

SPEECH BY

**MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY –
HONOURABLE EUNICE KAZEMBE MP**

DURING THE

**LAUNCH OF BURSARIES FOR DISADVANTAGED
SECONDARY SCHOOL GIRLS**

**BY THE CAMPAIGN FOR FEMALE EDUCATION (CAMFED)
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE MASTERCARD FOUNDATION**

**AT DZUMILA SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CHIKHWAWA
DISTRICT, MALAWI**

23 FEBRUARY 2013

- The Director of Ceremonies
- Secretary for Education, Science & Technology
- Principal Secretary, Basic and Secondary
- The Founder and President of the Campaign for Female Education – Camfed International, Mrs Ann Cotton
- The President and Chief Executive Officer of The MasterCard Foundation, Mrs Reeta Roy
- The Executive Director of Camfed for Malawi and Zimbabwe, Mrs Angeline Murimirwa
- The Division Manager for South West Education Division, Sister Eunice Dambo
- The District Commissioner for Chikhwawa District, Mr Felix Mkandawire
- The Honorable Members of Parliament from Chikhwawa Mr Sidik Mia, Mrs Benadetta Mlaka Maliro and Mr Grain Malunga
- The District Education Manager for Chikhwawa District, who also happens to be the Chairperson of Chikhwawa Community Development Committee (CDC), Mr George Ngaiyaye
- The Paramount Chief Lundu and all Traditional Authorities present here
- The Head of Operations and Impact for Camfed Malawi, Mr Harold Kuombola
- Members of the District Executive Committee and the CDC for Chikhwawa District Council
- All Civil Servants
- The Civil Society Organization members here present
- Distinguished Guests and Bursary Beneficiaries in Malawi
- Members of the Press
- Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my singular honour and a great pleasure for me to be here today to preside over this very important ceremony where the Campaign for Female Education is launching the Bursaries for Disadvantaged Secondary School Girls in Malawi in partnership with The MasterCard Foundation. Allow me, therefore, to welcome you all to this occasion, which marks yet another milestone in the provision of quality education to our girls in Malawi.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, it is pleasing to note that this year the first cohort of girls supported by Camfed in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology will be writing their School Certificate of Education Examinations. It is only befitting that such a milestone investment in our rural education system coincides with an event such as this.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, the Malawi Government is doing its utmost to achieve gender equality – a target in the Millennium Development Goals. Additionally, the National Education Sector Plan, which is the Government's ten-year education strategy and guide for 2008-2017, has prioritized access and equity as a strategic objective to be achieved by 2017.

The Government of Malawi pursues a policy encouraging Public Private Sector Partnerships and also Civil Society involvement in the Government development agenda, knowing that Government

cannot meet all the demands to educate girls single handedly. Based on that policy, it is extremely pleasing to note today that the partnership between The MasterCard Foundation and Camfed intends to invest in the following three critical areas in Malawi:

1. **Provide comprehensive four-year scholarships to 1,275 girls** in four rural districts of Malawi – Neno, Machinga, Mangochi and Chikhwawa.
2. **Introduce the post-school Camfed Association (Cama) network** to equip young women to become leaders of change and activists in their communities.
3. **Introduce a financial literacy training programme to benefit 4,500 school children and community members**, who will gain financial knowledge and skills, and contribute to the diversification of the rural economy where they are based.

These three objectives are designed to work in synergy, to ensure that the investment made at each stage reaps the highest dividends for individuals, families, communities and whole societies. They echo the direction of the Government of Malawi as espoused in the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy.

Ladies and Gentlemen, today's function creates a platform for recognizing and celebrating our collective efforts in education and an amazing opportunity for the future. We applaud The

MasterCard Foundation and Camfed's efforts and, as Government, we commit to ensuring that you and other such partners continue to work in a very conducive environment and have our utmost support.

