

**International Women's Day Speech**  
**Theme: "Invest in the Girl Child Cultural Transformation for Global Gain"**  
**University of Kisubi – 8th March 2026**

Vice-Chancellor Br Dr Deogratias MUGEMA, Members of senior management, the Dean of Students, Guild President and your team, Guild Minister for Ethics, Gender and Culture, religious leaders, members of staff, the students, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I am honored to join you as **Chief Guest** as we celebrate **International Women's Day** here at the University of Kisubi under the theme: **"Invest in the Girl Child through Cultural Transformation for Global Gain."** I am a testimony of the theme, if cultural transformation would have not taken place, I wouldn't be today's Chief Guest and a senior police officer making global impact.

I commend the Vice-Chancellor and his team, the founding body for organizing this event and the students for making the day colorful embodying the theme and the spirit of celebrating the achievements of women in the society.

As we reflect on today's theme Nelson Mandela said *"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world"*. The girl child is not just a beneficiary of development; she is a catalyst for it. By empowering her, we unlock a cycle of progress that benefits families, communities, and nations.

As Malala Yousafzai once said, "One child, one teacher, one book, and one pen can change the world." In Uganda, initiatives like the Girl Child Education Programme have shown remarkable impact. Girls who attend school are more likely to; delay marriage and childbirth, healthier families and communities which ultimately contribute to socioeconomic transformation and growth and above all global peace and security agenda. These outcomes aren't just statistics; they represent real lives transformed. When girls thrive, communities thrive.

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### **1. Why Invest in the Girl Child?**

As Amartya Sen reminds us, *"Nothing is as important today... as adequate recognition of political, economic and social participation and leadership of women."*

Investing in the girl child is not charity; it is **smart development**:

- a. Educated girls earn more, marry later, have healthier children.
- b. When girls stay in school, child marriage and child mortality decrease.

So, we must invest in:

- a. **Education**
  - b. **Health and safety**
  - c. **Skills, technology, and leadership development**
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## **2. Culture: What to Keep, What to Change**

Our cultures carry rich values: community, dignity, solidarity. Yet some practices—early marriage, preference for boys’ education, silencing girls—are harmful.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie reminds us: *"Culture does not make people. People make culture."*

This means we can:

- a. **Affirm** what is life-giving in our traditions
- b. **Reject** practices that deny the dignity of girls
- c. **Create** new norms that honour both our heritage and today’s realities

True culture must **defend**, not diminish, the girl child.

Let's redefine traditions like bride price, ensuring they uplift girls, not commodify them, let's celebrate marriage ceremonies where families come together, but let's also ensure girls aren't pressured into early or forced marriages. Let's preserve the beauty of traditional wear you exhibited here today like the Kanzu and Gomesi, the modern attire while promoting girls' freedom to choose their paths.

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## **3. Faith, Ethics, and Human Dignity**

Our celebration began with Mass, reminding us that every person is created with **inherent dignity**. Martha Nussbaum argues that a just society must secure basic “capabilities” for all—education, bodily integrity, and participation. Any belief or practice that treats the girl child as less valuable is not culture; it is **injustice**. The Bible says in Galatians 3:28 “There’s neither Jew or Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”.

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## **4. Culture, Technology, and the Global Age**

Today’s programme—traditional marriage drama, traditional wear, dance, and “culture and technology”—shows that we can be **rooted and modern** at once. We can now harness technology to promote and invest in the girl child through cultural transformation for global gain digitally by telling stories that shape inclusion, diversity, justice and achievements that girls can thrive and making a contribution to the globe.

Kwame Gyekye speaks of “critical loyalty” to tradition, let’s love it, but question it. In the digital age, investing in the girl child must include; **Digital literacy and critical**

**thinking** by protecting girls from online abuse and using technology to link local culture to **global opportunities**

Cultural transformation is key in shifting mindsets to value girls' education, health, and rights. In Uganda for example, tradition and modernity coexist – from the elegance of Gimesi to the buzz of online marketing and sales platforms. As we champion girls' empowerment, let's blend heritage with innovation. Let's ensure technology becomes a tool for progress, not a wedge between cultures. Imagine girls coding apps to solve local challenges, or entrepreneurs using social media to showcase traditional crafts.

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## **5. The Role of the University of Kisubi**

Universities are **engines of cultural change**. You can:

1. **Promote girls' access and success**
    - Scholarships, mentorship, women's leadership programmes
  2. **Ensure safety and dignity**
    - Strong anti-harassment policies and support systems
  3. **Teach and study culture critically**
    - Courses and research on gender, culture, and justice
  4. **Engage families and communities**
    - Outreach to explain the benefits of educating girls
    - Dialogue with cultural and religious leaders
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## **6. Charge to the Students**

To the girls:

Your value is **non-negotiable**. You are not guests in the story of this nation; you are **co-authors**. As Mercy Amba Oduyoye says, African women are "bearers of culture and agents of transformation."

To the boys:

Investing in the girl child is not a threat; it is a **gain for all**. True manhood is measured by **respect, partnership, and support**, not dominance.

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## **7. From Local Action to Global Gain**

What is done here in Kisubi has **global impact**:

- a. Educated girls become doctors, engineers, policy-makers, innovators, law enforcement officers, politicians, economists, environmentalists that serve in all spheres of human security.
- b. Empowered women build peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable societies.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres has said, "*Gender equality is... a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.*" By transforming culture and investing in girls, we contribute to that foundation.

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## 8. Call to Action

### 1. To leaders and institutions

- a. Back your speeches with policies, budgets, and enforcement that protect and promote girls.

### 2. To families and communities

- a. Commit that **no girl** is removed from school for early marriage or domestic work.
- b. