

EDUCATION: THE POWERFUL WEAPON FOR **CHANGING THE WORLD** *presented by Henry Mereka at* *Andiyamo Secondary School on the Form 4 graduation day- 7th June, 2014*

As Nelson Mandera used to say: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." May his soul rest in peace.

Education is an investment and one of the most critical investments we can make. This is true not only for Malawi but for the entire world. The UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) call all nations to achieve Universal primary education. This Goal has made most of the nations to have a heavy budget on education. This goal was included after it was noted that too many children are denied the right to primary education. Today around the world, an estimated of 61 Million primary – aged children are out of school especially in poor countries. It is estimated that 250 million children can not read, write or count well.

The emphasis on education by the United Nation speaks volumes of the importance education has on nations and their development. Education is therefore key to eliminating gender inequalities, reducing poverty, creating sustainable environment, preventing needless death and fostering peace. That is why, the UN report refers to 'education' as the New Currency by which nations maintain economic competitiveness and global prosperity.

In announcing his "Global Education First Initiative", the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki – moon reminded people that "***we cannot waste the talent of generation.*** He related this to his own experience growing up in Republic of Korea as it recovered from

war ***"people today often ask about my country's transformation from poverty to prosperity and without hesitation I answer that Education was key.***

My professional experience convinces me that education is one of the fundamental building blocks of society for its prosperity and sustainability. I strongly believe that education should be the first sector addressed when seeking to build or rebuild societies battered with conflict.

Education is an important aspects of human life. It provides knowledge for people and openings to great opportunities that are set in their future. Without education many will struggle throughout their lives trying to adapt to world today.

In the 21st century, most people have access to education but take it for granted. Some attend school but never graduate as such they struggle to live a decent life. Nevertheless, those who graduate from college have a better chance to survive and adapt to the realities of this harsh world as Charles Barclay put it ***"poor people can not rely on the government to come to help you in times of need. You have to get your education. Then nobody can control your destiny"***.

Education is also a key to improved life and society. For instance, in India, despite its huge population, only a few Indians attend University because they do not have money to send their children to school and also most children that live in villages do not attend schools because they have to work for their families to live a stable life. To improve their societies, India resolved to import educated individuals from all over the world to come and help educate them so they can improve their life and society.

Education in this regard therefore indentifies person's ability to adapt to the life that society provides today. The people who have opportunity to learn should never take it for granted for it is only education that will lead them to successful future. Chanakya

Holds "***Education is the best friend. An educated person is respected everywhere. Education beats the beauty and the youth***".

Expanding education access for girls is not just an urgent economic and social need. In many cases, it is literally a matter of life and death. A mother who can read can better protect her children from chronic illness, from AIDS, and from dying young. A child born to a mother who can read is 50 percent likely to survive past age five. In Africa's poorest nations, UNESCO projects that the lives of 1.8 Million Children could have been saved if their mothers had at least a secondary education. Education, particularly of girls and women, helps to control excessive population growth by promoting the concepts of family planning, collective health and well-being. An educated family makes informed choices with respect to having a child as well as for maintaining their own and their children's' health.

Conflict and insecurity are among the most significant development challenges of our time and considerable barriers to realizing the right to education for all children and young people. During conflict, education can offer knowledge and skills that provide protection, while in long term, it can help develop values and attitudes that prevent conflict and build peace. Education has the potential to build the capacities of children, parents, teachers, community members to prevent, reduce and cope with conflict and promote equality and peace. Education has crucial linkages to society's social, economic and political spheres. Education is central to identity formation, can promote cohesive societies and contribute to state –building.

In recognition of the importance of Education for sustainable development, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2005 -2014 the **UN decade of education for sustainable development**. The aim of the decade is to provide opportunity for refining and promoting vision of and transition to sustainable development through all forms of education and to give enhanced profile to the important role education and learning in sustainable development.

Development is defined by UN as the process for enlarging people's choices. These choices primarily reflect the desire to lead a long and healthy life, acquire basic knowledge, and have access to resources essential for a decent standard life. From this definition, development is dynamic process. Development empowers people and promotes important changes in lives. However, development cannot take place by itself. It requires educated, skilled and competent people. Seen from this angle, education becomes the most important factor for development and change. Education provides you with knowledge and information which in turn bring about desirable changes in the way you think, feel and act. Education also builds self-esteem and self-confidence. It contributes to the realization of ones potential. Therefore education is considered as a social instrument for developing human resource and for human capital formation.

However, it is not only by being in school that one may become successful. Success also comes with perseverance. Perseverance is the mother to success. You must not forget oneself and focus on education only. Remember there is **NO SWEET WITHOUT SWEAT** is my final advice to you who you are soon starting a new life in the world.

Education is defined by the dictionary as the act of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and generally of preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life.

Distinguished graduates, this is the message to take home;

"Life is like riding a bicycle, to keep your balance, you need to keep moving"