

# THE JULIUS NYERERE YOUTH FESTIVAL 2025

APRIL 15-16, 2025



MAKERERE UNIVERSITY



UGANDA MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE



## Introduction

This report presents a comprehensive overview of the Julius Nyerere Youth Festival 2025, a dynamic two-day event held on April 15th and 16th, 2025, and hosted by the Julius Nyerere Leadership Centre (JNLC) at Makerere University. Themed “Our Heritage, Our Voices: Culture, Innovation and Servant Leadership,” the Festival brought together over 250 participants, including 150 youth leaders from various public universities and tertiary institutions across Uganda.

The festival was honored by the presence of H.E. Maj. Gen. Paul Kisesa Simuli, High Commissioner of the United Republic of Tanzania in Uganda, as well as Ms. Mariatheresa David Mwamakula, granddaughter of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, who represented the Nyerere family.

Key highlights of the event included a keynote address by Ms. Eva Mulema Matsiko, a vibrant cultural showcase celebrating Uganda’s heritage, an evening social event inspired by the teachings of Julius Nyerere, a youth innovation pitch challenge, and a mentorship walk flagged off Prof. Tarsis Kabwegyere—a distinguished scholar, former minister, diplomat, a Board member of the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation (MNF) and a key advocate for Julius Nyerere’s legacy.





# DAY 1

# THE JULIUS NYERERE YOUTH FESTIVAL 2025

Wednesday, April 15th 2025

Theme:  
**Our Heritage, Our Voices:  
Culture, Innovation and Servant Leadership  
Honouring Our Past to Inspire the Future**





**Dr. Nansozi K. Muwanga, Executive Director – Julius Nyerere Leadership Centre (JNLC)**

In her opening remarks, Dr. Nansozi K. Muwanga, Executive Director of the Julius Nyerere Leadership Centre (JNLC), warmly welcomed participants to the Julius Nyerere Youth Festival (JNYF) 2025. She highlighted that the festival coincided with the birthday of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere—a moment not merely of celebration but of coming together in his spirit to build upon a legacy that remains both vibrant and inspiring.

Dr. Muwanga underscored that the event’s theme, “Our Heritage, Our Voices: Culture, Innovation, and Servant Leadership,” reflects the deep-rooted values of unity and dignity championed by Mwalimu Nyerere. She urged participants to view leadership not as a quest for status, but as a call to service, reminding them that this critical stage of youth is fertile ground for embracing leadership ideals grounded in practice.

She called on attendees to engage in meaningful dialogue during the festival and to carry forward new narratives that will shape the future of their communities. Dr. Muwanga emphasized the need for youth to become active participants and agents of change—challenging injustices and inspiring transformation rooted in their shared African and Ugandan identity.

Expressing gratitude, Dr. Muwanga acknowledged the invaluable support of partners and sponsors, including the East African Development Bank (EADB), the High Commission of the United Republic of Tanzania, Axiom Group, NBS, AfroMobile, and Roke Telecom. She also extended her appreciation to the volunteers and the dedicated team of former and current students who played a pivotal role in organizing and mobilizing for the event.

Finally, Dr. Muwanga challenged the young people to walk in the footsteps of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere—guided by the belief that true leadership is not about dominion, but about service to the people.

## Chair, JNLC Board of Directors



### **Dr. Saturninus Kasozi-Mulindwa – Chair, Board of Directors**

Speaking on behalf of Dr. Saturninus Kasozi-Mulindwa, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Julius Nyerere Leadership Centre (JNLC), Mr. Andrew Tumusiime warmly welcomed participants to the event. He congratulated the Centre on this year's festival, emphasizing that it marks a significant milestone in the Centre's journey. Mr. Tumusiime commended the Centre's efforts in equipping youth with leadership skills and noted that each day presents an opportunity to cultivate a new generation of capable leaders for Africa.

He expressed confidence that participants would leave the festival as better and more inspired individuals. Mr. Tumusiime reaffirmed that the Centre is dedicated to listening to the aspirations of young people and to guiding them in understanding that the present is their future. He extended his gratitude to all those who joined in celebrating JNYF 2025 and to the partners who have supported the Centre's activities. He concluded by pledging the Board's commitment to working with all partners to ensure that youth continue to benefit from the JNLC's mission.

## Vice Chancellor, Makerere University



### **Professor Barnabas Nawangwe – Vice Chancellor, Makerere University**

Associate Professor Julius Kikooma, Acting Director of Graduate Training, delivered remarks on behalf of Professor Barnabas Nawangwe, Vice Chancellor of Makerere University. He welcomed participants to Makerere University, the home of the JNLC, and noted that the celebration of 103 years of Julius Nyerere’s legacy coincides with Makerere University’s own 103rd anniversary since its founding.

Professor Nawangwe reaffirmed the University’s commitment to nurturing the next generation through education that cultivates wisdom, purpose, and service. He highlighted Makerere’s evolution since 1922 into one of Africa’s most prestigious institutions, proudly counting among its alumni presidents, scholars, innovators, and change-makers—including Mwalimu Julius Nyerere himself. He concluded by noting that the Julius Nyerere Leadership Centre at Makerere University continues to provide a nurturing environment for young leaders to grow in character, competence, and a commitment to serve society.

