

NL Closing Ceremony Remarks

Guest of Honour the Hon Minister of State for Higher Education, (rep of) VC Makerere University, VCs present, College Principals and Heads of Units Makerere University, HERS-EA Secretariat, Facilitators, Participants, Honoured Guests; Ladies & Gentlemen.

About HERS-EA – please take a brochure!

Thanks to: Sponsors – Makerere University (VC's office; GMD, DRGT & SWGS); other universities that funded participants.

Thanks to male Champions for encouragement, inspiration and practical support- Prof Nawangwe VC for his unwavering support and ensuring that we get an office; Professor Kabasa for believing in our Vision & providing seed funding; Andrew Wanyaka who has, from inception, voluntarily provided and continues to provide free legal services to HERS-EA.

HERS-EA is run solely by volunteers, who I wish to thank, especially, during the very busy time of the ACADEMY.

Above all, I wish to recognize, in a special way, women from the USA who mobilize their own resources and join us, in the spirit of supporting other women; please stand (some have left)!

Our Resource Persons from within Uganda comprise distinguished women who have stepped up in that same spirit of helping other women– thank you for catching the bug of giving to others! For the record – all our guests/facilitators have funded themselves to be here with us; we cannot thank you enough!

Honoured guests, HERS-EA was incorporated in September 2014, in Uganda, hosted by Makerere University. HERS-EA concept was adapted from HERS-USA, an educational non-profit organisation, established in 1972, to provide a women-centered intensive curriculum for development of women leaders in HEIs. The shortage of women in leadership and management in HEIs is global but worse in the developing world.

To the best of my knowledge only 5 women from the African continent are Alumnae of HERS USA; all five of us became aware of the HERS Institutes while serving in USA & Europe and we set ourselves the task of creating a similar organization back home. HERS-South Africa, established in 2001, funded by various US multinationals provided training for many women in Africa; some of the Alumnae include eminent women VCs in East Africa. When the grant dried up HERS-SA stopped training women outside RSA; that's how we stepped in and started HERS-EA. For the two of us who dared to dream and the original 12 HERS-SA Alumnae who readily responded to our dream, it is surreal to witness the passing out of the Second Cohort of HERS-EA ACADEMY participants.

The HERS-EA Concept has been embraced by all EA countries and we now have established country offices in Tanzania and Ethiopia (Ethiopia sought to be included). As mentioned earlier, HERS-EA is run by volunteers but that is unsustainable; we are now at a point where we need government buy-in, in the same way that the government of RSA bought into HERS-SA. We have support from IUCEA and we would prefer to take HERS-EA forward as a regional organisation that is aligned to the EA regional agenda.

Our two-part theme: 'Pathways to Leadership in Higher Education; New approaches to turning dreams into career plans'...was partially expounded by our Key Note speaker; and developed through the range of presentations and interactions provided throughout the week. The topics were informed by the needs of women in Academia in East Africa, compiled from primary and secondary research. We started the week with the intention of addressing personal and institutional development and developing sustainable collaborations and networks. We hope we have gone some way towards achieving those broad intentions.

To the participants: CONGRATULATIONS! Welcome to the HERS Community where 'Empowered Women Empower Women'! You have inspired us with your overwhelmingly positive comments; please hand in your Evaluation Forms so that we can continue to improve. All of us who have been involved in the HERS-EA project know the highs and lows we have been through! As you step out I want to commend to you a Biblical story of the Parable of the Talent.

You all have your God-given talents which, for personal or institutional reasons may have been lying low or completely undiscovered. We hope that we have helped you to figure out how to dig into yourself, discover that/those talents. When you do; develop and use them so that they can multiply! If you do not use them and think God will be impressed with your fear of getting it wrong – that talent could actually diminish! So; step out boldly and pull others; you might get some bruises along the way but, keep going, the scratches will heal!

I now invite one of the participants, Jane Akinyi Aduda, from Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, to share some reflections of the group.