

TRANSCRIPT-DR. SETH FRANKLIN BERKLEY

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen. It is a really great pleasure to join you here today even if only virtually.

I cannot tell you what a huge honor it is to receive this award which is particularly heartfelt given my personal history with Makerere University as a former faculty member and because of the deep connection that I still feel with Uganda even now after many years of working there. Back then in the late 1980's it was a difficult time for Uganda. It was a very different country, one that was grappling with a terrible new disease which at the time was fully understood, HIV/AIDs. Through my work as an Epidemiologist and the Ministry of Health as a practicing physician at Mulago, I saw first hand the terrible impact this disease was having, but the work we did together during the first National survey in establishing surveillance network across 33 districts at the time not only helped establish Uganda's National AIDs Control program but helped pass the global spotlight on the true scale of the epidemic in Africa and validated the definition for Africa laying a path way for other countries to follow.

Today the Makerere is the first University in East Africa to offer degrees in Public Health and a leading institution and continues that great work. And now as I join you today Uganda is sadly experiencing another challenging period along with the rest of the world battling to stop the spread of the Corona Virus but Uganda today is in a very different place. Back then only about 40% of children were receiving routine immunization today despite besides having three times the population that has over 90% putting it at par with countries like the UK. And I am extremely proud to be CEO of GAVI and vaccine alliance that has helped Uganda get there. Uganda also had a world leading Ebola program in addition to your childhood vaccination programs and we work with you to fight the epidemics at bay including in 2019 when there was a real risk of it spreading.

As a result, vaccines were made available and this allowed Ugandans to vaccinate 5000 frontline health workers during that critical period. And now with COVID 19, as co leader of COVAX facility, GAVI is working to ensure equitable access doing its best to provide vaccines for high-risk people such as frontline workers the elderly and other vulnerable people so far more than 800,000 vaccines have been delivered of the 15 of 2,000,000 doses, we hope to provide this year. As I have already said Uganda is a country close to my heart so I am very pleased to continue to play the role in its journey through the School of Public Health, GAVI AND COVAX. I am extremely honored to receive this honorary doctorate and delighted to join the rest of the graduates to be into the ranks of this esteemed institution.