**Dr. James Nkata – Director General, Uganda Management Institute (UMI)**



Associate Professor Gerald Kareija, speaking on behalf of Dr. James Nkata, expressed his honor at attending the Julius Nyerere Youth Festival and representing the Uganda Management Institute (UMI). He conveyed Dr. Nkata's deep appreciation for the partnership between UMI and Makerere University in supporting the Julius Nyerere Leadership Centre—an initiative championed by H.E. President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni.

Dr. Nkata, through Prof. Kareija, underscored that Julius Nyerere was a true champion of African unity and self-reliance. As we navigate the complexities of our times, Nyerere's vision for a just and equitable society remains a powerful inspiration. Dr. Nkata highlighted Nyerere's enduring contributions to education, healthcare, equity, and development, noting their profound impact on nation-building. He called on young people to emulate Nyerere's vision as custodians of our heritage and values, and to draw on his ideals to shape their own futures.

Dr. Nkata's message urged participants to prioritise education because Julius Nyerere believed in knowledge and critical thinking as very significant for society. He also believed in the importance of family and collective responsibility as an avenue to build strong and supportive communities through self-reliance. He indicated that his vision and impact is a reminder of the principles of servant leadership and the importance of remaining authentic and true to self. He thus called on participants to honour Nyerere's legacy by working towards a brighter future for our continent, and ourselves, communities. He finally urged participants to go and become servant leaders.

## **His Excellency Maj. Gen. Paul Kisesa Simuli, High Commissioner of the United Republic of Tanzania in Uganda**

In his remarks, H.E Maj. Gen. Paul Kisesa Simuli, started by commending the efforts of the leadership of the JNLC for organising the Julius Nyerere Festival 2025 to celebrate Julius Nyerere's birthday at 103 years. He indicated that the festival serves as a true befitting tribute of Mwalimu's vision who understood the power and dynamism inherent in the youth as not mere leaders of tomorrow, but also active agents of change today. He added that the festival goes beyond a mere gathering to celebrate Julius Nyerere as a powerful intergenerational bridge connecting today's dynamism of youth with the profound legacy of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere Kambarage.

He intimated to the participants that the theme: "Our heritage, our voices – Honouring the Past to Inspire the Future" not only offers a strong framework for youth participating at the festival and young Africans to understand and appreciate their rich heritage and diverse cultures, but also to find their own voice within this context. He added that the theme also challenges the youth to embrace innovation and tools for progress while embodying the selfless servant leadership that defined Mwalimu's life.

H.E Maj. Gen. Simuli emphasised that by engaging with the principles of self-reliance and principled leadership, youth can actively shape their future drawing from Julius Nyerere; a towering figure who championed such principles to foster unity and development as part of their aspirations. He emphasized that for young Ugandans and youth present at the festival, the legacy of Mwalimu carries a particular profound significance beyond his role as a founding father of Tanzania. It reminds the youth that Julius Nyerere was a continental beacon of hope who deeply believed in the youth's transformative power.





Reflecting on Mwalimu's time at Makerere University in Uganda, H.E Maj. Gen. Simuli noted that it was a formative period in Mwalimu's intellectual journey and Pan Africanist vision that continues to underscore the ties between Uganda and Tanzania. He stated that the fact that the festival is being held on Ugandan soil becomes a powerful testimony to the shared heritage and direct invitation for the youth to connect with the very ideals that shaped a leader who understood the youth's potential to build a better society and carry forward his vision for the African continent.

H.E Maj. Gen. Simuli urged that the political and economic relationship between the United Republic of Uganda and Tanzania should continue to flourish serving as a practical manifestation of the pan Africanism championed by Mwalimu Julius Nyerere Kambarage. He prayed that regular tie involvements, regular infrastructure development such as the East African Crude Oil pipeline and other collaborative efforts in the region demonstrate a deep commitment to mutual growth and stability. He added that this strong partnership not only benefits the economies of both Uganda and Tanzania, but also fosters a sense of regional unity and cooperation that empowers the youth to envision and contribute to a prosperous and interconnected East Africa echoing Mwalimu's vision for a unified and self-reliant continent.

In his concluding remarks, H.E Maj. Gen. Simuli informed participants that it is important to remember that the Julius Nyerere legacy is not just a matter of historical record. It is also a living inspiration and whenever we pursue an African issue, self-reliance and social justice should ignite the aspirations of generations across Africa urging us towards the realisation for a better future.

H.E Maj. Gen. Simuli pledged close collaboration with the Julius Nyerere Leadership Centre to ensure that the enduring legacy of Julius Nyerere continues to be cherished and actively engaged with to inspire future generations.



**OFFICIAL OPENING:  
LIGHTING OF THE FESTIVAL TORCH AND  
CULTURAL PERFORMANCE**



## **Keynote Address: Shaping the Next Generation of Servant Leaders: Mwalimu Nyerere Legacy**

*Distinguished Speaker Ms. Eva Mulema Matsiko, Chief of Party, RTI International*



In her opening remarks, Ms. Mulema reflected on the enduring legacy of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, describing him as a leader from whom today's youth have much to learn and emulate. She began by noting that every generation faces its own unique battles. For Nyerere, the challenge was to liberate his people from colonialism. For the youth of today, however, the struggle is different.

