

SPEECH BY CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER- MRS GRACE KWALAPU AT CLOSING CEREMONY OF WORKROCK IN MPONELA

- Unicef Deputy Rep – Ms. Margarita Tilevi
- Acting Chief Communication for Development (C4D) Unicef
Headquarters – Dr Kerida McDonald
- PAC Chairperson – Rev. Dr. Felix Chingota
- Chief Gender and Development Officer from the Ministry of Gender – Mr
Fred Simwaka
- Senior officials from Ministry of Information, Civic Education and
Communications Technology;
- All senior government officials.
- Representative of WorkRock Participating Faith Leaders – Pastor Fletcher
Kaiya
- UNICEF Staff
- Lead facilitators Cathy and Jean
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning

I am delighted and happy this morning, to officially close the first ever, WorkRock in Malawi. This is a rare opportunity where we strengthen our collaboration and partnership for children in Malawi. And through this meeting, we also take a step further to strengthening partnerships for faith actors for positive outcomes for children.

First of all, **the PAC Chairperson and Distinguished participants**, let me thank UNICEF for organising this important meeting which enables us to be part and parcel of the Faith for Positive Change for Children global initiative. The Initiative aims to enable faith based actors and other stakeholders to work together in a more sustainable, systematic, integrated and scalable way to impact children's lives.

Malawi is a second country after South Sudan where this initiative is taking place but believe you me, in implementation of this Initiative, Malawi will take position one.

The PAC Chairperson and Distinguished participants, let me also take this opportunity to thank the hardworking facilitators who travelled from various parts of the continent for the work well done.

Furthermore, I would like also to sincerely thank you all the participants for honoring the invitation to attend this meeting. You left your busy schedules and dedicating your time to be here for the entire five days. This cannot be taken for granted because without you this meeting would not have been materialized.

Can we clap hands for ourselves please?

2

The PAC Chairperson and Distinguished participants, the issue of child protection requires a holistic approach. All concerned players need to come together and bring out different strategies that can be adapted at all levels. As faith players, we need to understand the situation we are in and have a heart of change on how we can implement effective faith for social and behaviour change among our communities.

It is undisputable fact that faith leaders are taken as part of the gatekeepers and have a lot of respect in our communities. Therefore, you are a key partner in development for child protection. So, as faith actors, we are entrusted with a responsibility to support ethical programmes that are targeting promotion of values that entrench faith among our followers and discourage the infringement of human freedoms.

The PAC Chairperson and Distinguished participants, I have been reliably informed that participants to this WorkRock, enjoyed the educative and fun energizers that brought out many inspirational lessons that shape and enable us to develop a clear road map of our journey of change. The insightful strategies of power walk, childhood roadmap, sharing significant change stories set important foundations on how we can work together in order to bring change to our children situation.

In this meeting, **PAC Chairperson and Distinguished participants**, we realize that faith actors enjoy the trust from the followers, so we need to utilize such opportunity for the betterment of our children. My plea, therefore, to my fellow change agents is that in this journey we should not leave anyone behind. Besides us, national level faith leaders, there are a number of religious denominations in our communities that also enjoy thousands of followers, please consider them as well in our various programs.

PAC Chairperson and Distinguished participants, as government I would like to assure you that we will leave no stone unturned in fulfilling our promises which we have made here. We strive to champion the ownership of this initiative and find a new way of working together for a common good. Together with faith actors, we will continue striving to break down the existing barriers and scale through new strengthened programmes and partnerships where possible.

Government will utilize all existing structures such as Public Affairs Committee, National Social Mobilization Committee and District Social Mobilization Committee which have good representation from all key government ministries and sectors for child protection to trickle down this WorkRock initiative to the district level in order to make such approaches be adapted and practiced at a local level. Most of all, we promote the participation of children in the planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes that affect their lives.

PAC Chairperson and Distinguished participants, let me also encourage you to make sure that the resolutions listed in the communique are seriously considered for implementation by us all. The good work we have started should not end here but be carried on in our various work places.

What we should know is that, planning is 20% and implementation is 80% dangerous things. Let's make sure that what has been planned is put into action

PAC Chairperson and Distinguished participants, Lastly, I would like to thank UNICEF for the financial assistance towards this meeting and we ask you to keep on partnering with government in various endeavors for the betterment of children and women in the country.

Walk and, think and sleep and, ~~and~~ even when you are sitting think about them

At this juncture, I declare this meeting officially closed.

God Bless you all.