

# Makerere scholars, locals to partner in rural development

BY STEPHEN OTAGE  
sotage@ug.antionmedia.com

**KAMPALA.** Makerere University administration says it has started a multi-disciplinary internship programme, where students from different academic disciplines go to the local communities and engage in solving problems.

Speaking at the opening ceremony for the Research for Development Conference on Tuesday, Prof William Bazeyo, the deputy vice chancellor in-charge of Finance and Administration, said they are taking students to the field such that they work closely with the communities to identify problems and solve them together.

"We are looking at what hurts man. If it is food or water, how do we solve the problem? By getting the facts right. The community may be having water, but they may not know how to use and sustain its sources," he said.

Prof Bazeyo added that they are no longer doing research for promotions, but students from different

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**PROF WILLIAM BAZEYO, DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR IN-CHARGE OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION IN MAKERERE**

disciplines such as agriculture, law and medicine will be grouped together to work with the communities.

"We did work in Bududa and Butaleja districts. We worked with locals and they were able to leave the places before floods and landslides struck," he said.

## Major challenge

Dr Dorothy Okello, a senior lecturer at Makerere College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology, who doubles as the director innovations and research at Makerere University Resilience Africa Network, said they found lack of leadership and empowerment as a major hindrance during

their inquiry into why university research was having no impact on society.

"How do we identify the problems? How do we enable the community to create the solution? How do we translate this into usable information? And how does that solution get to the community?" she said, summarising the questions that prompted them to revise research approach.

The scholars are as a result now working with the communities to modify their traditional coping mechanisms to problems into simple modern technologies.

Dr Elioda Tumwesigye, the Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, told the researchers that government in March set up a committee to support innovators, who have ideas that solve pressing societal problems and who will be funded to actualise their concepts under a research and innovation framework.

"[The] government is going to appropriate money for innovators to fund basic research, technology development and commercialisation," he said.