



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STATEMENT BY THE MALAWI NETWORK AGAINST TRAFFICKING(MNAT)ON THE DAY OF AN AFRICAN CHILD

“ACCESS TO A CHILD-FRIENDLY JUSTICE SYSTEM IN AFRICA”

June 16th is Day of the African Child. It was first established by the Organization of the African Unity in 1991. The day aims at raising awareness for the situation of children in Africa, and on the need for continuing improvement in education. It encourages people's spirit of abundance to share something special with a child in Africa and support all the children from all forms of exploitations.

Every year **Malawi Network Against Trafficking (MNAT)** joins the whole world in commemorating of the Day of an African Child which falls on 16 June 2020. This day we stand in solidarity with other organizations and communities to raise awareness about the global extent of child Labour and the actions that are needed to eliminate it. According to the ILO there are about 152 Million children globally who are involved in child Labour. In Malawi Child Labour continues to be one of the major forms of child rights abuse, with almost 2.1 million children aged 5-17 of age this infringes their right to education.

1.0 THE IMPACT OF CHILD LABOUR ON CHILD EDUCATION

This year the Day of an African Child focuses on To celebrate the children of Africa and calls for serious introspection and commitment towards addressing the numerous challenges they face in Africa, the DAC 2020 theme's will reflect on '**Access to a Child-Friendly Justice System in Africa**' as adopted by the African Union Executive Council, during its 34th Ordinary Session, held on 07 – 08 February 2019. According to a report by UNICEF and ILO, millions of children across the world are at high risk of being forced into the worst forms of child Labour as a result of the covid 19 crisis which will cause a significant impact on child education.

In Malawi there are growing fears that worst forms of child Labour are on the rise as a result of the COVID-19 crisis which will result into economic hardships. Many cases of child labour external to the family involve fraudulent recruitment and physical or sexual abuse, inactive of forced labour. Traffickers lure children from their families in rural areas under the guise of employment opportunities, clothing, lodging for which they are sometimes charged exorbitant fees, resulting in prostitution coerced through debts. Traffickers subject children to forced labour on farms and young girls to sexual exploitation in nightclubs or bars.

2.0 INCREASED CASES OF HAZARDOUS WORK IN FARMS, TOBACCO COMPANIES & CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES AND IMPACT ON CHILD EDUCATION

MNAT continue getting reports from members that children in Malawi are engaged in Hazardous work in tobacco farms and companies and construction companies. They are exposed to chemicals, pesticides and harsh weather conditions. Some Children are forced to work alongside their parents as tenants in the farms and tobacco companies and often they incur loans during the growing seasons that in many cases are not paid, resulting to the entire family living under bondage. Most of the children under these conditions do not go to school. With the Covid 19 crisis more children are at risk of being forced into this form of child Labour due to high levels of poverty and closure of schools.

3.0 INCREASED CASES OF CHILD TRAFFICKING AND IMPACT ON CHILD EDUCATION

More Children in Malawi are vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation. This is due to increased poverty levels which is likely to pull children in to being trafficked. There are growing fears that due to this crisis more traffickers may become active and target children who are mostly vulnerable. More children in Malawi are at a high risk of being trafficked for sexual exploitation and forced Labour. Trafficking of persons is also done locally, especially for men, women and children who are subjected to forced labour, domestic servitude and prostitution. Victims are exploited within the country, generally transported from the southern part of the country to the central and northern regions for forced labour in agriculture (tobacco farming, goat and cattle herding) and brick making. This makes a lot children not to go to school and remain uneducated.

4.0 INCREASED CASES OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES AS BEGGARS IN STREETS AND ITS IMPACT ON CHILD EDUCATION

MNAT member's reports that children with disabilities, inclusive those with albinism are vulnerable to being forced in to the streets as beggars in exchange of food, water and shelter. There are also growing fears of increased cases of physical and sexual violence against children with disabilities in the streets especially girls, making early pregnancies to be on the rise. Most of these children with disabilities also do not have a chance to go to school.

5.0 INCREASED CASES OF CHILDREN AS DOMESTIC WORKERS

More children in Malawi, mainly girls are working in households doing domestic work like cooking, ironing, cleaning and looking after other children and the elderly. And according to ILO report most of these children work under hazardous conditions. With the Covid 19 crisis more parents are likely to force their children to work as domestic workers due to poverty and closure of schools. These children are also at high risk of being physically and sexually abused.

6.0 A CALL TO ACTION

MNAT therefore as an organization which focuses on preventing human trafficking and all forms of exploitation and working to ensure that children, women and young people who have experienced human trafficking and their families get the support and care they need to live safe and healthy lives would like to;

- We call upon Political leaders, policymakers, organizations working on children's rights, and the academics to ensure equal access to child-friendly justice to all groups of children in Malawi

- Ensure Children in Refugee Camps or undocumented migrants should not be exposed to discrimination, child labour and sexual abuse but rather support them to get access to justice and education.
- Continuously condemn all forms of child Labour in Malawi and across the whole world which infringes child education.
- Call on government and all concerned stake holders to strengthen policies that protect children from Child Labour in Malawi and ensure children remain in school.
- Call on government to put in place deliberate measures to ensure adherence to Labour laws that protects children and ensure they stay in schools.
- Call on Tobacco companies, Constructions companies, Farm managers and the general public to refrain from engaging children into child Labour and adherence to the Labour Laws as well as supporting children to go to school.
- Call on the judicial system to review sentences on Child Labour, trafficking and sexual exploitation on related crimes and give stiffer sentences to perpetrators
- Call on the Media to investigate, Report and unearth cases that exposes children to drop from schools child Labour in Malawi

MNAT and its entire membership remains committed in its work to protect the rights of children beyond Day of an African Child in Malawi as it works diligently to assist individuals, families, and communities impacted by human trafficking and all forms of exploitation.

Signed on this day 16/06/2020



Dr. Rodrick Mulonya
Chairperson



Caleb Thole
National Coordinator