Crucial to this is making good on our legal commitments and responsibilities to ensure that every child in our country has access to quality education. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology acknowledges that it is the prerogative of the Government to provide welfare and support to children who cannot afford it.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, may I remind you that, with the introduction of Free Primary Education in 1994 and the 50-50 selection policy by Government, demand for secondary education has increased, especially for girls. There is also improved equity for girls, orphans and vulnerable children. Other policies that are in favour of the girl child are: Re-admission Policy, whereby drop-outs due to pregnancy are allowed to be re-admitted only **once** into school after delivery. The government bursary to orphans and vulnerable children, and the building of girls' hostels in selected districts is yet another milestone by Government in its efforts to improve the welfare of our girls.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is therefore in this regard that Government appreciates the overwhelming support that comes from NGOs such as Camfed. The challenges for our girl learners are immense. Like most of their colleagues in sub-Saharan Africa, too many are victims of early and forced marriages, early pregnancies, harmful cultural practices, orphanhood and long distances to Secondary Schools. Did you know that, in our country, 13.6 per cent of girls are married by the age of 15 and 50.5 per cent are married by the age of 18? The age of marriage in rural areas is almost a year younger than in urban centres.¹ We are aware of these challenges as a Ministry and continue to work tirelessly to resolve them collectively and urgently.

I wish to applaud the District Commissioners and the District Education Managers from the districts where Camfed has been operating for embracing the opportunities presented and making education a reality for hundreds of children in their communities. In a special way, I would like to commend the District Commissioner of Chikhwawa and the Chairperson of the Chikhwawa Community Development Committee, in collaboration with the District Executive Committee, for hosting such a big launch of the Bursary Programme.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am very optimistic that, with Camfed being at the vanguard of activism and innovation in the field of

¹ Demographic Health Survey, Malawi 2004.

girls' education, the Bursary Programme will be able to contribute significantly to improved school enrolment, retention and pass rates of girls and indeed delay in their age of marriage and motherhood in our country, Malawi. It is only when we join our efforts and take our rightful roles that we shall see a changed Malawi, full of educated girls who will be able to positively contribute towards the development of the country and indeed Africa as a whole.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Guests, I am reliably informed that Camfed invests at every stage to enable a critical mass of girls to complete school and become entrepreneurs and leaders within their communities. To hear that The MasterCard Foundation, in partnership with Camfed, is supporting our efforts is such wonderful news and a challenge for us as a Government to continue with the implementation of policies that are aimed at improving access to education for the girl child.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am quite aware that Camfed's programmes are delivered via a devolved local partnership infrastructure through which Camfed engages with government and community institutions that have the potential to support and protect orphans and vulnerable children. This is a commendable strategy indeed. As Government, we would therefore like to urge these comprehensive support systems – such as the Community Development Committee, Parent Teacher Associations, Mother

Support Groups, Pupil Councils and Teacher Mentors to continue to support girls' retention and completion.

Our Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, as a female Minister, girls' education and young women's empowerment are dear to my heart. The two in turn enable young women to become role models, access decision-making platforms, and influence programmes and policy at local and national levels. It prepares them for a brighter and better future, and transforms nations.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we all know that it takes many players to raise an educated and responsible citizen. May I take this opportunity to challenge each and every one of us to give their best to this effort:

- **Teachers:** this calls for even more dedication and commitment from you. Without you, the children cannot learn. We are aware of the immense challenges you face – the crowded classrooms and limited teaching material. Even then, do the best you can still! You hold the future of so many children in your hands and we owe it to them to give them only the best!
- **Traditional leaders** – Paramount Chief, Traditional Authorities, Group Village Headmen and other Chiefs: you are custodians of our culture and even closer to the people.

These children represent your tomorrow. Protect them from negative cultural practices and rally the community in giving only the best to children. Spearhead the safeguarding of Malawian girls and, where necessary, please do not hesitate to put necessary strict measures such as by-laws and door-to-door campaigns to address the challenge of early marriages to complement existing efforts. We need a culture that nurtures and celebrates children by giving them opportunities to stay and succeed in school.

- **Parents and community members:** your responsibility continues in ensuring the very best education possible for your children. Continue to support the teachers who teach your children, and to making the environment teacher and child friendly.
- For those who will benefit from this support, let me strongly urge you to utilize this opportunity to think big and achieve your goals. Use it to turn the tide of poverty that threatens your family and community. Work hard, and remember hard work never kills but pays in the end!

Last but not least, to all our development partners, including The MasterCard Foundation and Camfed here present, we do not take your support for granted. Your support brings us closer and faster to our development goals. We would want to urge you not to give up on us and to continue to support as many girls as possible through school. Problems of educating a girl child are real BUT we

know that, with more girls educated, poverty in Malawi can become history. We thank you for your support.

On behalf of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and the Government of Malawi, I would like to declare the Bursaries for Disadvantaged Secondary School Girls officially launched.

Many thanks for this opportunity. Together we can make this world a better place through the education and protection of each and every child!

Thank you.