

**Speech by the UNICEF Representative
Ms Carrie Auer at the Official Opening of the Child
Protection Workers' Refresher Training**

Postal Conference Center, Blantyre

Monday, 23 NOVEMBER 2009.

The Minister of Gender, Children and Community Development, Honourable
Patricia Kaliati, MP

The Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Gender, Children and Community
Development, Mrs. Olive Chikankheni

Officials from the Ministry

Workshop Facilitators

Let me begin by acknowledging the child protection workers gathered here and thank them for their unwavering commitment and hard work in ensuring that vulnerable children receive adequate safety and protection.

You are in the frontline of our daily battle against the abuse and exploitation of children. Without you, we would have a difficult time knowing what is happening to children and where the most abuses are occurring.

Let me also add that today's training is made possible because of the leadership of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Community Development. I

assure you, Honourable Minister, that we in UNICEF will continue to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with you in your efforts to ensure that every child in Malawi is protected from abuse and exploitation.

This training is aimed at exposing child protection workers to a holistic perspective of child protection. I am told that the initial group of child protection workers was trained in 2004 before the development of the Child Protection Manual and Resource Kits by the Government of Malawi with the support of UNICEF. This training will therefore be an opportunity to familiarize the Child Protection Workers with the manual and the resource kit which is an important guide to your work.

This training fits well within our objective of supporting national efforts to increase equitable access to and utilization of quality basic social services. It aims at strengthening government capacity to lead and coordinate implementation of the National Plan of Action for Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children and provide a legal and protective environment for all children.

Honourable Minister, child protection workers are critical to the achievement of these outcomes as they are the eyes and ears on the ground. They act as a crucial link between children in communities and arms of government that provide critical services to children, such as the social welfare

offices, labour offices, the police, community victim support units, the courts, schools, hospitals, and other service providers.

Child protection are therefore an important component of the child protection network that the government is building. Indeed, a review of child protection workers undertaken by the Ministry in 2007 showed that they, in conjunction with traditional leaders, are critical in establishing and providing regular support to community protection committees.

They promote awareness of child rights at community level, provide support and guidance to community-based childcare centres, support the registration of orphans, and help community-based organizations involved in child protection with technical advice and guidance.

It is clear that community child protection workers need to acquire relevant skills and knowledge if they are to be effective. We in UNICEF will continue to support the Ministry to continuously enhance the capacity of child protection workers to deliver services to children. These efforts include upgrading the Magomero College to provide Diplomas in social work. This is an opportunity that I am sure many of you gathered here will take advantage of in future.

Finally, I wish to thank you Honourable Minister for your presence, which I am sure will go a long way in motivating everyone here to do even better.

I thank you