

## TALKING POINTS

**UNICEF Deputy Representative Margarita Tileva**

***Closing Remarks - Workrock: Faith and Positive Change for Children in  
Malawi***

**Friday, 15 November 2019**

**Linde Motel, Dowa**

- The Chief Information Officer responsible for Publications, Ms. Grace Kwalapu
- The Chairman for the Public Affairs Committee, Reverend Dr. Felix Chingota
- The Representative of Workrock participating Faith Leaders, Pastor Fletcher Kaiya
- Religious bodies here present
- Colleagues from UN agencies
- Colleagues from UNICEF Malawi Country, Regional Office and HQ
- Members of the media present
- Ladies and Gentlemen
- All protocols observed

It is heart-warming to see such distinguished gathering coming together to discuss children rights and issues around child marriage.

I am extremely grateful to the representatives of all faiths gathered here and am deeply touched by your commitment and active

participation during these past 4 days of deliberations exploring opportunities for collective action to address issues children in Malawi face.

Faith and faith-based organizations have traditionally played a major role in charitable works — Christian and Muslim organizations equally have long established schools, hospitals and social service organizations motivated by their beliefs and the positive emotions they feel towards their respective religious communities.

We all know what profound changes the faith can bring in lives of people through a humble, yet powerful care and guidance to communities, parents and children towards greater compassion and love. All religions in the world seek especially deeply such compassion and love towards the most pure, yet most vulnerable human beings - the children - who need our collective, care, protection and guidance, so that they can become active citizens and fulfil their dreams.

I understand the deliberations in the past days were heated and also energised and hopeful, seeking to identify the best ways for our collective action that will bring better results for children, including how you can mobilise your associations and parishes, how you can raise the awareness of your communities and what will be these mechanisms applied to prevent negative practices and behaviours

which jeopardise child growth and development and deprive children from a caring and loving environment.

While many issues were discussed, including ensuring a happy childhood, a caring growth and development for babies and young children, protective school environment providing quality inclusive education that shapes future bright minds, there were also more serious issues discussed seeking to combat harmful practices and behaviours related to child neglect, violence against children, engagement of adolescents in risky behaviours which can lead to HIV and one very serious issue which indeed deprives a child from happy childhood –the child marriage.

So here we are today, to reaffirm our call to action to fight and combat harmful attitudes and practices everywhere and all the time. We look forward to our joint collaboration and identifying open communications channels where you can inform us about great successes you have achieved in changing negative behaviours as reflected in your specific action plans developed this week.

We also look forward to getting feedback from the Task Team to inform us on how to move forward. UNICEF remains committed to provide technical support along the journey and advice on standardized approaches in collecting evidence that will support strong action towards ending child marriage and other harmful practices.

Before concluding, I would like to extend my special thanks to the National Social Mobilisation Committee which co-facilitated the organisation of this wonderful event as well as the District Social Mobilisation Committees which are there to work and support each one of you.

I reaffirm as well UNICEF's commitment to joint hand with all of you and spread the message about the need to ensure safe, secure, protective and loving environment for our children in Malawi so that they can grow and thrive.

I thank you all for your dedication and commitment to the children of Malawi!

Thank you!