

**SPEECH BY HON. KAROORO
OKURUT-MINISTER OF GENDER
LABOR AND SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT AT THE LAUNCH
CEREMONY OF THE CENTRE OF
EXCELLENCE FOR THE STUDY OF
THE AFRICAN CHILD HELD ON
15/10/2014 AT MAKERERE
UNIVERSITY.**



The Vice Chancellor Makerere University,

Their Excellencies the Ambassadors and Members of Diplomatic Missions,

All Line Ministry Representatives,

Honorable Members of Parliament,

Members of the Management and Staff of Makerere University,

Development Partners,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to join you at the launch of the **Centre of Excellence for the Study of the African Child - AfriChild**. I would like to congratulate AfriChild's Promoting Institutions - ChildFund International Uganda, Columbia University, Makerere University, my Ministry, TPO Uganda and UNICEF Uganda - and all of the other partners that have worked to make this day a reality.

I am aware that the idea of establishing this centre was conceived about three years ago with the aim of converging research, policy and practice to improve the well-being of the African Child.

The rights of children are protected under Ugandan law, and the Uganda Government has undertaken a number of different initiatives and programmes to support vulnerable children, including children with special needs. These include: developing the Alternative Care Framework; launching of the National Child Helpline; the development of an Early Childhood Development Policy; and the establishment of the National Child Protection Working Group, among many others.

But much more needs to be done to achieve our desired goal of ensuring that all of

Uganda's children grow up free from violence and abuse and with equal opportunities to develop to their full and unique potential.

To achieve this goal, we need more and better data on the situation of children and evidence of the impact of efforts to improve child protection and well-being. We also need to ensure that this knowledge is used effectively by policy makers and practitioners, who need high-quality training and skills to effectively undertake programmes that support children and their families.

Indeed many people who are part of the social welfare work force in Uganda lack specialized training in child protection and therefore do not have adequate capacity to perform the duties which they are responsible for.

I am therefore particularly pleased that this centre is strategically positioned to address these gaps. The Centre has already begun to provide strong leadership in advancing research and action on children's issues as it works with partners to lead the implementation of the upcoming Uganda National Child Well-being Survey and provide technical support to the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development on the development of a National Child Protection Strategy in partnership with UNICEF.

The Government of Uganda therefore pledges our ongoing support and commitment to work of the AfriChild Centre in its roles convening partners, supporting excellence in research, generating knowledge and building much-needed capacity and action to influence policy and practice supporting the well-being of the African Child.

We are confident that with this in place, the government will be able to improve on its service provision effectiveness and efficiency specifically in terms of outcomes for children and families.

Therefore, I would like to officially launch the Centre of Excellence for the Study of the African Child. I thank you.

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY

Hon. Karoro Okurut

Minister for Gender, Labor and Social Development