Quoting Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, she remarked, "The world is changing rapidly... the era of aid and free money is over. We must learn investment discipline, especially as aid budgets continue to shrink." Ms. Mulema stressed that this is Africa's new frontier—one that requires bold, principled leadership from young people.

She highlighted Nyerere's decision to pursue political science and history at Makerere University and later at the University of Edinburgh, rather than the sciences, as a clear sign of his visionary thinking—recognizing early on the urgent need for political and intellectual leadership in Africa. Upon graduating, Nyerere chose to teach, an experience that deepened his understanding of education and its transformative power—an example, she said, many youth today may shy away from.

Ms. Mulema also decried the persistent plague of tribalism in Africa. While other nations rally around nationalism—such as "America First"—in Africa, she observed, we continue to divide ourselves along tribal lines. "We must move beyond tribal allegiances," she urged. Citing Nyerere's unwavering support for African liberation movements—his backing of the African National Congress during apartheid, and his solidarity with Uganda in the struggle against Idi Amin—Ms. Mulema reminded participants of his lifelong commitment to unity, accountability, and justice.

She emphasized that diplomacy and negotiation were central to Nyerere’s leadership. He wielded influence not through violence, but through reason, self-restraint, and moral conviction. These, she asserted, are the critical skills youth must cultivate to effect meaningful change without bloodshed. Encouraging participants to embrace bold thinking, Ms. Mulema pointed to Nyerere’s Ujamaa policy as an example of daring innovation grounded in African values. “Let us be inspired to craft and champion home-grown solutions, just as Nyerere did,” she said.

Ms. Mulema urged students and young leaders to take full advantage of the intellectual and research resources available at institutions like Makerere University. These resources, she noted, can bridge the gap between ideas and actionable policy, if leaders are willing to utilize them. For this to happen, she encouraged youth to develop a culture of disciplined study and lifelong learning.

She also emphasized Nyerere’s profound humility. Despite his stature, he remained deeply respectful of individuals and valued every human being. “There is a lesson in this,” she said. “As we lead, we must carry with us a heart that looks out for people—whether they live in the village or in the city.” On the subject of identity and culture, Ms. Mulema warned against the loss of African values. “Too often, we see ourselves as inferior,” she said, “and in doing so, we abandon our culture and heritage.” She challenged emerging leaders to take pride in being African and Ugandan, warning that without such pride, they are vulnerable to compromise.

Turning to the role of the older generation, Ms. Mulema called on them to:

- Model values grounded in love for culture, heritage, and country;
  - Provide real opportunities to youth, not symbolic gestures of inclusion.
- To the youth, she offered this charge:
- Harness every opportunity you encounter;
  - Strive to be the best version of yourself.

In conclusion, Ms. Mulema reminded participants that Julius Nyerere received numerous honorary doctorates—not simply because of his position, but because he strived for excellence. “So too,” she concluded, “can we excel, if we are committed to doing our best.”



## **Panel Discussion One:**

### **Theme: *Servant Leadership for Societal Transformation***

#### **Topic: Redefining Leadership for Youth Empowerment in Uganda**



***Speaker: Ms. Josephine Aanyu (Former Speaker, Uganda Christian University Guild)***

Ms. Josephine Aanyu, a proud alumna of the Julius Nyerere Leadership Training Programme, opened the session with a passionate call for youth-led transformation. Driven by a deep commitment to amplifying youth voices, she posed a thought-provoking question: “How can young leaders avoid corruption, and what practical steps can they take?”

She emphasized the importance of cultivating a character rooted in integrity and the courage to speak truth to power. Ms. Aanyu urged participants to reject lifestyles that compromise their moral clarity and instead utilize every resource entrusted to them with purpose and accountability. Reflecting on her own leadership experience as Guild Speaker at Uganda Christian University (UCU) Mukono, she shared how she successfully managed a student budget of UGX 250 million, underscoring the importance of financial stewardship and transparency in youth leadership.

Drawing inspiration from the keynote address, she called on young people to seize emerging opportunities with creativity and courage. Deeply concerned about the high levels of youth unemployment, she challenged participants to adopt the principle of collective responsibility, and to create or innovate using the knowledge and skills gained from their education. “Start small,” she urged, “and collaborate with others to build something impactful.”

Ms. Aanyu concluded with a strong appeal to the youth to adopt a mindset of ethical leadership. She encouraged them to take initiative, run for leadership positions in their communities, and become agents of positive change. She emphasized the importance of engaging in constructive dialogue, avoiding extremism, and maintaining unwavering integrity even amid social and systemic challenges.

## Theme: Leadership Ethics, Accountability, and Grassroots Impact



***Speaker: Ms. Gracious Kadondi (91st Guild Vice President, Makerere University)***

Ms. Gracious Kadondi centered her remarks on the ethical foundations of leadership, drawing lessons from the enduring legacy of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere. She highlighted Nyerere’s commitment to unity and public service, urging young leaders to lead with empathy, remain accountable for their decisions, and practice transparency to build trust with the communities they serve.

