

MAKERERE



UNIVERSITY

**REMARKS BY THE VICE CHANCELLOR, PROF. JOHN DDUMBA-
SSENTAMU**

**AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE ANNUAL HELEN KANZIRA MEMORIAL
LECTURE**

ON THE THEME

***"EXPLORING UGANDA'S PERFORMANCE ON THE MDGS IN THE AREA OF
MATERNAL HEALTH: ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES"***

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2015
IMPERIAL ROYALE HOTEL**

- **The Keynote Speaker/World Health Organisation Family Health and Population Advisor, Dr. Olive Sentumbwe-Mugisa**
- **Distinguished Panelists in your various capacities**
- **The Director of the Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria, Prof. Frans Viljeon**
- **The Acting Principal, School of Law, Makerere University**
- **Academic Staff of the Universities of Makerere and Pretoria**
- **The Family of the Late Helen Kanzira**
- **Distinguished Guests**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen:**

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On behalf of Makerere University and on my own behalf, I welcome you to the Annual Helen Kanzira Memorial Lecture, which is meant to celebrate her life and achievements as a woman, mother and wife on the one hand, and as an exemplary member of the legal fraternity on the other. The Lecture also serves as a point of reference to shape the advancement of maternal and reproductive health in Uganda.

I would like to thank the Makerere University School of Law and the University of Pretoria Centre for Human Rights, for collaborating on a series of Annual Lectures around topical human rights issues, thereby ensuring sustained discussion and attention to the pressing matters affecting our world today.

I am informed that the Centre has been convening the Helen Kanzira Memorial Lecture under its programme of celebrating the lives of departed students while generating debate and social consciousness on topical issues that affect Africa. I applaud our School of Law for joining such noble causes and partnering with the Centre to host the Lecture this year. This follows the November 2013 Memorial Lecture in commemoration of the life of the late Julius Osega.

This is our role as institutions of higher learning – to be in touch with the realities of the world. It is our job to think, invent and create for the purpose of contributing to global advancement through offering possible solutions to the vast challenges of our times. In order for us to do this effectively, we must create linkages with different sectors and stakeholders. Public lectures are one of the fora through which we are able to do this. As Makerere University, we are therefore proud to be associated with the Public Lectures.

Indeed the Annual Helen Kanzira Memorial Lecture is very timely given the current global discourse on Reproductive Rights of Women generally and maternal health specifically. We are aware that the statistics on maternal health in Africa alone are alarming, calling for regular discourse and assessment in order to find lasting solutions. The United Nations has recently proposed new Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs] as we take stock of the Millennium Development Goals [MDGs].

The Lecture presents an opportunity for us to examine the new SDGs relating to maternal and reproductive health and rights with a timeline of 2030. These include:

- Goal 3.1, to reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births
- Goal 3.7, to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health care services, including family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes
- Goal 5.6, to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights

Ladies and Gentlemen, this Lecture stands for the daily maternal and reproductive experiences and challenges of all women not only in Uganda but the world. We remember the Late Helen Kanzira as an alumnus of the then Faculty of Law of Makerere University [class of 1998] and as one of the pioneers of the University of Pretoria Masters Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa [class of 2000]. We also remember her as a symbol of the challenges of maternal and reproductive health and rights. She personifies the countless women who die during pregnancy and childbirth, many of whom sadly go unnoticed.

As we listen to the Keynote and arising panel discussions, let us reflect on the ways we can contribute to easing the challenges we have at hand and specifically how we can reduce maternal mortality. The challenges of our health service delivery systems are known and often the rural underserved suffer the most. However, as far as maternal and reproductive health is concerned, the urban woman is also affected. This is an issue for all women everywhere and we must find sustainable solutions through our research and community outreach agenda. The theme “*Exploring Uganda’s Performance On The MDGs in the area of Maternal Health: Achievements And Challenges*” is indeed fitting.

I wish you successful deliberations as we strive to achieve the new Sustainable Development Goals in the field of maternal and reproductive health and rights.

Thank you.