



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

SEPTEMBER 2021

VarsityFocus

A magazine of the University of Nairobi

UoN BEYOND 50 YEARS

ALSO INSIDE:

**FERDINAND
OMANYALA**

Student Shines at
Tokyo Olympics



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

Our Vision

A world-class university committed to scholarly excellence

Our Mission

To provide quality university education and training and to embody the aspirations of the Kenyan people and the global community through creation, preservation, integration, transmission and utilization of knowledge.

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- Innovativeness and creativity
- Partnership and teamwork



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As the University welcomes the 2021/2022 First Year students, we at *Varsity Focus* would like to wish them a fruitful stay in the University. We would also like to send a warm message of congratulations to the students who completed their studies successfully and have qualified to graduate this September.

The September 2021 issue of *Varsity Focus* has been published under the theme, "Beyond 50 years", coming soon after the conclusion of programmed activities to mark this milestone in the history of the University. Moving forward, the Vice-Chancellor has shared his vision for the University, which focuses on sustaining the growth momentum, academic excellence, and attainment of world-class status. The underlying message is that these will be achieved through making some adjustments in our approach, as we work together in a committed manner. The University of Nairobi is currently ranked the best university in Kenya and East Africa and one of the leading ones in Africa, which suggests that the groundwork has already been done and the University is moving in the right direction.

We have highlighted selected activities of staff and students and the ongoing collaboration work with our partners as a way of demonstrating the capacity and potential of the University to deliver on

the stated goals. Research institutes, like University of Nairobi Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases (UNITID), have the state-of-the-art laboratories required to conduct the much needed discovery research on the African continent. Researchers at the Institute and their collaborators are tackling the difficult questions of finding vaccines

and effective cures for some of the diseases that continue to ravage the continent's population, including some emerging ones. The Director of Research has projected that the future of University research will be best directed towards discovery and the generation of new knowledge, the need for sustainable funding mechanisms, multidisciplinary approaches, and effectively targeting local communities when it comes to the consumption of research findings.

The appointment of some of our staff to key positions in international organisations is a testament to the level of expertise that we have at the University. On this note, we congratulate Prof. Patricia Kameri-Mbote and Prof. Attiya Waris of the Faculty of Law, whom we have featured in the magazine. Our students are excelling in academics, leadership, community activities, and international activities thus raising the profile of the University. We bring you a selection of student initiatives which demonstrate the level of talent within the University.

The University of Nairobi Alumni Association (UONAA) is also adding value to the University and has even bigger plans for the future, key among these being to mentor our students and work closely with the University in finding meaningful internships and opportunities for attachment. I hope you will enjoy reading our current issue of *Varsity Focus*.



JOHN A.O.ORINDI, mCIPR
Director Corporate Affairs

JOHN A.O.ORINDI, mCIPR
EDITOR

Greetings!

We have settled into a new rhythm of work within what is permitted to stay safe from the COVID-19 infection. We continue to observe good hygiene, keep social distance, and wear masks. We are also privileged that the University is a vaccination centre and hence the easy access to the vaccine is making it possible for the staff and students to take the jab.

This September, two major activities in our academic cycle are anticipated. As I write this message, we are receiving about 6000 First-Year students, for the 2021/2022 academic year. Let me take this opportunity to welcome them into the UoN community and look forward to interacting with them meaningfully. The second activity is the scheduled 65th Graduation, which will also be taking place simultaneously with the orientation of the new students. I would like to congratulate our graduands and wish them well as they move on to their next phase of life. The amount of planning and preparation needed to execute just one of these activities can be daunting, even in the absence of a pandemic. For this reason, I want to thank all those who are putting in their best effort to make the events possible. This display resonates with the values of this University of commitment and teamwork.

If there is something we have learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is the power of resilience that this University has. There were some challenges in the beginning, but we have now adapted ourselves to blended teaching and learning, making the necessary adjustments as we forge ahead. The forthcoming 65th graduation will be the third such event to be celebrated virtually. Another lesson to be drawn from the pandemic is that much as

systems may be seen to be working, there will always be the potential to do better. Inevitably, some degree of change is necessary for us to achieve more. The experience from the COVID-19 pandemic is that irrespective of the source of change, we will always push

towards success. The University of Nairobi is easily the best university in Kenya and East Africa with the aspiration of attaining world-class excellence. In order to stay ahead, and continue to remain relevant, we have to improve on and maintain the production of quality graduates; we have to be known for conducting quality, impactful research. This calls for us to be more outward looking in our approach so as to prepare our students for the world by doing what the rest of the world is doing. All these require us to make certain adjustments to chart a new direction for the University.

Whereas it is acceptable to be cautious; to think through things and plan; and to also reach a consensus, we also ought to be swift in our actions lest we risk becoming extinct for not adjusting to the environment accordingly. We shall continue to hold these conversations, but it is also time to make some bold steps forward.

Those who began this University about 50 years ago had a more difficult task than we do today. Our task of taking this University to a new level of growth pales in comparison because we have the advantage of a solid foundation and a legacy to build upon. We also have our collective experience, the benefit of hindsight, and many others ahead of us from whom we can draw useful lessons. Hence, I am inviting everyone on board so that we can sail together and re-engineer this University in pursuit of the ideal of world-class academic excellence.

**STEPHEN GITAH KIAMA, Ph.D.,
VICE-CHANCELLOR**



PROF. STEPHEN GITAH KIAMA,
Vice-Chancellor

VICE-CHANCELLOR PROF. STEPHEN GITAHI KIAMA: MY VISION FOR UoN



Varsity Focus held a one-on-one discussion with the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Gitahi Kiama, on the future of the University beyond 50 years. As Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Kiama is the driving force behind the activities that will take the University to the next level of growth. Cognisant of the fact that the University's next scorecard will reflect the decisions made during his leadership, Prof. Kiama made time to explain his vision for the University and some of the proposed actions for realising this vision. We bring you excerpts of our interview with the Vice-Chancellor.

What do you consider as the greatest achievement of the University of Nairobi during the 50 years that it has been in existence?

Answer:

The greatest achievement is the transformation of our country. The University of Nairobi has transformed this country in all sectors, both public and private, in a way that would not have been possible if it did not exist. The University has provided health support for the Kenyan people, and the East African region as well, by producing doctors and other essential health personnel. In the dairy industry, Kenya is a milk exporter, unlike other countries in the region, because of the contribution of veterinary doctors from this University. This University has produced the CEOs running various successful establishments in the country; the experts in constitution-making; and those heading our judicial institutions. Graduates from this University are also driving the vibrant debates taking place in the National Assembly and the Senate today. We have produced leaders in the building industry responsible for the beautiful structures found in the City of Nairobi and across the country, including the master planning.

Generally speaking, this University was a very strategic establishment by the government. Look at the other countries which did not have a university early enough and you will know the difference. But we still have a lot of work to do.

What has been the University's major setback?

The major setback, in my view, is that we have not taken good care of our scholars. As a result, some of them left the country to go and serve elsewhere, some were detained, and those who remained developed fear. The recovery process from this setback has been slow.

The government's shift in financing priorities also destabilised the University and demoralised the scholars. We need to recover from this setback and that is why people reforms constitute a vital component in my reform agenda.

The issue of scholars is core to the University. How do you intend to attract and retain the right calibre of scholars for the University?

We will begin a transformation process which will provide a governance and administrative structure that returns the decision-making processes to the scholars, the faculties, and the departments. We shall focus our resources where the scholars are so that we free them from routine administrative tasks and allow them to use their time to think and expand space for the University.

A section of the scholars seems to be uncomfortable with the reforms being proposed by your administration. How do you intend to bring them on board?



We are going to engage with the scholars continuously because this is important. The debate on reforms is not new, but maybe we accelerated the process more than was expected. Some people fear that implementing the proposed reforms will remove the opportunities for individual growth, but I want to clarify that universities are about scholarship and not administration. The University is about thinking, developing new knowledge, creating new opportunities, and imparting new skills to transform communities. This is why we are measured based on such things as research output and the students who graduate. We still have the positions for professional growth from assistant lecturer to the level of professor. If there is a problem on these issues, then we will fix it together.

What would you consider as the priority of the University at this point in time?

The priority of the University is people reforms; where people are able to identify their skills and their strengths and we support and nurture



them to improve productivity. This is because when individual productivity is improved, then productivity of the entire University improves as well. We must ensure that everyone plays their role to enhance the value of the other to achieve a better sense of belonging to the University.

The issue of finance is another priority of the University because we need to take care of our needs as an institution. We have to manage our expenditure better, align resources with our core mandate, and enhance our resource base to make more. If we do this, we shall secure the University now and into the future.

How will people reforms contribute to the University's core mandate and good standing on the national and global stage?

The University of Nairobi is about people. First, there is the issue of image. If people are saying and doing the correct things, then we shall win the trust of our clients and the University will grow. Secondly, we will also improve our competitiveness. People reforms will also enhance our productivity through publications and the graduates we produce leading to increased visibility. Collaborators will come calling and we shall be in a position to choose our friends.

Recently, your administration introduced a number of reform proposals which should lead the University to prosperity. What fuels your belief that the proposals carry the right prescription for the University?

I have been a student here and I have observed the University from the perspective of a student. There were things I would have liked to see as a student. I have also been a teacher and grown through the ranks to become a full professor; as a member of staff there were things I would have liked to see the University doing. I have been in administration as a member of a committee, chairman of a department, associate dean, acting dean, director, principal, and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Human Resource Management). I am now the Vice-Chancellor. As an administrator in this University, I have seen what needs to be done. I have also been a researcher and I know what researchers go through. Besides that, I have a PhD from a university outside this country, so I have that perspective of a university having spent four years working with different scholars. I have worked in many other universities. When I was young, I worked in St. Andrews University in Scotland and I know the level of equipment there. I worked at the University of Berlin in Germany and the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa among others. I

have visited many other universities and I have collaborators. From that interaction I have the perspective of what a university is and how it is run.

