

**DOROTHY NGOMA (GCAP AMBASSADOR, MALAWI):  
Presentation at the MDG High Level Event, United Nations, 25<sup>th</sup>  
September 2008.**

Honoured guests.

I am a nurse and have been for many years. Facing disease and death at a level that is hard to imagine for people living in what we call developed countries.

Some weeks ago in Malawi five pregnant women died in one Hospital during childbirth, within a week. What would have happened if so many mothers died in a hospital here in New York? Do the lives of women in Africa have less value than those in "The Big Apple"?

People from poor countries don't really believe that the MDGS will be achieved by 2015. But as leaders and movers of the world we live in you can make a difference. **We** can make a difference, indeed we are obliged to make a difference. This world has enough resources to solve the problems it faces.

As we consult at this UN Special Meeting, let us look for the solutions that are possible to find. We can stop this continuing tragedy. Education, Health, water, food and good health nutrition as well as gender balance are crucial for achieving

economic development and eradicating poverty. These are basic human rights and are a must for each and every person living on this planet.

Free primary education is beyond the reach of people in most poor countries, yet absolutely vital to provide countries with qualified human resources to meet the challenges of the future. If children are not educated then how much violence and criminality will they cause as they grow into lawless, uneducated adults?

Achievement of universal access to health care remains a distant dream in most poor countries. The world needs over 4 million skilled health care workers including Nurses and Midwives to protect and save lives. Shortages will soon be a challenge not only to developing countries, but globally. We need to provide:

- Access to emergency obstetric care when life threatening complications occur.
- Family planning services that will increase survival rate for both women and children.
- Eradication, or at the very least containment, of diseases like malaria, TB, HIV and AIDS.

The global human resource crisis of too few health care workers can be solved. We in Africa can rise to the challenge.

Give us the means and we can train hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands of new health care workers, to cope with the challenges facing Africa.

In terms of water and sanitation we must increase assistance and support to scale up implementation of water and sanitation interventions for the poorest and vulnerable groups. It is essential that efforts must be made to target those who entirely lack access to basic services.

We implore government leaders to provide strong leadership while involving stakeholders and providing political momentum to successfully attain the MDGs by 2015.

**Key strategies should include:**

- Increasing and retaining the number of well qualified health personnel.
- Increasing availability and supply of drugs.
- Improving health educational facilities.
- equipment and improving financial management and
- Accountability in all government systems.

Although women ability to influence and participate towards policies and programmes to meet the MDGs adds impetus towards reducing poverty, tackling diseases, improving

standards and increasing economic growth within countries; their empowerment is always undermined.

Women are:

- The greatest labour force in agricultural problems.
- Greatest retainers of household resources if given control.
- Greatest controllers of infant mortality if given more years of education.
- Greatest family planners.
- Greatest caregivers to the ill.
- Greatest resource in controlling water sanitation and environment.

The list continues. Even as I speak to you now, three women have died giving birth. One a minute, every hour, day, every week and month of the year – over 500.000 each and every year. An additional 500.000 women will die 2015 due to unsafe abortions. Can you let this continue.

Multilateral and bilateral development partners should provide coordinated dependable, sustainable and adequate financial support for public/ social services and to immediately fulfil pledges made towards attaining the MDGs.

Failure to act with strength and conviction represents a fundamental social injustice and a violation of basic human rights, especially those of the poor or our society. History will be our judge. I urge you to act now.