



INTRODUCING THE MALAWI 6th CEDAW REPORT

***STATEMENT MADE AT THE 45TH SESSION OF THE
COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW)***

BY

OLIVE TINDAPEULI CHIKANKHENI

***SECRETARY FOR GENDER, CHILDREN AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT; GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
MALAWI***

On 22ND JANUARY 2010; In GENEVA

The Chairperson and Distinguished Members of the Committee of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women,

On behalf of Malawi delegation, I am very grateful to the Committee for inviting Malawi to discuss the country's sixth CEDAW periodic report. Malawi values the contributions being made by your committee, Chair, in promoting gender equality and women advancement through the follow-ups the Committee makes.

I am privileged to represent Government of the Republic of Malawi to discuss the report. Before I go into details allow me to introduce members of the Malawi delegation. The delegation is composed of Government, Civil Society and Donor Community representatives:-

- Mr. Harry Chidengu-Gama, Assistant Director of Gender Affairs, in the Ministry of Gender, Children and Community Development
- Mr. Hanz Katengeza, Reproductive Health Officer, in the Ministry of Health
- Mrs. Mary Kachale, Senior State Advocate, in the Ministry of Justice
- Mr. Chizaso Nyirongo, Assistant Chief Law Reform Officer, in Malawi Law Commission
- Mrs. Emma Kaliya, Chairperson of NGO-Gender Coordinating Network
- Dr. Panji Chamdimba, Education Specialist, UNICEF Malawi

- Mrs. Veronica Njikho, Gender Programme officer, in UNFPA Malawi
- Mrs Clara Chindime, Girls Education officer, in UNICEF Malawi
- I am Olive Tindapeuli Chikankheni, Secretary for Gender, Children and Community Development, in the Ministry of Gender, Children and Community Development

Chairperson and Distinguished Members

In my presentation, I will highlight first my country's achievements and actions that are in progress in the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, then I will share with the Committee, some of the challenges facing my country in putting some of the provisions of the Convention into practice. Considering that it has been sometime since we produced the 6th report, I will add updates in some areas.

Chairperson and Distinguished Members

Malawi is a democratic country. Almost half of its population is female. Under the leadership of His Excellency Ngwazi Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika, the President, the vision of the Government of the Republic of Malawi is to move out of poverty into prosperity. Government is fully aware that prosperity cannot be attained without gender equality and empowerment of women.

His Excellency Ngwazi Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika is a bearer of the MDG3 Torch. The President promoted a lady, Right Honorable Joyce Banda, to be the Vice President. I have mentioned these developments to assure you and the distinguished members of the Committee that Government of the Republic of Malawi takes its obligations, that positively address gender inequalities and empowerment of women, seriously.

More specifically, Chairperson and Distinguished members, Malawi has in place Gender related Acts and Bills :-

- A constitution that provides for, among other issues, equality of individuals before the law and the enjoyment of civil and political rights without discrimination on sex.
- Prevention of Domestic Violence Act
- National Registration Act
- Deceased Estates (Wills, Inheritance and Protection) Bill
- Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Bill.
- HIV and AIDS (prevention and Management) Bill.
- Trafficking in Persons Bill
- Gender Equality Bill
- Child Care, Protection and Justice Bill

Chairperson and Distinguished Members

Malawi has designed Policies and programmes to assist in putting the provisions of the Convention into practice, some of which are:-

- Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
- Food Security and Nutrition Policies
- National Gender Policy
- National Gender Programme.
- National Programme on Promotion of Women into Politics. In order to increase women's participation in public and political life at all levels, the government is implementing a National Programme on increasing women participation in decision making which is popularly known as the 50-50 campaign. The campaign contributed to the increase of women in parliament during the May 2009 Presidential and Parliamentary elections which saw Parliament registering 22% women representation from 14% in 2004 Elections. The Government will continue to implement the Programme with particular focus on the forthcoming Local Government Elections (2010) and the next general elections in 2014. Furthermore, recruitment agencies and commissions (civil service, judicial, police, health, and teachers) will be re-oriented in order for them to be gender sensitive in their work.
- Adult Literacy Policy
- Mass Adult Literacy Programme
- Early Child Development Policy
- Early Child Development Advocacy Strategy
- Early Child Development (ECD) Strategic Plan

