

OVER 100 FEMALES GRADUATE IN RURAL TRANSFORMATION

By Andrew Musinguzi

Ugandan graduates have been urged to act as agents of transformation in rural communities if education is to make meaningful impact in Uganda. The appeal was made by Dr Robert Juuko, an education expert, during the 11th graduation ceremony of the African Rural University (ARU) in Kagadi district on November 29.

Juuko, who was the chief guest, hailed the graduands for completing their studies and encouraged them to transform rural areas.

"I am happy to hear that this is the first non-profit value-based all-female university in Uganda centred on rural transformation; providing transformational education that empowers women to become

effective agents of change within the African development context," he said.

Over 100 females graduated with bachelor of rural development and bachelor of science in sustainable agriculture disciplines from ARU.

Juuko, who is an associate professor at Gulu University, also appealed to African scholars to preserve indigenous African knowledge as artificial intelligence takes over key roles in the world.

"I want graduates to use smartphones to predict weather patterns and make money; not just chatting with boyfriends and viewing pornographic literature," he said.

ABOUT ARU

Dr Mwalimu Musheshe, the founder and vice-chancellor of ARU, said the institution, which was established in 2006

ATTENTION

Indigenous knowledge is still important because it helps to preserve Mother Earth. There is a need for us to integrate artificial intelligence with indigenous knowledge to solve problems of water scarcity, soil degradation and other environmental problems – Dr Juuko.

and accredited by the National Council for Higher Education in 2011, has skilled over 7,000 graduates who are serving in different parts of the country.

Musheshe was happy to note that over 70% of the graduates have been absorbed in 20 districts of Uganda as rural transformation specialists.

"ARU blends traditional wisdom, science, humanities and arts into academic



PHOTO BY ANDREW MUSINGUZI

Dr Musheshe (back row, centre) with ARU graduates and guests from other universities during the 11th graduation ceremony in Kagadi district on Saturday

programmes that skill women for transformative processes in rural communities. It blends 60% theory and 40% practicals," Musheshe said.

He noted that the university offers professional discipline in rural technologies for rural transformation.

TOP GRADUANDS SPEAK OUT

The best graduands were Beatrice Aciro of bachelor of science degree in sustainable

agriculture, and Dorreen Atugonza of bachelor of rural development with a cumulative grade point average of 4.7.

They lauded their parents for supporting them and Dr Musheshe for establishing a university tailored for local needs.

"As a graduate, I can make liquid soap, sanitary pads, shoe polish and many other things. The three years of academics and one year of practicum in

rural communities has shaped me into a rural transformation specialist," Atugonza said.

Aciro said the knowledge and skills she acquired at the university have made her so innovative and creative in sustainable agriculture.

Also present at the ceremony were top administrators from Gulu, Makerere, Kyambogo and Kabale universities, as well as Mbarara University of Science and Technology.