



UNIVERSITY OF EMBU

**VICE-CHANCELLOR'S SPEECH
ON THE OCCASION OF THE CELEBRATIONS
TO MARK THE
DAY OF THE AFRICAN CHILD
WEDNESDAY, 16TH JUNE, 2021
10.30 A.M.
CHARTER HALL**

- Our Special Guests – The Children,
- The County Commissioner Mr. Hiddi Galgalo,
- Members of the University of Embu Management and Staff present
- The Chief Officer, Department of Gender, Children and Social Services - County Government of Embu,
- The Embu County Area Advisory Council Members,
- Members of Embu County Children Assembly,
- Invited Guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the University of Embu. Thank you for choosing the University to host this year's celebrations to mark the Day of the African Child (DAC). I thank you also for inviting me as the Chief Guest. This is a great honour for me and the University as a whole. It is a demonstration of the confidence that you

have in us and the activities that we are engaged in to enable our children to realize their full potential in life.

This Day gives us the opportunity to reflect on issues affecting children. It is also a Day for us to take stock of what we are doing for our children and agree on what more we need to do to give our children a better life in terms of protection of their rights, proper upbringing and access to equal opportunities in life.

The Day of the African Child (DAC) is recognized internationally as an avenue for promoting children's rights and welfare issues. The day is celebrated every year on June 16; It was instituted in 1991 by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in memory of a student uprising that took place in Soweto, South Africa on 16th June, 1976. Since then, the OAU and its successor, the African Union (AU), have used this Day to remember the children, to celebrate all children in Africa as well as to inspire a sober reflection and action towards addressing the challenges that children in Africa face on a daily basis.

The Theme of this year's celebration is **“30 years after the adoption of the Charter: Accelerate implementation of Agenda 2040 for an Africa fit for Children.**

The idea of *an Africa fit for children* resonates well with our institutional aspirations as a University. Children are the backbone and the future of society. Without children, there can be no future and all our current effort may just as well be in vain.

The University has a key mandate in capacity development and research for community empowerment. Child wellbeing, child protection and child resilience can be achieved when universities become involved in every aspect of the community. The University is currently engaged in collaborations with the surrounding primary and secondary schools like Kangaru Boys, Kangaru Girls and Kangaru DEB Primary School to assist the children to improve their academic performance. We are working together to build a supportive community of academics who are going to promote a child-centered, participatory and right's based approaches to learning. These initiatives are meant to build strong connections between universities, researchers and other national and international institutions working in the area of child studies and related fields.

Embu County, like other counties, has cases of child abuse and neglect. To support the ongoing responses by the County Children's Department, the University is working with stakeholders in the following areas:

1. The School of Education and Social Sciences is an active member of Embu County Child Protection Network (ECCPN). The School is providing advisory support to the Network.
2. The University has an MoU with Kangaru DEB where some of the School's buildings are undergoing renovation sponsored by UoEm. Through the partnership, the University recently sponsored the whole school on a field trip to the Children's Park to learn about road safety.
3. A "ChildLab" will be established at Kangaru DEB Primary School to provide space for research in child development in collaboration with our partners namely; University of Toronto, Canada and Catalyst Research and Development. I am happy to announce to you that plans are also underway to establish the Centre for Child Studies at the University of Embu in collaboration with the University of Toronto, Canada.
4. Further, the University is also at an advanced stage of signing an MoU with the Kenya Deaf Society to provide support to families with Children with hearing impairment as well as provide capacity development for sign language training and adoption.

As part of our Corporate Social Responsibility, we are also working together with the Department of Children Services, Embu County to promote the welfare of children and provide them with opportunities for personal and professional growth. As a matter of fact, we are also in the process of signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Children Services, Embu County, so as to concretize our collaboration for the benefit of the children.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Children Agenda is of much interest to us as an institution. When children are molded well and can access all their rights as required, they will grow healthily and happily; they will perform better in school and they will make good citizens and leaders in the future. As a University, this is what we do every day, to provide an opportunity

for all children and our youth to grow in their chosen careers and in all spheres of life. We need to encourage every other sector engaged in child support to ensure that the welfare of children is considered with utmost importance at all levels of society, upbringing and even schooling.

The quality of students that eventually join the University depends, to a greater extent on the social and academic environment that the child has passed through. If that environment observes and cares for the welfare and rights of the children, then we will definitely be able to get good students to enable us realize our mandate as a University.

The Agenda 2040 for an Africa fit for Children has Ten (10) Aspirations which we, as stakeholders and duty bearers, resolve to achieve by the year 2040.

These **aspirations** are;

1. The African Children's Charter, seeks to provide an effective continental framework for advancing children's rights.
2. The existence of an effective child-friendly, national legislative policy and institutional framework in all member states.
3. The registration of every child's birth and other vital statistics.
4. Every child survives and has a healthy childhood.
5. Every child grows up well-nourished and with access to the necessities of life.
6. Every child benefits fully from quality education.
7. Every child is protected against violence, exploitation, neglect and abuse.
8. Children benefit from a children-sensitive criminal justice system.
9. Every child is free from the impact of armed conflicts and other disasters or emergencies.
10. African children's views matter.

It is my wish that we will all endeavour to accelerate the achievements of these **aspirations** in all we do as duty-bearers.

There are still many challenges that our children face in the course of growing up, among them: Discrimination, Abandonment, Sexual Violence, Danger or Attacks on the way to school, Family breakdown, Disability, Child marriage, Child labour, War and Displacement and many more. During these unprecedented times of the Covid-19

Pandemic, children, of all ages, and in all countries, are affected in different ways by unprecedented socio-economic impact. Many children have been left orphaned and homeless after their parents or families died of COVID-19.

It is my hope that the commemoration of this Day here at the University, will bring a renewed sense of commitment towards addressing and overcoming the challenges that hinder our children from having a happy childhood. I thank all those working for children for their sacrifice. It is not easy, but together we will make a difference. Let us join our hands and fight this good fight together. This will help our children to grow in an environment that they can enjoy their rights to the fullest.

Lastly, I would like to sincerely thank the County Commissioner, the Department of Children Services, Embu County, and all partners and stakeholders who participated in organizing this event and worked tirelessly to make the Day a success. This is a noble job that you are doing. Please keep it up.

To the children present, we appreciate you and applaud you, as members of County Children Assembly, we thank you for the role you have played in championing children rights. Keep it up and do not tire.

Once again, I thank all the guests and every one present here today, as well as those following us online for sparing time off your busy schedules to participate in celebrating this Day. May God Bless you.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With those remarks, I now declare the 2021 Celebrations of the **Day of the African Child** in Embu County, Officially Launched.

Thank you

Prof. Daniel Mugendi Njiru, Ph.D
VICE-CHANCELLOR