Ms. Kadondi called on youth to lead with moral conviction and to use mentorship opportunities to grow into ethical leaders. “Let your values, your integrity, and your honesty guide your leadership journey,” she said.

She further encouraged participants to emulate Julius Nyerere by actively seeking leadership roles and contributing to policy processes. “Leadership is not just about holding a title,” she emphasized, “but about using your voice to address critical issues and advocate for meaningful change.”

Ms. Kadondi closed her remarks by defining integrity as “being honest, taking responsibility, admitting mistakes, and doing better.” She expressed gratitude to the event organizers and expressed hope that participants would leave inspired to lead with authenticity and responsibility.

## Theme: Servant Leadership and Ethical Governance for Youth Empowerment

**Speaker: Mr. Rubanga Kenny Ronnie – Guild President, Uganda Management Institute (UMI)**

Mr. Rubanga Kenny Ronnie opened his remarks with a powerful reflection on a core lesson from the legacy of Julius Nyerere: “Unite or perish.” He emphasized the urgent need for Uganda’s youth to embrace unity beyond tribal, regional, and religious lines, drawing from Nyerere’s unwavering commitment to inclusive leadership and Pan-African solidarity.

He underscored that while Uganda has a robust array of policies on paper, the persistent challenge lies in their implementation. According to him, building a culture of ethical leadership must begin at the individual, family, and societal levels. He emphasized that servant leadership—putting others’ needs above personal gain—is foundational to transforming governance and fighting corruption.

Mr. Rubanga stressed the importance of leadership that emerges from the grassroots. He described the workplace not merely as a space of employment but as a community where ethical values and systemic change can be cultivated. Citing Julius Nyerere’s legacy, he challenged participants to become change agents in their immediate environments.

He advocated for youth engagement with key stakeholders in society to co-create solutions that can help young people enter and thrive in the money economy. Integrity, he noted, is best defined as “doing the right thing even when no one is watching.” He argued that strategic positioning through ethical leadership will allow young people, especially those currently at the margins, to become drivers of national transformation. He closed with a motivational challenge: “Don’t count the days; make the days count.” He encouraged participants to think big and take responsibility for shaping their future.



## Plenary – Highlights and Participants' Reflections



The discussion that followed Mr. Rubanga's remarks prompted several thought-provoking contributions from participants. Key issues raised included:

1. **Systemic Barriers and Reform:** Participants expressed concern about structural inefficiencies in governance, noting the grim realities of youth unemployment, economic hardship, and limited access to opportunities. A "system overhaul" was proposed as a necessary step to rebuild trust and create inclusive systems.
2. **Defining Integrity:** There was a call for a deeper exploration of what integrity truly means. One participant asked, "How can you measure or know that someone has integrity?"—a question that sparked reflection on character and accountability.
3. **Recommended Readings for Mindset Shift:** Participants were encouraged to read "Kicking Away the Ladder" and "The Bad Samaritan"—two influential books that challenge prevailing development narratives and encourage self-determination and critical thinking among youth.
4. **Debating the Bottom-Up Approach:** A critical question was raised about the practicality of a bottom-up leadership model in Uganda's current top-down political and economic systems. Can grassroots-driven change truly be effective within the existing structures?
5. **Policy and Youth Inclusion:** Participants voiced concern about policy frameworks that appear to exclude youth from economic participation—for example, excessive taxation of small youth-led businesses. There was a call for more youth-centered policy reforms.
6. **Core Leadership Values:** The session concluded with a discussion on the fundamental values that leaders should possess. Participants identified integrity, empathy, vision, courage, and accountability as key pillars of transformative leadership.

# Panel Discussion Two: Youth Voices for Social Change

**Theme: Empowering Youth as Change Makers in Governance, Mental Health, and Gender Equity**



The session opened with a compelling provocation from the Chairperson: Are the youth ready? Is the system ready to receive them?

With over 78% of Uganda's population comprising youth, the session explored whether young people are being meaningfully engaged in governance and leadership, and if they possess the capacity and support systems needed to lead.

## Panelists' Reflections

### ***Mr. Robert Maseruka – 90th Guild President, Makerere University***

Mr. Maseruka emphasized the power of inclusive leadership. Reflecting on his tenure, he shared that his cabinet reflected a 50:50 gender ratio and included persons with disabilities—affirming his belief in equality, equity, and the leadership potential of women and marginalized groups. He highlighted the transformative impact of mentorship, especially for women and persons with disabilities, urging institutions to intentionally nurture such leadership pathways.

Mr. Maseruka challenged prevailing gender stereotypes, advocating for a mindset shift: “Leadership is not about gender—women are already leading as presidents, ministers, and innovators.” He encouraged the youth to discover and remain true to their purpose: “Your calling should never be bought by money. If you're empathetic, go into leadership—you might find something you're willing to die for.”



