

International Dinner Remarks
September 16, 2008

Karibuni! Ambassador Ogego, Welcome to Indianapolis and the State of Indiana, home to three of the finest universities in the world—Indiana University, Purdue University, and IUPUI. In his inaugural address, President McRobbie reminded us that great universities are not bounded by campus or national borders. They are to be found where they are needed, where they are welcomed, where their faculty teach and study and serve—indeed where they come from.”

Jim Morris, by grappling with more borders than anyone in this room in your job as Director of the World Food Program, you embodied this spirit. And, Jane Gelhausen and Diane Thomas, by connecting people of all cultures, the International Center of Indianapolis embraces this spirit and brings it to life in Central Indiana.

Thank you, Jim, Jane and Diane, for all the good that you do.

The success of the IU-Kenya partnership derives from the support it receives from everyone in this room. I would particularly like to acknowledge the honorary co-chairs of this evening’s event, Craig Brater and John Lechleiter. Most of you probably realize how important Craig’s leadership has been to the development of the IU-Kenya partnership. However, I would guess that many of you would be surprised to learn that John Lechleiter and Eli Lilly Company have made an enormous difference in the lives of thousands of Africans. In Kenya, Eli Lilly Co has quietly and without fanfare given us the wherewithal to treat virtually every impoverished patient at Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital suffering from diabetes, depression, schizophrenia, and MDR Tb.

Key to IU’s success in Kenya is our capacity to leverage the unique power of the academic medical center. That power emanates from the tripartite academic mission of service, training, and research. Importantly, in the IU-Kenya Partnership, we lead with service—or care—not to diminish research and training, but to affirm and empower both research and training.

Our aim is straightforward: to serve the most vulnerable among us, in both our local and global communities. If we train the best doctors, but the most vulnerable individuals in our community do not benefit from those whom we have taught, we have failed. If we do the best research, but that research is not translated into better health for the most vulnerable individuals, we have failed. And, if we provide the best care, but leave the most vulnerable among us behind, we have failed.

IU-Kenya is driven by values that are the heart of every profession, and by a desire to inspire those values in our students and colleagues. With those of you honored in this room this evening, Indiana University, through the IU-Kenya partnership, shares the aim of fostering justice and charity and alleviating the adverse physical, mental, and psychosocial consequences of impoverishment. I extend my thanks and appreciation to each of the organizations honored this evening for embracing that aim.

The way forward in Kenya is clear: with a relentless, uncompromising commitment to the health of the population we serve, we will canvas every community, location and village; discover new and replicable ways to change behaviors, prevent illness, deliver medical services, feed the hungry, assure economic security, and keep families together. This is not naïve idealism; indeed, it is what the IU-Kenya Partnership did yesterday and today, and will do tomorrow.

Already we are transitioning AMPATH from its focus on HIV to a broader focus on primary health care, inclusive of but not limited to HIV. AMPATH even has a new name...no longer the Academic Model for Prevention and Treatment of HIV, AMPATH is now the Academic Model Providing Access to Healthcare for all people. I spent last weekend in Eldoret with our Kenyan and American colleagues, and our friends at USAID, charting the way forward, strategizing how our partnership will apply the lessons learned from AMPATH to bring up a new academic model for primary health care that is relevant to vast swaths of sub-Saharan Africa.

Let me be clear: the real pillars of AMPATH are our Kenyan colleagues. It is people like Mengech and Esamai, Nyandiko, Kigotho, Ndege, Wachira, Siika, and nearly 1200 others who are on the front lines and making the real difference—It is our distinct pleasure, privilege and honor to work with them.

I would like to single out one Kenyan colleague—his daughter is in the room this evening—and that is the AMPATH Program Manager, Dr. Sylvester Kimaiyo. Kimaiyo's humble leadership, personal sacrifices, and ability to manage crises with fairness to persons of any stripe are deeply appreciated.

As my colleague Joe Mamlin says so eloquently, Indiana University's business is to reconstitute lives, not just immune systems. We seek wholeness of communities, of individuals, and of ourselves. This is the transcendent mission of Indiana University—indeed; it is the transcendent mission at the heart of every liberal education. Through the IU-Kenya Partnership, Indiana University achieves that mission better than any other University in the world. But we must not rest on our laurels, for our exceptional position in global health is tenuous.

For sure, our success at home—fostering health of the most vulnerable persons of Indianapolis—enables our singular success in sub-Saharan Africa. But, it is our success in Africa that helps build community here at home, and brings prestige to our institutions. It is a process that has lifted us from the ordinary to the extraordinary. But, if we wish to continue to lead from that position, we must be willing to take risks, to sustain our partnership and to embolden it to make its next discovery.

Ms. Gelhausen and Ms. Thomas, on behalf of the IU-Kenya Partnership, I would like to express our deep gratitude to you and to the International Center of Indianapolis for the honor of receiving this award. Through this partnership, all of us, American and Kenyan alike, are at a new boundary, a new frontier. If we turn inward, our presence on the global stage will recede into mediocrity and irrelevance. But, if we can find the strength to embrace that frontier, we will distinguish our respective institutions and change our world.