



Background on Prof. Elizabeth Ngugi 2004 United Nations in Kenya Person of the Year



**For her contribution to preventing the spread of
HIV and STDs in Kenya**

This year's United Nations in Kenya Person of the Year, Professor Elizabeth Ngugi, of the University of Nairobi College of Health Sciences, is being honoured for her contribution to preventing the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in Kenya. Professor Elizabeth Ngugi is a truly great woman leader. Over the years she has received numerous awards and honours for her considerable contribution to the battle against HIV/AIDS in Kenya and the overall development of the country. She is equally effective at the grass roots and national policy-making levels, and has consistently shown that she is unafraid to raise her voice against injustice. For these reasons the UN family in Kenya has named Professor Ngugi the UN in Kenya Person of the Year.

Professor Ngugi started her career as a paediatric nurse, rising to her current level of Senior Lecturer in the College of Health Sciences. She has a long history of teaching, mentorship and leadership in the area of nursing in Kenya, and this work over the years has expanded to include similar leadership in the area of maternal and child health, community-level disease prevention and health promotion.

Since 1990, she has been the co-Director of the 'Strengthening STI/HIV/AIDS' project, a long-standing University of Nairobi partnership with the University of Manitoba. Under her leadership, and in collaboration with world-renowned scientists, this project's research has not only contributed to a much greater local understanding of the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV/AIDS) in Kenya, but has made a significant contribution at the international level. The project is well-recognised as an international best practice.

As the widely-respected leader of this important project, Professor Ngugi is continuously called upon by the Kenyan government for her guidance in matters of policy related to the national response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. As well as participating in numerous panels, task forces and committees, Professor Ngugi is a member of many societies and is the Chair of the Society for Women Against AIDS in Kenya.

Professor Ngugi's greatest contribution, however, is related to her grassroots work through the STI/HIV/AIDS project's involvement with communities of sex workers in Kenya. For many years, the project has been the leader in providing HIV/AIDS prevention information and other services to sex workers, and Professor Ngugi is recognised as having been one of the nation's leaders in the effort to provide support to this highly vulnerable group. Through this challenging work Professor Ngugi has also emerged as a major force in the area of women's rights as they relate to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Kenya.

This year saw the launch of the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS. In addition, the theme for the World AIDS Campaign this year is 'Women and HIV/AIDS'. In Kenya, the UN system is initiating a groundbreaking joint advocacy programme on girls, women and HIV/AIDS. By selecting Professor Elizabeth Ngugi as the UN in Kenya Person of the Year, the UN family in Kenya is not only recognising Professor Ngugi's contribution to the country's sustainable development, but is reiterating its commitment to and solidarity with these global and local initiatives.