***Ms. Charity Nduhura – Guild Speaker, Uganda Management Institute (UMI)***

Ms. Nduhura tackled the structural and cultural barriers that hinder women’s full participation in leadership. She urged young women to plan strategically, balancing education, leadership, and personal responsibilities with discipline and vision.

On the topic of marriage and leadership, she advised: “Marriage is important—but never compromise your character or aspirations. Class attracts class.” She stressed the importance of dialogue with spouses and the necessity of shared vision in supporting women’s leadership goals.

Ms. Nduhura also emphasized grassroots empowerment, calling for policy interventions that uplift rural women and encourage their involvement in local decision-making spaces. Notably, she advocated for holistic empowerment that also involves men as partners in progress.

# L 15TH - 16TH 2025

:00AM - 5:00PM

YUSUF LULE AUDITORIUM AND JNLC

YouthFest25

[www.thejnlc.org](http://www.thejnlc.org)



### ***Ms. Rose Nabwire – Guild President-Elect, Makerere University Business School (MUBS)***

Ms. Nabwire raised concerns about the commercialization of leadership among youth. She cautioned that many young people perceive leadership as a path to self-enrichment rather than service. “Leadership has been reduced to politicking and personal gain. This undermines trust and authenticity.”

She called for a return to values of servant leadership, integrity, and empathy. Trust, she stressed, must be built from the outset through active listening and genuine engagement with constituents. “Start where you are. The leadership journey is long, but you’ll meet people who believe in you.”

### **Key Takeaways from the Panel**

- Ethical leadership rooted in empathy, inclusion, and service is essential.
- Representation matters: women and persons with disabilities must be part of governance.
- Mindset shift and grassroots empowerment are critical to sustainable change.
- Young people must redefine leadership beyond personal ambition.

### **Plenary Reflections**

The plenary session surfaced deep concerns and unresolved questions, highlighting the complexities youth face in toxic, highly politicized leadership environments:

- How do we eliminate tokenism in empowering women and marginalized groups?
- How can we balance women’s empowerment with societal expectations of marriage and motherhood?
- How can youth provide servant leadership amid financial burdens and costly campaigns?
- Is it possible to de-link leadership from transactional politics?

## Cultural Showcase: Celebrating Our Heritage



The festival celebrated African heritage through:

- Traditional music and dance performances
- Youth Art & Craft Exhibition: Featuring cultural artifacts, paintings, and handcrafts
- Storytelling Session: Personal testimonies inspired by Julius Nyerere's teachings and supported by the JNLC Mentorship Programme

# Mentee Storytelling Highlights



- 1. Aser Constance Ichuma.** Constance shared her transformative experience during a visit to Butiama, Tanzania—birthplace and final resting site of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere. Inspired by Nyerere’s humble beginnings and belief in youth leadership, she emphasized the importance of building a meaningful legacy. “Young people today must move beyond survival to significance.”
- 2. Mwebaze Bruce.** Bruce recounted his eye-opening experience visiting Butiama and discovering Nyerere’s deep love for youth and education. He challenged the notion that science students are not suited for leadership and urged all youth to believe in their capacity to lead. “Leadership is not reserved for the arts—scientists too must step up.” He further advocated for the adoption of Kiswahili as a unifying language across East Africa, in honour of Nyerere’s Pan-African legacy.



## Reflections by Student Leaders

Key reflections from Guild Presidents and Vice Presidents included:

1. Reject corruption and embrace servant leadership.
2. Be accountable for resources and decisions.
3. Seize small opportunities—there's always a starting point.
4. Reframe leadership as a means of transformation, not popularity.
5. Run for elective positions to influence change at local levels.
6. Promote dialogue over confrontation.
7. Leverage mentorship to shape ethical leadership.
8. Collaborate with stakeholders for sustainable youth development.
9. Support inclusive mentorship—especially for women, PWDs, and other vulnerable groups.
10. Promote mindset change around the role and potential of women in society.

## Evening Social Event: “Voices in the Night” – A Cross-generational Conversation (Ekyooto)

An inspiring evening of poetry, spoken word, and music, inspired by Julius Nyerere's teachings.

Highlights of the evening event included:

- Poetry Recitation by students from the Department of Literature: “When Africa Rises” and “A Letter to My African Friend” – affirming identity and hope.
- Poetry by Kagai Ngobi: “But Why Am I Telling You This in English” and “The Seven Dances of the Sankofa”.
- Poetry by Prof. Susan Kiguli: “Mwalimu Nyerere in Memory” and “No Longer a Voice in the Wilderness”.



## **Remarks by Mariatheresa David Mwamakula *A Granddaughter of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere***

Ms. Mwamakula read excerpts from Nyerere’s works on gender equality (“Women Are Not Chickens but Eagles”) and Pan-African unity (“Unity Will Not Make Us Rich...”).

She expressed gratitude for Uganda’s enduring celebration of her grandfather’s legacy and emphasized the importance of carrying forward Nyerere’s vision with compassion, justice, and integrity. As a university lecturer in psychology and mental health, she encouraged youth to prioritize emotional well-being and purpose-driven leadership. She pointed out that “Nyerere’s philosophy—service, humility, empathy—is more relevant today than ever. The youth must carry it forward.”

