Makerere pays tribute to First Lady for Emerging Leaders Programme

By Nelson Kiva

Makerere University leadership has paid tribute to the First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, Mrs Janet Museveni for the idea of the Emerging Leaders Programme (ELP) which they said is deepening both academic and moral accomplishments at the university.

According to Lorna Magara, the chairperson of the university council, the programme has shaped the character and anchored values into the students.

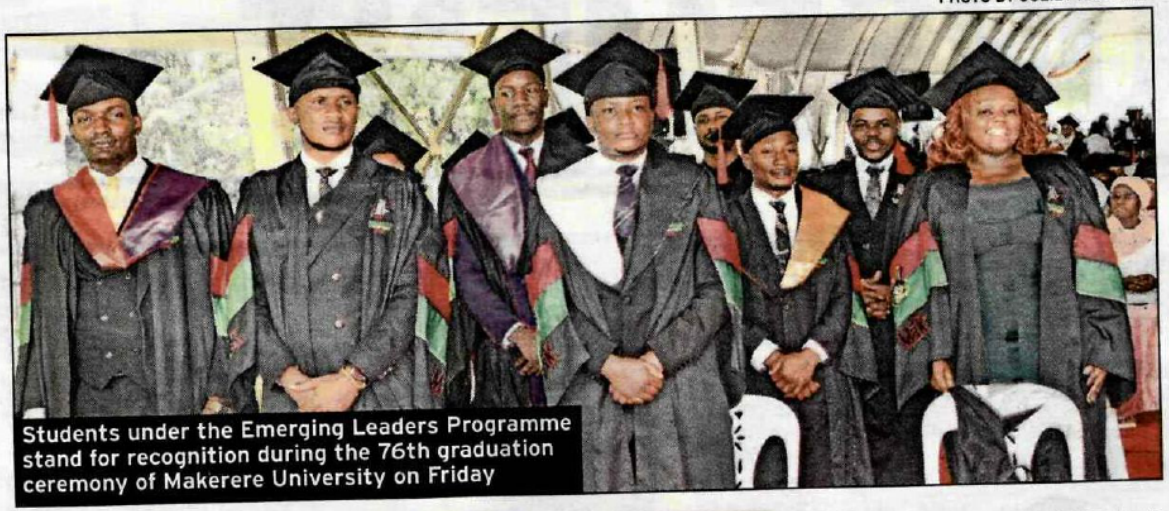
"It represents perseverance, discipline, sacrifice and fulfilment of aspirations. Today, we celebrate something deeper than academic accomplishment. There is more to life than just accomplishments," Magara said at the conclusion of the university's 76th graduation ceremony at the Freedom Square on Friday. Over 9,200 graduates were conferred different academic qualifications.

"We celebrate the shaping of character, anchoring values that evaluate both the individual and the nation. Significantly today, we gather at a historic milestone as we graduate the founding champions of the Emerging Leaders Programme at Makerere University," Magara said.

She commended ELP co-chairperson, Vision Group, Editor-in-Chief, Barbara Kaija and Prof. Winston Tumps Ireeta, the deputy vice-chancellor in charge of finance and administration, for ensuring effective implementation of the programme.

Over 20 pioneers of the programme graduated in different academic fields and heaped praise on the values acquired through the programme for facilitating the progress in their studies. The ELP championed by the First Lady is a life skills capacity-building and behavioural initiative.

PHOTO BY JULIET KASIRYE.



Students under the Emerging Leaders Programme stand for recognition during the 76th graduation ceremony of Makerere University on Friday

Currently in the pilot phase, ELP was launched at Makerere University on September 24, 2024. Its implementation framework is tailored on four pillars: Sexually Fortified, Addiction Free, Financially Faithful, and Education Focused (SAFE). The value and character-driven initiative is implemented in partnership with Makerere University, Global Leadership Summit and Life Ministry Uganda.

"At the inauguration of the current council in 2022, Maama Janet charged us by posing a courageous question at a time when universities across the world were racing towards technical excellence. She asked, what about character? What about integrity? What about moral courage? What about servant leadership? These were not just peripheral concerns. These were foundational questions. And so, the Emerging Leaders Programme was born," Magara said.

BENEFICIARIES SPEAK OUT

Emojong Kisaija, an ELP beneficiary, who graduated with a bachelor of biomedical laboratory technology, said: "Through ELP, I have learned a lot of things which include leadership, integrity, ethics, morality and financial management."

Harriet Yake Tiyobo, who graduated with bachelor of science in biomedical engineering, lauded ELP as a blessing: "One of the major things I love about it is they bring the aspect of God in everything."

The programme was in response to youth challenges, such as substance abuse, risky lifestyles and declining values. It emphasised character formation, ethical decision-making, and personal transformation.

"Students engage in leadership and life skills training sessions, mentorship and guided discussions, character and values workshops and peer leadership.

These initiatives and awareness campaigns on integrity, health, responsible living, are all guided by the SAFE framework, which is promoting healthy, ethical, and disciplined lifestyles. It is therefore positioned as a nationwide initiative, not merely a campus activity," Magara said.

Magara emphasised that education must shape conscience as intentionally and rigorously as it develops competence.

FIRST LADY REACTS

In a video address to the graduates on Thursday, the First Lady said the programme was a deliberate commitment to raise a generation of leaders grounded in values, integrity and service to others.

"Today, these 20 graduates represent the highly visible fruits of that vision. They have deliberately chosen to build their lives on a foundation of strong moral values and servant leadership. I am so proud to say that some of them are already making their mark in public life," Mrs Museveni said.

Some of the ELP alumni, the First Lady used the platform to celebrate included; Robert Maseruka, 25, the Member of Parliament-elect for Mukono South of National Unity Platform and Lawrence Alionzi aka Dangote, 26, mayor-elect Arua city of National Resistance Movement. Both Maseruka and Alionzi are former Makerere guild presidents.

"Though they serve on different political platforms, they share something far more important, a common foundation in values-based leadership. This is what the Emerging Leaders Programme stands for, preparing leaders who will serve Uganda faithfully, with character and integrity regardless of political affiliation," Mrs Museveni said.

TARGET

According to the ELP secretariat, the programme targets to reach 250,000 young people across the country and today the beneficiaries have reached 25,000 (10%).