

MALAWI DAD'S 'GLAD'

Madonna defense

By VERONICA HINKE
Post Correspondent

CHICAGO — A weepy Madonna yesterday defended her controversial adoption of a motherless 13-month-old African boy in an interview with Oprah — and claimed his father told her she was saving the Malawi toddler's life.

Little David Banda's dad told her through a translator, "If my son stayed here, I would end up burying him," Madonna claimed in a satellite feed from London that was taped yesterday and is scheduled to be aired today.

Those chilling words were what audience member Amy Hills-Baier remembered most about the 30-minute interview with the flamboyant pop star who appeared onstage wearing a crown of thorns and bound to a giant mirrored cross during her recent "Confessions" tour.

Others who were in Oprah's Chicago studio told The Post that Madonna said David had pneumonia and hadn't been tested for HIV — which afflicts thousands of orphaned children in AIDS-ravaged Malawi — when she agreed to adopt him.

"He is now perfectly fine — recovering from his bout with pneumonia and in London with Madonna," said Robyn Radeker.



MADONNA
Weeps to Oprah.

"Madonna said all of his tests have come back negative, and her children have really taken to him," Radeker added.

The pop star challenged the recent claim by David's biological father, impoverished farmer Yohane Banda, that he didn't understand what was going on when he signed the adoption papers in court.

The 48-year-old star said he "looked right in her eyes in court and told her, 'I'm glad he'll be with you and get an education,'" Radeker said.

David's father, though still adamant that he didn't realize Madonna would be taking his son "for good," told Time.com yesterday that he doesn't plan to contest the adoption.

"I don't want my child, who is already gone, to come back," he said. "I will be killing his future if I accept that."