

## ***Dr Phoebe Asiyo: A Legacy Of Service To Children***

**By Irene Mureithi, CEO/Managing Trustee- Child Welfare Society of Kenya**

If one were to crown a person as the embodiment of love, protection and unwavering concern for the welfare of Kenya's children, Dr. Phoebe Muga Asiyo would wear that crown with unmatched grace.

We honour and celebrate the life of a distinguished and devoted life member of Child Welfare Society of Kenya (CWSK), colleague, and mentor. Dr Asiyo dedicated herself whole-heartedly to the Society's mission to promote and secure the rights of children and vulnerable young persons, enabling them to realise their full potential.

She served as Chief Executive Officer of the Society from 1969 to 1980, having succeeded Pamela Mboya, who stepped down following the death of her husband, Thomas Joseph Mboya, on July 5, 1969.

During this time, Mama Phoebe emerged as a towering figure in the field of child care and protection, playing a pivotal role in the development of childcare and protection systems in Kenya. Her leadership significantly increased the Society's reach to vulnerable children.



The American Women's Association led by Mrs. R. McLivaine, wife of the American Ambassador in Kenya, had an education tour of the Child Welfare Society's Mama Njira Children's Home in Nairobi South. Here one of the children at the Home, Maryu Tali, plays with one of the toys presented by the visitors. Looking on (from the left)

Her deep commitment to orphaned, abandoned and at-risk children helped shape Kenya's adoption and family-based care frameworks that laid the foundation for progressive child protection.

She personally received children from across the country, addressed their needs, including helping to place some of them in families. She also served as Guardian Ad Litem (representing children interests in court) for many of them.



Under her stewardship, CWSK was approved as an Adoption Society, mandated to provide adoption, guardianship and foster care services on behalf of the government. She was a strong

advocate for the sector and actively lobbied for increased government funding for children's services, including a personal appeal to then President Mwai Kibaki to increase funding for CWSK—an appeal that was effected in the 2010 national budget.

Her vision was simple, yet profound: every child deserves a safe, nurturing, and loving home.

This belief shaped the Society's early policy and advocacy efforts. Mama Phoebe brought compassion and boldness to her role, often challenging societal norms and legislative gaps that left children and women unprotected.

She was articulate and meticulous in her work, including mentoring many of us at CWSK through a culture grounded in the highest standards of professionalism, a legacy that still defines the organisation today.

Even after transitioning into the demanding world of politics, her commitment to the wellbeing of Kenya's children remained unchanged.

Long after her tenure at CWSK, she continued to be a guiding presence mentoring me personally and steadfastly championing her bold, compassionate vision for the welfare of children.

As we reflect on her extraordinary life, we are reminded that true leadership is selfless service to humanity. Mama Phoebe served with grace, wisdom and purpose.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to her family, friends and all whose lives she touched. Mama Phoebe, you received the babies of our motherland with open arms.

You gave them food, clothing, education and shelter. You found them families and temporary shelter from the Coast at Mji Wa Salama in Mombasa to Eastern at the Children's Homes in Isiolo and Embu; from the Rift valley at Nakuru's Arap Moi Children's Home to Kanduyi Children's Home in Bungoma, Western Kenya; from Mama Ngina Children's Home in Nairobi to Nyanza at Kisii Children's Home and Mama Ngina Children's Home, Kisumu.

You gave thousands of disadvantaged children not just care, but a reason to live. Many of them are now accomplished men and women in Kenya and beyond, while others are still being nurtured in the very institutions you helped build—places rooted in your values of professionalism, compassion and love.

You have left behind a profound legacy. Truly, you were a great mother to many.

The CEO, staff of CWSK, and the children were blessed to have you as our matriarch.

Your love will forever be cherished in our hearts. We loved you dearly.