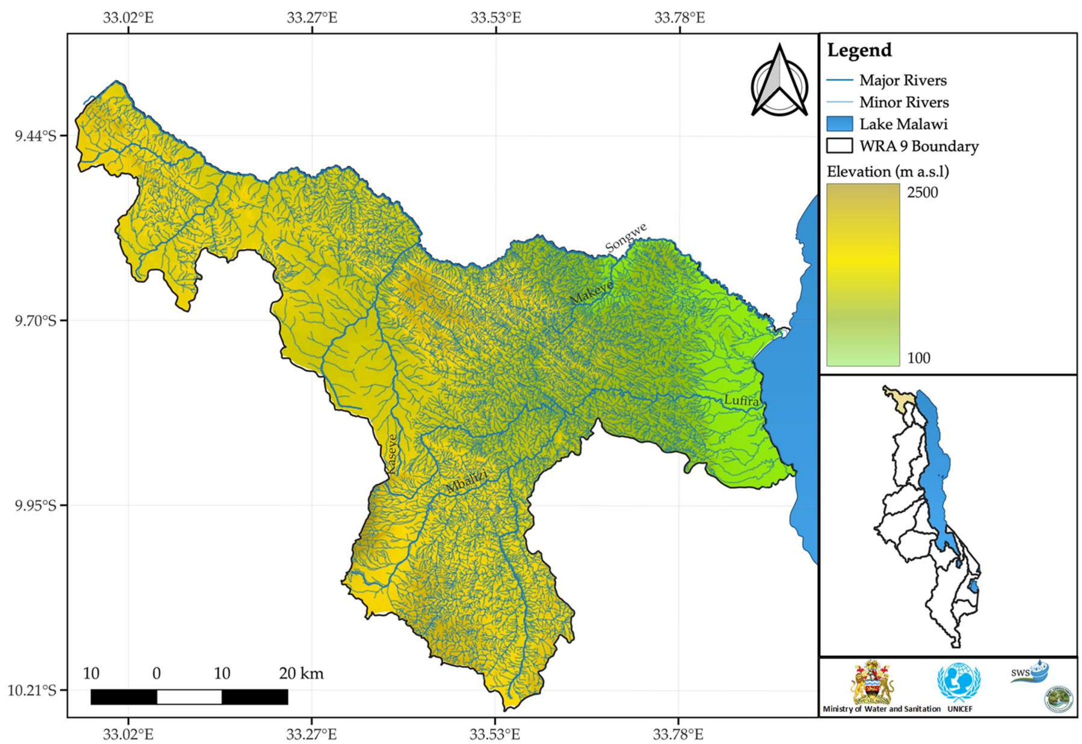


Figure 8. Drainage for the major rivers in Water Resources Area 9.

Climate

WRA 9 experiences a tropical–continental climate with dual distinct seasons: the wet season is extended in northern Malawi which is influenced by the Inter Tropical Convergence Zone in Africa. Annual mean rainfall is 952mm distributed similarly between highland plains and the lake front (**Figure 9**), peak rainfall occurs between December and March. High rainfall events in the mountain region can result in periodic flooding in the catchment. Mean temperatures for the cool-dry season occasional drops to 4 to 10 ◦C. Wet season mean temperatures range from 25 to 32 ◦C.

Table 3. Calculated mean rainfall in each Water Resource Unit within WRA 9. These values are used to calculate the annual estimated groundwater recharge in each WRU.

WRA	WRU	Station Names	Mean Rainfall-Station Data	Mean Rainfall-Interpolated Data (IDW)
9	A	- No Station -	-	942
	B	Chitipa/Misuku	952	947

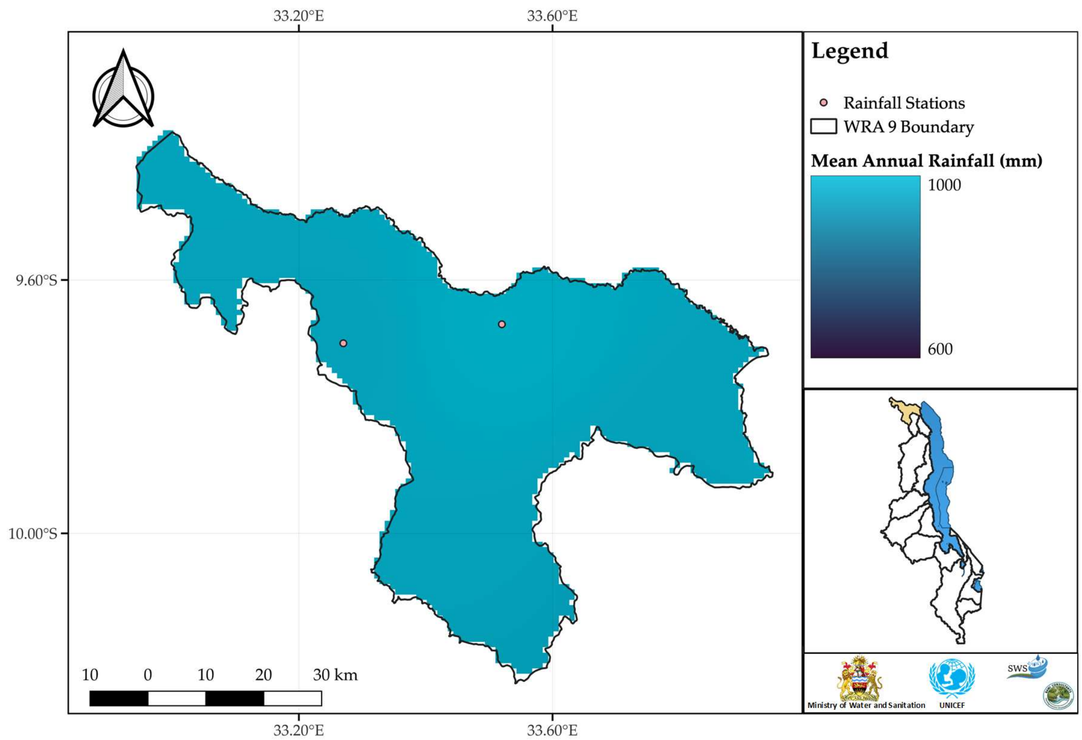


Figure 9. Rainfall distribution (GIS modelled using inverse distance weighted mean) across Water Resource Area 9 with the location of weather stations. Average rainfall measured is 952mm, average rainfall modelled is 944 +/- 8mm (range 925mm to 965mm).

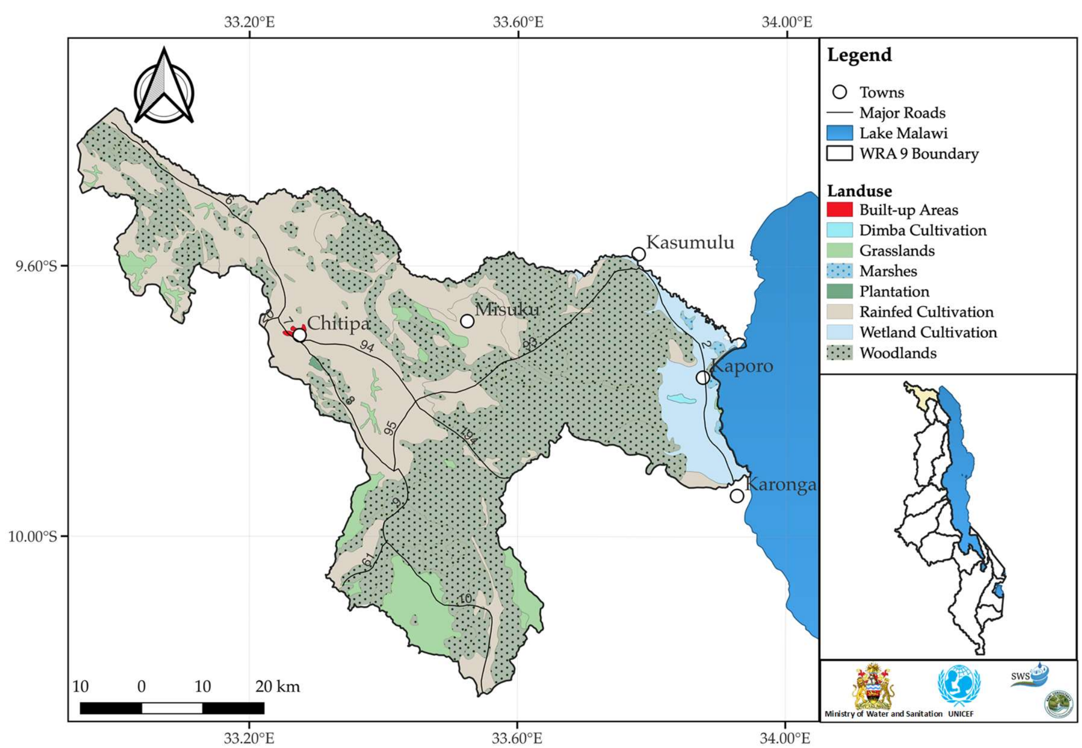


Figure 10. Land use in WRA 9 is dominated by woodlands and rain fed cultivation.

Land use

Most of the WRA 9 is open woodlands and used for rain fed cultivation. It is also covered by open grasslands and marshes, while other areas are used for wetland cultivation and dimba cultivation in the area. WRA 9 covers border areas that are open to international trade with Zambia and Tanzania, thereby enhancing its economic income base. It is also one of the productive rice growing areas along Lake Malawi, making rice production another major income source. The diverse natural and cultural heritage makes it an ideal place for tourist attractions, making it one of the tourist sites in Malawi.

Hydrogeology of WRA 9

Aquifer properties

WRA 9 includes uplands with colluvium and fluvial sediments, the western edge of the Rift Valley and fluvial and lacustrine units along river channels and Lake Malawi. Most groundwater abstractions are focused on the sedimentary units in WRA 9. Detailed particle size distributions or borehole logs were not available for interpretation of the general aquifer properties in WRA 9, and further work is required to collate and georeferenced all records in the Ministry of Water and Sanitation.

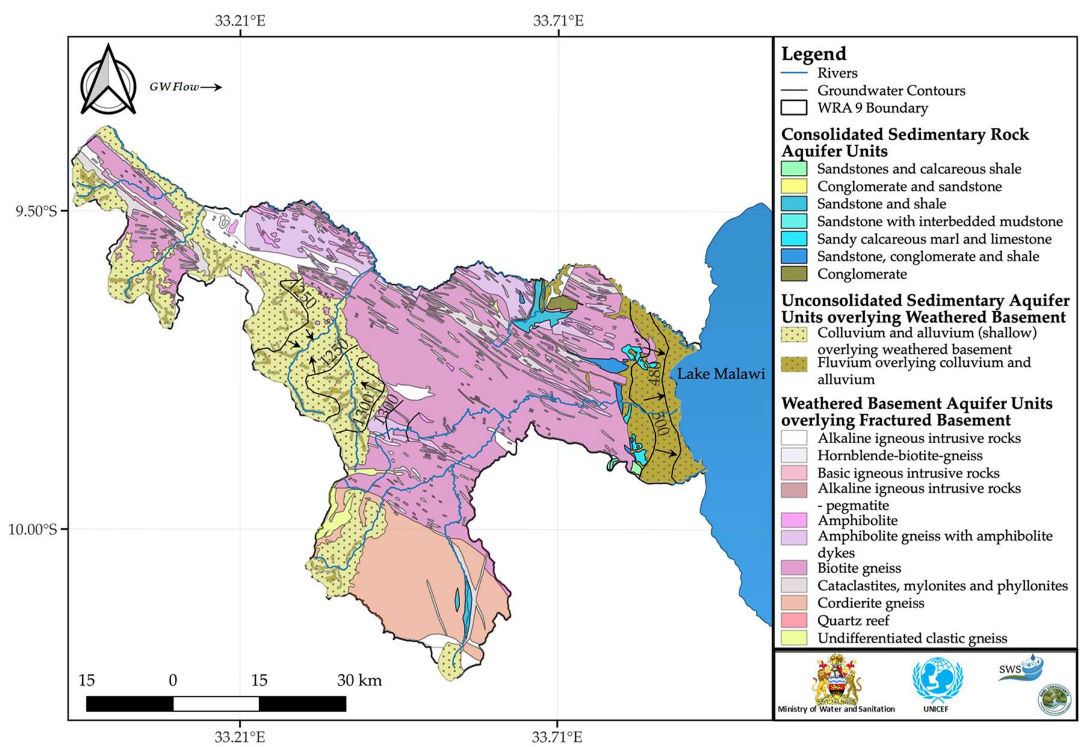
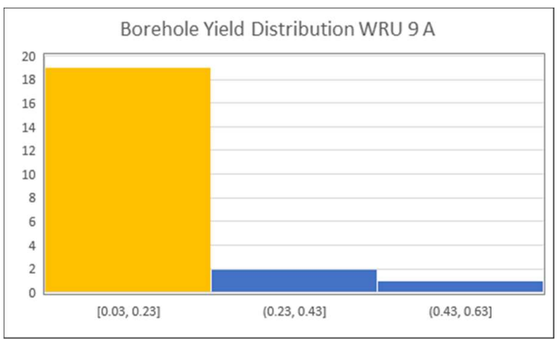


Figure 11. Groundwater level contours and flow direction in WRA 9 [1987 Hydrogeological Reconnaissance data]. [water level contour interval 50m highlands and 20m near Lake Malawi]

Groundwater levels and flow regime

The Ministry of Water and Sanitation database has measurements of resting water levels in many boreholes, however there is no high resolution elevation data that corresponds with this data, therefore groundwater level data for WRA 9 is based on prior hydrogeological reconnaissance.

Groundwater level data for WRA 9 based on prior hydrogeological reconnaissance confirm for the western upland and eastern lowland unconsolidated aquifer units mapped a flow regime following topographic drainage (**Figure 11**). In the elevated plateau area to the west in WRU 9B, contoured heads at 1300 m and 1250 m asl confirm groundwater flow follows the steep topography with flows convergent on the Kaseye River flowing to the north-east. Hydraulic gradients are around 0.01 with a groundwater velocity calculated of 18 m/yr for a nominal hydraulic conductivity of 1 m/d and effective porosity of 0.2. The lakeshore unconsolidated alluvial aquifer extends to around 20 km inland from the Lake Malawi shoreline. Groundwater flows are towards the lake recognising the 500-m contour notably inflects inland around both the Songwe River in WRU 9B and the Lufita River in 9A indicative of strong base flows to the river reaches downstream of the Basement escarpment. Hydraulic gradients are around 0.004, towards the lower end of the range found in WRAs further south on the lakeshore plain that may be attributed to the less steep topography in land and relatively wide and uniform valley floor. Groundwater and surface water are Trans Boundary and therefore must be managed through international agreements.



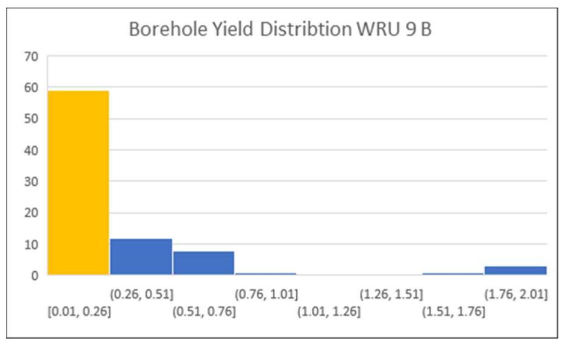


Figure 12. Distribution of Borehole Yield Data held by the Ministry of Water and Sanitation plotted for each Water Resource Unit within Water Resource Area 9 (note: limited data in WRU 9C) (y axis = *n* observations).

