

SPEECH

**BY THE UNICEF REPRESENTATIVE, MS. CARRIE AUER AT THE
OFFICIAL HANDOVER OF CERTIFICATES ON CHILD RIGHTS AND
TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP TRAINING TO DISTRICT**

COMMISSIONERS

LILONGWE,

21ST SEPT 2010

The Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Honourable Anna
Kachiko, MP

The Principal Secretary for Local Government and Rural Development
District Commissioners,

Representatives from various government ministries,

UNICEF colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen

My task this evening is a relatively easy one: to simply hand over
certificates to the District Commissioners who took part in the training on child

rights and transformational leadership in April this year. But before I do that, allow me to make a few remarks by emphasizing how important we in UNICEF view the role of district commissioners to be in fulfilling child rights.

Children in this country are looking to you to fulfill their rights because you are the closest to where they are. As was emphasized during the training, children's well-being depends on duty-bearers like you carrying out your obligations. When duty-bearers fail, the greatest amount of suffering is felt by children.

Honourable Minister, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, we have a unique opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of children. We are currently engaged in supporting our government partners to develop the next Malawi Growth and Development Strategy and our message is simple: children need to be at the center of Malawi's development process. This means that the MGDS addresses children's issues in a specific and prominent manner. It means that the MGDS explicitly includes areas requiring increased investments in children, such as social protection, universal birth registration, child protection, education, health and nutrition, and water and sanitation.

The MGDS is important but it is what happens at the local levels that is even more important. The increased momentum towards decentralisation offers us a great opportunity to put children at the heart of our district plans and for these plans to be financed by the government, the UN and other development partners.

I am hopeful that the efforts we have put into training you the District Commissioners will yield greater results for children now and in the future. When we begin to see a greater focus on children in your district development and implementation plans, then we will know that our efforts were not in vain. When we begin to see improvements in the lives of children; when hungry children can now eat; when vulnerable children receive the protection they need; when sick children receive the treatment they deserve; and when children no longer drop out of school, then we will know that our district commissioners are putting into practice what they learnt. This, Honourable Minister, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, is the essence of our gathering here this evening.

Zikomo kwambiri.