I have an image constructed from all those perspectives. I have this image of a world-class university where there is a high concentration of talents and resources, and there is also linkage with the private sector. I would like everyone to join me in walking into that university together. Obviously, the perspective of every person will be different because we have different experiences, but I think the University of Nairobi has nurtured me well enough to occupy the position that I occupy today.

How do you plan to include other people's perspectives in this image of a first-class university that you have envisioned?

Everyone has a role to play in realising that new image; whether it is a student, a parent, staff member, or a collaborator. It is through everybody playing at their stage that this University will be elevated and hence the focus on people reforms. We have to ensure that everybody is equipped appropriately to play their roles in the positions that they occupy so that we can succeed.

What value do you expect the of alumni of this University to bring in the context of people reforms?

We have produced many graduates whom we consider as children of this University. In the context of people reforms, it is important for them to come back and ensure that the needs of their University, their mother, are also met. Our alumni are responsible people who will also serve as role models for our students. We need our alumni to join us in building one another so that we can make this University really transformative to offer better services to current and future students.

How will you go about preparing the University community to join you in realising this image you have of a successful University?

I will go out and continuously engage the faculty and other staff to listen to their views on what we can do better because that is important. We shall also identify the skills that we need to nurture in order to obtain the desired results.



In future, what is the one achievement that you would you like to associate yourself with because you served this University as Vice-Chancellor?

That the University of Nairobi positioned itself for greater impact to the society. I want this University to be seen in terms of innovation and community transformation beyond offering access to higher education. We need to also cut the niche of doing research that is truly transformative and has real impact to the communities that interact with us. I want this University to be the destination of choice in Africa for researchers and students from all over the world because of the nature of our programmes and how we deliver them.

There are fears that the plan to increase fees for the Module II programme is likely to discourage prospective students from coming to the University? What is your take on this issue?

The University of Nairobi has an obligation to admit government-sponsored students and will continue to do so. The University Senate also considered it necessary to develop a programme where we also admit self-sponsored students. However, we do not expect the self-sponsored students to pay less fees than the value of the education we are offering here and hence the adjustments we are proposing. For students under the Module I programme,

the University has not increased their fees; we are simply implementing the differentiated unit cost financing model (DUC) which the government approved about three years ago. Whatever the case, we have not increased fees for our continuing students under any programme. In future, however, a student who qualifies to join our Module II programme and is admitted to this University will be expected to pay the approved fees at the time.

What is your message for the University of Nairobi community and stakeholders at this point in time?

The University of Nairobi is a public entity fully aware of its obligations as well as the expectations. The University is also operating in an environment that keeps on shifting. We must be that University that responds to change positively; walking together as we do so. We must enhance our skills to adapt to change. It is also important to live true to our values of innovativeness and commitment among others. In the face of reforms, which are inevitable, we shall continuously enhance the skills of our staff because we need each one of us to reach where we want to go as a University. Everyone should feel free to contribute in whichever way they can to make the University of Nairobi better for all of us.

Thank you very much.



A DON'S PERSPECTIVE ON INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS

*The University management recently announced proposals to reform its administrative structures in a move that has continued to elicit debate among the stakeholders. **Prof. Winnie Mitullah**, a researcher from the Institute for Development Studies, shares some insights on the reform process based on her expertise and experience in institutional reform.*



Reforms at the University of Nairobi can be contextualised globally because institutions of higher education everywhere are re-examining themselves especially with regard to performance. It is no secret that the University has been bleeding for reforms, and if these had not been initiated internally, then the institution would have been forced to bow to external pressure to do so. The University was thus on the homestretch in terms of reforms.

The challenge we have on our hands then is not why, but how to implement the much desired reforms. Leadership is definitely crucial in any reform process and in our case both the Senate and Council have been clear on this issue, including being in agreement on the pillars of University reforms.

In my view, the University's reform agenda seems to be placing emphasis on the financial aspect as the reason for scaling down the number of administrative units. Such emphasis often obscures an important first step in any reform process; that is, the development of a plan which states every desired activity and the rationale behind it until the end of the process. Once an institution is clear about what it is

trying to achieve, then a successful reform process is guaranteed.

The University of Nairobi is seeking to address overlaps and duplication in the organisation of its academic structures and management has clearly emphasised these weaknesses from the onset. When we talk of duplication and overlaps, we are thinking ahead to those programmes which can be collapsed or merged. We reform by applying this principle first, rather than laying emphasis on numbers. If we start with numbers, then we would be making a false step where we determine arbitrarily that we need to have only a certain number of units, and then what follows is clumsy as we try to fit everything within our stated figure.

The University avoided this pitfall by developing a framework at the point of defining the reform agenda. The University also tried to adhere to the framework and gave the task to implementation committees to indicate what should be done, including undertaking a functional analysis. In terms of participation, the University also attempted to constitute a committee that draws from all departments and

units in a mixed approach.

Whereas the University may be experiencing challenges in terms of lack of buy-in from certain quarters, I would say we are still on the right track. The important question then is how do we forge ahead? Granted, there could be need for some slight adjustments in the establishment of some units, but this is not necessarily a bad thing because there are always swings during implementation which may call for changes here and there.

Implementing institutional reforms, therefore, can take quite some time, but if one wishes to fast-track the process, it is still allowed to adjust where necessary so as not to deviate from the mandate because of being too rigid. An important factor to consider, in order to move the reform process forward, is perhaps to accept that we shall have some teething problems, and that we can still review what is causing tumult, doubt, or is likely to hinder effective implementation. Going forward, the University has also elected to use the “troops”, in reference to walking with students,

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The University of Nairobi is seeking to address overlaps and duplication in the organisation of its academic structures and management has clearly emphasised these weaknesses from the onset.

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administrators, dons, and even service providers. This may not be an easy thing to do, but it suggests a real participatory process, which is essential for implementing unknown and unfelt strategies.

Finally, the University has affirmed the need to continually address the feelings on the ground of not belonging; the lack of a “we” feeling. As

we begin to form an image of the University of Nairobi beyond fifty years, the need to re-energise has never been so clear, and inevitably, the process must conform to the principles and practices of guided and participatory reform.



Prof. Winnie Mitullah contributes on development issues at a past function



UoN RESEARCH BEYOND 50 YEARS

By Attiya Waris

One must row in whichever boat one finds one's self

— African Proverb —

It is no surprise that as a University our vision is: “To provide quality university education and training and to embody the aspirations of the Kenyan people and the global community through **creation, preservation, integration, transmission and utilization of knowledge**”.

It is this creation, preservation, integration, transmission and utilisation of our research and knowledge that continues to fascinate me. This article will explore what research can do for a people; where we are as a university and as a nation; and where we could be heading, and finally some suggestions on what we can look at for a bright future for research in our nation.

I have been the director of research at the University of Nairobi for over one year now, during which we spent a great deal of time building our database of publications, grants, and other research-related information. We also supported other research activities, conferences, and publications University wide. As I look back and reflect on our activities, I am filled with joy and amazement.

University of Nairobi researchers are

influencing decisions nationally, regionally, and globally with their cutting edge thinking and work. We have the only aflatoxin laboratory in the country outside government; we are at the forefront of HIV/AIDs research, and our research on the coronavirus disease (COVID) is growing in leaps and bounds. We have built and launched a satellite, we are exploring opportunities for nuclear power production, and we continue to study our society in order to better it. While this is only a simplistic snapshot of the past 50 years, I cannot begin to imagine the incredible future we have ahead of us; what we can do in the next 50 years. What an amazing boat we have found ourselves in to row!

With the changes happening in our society, more inclusivity, a higher youthful population, and our unending curiosity as the key driver for research and innovation, we should have a Kenyan woman on Saturn's rings, and another Kenyan at the bottom of the sea assessing how we can protect that part of our universe. Many others should continue to explore, discover, imagine, and innovate. Polio should have been eradicated; malaria should be eradicated; we should have a vaccine for

COVID. There should be no more food insecurity. People should trust the state and the government should truly work for the people. There should be no more preventable maternal deaths, and the quality of life for Kenyans should be on an upward trajectory. We should be known as an innovative and imaginative people whose curiosity is not only opening up new areas of knowledge, but also solving problems and improving lives consistently.

When I look at the research frontiers, so much has to do with technology yet the continent remains at only 40 percent electricity penetration. How shall we build and support the amazing ideas from our brilliant minds outside the grid? Well, we have solar power, but it is expensive and hydroelectric power is now exhausted. Where is wind power, or nuclear power? Developing homegrown wind vanes and nuclear power plants are the next energy

frontier. Since climate change is also a real concern, solar and wind power then become even more important for African countries. However, patent issues will often block access; signaling that it is time to change our laws and encourage reverse engineering or reengineering. Technology is the tool not the objective. How the human brain interfaces with technology is the most crucial issue for the next half century.

Research can and should be for “Wanjiku”, not only for the person who gives the instructions all the time. Research and the curiosity which fuels it need to be celebrated and encouraged from birth. An amazing invention or discovery of any kind can inspire and encourage others. It opens up spaces of reflection and breaks the boxes people are put into. However, research and innovation are not enough; the media should also be encouraged to



Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Kiama (Centre), hosts a delegation from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) at a past function



Delegate signs in during the KIPPRA Mentorship Programme for Universities at the Taifa Hall on 4 March, 2021

celebrate the many great minds we have in order to inspire. Government should look to its local researchers for solutions, and we as academics should work at translating our incredible, but often complex ideas into language that is simple and easy to understand.

Starting with problems, then looking for solutions, is one way for researchers to approach issues. But now with technology, we have tech specialists pushing the boundaries of the field while not being specialists in other areas. As the world moves towards more multidisciplinary research, technology can be approached in many diverse ways. One could look at what technology provides, often as experimental solutions to simple problems (some researchers may argue they are not 'real

problems) and look to see how they might be useful in other fields, may be another approach. Research into gamifying learning is one space to explore, which many are exploring but gamifying research remains a less explored area.