Aquifer / Borehole Yield

In most WRA's in Malawi, the borehole yield data held by the Ministry does not appear to follow the anticipated distribution based on aquifer lithology. **Figure 12** provides the distribution of the data held by the Ministry of Water and Sanitation, and it is clear the distribution is skewed toward values of < 0.25l/s. This is suspect and likely represents substandard well construction for boreholes to meet a minimum borehole yield for the hand pumps rather than to drill and test each groundwater well to determine the exact aquifer properties at each location. In WRA 9 (**Figures 13a and 13b**) there is some potential in the lower elevations for higher yielding boreholes, in particular where there are reported yields over 5l/s, and there is potential for artesian confined systems along the escarpment but detailed hydrogeological on-site mapping should be undertaken to confirm.

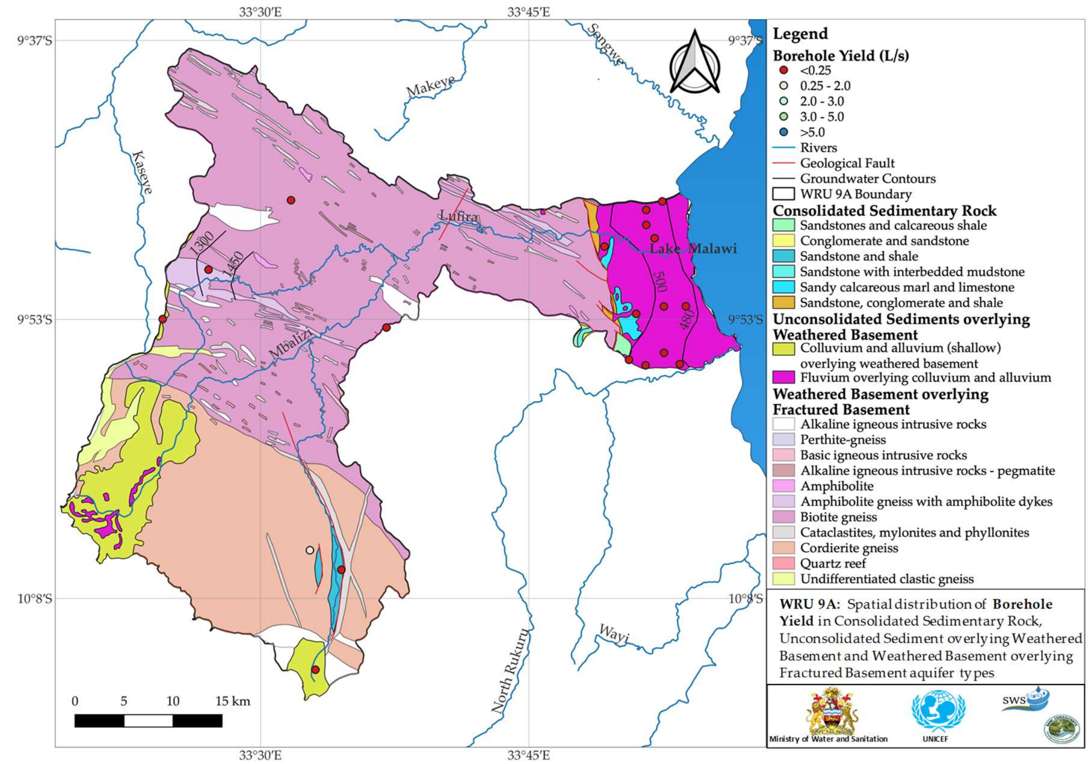


Figure 13a. Borehole Yield data held by the Ministry of Water and Sanitation for WRU 9A.

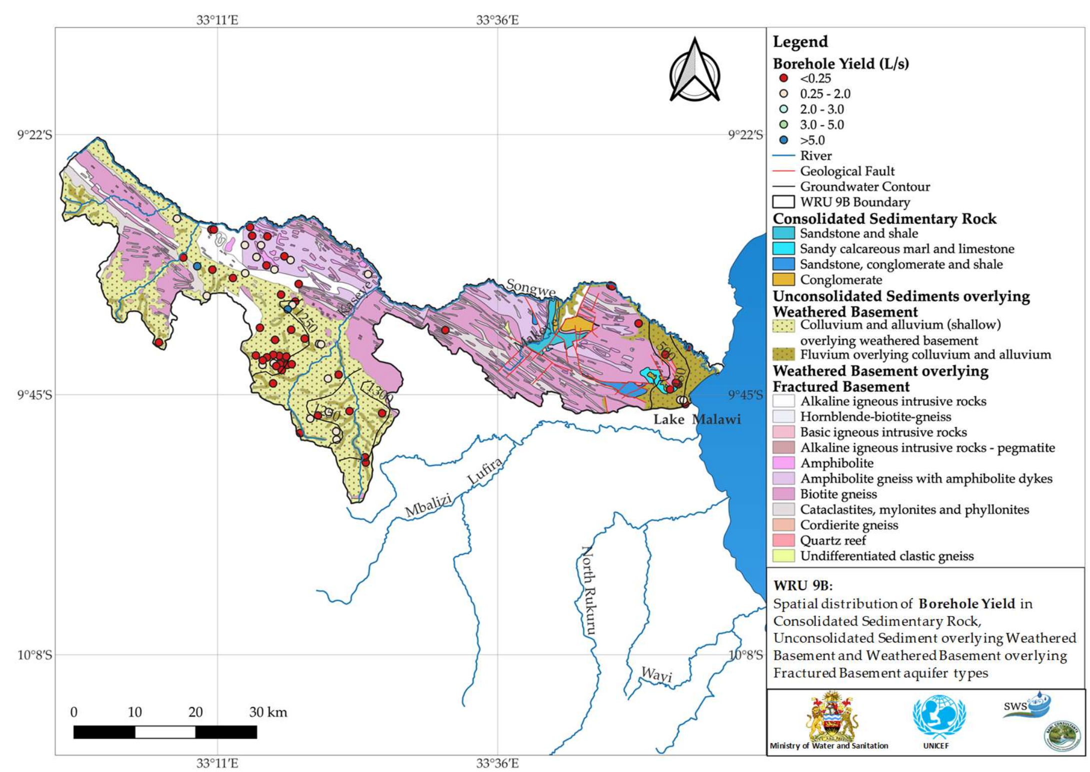


Figure 13b. Borehole Yield data held by the Ministry of Water and Sanitation for WRU 9B.

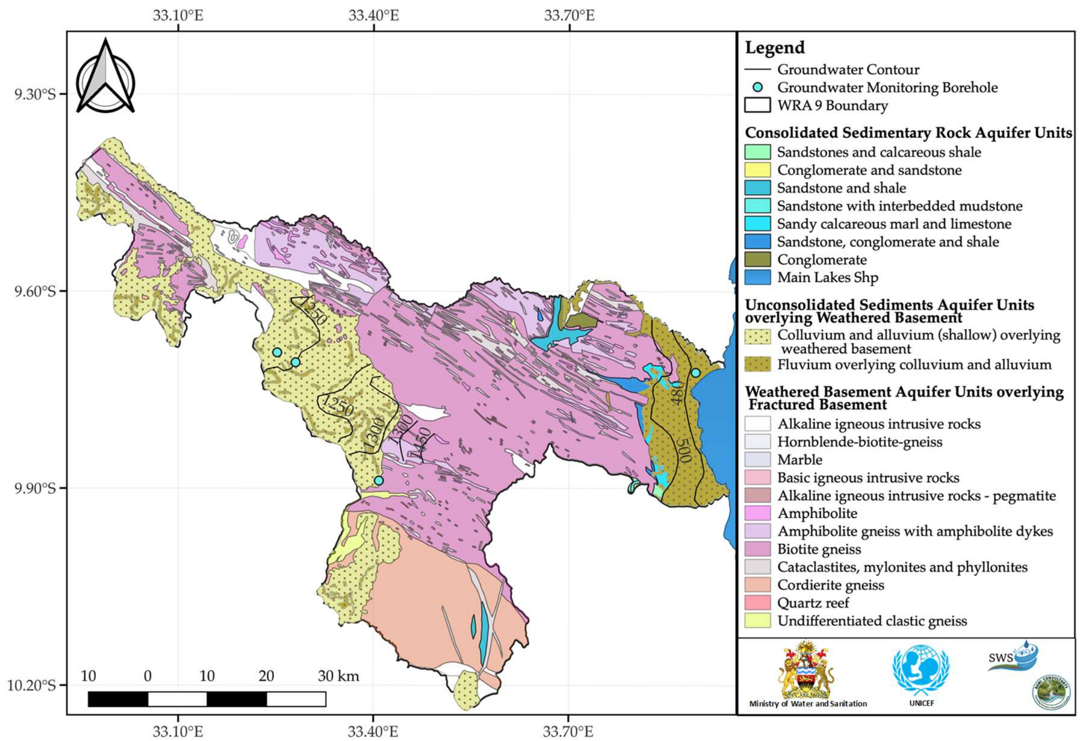


Figure 14a. Location of groundwater monitoring points

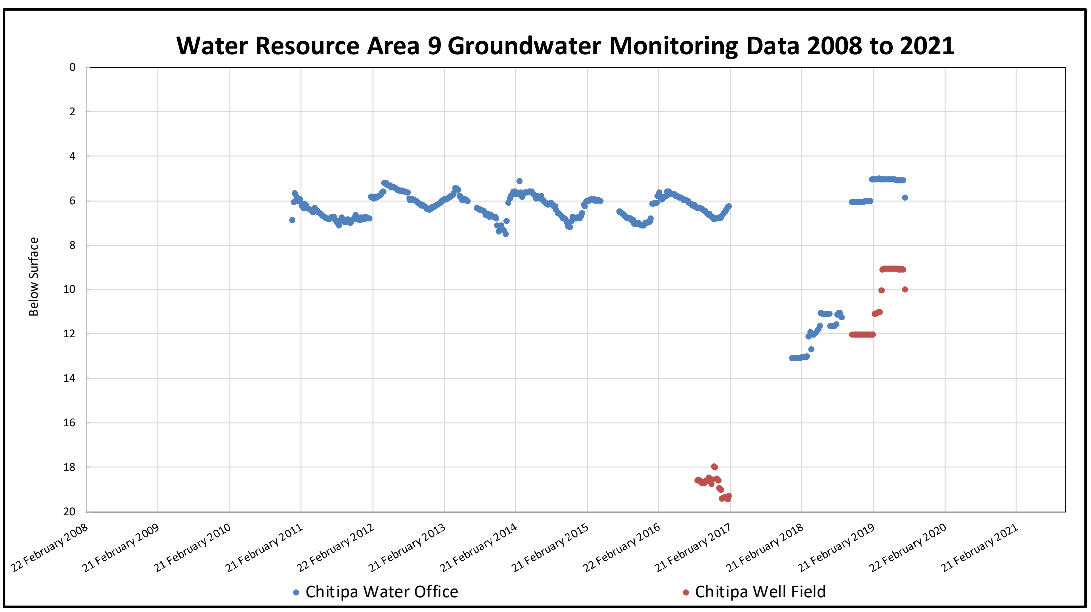


Figure 14b. Groundwater Level Monitoring Data held by the Ministry of Water and Sanitation for stations in Water Resources Area 9. (units assumed to be meters below ground level).

There are general trends which suggest the highest borehole yields are found in alluvial aquifers in the order of less than 1 l/s. The highest yielding boreholes in basement aquifers will likely be located mainly along linear structures and main streams and near contacts between different aquifers.

Groundwater Table Variations

There is only one operational groundwater monitoring stations within WRA 9 at the Chitipa Water Office (**Figure 14a** for location of all groundwater monitoring points and **Figure 14b** for data) where there is some continuous data that exhibits annual trends, the data for the Chitipa Well Field is not complete and is problematic. There is a low amplitude (ca 2m per annum) variation in the water table. Data from the 2020 National Survey suggested seasonal water table declines in shallow groundwater supplies (likely dug wells) and this is supported by the data in **Figure 14b**. It is not possibly to determine any long-term trends that may relate to climate variability (rainfall and recharge relationships). The magnitude of the seasonal variation suggests the aquifers these monitoring points intersect are unconfined and receive annual seasonal recharge. However, given here are no borehole logs or multi-level installations that separate different hydro-stratigraphic units and it is recommended that multi-level installations are placed into each hydrostratigraphic unit is an area for future investment.

Groundwater recharge

The groundwater volume in each WRU was calculated using the estimated range of porosities published by McDonald et al. (2021) and the range of saturated thickness for each aquifer type (based on the depth of boreholes and water strikes per agreement with the Ministry of Water and Sanitation).

The calculated volume of groundwater recharge in WRA 9 ranges between 34.6 Million Cubic Meters (MCM) and 259.7 MCM per year, with a mean age of groundwater of 100 years across the Water Resource Area **(Tables 4a and 4b**). There is a need to better constrain water volume/balance aspects of the basin and to expand the use of Isotope Hydrology and properly modelled and measured groundwater age constraints.

Table 4a. Groundwater volume per hydrogeologic unit and the estimated annual recharge for WRU 9A, using these calculations the mean residence time of groundwater has been calculated.

Aquifer Type	Area of Aquifer Type (km^2)	Porosity Low Est.	Porosity High Est.	Sat Thickness Low Est (km)	Sat Thickness Low Est (km)	*MCM Groundwater Low Est	*MCM Groundwater High Est	
Consolidated Sedimentary Rock	30.9	3%	15%	0.02	0.10	18.6	464.1	
Fluvial Units	161.8	10%	35%	0.02	0.10	323.7	5,664.5	
Lacustrine units	0.0	10%	35%	0.02	0.03	0.0	0.0	
Colluvial etc.	118.5	10%	30%	0.02	0.06	236.9	2,132.5	
W & F Basement	1,427.2	1%	10%	0.02	0.03	285.4	4,281.6	
	Area of WRU (km^2)	9A	WRU	Recharge Rate Low Est. (mm)	Recharge Rate High Estimate (mm)	*864.6*	*12,542.5*	*Total Volume Groundwater*
	1,738.4	942	Average Rainfall in WRU	9.42	70.65	16.4	122.8	Renewable Groundwater Recharge Volume
The average recharge is thought to be in the range 1% to 7.5% of annual rainfall, (typically 8-60 mm per year) [Chilton]						53	102	Calculated Average Residence Time of Groundwater (years)
						Low Est	High Est	

Table 4b. Groundwater volume per hydrogeologic unit and the estimated annual recharge for WRU 9B, using these calculations the mean residence time of groundwater has been calculated.

Aquifer Type	Area of Aquifer Type (km^2)	Porosity Low Est.	Porosity High Est.	Sat Thickness Low Est (km)	Sat Thickness Low Est (km)	*MCM Groundwater Low Est	*MCM Groundwater High Est	
Consolidated Sedimentary Rock	58.6	3%	15%	0.02	0.10	35.2	879.4	
Fluvial Units	173.3	10%	35%	0.02	0.10	346.6	6,066.0	
Lacustrine units	0.0	10%	35%	0.02	0.03	0.0	0.0	
Colluvial etc.	591.9	10%	30%	0.02	0.06	1,183.8	10,654.2	
W & F Basement	1,103.0	1%	10%	0.02	0.03	220.6	3,308.9	
	Area of WRU (km^2)	9B	WRU	Recharge Rate Low Est. (mm)	Recharge Rate High Estimate (mm)	*1,786.2*	*20,908.5*	*Total Volume Groundwater*
	1,926.8	947	Average Rainfall in WRU	9.47	71.025	18.2	136.9	Renewable Groundwater Recharge Volume
The average recharge is thought to be in the range 1% to 7.5% of annual rainfall, (typically 8-60 mm per year) [Chilton]						98	153	Calculated Average Residence Time of Groundwater (years)
						Low Est	High Est	

Table 5. Distribution of dissolved species in groundwater WRA 9. It should be noted that data which was reported as zero or negative numbers by the Ministry Water Quality laboratory have not been included in this table. Additionally, where the result was reported below the minimum detection level of the method, the results have not been included in this table. Non-detect and below detection limit results have been included in the graphs providing the distribution of dissolved species in groundwater for each of the WRAs.

