

**SPEECH BY H.E.SALMA KIKWETE, THE FIRST LADY OF
THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA, AT THE SIXTH
ANNUAL PROJECT C.U.R.E FIRST LADIES LUNCHEON,
PHOENIX, ARIZONA, 21st APRIL 2011**

***Madam Janice Brewer, Luncheon Co-Chair and
Governor of Arizona;
Ambassador Barbara Barrett, Luncheon Co-Chair;
Dr. Douglas Jackson, President and CEO of
Project C.U.R.E;
Hon. Mwanaidi Maajar, Tanzanian Ambassador to
the United States
Hon. Zakia Megji, Member of Parliament and Vice
Chair, WAMA Foundation.
Distinguished Guests; Ladies and Gentlemen;***

I thank our gracious host, the Project C.U.R.E for inviting me to participate in the Sixth Annual First Ladies Luncheon here in Phoenix, Arizona. I feel privileged, indeed, to be given the opportunity to speak before the distinguished gathering of kindhearted

women and men on a subject of great significance to my organization, and my country.

Let me state, early on that, I am deeply touched by your commitment to compliment our efforts to improve health care delivery for the people of Tanzania especially women and children. Indeed, your contribution will go a long way towards enabling a number of communities to build sustainable healthcare infrastructure and save many lives among people who otherwise would not have access to proper health facilities.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

We are glad to note with great appreciation, that the work of Project C.U.R.E has already touched many lives of Tanzanians. Since 1998, we have received medical equipment and supplies more than 13 times. Those equipment and supplies have been distributed to eight hospitals in Tanzania that serve a population of approximately 2.2 million people. Indeed, this

magnanimous support has been a shot in the arm to our hospitals. We thank you very much.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

We in Tanzania, have made tremendous progress in providing healthcare services since independence. Efforts to improve the health of our people are guided by broader national policies for socio-economic growth and reduction of poverty as well as specific health related policies. However, we still face a number of challenges. One of the health challenges that I will confine my address today is the issue of maternal and child mortality. As a mother, it is not an overstatement if I say it is a matter that is very close to my heart.

Tanzania, like many other developing and least developed countries is striving hard to achieve Millennium Development Goals number 4 and 5. We have registered considerable progress in the reduction

of under-five and infant mortality rates. Under five mortality rate has been reduced from 147 for every 1000 live births in 1999 to 81 per 1000 live births in 2009/10.

Infant mortality has been reduced from 99 per thousand live births in 1999 to 51 per thousand live births in 2009/10. If the current trend is sustained we are likely to meet the MDG target for reduction of child mortality by 2015.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

We have however, registered less progress on reduction of maternal and neonatal deaths. As a matter of necessity, we have to scale up interventions to significantly reduce maternal and neonatal deaths. The government has prioritized maternal and newborn health, as matters that are being given special emphasis. The purpose is to accelerate progress over the next four years before 2015. The biggest challenges we are facing as a country are related to

lack of adequate resources to expand health care coverage especially to people in rural areas. There are also problems of acute shortage of health care workers, medicines and medical equipment.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

I strongly believe that achieving any meaningful progress on implementing MDG 4 and 5, requires a solid primary health care system that will cater for the majority of women and children who live in the rural areas. Since 2007, the Tanzanian government has been implementing an ambitious Primary Health Care Development Programme (PHCDP). The Programme aims to have a dispensary with a radius of five kilometers from every village and one health centre in every ward by 2017. Each of these facilities will have among others fully fledged mother and child health services. The ultimate goal is to enable every citizen to have easy access to health care services close to where they live. The issue of health personnel among them,

doctors, nurses and midwives; the availability of medicines and medical equipment will be addressed.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

To implement such a programme requires substantial amount of financial and other resources. Unfortunately, the Government of Tanzania left alone, will take many years to accomplish. I believe friends of Tanzania and friends of mankind like Project C.U.R.E can play an important role in complimenting these efforts. Having visited your facilities, I believe many of the requirements are within the capacity of Project C.U.R.E to assist in their availability.

We will work together to identify the actual needs so that you can provide us those equipments that we dearly require. I also know that we are not alone. So we will appreciate it very much as I am doing today.

As a mother, support for care and management of pregnancy and birth related complications should be given top priority. You can assist with things like delivery beds, delivery packs, kits, incubators and others that would enable health centers manage caesarian sections and resuscitation of newborns.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

In 2006 I teamed up with some caring Tanzanian women to establish the WAMA Foundation to work on the improvement of women's social and economic wellbeing. In this regard, we agreed to work on, among other things, gender equality, women's and children health as well as creating opportunities for economic empowerment of women. Increasing women's access to health care, in general, and reproductive health services, in particular, were top in our Foundation's agenda. As a result, the Foundation, has

been at the forefront in the campaign for reduction of maternal and infant mortality rates in Tanzania.

We have been conducting outreach visits to all regions in Tanzania to sensitize communities, men and women alike to participate in efforts to build dispensaries in the villages. Our Foundation has been very active in supporting construction of dispensaries and health centers and sourcing medical equipment and medicines.

We have been doing advocacy and appealing to pregnant women to regularly visit ante-natal clinics and do HIV screening. Our Foundation is in the forefront of campaigns to encourage mothers to take their under-five-children to clinics for observations and vaccinations.

We have been campaigning against pregnancies among young girls and HIV infections among the youth. I am

Patron of the Medical Women Association of Tanzania. As such, WAMA Foundation is actively involved and actually supports efforts of these women medical practitioners for breast and cervical cancer screening and treatment. Through our Foundation, we get accessories to assist breast cancer victims which we distribute freely to affected women. So please include cancer diagnosis and screening equipments in the list for Tanzania.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The challenges are daunting but, we are determined to make our humble contribution for the betterment of the lives of women and children in our dear country. With support from friends like you and other philanthropists, and persons of goodwill, we shall overcome, if not now but in not too distant a future, we shall.

Distinguished Co-Chairs;

Invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

I can't find better words to express my deepest appreciation for today's event. The precious time you spare and the generous donation you have made, speak volumes about your kind and caring hearts. Your support has come at the right time. It complements efforts of the government and the people of Tanzania as well as those of our Foundation, dedicated to improving the health of the many needy men and women in my country.

It is with a great sense of humility and appreciation that I would like to say, on behalf of the people of Tanzania, how grateful we are for your kindness. Thank you so much for being there for us during this time of need. We will always cherish and remember this generous support. However, allow me to conclude by saying that, there are still many challenges and therefore, the need for more support. We welcome

more of this support in future. I know you can. Yes together we can!

Thank you for your kind attention.

God bless you all.