

## **NORA’S SISTERS**

### **CLOSING REMARKS BY PROF. VENANSIUS BARYAMUREEBA, AG. VICE CHANCELLOR, MAKERERE UNIVERSITY, FRIDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2009**

**Honorable Ministers**

**Honorable Members of Parliament**

**Your Excellency, Ambassador Bjørg S. Leite**

**Ambassadors present and other representatives of Development Partners**

**Representatives of Government Ministries**

**Members of Civil Society Organisations**

**Members of the Private Sector**

**The Chairperson and Members of Makerere University Council**

**Deans and Directors**

**Makerere University Community**

**The Media**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

On behalf of Makerere University I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Uganda for selecting Makerere to partner in hosting Nora’s Sisters. We are indeed honoured with this great opportunity to draw on the great works of the famous playwright, Henrik Ibsen, “A doll’s house” that was written in 1879 but is still relevant to contemporary societies in different countries.

Makerere University’s long time partnership with the Government of Norway dates back to the 1960s with the Department of Botany in the Faculty of Science and Department of Forestry. Over the years, this support has expanded in scope to cover the entire University’s Institutional Development Programme with the following components:

1. Good governance and Gender Mainstreaming
2. Food, Nutrition and Value Addition
3. Strengthening University Management

#### 4. Development of infrastructure and ICT

The support has introduced important interventions aimed at relating higher education to the needs of society by supporting the development of human resources in various fields and increasing the practical orientation of the graduates. Through synergies with other partners (such the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Sida/SAREC, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Rockefeller Foundation) , the support has enhanced the University's delivery capacity and also facilitated innovations and quick response to the changing needs of society.

The support has greatly helped in expanding physical infrastructure which in turn has facilitated the university to cope with increased demand for higher education; development of the human resource in various fields; contribution to ICT-enabled operations in administration and Library service delivery; enhanced capacity for gender mainstreaming; refurbishment of laboratories with specialized scientific equipment; strengthened research and research coordination; publication, outreach activities, institutional collaboration, partnerships and networking.

Institutionalisation of gender is at the core of the Makerere University functions and as such the University's commitment to gender equality and equity underscores the importance of today's occasion. The creation of the Women and Gender Studies Department and establishment of the Gender Mainstreaming Programme, Affirmative Action Policy for girls commonly known as the 1.5 that has raised female enrollment in Makerere University from 25% in 1990 to 46% in 2009, the Policy on Sexual Harassment, over 690 scholarships to girls from disadvantaged backgrounds, are some of the key initiatives that the University has undertaken which have made Makerere an icon of gender equality and women's empowerment in institutions of higher learning.

Today's event is absolutely timely and is a reinforcement of promoting the rights of men and women as has been portrayed in an artistic and creative manner. I am glad that gender issues have been communicated in a manner that is not "confrontational" as is often the case, but in

a way that appeals to our interest and intellect. This has enabled us to appreciate the intricate and conservative challenges of patriarchy that faced societies in Ibsen's times and yet are still pertinent in today's world. We acknowledge that over the years major milestones, such as Uganda's gender sensitive constitution and policies have been realised. However, today we have been reminded that a lot more still needs to be done to fully realize gender equality.

I believe that Nora's Sisters has contributed to the discussions on gender issues in relation to the current debates on family laws and human rights. We are glad to have amongst us various actors especially honorable Members of Parliament whom we commend for enacting the Domestic Violence Bill and hopefully will expedite the passing of the Marriage and Divorce Bill. Enforcement of such gender responsive laws, in addition to the education of both girls and boys and other development initiatives are key to sustainable and meaningful development.

I conclude by thanking the Royal Norwegian Embassy and the Makerere University Gender Mainstreaming Division for facilitating and organising this event; the presenter and panelists for the informative and interesting dialogue, the Artists and the Musicians for the creative portrayals and entertaining performances; the photo exhibitors and Makerere University Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Art for the art master pieces.

I also thank all of you for honouring our invitation. It is your presence and active participation that has made this evening a success. I am confident that we have been inspired to create transformation at the personal, interpersonal, family, community and national levels, as

**WE BUILD FOR THE FUTURE.**

I hereby declare this event closed.