We need sustainable research, but the African research space is struggling. Unfunded research makes it difficult to progress, but paid salaries that leave room for research is one important way to go. Funding research domestically, not just priorities, also allows the growth of areas ignored by other donors. Let us simply allow people to explore. Internal funding and endowments to jumpstart new researchers is also crucial in developing country spaces like ours. The absence of this type of support for research has led to a

loss in our position in the conversations about our communities and nations. There is a need to recapture and to control our narrative of creativity and ensure that private enterprise does not occupy the position of the unbiased passionate researcher.

Over the years there has been a shift from traditional to modern research where private stakeholders fund targeted research and everything has impact. However, this tends to be profit driven and areas where huge expenditure is needed are ignored and left under the control of the public sector where they tend to be unsustainable. One consistent problem facing many upcoming researchers in the private sector is a clear absence of the academic researchers' ethical training, an eye for detail, and unbiased position.

We need to maintain and grow the space for homegrown solutions for domestic challenges; Kenyan, African, and globally inclusive solutions for global problems. Fifty years from now, I hope that we will still be conducting research out of pure curiosity, which means that research is meant to push the boundaries of knowledge, and not necessarily for

impact. I would love to see our University as the place where we can sit together and debate. The University of Nairobi recently became the first on the continent to sign a memorandum of understanding with the University of Helsinki. We need to encourage and support more interaction and collaboration with them.

The way of the future is that research is multidisciplinary; research cannot be conducted in a vacuum; research needs to impact local, regional, and global narratives; and research needs to express and capture our narrative of *the creation, preservation, integration, transmission and utilisation of knowledge*.

“*Research can and should be for “Wanjiku”, not only for the person who gives the instructions all the time.*”

We are the trunk of the tree whose deep roots reach out to the other parts of our world. We need to keep our roots firmly entrenched as we continue to grow more roots, branches, flowers, and leaves. Every discipline is part of the trunk; our lived experiences are our roots; and the branches are the areas we as individuals and groups support, nurture, and grow. There is an African proverb that encourages innovation, thinking, and research that says, “Don't get accustomed to other people's things”.

UNITID:

Why Discovery Research is Vital for Africa



Prof. Julius Oyugi (Right) discusses some of the researches conducted at UNITID labs

Africa is lagging behind in discovery research, which can make a significant contribution to solving some of the challenges facing the continent. According to Prof. Julius Oyugi, Director of Research at the University of Nairobi Institute for Tropical and Infectious Diseases (UNITID), much of the research work being conducted by the continent's researchers focuses on the implementation of discoveries by scientists from other regions.

'We shall continue to lag behind if we do not develop our own cures and vaccines', warns Prof. Oyugi adding that it is time to change the focus. Using the COVID-19 vaccine as an example, the researcher observes that the balance is heavily tipped against Africa

when it comes to enjoying the benefits arising from important scientific discoveries.

'We have the labs, we have the human capacity to do this', says Prof. Oyugi in reference to UNITID, which is stepping up its activities in vaccine and drug discovery.

UNITID was established in 2004 as a strategic decision to expand the scope of research conducted by the Department of Clinical Microbiology. The Institute is a product of many years of research on Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) conducted jointly by researchers from UoN's Department of Clinical Microbiology and their counterparts from University of Manitoba in Canada. A major breakthrough of this collaboration was the

discovery of sex workers from Nairobi's Majengo slums who showed resistance to the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). According to Prof. Oyugi, who is a virologist, the groundbreaking discovery defined a new direction for HIV/AIDS research. 'Everyone wanted to know why the sex workers were resistant to HIV, and possibly find a vaccine or cure', he says. The discovery also expanded the scope of research work beyond the capacity of the Department of Clinical Microbiology and the two institutions found it necessary to establish a research institute to continue the investigations on STDs and also support research in other areas. The University of Manitoba hence funded the establishment of UNITID at the Kenyatta National Hospital campus.

State-of-the-Art Laboratories

UNITID is a virtual institute and has strong laboratory infrastructure. Prof. Oyugi emphasises that the institute's facilities are open to all.

'Anybody who is interested in doing research in infectious and tropical diseases

is welcome to use this facility, through a Memorandum of Understanding; whether they are within the university or outside, within Kenya or abroad', he explains further.

The Institute boasts of an Enhanced Level-3 laboratory, which is specially constructed and equipped to match the recommended high levels of safety for handling dangerous pathogens, like those which cause Ebola and Marburg diseases. According to the researcher, only two other countries in Africa have this kind of laboratory.

UNITID's Collaborators

The HIV/AIDS research is still a major component of the activities of UNITID and the University of Manitoba. 'We have been studying the low resistance group among the sex workers for the last 30 years and they have never been infected with HIV', says Prof. Oyugi. Commenting on the progress of the research team, the researcher indicates that the investigations are at an advanced stage to shed more light on this phenomenon.



Prof. Julius Oyugi mentors the next generation of scientists at the UNITID labs



Technician at work behind a bio-safety chamber at the UNITID labs

UNITID has also been collaborating with various institutions to carry out investigations in other areas such as malaria; human papilloma virus (HPV); and zoonotic diseases like Rift Valley Fever, Q-Fever, and brucellosis. The Institute's collaborators include Belgium's Institute of Tropical Medicine Antwerp; UK's Oxford University; and Washington State University in US among others. Washington State University has been especially instrumental in providing support to UNITID's capacity building programmes, disease surveillance, and research into zoonotic diseases.

According to Prof. Oyugi, disease surveillance and the investigation of disease outbreaks are also vital components of the work undertaken at UNITID to complement government efforts in this area.

'If we do not have a strong disease surveillance system in a country and there is an outbreak of a new disease, a large

number of people will get infected and die within a short period of time', says the researcher.

A surveillance system helps to contain the spread of a disease and minimise adverse impact on the population. The disease surveillance activities carried out by UNITID cover the counties of Isiolo and Kajiado where people live closely with their animals.

In line with UNITID's mandate of training and capacity building, the Institute recently established the Center for Epidemiological Modelling and Analysis (CEMA) whose mandate is to offer training in disease modelling to doctors and other scientists from Kenya and other countries in the region. According to Prof. Oyugi, this kind of training will enhance the understanding of disease trends and how these are likely to play out in our communities. The knowledge so-generated will be useful in predicting what might happen in future including identification of early warning signs in case of a disease outbreak.

Searching for plant-based cures

Researchers at UNITID are also focusing on ethnopharmacology, which entails the scientific study of plant-based cures commonly used by local herbalists. The research, which is funded by Japan's Hitachi Corporation, has been going on for the last three years and incorporates herbalists as well. The Institute's researchers, including PhD students, and their Japanese collaborators, have identified some compounds with promising results for malaria treatment. The Institute has plans to extend this work to cover prostate cancer and later include other types of cancer.

A COVID-19 testing kit

On the COVID-19 pandemic, which has claimed the lives of more than 4000 people in Kenya and over 4.4 million globally, Prof. Oyugi is concerned that the current surge in the number of infections is making the country more vulnerable to the transmission of the more lethal Delta variant of the virus.

In addition to the existing safety protocols for prevention of transmission and infection, the don advises on the urgent need to make the vaccine available so as to raise the level of coverage across the country. 'We should educate people on why they need to take the vaccine, especially those with co-morbidities and those working in high risk environments', he says about the apparent reluctance to

vaccination among sections of the population.

In 2020, Prof. Oyugi received a grant from the National Research Fund to develop a diagnostic kit for COVID-19, whose success will boost the country's capacity for mass testing and hence management of the disease.

What next for UNITID?

As an institute of research, UNITID intends do more work on vaccine and drug

discovery which already has a foundation in the ongoing work in HIV/AIDS research. Prof. Oyugi notes that Africa has not produced a vaccine against COVID-19, which is something to consider seriously. 'If we had our own vaccine, we would be assured of access', he observes.

Note: Prof. Julius Oyugi is Director Research at UNITID. He teaches medical students, up to PhD level, at the University of Nairobi.

He has a cross-appointment as Assistant Professor at University of Manitoba where he also supervises students. Prof. Oyugi is a virologist who has a passion for mentoring PhD students and faculty in research. He is keen on discovery research in drugs and vaccine development. Prof. Oyugi gives media commentaries on COVID-19 to educate members of the public on the ongoing efforts to contain the disease.

“
We shall continue to lag behind if we do not develop our own cures and vaccines. We have the labs, we have the human capacity to do more work on vaccine and drug discovery.”

Prof. Julius Oyugi,
UNITID

Mr David Madanji: Curatorial Assistant at Institute of Anthropology and Gender Studies

In this edition of Varsity Focus, we introduce two artists whose work goes beyond the UoN lecture rooms

Mr David Madanji joined the University of Nairobi in 1990 as a curatorial assistant. His work entails taking care of the University's material culture collection. He is required to clean, treat, conserve, preserve, and restore objects. 'When I was appointed as curatorial assistant, I was also charged with the task of developing illustrations of objects. I continue to do this', Mr Madanji says of his job description. Presently, Mr Madanji holds the position of Senior Technician, in a career whose skills he began developing early in life.

'When I was a young boy in primary school, I did a lot of sculpting from wood and soft rock materials. We would also extract threads from sisal and come up with a rope during art and craft lessons', he recalls. He would later draw upon the same skills to preserve the objects under his care at the University, including stitching torn hides and skin-based objects and restoring broken stone and wooden objects. The artist's drawing skills were similarly developed with a lot of personal effort. He realised he could draw cars and aeroplanes while Standard Three.

The budding artist then advanced to still art where he could draw objects. Later, he began to do portraits, using a pencil, and was drawing people's faces by the time he left high school. He then went through a one-year course at the Creative Arts Centre in Nairobi to learn



illustration and also polish his skills in art. Some of the drawings developed by Mr Madanji in the course of his employment at the University have been used as teaching aids and examination material. 'I have retained a file of all my illustrations done over the last 30 years or so', he says. He is preparing his collection for preserving in the digital form.