- National HIV and AIDS policy
- National Strategic Framework on HIV and AIDS
- Women, Girls and HIV and AIDS programme
- Orphaned and Vulnerable Child National Plan of Action
- Social Protection
- Education Policy.
- National Education Strategic Plan; Fast Track Initiative
- Increasing the number of girls hostels, intensifying the implementation of the re-admission policy for teen mothers, institutionalization of mother groups in communities to support girls retention in school
- Women economic empowerment, women are being trained in business and credit management and are linked to micro finance institutions including Malawi Rural Development Fund (MARDEF).
- Collection of sex disaggregated data. All National data generation, e.g Population Census and DHS is disaggregated by sex. Malawi Gender Development Index has been drafted to standardize parameters of measure in line with international areas of analysis.
- Various community mobilisation activities and programmes aimed at reducing and eliminating harmful cultural practices targeting opinion leaders and community at-large
- National Response to Combat Gender Based Violence which is a guiding and coordinating framework for all activities and programmes on gender based violence.

Currently plans are underway to undertake a mapping exercise for gender based violence in the country to help in determining required interventions.

- Training programmes for Enforcement Officers, Service Providers, Police, Health Personnel and Judicial Officers are being done to assist in the enforcement and implementation of the PDVAct. This is done in collaboration with Civil society largely NGO Gender Coordinating network.
- Involvement men and FBOs in combating gender based violence, introduction of Victim Support Units in all Police Stations and at Community level (community victim support units), involvement of media, social mobilisation campaigns, and observation of all women related International Days are some of the initiatives Malawi is using to combat GBV
- A study has just been carried out to understand the plight of commercial sex workers in my country, so that appropriate programme, to address needs of sex workers, can be developed and implemented.
- Improved maternal health. Appointment of the Right Honorable Vice President of the Republic of Malawi as Good Will Ambassador for Safe Motherhood to champion the reduction of maternal mortality in the country, redefining roles of Traditional Birth attendants from conducting deliveries to referring pregnant mother to health facility have been some of the applied strategies. On abortion and the law Issues, No research has been conducted in the country to establish the link between prohibitive Laws in abortion and extent of unsafe abortion in Malawi. However, the

Government has taken a holistic response approach to the problem and adopted the post abortion care. The criminal justice reform programme on the review of Penal Code and the special Law Commission on the Development of Gender Equality statute having studied and deliberated on abortion issue at length, have recommended a review on provisions on abortion.

- Provision of comprehensive Youth friendly Sexual and Reproductive Health services as well as Life Skills Education targeting in and out of school Youth, so that they are informed and better acquainted with sex education at the earliest time possible. Life Skills Education is now examinable at primary and secondary education levels.

Chairperson and Distinguished Members

With a Government committed to gender equality and empowerment of women in position, the capacity of the Gender Machinery is being strengthened. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Community Development is being led by a Minister and a Deputy Minister in addition to the technical team that is headed by a Principal Secretary. The Vice President, Right Honorable Joyce Banda is the Eminent Advocate for ECD –a critical stage for a paradigm shift or change of custom.

With financial and technical support from UNICEF Malawi, UNFPA Malawi and the United States Government (through

USAID) the human resource capacity of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Community Development is being enhanced.

Other institutional arrangements are also available to enforce gender equality and empowerment of women; namely:-

- Malawi Law Commission
- Office of the ombudsman
- Human Rights Commission
- Legal Aid
- Anti Corruption Bureau
- Office of the Director of Procurement
- Courts
- Civil Society (e.g. NGO-GCN)

Chairperson and Distinguished Members

Malawi continues to face the challenge of handling harmful cultural practices. Behavior change among people is proving to be a slow process.

Illiteracy levels among adults is high. This limits access and enjoyment of some human rights.

Limited access to resources by most women. Sadly even time resource.

Inadequate financing for Gender Equality and women empowerment.

Chairperson and Distinguished Members

I thank you for your attention.