

ICED 2010: Summary Report

The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago, the second best time is now! **African Proverb**

Nassozi Kiyaga gave a Keynote address on **Unique Challenges in Developing Countries** at the 21st International Congress on the Education of the Deaf held in Vancouver, Canada (July 18th – 22, 2010). She is an Alumni of Gallaudet University which proudly sponsored her Keynote.



During the Conference, Nassozi was engaged in the following activities:

1. **The International Leaders Summit** attended by participants from 29 countries, was held at Wosk Centre for Dialogue. Dr. Roslyn Rosen and Nassozi each presented the *Summary Comments* giving a synopsis of the themes and ideas presented at the Summit: Roz from the Western World perspective and Nassozi from the Developing World perspective.
2. **Keynote address:** Unique Challenges in the Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals in Developing Countries;
3. **Symposium:** Deaf People Around the World: *Educational and Social Perspectives*. Nassozi was part of a symposium team of experts from different parts of the world. She focused her presentation was on *Deaf Education in sub-Saharan Africa*.
4. **Platform Session:** Screening of the documentary: “Deaf: Hear Me!” filmed in India. Nassozi was associate producer and production manager of the film.

A Keynote address focusing on sub-Saharan Africa: Examples from East Africa.

The developing world is a vast and multi-complex region where eighty percent of the world’s people with hearing loss live. Politically, economically, geographically, culturally and socially, it is a cauldron of diversities; therefore to understand unique challenges that influence the education of deaf and hard of hearing individuals, it is important to understand the environments in which they exist. However, it is important to note that amidst the challenges are remarkable efforts made towards positive developments.

Sub-Saharan Africa is a region that possesses enormous potential wealth and brilliant, dynamic human resources. There is no place, on the face of the earth that is as beautiful and abundantly endowed as Africa! However, it is a tragic irony that this **Cradle of Humanity** is the world’s least developed. According to the United Nations Human Development indices, twenty six of the world’s lowest ranking countries in human development are African, with poverty affecting over half of the population. This is the only region in the world where school enrolment is falling and illiteracy is common;

- With the world's weakest infrastructure, the region is confronted with critical health issues: preventable and treatable diseases, such as malaria, measles and meningitis continue to cause major challenges. Some diseases that lead to hearing loss are due to lack of access to medical treatment, poor public health services, unhygienic living conditions or wrong traditional practices used in the treatment of ear diseases;
- A perpetual cycle of poverty exacerbates challenges, especially in rural areas where the highest percentage of deaf and hard of hearing individuals live. Concerned about survival and meeting basic human needs, most families cannot cater for the needs of a child with a hearing loss;
- **The HIV & Aids** pandemic has by far caused the most devastating effects: *According to the UN, about 22.5 million Africans were living with AIDS by the end of 2007.* The continent that bears seventy percent of the world's HIV & Aids cases yet is home to only ten percent of the world's populations. AIDS has terribly decimated Africa's population and greatly reduced life expectancy as infection rates continue to rise in some countries. With catastrophic implications, AIDS threatens Africa's heritage, its educational, economic and social progress;
- Although there has been a significant decline in armed and violent conflicts, civil wars in many countries have created humanitarian disasters: maiming and killing thousands of people each year, wiping out livelihoods and making any kind of development difficult. It's an ironic absurdity that some governments divert huge amounts of money on military spending instead of improving healthcare and education: *Poor Uganda, so well-armed, to spend over US\$300 million buying six fighter jets.* J. Buwembo – **The East African: Opinion.** April 19-25, 2010.
- Education systems struggle under politically unstable and dysfunctional governments many of which are characterised by grotesque corruption. The headline news in the **Daily Nation** (Kenya's leading newspaper) revealed: *The Free Education Scandal: How officials looted schools' millions meant for poor children's learning* (Saturday Nation, 19 December, 2009). Such rampant embezzlement, mismanagement and unaccountability of public and donor funds gravely contribute to challenges in education. That *Africa is not poor, but poorly managed*, is a true statement by Liberian President, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.
- Cultural superstitions and negative perceptions about deafness result in the marginalisation of children in families desperate under the burden of stigma. Due to profound ignorance and lack of information to understand hearing loss, the child is excluded from all life opportunities. Gender bias and discrimination further subordinate females, doubly disadvantaged because of deafness and being female;
- Incompetently run African economies create impoverishment as the education of deaf and hard of hearing children is not considered a viable investment. Hardly any government funds are allocated for the provision of quality education, trained teachers and instructional resources. This is evident from the very few special schools, lack of specialised teachers and the abysmal number of deaf children attending school, and high drop-out levels;
- The type of education children receive is inferior and sub-standard. It fails to equip them with knowledge and productive skills to prepare them for a future working life. Low expectations about their intellectual abilities subject the majority to a deplorable life of dependency and deprivation.