Mr Madanji has also participated in University exhibitions such as open days and the Nairobi International Trade Fair where he displayed his art work. In 1992, he designed a portrait of the top managers of the University at the time. The publicity that ensued from this project brought him numerous requests for portraits by members of staff. The University commissioned him again to prepare another portrait of management including college principals, deputy vice-chancellors, vice-chancellor, chancellor, and the chairman of council. His first University portrait still adorns the walls the Vice-Chancellor's office.



The artist also developed a painted illustration of the University's Fountain of Knowledge sculpture, which was for many years displayed at University exhibitions. Sadly, the piece of work in water colours disappeared during an exhibition and has never been recovered.

Some of the personalities who have had their portraits prepared by Mr Madanji include Former Chief Justice Prof. Willy Mutunga; Dr. Esther Keino of Egerton University; Ms Raychelle Omamo, when she held the Defence Cabinet Secretary portfolio; former vice-chancellors Prof. George Magoha, and Prof. Peter Mbithi; and the current vice-chancellor, Prof. Stephen Kiama. The artist's rich portfolio also includes portraits of Dr. James Mwangi, Group Managing Director and CEO, Equity Group Holdings, and a former Prisons Commandant.

Mr Madanji describes himself as a "people watcher"; a skill that he believes was picked up from his father. He defines his kind of art as the depiction of objects exactly as he sees them. 'I am not a cartoonist or a lampoonist; I like to describe the people, and characters, in my day-to-day interactions', he explains. Some of his

drawings are also inspired by what he is thinking.

So, what lessons has the artist learned over the years? First, he has learned to hold his temper in check, which is good for him beyond just art. He has also learned the importance of making friends and building understanding across the board. Born over 50 years ago in Garissa, he is fluent in the Luhya and Dholuo languages of his parents, as well as in Kikuyu, Kikamba, Kalenjin, and Kiswahili. Mr Madanji recalls his early background and relocating to several stations across the country with his father who was employed by the Prisons Department. This is perhaps what taught him to interact with other ethnicities and cultures. 'I went through six primary schools in different districts and by the time I was in class seven, we were living in Embu', he says.

Mr Madanji has learned to be patient. He considers this as a true virtue because as an artist he will encounter those who criticise his work. 'You must move beyond the criticism to critically analyse your faults and correct them with wisdom', he says.

Mr Kennedy Videdi: Artist, Department of Educational Studies

Mr Kennedy Videdi is a member of staff in the Department of Educational Studies. He does portraits and paints pictures of wildlife. He has been working at the University of Nairobi for almost 22 years, illustrating and providing services as a graphic artist for student workbook modules used in distance learning. He received recognition for his work during the 2021 University Talent Show, effectively exposing him to the University community.

Mr Videdi, who refers to himself as a “shy artist”, started by drawing simple illustrations under the tutelage and exposure of his class teacher, a Mr Zadock Jalela. He would be invited to the upper classes to do illustrations, such as drawing animals, for the science lessons.

When he was about 20 years old, the artist started drawing cartoons for Taifa Leo and The Standard newspapers. His depictions, centred on social issues such as politics, were captured under the title “Darubini”, which means telescope and “Wiki hii na Videdly”. “Videdly”



is a play on his name.

Mr Videdi has depicted socio-economic issues such as the evils of Chang'aa; condoms and the debate around their use; police brutality; and witchcraft among other issues. 'I was also a freelance contributor to The Standard newspaper, where my illustrations and comments on social issues were captured in the Profile Magazine edited by Roy Gichuhi', recalls the artist. Some of his memorable moments can be found in the work that he did for Taifa



BEYOND THE LECTURE ROOM

Leo and The Standard newspapers. 'It was not just about the money, but also the recognition of my talent', he says.

Recently, Mr Videdi began writing comics. 'I am yet to release a children's cartoon book, in real life, in the fashion of Frank Odoi's Akokhan, but from a Kenyan perspective', he says as he alludes to his future plans. Those who have inspired his work include the likes of Paul Kelemba commonly known as "Maddo" as well as the late Frank Odoi, Gaddo, and Kham. He also acknowledges the contribution of his primary school teacher, and Mwalimu Kukubo Barasa, who have played a role in editing his work and introducing him to Taifa Leo.

The cartoonist also derives inspiration from people's stories and lives. 'It is not surprising to find me in a bar, yet I do not drink alcohol. I talk to people, even the humblest, and I manage to get their life experiences', he remarks.

Mr Videdi, who believes in the importance of investing in the transformation of local stories into comic books believes that this is the way to go. 'To me, folk tales such as Wamugumo, Simbi and others, if well transformed, can encourage a reading culture in children and even adults'. He also believes that comic books can ignite social awareness, development, and inspiration as well as play a role in attracting tourists.

According to Mr Videdi, the future of animation is bright, vast, and necessary. 'I believe animation is the way to go even for a university community. I would like to see communication departments run animation programmes, which can also be a viable revenue stream'. 'We can, perhaps, inculcate a sense of animation in our design and communication students', he remarks.



UoNAA: Our Next Level of Influence



The Chairman of the University of Nairobi Alumni Association, Mr. Isaac Awuondo (Left), signs an agreement with the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Kiama, to strengthen collaboration with the University of Nairobi

*In this article, **Dr. Anne Aseey**, vice-chairperson of the University of Nairobi Alumni Association, explains the association's plans as the University of Nairobi turns new leaf after 50 years.*

The University of Nairobi Alumni Association (UoNAA), founded in 2005, has made major strides in connecting the University with its graduates. The Alumni Association reaches out in many ways, and if one wants to engage with us, there are easily accessible avenues for doing so. The trajectory of the Association at the moment is directed towards bringing alumni together; networking; and having people identify with their alma mater, their friends, and their old school. The Association's agenda is to go where the alumni are; link alumni with society; and get people to

appreciate the University's brand and visibility. We want to maintain the status quo that people take pride in their University.

With over 300,000 alumni, we definitely have a plan. We intend to reach each and every alumnus and promote the importance of forming faculty-based networks. The networks will enhance working together and finding ways to identify with and also benefitting from the association with the University.

Once we have members on board, we shall engage them in various activities including scholarship and mentorship programmes; sports and talent development; renovation of halls of residence; and many others. Already, the Chiromo Class of 89 has been supporting needy students and associating with fellow alumni. The Deputy President of the Republic of Kenya, Dr William Ruto, has funded some of their activities. Members of the Education Chapter are even going to the villages to look for their colleagues who are yet to graduate and helping to

make this a reality. This is a perfect example of the concept of “alumni-to-alumni”. We want to leverage on this noble idea so that we become “our brother’s keeper”.

As part of the strategy for reaching alumni, UONAA is conducting tracer surveys. These will help to not only locate alumni, but also provide details of their graduation status so that we can empower them in a better way. We also have the strategy of involving our alumni in society because this is important. If you look at the involvement of our alumni in the health sector activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, you will begin to understand why this strategy is vital. Our alumni at UON have embraced SDGs to participate in development. They are leading in various sectors including education, poverty reduction, policy formulation, research, gender equality, governance, and leadership. During the last 50 years, the University has produced leaders, and as an alumni association we are looking at mentoring upcoming leaders.

In the mentorship programme, UONAA is offering scholarships under the bursary fund. The Association is also strong on linking students with mentors as our greatest strategy as the University moves beyond 50 years of existence. We are already talking to students in the various campuses. We also have a schools outreach intervention where we provide sports equipment, learning materials, and sanitary towels. The Association will continue to work with partnerships involving other alumni, the University, and the community in order to move the University to the next level of influence.

The Association has also embraced the view that the alumni need to be involved in research. to generate new knowledge. The idea here is that research must be productive and relevant for correcting problems in society such as poverty, food insecurity, weaknesses in governance and leadership among others.

Beyond bringing the UoN alumni together, UONAA intends to bring to fruition the proposed

Alumni Centre, which will be the focal point for the Association's activities. Our greater vision as an association is to provide a home for the alumni closer to their alma mater. The motivation to build the centre is driven by the need to provide the Association with an environment that is conducive for business and social networking, mentoring younger alumni, creating linkages between the University and industry, and keeping members connected with their alma mater.

The realisation of the Alumni Centre is also linked to the need to engage with the youth. The UONAA agenda, going forward, is to provide direction for the youth. The youth in this country need to be linked to entrepreneurs to become independent as wealth creators rather than employees, hence coaching for start-ups and enhancing skills in market development will be a key feature of our activities. The members need to be linked to offer internships, apprenticeships, and opportunities for brand ambassadorship. Linked to the youth development programme is producing citizens with people skills, skills in presentation of self, and behavioural soft skills towards

becoming both local and international citizens.

In line with UONAA's rallying call, “our alumni, our strength”, which implies the relevance of our alumni, we plan to organise open days and encourage young people to pick professions from the earliest instance, even before they report. In this way, the alumni can contribute effectively, including correcting the gender disparity in a number of professions. If we bring on board more women as members, then they will act as mentors to the young ladies on campus.

Finally, going forward, we intend to build a strong alumni association with relations that are inclusive and future oriented. Our goal is to have an engaging alumni on board to grow the University. Like Noah's Ark, we need everyone on board; we need diversity, we need all strengths to support the activities of the University of Nairobi Alumni Association.



PROF. ATTIYA WARIS APPOINTED AS UNITED NATIONS INDEPENDENT EXPERT ON FOREIGN DEBT & HUMAN RIGHTS

Professor Attiya Waris was recently appointed as United Nations Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights (commonly known as UN Independent Expert on Foreign Debt & Human Rights). The appointment took effect on 1 August 2021 and is expected to run for a period of three years.

Prof. Waris is currently the Director for Research & Enterprise as well as an associate professor of Fiscal Law & Policy at the University of Nairobi. She is the founder and immediate former chairperson of the Committee on Fiscal Studies (CFS), an institution within University of Nairobi, which is geared towards interdisciplinary research that attempts to show the linkages between various disciplines.

The United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) established the mandate of the Independent Expert in 2000 and has since deemed it necessary to extend the mandate up to now. Becoming a mandate holder at UN is such a critical position that it is a reserve to be filled by only highly-qualified individuals. The three-year appointment is renewable once.

With the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Independent Experts:

- undertake country visit to countries that have extended invitation to UNHRC;
- act on individual cases of reported violations and concerns of a broader nature by sending communications to States and others;
- conduct annual thematic studies, seek information from calls for input, and convene expert consultations;



- contribute to the development of international human rights standards; and
- engage in advocacy, raise public awareness, and provide advice for technical cooperation.

Mandate-holders help advance human rights by contributing to

- Legislative reform
- Improving access to mechanisms of redress
- Policy reform
- Human rights mainstreaming
- Contribution to government/judicial processes
- Human rights standard setting
- Raising human rights awareness
- Facilitating dialogue/coalition setting
- Preventing/cessation of violations

The mandate holder for foreign debt and human rights assesses the impact of international foreign obligations on human rights on the capacity of States to design and implement human rights-sensitive financial policies and programmes, particularly in developing countries. The Independent Expert also considers measures taken by the private sector and international financial institutions to ease the impact of foreign debt on human rights in developing countries.

In specific terms, the mandate holder examines:

- the problem of the debt burden of developing countries, with particular focus on the least developed countries,
- the social impact of the measures arising from foreign debt,
- the impact of illicit financial flows on the enjoyment of human rights.

In fulfilling her mandate, the Independent Expert on Foreign Debt and Human Rights undertakes country visits and submits activity reports to the UN General Assembly and Human Rights Council. The purpose of the country visits is to assess the situation of human rights at the national level, to report on the findings and to propose, in a spirit of cooperation and assistance, recommendations to improve situations identified as matters of concern.

Some of the countries that this mandate holder will be expected to visit include Algeria, USA, and Pakistan, among others and having served as UN Observer in the Tax Committee, this is a role she is expected to fulfill with ease and much success.

During such missions, the Independent Experts assess the general human rights situation in a given country, as well as the specific institutional, legal, judicial and administrative

situation. They meet with national and local authorities, including members of the judiciary and parliamentarians, civil society organisations and victims of human rights violations and prepare a report that is submitted to the Human Rights Council and UN General assembly.

Additionally, the Independent Expert submits annual thematic reports to the Human Rights Council (HRC) and to the General Assembly (GA). Thematic reports document the Independent Expert's findings on particular topics and provide guidance and recommendations for UN Member States, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders.

Some of the recent reports have been on “Debt relief, debt crisis prevention and human rights” as well as “Addressing, from a human rights perspective, the debt-related problems of developing countries caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic”.

All UoN staff and students are encouraged to review the independent expert mandate and reach out to Prof. Waris expressing areas that have potential for collaboration as well as opportunities for research that we could work on together.

*Information supplied by
Lesikel Ali (UNHRC)*



Prof. Attiya Waris (Left) at a past function

PROF. PATRICIA KAMERI-MBOTE: Linking Academia and Practice in New Role at UNEP



Prof. Patricia Kameri-Mbote was recently appointed as Director of the Division on Policy Development and Law of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). Prof. Mbote, who is an accomplished researcher on law and development issues, will be leading UNEP's work in policy analysis, development and partnerships, and environmental law. Until her appointment to the UN body, she was a Professor of Law at the University's School of Law, having worked at the University for over 30 years. About two years ago, she was awarded a Doctor of Laws degree, becoming the first woman and sixth individual to be awarded a Higher Doctorate degree by the University of Nairobi.

On the question of what drove her to apply for the position at UNEP given her solid background in academia, Prof. Mbote's response is as interesting as it is illuminating. 'I always apply for jobs and I do so for two reasons. First, when you are in academia, you hear many gloom and doom stories and I always want to see if I can keep up with the world in terms of competencies', she says. Her next motivation has to do with her responsibility as a mentor. 'Secondly, I apply for jobs so that I can affirm to my students that they should not limit their perspective and outlook to the world', says the don.

Prof. Mbote is not new to the environment field and could not be more prepared for her new responsibility. 'The environment is a field that I have covered for the better part of my life. I have written on laws, researched, and established organisations', she says confidently. Only two years ago, she established the International Environmental Law Centre, which publishes an online journal called *Law, Environment and Development*. On her recruitment, which she sums up as rigorous, Prof. Mbote has some

advice for those aspiring to venture outside their comfort zones. 'You must think outside of just being casual; you must link

your activities all the time', she says. The Professor of law links her current status to situations and developments that have occurred in the course of her life.

Born and raised in present day Murang'a County where she also attended primary school, Kameri-Mbote went to Loreto High School, Limuru for her secondary education. 'My teachers in high school planted a seed in me, even though I did not set up to be like them'. She recalls that her principal, Sister Mary Owens, saw a teacher in her.

'What pushed me into academia, however, was happenstance because I had wanted to be a lawyer ever since I turned 15', says the don recalling her first encounter with a lawyer as a student in Form Three. She was motivated to study law because of watching dramas and adventure filled stuff and reading books, which was the more encouraged pastime at home.

The journey into the legal profession began with the "class of 84" at the University of Nairobi. 'It was my pupillage at Kaplan and Stratton that stirred something in me. I encountered areas in law that I had not come across before, such as intellectual property law', she says. In 1988, she joined the University of Warwick on a scholarship to pursue a master's programme. Two events during her stay at Warwick seemed to have changed the young lawyer's perspective of the field of law and opened her eyes to other

possibilities. She came to realise that one does not always have to go to court because they studied law. In this, she was inspired by legal luminaries such as Yash Pal Ghai, Patrick Maucaslant, Saul Picciolotto, and Mr. Himes of the Library system.

Prof. Mbote also recalls that there was no class at Warwick where they taught the bare bones of law, but there was, instead, an infusion of development. Her master's thesis was on patents in development and how global systems affect the developing countries. Prof. Mbote is thus convicted that law and development are not things that you practice in the theoretical sense and perhaps it is this realisation that pushed her into academia.

Later, during her PhD studies at Stanford University Prof. Mbote had the opportunity to combine research with teaching. She recalls that one of the most exciting things she has done is with research networks such as Women and Law in East Africa, under which she went to Zimbabwe to pursue a postgraduate diploma in women's laws. This was critical for it enabled her to begin to appreciate and question law. At Stanford, she pursued further knowledge in different areas and this kept her in academia. 'On hindsight I was fortunate to have embellished the research aspect which has become a way of life', she notes. At Stanford, Prof. Mbote used the tools she had acquired in Zimbabwe, on how the laws interacted with people's development, to conduct her studies and fieldwork and graduate in record time. She earned her PhD in 1999 specialising in property rights and environmental law.

Over the years, Prof. Mbote has engaged variously. She began conducting research and applying for grants very early in her career. 'For me, research became integral to my teaching'. This resonates with the mandate of the University of Nairobi; while her studies and life are in harmony as she often emphasises to her graduate students. 'I align all my consultancy, research, teaching and community service; what I teach, I write on and what opportunities

come, I consult in that area'.

Who are some of the people that have influenced her choices in life. "My mother and father; I looked up to them", she says. According to the don, growing up in a large family, including the extended family, also made one want to live beyond self and become a role model for the younger ones. There are people like Prof. Wanjiku Kabira and Dr Eddah Gachukia; 'women who have taken the world by the lapels, but remained with their feet firmly on the ground'. The late Prof. Charles Okidi is another influence, 'who was as comfortable in the village as he was in the United Nations'. Prof. Mbote has also learnt a lot from the young people she has mentored. 'My students also influence me; some of them, I learn from, especially those going through their PhD studies. Actually, academia is an influence, it moulds you', she says.

What then can we expect to see of Prof. Mbote? This is a normal question that we at the University like to ask those who take up positions outside the world of academia. Prof. Mbote is quick to point out that wherever one goes, they carry the UoN brand so the assignment she is taking up may give the University visibility. To have a Kenyan working at that high level within the UNEP ranks is also good for the country's image and work in the environment field. Prof. Mbote believes that it is important for everyone to see that it can be done.



Prof. Patricia Kameri-Mbote in her office at the Faculty of Law, Parklands

PARTNERSHIP

ACTIVITIES DURING THE YEAR

In this article, we report on some of the activities that the University has undertaken with collaborators in the last couple of months.

The University of Nairobi continues to intensify efforts aimed at strengthening partnerships with government, industry, local communities, and international institutions to achieve greater impact in its educational, training, research, and community engagement objectives. Currently, the University has over 1,300 collaborations and partnership agreements signed with organisations from around the world. The University has also hosted numerous distinguished visiting professors and researchers from international universities. Academic staff provide consultancy and capacity building services to a wide array of clients within the country and globally. The University's research was about KES 5.5 billion (US\$51 million) as of 30 June, 2021.

The institutions outlined in this article carried out some activities with the University in the course of the year focusing on training, the establishment of new programmes, talent development, research, and student and staff exchange among other areas.



Institution of Engineers of Kenya (IEK):

The University embarked on the partnership, which is deemed vital in bridging the gap between engineering theory and practice and at the same time promoting best practices in engineering. This partnership is in line with UoN's mandate to establish linkages and partnerships with industry in a bid to build and enhance knowledge bases and growth opportunities.

As part of the partnership, the University will provide content for the Engineering in Kenya Magazine, which is a bi-monthly publication with an audience of 100,000. The magazine offers an opportunity for IEK members to publish their views and observations with regard to the achievements, innovations, and trends in the field of engineering.

As a start, the University is expected to contribute to the fourth issue, which is titled "Engineering, Education, Research and Practice". The University will contribute articles on the history of engineering and future direction.

This UoN- IEK partnership will provide an outlet for engineering innovation and research to reach far and wide and there are indications that more areas of collaboration will take root including guest lectures by engineering professionals.



unesco



Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

UNESCO and the Swiss Development Corporation:

These organisations are working on a project that will empower a network of universities across Africa. Seven Kenyan universities, including the University of Nairobi, are engaged in the initial phase of this collaboration to empower the youth. The launch date of this project is scheduled for

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September 2021.

UNESCO is currently working on a baseline survey and health assessment to identify initiatives that are best suited for the different universities. The intention is to build upon already established initiatives while establishing new ones. The RADA mobile health application, an initiative by University of Nairobi's students, will benefit from this collaboration. RADA provides access to information on sexual and reproductive health, professional counselling and peer counselling and acts as a helpline in case of an emergency within the University.



Chartered Institute of Public Relations in the United Kingdom (CIPR):

The basics of the partnership is accreditation of the Corporate Affairs office, to become a teaching centre. CIPR is a qualification for professional PR practitioners, and following accreditation, between 2020 and 2021, the Corporate Affairs office enrolled and graduated 21 students drawn from different sectors of the economy and backgrounds including law, communication, and education amongst others drawn from Kenya with some students also from Uganda.



Techno Kenya:

The partnership with the University commenced in 2018 and was responsible for the support leading to the successful 2021 edition of the University Sports Day. Techno company branded all teams and provided merchandise, games kit, trophies, medals, and other equipment. In July 2021, Techno also supported a photo exhibition at the University

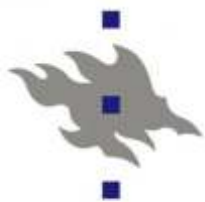
to illustrate how technology can impact the city. Another exciting feature of the partnership was the support given for the watch party of Kenyan athletes during the recently concluded 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Techno donated a screen for the watch party, enabling the University to host over 200 students to cheer our own student and hero, Ferdinand Omanyala, who has done the university proud by excelling in other activities beyond academia.



Kenya Institute of Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA):

The institute is collaborating with the University of Nairobi on a mentorship programme for students dubbed "KIPPRA Mentorship Program for Universities". KIPPRA raised a call for essays around the theme of public policy making processes and the Big 4 Agenda amid COVID-19. The outcome of the call for essays was a meeting of over 500 students during which the best five essays selected by KIPPRA were recognised and the authors given the opportunity to serve as panellists during the debate over the two day period. Another activity during the two-day period was training of students on how to formulate policy and report on policy implementation as part of encouraging them to think on development issues within Kenya. The event also served as an opportunity for students to interact with industry players given that several organisations such as Youth Enterprise Development Fund, the Vision 2030 Secretariat, KASNEB, National Cohesion and National Values Directorate, National Youth Council, and the Youth Affairs Ministry were in attendance.

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UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

University of Helsinki:

Under the partnership, there are research activities centred on flora and fauna, and especially loss of biodiversity, climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and future pandemics. There is also a partnership between Reaktor, a Finnish Company, and the University of Nairobi, in a programme on Artificial Intelligence. The Department of Computing and Informatics at the University, is the focal point for the programme, which is envisaged to provide staff and students the opportunity to learn and apply “science for everyone” and be change makers.

Women Education Forum 2021:

The partnership between the University of Nairobi and the Women Economic Empowerment Hub (WEEHUB). The rationale of the forum is reshaping Kenya's economy. WEEHUB is a centre of excellence and draws support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. It is part of the agenda to be a thought leader in producing cutting-edge, innovative, and acceptable research that is subject to the scientific standards of vigour so that it impacts on policy formulation, implementation and upscaling for full realisation of women's empowerment. In 2021, the Forum titled “Reshaping Kenya's economy by tapping into women's potential” was held at the University of Nairobi. The closed door

forum drew 100 participants to discuss the areas of agribusiness, manufacturing and value addition, financial access, technology and innovation, entrepreneurship, tax, and policy regimes. Several organisations were present such as Care International Taylor, Ministry of Public Service and Gender, Community Advocacy and Awareness (CRAWN) Trust, Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organisation (KALRO), the National Treasury, Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), Women in Business, Technical University of Kenya (TUKs), and Break through Leadership transformation.



CITY UNIVERSITY
LONDON

City University of London and Change School of the United Kingdom:

The institutions are in a tripartite partnership with funds leveraged for the British Council. The grant of Ksh 180 million is part of an innovation for African universities centres of excellence. Under the programme, the partners will support development in Kenya, using expertise from the University of Nairobi. The partnership includes scholarships to build institutional capacity of higher education in entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystems. The activities are ongoing.

Experience the Modern GRADUATE LIBRARY

By Angela Mumo

In pursuance of the core mandate on research and innovation, the University transformed what used to be a bookstore into a modern graduate library, the Mahatma Gandhi Graduate Library (MGGL) located at Gandhi Wing. The library has over 750,000 volumes of print resources, about 75,000 electronic journals, and over 163,000 electronic books. It is also fitted with state-of-the-art technologies to provide quality services and resources especially targeting graduate students and the University academic staff. The library was commissioned on 14 June, 2021 by Dr S. Jaishankar, the External Affairs Minister of the Republic of India.

Present to witness the commissioning ceremony was the UoN Chancellor, Dr Vijoo Rattansi who reiterated the cordial relationship

existing between the University and the Government of India and which had led to the support in refurbishing the library by the Indian High Commission in Kenya. She called upon the graduate students to make maximum use of the library. The Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Kiama, highlighted some of the key features of the library, including the inbuilt capacity to offer special services to Persons with Disabilities. Also present to witness the colourful ceremony were the Chair of Council, Prof. Julia Ojiambo, Principal Secretary, State Department for University Education and Research, Amb. Simon Nabukwesi, Chief Administrative Secretary (CAS) Hon. Ababu Namwamba, and Director Library and Information Services, Ms Angela Mumo.

Some of the unique services offered at the MGGL include individual study and discussion rooms with data outlets and a reliable and strong WIFI network. The library is also equipped with the latest library technology, including Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) with a self-check system, a stocktaking system, as well as a biometric and security system.

The graduate library offers a good ambience for reading, including a coffee shop, in line with the global trend in the industry where the library is viewed both as a learning and social place. To ensure a relaxing atmosphere, there is a comfortable lounge where users can relax while keeping abreast with local and international current affairs.

All eligible users are welcome to use the library.



The External Affairs Minister, Republic of India, Dr. S. Jaishankar officially commissions the Mahatma Gandhi Library. Looking on are Hon. Ababu Namwamba, the Chief Administrative Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (Extreme right), Chair of Council, Prof. Julia Ojiambo (Extreme left), Chancellor, Dr. Vijoo Rattansi (Left), and Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Kiama (Back left).

Don's Quest for Education of marginal communities

In this article, we learn the value of community engagement from the activities of **Dr Loise Gichuhi** of the Faculty of Education.

Dr Loise Gichuhi of the Faculty of Education is working together with an initiative called "Education Teacher Afrika" to offer training to untrained teachers of schools within informal settlements such as Mathare and Kibra. The training programme, known as "teacher education done differently", is based on the knowledge that many of the schools found in informal settlements do not usually have trained teachers.

Dr Gichuhi's evaluation of the teaching and learning situation in the urban informal settlements paints a bleak picture of the possibility of meeting the required educational quality standards. 'Even though teaching goes on in these places, there is a gap to consider given the clarion call of "leaving no child untouched", and the idea of inclusive and quality education for all', says the don. She is certain that without the right interventions, many of the schools located in informal settlements will not meet these targets.

The initiative runs a two-year training programme implemented through partnership with the communities being served by the schools. The communities provide the space where the training is conducted, usually the Constituency Development Fund offices. University of Nairobi graduates provide mentoring support to the trainees on a one-on-one basis. The don reveals that the training focuses on methodology or the pedagogical



skills of writing the schemes of work, lesson plan preparation, and general classroom management. 'A good number of the teachers in informal settlements have grown in the career but never been exposed to formal training in methodology, hence those who go through the programme appreciate the skills imparted to them', says the don who has also been running a programme on education in emergencies for the last three years.

In another intervention targeting improvement of the transition rate to secondary school within Kenya's marginalised counties, Dr Gichuhi and other experts are working with the Ministry of Education to address the problems that keep learners away from school. This work is based on a World Bank funded baseline survey whose report outlines reasons for the observed high attrition rates in the North-Eastern and other arid regions of the country. They include early or child marriages; female genital mutilation; low regard

for education; and teen pregnancies. The actions recommended for reversing the trend of low transition rates include addressing infrastructural challenges, scholarships, and gender sensitisation.

In a programme designed to address some of these issues, Dr Gichuhi and her colleagues have already trained more than half of the 7000 teachers identified as gender champions through the Teachers Service Commission (TSC). The training covers issues such as child protection, gender-based violence, disaster risk reduction, and child development. The sensitisation programme also covers relevant stakeholders including country directors of education, the Ministry of Health, and sub-county heads. Plans to train the boards of management of schools and community focal persons were temporarily halted by the COVID-19 pandemic, but the programme will soon be proceeding virtually.

According to Dr Gichuhi, the question underlying these and similar interventions is what we can do as a University to foster community engagement. The don observes that the University of Nairobi is in a good position to work with communities and can do more. 'When staff engage with communities at the lower level, and they (communities) know that the staff are drawn from the University, then they are more willing to listen', she says. Drawing from her experience of doing community outreach work, Dr Gichuhi observes that moving from the ivory tower to discuss people's needs at their level and teaming up with them to formulate strategies that work tends to bring in the right buy-in from the community. The don is also cautioning the tendency to offer prescriptive solutions. The University can, instead, play the

more vital role of identifying solutions through participatory approaches like mentoring and coaching.

'We are at an advantage because we can identify the need, we can do research, and we can get the community to validate the findings and propose solutions that can be up-scaled', Dr Gichuhi says of the University. The strategy of upscaling and replicating community grown solutions is one that she learnt from another one of her activities with local communities called "read to lead initiative". This is a programme for marginalised and disadvantaged children, which donates story books to them to enhance their reading skills, improve the quality of English as a language of communication, and improve learning in the other subjects.

In Dr Gichuhi's, the "read to lead programme" was successful because of using one school to serve a community library to hold the books that other schools could borrow, return, and even deposit more books that pupils from other schools could use. According to the don, 'This is the spirit of reciprocity that is at the core of community engagement'.



Dr Loise Gichuhi: 'The University of Nairobi is in a good position to work with communities and can do more'.

STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

SOARS AMID COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Please tell us about yourself.

My name is **Isabela Akumu Oyoo**. I was born and raised in Kanyadoto village of Ndhiwa Sub-County in Homabay County. I went to Asumbi Girls High School in Homabay County. I am awaiting graduation after completing my degree programme in civil engineering recently. I am passionate about civil engineering; leadership; environmental conservation; and mentorship of the girl child. I have also played hockey for the University of Nairobi.

What motivated you to pursue engineering?

Throughout my primary school life, my siblings and I would walk a distance of 3 km to get to the nearest road because our home area was not accessible by any means of modern transport. From here, we would use a bicycle to get us to a bus stop where we then boarded the bus to school. The dry weather roads in the area were not usable during the rainy season. I always desired for my home area to be opened up to the world, and the easiest way for this to happen was through all-weather tarmacked roads. Therefore, my goal throughout high school was to study hard and land a civil engineering course. With time, I would get back home to open up Kanyadoto to the world!

What led you to vie for the position of ESA Chairperson?

The first time for me to vie for an ESA position was when I became the association's Finance Secretary in my second year of studies. I saw the



amazing milestones that we achieved and was inspired to vie for the Secretary General seat so as to continue the good work. From there, I had even bigger dreams for the association and knew that I had to go for the chairperson's seat.

How would you describe your leadership style?

I have gained most of my leadership skills through a lot of moulding ever since I was a little girl. I lead a lot with my heart, which is something I got from my father. I am more of a pacesetter; someone who delegates a lot in an effort to ensure everyone is included and is learning in the process. I always ensure that my heart is in the right place when I am making decisions. As a leader, I always put the association's interests first whenever a decision is to be made.

What sets you apart from your predecessors?

My predecessors had set very high standards of performance. I witnessed the reign of Nelly Omina. I also served under the tenures of Jafferson Anduvate and Hillary Yegon. Their leadership helped me to learn a lot and when I came into office, I had no choice but make sure things moved on.

My reign was a unique one. No sooner had I taken over the mantle as ESA chair person than the COVID-19 pandemic struck. My team, through my leadership, had to improvise and find ways of keeping the association's activities going. We had to make sure that we achieved our main goal of "keeping engineering students in the lead". The new state of affairs inspired the theme that drove our activities throughout the year; "Engineering in the New Norm." The association joined the School of Engineering in embracing virtual and hybrid activities.

I was blessed with a multi-talented, hardworking, and committed executive committee as well as a strong editorial team led by Laban Musungu as Editor-in-Chief. We have managed to steer the ESA ship through the storm that the COVID pandemic has been.

What have you managed to achieve as ESA and how have the members benefitted?

- We organised numerous virtual mentorship sessions and career talks with Eng. Charles Kimiti of Unilever, Eng. Jeshika Ramchund; Eng. Wachira Kahoro; Consulting Engineers of South Africa; Stem; Wahandisi La Femme; Bee The Engineer; Festo Didactic; Michelle Boit

Foundation; and IEEEYP Kenya. We reached over 500 engineering students with invaluable information in the engineering field.

- We successfully held the 4th International Engineering Students Conference (IESC 4.0) on 25th and 26th March 2021, with mentor Idah Ng'ang'a, Regional Head UNESCO Emerging Technologies, as the guest of honour. Students used the platform to present and pitch their projects and receive funding. Students were also given an opportunity to market their startups, like Eco-Sokoni.

- We held the annual networking ESA dinner at Tamarind Tree Hotel, Nairobi, on 9th July 2021 with Engineer Nathaniel Matalanga, President of IEK, gracing the event as the guest of honour. Students had the opportunity to dine and interact with trailblazers in the engineering industry. The companies represented at the event were Geothermal Development Company (GDC), Institution of Engineers of Kenya (IEK), Kenya National Highways Authority (KENHA), and Engineers Board of Kenya (EBK). Some students actually managed to get opportunities for attachment from the interaction.

- We visited Tree House children's home on two occasions to interact with and mentor the children in addition to providing for some of their basic needs.

This is also the year that we formed and launched Engineers Without Borders University of Nairobi Chapter. I believe we have created a lot of new relations with universities and corporate partners who will continue coming together to incubate ideas and turn them into reality.

What has been the outcome of your partnership with industry for your members and the community at large?

My obligation was to maintain and form more of the kind of relations that ESA has with the community, other universities, and the corporate world. I am confident that these ties have been strengthened over time. The students were willing to participate actively and be part of the change; while the companies were always willing to support their activities. I had the opportunity to lead my team in signing a Memorandum of Understanding with National Construction Authority that would see the latter plug into supporting ESA's Engineers Without Borders and the *Student Engineer* magazine. Under my leadership, we managed to rally over one hundred students together and ease the process of registration with IEK.

What legacy would like to leave behind?

My biggest legacy would be to mentor the people behind me and leave behind a team that will continue with the good work that ESA is doing. I also look forward to launching a library project in my home village.

Anything else you would like to share with us?

I want to appreciate the wholesome growth I have experienced at the University of Nairobi, and for which I want to thank the office of the Dean School of Engineering, office of the Dean of Students, office of the Director Corporate Affairs, and the entire University of Nairobi administration for supporting students' initiatives and ensuring that we reach for opportunities.



Isabela Akumu Oyoo vows to continue mentoring young people.

FERDINAND OMANYALA

Chemistry Student Shines at Tokyo Olympics

*Varsity Focus brings you
Ferdinand Omanyala's
experience during the
2020 Tokyo Olympics in
Japan.*

Ferdinand Omanyala Omurwe, the 100 metres Kenyan sprinter, is currently at position eight as the world's fastest man. He was back in the country after the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and a series of other meets in Europe. He was also preparing to take part in his final race of the season, the Kipkeino Classic to take at the Moi International Sports Complex in Kasarani on Saturday September 18, 2021.

The Second Year Bachelor of Science student in chemistry paid a courtesy call on the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Kiamaa, who congratulated him and urged him to mentor fellow university students and the youth in general and show them that they too can make it in life by nurturing their talents. Prof. Kiama also pledged his support for Omanyala's career, stating that the University was going to help him look for sponsorship and other opportunities to advance his sportsmanship. The Corporate Affairs team had a chance to speak to the athlete about his experience at the Tokyo Olympics.



We arrive in Tokyo

I was elated to make it to the list of 11,000 athletes that competed in the Olympics. Just by being in Team Kenya for me was already a win.

We went to Japan two weeks before the Olympics and were placed in a village called Nkurumeh. It was Kenya's sports camp. We had ample time for training and for our bodies to acclimatise to the weather. We had carried our supply of maize flour, and even got to eat "omena" while there. We flew to Tokyo three days before the races began.

In Tokyo, Team Kenya shared an apartment with teams from Australia and Fiji. The place was clean with good ambience and the security was great. I have never slept in a more comfortable bed than the one I used in Tokyo.

COVID-19 Protocols

We had an app that we used to record our temperatures every morning. We would do a PCR test every day before taking our breakfast at 9 a.m. My days were easy; I would get ample time to sleep, wake up, train, and go to the gym for some explosive workouts.

Quarter-Finals

On the Saturday that I was to race, I woke up and glanced through my social media and was elated at how Kenyans were anticipating my race. I knew the University of Nairobi had organised a watch party to see me compete, and that back home my family had also gathered to watch. I felt pressured to give it my all, but I did not allow this to go to my head. Two hours before the race, I took my lunch and went to the field.

We went through the first and second call rooms. The first call room checks whether all the athletes are present, while the second call room is for receiving the numbers that you see pinned on our chests. They also check that the spikes on our shoes are not more than 9 mm long. The numbers on our chests have a device that is used to record speed.

I could see the people that I have always looked up to also lining up; decorated sprinters like Yohan Blake of Jamaica and Andre De Grasse of Canada and I was about to race against them. This was also my first race in about six weeks and I did not know what to expect. All the tension that had been building up disappeared the moment we got to the field and I saw the well-lit stadium, the cameras, and the big screens.

All of you must have seen the false starts that we had, which caused the Nigerian sprinter to be kicked out of the race. I did not allow that to disorient me although I admit it affected the race. I gave it my all.

It remember my name flashing on the screen as number 3 at 10.01 seconds finish.

After the race, I packed my stuff, did my warm up, and went back to my room. When I checked my phone, I saw over 900 WhatsApp messages. I was trending on Twitter and experienced some pressure because the semi-finals were the following day.

Semi-Finals

In the semi-finals, I raced with Yohan Blake, my role model; and the number 1 and number 2 from the heat 5 quarter-finals; a France record-holder and a Great Britain sprinter. I finished the race at 10:00 seconds, setting another national record.

When the final results came, I was number eight but although I did not make it to the finals, I still left with my head held high.

After the Olympics

After the Olympics, I managed to race in Austria and finished at 9.86 seconds. In Lahti, Finland, I broke the record set by Namibia's Frank Fredericks by clocking a 10.09 seconds finish. At the White City Games in Finland, I broke a 35 year-old record with a 10.06s finish, and in Belgium during the Brussels Diamond League, I finished fourth with a speed of 10.02 seconds.

Editor's note: Omanyala finished the Kip Keino Classic race with a time of 9.77 seconds, breaking the national record a fifth time and setting a new African record. The race was won by Trayvon Bromell of USA with a time of 9.76 seconds.



Ferdinand Omanyala Omurwe (Second left) is received by the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Kiama, after the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Also present are Mr. Mbaabu Murithii, Sports and Games (Left), and Mr. John Orindi, Director, Corporate Affairs (Right)

Students' ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2021

The University held its inaugural Talents Day in 2020 as a creativity contest where both staff and students were given a chance to demonstrate their unique skills and talents. The activity was also meant to shift students' minds from academia as they are supported to express and grow in their chosen talents.

Following the event, the University appointed a full-time member of staff to co-ordinate skills and talents development among staff and students. There is also a University Talents Development Committee comprising staff, alumni, and friends of UoN, whose task is to identify, nurture, and mentor the upcoming talents at the University. In 2021, some of our students have excelled and left an impression in their chosen talents as captured here.

Darren Hart

Department of Civil Engineering

Darren Hart is keen on making an impact on his community with the education he is receiving from the University of Nairobi. He has been involved in numerous activities within and outside the University, like the campaigns to raise sanitary towels for school girls living in informal settlements such as Kibra and Majengo slums.

Darren is a keen environmentalist and has organised community cleanup and tree planting activities especially in public schools in Langata, Kibra, Kitengela and Kikuyu. His dream is to plant 2 million trees across Kenya by 2025. So far, he has been involved in planting 4,000 tree seedlings.

Darren is focused on launching the Students-for-Students Club, an initiative that he believes will assure students of access to quality education. The club will be a network of students who can help each other in meeting their needs.

The initiative has been boosted by an exchange student programme with Chiara Riechert from Humboldt University in Germany. The two universities have formed a network of students who are helping each other.



Ashura Michael

Faculty of Law

Ashura Michael is in her second year of study in the Faculty of Law. Ashura already holds a degree in gender and development from the University of Nairobi. She is the Speaker of the East Africa Youth Parliament. Ashura, who is hearing impaired, is fondly referred to as the "silent speaker". She is a board member of the National Council for People with Disabilities (NCPWD) and well as the National Youth Council (NYC).



STUDENT'S ARTISTRY

Jed the Photographer

Jedidiah Njenga's Instagram page is an exhibit of his talent as a photographer with an eye for a good picture. Known to many as "Jed via Lens", the young but determined photographer is a Bachelor of Arts student currently in his third year of study at the University of Nairobi. He is pursuing geography, sociology, and tourism but hopes to major in sociology. Jed's unique style of capturing moments and telling his story through pictures saw him emerge among the top talent in the 2019 Adobe competition for creatives.

'I submitted an entry dubbed "Black is Golden" and was among the top three African creatives in the photography category. I enjoyed the creative process and realised a lot of growth in that season', he says.

Other than his talent in using the camera since his days in high school, Jed also made a deliberate choice to enter the world of photography for what one might call "a rainy day".

'Back in high school, my grades were not so good. I knew I could not pursue my dream courses, so I needed to have a fallback plan if I did not qualify to join university', he says.

Luckily, Jed got admission to join university, but he could not shake off his interest in photography.

'I enjoy taking photos. I love seeing things from a different perspective; and I am



comfortable in who I am as a photographer', he explains. He makes it clear that he is able to balance his time between school work and photography, which he refers to in local parlance as his "hustle", to mean source of income on the side. Jed has done many photo shoots for clients. He also enjoys doing "passion projects" or those photo shoots that allow him to exercise his creativity.

Last year, Jed developed an interest in mountain climbing and actualised it. 'I want to offer a unique experience for clients as they go up and down the mountain', he says. He has since gone up Mt. Kenya three times and was able to capture what he describes as 'great moments'. The student, who also has a knack for business, is seeking to partner with companies that facilitate clients in mountain climbing.

Jed has grown in the field of photography, starting off as an intern at Figure Studio in Nairobi, soon after high school, to becoming head photographer in the same

outfit. The skills he acquired became useful when he decided to venture into freelance work in May this year.

On becoming a CEO

Jed has learnt what it means to run a sole proprietorship, where he is expected to strike a balance while playing multiple roles, in order to succeed at being his own boss. 'I am the CEO, marketer, and human resource and finance officer. I have learnt how to manage myself and ensure that everything is in order. Being your own boss is like being ten people in one', he reveals.

About the industry, Jed explains that the photography business is flooded with many photographers and hence getting jobs is sometimes challenging. 'Unfortunately, clients go for the cheapest option. You find that some clients do not take photographers seriously as they do not see the investment one has put into the business; to them, we are just taking photos', he laments.

Jed markets his business by engaging clients on social media platforms, using referrals, and one-on-one interactions. He knows from experience that in order to stand out and win new clients, one has to be strategic, innovative, and engaging. Having been in the photography business for over five years, Jed has also been able to identify what can make one succeed or fail in the industry.

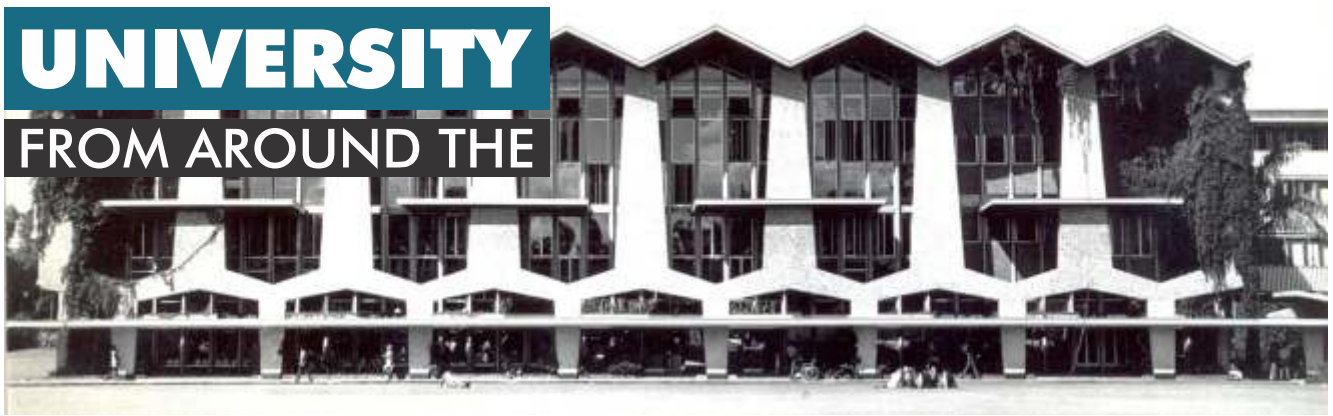
'It is one thing to take good photos but another to be ethical. This job is all about trust and when one photographer messes up a client's work, this affects all of us', he says. Jed's dream is to have a studio similar to the one owned by Tyler Perry, leading American actor, producer, director, and screenwriter. 'I want to have a well-

equipped studio that not only deals with photography but also film. I want to create a space where creatives come and curate great content'. Jed's idea is to establish a space where upcoming creatives will receive mentorship because he attributes his progress so far to good mentorship.

As an upcoming creative and entrepreneur in Kenya, Jed would also like to see the government supporting creatives in their ventures. He hopes that a time will come when the industry will be regulated and guided by policies that will protect not only artists but also their clients.



UNIVERSITY FROM AROUND THE



Arrival of First Year Students

The University welcomed over 6000 First Year students who have already gone through a one-week period of orientation. The new students were sensitised on factors like the university governance structure and management, student welfare services, and role of the Dean of Students in their development and career aspirations among others. This orientation marks their induction into student life and responsibility.



UoN Tops the Rankings Again

The University of Nairobi has been ranked as the top University in Kenya and eleventh in Africa. The World Universities Ranking 2022 report, which was released recently by Times Higher Education (THE) also placed the University in the 501-600 category of the best universities globally. This is a significant improvement from last year's ranking, in which UoN was ranked in the 601-800. The ranking cover parameters like research, citations, teaching, industry income, and international outlook. The University scored the highest mark in citations at 96.7%, garnering a mean score of between 38-40%. Out of the 1,662 universities ranked globally, ten African universities emerged in the top 600 category. South Africa took the lion's share with six universities in the top 600 list, with Nigeria following with two institutions. In East Africa, UoN was followed closely by Makerere University, which was ranked within the 601-800 category. Kenyatta University was recognised among the universities making effort but not yet ranked.



Dean of Students Office

As part of serving the student community, the Office of the Dean of Students has been reorganised to make it easier to identify and assist needy students who cannot raise fees and accommodation; identify and assist disabled students to undertake their programmes with ease; deal with career development of students in and out of the University; and follow-up students who need psychosocial support and ensure that they get the needed assistance and follow up on a daily basis.



UoN Students shine in African Research Challenge

Four UoN students beat teams from Strathmore University and Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) to represent Kenya in the Africa Research University Alliance (ARUA) Centre of Excellence for Unemployment and Skills Development competition known as Youth, Business, and Innovation challenge (YOBIC). The competition engages the innovative capacity of the African youth to tackle youth unemployment while solving some of Africa's problems. During the competition, held on 25- 27th August at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, Team Kenya emerged as the first runners up to secure GBP 1 500 seed capital for a project towards the Big Four Agenda aimed at creating jobs in Loitokitok and across the country once it is replicated in different counties. The project will also target the improvement of food security in arid and semi-arid areas.

Youth in peace conference

The University of Nairobi hosted a three-day convention on youth, peace and elections in partnership with USAID and the Universities and College Student' Peace Association of Kenya (UCSPAK). The conference, which was titled "The role of the youth in promoting peace and stability" was vital because the youth constitute the majority of the population globally. They are also a driving force for change. During the conference, the youth were encouraged to maintain a high standard of ethics and to create meaningful partnerships and connections in order to bring about a generational change. The inaugural National Students' Convention on Youth, Peace and Elections was a major success and will go a long way in promoting long-term peace in Kenya. The youth who attended the convention felt encouraged, having been sensitised about their impact on making meaningful change in Kenya. They vowed to spread the peace message in their communities.





The Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. J.B. Muturi (Left) and Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Kiama at the signing of an agreement on the training of Members of Parliament, county assemblies, and regional parliaments.



UoN, KNBS, UN Women, State Department for Gender, and student researchers during the launch of the Gender-data manuscript on Women's Empowerment, Health, and Gender-Based Violence



Vice-chairperson of University of Nairobi Alumni Association (UoNAA), Dr Anne Aseyi (Far left), during a schools outreach intervention where UoNAA provided sports equipment, learning materials, and sanitary towels.



Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Kiama, and the Chief Conservator of Forests, Mr. Julius Kamau plant a tree to commemorate the UoN@50 under the theme, "Partnering in Afforestation beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic" on 18 May, 2021



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