

## **SPEECH**

**BY UNICEF RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE MS. CARRIE AUER**

**IN ACCEPTING THE WOMEN OF COMPASSION AWARD**

**LOS ANGELES, USA**

**11<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2011**

Good afternoon.

I am greatly humbled to have been recognized for this award, alongside somebody I have come to greatly respect and admire. Frida Giannini is not only a great friend of UNICEF but a tireless advocate and ally of the poor children of Malawi.

I also thank Caryl and her team for recognizing my modest contributions. None of my efforts would have been possible without the organization I work for – UNICEF – and the unflinching support of my colleagues in Malawi, Nairobi, Geneva and New York. I count it a blessing to work with men and women that are truly committed to making life better for all humanity, especially the poorest and most marginalized.

I and my colleagues in Malawi are working hard for children. We work in one of the poorest countries in the world, where millions of children live in grinding poverty and who, without any tangible help, have narrow odds for

leading a healthy and successful lives. I'll never forget their faces, the children who go for days without food; the children who suffer needlessly from largely preventable diseases; nor will I ever forget the children whose lives have been scarred by years of repeated violence and sexual abuse. We work tirelessly for the lives of children who live alone because their parents have succumbed to AIDS.

In all this, I have never ceased to be inspired by the resilience and commitment of poor communities to improve their lot. There are thousands of grandmothers who toil every day, often with limited means, to provide for the orphans they look after. Grandmothers like Sidoniya who, with just a little bit of help, have done some of the most amazing things I have ever seen. Nor could I ever forget the hundreds of individuals, themselves poor, that work everyday without reward to improve the lives of those less fortunate than themselves.

If we have made any difference at all, it is because of people like these. So today, I dedicate this award to the thousands of grandmothers in Malawi that are bearing ever so courageously the brunt of poverty and disease. They are the unsung heroes of our work; they are the true women of compassion.

Thankyou.