

## WFWP Africa's Celebration Of The International Day Of The Girl Child

Flory Ledwaba  
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On October 11, 2022, at 5 pm GMT, WFWP Africa held a virtual event to mark the 10th anniversary of the International Day of the Girl Child. The United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 66/70 declaring October 11 as the International Day of the Girl Child in recognition of the rights of girls and the unique challenges that girls face all over the world.

The Honorable Agnes Nkhoma, Deputy Minister of Gender and Social Development, delivered the Keynote Address representing Minister Dr. Patricia Annie Kaliati. The occasion was also participated by the exemplary youths who shared their passion. WFWP also exhibited in a video presentation the different local chapters' youth empowerment programs and projects such as character education, literacy project, youth camps and environmental sustainability.

In her welcome remarks, Dr. Susan Kone, IVP of WFWP Africa, affirmed that, from birth, girls in general are more vulnerable to discrimination and violence than boys. The program was to stand up for and with girls. Dr. Kone said, "Let's all work together to give hope to every child in Africa so that their dream for a better life is valid and can come true, which is also part of the vision and mission of WFWP."

Mrs. Mica Amanlaman, International Association for Youth and Students for Peace (IAYSP- Africa) gave opening remarks. She stated, "I am a mother of three girls so, I am very much passionate about the importance of advocating this day. Especially in our region of Africa, girls often do not have the same amount of equality as boys. It is valuable to keep promoting this day of the girl child to recognize their rights. I believe that as we enter a new era of development we need to bring to the forefront and encourage young leaders, encourage them to fulfill their vision and dreams. Let us unite to create an environment to support and nurture the girl child."

The first speaker was Ms. Mitchell Miriam Achieng, founder of Mitchel Gift, a community-based organization. She is the winner of the prestigious award: Every Girl Wins. It is an award given out in recognition of a woman who goes above and beyond to improve the lives of women. In her remarks, she shared, "I love empowering my young sisters because I believe that once a girl is educated the whole community is educated. Thank you for this opportunity to share, it is a great honor and a motivation for me. Let's keep on supporting each other and empowering the girl child."

Next was the Keynote Address from the Minister of Gender and Social Development, Dr. Patricia Kaliati. It was delivered by the Hon. Agnes Nkhoma, Deputy Minister of Gender and Social Development in Malawi, who said that, "In compliance with the 2022 International Day of the Girl Child, the Department of Gender and Social Development, Malawi, created programs in the community and held an intergenerational and international conference to address the myriad challenges that girls face today. Moreover, there is an urgent need for involvement and implementation where we can strategically continue to bring men and young men on board to challenge harmful social and gender norms that negatively affect girls prior to maturation, including rape, gender violence, early marriages, and teen

pregnancies. It is an important day to allow us all to take stock of what more must be done and renew our commitment to enable a safe and nurturing environment for the girl child." She emphasized that the observance of the International Day of the Girl Child is an occasion that challenges us to put the voices of girls and young women at the center by providing space for them to lead the discussion and share with decision-makers their key messages for a change in their own right as agents of change. She added that this year the government of Malawi will continue to systematically tackle the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, sharing how this had affected the Malawian population, and particularly girls.



The next speaker was the vibrant young parliamentarian, President of IAYSP Cameroon, and recipient of the 2022 Peace Maker Award, Ms. Victoria Tching Bobe. She shared a testimony of her work in schools and the community to empower the youth. She said that women comprise the majority of the population and if we ladies and youth unite forces, change can come about. She shared her involvement in the schools doing activities like character education and promoting abstinence as the best way to prevent teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. She also said, "The solution is in our hands. The key to a better future lies in education. I believe a great wave of change is happening through the youth."

Ms. Aine Teddy was the third youth speaker. She is an environmental activist and winner of the 2022 WFP Uganda Speech Contest. She asked the audience, "Every year we celebrate this day for the past ten years with the same debates, same lines of talks, but how far have we achieved in terms of girl empowerment and women empowerment? When girls are supported, they can reach their potential and create a better world for themselves, their communities and societies. When they are educated, they are more likely to live healthy, productive and fulfilling lives. Therefore, girls, let's be persistent. Know your worth. Be confident and be loud. Do not be afraid to speak up. Be patient. You may not be on the same level as your peers but that's okay. Do not be afraid to fail. You will learn along the way. Girls can write history and make the world a better place."

Mrs. Thulamsindo Rapotu a poet and the Communication Director for WFP Southern Africa, performed the following heart-touching poem about the girl child:

"Mommy, Daddy, Aunt, Uncle, Grandpa, Grandma,  
 I am on my knees and tears, to let you know,  
 That all I need is True Love,  
 Rise up and support me to crush all forms of Discrimination,  
 And Let me Fly, I am the Future, I am A Girl of the Future It's our Time  
 My Dream is a valid Dream,  
 Let me live it, Let me feel Loved,  
 Let me feel Appreciated, Let me feel Supported,  
 I will definitely fulfill my Human Rights  
 I will definitely fulfill my Mandate  
 I will make you proud  
 See, my Dream is valid,  
 It is our Dream, Our Ancestors' Wildest Dream."

Hon Erinah Rutangye, a former member of parliament and entrepreneur from Uganda gave the closing remarks. She said that we all want to see the girl child become a confident woman, contributing to national joy, contributing to global joy and serving society in many capacities, for example, as doctors, managers and lawyers, etc. Education is the best way to empower the girl child.

Ms. Se-jin Ndiaye, WFP Senegal, and Mrs. Flory Ledwaba, RSG of WFP Africa, were the moderators of the virtual event with about 80 connections and 100 participants from across Africa and the United Kingdom.