

## **Prof. Eddy Walakira hands over SWASA Headship to Dr. Denis Muhangi**

Professor Eddy Walakira on 11th May, 2023 handed over office to Dr. Denis Muhangi as new head, Department of Social Work and Social Administration.

Prof. Walakira started working at Makerere in 1996 and was ushered into leadership when he was first appointed in Ag. head on 1st November 2012 and subsequently, became substantive on 1st September 2014.

“So that marks over 10 years in leadership of the department and I am grateful for all the time that I have been able to serve” He said.

Reflecting over his leadership style, Prof. Walakira reported that he has emphasized team work, had cohesion, peaceful co-existence and discounted negative talk.

“We have given every person, freedom to express themselves and because of that, the atmosphere that we have created even in project collaborations and coordination, I have made sure that everyone participates. I have encouraged staff not to look at what individuals do but instead learn from their capabilities and creatively innovate something that they can do themselves”, He said.

That style he said, avoided conflicts and ensured staff stand as a coherent strong team and built a unit that was resourceful.

The department he stressed has not been in a fragile financial situation and has been able to meet costs for big meetings and visiting delegations.

“As a leader, when you get into office, it would be very difficult to start looking at the university to meet all the financial needs of the unit. All along, I have created an environment of flexibility, collegiality, teamwork and being pragmatic so as to take advantage of every opportunity that comes along so that we are able to support university functions and activities”, he explained.

Across all the years, Prof. Walakira said the department has been able to support the part timers who are not paid by the university.

Prof. Walakira highlighted key achievements under his tenure in areas of staffing capacity, teaching and training, developing new programmes, curriculum revision, staff promotion, research, publications and collaborations, infrastructure and facilities, financial resources and supplies, ongoing transformation efforts and maintaining visibility.

He said for the last couple of months, the units has been thinking about the way forward and came to appoint that the department should transform into a school imploring the incoming head to look into what members of staff subscribe to, to move the process forward.

He said the paper work is about to be completed to achieve a higher goal calling for the necessary support to achieve this.

“This s important because it elevates the profession itself, because the higher you go as a unit the more the profession gets the clout to negotiate, be considered important and also to pursue an agenda that truly reflects an agenda that you aspire to as a profession”, Prof. Walakira stressed.

Other remarkable achievements according to Prof. Walakira include improvement in staffing capacity standing at 54% as one of the university units with staffing capacity beyond 50%. By the time he assumed office, the unit had 24 staff, of these 19 teaching and 5 support staff. In terms of qualifications, 63% of staff had PhDs when he came in but currently 69% hold PhDs.

In teaching and learning Prof. Walakira reported that the department has a Bachelor of Social Works and Co teach Bachelor of social sciences with 4 Masters programmes (with two active namely Master of social Works and Master of social sector planning and management) and a PhD based on research.

Areas that need strengthening in teaching according to Prof. Walakira include teaching in sign language which is depended on part timers, managing complex disabilities and promoting inclusion, teaching quantitative research at all levels, teaching social work and mental health, and the need for staffing in social policy, climate change adaptation and mitigation.

He reported that during his administration, the unit successfully revised the curriculum for the active programs, and was currently revising the curriculum for the master of social sector planning and management and developing a new curriculum for a PhD in social work with an additional description in social work.

Prof. Walakira also reported that the department developed a document detailing the minimum standards and competence framework for social work education and training in the country to amplify the relevance of the subject to nation building.

From one Professor and Associate Professor, he said the unit has 6 members at the level of Assoc. Professor with 5 senior lectures from 4 that time with a number of staff who have applied for promotion. The department he reported was outstanding in the area research, collaborations and publications with over 70% of staff actively involved in research and publications.

I accept the responsibility - Incoming Head Dr. Denis Muhangi

The incoming Head, Dr. Denis Muhangi thanked the outgoing head for the leadership offered, the innovativeness and pragmatism which are necessary for any leader to thrive amidst limited resources and challenges.

“It is my great pleasure this morning to accept the responsibility being bestowed upon me, I have shaken hands with the outgoing head, received the files and I accept the responsibility. I thank all members for making time to witness the hand over and for the confidence and trust you put in me when you elected me”, Dr. Muhangi appreciated

Dr. Muhangi described the transition as an important milestone in the history of the department pledging to carry on the mantle by leveraging on his predecessor's mode of leadership of collegiality, peaceful conflict resolution and harmonious co-existence.

“We are social workers, we teach, conflict resolution, dialogue and issues of engagement so, we should practice what we teach to help maintain a good environment for us to prosper”

As he embarks on this journey, Dr. Muhangi said the tasks ahead were clear urging staff to continue with roles of teaching, examining and supervision saying, this was the main reason they exist in the university.

He implored staff to tap into existing opportunities and leverage on existing networks nationally and internally and to enhance the brand and the visibility of the department for better recognition.

He recognized the resourcefulness of every staff hoping to draw on these resources for collective achievements.

He expressed the need for all to come up with innovative ways of supporting graduate students to complete on time and issues pointed out by the outgoing head.

“I appreciate that what I am taking on is a huge responsibility and I want to pledge that I will do my part to provide support, guidance and enabling environment as will be need. It is also comforting to know that there is the support of the Dean, the Principal’ office and other support units of the university and management”, Dr. Muhangi promised.

He called on staff to continue cherishing the spirit of social support in good and bad times.

The Dean commends efforts to preserve the profession

Presiding over the ceremony. the Dean School of Social Sciences, Dr. Justus Twesigye said this was historical in the making for the department to have an elected head after having a record acting heads who are finally confirmed

Noting that there is struggle to find a professional and social activism that promotes social change, Dr. Twesigye expressed the need for new recruits to be part of this culture and learn that it is professionalization in social work that one can hand over, talk and welcome change.

