

## THE 9<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL ICOB CONVENTION REPORT

From the 28<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2011 the International community of Banyakigezi gathered in London, United Kingdom for the historical and hilarious 9<sup>th</sup> Annual ICOB convention. The observers have it that this was the most organized of the ICOB convention they have been to so far.

It all started with an opening prayer by Father Boniface Turyahikayo (Kabale Diocese) followed Mr. Johnson Mujungu (ICOB President and Chair COB-UK/Ireland) who welcomed the guests, presented an overview of the state of ICOB and its flagship Kigezi Education Fund and gave the conference overview.

A total of 184 Banyakigezi and friends from all over the world attended the convention graced by Hon. Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda (Guest of honour), Her Excellency Joan Rwabyomire (Uganda High Commissioner to the UK and Ireland) who officially opened the convention, Prince Olimi Kabuzi of Tooro who gave the keynote speech and Hon. Nandala Mafabi (the Leader of Opposition in Uganda parliament). Other notable guests included Hon Jack Sabiiti (MP Rukiga), Senior Special Advisor to the President Hon. Steven Bamwanga, Mr. Dan Mugarura, Col Samson Mande, Ms Eva Baguma (Chairperson Tooro Association) and Uganda North American (UNAA) representatives Mr Edriss Kironde and Mr Moses Nsereko.

This was a convention of bringing minds and hearts together to discuss and map out ways of developing Kigezi and her people. Indeed Banyakigezi and friends of different religious, political and social allegiances came and enjoyed chatting with each other as well as holding serious discussions on how to develop Kigezi and Uganda at large.

The theme of the convention was, “Guharanira kunoza (In pursuit of excellence)” which was well expounded in two sessions, culture and education by excellent, thrilling and constructive presentations from Rev. Canon Dr. Gideon Byamugisha and Prof. Manuel Murunga on culture and language; Hon. Henry Banyenzaki, Prof. Augustus Nuwagaba and Ms Connie Tukwasibwe on behalf of Prof. Joy Kwesiga on Education and Economy.

Presentations on culture underscored the core values by which Banyakigezi can stand and or evaluate themselves as they live and progress in different parts of the world. Canon Gideon called it the cultural code for securing our future & realizing our full potential as a people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

He summarised the code in ten points: Culture for Life and Survival (Ebyemitwariize yokutubeisaho); Production, Saving and Investment for Prosperity (Ebyokukora , okubiika, obweziriki nokubagye nyensya);Community Ethic and love for Our Neighbours (Eby'entwaaza ey'obuuntu); Life protection and Life Enhancement (Ebyokurinda amagara, n'obugwagye); Community Ethic and love for Our Neighbours (Eby'entwaaza ey'obuuntu);Sexual and Reproductive Health (Ebyokweigeta n'okuzaara);Mentoring and Leadership Development (Eby'abakuza nobwebembezi burungi); Living as Global Citizens (Ebyokubaho nokukura nka'abatuuragye bensi yoona); Holistic Peace ( Ebyobusingye , Obuhooro, Neihorere); Faiths, Culture and Spirituality (Ebyediini, Obuhangwa, N'Enyikiriza); Holistic & Life Competent Education (Eby'obweegyese oburikuha entunguka, bukarinda amagara, ensi yaitu, obuteeka nabantu ba KIGEZI boona ahatariho okushoroora nari okwebaganisamu ahibari hoona).

Taken together, these values embrace learning and researching our culture and language, preserving our cultural heritage and passing it on our children, innovation for development and transformation of society (*full presentation at [www.abanyakigezi.net](http://www.abanyakigezi.net)*).

We could not have had a better person to talk on language. Prof. Manuel Muranga invigorated the convention when he treated the subject of Language in Rukiga enlightening the delegates of the three types of Rukiga language, Rukiga-orusigi, Rukiga-oruhororo and Rukiga-oruhimba.

He further pointed out that learning is more successful when the learner is instructed in the language h/she understands well (mother tongue). Cognitive abilities are interlinked with language and better understanding of language causes the learner to have better comprehension of the subject, be more imaginative, creative and innovative. In this aspect, the convention was duly informed that O' and A' level syllabus in Rukiga-runyankole syllabus is complete and some schools in Kigezi are already offering it, - thanks to Prof Muranga and colleagues who have spearheaded the learning of Rukiga-runyankole. (*full presentation at [www.abanyakigezi.net](http://www.abanyakigezi.net)*).

Following the presentations on culture, an open and constructive discussion was conducted, thanks to the moderator Robert Kabushenga, and the following resolutions/recommendations were made:

**1. Cultural Leadership:** In order to preserve our cultural heritage and develop as one people, the convention deemed it important for Kigezi to revisit the idea of Cultural Leadership / Clan Leadership at village level, where each clan has a respected elder of high integrity, honesty and is held in high esteem by society to be a leader and steward of our cultural values and morals. The Bagisu cultural institution model was given as an example to learn from.

**2. Camping Retreats:** Very important for Banyakigezi grand sons and daughters in Diaspora and even those living in Kampala or other Ugandan towns. Camping retreats held in Kigezi would enable the youth to mix with fellow youth at home and elders who would teach them the Kigezi culture. Activities could be folk songs, cultural dance, okugana, okwevuga, okusakuza etc

**3. Investment in Local Communities:** Putting back in the communities in which we were born and raised in order to steer development and create jobs for people in Kigezi. The wealth and hard working Banyakigezi were called upon to invest part of their wealth in Kigezi by starting projects, which will uplift the wellbeing of Banyakigezi at home and save them from resorting to waragi and despondency.

**4. Parents responsibilities:** Parents were encouraged to take the responsibility of teaching their children not only the mother tongue but also our culture and morals. It was observed that most parents in the Diaspora have given up on teaching their children language and Rukiga cultural values, - thanks to the online Rukiga language resources by Prof. Muranga coming up soon.

**5. Kigezi Museum:** Building a museum that would house our cultural heritages was proposed. Mzee Festo Karwemera, a respected elder and authority on Rukiga – Runyankole language, author of many books in Rukiga - Runyankole, has held this idea for long and it is high time we actualized it. Ideas put forward were either finding a private

investor to build the museum as a business entity or building it private investor – community shared partnership. The museum would house Kigezi antiquities, library for Rukiga-Runyankole literature, and theatre for Kigezi dance and drama and leisure facilities.

**6. Increasing availability of Kigezi literature:** It was resolved that Old books with Kigezi literature such as Kigezi n'Abantu Bayo (Kigezi and Its People) by Paulo Ngongorogoza be reprinted. Mr Robert Kabushenga and Hon. Steven Bamwanga offered to spear head the reprinting of these books.

**7. Popularization of the Rukiga Language:** An annual award, “**Writer’s award**” for the best student in Rukiga language at A-Level, Essay or best Book written in Rukiga was proposed. Making electronic versions of Rukiga literature and learning resources available on the Internet and encouraging people to write books in Rukiga viz: short stories, proverbs etc.

Education has been and still remains a core of the mission of the International community of Banyakigezi and the 9<sup>th</sup> ICOB convention would be incomplete without brainstorming on how best to develop education in Kigezi and Uganda at large. Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> was the Education day culminating in a grand dinner during which fundraising for the Kigezi Education fund was conducted.

Hon. Henry Banyenzaki (Minister of state for Economic monitoring) gave an elaborate presentation on government education policy of which the government spends over a trillion shillings every year in support of primary, secondary and tertiary education. The introduction of Universal primary education (UPE) has seen increased numbers of enrolment at both primary and secondary level. He, however, noted that despite the increased funding, the performance in most schools has declined and attributed this to poor management by school management committees instituted by government. The school foundation bodies such as churches, which used to hold teachers and Head Teachers accountable no longer, have powers to do so.

Prof. Augustus Nuwagaba, a renowned economist and consultant treated the subject of education from an economic point of view. He observed that poor economic policy breed poverty and all together result in poor educational services.

He noted that while the number of pupils enrolling in primary and secondary schools had increased during the UPE era, the poor planning and allocation of resources had left these schools with high pupil to teacher ratio, poorly paid teachers, few or no learning aids such as text books etc. As a result the performance in schools has continuously declined and the school facilities left in a deplorable state.

Taking Kabale as an example, he illustrated how rural schools had more than half of the candidates in grade U compared to urban schools (schools in Kabale town); he attributed this to lack of teaching, poor learning environment and absenteeism precipitated by poverty.

He further observed that parents in rural areas depend on peasantry agriculture for a living and would rather have their children out of school to contribute labour on their farms. Noted even in other parts of Uganda is that parents can longer afford lunch for children at school, and how can a child learn on empty stomach?

On curriculum, Prof. Nuwagaba emphasized the promotion of vocationalization to equip the youth with skills, which will make them competitive and ready for the job market. For an economy to be vibrant and successful, vocational skills must be given priority.

The two presentations were studiously discussed by the convention with the help of Mr Wilber Sabiiti who moderated the session and Mr Jackson Mwesigye, the day's masters of ceremony. The following recommendations and resolutions were made:

**1. Pupil – teacher ratio:** The convention recommended and urged delegates who sit on policy planning boards to advise the government to reduce pupil – teacher ratio in order for better instruction and learning to occur.

**2. School management:** It was noted that parents and other stake holders like religious bodies in Kigezi and Uganda at large should once again take up the responsibility of ensuring that schools are better managed and teachers and Head teachers are held accountable.

**3. Educational resources:** It was agreed that a database or website link be created enlisting teaching and learning resources available in Kigezi. The Banyakigzi who have done or have educational projects were asked to submit the details so that what they are doing can be made known to all people in Kigezi.

**4. Vocationalization:** The Kigezi education fund will continue to support Vocational Education in Kigezi adding to what has already been achieved at Rukungiri Technical Institute in Rukungiri District and Nyakatare Technical Institute in Kanungu District, and what is planned for Kisoro Technical Institute in Kisoro District and Uganda Martyrs Polytechnic - Nyarushanje in Kabale District

The convention ended with the fundraising dinner and dance hosted by ICOB president Mr Johnson Mujungu and assisted by Jacqueline Matovu. Dr. Ruhakana Ruganda, the Guest of Honour, thanked the convention organizing committee for doing an excellent job of organizing the convention and informed the convention on home and international issues of interest to Uganda.

The fundraising effort, steered by Mr Cliff Musimenta, led to a collective grand total of over \$10,000 in cash and pledges to the grand Kigezi Education Fund.

***ICOB London 2011 Convention organizing committee***

Johnson Mujungu  
Jackson Mwesigye  
Wilber Sabiiti  
Clement Rwama  
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James Magabo  
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