

1st Student- Led Conference Held At Cavs

The University of Nairobi (UoN)- Center for Sustainable Dryland Ecosystems & Societies (CSDES) opened its doors to the first ever student-led conference whose motto was *preparing the next generation for dryland sustainability*. The conference was held from 29th-30th May, 2013 at the College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences (CAVS), Upper Kabete.

The two day conference on Transformative Education, Research and Engagement for Dryland Resilience and sustainability organized by the University of Nairobi (UoN) Students and Colorado State University (CSU), brought together students and leaders from various diverse sectors.

Prof. Isaac M. Mbeche, Deputy Vice-Chancellor in charge of student affairs opened the conference on behalf of the Vice ó Chancellor. The DVC was optimistic that the discussion of research findings and research ideas shared in the conference would contribute to renewed thinking on how to release the potential of drylands.

Dr. David Nkediye, Governor Kajiado County, gave a keynote address on empowering the underrepresented groups for sustainability on dryland ecosystem & societies. He emphasized on the critical role of higher education if the counties have to take off. öThere is need to bring expertise with good work ethics, the right attitude and effort into place. Young people and students need to come on board so as to achieve the right resultö. Dr. Nkediye said.

Student interns who had gone for field work in the drylands like Narok, Garissa, Isiolo, Samburu and Kajiado narrated their experience in the fields. One common problem was lack of infrastructure and networks in place. There was also the problem of language barrier.

The students emphasized on the need to evaluate relationship between human and wildlife and to strategize opportunities like wildlife farming and eco-tourism potential that will lead to sustainable wildlife utilization. The need to train livestock herders on herd management also came up. It was evident that people living in the dryland still faced mobility hardships, insecurity and illiteracy.

While giving her closing remarks, Prof. Agnes Mwangøombe, Principal, CAVS acknowledged the efforts of the students and all the participants in organizing and making the 1st student conference a success. She called on all the stakeholders to make the conference an annual event. öI challenge the CSDES and other stakeholders within the University to facilitate the student conference to become an annual event just like it is at Colorado State University. It is my hope that the conference presentations will be published in proceedings that can be one of the many to follow so that the outcomes of the conference will be widely disseminated.ö She concluded.