**In celebration of culture, Aisha Nyerere, a great-granddaughter of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere penned a heartfelt poem - Ode to Khanga to celebrate all the important things that just one piece of cloth - the khanga - represents to generation after generation in Tanzania.**

## **ODE TO KHANGA**

*Dear Khanga,*

*Thank you,  
For carrying our children  
For supporting the weights they bore on our backs  
While we carried on with everyday tasks*

*Thank you,  
For covering us women  
After our showers, during our chores  
Being gorgeous in your simplest form  
Ensuring all your daughters can be adorned*

*Thank you,  
For attending the weddings  
For lending yourself as a gift  
Remembered after our festivities*

*Thank you,  
For your comfort in funerals  
For letting our tears stain the ends of your threads  
And offering words of wisdom to the grieved*

*Thank you,  
For your years of service  
As bedsheets, blankets, covers and curtains  
When we couldn't afford much more*

*Thank you,  
For never stuttering in your expression,  
For letting every aspect of you  
Intentionally tell our story  
For enabling us to honour our histories on our bodies  
And wear our hearts near your hems  
For reminding us of proverbs  
Verses and people who've passed on,  
For weaving what's loved and lost into our daily routine  
If you were a person, I'd see you as a mother  
One willing to give a piece of herself to each of her children  
So none would have to live without her  
You are a testament to art's transcendence  
The fabric that holds us together  
Covering our country ten times over  
Carrying life and death on your shoulders*

*So thank you,  
For being timeless and new  
For refusing to fade when  
Many of your children would rather change  
And yes, I see you  
Folded, flattened in the back of my closet  
Behind my thick towels, silk sheets  
Sweatpants and hoodies  
But, in the times that I  
Wrap you around my chest and waist  
With my towels still in the wash,  
The bathroom blinds drawn tight and winter's wind  
Rushing against the windows  
In this room of white, grey and clear glass mirrors,  
There's an image waiting to be seen.  
I see myself helping my aunt tie my cousin to her back  
Hearing the child's cry soften like  
He's just been wrapped in love  
I see my Bibi leaving for church, the image of  
Virgin Mary draped over her head like a veil  
I see my mama, securing your ends to our window bars  
To keep neighbours from seeing us during the day  
I see sun rays transform in your translucence  
An array of stained shadows painting  
The whitewashed walls of my room  
I remember waking in the embrace of a rainbow.  
Such beauty can't be seen through blinds.  
Thank you, Khanga.*

*Love,  
Aisha.*



## **Closing Remarks – Day One**

### ***Dr. Nansozi K. Muwanga – Executive Director, JNLC***

Dr. Muwanga thanked all participants for engaging deeply in Day One's events. She invited everyone to return for Day Two's Mentorship Walk, retracing Mwalimu's footsteps through Makerere University.

### ***Dr. Saturninus Kasozi-Mulindwa – Chairman, JNLC Board of Directors***

Dr. Kasozi-Mulindwa applauded the vibrancy of youth participation and the richness of intellectual and cultural exchanges. He commended the students' poetic tributes and Prof. Kiguli's mentorship. He extended special appreciation to Ms. Mariatheresa Mwamakula for honouring her grandfather's legacy and praised the JNLC team, partners, and sponsors for organizing a memorable celebration.



# DAY 2

# THE JULIUS NYERERE YOUTH FESTIVAL 2025

Wednesday, April 16th 2025

Theme:  
**Igniting Youth Innovation and Leadership for  
Social Change**



## Discussion Highlights:



## Key takeaways from early reflections included:

1. **Seize Opportunities:** Young people should take initiative and make the most of every opportunity that comes their way.
2. **Cultivate Self-Awareness:** Understanding one's strengths, talents, and purpose is essential for meaningful innovation and leadership.
3. **Perseverance and Purpose:** Growth requires resilience, learning from failure, and a willingness to develop over time.

## Panel Session: Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurship



### **Theme: Our Heritage, Our Voices: Igniting Youth Innovation and Leadership for Social Change**

#### ***Speaker 1: Joy Turamuhawe – Entrepreneur (Cleaning & Digital Services)***

Joy shared her entrepreneurial journey that began with cleaning church premises. Inspired by her experience, she posted her work online, gained three clients, and within a year had registered a company, acquired cleaning equipment, and expanded her clientele.

She emphasized that many youth have brilliant ideas but never start because they fear failure. “You have smartphones—don’t just use them for entertainment. Use social media to build something for yourself.”

On access to capital, she advised: “No one will fund you unless you’ve already started. Show traction before you seek support.”

Joy encouraged young people to start small—even from home or the boot of a car—instead of spending resources on fancy office setups. She also highlighted the importance of value addition and diversifying within a chosen business field to maximize returns.

She challenged youth to become solution-oriented: “Look for community challenges and innovate around them. That’s how you make impact—just like Nyerere taught us.” Joy also touched on systemic barriers, including limited local market access and negative perceptions about Ugandan work ethics, and urged young people to rewrite this narrative through professionalism and quality delivery.

