

# EMPOWERING LEADERS

# New Vision

## ADVERTISER SUPPLEMENT

# 1,600 attend BRAC leadership congress

By Vivian Agaba

Over 1,600 A-level scholarship beneficiaries of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Programme at BRAC turned up to attend the biannual leadership congress.

The third leadership congress, which was organised by BRAC Uganda is aimed at inculcating transformative leadership concepts into young people, prepare them to be socially responsible and be able to contribute to the economic development of the country.

The three-day event took place at Uganda Martyrs' SS, Namugongo recently under the theme; Empowering leaders of social good.

Leadership role models such as Ethan Musolini, a motivational speaker and young social entrepreneurs such as Esther Kalenzi, Brenda Katwesigye, Eve Zalwango, Elizabeth Kasujja, Stephen Katende, Thomas Nsubuga, Isma Kayiza and Martin Muganzi were brought in to speak to the scholars.

### Purpose of the congress

The programme manager of Mastercard Foundation Scholars Programme at BRAC, Francis Tabu, said the leadership congress is one of the activities under the scholars programme organised after every two years to equip the beneficiaries with leadership skills to prepare them for service to their country. The programme beneficiaries are those that are academically talented, but economically challenged and come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

### About the programme

Tabu said through the programme, the organisation was able to support the leadership development of the beneficiaries through various congresses, leadership camps and support mentoring programme for the students through training of teacher mentors in the 105 schools, where the students are placed.

"We want to inculcate into these young Ugandans certain values that are deep-rooted in them by conviction so that they can apply them in their daily lives to be able to contribute to the social economic transformation of the communities they come from," he said.

"We want them to use the skills and knowledge acquired while undergoing this programme to go back to their communities and contribute towards solving community problems. This is because they know where the gaps are, the community needs, but we also want them to aspire in professions in which they can meaningfully contribute to change," Tabu added.

The secondary level scholarship programme is a partnership



## Other benefits of the programme

Apart from the leadership congress, the scholars also enjoy other benefits. BRAC organises students' community service workshops where they bring together people to train scholars in development of an entrepreneur mindset, life skills training, and issues of self-management such as personal hygiene, then educated on issues of value based and ethical leadership to bring out a holistic young person.

Every scholar that graduates from the programme has the opportunity to undertake internship at different BRAC offices with over 160 branches countrywide. The internship is full facilitated for one month and three months paid by BRAC.

"Internship gives them an opportunity to understand how a professional office environment operates. For example, we want them to learn things like time management, work ethics, communication, these are things one gets to experience when taking internship," Tabu said. After completing secondary level, they are supported through application process to join university and tertiary institutions.

So far, out of those who have graduated over the last couple of years, 82% have been able to join university for further education.

"The 18% that have not joined, we have an upcoming project, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) which is going to support them and hope to increase that number to 95% from the current 82% over the next three years," Tabu said.

He explained that TVET is basically going to give

them hands-on technical and vocational skills, either using an apprenticeship model vocational training through diploma programmes, then provide them start up kits to undertake own enterprises or gainfully economic activity.

In this programme, some scholars and mentor teachers are chosen to travel to other countries, interact with fellow scholars through exchange programs, learn from one another, connect, and strengthen leadership skills. A network of high quality secondary institutions has been developed under this programme to bring together head teachers of different schools through school leadership forum.

Headteachers are also trained in improving management capacity by sharing new trends in management, school management where we bring specialists to guide them, on how to effectively manage a school system, to avoid strikes, unrest amongst teachers themselves to help them teachers, under take their work more effectively while looking into their welfare," he said.

Scholars have also been involved in tree-planting in different districts, working closely with district officials as part of give back activities, organised day of service every year (November 8), go to communities, identify a need, clean up hospitals, visit babies homes and offer materials from their contributions.

"Working closely with ministry of education and sports is a very critical aspect of this, we have an agreement with them and they have been very supportive over all these years in," Tabu said.

**The scholars who benefited from the BRAC leadership conference and other officials.** Photo by Shamim Saad

between Mastercard Foundation, a global foundation based in Toronto, Canada and BRAC.

In Uganda, it was rolled out in 2013 and launched by then education minister Jessica Alupo, with the goal of achieving social-economic transformation of communities, through provision of high quality education. The objective is to select 5,000 young Ugandans to access and complete quality secondary education and also be supported to transit into universities. Scholars are given school fees, all scholastic materials and pocket money. "We have achieved the objective of selecting the beneficiaries, we already have 5,000 scholars on programme, out of these, and four cohorts on the programme have graduated from secondary education.

A total of 1,606 students completed their secondary education and currently, we have 3,394 enrolled on the program in the 105 secondary schools," Tabu added.

### Qualifications

To be considered for this scholarship, one has to excel academically, with first grade, should be economically disadvantaged and, therefore, unable to access secondary education.

Thirdly, the individual has to demonstrate leadership aspirations by application, for instance, what they plan to do for their communities in future, are they able to identify a need in their communities, talk about it and be able to contribute towards change.

### Scholars tipped

Speaking as the guest of honour at the opening ceremony of the leadership congress, the state minister for higher education, John C. Musingo, tipped scholars on what it takes to be an effective and

efficient leader.

Musingo said as young leaders, they always have to be optimistic, adding that negative thoughts effect their emotions and subsequently, affect behavior, which explains the frequent and unsatisfactory behavior among the youth today.

"Let us remain positive, after all, optimism is what is needed to change the way this world works," he said.

He told the scholars to know when to listen to others and when to listen to themselves, noting that sometimes, majority may not represent the right thinking.

"Also, never let someone tell you, you cannot do something, if something is not out there, go and create it. Do not sit on your creative ideas, explore opportunities, innovate, stand up to the challenges in your community and you will be amazed at the contribution you can make," he said.

Musingo asked the scholars to always endeavour to inspire others, be exemplary, be ambitious and not afraid to take risks, should be able to define goals, set plans on how to achieve them and work hard towards realising them.

As a leader, never push others to do what you are not willing to do, connecting with others should always be a priority, diverse networks of friends comes with opportunities everyone benefits from a big network.

He reminded them that leadership is about knowing the way, showing the way and going the way, adding that a leader who cannot tell the people the bitter truth and guide them to prosperity, is not worthy having the privilege of being a leader.

Musingo's message was contained in a speech read by the assistant commissioner for secondary education, ministry of education, Alfred Kyaka.

Musingo applauded BRAC and Mastercard Foundation for bringing together young people not only to attain quality secondary education but also giving them many opportunities including leadership skills so that they develop holistically.

### Voices from scholars

Jemima Peace Aguro, a Senior Six student at Iganga S.S, who is also the former headgirl, said she had learnt three things from being a leader, sacrifice, how to deal with people and prioritising.

Joseph Odongo, 17, at Uganda Martyrs SS, said through the pocket money BRAC gives them every month of sh75,000, he saved and has been able to start a piggery/poultry project at home.

Judith Eyoa Onzia, 22, the alumnus joined the programme in 2013, with no hope of further education because her parents could not afford fees. She completed her degree and wants to pursue a master's degree in economics.