WRA 9	pH	EC (as TDS mg/l)	Cl (mg/l)	SO_4 (mg/l)	NO_3 (mg/l)	F (mg/l)	Na (mg/l)	K (mg/l)	Ca (mg/l)	Mg (mg/l)	Fe (mg/l)
Mean	6.4	585	4.7	5.2	0.3	0.2	58.9	6.9	12.8	4.3	0.8
Std Dev	0.3	512	4	10	0.2	0.2	85	5.5	11.8	5.5	0.9
Median	6.3	360	3.1	0.4	0.3	0.1	18.2	4.1	9.4	2.3	0.6
Max	7.1	2,480	11	20	0	0.6	186	15	30	12	1.9
Min	5.6	150.0	1.6	0.4	0.0	0.1	13.5	4.0	2.6	0.4	0.0
n	38	38	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4

Groundwater quality WRA 9

Groundwater major-ion water quality in WRA 9 for data available within the Ministry of Water and Sanitation is available but is limited to those analyses which have geospatial information and data which was reported as 'zero' or below reported minimum detection limits were ignored (**Table 5**).

Piper plots of the WRA 9 water quality data suggest most water has interesting major geochemical changes from water-rock interactions dominated by Na-Ca-Cl type waters but it should be noted there are few analyses in WRA 9 and a detailed survey is a critical need (**Figure 15a and 15b**). The average groundwater age, the high precipitation rate and calculated recharge rates together with the relatively low electrical conductivity points to recent meteoric recharge of much of the groundwater with water-rock interactions, but care should be taken interpreting the existing water quality data, and investment in a WRA – wide water quality survey with detailed geologic / hydrogeologic relationships planned and implemented.

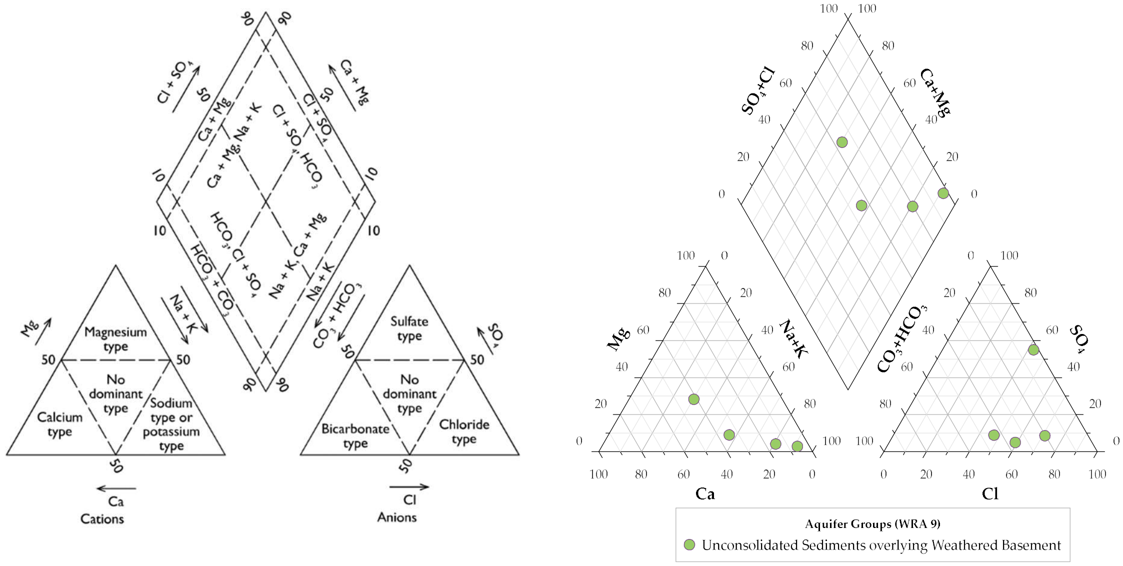


Figure 15a, 15b. Piper Diagramme of Groundwater Samples in WRA 9 and for each Aquifer Type in WRA 9.

Groundwater quality - Health relevant / aesthetic criteria

Salinity

Generally, the TDS of groundwater in WRA 9 is low (**Figure 16**) however the lack of routine and wide-spread water quality analyses held by the Ministry of Water and Sanitation does not allow for interpretation with respect to hydrogeologic units. It is recommended that investment in routine monitoring of public water supplies is planned and implemented prior to enhanced groundwater resource utilisation. The distribution of key dissolved water quality species in groundwater of WRA 9 is provided however caution for over interpretation is advised given the very limited water quality results and few with geospatial coordinates. There is a need to develop a systematic water quality monitoring approach in all WRAs to meet the Water Resources Act (2013) requirements.

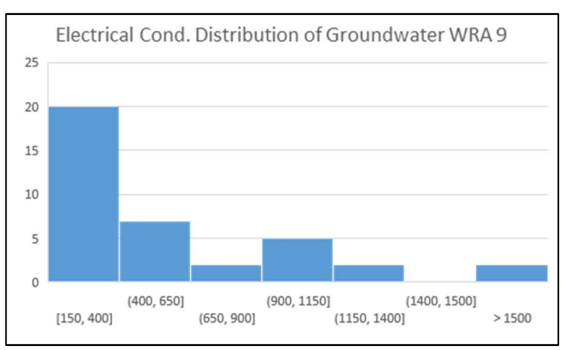


Figure 16 Distribution of EC in groundwater within WRA 9 (y axis = *n* observations).

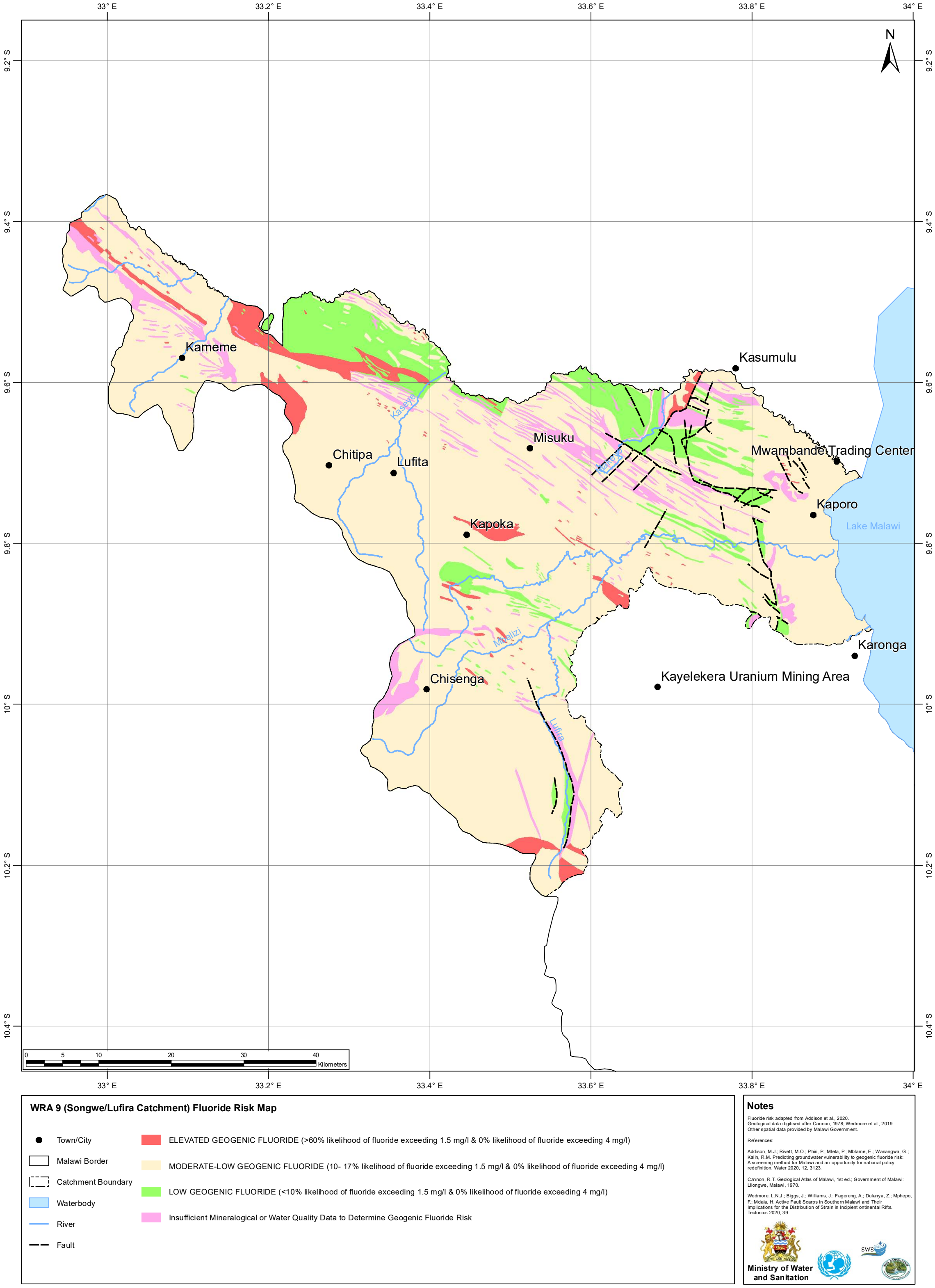


Figure 17. Groundwater Fluoride Risk Map WRA 9 (after Addison et. al. 2021).

Fluoride

There is little prevalence of hot springs in WRA 9, but there are areas that carry an **Elevated Risk** category for fluoride in groundwater. Groundwater data drawn from the recent national-scale assessments (**Figure 18**) reveals none above 1.5mg/l, however a WRA level survey is needed and it should there be any known hot springs, these should be targeted for analysis. Given the co-location with major faults, those water points in proximity to the faults have an increased risk of F > 1.5 mg/l and should also be targeted for analysis. The current water quality monitoring data held by the Ministry of Water and Sanitation is insufficient to manage this risk and it is recommended that a detailed and systematic survey of groundwater quality in WRA 9 is planned and implemented.

Arsenic

A recent national collation of arsenic groundwater survey data found widespread low concentrations but with only a few above the WHO 10 µg/L guideline that were usually associated with hot spring/geothermal groundwater, often with elevated fluoride. This national dataset did not sample the area of WRA 9, however arsenic risks may exist due to the presence of hot springs but this remains unproven due to a lack of routine, geospatially managed WQ analyses. It is recommended that a detailed and systematic survey of groundwater quality in WRA 9 is planned and implemented

E-Coli and Pit Latrine Loading to Groundwater

There are few measurements by the Ministry of Water and Sanitation for groundwater e-coli that are georeferenced or with details of source. Recent studies (Rivett et al 2022) show recurrent rebound of e-coli from groundwater supplies after chlorination is common, the most likely source being a preponderance of pit latrines. We have therefore modelled the loading of pit latrine sludge as widely distributed point sources of groundwater contamination within the WRA. The spatial population distribution for the years 2012-2020 was accessed through WorldPop distributions (WorldPop2022). WorldPop generates spatial distributions from census data as outlined in Stevens et al. 2015. For the 2021-2022 population projection, the methodology outlined in Boke-Olén et al 2017 was used to produce a future population projection. The spatial distribution is broken down into urban and rural areas through using the urban fraction for 0.25-degree regions of Malawi (Hurtt et al. 2020). Census and DHS data was then used to indicate the latrine adoption in different districts and by rural compared to urban areas, this was then multiplied by the spatial population distribution in each district to provide a spatial distribution of latrine users across Malawi accounting for variation in latrine usage in urban and rural areas and across districts.

The overall latrine adoption data across Malawi was split into individual water resource units to give an indication of the number of latrine users in each water resource unit. The quantity of the average amount of faecal matter produced by each latrine user (270L) is multiplied by the average number of users to give an estimate of the faecal load for each water resource unit.

Table 6. Calculated pit latrine loading 2012 to 2022 within WRA 9.

	Population (Worldpop online)					*Projection*	*Latrine fecal sludge*	*Cumulative Sludge loading*
	Calculated Number of Latrine users							
Water Resource Unit	**Year 2011 - 2012**	**Year 2013 - 2014**	**Year 2015 - 2016**	**Year 1017 - 2018**	**Year 2019 - 2020**	**Year 2021 - 2022**	**Total Volume over 10 year period (Liters)**	**Estimated Total Loading (metric tonnes fecal sludge 2012 - 2022**
9A	90,240	94,082	99,341	103,947	108,376	104,831	324,441,230	389,329
9B	141,519	151,189	161,498	171,811	182,645	191,564	540,121,785	648,146
WRA 9	**231,759**	**245,271**	**260,839**	**275,758**	**291,021**	**296,394**	**864,563,015**	**1,037,476**

Model results (**Table 6**) suggest water resource unit 9 has a total of 1,037,476 metric tonnes of faecal matter loading over the 10-year period (2012-2022). Over the 10-year period the modelled number of pit latrine users in the region increased by 64,635. WRA9 covers roughly 3.01% of Malawi's area, if it assumed that the approximately 202,741 metric tonnes of fertiliser used in Malawi each year (World bank 2022, data for Malawi 2018) is equally spread around Malawi, 6,111 metric tonnes of fertiliser would be used in WRA 9 per year, and model results suggest there was 17 times more faecal matter added to this WRA than fertiliser over this 10-year period.

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Water Resource Unit (WRA) 9 Figures

Figure WRA 9.0: Aquifer Units and Groundwater Level Contours Water Resources Area 9

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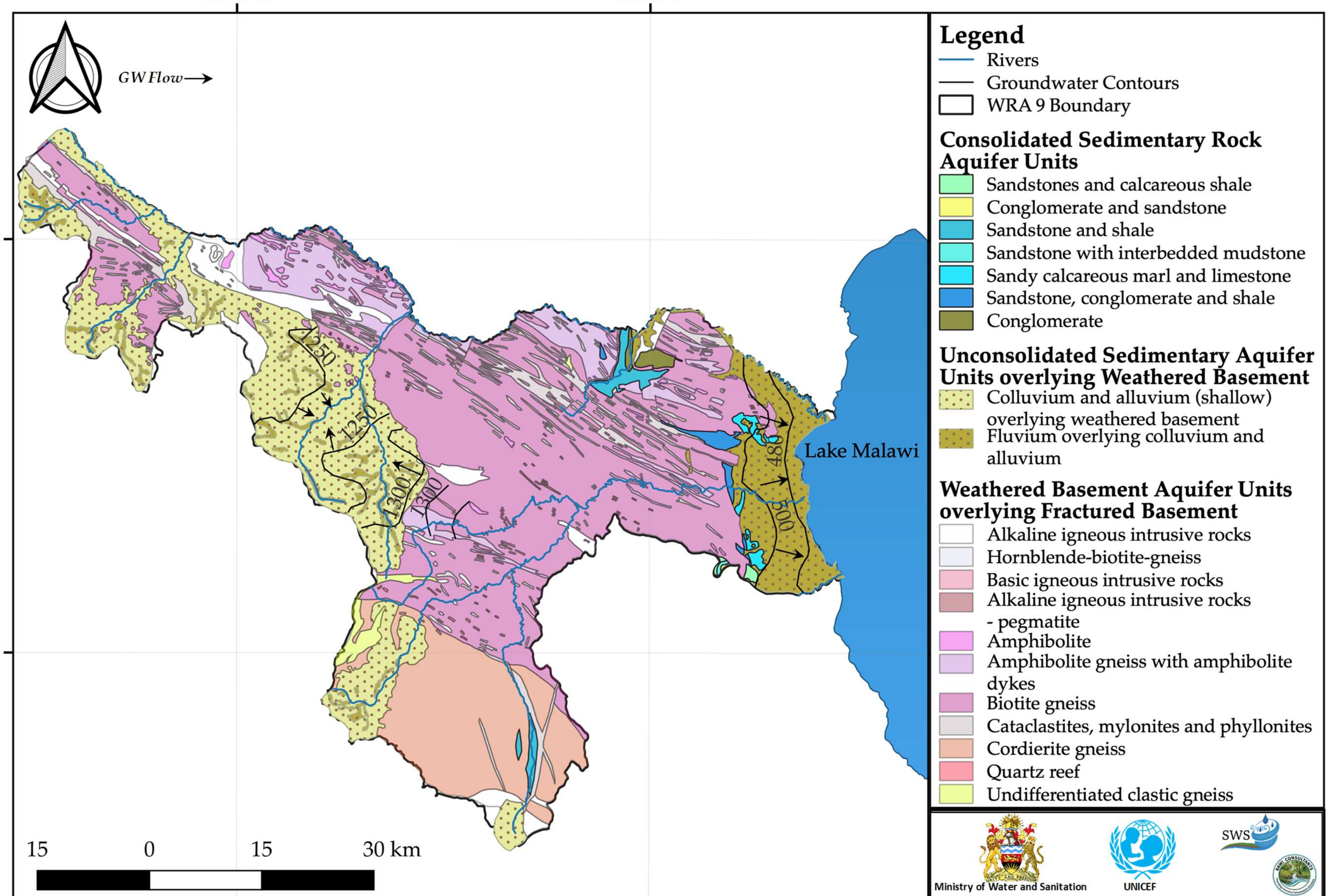


