Maternal and child mortality rate in sub-Saharan Africa is staggering. In fact some analysts describe the continent as a place in the world difficult for a child to survive until age five. This description might be exaggerated and biased. However, it holds some truth. Maternal and child mortality rate is high in Africa compared to other continents.

The main causes that attribute to the high death rate are poverty, communicable diseases, civil conflicts, inadequate physical infrastructure and low health system. And these by implication are manifested due to lack of attention and policy by the respective governments. Where civil conflict and corruption are the major news no one expects substantial investment to be made to save the lives of mothers and children. All the money goes to add more fuel to the conflict so that regimes stay in power or to the international banks in the name of family members.

That being the general scenario in the continent there also success stories in individual countries. Countries which are not known for corrupt leaders and keen to heavily invest in the welfare of their citizens. And such countries have received acknowledgment by professionals and organizations that follow events and conditions of the health of mothers and children worldwide. Eritrea is one of those countries that is deeply concerned and heavily invests for mother and child care.

According to international analysts Eritrea is one of the few countries in Africa on track to meet the Millennium Development Goal and the data from the Ministry of Health reveals 69% reduction of the mortality ratio from 1990 to 2008. This achievement registered came through hard work and huge investment by the Government and dedicated intervention by the health professionals.

In Eritrea to day there are 231 health facilities that provide delivery services; of which 160 are health stations, 48 health centers, 17 hospitals and 6 maternal and child health centers (MOH).
This is tremendous achievement by a country 21 years old.

Putting in place the necessary health infrastructure alone is not proof to the achievement. Above all the people are making maximum use of the opportunity. To date in this country it has become common for mothers to go to health facilities before and during delivery. Through out the years of independence rigorous awareness campaigns have been conducted and that paid off.

The yearly nation wide vaccination programs for children under five years being conducted by the Ministry of Health is an exemplary undertaking by the Government. To day Eritrea is free of measles and polio. Other communicable diseases are also dramatically being reduced. That is what makes Eritrea one of the few countries in sub-Sahara Africa to achieve the Millennium Goals.

Many professionals that happen to visit Eritrea are witness to the achievements the country has registered in terms of tremendously reduces maternal and child mortality rate among others. One of the renowned professional witnesses to this is Dr. Lisa Masterson. Dr. Lisa obstetrics and gynecology (OB-GYN) specialist works at Los Angeles Cedar Sinai Medical Center. She is also co-host of the popular TV series program “The Doctors”. Recounting her eye witness, Dr. Lisa said that she has a long work experience in a number of countries and observed majority of the countries she visited put aside the action plan mapped out due to managerial inefficiency, internal crisis and corruption. What she witnessed in Eritrea is peace, clear vision and dedicated leadership that could be categorized as model for others.

Substantiating her observation, Dr. Lisa said that “Eritrea is definitely on the right track towards achieving the UN millennium development goals, and it absolutely will. I have been very amazed and proud; and, I think very highly of the Government in the effort to tackling this country’s health challenges by means of the medical school. Education and educating people is where it starts. At the end of the day, the realization is that mothers and children are the focal
point of the society. Once you eradicate that, you can really alleviate a country. Eritrea's impressive achievement within the set short timeline stems from the realization that women and children be given primacy."