

WORKROCK STATEMENT
MALAWI FAITH FOR POSITIVE CHANGE FOR CHILDREN – JOURNEY FOR CHANGE
MPONELA, MALAWI, 11-15 NOVEMBER, 2019

We, Malawi Faith Actors represented by the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) drawn from the Malawi Council of Churches, Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM), Evangelical Association of Malawi (EAM), Anglican Council of Malawi, Baptist Convention of Malawi, Muslim Association of Malawi, Quadria Association of Malawi (QMAM) in collaboration with UNICEF and Joint Learning Initiative on Faith, having convened at Linde Motel in Mponela, from the 11th to 15th of November 2019, on the Theme **Strengthening Partnerships For Faith Actors For Positive Change for Children in Malawi**, hereby make this statement to highlight key outcomes of the Assembly.

Recognising that religious leaders hold some of the deepest and most trusted relationships with their communities and, as skilled and influential communicators, can significantly move the hearts and minds of millions of people, and in turn shape behavioural and cultural practices in ways that development actors cannot; that in situations of corrupt practices, conflict, unrest and humanitarian crisis. Religious leaders and faith actors are also best positioned to foster inter-faith dialogue, diffuse tensions, contribute towards an end to corrupt practices, discriminatory attitudes and are uniquely able to provide spiritual and psycho-social support in the face of adversity;

Noting with great concern the plight of our Children in Malawi through rampant Child Abuse whereby 21% of our female children, and 14% of male children are suffering sexual abuse in their childhood right under our noses, that Malawi is currently the 7th Country in the World with the highest rate of child marriages, with 1 in 2 girls marrying before turning 18 years, despite the Country having ingrained in its Constitution the minimum age requirement for marriage which is 18 years;

Recognising the sad reality that currently 1 in 3 girls will have borne a child by age 18; and that negative social and behavioural deviances and mindsets are prevalent in the Malawi society;

Deeply concerned with high rates of school drop outs among our children, albino killings, child stunting and malnutrition, child negligence and reported incidences of child trafficking and child labour, rising cases of gender-based violence among children and many other harmful cultural practices;

Acknowledging the legal frameworks and instruments that the country has developed to curb child abuse, help end child marriages, prevent GBV among children, frameworks such as the *Gender Equality Act, the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act, The Prevention of Domestic Violence, and the Constitutional amendment on the minimum age for marriage of 18*; including National Strategies and Policies such as the National Strategy For Ending Child Marriages, and the Comprehensive Malawi Child Protector Policy;

Recognising the Government of Malawi being a signatory to several international instruments aimed at protecting and safeguarding the rights of Children such as the UN Convention on The Rights of the Child, The African Charter; SDG 5 aimed at Achieving gender equality, empowering all women and girls and eradicating all harmful cultural practices, and SDG 16 aimed at attaining peace, justice and strong institutions, and seeking to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions for all, including children;

We,

Call for attitude, mindset, and behavioural change among all Malawians and at all levels of Society to eradicate all forms of child abuse and in particular call for an end to child marriages in Malawi;

Call upon faith actors to curb all harmful and negative religious practices and influences that negatively impact on the well-being of women, girls, men, boys, and all children in our Nation; and condemn in strongest terms any abuse perpetrated by the faith community as well as any individual in any capacity anywhere in Malawi.

Call upon the Government as a signatory to International Conventions, Protocols, and Instruments to scale up efforts to disseminate, popularize, and reinforce such agreements aimed at protecting and safeguarding children from abuse and promote the realization of children's rights.

Call upon each and every institution in Malawi; Government, Private Sector, Faith Community, Academia, and CSOs subscribe to child protection and safeguarding policies and ensure the existence of appropriate safeguarding mechanisms in their institutions.

Call upon the Media in Malawi to step up the fight against all forms of child abuse including ending child marriage by disseminating proper information covering both the prevalent ills as well as showcasing positive stories of change that will help shift the mindsets and stereotypes around children's rights and protection issues.

Call upon all development partners to scale up support towards strengthening partnerships for positive changes with technical know-how and financing to end child abuse and help combat child marriage.

Call for an end to bribery and corruption at all levels of society that impede the delivery of justice for victims of child abuse.

Call upon PAC to organize thematic interfaith conferences on child protection;

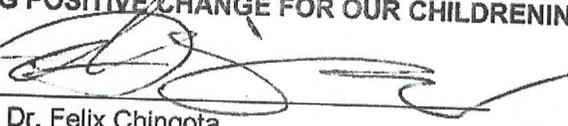
Call for strong and well-coordinated participation by all stakeholders, including *All arms of Government, (The Executive, Legislature, Judiciary), the Police, Media, all Faith Actors, CSOs, Private Sector, Development Partners, local Councils, School Authorities, Communities,* for positive outcomes for children in Malawi.

Collectively commit to the implementation of evidence based strategies and best practices as well as to a continuous assessment of weaknesses, gaps, and practices in order to maximize the full contribution of religious leaders and faith actors for positive change for children in Malawi.

Further commit to a mind and heart change, and seek to transform the face of Malawi, with our individual and collective efforts, creating a safe environment for our children and never let them be subjected to any form of abuse anywhere and by anyone in Malawi.

MAY GOD PROTECT AND SAFEGURARD OUR CHILDREN AND MAY HE GUIDE OUR EFFORTS IN BRINGING POSITIVE CHANGE FOR OUR CHILDRENIN MALAWI.

SIGNED



Very Rev. Dr. Felix Chingota

BOARD CHAIRPERSON, PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE (PAC)