WRU 9A Figures

Figure WRU 9A.1 Land Use and Major Roads

Figure WRU 9A.2 Rivers and Wetlands

Figure WRU 9A.3 Hydrogeology Units and Water Table

Figure WRU 9A.4 Groundwater Chemistry Distribution Electrical Conductivity [uS]

Figure WRU 9A.5 Groundwater Chemistry Distribution of Sulphate [ppm]

Figure WRU 9A.6 Groundwater Chemistry Distribution Chloride [ppm]

Figure WRU 9A.7 Groundwater Chemistry Distribution Sodium [ppm]

Figure WRU 9A.8 Groundwater Chemistry Distribution Calcium [pm]

Figure WRU 9A.9 Piper Diagram of water quality results with respect to the major aquifer type

Figure WRU 9A.10 Borehole Yield Map for data held by the Ministry

Figure WRU 9A.1 Land Use and Major Roads

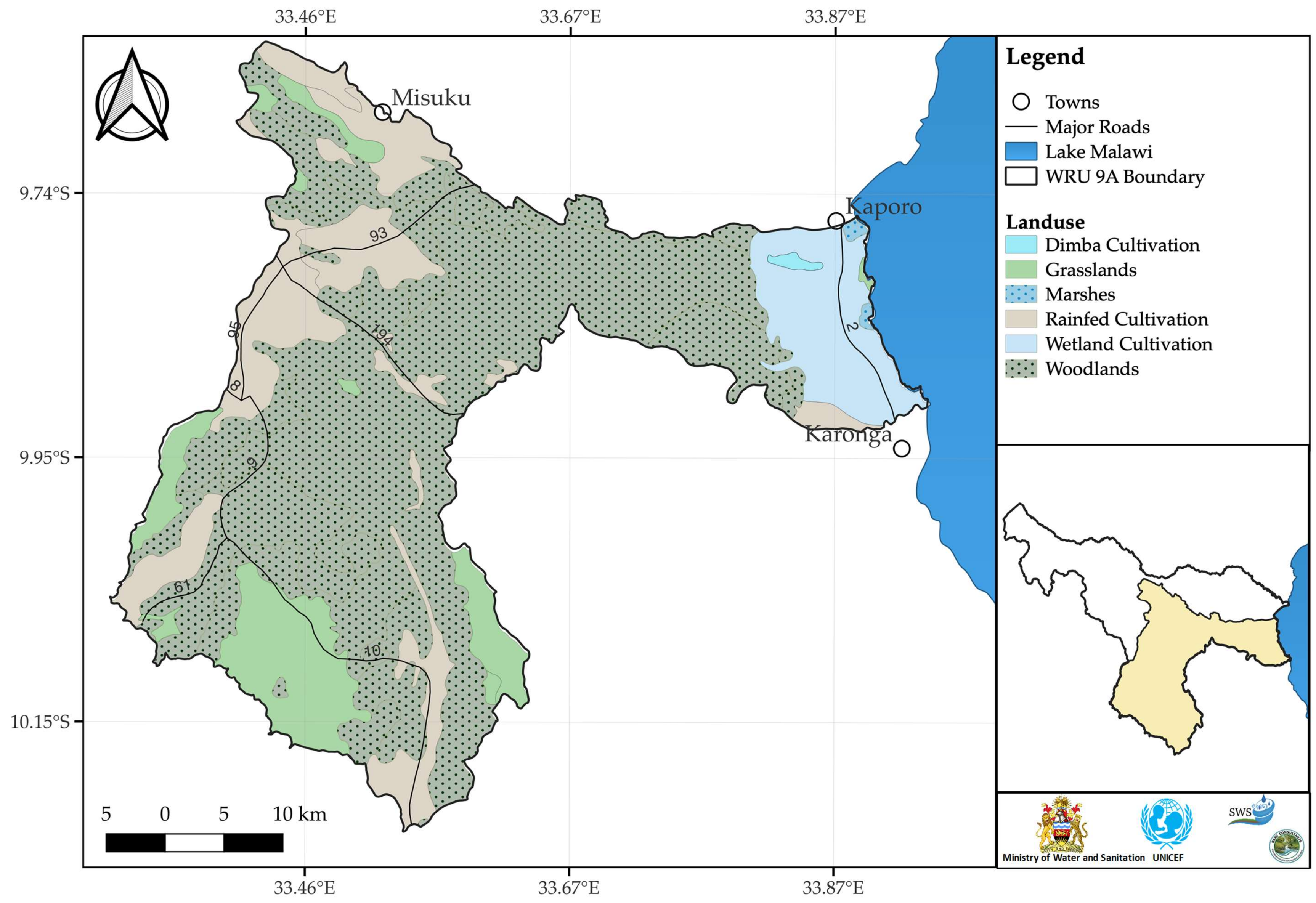


Figure WRU 9A.2 Rivers and Wetlands

