**RESULTS National Grassroots Webinar – August 2017**

**Thoko:** Thank you so much Joanne, and thanks everyone who’s on the call. I would like to say I’m very delighted to be part of the call, sharing my story and knowing that those of you on the call are working tirelessly to support the Global Fund and to save the lives of many people.

To start, I would like to say that I am the second born in a family of four children, born in the year 1984. My family was really affected by TB and HIV. So I’ll go back to 1997 when I was a kid and my father got ill. He was in and out of the hospital. By then, people didn’t know what was affecting people. Many people got ill, the hospitals were full, and during those times it was hard to get an HIV test. So you’re in and out of the hospital coughing, and only about 8 months on, he died. And after his death, of course my mother knew that my father was HIV positive and unfortunately he had TB. So he passed on in 1997.

By that time I was about 13 years old. And then later on, the family was so affected – most especially my mother, my brother, and of course my younger sister. They didn’t know what was happening in the family, and just to get an HIV test was hard. And of course during those times the hospitals were far apart.

I’ll just go back to explain how affected as a family we were because of my father’s death. He was the only bread winner in the house, so this meant that the time he passed on, the family was really affected because we couldn’t get the food that was needed in the house. At times we could get one meal in a day, and of course nutrition was really low in the family, and of course all of us got ill again and again.

Later on, my younger brother got ill. And we went back and forth to the hospital with him. And the results were not conclusive about what was affecting him, until a day when the doctor called my mother and said, “We ran these tests, and the young boy is HIV positive.” Then my mother decided to take all of us for HIV tests to find out what is happening in the family.

And so they found that my mother, my younger brother, and my younger sister, all of them were HIV positive. And that was really devastating news in the family because my mother was struggling to help the family and she wasn’t working. At the same time, the children were getting ill again and again. So my younger brother was treated for TB, and he got better for a short while, and then he got ill again and eventually he died. That was in the year 2000 to the year 2001. And then later on I started coughing as well. Luckily enough, because of the drugs, I got treated for TB.

And the coming of the Global Fund changed the whole set-up. That’s to say that not only my family was affected before the Global Fund – many families were affected. It was every week that people used to go to funerals, burying their uncles, their sisters, even their brothers. And communities were affected – people could not do their work in the way they were supposed to because they were closely affected. They couldn’t even go to the gardens to or to their offices to work because they had to take care of their family.

The coming of the Global Fund changed the whole scenario because people were able to access free drugs and diagnostics, the coming in of infrastructure strengthening…Many governments were able to support peripheral health facilities so that there are facilities and services for TB, HIV, and malaria.

I would like to attest today that the Global Fund has saved many lives, and in turn has supported so many on issues of housing and other things. If you’re healthy, you are able to go to work, you are able to earn money presumably to pay for your housing, you are able to send your children to school and education… So in a nutshell, that’s how I would tell my story.

**Q:** Despite all the amazing progress made, there’s still an enormous amount to be done. How do you keep yourself inspired? How do you keep going?

**Thoko:** The main reason I keep doing what I’m doing is because as a person I see the need to speak out, to support the people that cannot speak out, to support those people who do not have access to the platforms where they can present themselves. I’d like to say it’s because of the people who are living in my family that are still benefitting from the Global Fund that makes me stand out and voice with them. So that’s why I have the passion.

I also know that without the Global Fund I probably wouldn’t have been here. I see the need to speak out. I see the need to represent the affected communities.

**Q:** What agencies in Malawi deliver the HIV/AIDS services?

**Thoko:** We have government facilities that are supported by the government and other development partners like PEPFAR. Most of them are supported by the Global Fund, mainly through antiretroviral drugs as well as TB drugs and malarial services. Just to mention that 80% of TB funding comes from the Global Fund, which means most of the resources come from the Global Fund. So we have those government facilities, we have non-governmental organizations… So in a nutshell I can say that most of the health services are provided by the government, and some of them are non-governmental, a huge percentage of it being the private sector.

**Q:** If you were able to be sitting in front of a member of Congress right now, or if you were on a radio program in the US, and you had a minute to say something, what would you say about why the US should continue to fully fund the Global Fund?

**Thoko:** Basically, my first point is about global solidarity… each life matters when it comes to health access. On the other hand, I would like to say that we can end these diseases now and forever. We have living proof of the science - the science is there that can help us end these diseases. We’ve got proof that we have the ability to end these diseases. So we need to act now. I would also mention about cases of Ebola. It was in a tiny town, and then one small case grew to a global issue. So it’s about all that.

**Q:** What is being done to bring new TB drugs to markets? Only one drug has been released in the past 20 years despite the 9 million people who contract the disease every year.

**Thoko:** I may not respond to that issue in the way that it's supposed to be responded to, but there’s something else I want to say. To end this disease, it needs political will. Firstly, it’s political will. Secondly, it’s availability of resources and commitment to making sure that that the issues that we are facing as a global community are addressed. There is research and development going on, but we haven’t rolled it out to an extent that moves us beyond the current status quo.

So what we need are resources to ensure that everyone who is left behind – we pull together human resources, financial resources to move ourselves beyond the current challenges to reach them.

Thank you so much for having me on the call, I am greatly honored.