## **Speaker 2: Sandra Nakayenze – Youth in Agriculture Advocate**

Sandra's story is rooted in her upbringing in Sironko, a coffee-growing district. Despite agriculture's unpopularity among youth, she returned to her community and used her education background to organize rural women into groups and start Kalamugo Women's Group.

Her leadership has helped the group acquire over four coffee pulping machines through proposal writing and partnerships. She formed 32 farmer groups, trained them in post-harvest handling, and introduced adult literacy programs to overcome the challenge of low education levels among women.

Sandra emphasized values such as honesty, patience, and effective communication, which she instills in the group. By involving school-going children in the training, she also created intergenerational support systems. "Kalamugo began in 2014 and operates sustainably with UGX 4 billion per season. We've only ever received one grant from MTN. The secret is starting small and growing gradually." She concluded by encouraging youth to make the most of their youthful years: "Marriage is important—but it's not urgent. Build something first."





***Speaker 3: Moses Obi – Entrepreneur and Mentor***

Moses reflected on the role of institutions like UMI, YALI, and JNLC in shaping youth leadership and innovation. Through mentorship, he trained women in western Uganda in cocoa production but faced challenges with consistency in operations.

He stressed the importance of mindset change:

“If we don’t consume our own products, how can we shape national policies that support local business?” He noted that apprenticeships are increasing across sectors like Civil Aviation and UBL, and urged universities to lobby for more such placements.

On business formality he added that “Youth must register and certify their businesses. Without compliance, they miss procurement opportunities and resort to shortcuts that lead to corruption.” He warned against grantpreneurship, where youth chase grants without a sustainable business model. “Support is essential—but it must align with your long-term business goals. Don’t misuse funds for weddings and lifestyles instead of growth.”



***Speaker 4: Churchill Ssentamu – 91st Guild President, Makerere University***

Churchill emphasized the critical role of student governance in promoting innovation, academic research, and leadership development.

“Guild leadership should serve as the bridge between students and organizations—acting as both a voice and a watchdog.” He advocated for more funding for student research and engagement with the Makerere Research and Innovations Fund to support ideas at early stages. Churchill stressed the importance of resilience: “When the going gets tough, remember why you started. Listen to everyone, but make your own decisions.” He concluded by urging youth to embrace e-learning and digital platforms to unlock new possibilities.

## Plenary Discussion: Youth Concerns and Questions

1. Emotional Intelligence in Business: How can young entrepreneurs avoid mixing emotions with business—especially when dealing with cyberbullying and criticism?
2. Digital Ethics: Some youth advertise lower prices online, only to quote higher figures in person. How can business integrity be fostered?
3. The ‘Grant-preneur’ Problem: A worrying trend was noted where youth jump from one grant to another without developing viable businesses. How can this cycle be broken?
4. Lack of Formalization: Many businesses engaged in value addition are unregistered and lack QR codes, barring them from entering formal markets like supermarkets.
5. Sustainability of Ideas: “The graveyard is the richest place”—so how do you sustain and implement great ideas before they are buried?
6. AgTech and Digital Tools: How can farmers be trained in AI tools and cost-benefit analysis to enhance agricultural productivity?
7. Contracting and Corruption: There was a critique of government contracting practices, where local companies are overlooked in favor of foreign firms. How can youth engage in policy advocacy to change this?



# Youth Innovation Pitch Challenge

The Youth Innovation Pitch Challenge was to provide a platform for young people to present creative ideas. The challenge involved a short, persuasive presentation to a panel of judges and the wider audience. The pitch for the Digital Mwezo Board Design showcased an innovation in the area of technology. The goal was to demonstrate the potential impact, feasibility, and originality of the idea.



## Digital Mweso Board Design



Mweso (also known as Omweso) is a traditional mancala game deeply rooted in Ugandan culture, believed to have been introduced by the ancient Bachwezi. Played on a board with four rows of pits, the fast-paced game involves strategic seed movement and captures, enhancing mental agility and problem-solving skills. Historically popular since at least the early 20th century, Mweso continues to hold cultural and intellectual value.

At the Julius Nyerere Youth Festival 2025, students from the College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology (CEDAT) presented an innovative pitch to digitize the traditional Mweso board. Their vision is to preserve African heritage while leveraging technology to make the game more interactive and accessible. The electronic board, linked to a smart app, allows users to play and spectate in real time—similar to watching a football match—without needing to crowd around a physical board.

The students emphasized that the digital Mweso game is not only educational—enhancing mathematical thinking and strategic reasoning—but also inclusive, targeting schoolchildren, university students, and wider community members. They plan to roll out Mweso clubs in schools, building on the one already established at Makerere University.

## **Comments by Mrs. Irene Mutumba – Educationist and Makerere Alumna**

Mrs. Mutumba applauded the participants for their creativity and commitment during the Julius Nyerere Youth Festival 2025. She encouraged young innovators to go beyond ideas and take concrete steps toward implementation.

She expressed concern about the mismatch in Uganda's education system and called for curriculum reform that integrates life skills, such as financial literacy and entrepreneurship. She urged youth to maximize the opportunities within their environment to generate innovative solutions.