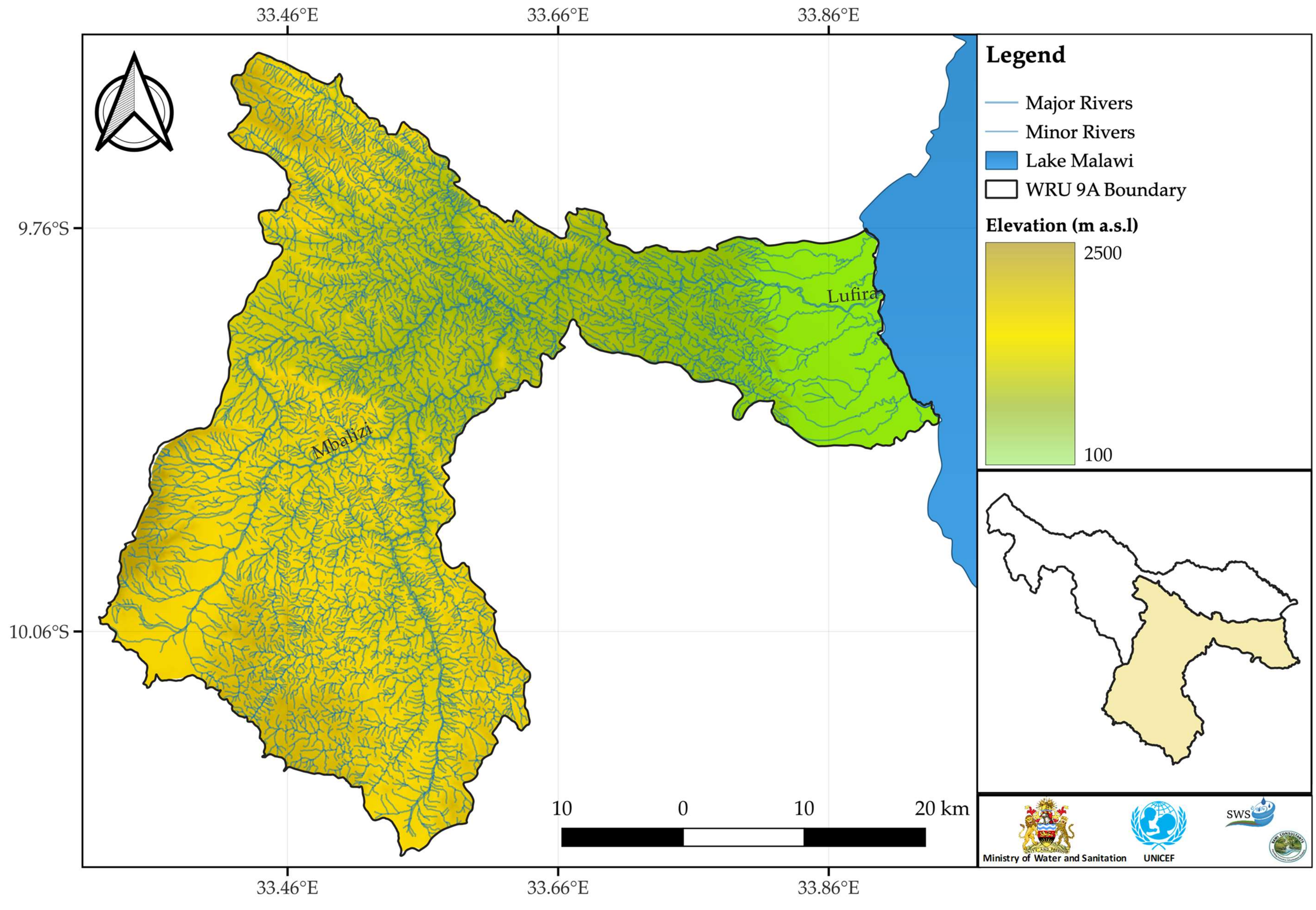


Figure WRU 9A.3 Hydrogeology Units and Water Table

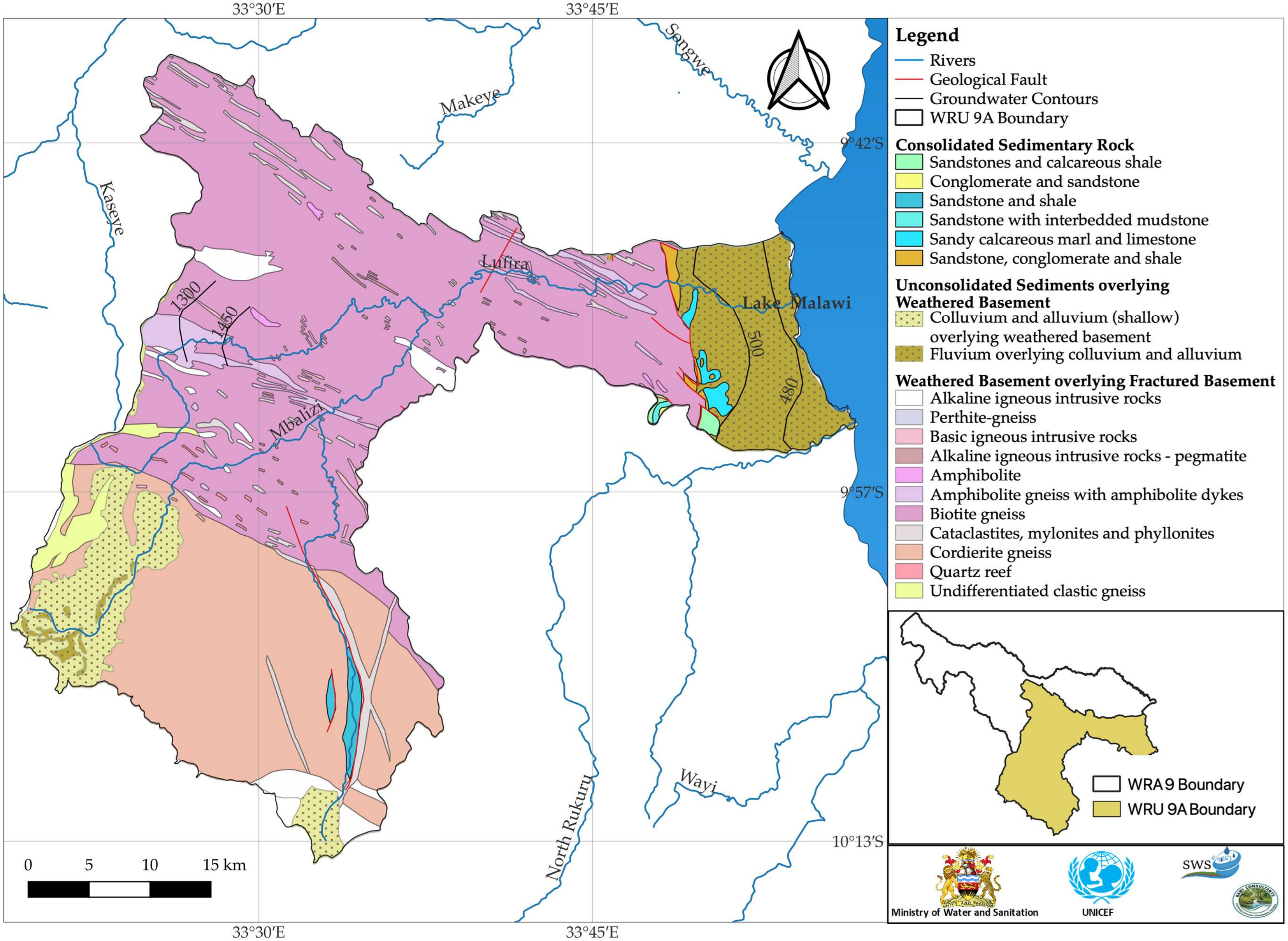


Figure WRU 9A.4 Groundwater Chemistry Distribution Electrical Conductivity

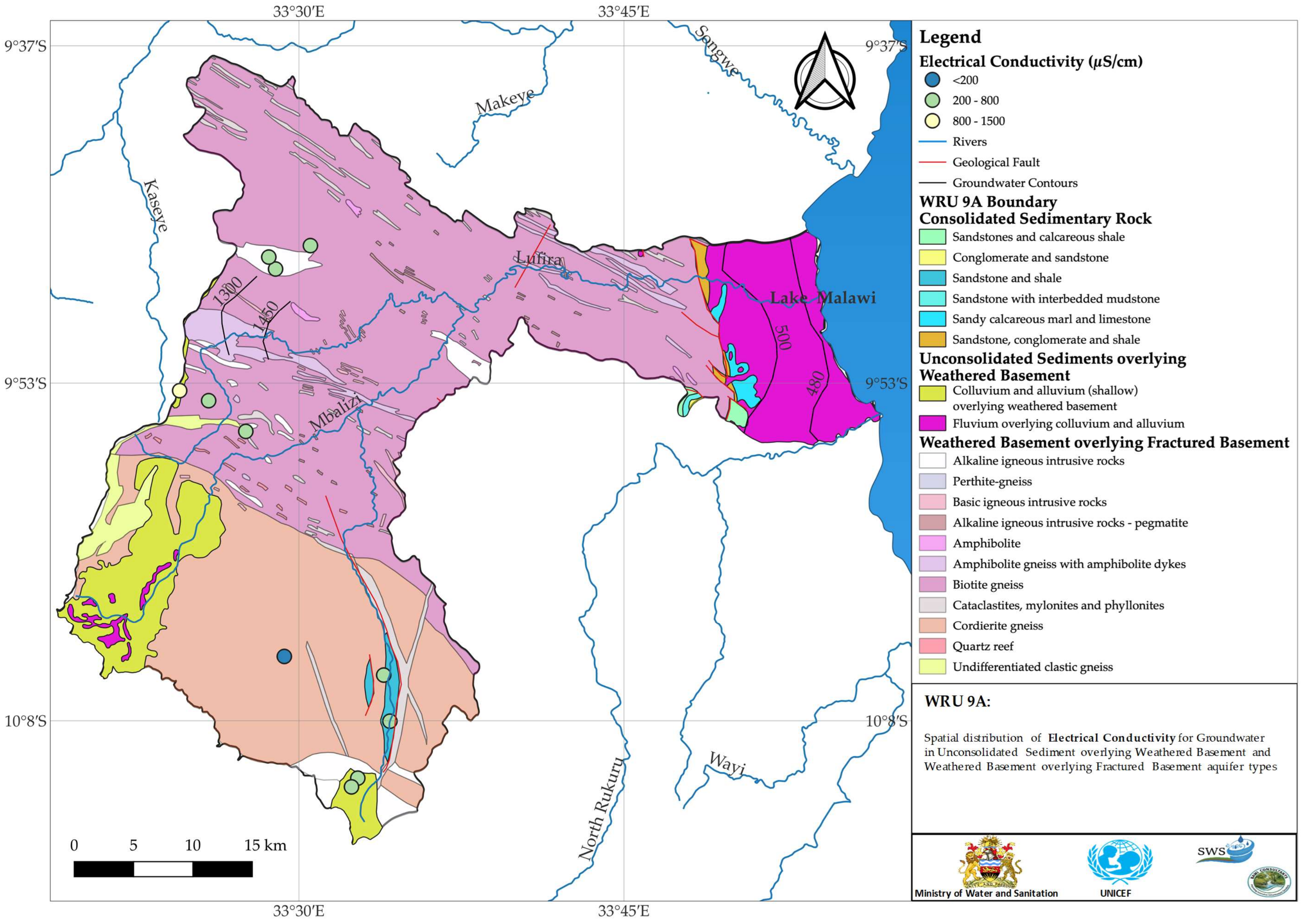


Figure WRU 9A.5 Groundwater Chemistry Distribution Sulphate

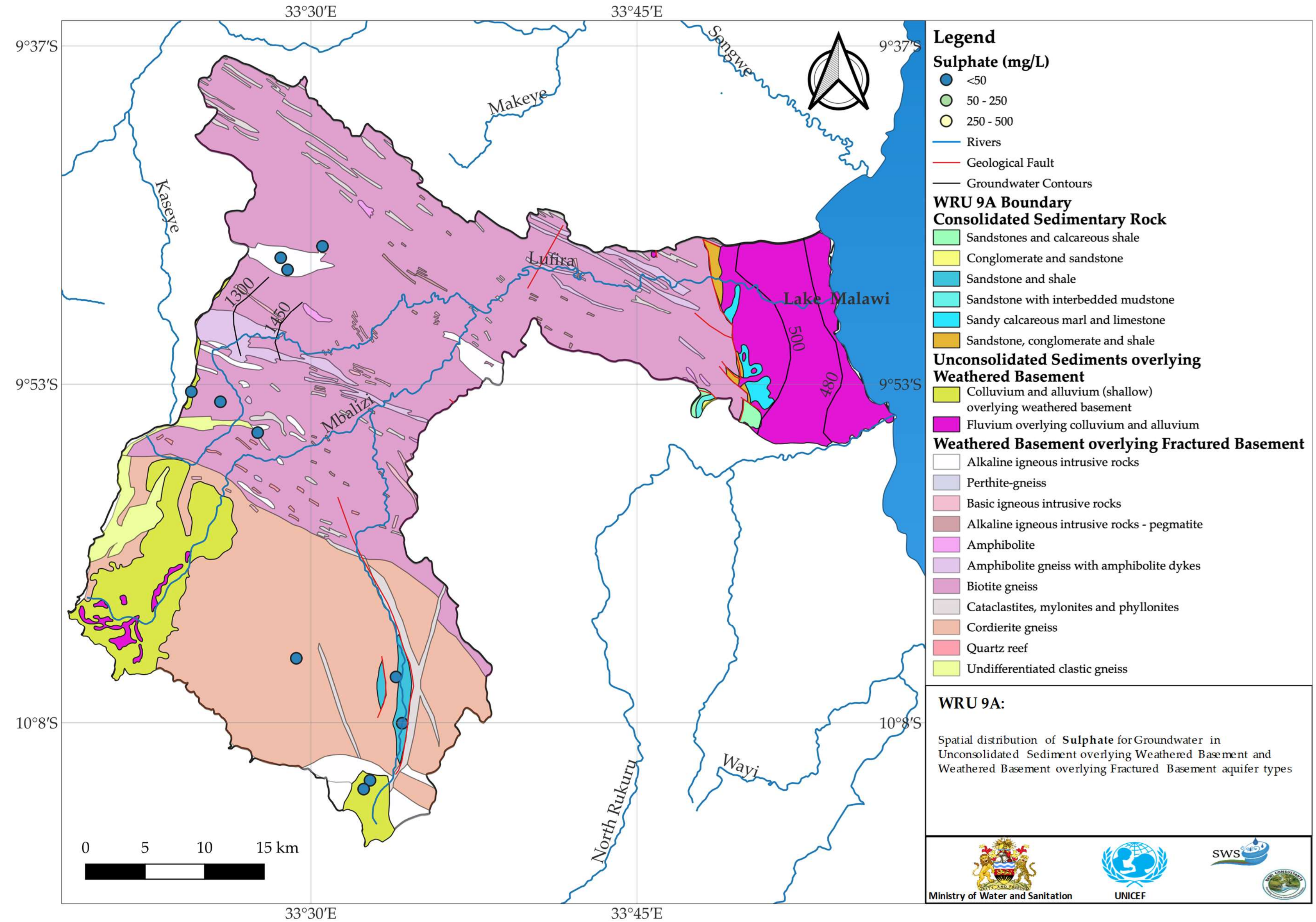


Figure WRU 9A.6 Groundwater Chemistry Distribution Chloride

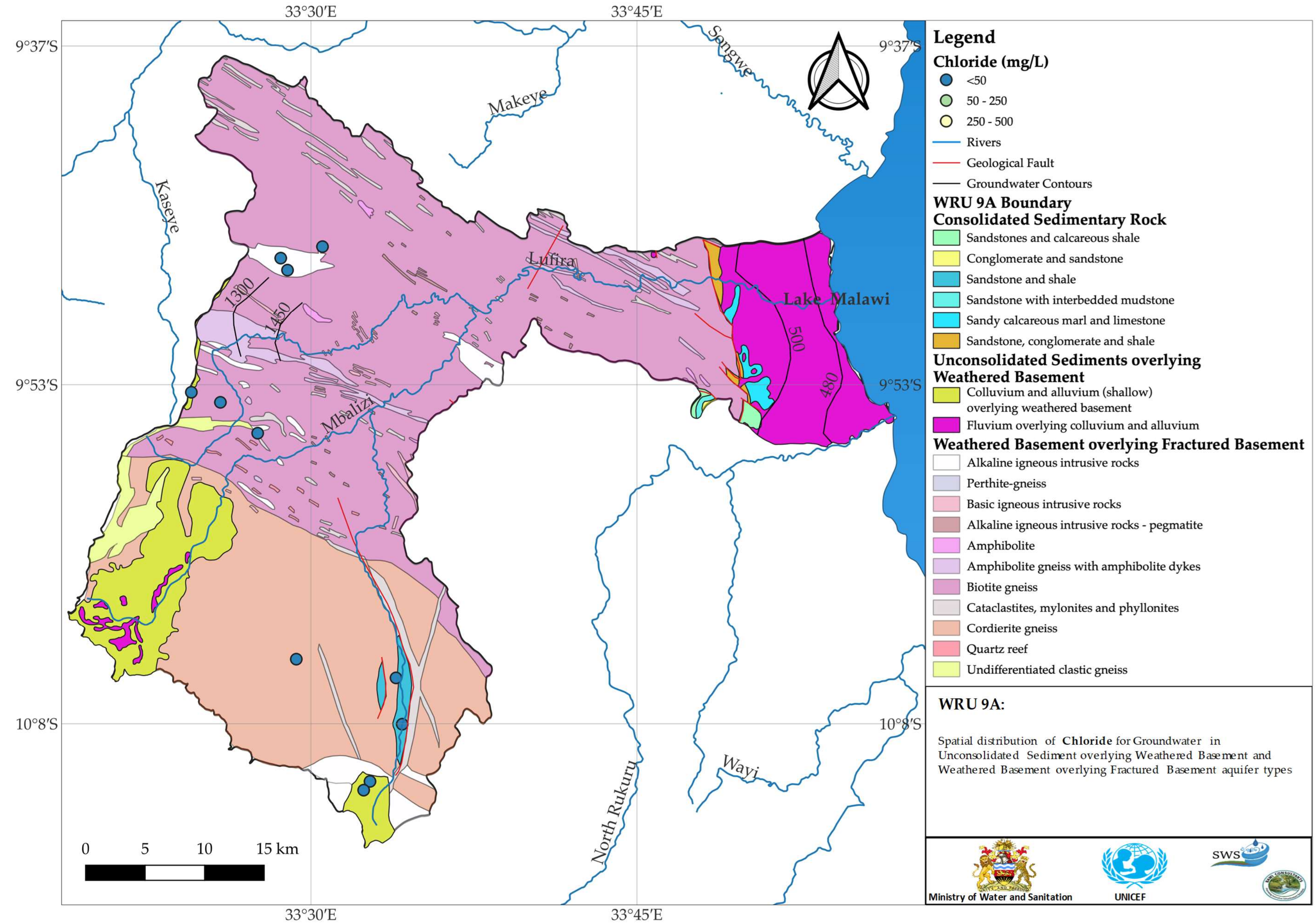


Figure WRU 9A.7 Groundwater Chemistry Distribution Sodium

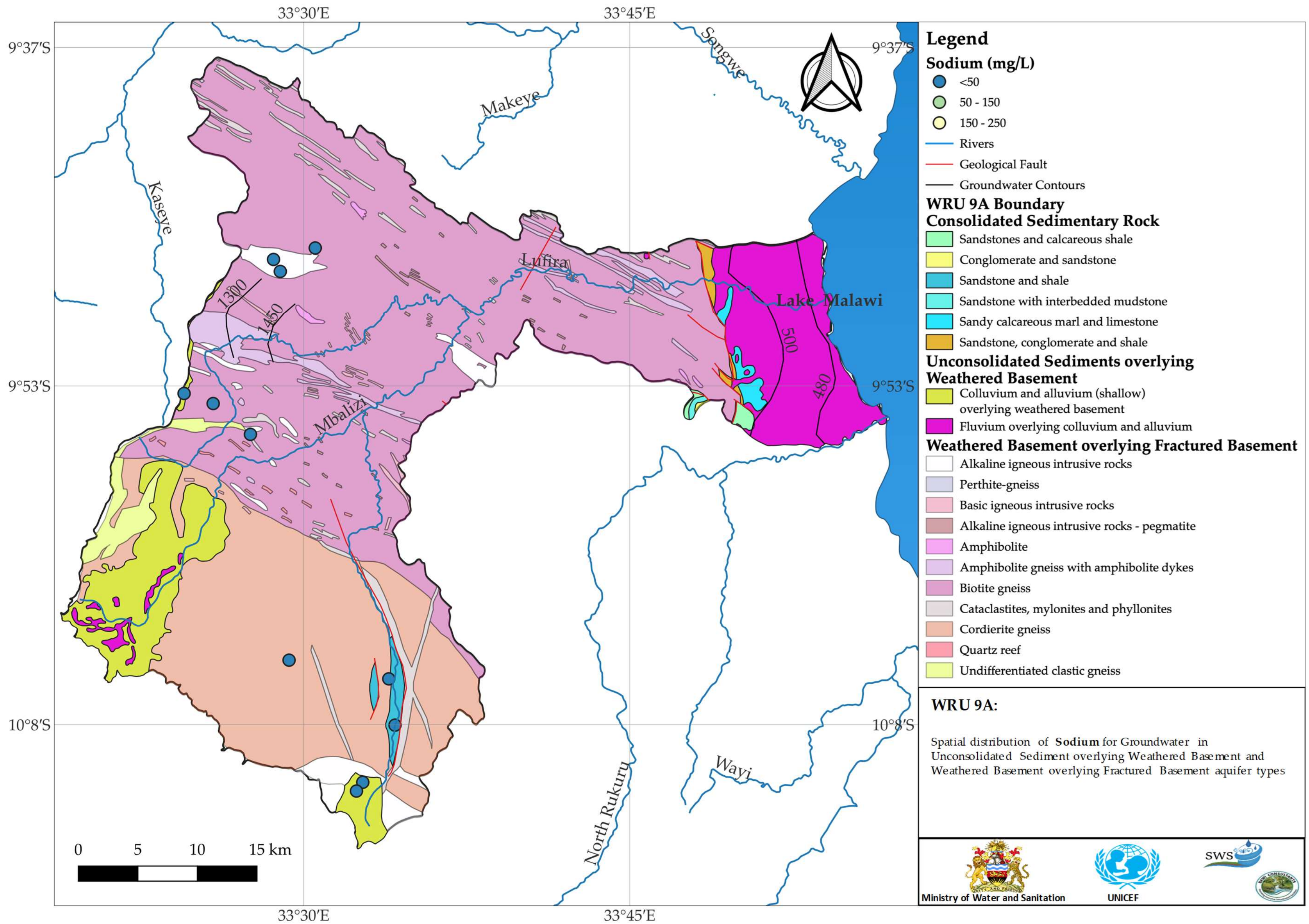


Figure WRU 9A.8 Groundwater Chemistry Distribution Calcium

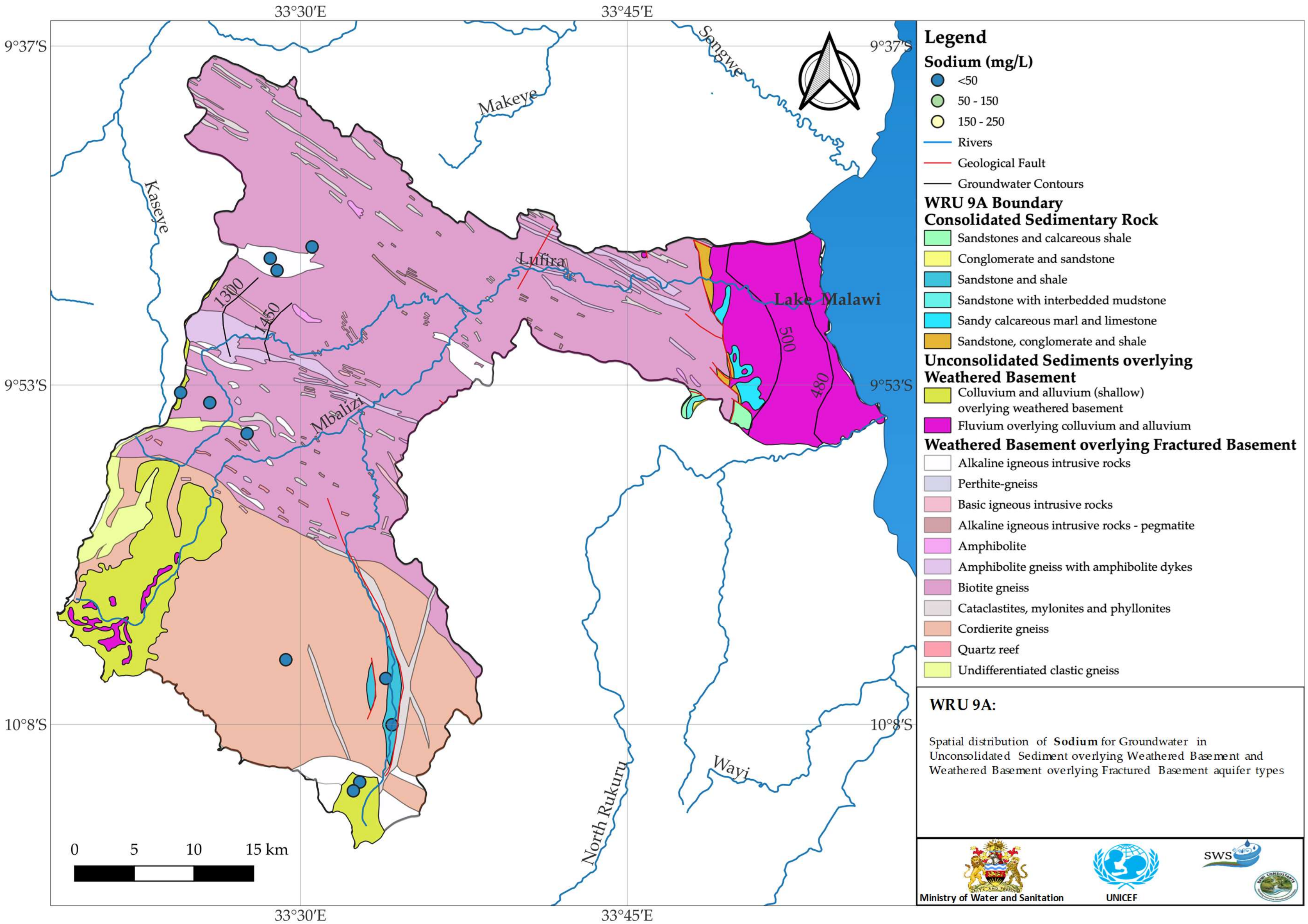


Figure WRU 9A.9 Piper Diagram of water quality results with respect to the major aquifer type

