

THANK YOU, JAPAN, FOR THE NOGUCHI AFRICA PRIZE!

MIRIAM K. WERE

2008 LAUREATE FOR MEDICAL SERVICES

HIDEYO NOGUCHI AFRICA PRIZE

**ACCEPTANCE SPEECH
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**By
MIRIAM K. WERE**

Your majesties The Emperor & Emperess of Japan;
Your Excellency, Prime minister of Japan;
Your Excellencies, African Heads of State and Government;
The Family and Community of Dr. Hideyo Noguchi;
The People of Japan,
And my husband Humpreys R. Were;
Other Dignitaries present,

First of all, I believe my Head of state, the President of Kenya, President Mwai Kibaki has already given your Excellencies greetings from Kenya. I take this opportunity to also greet you on behalf of the women of Kenya and Africa: JAMBO!

Secondly, We in Africa were delighted with **the establishment of the Hideyo Noguchi Africa prize by Japan.** It was particularly gratifying that this prize had a substantial financial component. When you work among poor people, a financial component to a prize is a great help for continuing the work. I have been even more thrilled to know that contributions to the prize money have come from the Government of Japan as well as from the business community and citizen including school children of Japan. This makes this prize even more precious and it is a great honor to me to be the recipient of the Hideyo Noguchi Africa prize for medical services. Thank you very much indeed, Government and people of Japan. Thank you very much.

Thirdly, I am particularly happy that the **Hideyo Noguchi Africa Prize** has recognized the great need to expand Medical/Health services in Africa towards universal access to health care services by all.

- Nothing is more discouraging than to be sick yourself and unable to provide for your family or to do your work because you have no access to basic health care:
- Nothing is more distressing than to see your child die while you watch helplessly because you have no access to any health care services. Yet this happens somewhere in Africa every single day.

Therefore, bringing health care to all communities in Africa is of paramount importance. And so thank you, Japan, for recognizing the importance of this and including expanding medical/health services in Africa in this prize.

Fourthly, thank you, Japan, that **improved Health in Africa** is one of the priorities in your partnership with Africa. Reduction of the disease burden on the people of Africa and improvement of health is crucial for creation of wealth and improvement of the overall socio-economic situation in Africa. People who live in poverty and who are frequently sick cannot be productive enough to improve the situation. Africa's history that includes the massive

transatlantic Slave Trade that disorganized the continent for nearly five hundred years followed by a disempowering form of colonialism and brutal apartheid in Africa for a further one hundred years (1884 to 1994) laid the roots of poverty and disempowerment in Africa that casts a long shadow into the present and future. Healthy people, creation of wealth and social stability are some of the requirement for us, the people of Africa, to get out of the indignity in which most of us live. Thank you, Japan, for establishing the forum with African Heads of State-- as a first of its kind. We, the people of Africa, believe that through this forum, outcomes will be positive for Africa, for Japan and for the world.

Fifthly and finally, I pay tribute to Dr. H. Noguchi and the family and community in which he grew up and to his country, Japan. From what I have read of his life, Dr Noguchi loved his family, Community and Country. That became a springboard for working in the world community. Dr. Noguchi did not live and die working only for his clan, his tribe or his race. Eighty years ago, Dr Noguchi died in Africa working on how to bring the fruits of new knowledge to a people that were disadvantaged.

Through this Noguchi Africa Prize, we get the message that the Government and people of Japan are committed to this spirit of Dr. Noguchi's life and work.

Through this Noguchi Africa Prize, we in Africa are challenged by the sacrificial life of Dr. Noguchi. May it become embarrassing for us, Professionals and Leaders of Africa at all levels of society who are in positions of privilege, to live lives of extravagant opulence while disease and death is rampant in our African communities.

May the spirit of Dr. Noguchi draw the people of the world closer together and towards working for the common good everywhere. May this spirit inspire us with visions of VIBRANT AFRICA as presented on this 2008 TICAD booklet. I pray that we, the Noguchi Laureates, live up to this NOGUCHI SPIRIT.

YOUR MAJESTIES AND YOUR EXCELENCIES,

I ACCEPT THIS PRIZE WITH JOY ON BEHALF OF MYSELF AND ALL THOSE COMMITTED TO EXPANDING HEALTH CARE SERVICES TO ALL COMMUNITIES IN AFRICA AND THE WORLD IN THE SPIRIT OF SERVICE SHOWN BY DR HIDEYO NOGUCHI.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION.