**Mak strategizes to improve the contribution of museums to national transformation**

The Department of History, Archaeology and Heritage Studies at Makerere University in collaboration with the Uganda Museum on 6th-7th May 2021 held a workshop on the theme ***“Remaking a National Museum”*** to deliberate on ways of advancing the role of museums in transforming societies.

The workshop held at the Uganda Museum in Kampala was part of the activities of the supra-national research platform - “**Remaking Societies Remaking Persons Forum (RSRP)”** supported by the Andrew W Mellon Foundation. The “**Remaking Societies Remaking Persons Forum (RSRP)”** concentrates on among other issues, questions of new museums and museologies, the reconsideration of public history, heritage, the politics of display, and multisensorialism and accoustemologies. In bringing Museum and Heritage Studies and Forensic History together, this project is an intervention in the fields of museum and heritage production, museum and heritage education, exhibition making and in reckoning with the place of the dead and their deaths in the remaking of societies. The project is spearheaded by the University of the Western Cape’s Department of History, working in partnership with the Department of History, Archaeology and Heritage Studies at Makerere University; the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies at the University of Ghana Legon, Accra (UGL); and the Cynthia Nelson Institute for Gender and Women’s Studies (IGWS) at the American University Cairo.

The two-day blended engagement attended by academics and curators of private and community museums from across Africa, featured a keynote address on the ***“Politics of Heritage and Museum Development in East Africa”***, delivered by Prof. George Abungu, an International Heritage Consultant, also Chairman of the Kenya Cultural Centre. In his presentation, Prof. Abungu emphasized the importance of museums in fostering social cohesion and economic development. Commenting on the efforts to remake African Museums, Prof. Abungu called for the decolonization of mindsets. “Africans need to break the colonial ties and craft museums that meet their aspirations. We need to review our perception of museums as custodians of the past and re-position them to deal with current affairs. Museums should be in position to address issues affecting humanity like bad governance, corruption, tribalism, climate change, negative ethnicity, diseases and conflicts. There is also need to work with communities in developing museums,” he advised.

Other presentations included*,* ***“Heritage Policy, Management and Administration: Experience of the Uganda Museum”*** by Mrs. Rose N. Mwanja and Mr. Nelson Abiti; ***“Restitution of Cultural Property”*** by Prof. Ciraj Rasool, Professor of History at the University of the Western Cape; ***“National History and National Museum”*** by Mr. Mwambutsya Ndebesa from the Department of History, Archaeology and Heritage Studies, Makerere University; “***National Museum and the University: Ghana’s Experience”*** by Prof. Gavua Kodzo from the University of Ghana; ***“Towards an Archaeological Perspective of Ttanda”*** by Mr. Herman Muwonge; ***“Reconstructing the life, form and identity of the Baganda at Dindo Landscape”, and “Heritage Research in Uganda”*** by Dr Elizabeth Kyazike; ***“A History of Iron Working in Mpororo”*** by Dr Christopher Muhoozi; ***“Museums and Historical Memory in Post Conflict Situations”*** by Francis Nono; as well as ***“Heritage and Museum Studies”*** by Dr Pamela Khanakwa and Dr Simon Peter Rutabajuuka. The event also featured a panel discussion on private and community museums in Uganda.

In her remarks, Mrs. Rose N. Mwanja, Commissioner Museums and Monuments in the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities said the project was timely for improving exhibits of national museums. Emphasizing the significance of museums in national transformation, Mrs. Mwanja called for more research into Uganda’s cultural heritage, noting that academics have a vital role to play in changing the role of museums.

Addressing participants, the Acting Deputy Principal, Dr Julius Kikooma underscored the importance of history in national development. “We should use the opportunity of the ongoing curriculum review in the Department of History, Archaeology and Heritage Studies at Makerere University to re-centre history. All disciplines should have capacity to historicize in order to plan better for the future,” he noted.

Commenting on the ongoing efforts to transform national museums,the Dean, School of Liberal and Performing Arts at Makerere University, Dr Patrick Mangeni said there was need to focus attention beyond the tangible aspects of heritage.

The workshop was moderated by Dr Pamela Khanakwa, Senior Lecturer in the Department of History, Archaeology and Heritage Studies at Makerere University.