

## Gusii Diaspora Takes Action on Poor Education Performance in Gusiland

Arlington, Texas

July 4, 2009

Attendees at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual **Gusii Educational Advancement & Resources (GEAR)** have resolved to take action to address the poor performance of schools in Gusii schools in national examinations. Among proposed actions will be the adoption of schools to raise the standards of performance, creating model schools, and investing in early childhood centres. Others include the establishment of library resources and mentoring students.

The conference urged greater involvement and collaboration of community leaders and professionals in mentoring students. They decried political and religious interference in the running of schools and urged politicians to recognize the negative impact of their actions and the disservice this caused the students.



Some Attendees at the 4th GEAR Conference

Kenyan Certificate of Primary Examination (KCPE) performance data showed that between the years of 2000 and 2007 the then three Gusii districts (Nyamira, Kisii Central and Gucha) consistently featured among the ten worst performers. "Nyamira was in the ten worst performers in all the seven years while Gucha and Kisii Central appeared six times in the category in that period," said Dr Joshua Bagaka the GEAR Chairman. Dr Tabitha Otieno presented research that showed that teacher dedication, access to resources and parental involvement enhanced performance while lack of resources, poor teacher commitment and poor learning environment caused poor performance.

In her keynote speech, Dr Truphena Choti, said that only 5% of high school attendees from Gusii make it to the university while 57% score no better than a D in the Kenya Certificate of Education (KCE) examination. In Nyamira, only 35% got a C or better grade. She wondered what happens to the large population of school dropouts and those that fail in examinations. Public schools were the worst culprits in this respect.

Causes identified include lack of parental involvement, poor learning environment, demoralized teachers, clanism and nepotism, political and religious interference in the running of schools, and lack of resources (books) and facilities (laboratory and workshops) for effective teaching. She cautioned over the mushrooming academies saying they drill children for passing examinations rather than learning.

“The poor economic environment is also a factor,” said Peter Isoe, adding that “there is lack of student motivation in part because even some that have pursued education remain unemployed and compete for menial jobs with those that never went to school.” Dr Matunda Nyanchama urged more incisive assessment of causal factors to determine those with the greatest impact. Doing so would help determine allocation of effort, attention and resources. He further called for the scrapping of the 85% rule that requires schools to select not more than 15% of their students from outside the district. The rule confines students to their home districts and never gives them a chance to grow with national perspectives.

Prof. Meshack Sagini called for awareness of potential limitations of what is achievable by GEAR. He added that some systemic issues need collaboration with others beyond the means of GEAR.

Hebron Mosomi urged GEAR to identify achievable goals in the short and long term and focus time, effort and resources as necessary. He cautioned against “biting more than could be chewed”.

In his luncheon speech Dr Omari Onyango examined the community’s strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats. The region’s fertile land, hard working population and risk-taking nature of the people need to be tapped for education attainment. However, the dwindling land holdings present major threats to economic performance. He cited the lack of collaboration and ongoing fragmentation as an impediment to pooling of resources for the common good. It is important that the community, professionals and the government worked together towards common goals and achievements.

Dr Kefa Otiso presented data on Kenyans in America, saying that rootedness in the Diaspora would enhance the community’s ability to address problems of education in Gusii. Those in the Diaspora should not forget the challenges of education and attainment in their adopted communities.

In working on solutions, the conference resolved to work with all stake holders as a matter of urgency.



GEAR Committee Officials Present

“This will be in line with the planned 2010 Annual GEAR Conference to be held in Gusii, Kenya, said Dr Nyanchama. The proposed 2-day conference will bring together

educationists, professionals, and religious and community leaders to chart a common course in addressing problems of education in the area.

“The event will also mark the launch of GEAR in Kenya,” said Dr Nyanchama. Other speakers included Jared London who offered suggestions on collaboration and Augustus Otworu who presented a historical perspective on GEAR’s founding.

Organizers of the Dallas conference Meshack Boraya, Joshua Mochache, Hebron Mosomi and Amos Abuga expressed satisfaction with the conduct of the conference, and resolved to invest efforts to raise money for GEAR initiatives. In this respect, they have planned a fundraising dinner on Saturday July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009 in Arlington, Texas.

**Check GEAR website for further updates.**

Related stories: **The Launch of GEAR.**