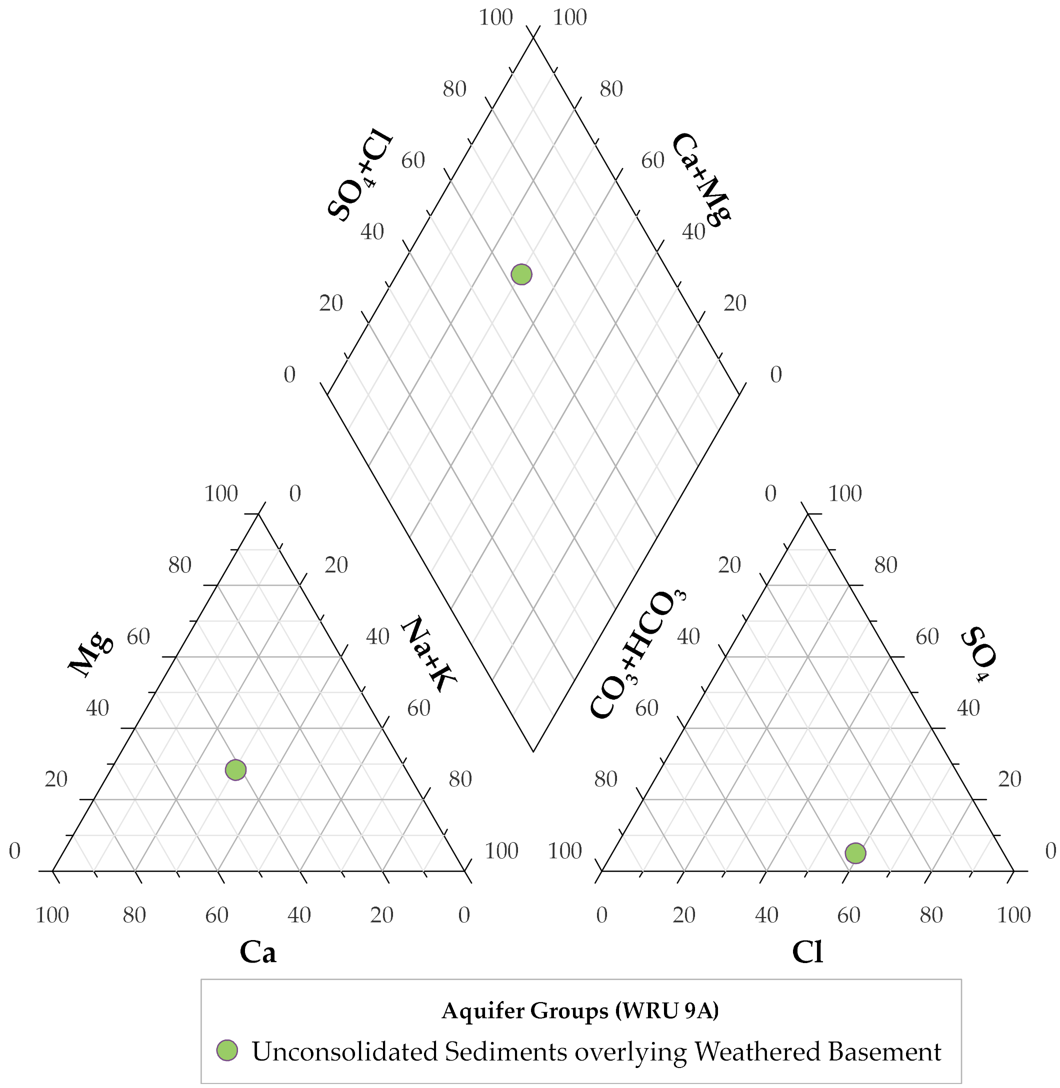
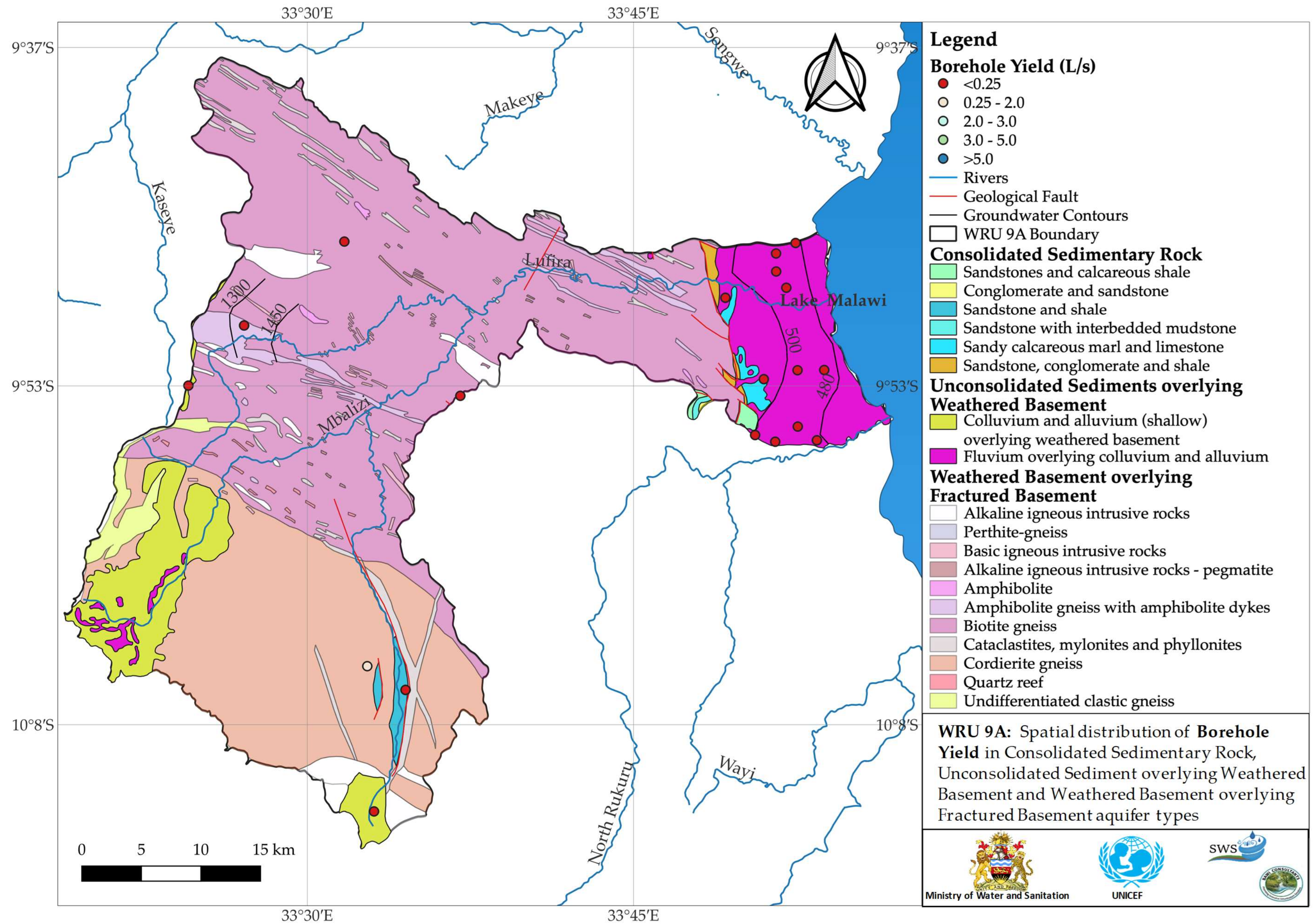