Positive developments:

Despite the challenges, sub-Saharan Africa is a region of enormous potentials and great optimism. Africans possess immense abilities; therefore it is important to acknowledge improvements made in the provision of appropriate educational services, and other developments geared towards the overall welfare of deaf and hard of hearing individuals. The East African Community, emerging as a strong regional economic and social bloc, is creating great opportunities vital to linking professional personnel, networking and sharing knowledge for good practices. Each country is making concerted efforts to raise the profile of Special Education:

- Special Needs Educational Institutes, particularly in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania are increasing enrollment of deaf and hard of hearing students, investing in teacher training, Interpreter and Sign Language Research programmes. Adult literacy programmes for the deaf are providing opportunities for individuals within East Africa;
- Governments and non-government organisations are establishing more schools and increasing the number of deaf and hard of hearing children attending school in East Africa;
- Proactive individuals and interest groups are facilitating the mobilisation and growth of grassroots and national organisations of the deaf, which is enabling deaf communities and individuals to become instrumental in steering change, advocate for their rights, fight against socio-economic discrimination and remove barriers to progress. Increasing strengths and potentials among the deaf is an indicator of improvements made to champion their cause and work in partnership with national and international Disability Movements and the World Federation of the Deaf.

While the International Labour Organisation states that Africa has the world's largest percentage of unemployed, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor finds Africa the second most entrepreneurial region in the world, just behind South America. Therefore, entrepreneurship potentials of deaf individuals is an opportunity for personal and national economic development – a tool to fight against poverty:

- **DEAF LINK UGANDA** a non-profit, grassroots Community Based Organisation is spearheading efforts to promote deaf and hard of hearing entrepreneurs and respond to challenges of economic deprivation and inequalities. Our entrepreneurial initiative, **Tweyambe Deaf Development Project (TDDP)** is a micro-credit loan project that provides small loans to deaf and hard of hearing individuals with existing small scale businesses of their own. The project aims to increase income and boost economic capacities; it's been successful in finding local solutions to local problems, promoting self-employment, overcoming unemployment, poverty, dependency and exploitation. The organisation pays particular attention to support deaf female entrepreneurs, those living in urban slums and rural deaf communities. In addition, our **Skills Training and Employment Project (2009)** under **Deaf Link Uganda – Eastern**, enabled rural deaf individuals acquire productive skills for employment.

*You will have an opportunity to gain deeper insight into Presentations by professional experts from different parts of the world in the upcoming **Partners in Education** publication entitled: **The Work**.*

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A Memorable Experience:

It was the first time for me to attend a prestigious conference of this nature that brings together (once every five years) a gathering of deaf, hard of hearing and hearing educators, scholars and many other related professionals. Since 1878, the International Congress on the Education of the Deaf has become the prime international forum for both best practice and cutting-edge research. To actively participate and contribute to the Congress was a great privilege and honour that will remain infinitely memorable to me. The climax of the Congress was the presentation of the Vancouver 2010 Resolution, a profoundly remarkable achievement marking ***A New Era of Deaf Participation and Collaboration*** <http://www.milan1880.com/Resources/iced2010statement.pdf>

Vancouver, our ICED 2010 host city, is an exceptionally beautiful city – One of the World's Finest! It was a great joy to bask in the warm hospitality and graciousness of the Canadian People and most especially our Canadian colleagues, who worked exceedingly hard to host such an impressive and highly professional Conference. It was a marvelous opportunity to network and interact both on a professional and personal level, sharing our knowledge and diversity: a truly **Once-in-a-Lifetime** Experience!

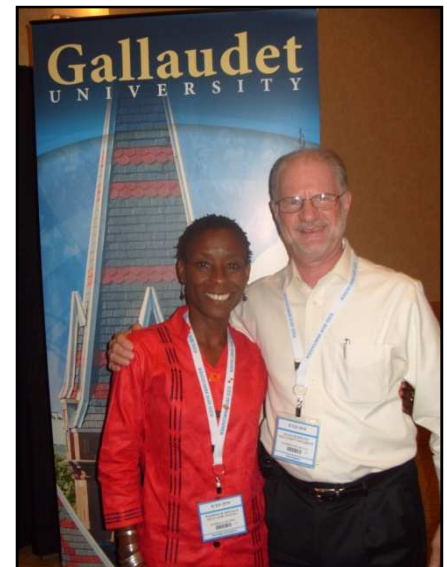
My special thanks and gratitude goes to Gallaudet University for their generosity in sponsoring my Keynote address and enabling my participation in a Congress that gave Developing Countries opportunities to effectively contribute throughout.



Deaf Link Uganda – Eastern:
Sharing experiences working with rural deaf communities.



ICED participants interact and network during coffee break.



At ICED: Nassozi with Dr. T. Alan Hurwitz Gallaudet's tenth president.

If you want to walk fast, walk alone;
if you want to go far, walk with others. **African Proverb**