Commending the digital Mwes0 initiative, Mrs. Mutumba emphasized the importance of articulating a clear problem statement and showcasing the social and educational benefits of the innovation. She challenged the team to define their target audience and the inspiration they hope to spark. Concluding her remarks, she praised the initiative for blending innovation with cultural preservation and encouraged the team to embody servant leadership alongside entrepreneurship.



# Mentorship Walk.

## “Walking in Nyerere’s Footsteps”: A Journey of Reflection

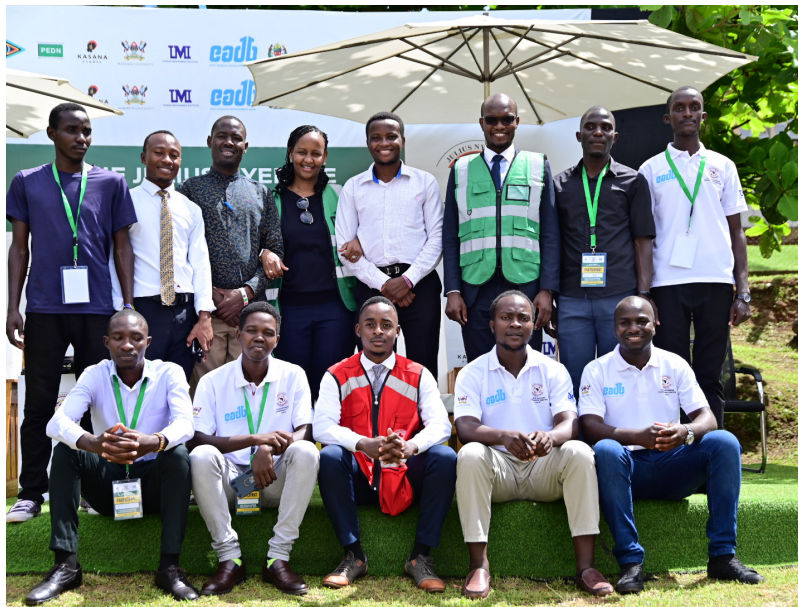


The aim of the Mentorship Walk was to inspire young people by connecting them with experienced mentors through a symbolic and reflective walk across key historical landmarks at Makerere University. The walk designed to honor the legacy of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, sought to promote inter-generational dialogue, and encourage youth to embrace servant leadership, civic responsibility, and lifelong learning. The walk was expected to strengthen youth commitment to ethical leadership and social transformation in their communities.

The Mentorship Walk was flagged off by Prof. Tarsis Kabwegyere. Describing the walk as more than a symbolic gesture, Prof. Kabwegyere called it a journey of purpose—a reflection on identity, leadership, and the future. He noted that few individuals have contributed more significantly to Uganda’s peace and development than Julius Nyerere.

In his tribute to the late Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere, Prof. Tarsis Kabwegyere reflected on how Nyerere identified and mentored young leaders—including himself, when he was chosen to chair a major conference in Moshi in 1979. He described Nyerere as a visionary, disciplined, and thoughtful leader who remained actively engaged in peace efforts until his passing, including chairing the Burundi Peace Process.

Prof. Kabwegyere announced ongoing efforts to establish a global leadership institute in Dodoma in honor of Nyerere, with support from H.E. President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni and a planned mobilization of non-aligned nations.



He called on participants to contribute to Nyerere's intellectual legacy by writing about his life and philosophy from diverse perspectives, proposing themes such as:

- Julius Nyerere: His Origins and Family History
- Julius Nyerere: A Seed of Knowledge and Metaphysical Thinker
- Julius Nyerere: Torchbearer of Anti-Colonial Struggles
- Julius Nyerere: The African Emancipator and Ujamaa Visionary
- Julius Nyerere: Architect of Global Peace and Leadership
- Julius Nyerere: A Case for Sainthood and Spiritual Legacy

Participants were invited to honor Nyerere with each step they took, chanting his name as a sign of respect and remembrance. Each mentor led a group of 4–5 students through key landmarks at Makerere University including:

- Mwalimu Nyerere's Room in Complex Hall – A symbol of simplicity and sacrifice in pursuit of knowledge.
- Main Administration Building – Representing leadership and institutional heritage.
- Freedom Square – A space for civic engagement and student activism.
- University Library – Embodying knowledge, continuous learning, and intellectual growth.
- College of Engineering – The innovation hub where youth can leverage technology for societal transformation.

Prof. Kabwegyere encouraged prayer and advocacy for Nyerere's canonization, recognizing his universal contributions to humanity.

## Closing: Lunch, Networking, and Celebration

The Julius Nyerere Youth Festival 2025 concluded with a vibrant networking lunch, filled with music, cultural dance performances, and celebrations. After two eventful days of inspiration, dialogue, and reflection, participants departed energized to carry forward the spirit of innovation, leadership, and Pan-African legacy defined by Mwalimu Nyerere.





# *The Julius Nyerere* **Youth Festival 2025**

**OUR HERITAGE, OUR VOICES:  
CULTURE, INNOVATION, AND  
SERVANT LEADERSHIP**



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