Figure WRU 9A.10 Borehole Yield Map for data held by the Ministry



WRU 9B Figures

Figure WRU 9B.1 Land Use and Major Roads

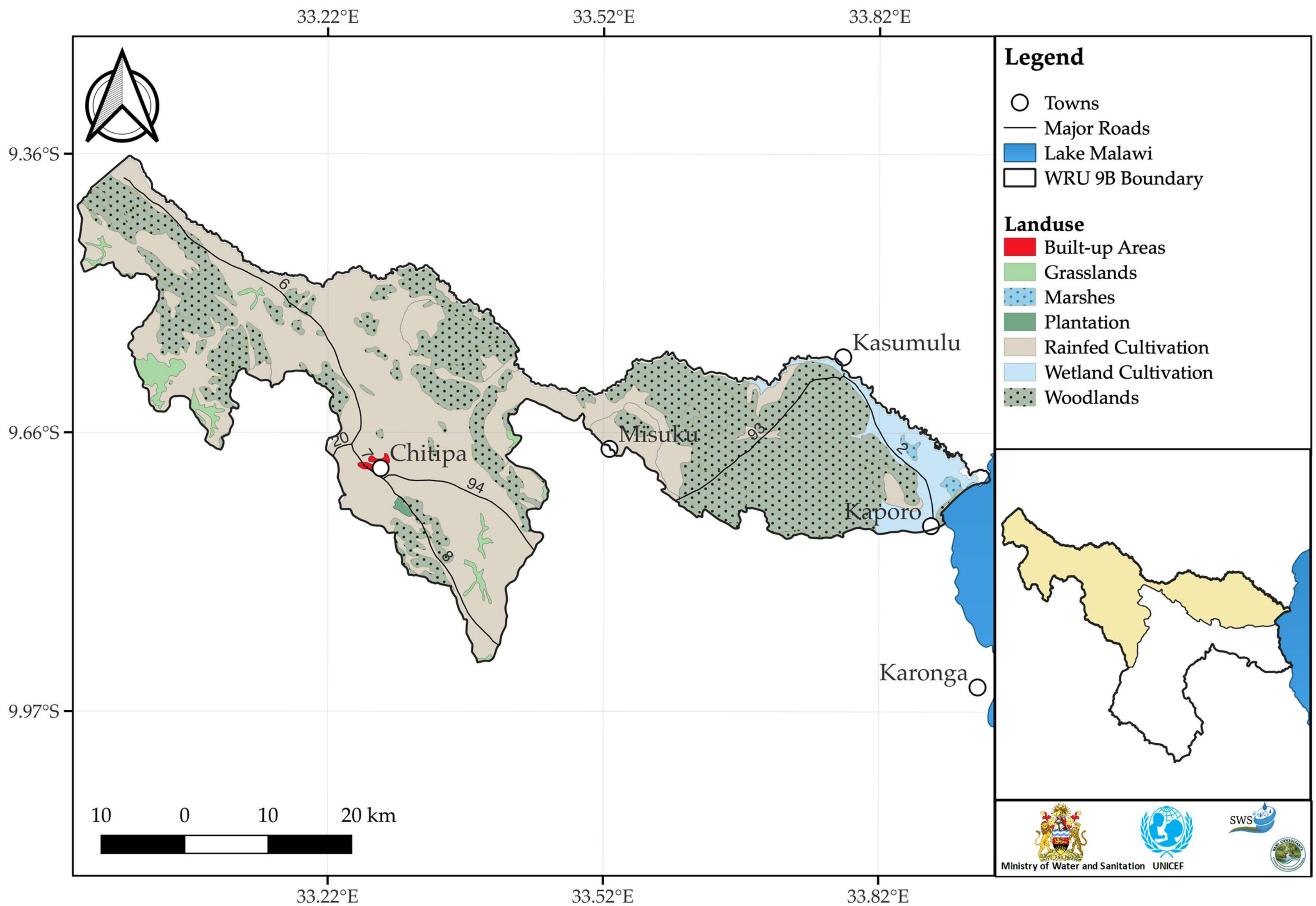


Figure WRU 9B.2 Rivers and Wetlands

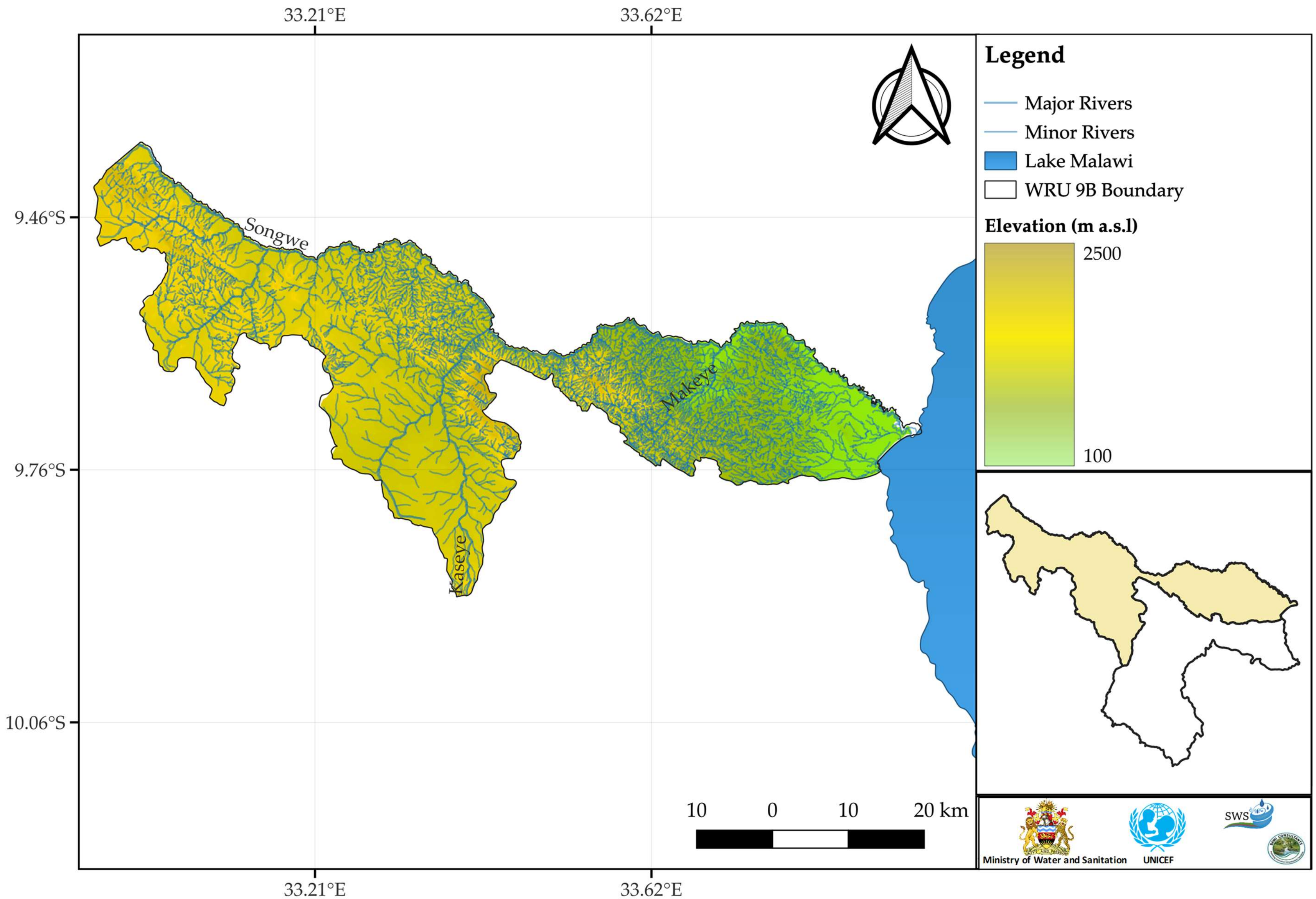


Figure WRU 9B.3 Hydrogeology Units and Water Table

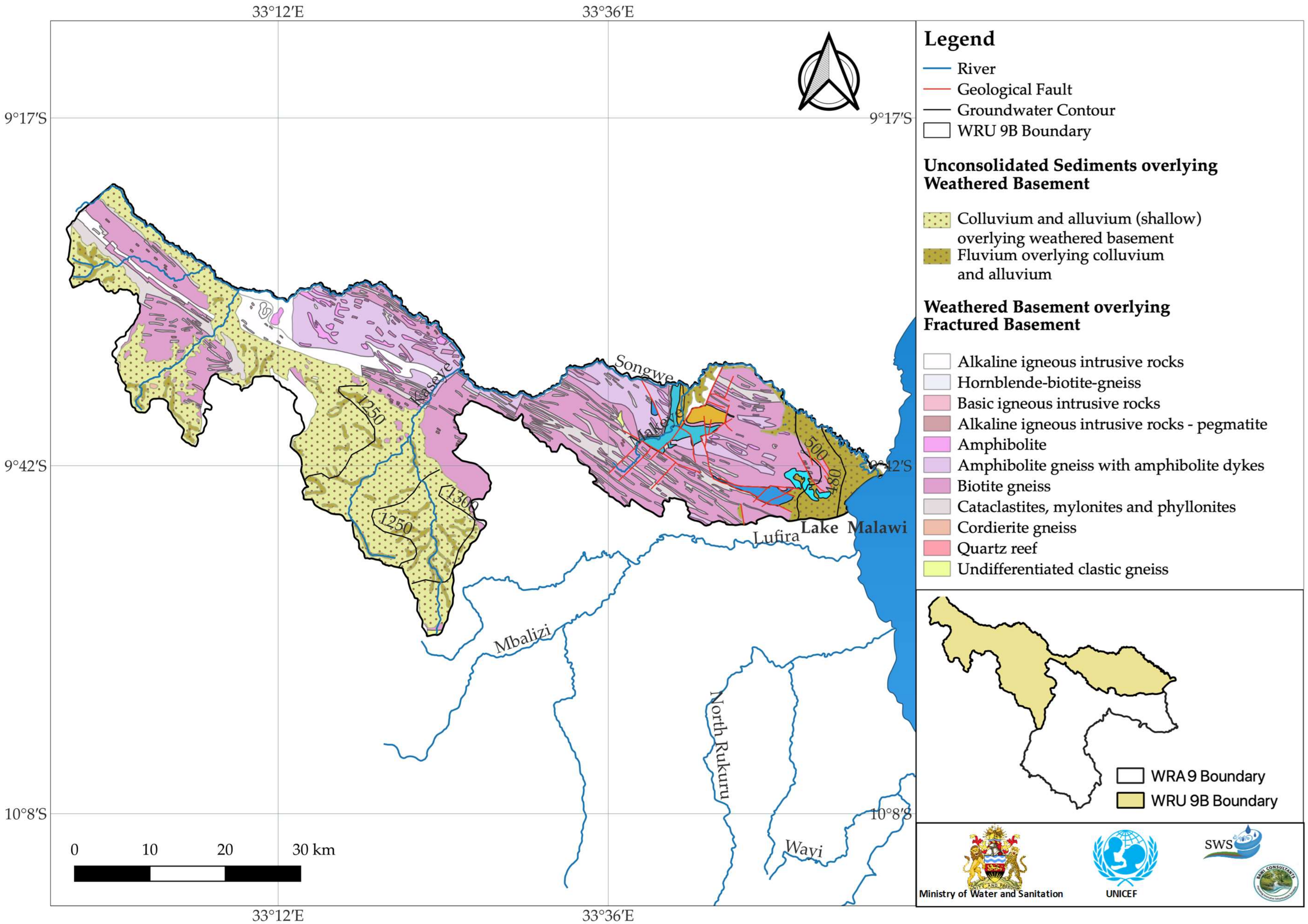


Figure WRU 9B.4 Groundwater Chemistry Distribution Electrical Conductivity

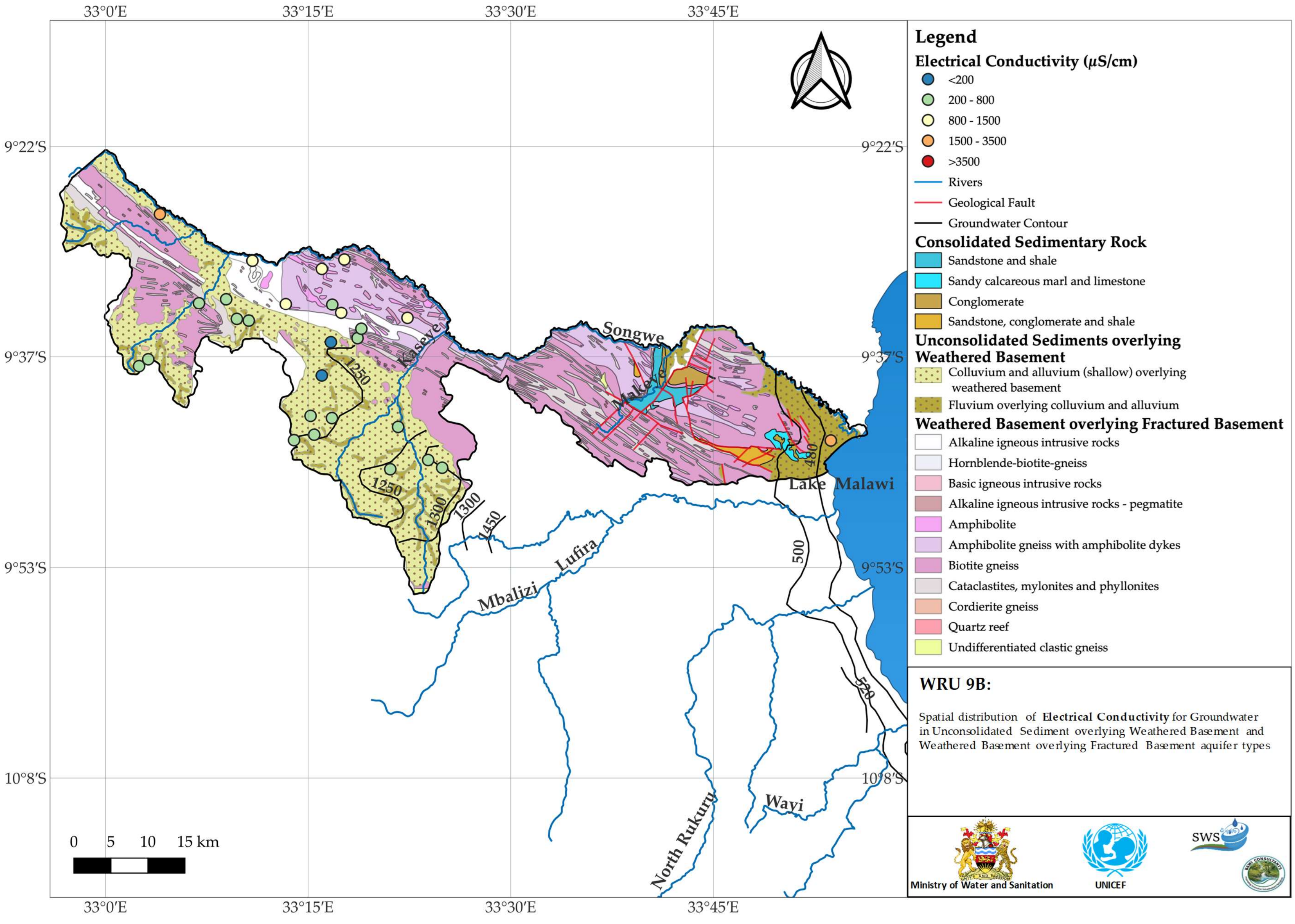


Figure WRU 9B.5 Groundwater Chemistry Distribution of Sulphate

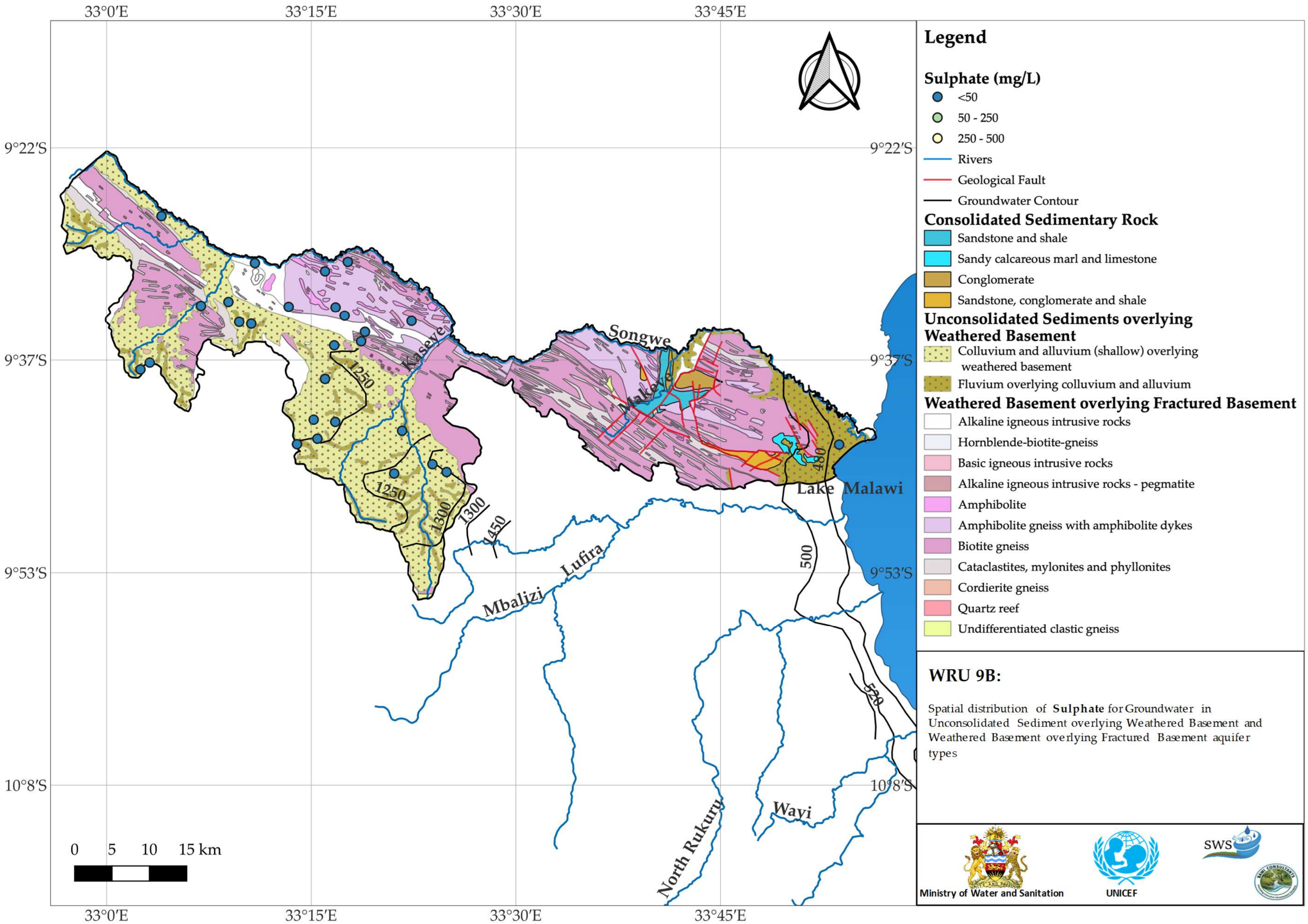


Figure WRU 9B.6 Groundwater Chemistry Distribution Chloride

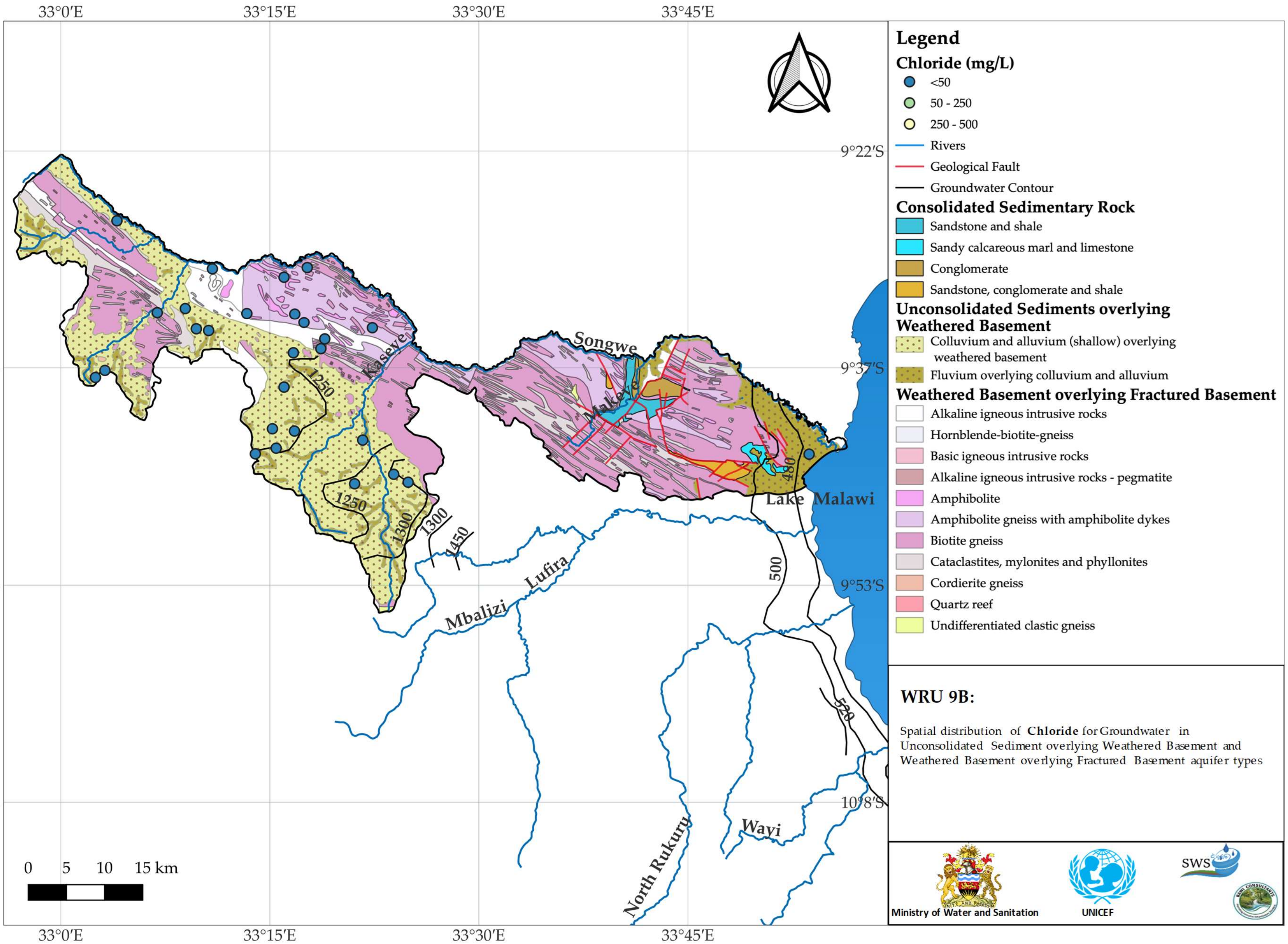


Figure WRU 9B.7 Groundwater Chemistry Distribution Sodium

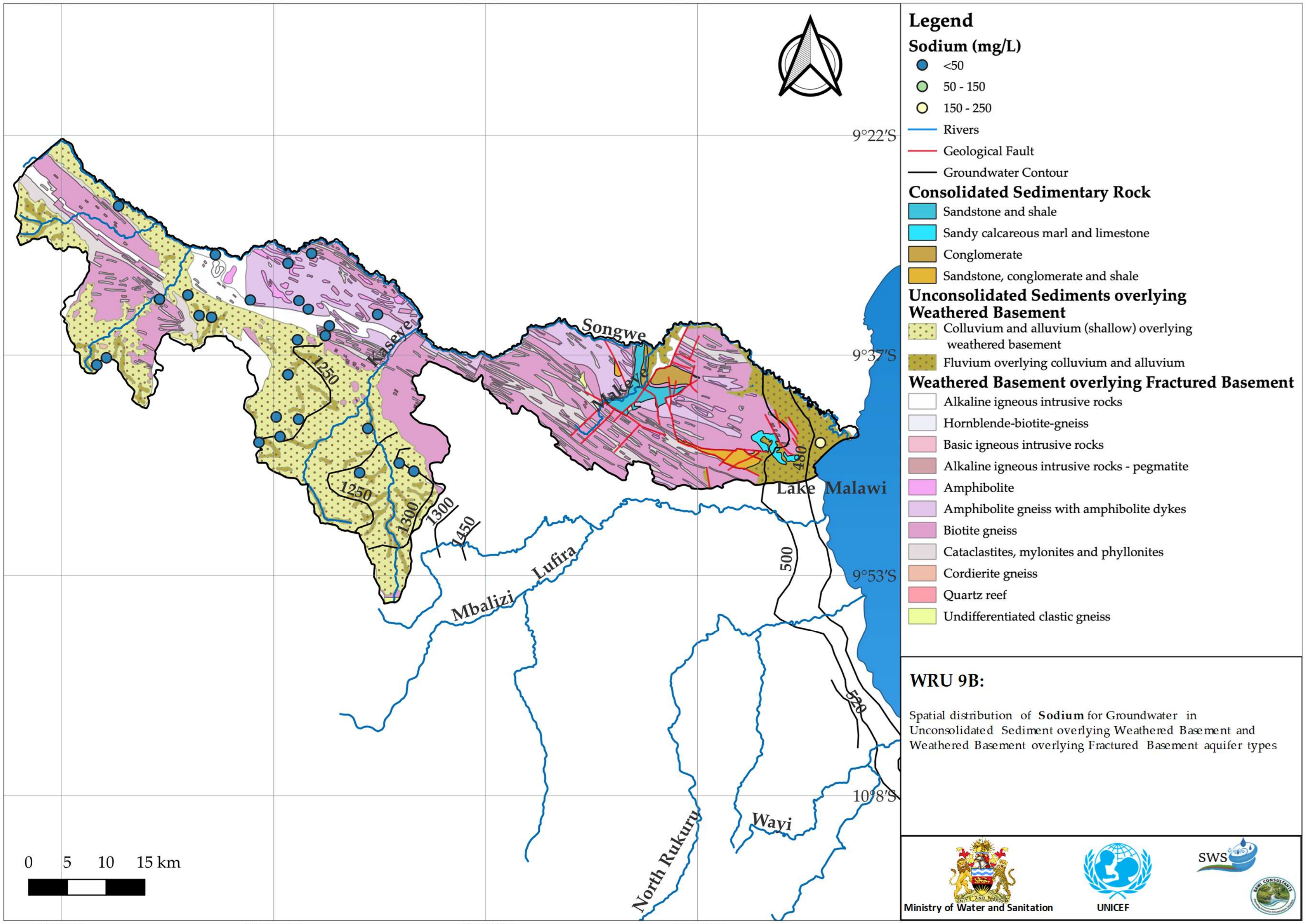


