

FRIENDS OF MAKERERE IN CANADA, INC (FOMAC)

ANNUAL REPORT 2010 /2011

General Statement

FOMAC is pleased to present to its members and friends this Report for the period 2010/2011. The Executive Committee has continued to discharge well its tasks as provided for in the organization's constitution and is thankful for the support and commitment of the members. In its operations, especially as concerns the management of resources, FOMAC has adhered to its declared policy of TARA (transparency, accountability, responsibility and action). For nearly nineteen years FOMAC has provided information and assistance to its members and has tried to energize its friends and volunteers to carry out its projects. That has not been easy, in the light of the dwindling resources. However, the support and commitment of the members has motivated us.

As the primary focus of FOMAC is Makerere University, we take pride in the work we do for the institution and are optimistic about its future. The university continues to struggle to provide a conducive environment for teaching, learning, researching and innovation and in this it has our wholehearted support. We have noted sustained progress and Makerere is working hard to become a high-performing teaching and research institution. However, we are still concerned about the quality of scholarship provided to its graduates, especially in the light of the phenomenal increase in enrolment. As well we are concerned about allegations of corruption and mismanagement as well as the frequency of staff strikes, the latest of which lasted for weeks and ended only in September following the intervention of the national government.

Looking at the most recent ranking of universities world-wide we cannot help but express disappointment about the low ranking of African universities. An entire continent is absent among the top one hundred, with the University of Cape Town in South Africa ranked at 107th as the highest in Africa.

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics there are about 4.5 million university students in Sub-Saharan Africa, which represents a huge increase from the number only a decade ago. Therefore the talent and institutions exist. The problem, according to the World Bank, is that the growth in enrolments has outstripped the financial capacity of universities, such as Makerere, to provide staff and facilities. It has added to the pressure on an underfunded system which

began in the 1980s when, with the advice of the same World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, many African countries switched resources to universal primary education, when other parts of the world, especially Asia, were investing in higher education. Africa is only now playing catch-up. Consequently the quality of university education is somewhat compromised. At the same time, for too long Africa has experienced a "haemorrhage" of talent. Many of its best students have travelled abroad to universities in Europe, North America, and Asia to take their higher degrees and too few have returned. Hence their countries of birth have received few benefits from their intellectual and research achievements. Unlike the top universities of Europe and North America, African universities are not global as such and are therefore unable to attract the talent they want or the external investment they need.

In this regard, it is disappointing that Africa, which is the world's second largest and second most populous continent after Asia, remains the world's poorest and most underdeveloped continent, despite an abundance of natural resources. One sad aspect is that African scholars overseas provide intellectual inputs to the achievements of other countries, while denying their countries of birth contributions to science and technology and to such vital matters as food security, disease control, access to clean water and environmental sustainability.

The challenge for African governments is that they need to invest much more in education, especially higher education, as well as in health and infrastructure. In addition, they need to create the necessary political, social and economic conditions that can serve as incentives to curb the brain drain and to attract much needed investments.

Activities by Friends of Makerere Chapters

The Friends of Makerere Chapter in Ontario (FOMOC) has been somewhat dormant since its Chairperson John Okumu had a stroke and its Treasurer Jones Mugulusi moved to the United States. Most recently the former Executive Official Allyce Mutungi informed FOMAC that she was arranging to convene a general meeting with a view to reactivating the Branch and electing new officials. FOMAC has promised to extend help if needed. FOMOC has great potential since Ontario is the home of a large number of former students and teachers of Makerere.

The President of the Kampala Chapter, who is also the representative on the coordinating committee for the Friendship House, has undertaken to provide a full

account of the activities of the Chapter. Of critical importance to FOMAC is the progress made in the preparations for the construction of the Friendship House as well as the selection of the next recipients of the Scholarship Award.

The Government of Uganda announces change in University Admission System

The Education Ministry has announced a policy shift as regards the system of admission into the publicly funded universities in Uganda. Currently the government sponsors 4,000 students every year at the five public universities, of which 896 slots go to various districts under a quota system. The new system will be based on district population in order to ensure equitable access to the available government sponsored slots. This means that government will abandon the blanket scholarship policy which in the past guaranteed each district at least eight positions. The Education Ministry has stated:

"Districts will now be grouped in bands of population in specified ranges so that districts falling under each band will receive corresponding slots under the quota depending on the weight assigned to each band"

But there is no explanation as to how this new system will work in reality. It is clear however that the change was inevitable following the mindless and politically motivated creation of numerous districts in the recent past.

Another policy shift announced recently involves subject choices by A-Level students. Students will be required to take either computer studies or Mathematics, in addition to general paper. They will be required to do only three principal subjects - not four - as has been the practice. At O-Level, physical education and sports will be compulsory.

DEVELOPMENTS AT MAKERERE

University Re-opening

Following a prolonged strike by the academic, administrative and support staff, the university reopened its doors on September 23, 2011. Earlier the academic staff had staged a strike demanding salary increases and the payment of arrears and pension. Other staff and students joined the strike, leading to the closure of the university. The university council and the government jointly agreed to resolve the payment issue and established a committee headed by the Attorney General and the Vice Chancellor to work out the mechanics.

The core of the problem at Makerere is funding. The government has clearly shirked fiscal responsibility for the country's leading public university while it continues to claim the right to define its policies and to appoint its top management, most of whom are in an acting capacity, and have been so for nearly two years. The result has been an erosion of the 89-year old institution.

The University Chancellor is re-appointed

Professor Mondo Kagonyera, whose four-year term as Chancellor of Makerere University expired earlier this year, has been reappointed by the government of Uganda. The University Council had earlier established a committee to search for a replacement. It is not clear if the committee had concluded its work. The reappointment of this controversial figure is bound to raise eyebrows.

The Passing of Professor Margaret Macpherson

Professor Margaret Macpherson passed away recently in her home in England. She served Makerere University for 36 years as Lecturer, Senior Lecturer and finally as Professor of Linguistics. She retired in 1981. She was a very popular teacher and a great intellectual. For many years she produced and edited a famous Makerere magazine, "the Old Makererian" which catalogued the social and academic activities and accomplishments of present and former Makerere students and teachers. She had a knack for remembering names of students and events. Her legacy includes the teaching and mentoring of students who subsequently became literary giants in their own right, such as Ngugi wa Thiongo, Robert Serumaga, Timothy Wangusa, Michere Mugo, etc. For a while Professor Macpherson was a member of our UK chapter, Friends of Makerere in the United Kingdom (FOMUK). She also served as a FOMAC consultant on a project we undertook at Makerere to determine the establishment of a university publishing house.

A memorial service for Professor Macpherson was held in September at Makerere University's St. Francis Chapel. It was attended by many former student as well as public figures, including former Prime Minister Apollo Nsibambi, Vice Chancellor Professor Venansius Baryamureba, Professors Charles Olweny, George Kirya, Lillian Tibatemwa-Ekirikubinza, etc.

Makerere produces and launches an Electric Vehicle

Makerere's Centre for Research in Transport Technologies has successfully designed, produced and launched an electric vehicle, codenamed The KIIRA-EV. It

is Uganda's first and was successfully test driven on November 1st and officially launched by President Yoweri Museveni on November 24th. The Kiira-Ev is a two-seater vehicle.

FINANCIAL REPORT

The Financial Statements for the Year Ended March 31, 2011 are submitted separately.

Please visit our website: www.friendsofmakerere.ca

**Winnipeg, Manitoba
November 25, 2011**