“In social development terms, we are happy that now we can make choice that we have more capacity, there is agency and that we can hand over and talk of change without fights. To me this is something we should celebrate as a social work family”, The Dean said.

The Dean thanked Dr. David Mafigiri who was the opponent to the incoming for leading and engaging Dr. Muhangi in a peaceful contest, accepting defeat and pledging to support, describing these as a sign of maturity and good growth.

Dr. Twesigye congratulated Prof. Eddy Walakira for successfully having his terms as head of department.

“You should be pleased over this landmark over 10 years in office is not an easy thing. We lost several heads of departments in successive years, but you have been able to live and serve. God blessed you with good health, you have been constant, available and smiling. To be able to lead a team and focus for a long time is very good. This is God’s Grace”, Dr. Twesigye said.

He reminded staff that the ceremony signifies that when you take over office, you must serve and at one time leave using the adage that when the curtains close, no matter how good a dancer you are, you must leave the stage.

Dr. Twesigye commended Prof. Walakira for the tremendous achievements .

“The first one is minimum standards and competence framework for social work education and training that to me, is really spot on. That document if interpreted well, is going to help us and even when out of here, we shall be talking of preserving this profession.

The second one is having the Master of social work and Bachelor curriculum that is very extremely important for the identity and professionalization and the core of putting the department where it is”, The Dean commended.

The Dean congratulated Dr. Denis Muhangi and welcomed him to the leadership forum describing him as kind hearted and sober person capable of taking the department to another level.

Dr. Twesigye reminded the incoming that he will take on more responsibilities including emergencies and will have to account to the Dean, Principal and university Management as the first point of contact.

He said he has inherited leadership with great opportunities over the years with a good number of PhDs, with the largest number of students who have government scholarships in the university through the special entry scheme, district quotas and disability schemes of almost 30%, then national merit of about 25-30%.

Despite the potential and opportunities, the Dean noted that the identity crisis was still present in the profession which cannot be accounted for, adding that he has not had of a full professor in social work as long as he can remember .

Noting that there is so much suppression to fight against, the Dean implored the incoming head, to capitalize on the opportunities to tackle critical challenges such as the teaching culture, negative publicity, the staffing gaps, graduate completion rates, attracting the super cream undergraduate students to enrol for masters and ensure the professionalization of social work is revisited, understood and pursued to the latter.

### **Prof. Eddy Walkira hailed for exemplary leadership**

Assoc. Prof. Asingwire Narathius , a mentor and the previous leader who laid the foundation for the department applauded the outgoing head for exemplary leadership.

“I thank you so much Prof. Walakira for appreciating to bring you in the leadership. I mentored you and you have not disappointed me. You have left the department united, the level of cohesion is unrivaled and I am sure Dr. Muhangi will pick from there. This is very positive environment with the Dean being part of us”

Prof. Asingwire joined university leadership as Ag. Head Department of Social Work in 1998 and served for 13 years in acting and substantive positions. He came when the department had lost two heads within a short time and at the turbulent times when then Vice-chancellor had appointed a committee of inquiry into the department.

“To serve 10 years Prof. Walakira, that is not a short time and certainly in 10 years, that is a long term of service. I thank all colleagues for giving you unwavering support. Dr. Muhangi is coming into office through the power of the ballot. This is the first time the department has held an election”. Prof. Asingwire commented.

He clarified that no one was stifling democracy but staff could not respond to calls for nominations and some would not qualify.

“Thank you for making this office very attractive. I pray that Dr. Muhangi will even make it more attractive so that when his term expires, that everyone will seek to be nominated and we will have a variety of choice”, Prof. Asingwire stated.

The Assitant Lecturer, Agatha Kafiko congratulated the outgoing head upon the milestones over the 10 years and the incoming upon his election and appointment.

“Social work has contributed significantly to professional development especially in the area of child protection in Uganda. Also with social labs now, we are contributing significantly to the university’s strategic goal in terms of innovative ways of teaching and community engagement”,

### **Dr. Denis Muhangi**

Dr. Muhangi is an experienced researcher with over 15 years experience in conducting social research and evaluation studies. His work has been in the areas of HIV/AIDS, malaria prevention, water and sanitation, livelihoods, orphans and vulnerable children, and governance. Dr. Muhangi completed his PhD studies at Queens University of Belfast in the UK, his PhD research focused on government-NGO partnerships in HIV/AIDS response in Uganda. His PhD research built on his many years of work in the area of HIV/AIDS as well as in the area of government relations with other actors, such as NGOs, CBOs, FBOs, and the private-for-profit sector. His other fields of interest include social policy reform, social services design and delivery, and institutional development. He brings with him extensive experience in conducting social research, mainly using qualitative (including PRA) methods, with fair knowledge of quantitative methods. He is competent in designing research studies such as baselines, reviews, and impact assessments. He is also competent in designing M&E systems. He has exceptionally good conceptual and analytical skills, skills for making presentations, and writing skills – including writing for publication. He has previously worked as a consultant for reputable organizations such as UNDP, UNICEF, UPHOLD, Directorate of Water Development, PSI/PACE, and several local Ugandan NGOs. His work has been a wide range of sectors including HIV/AIDS; Orphans and Vulnerable Children; Water Supply, Hygiene and Sanitation; Health; Income Generation and Livelihoods; Poverty alleviation; and Institutional/organizational Development.

By Jane Anyango

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