Figure WRU 9B.8 Groundwater Chemistry Distribution Calcium

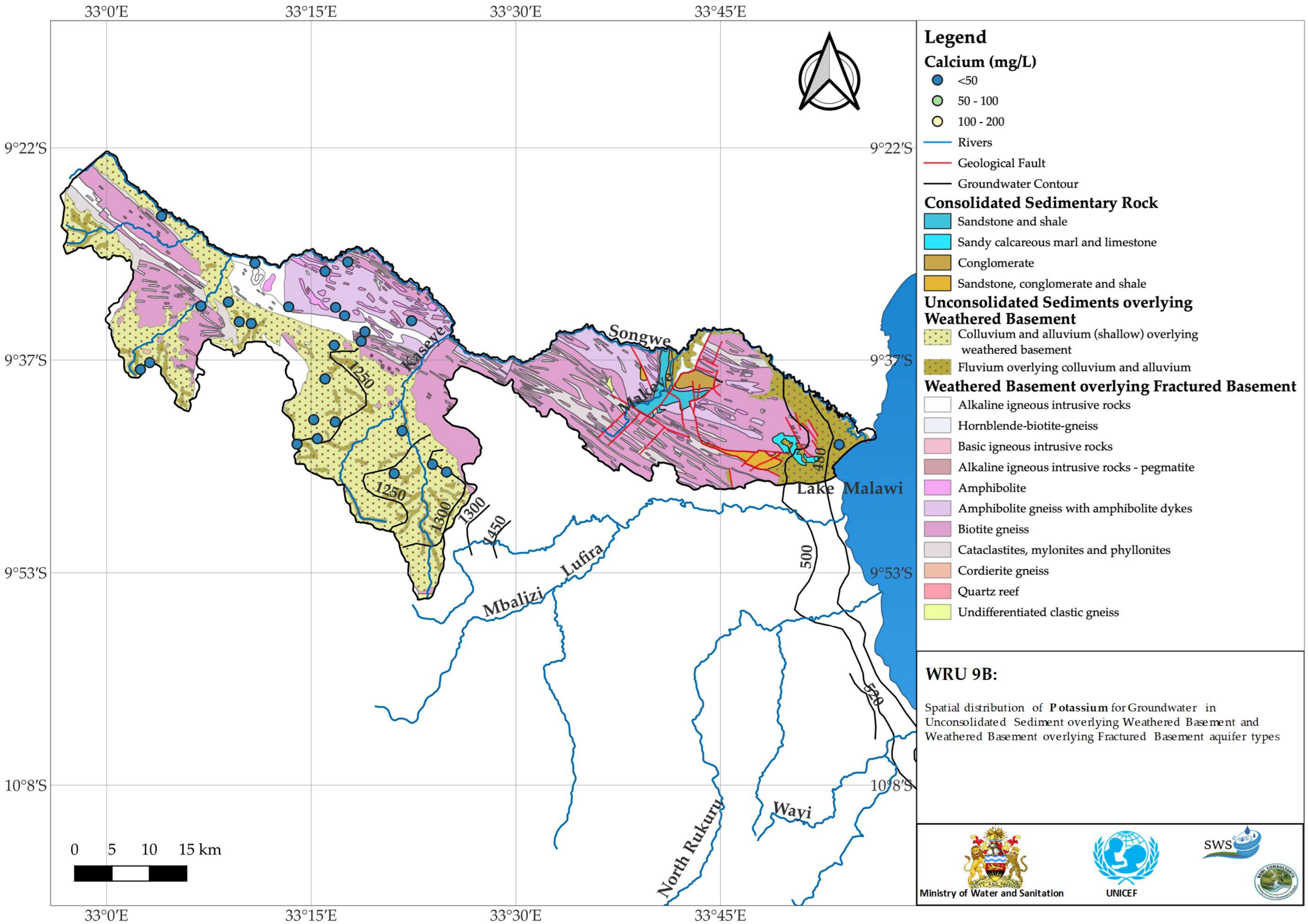


Figure WRU 9B.9 Piper Diagram of water quality results with respect to the major aquifer type

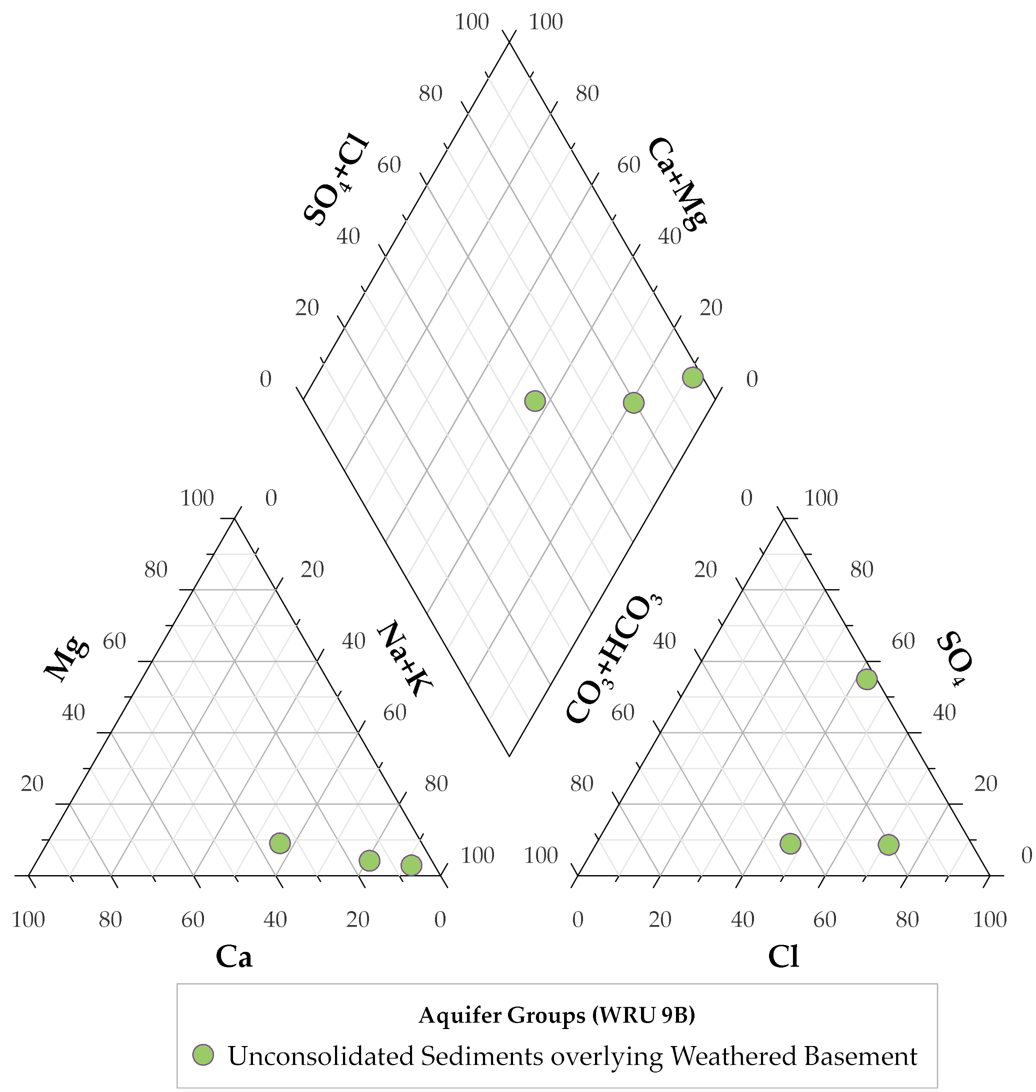
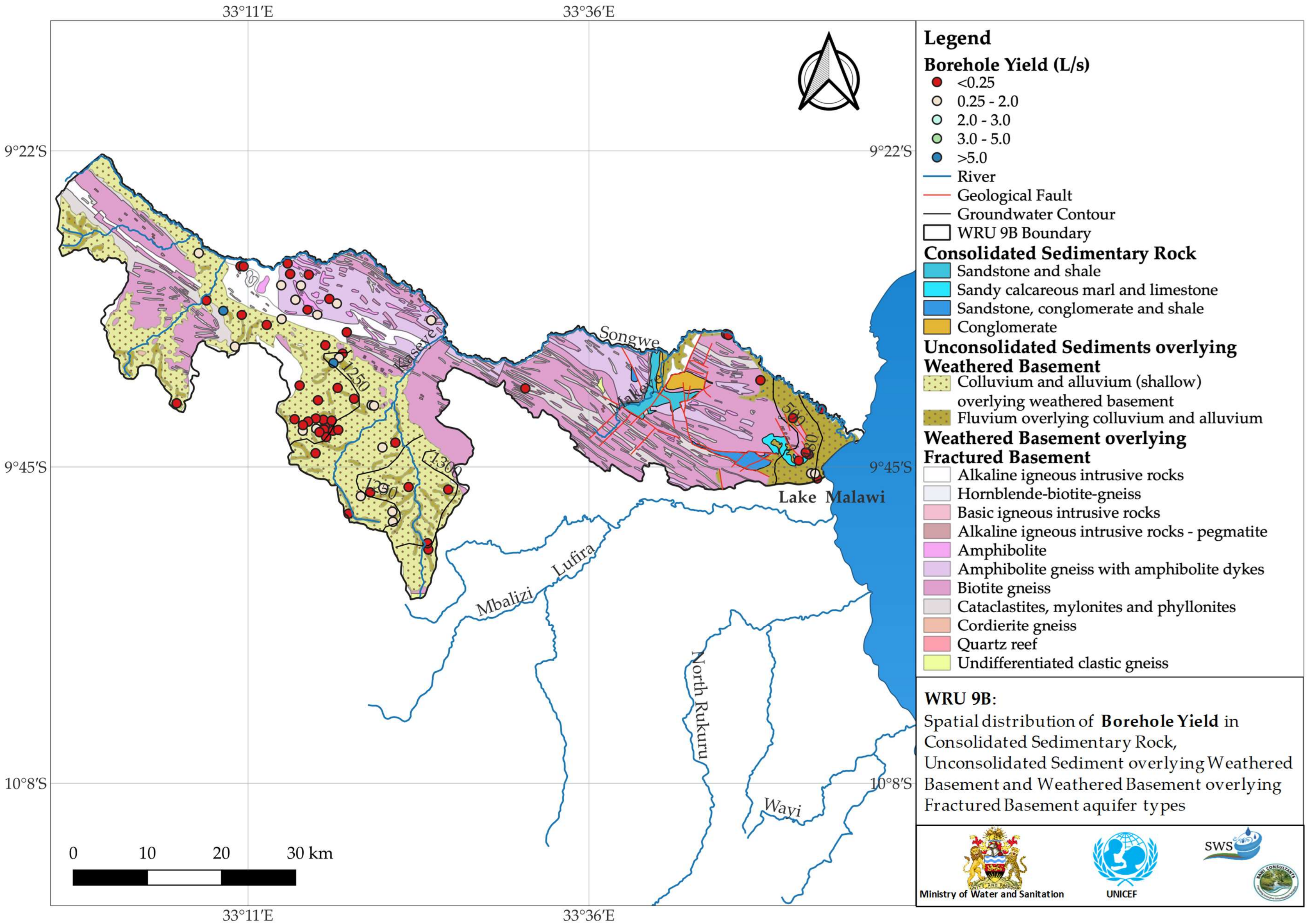


Figure WRU 9B.10 Borehole Yield Map for data held by the Ministry



Ministry of Water and Sanitation

Hydrogeology and Groundwater Quality Atlas of Malawi

Reference: Kalin, R.M., Mleta, P., Addison, M.J., Banda, L.C., Butao, Z., Nkhata, M., Rivett, M.O., Mlomba, P., Phiri, O., Mambulu, J, Phiri, O.C., Kambuku, D.D., Manda, J., Gwedeza, A., Hinton, R. (2022) *Hydrogeology and Groundwater Quality Atlas of Malawi, Songwe River Catchment, Water Resource Area 9, Ministry of Water and Sanitation, Government of Malawi, ISBN 978-1-915509-10-9 56pp*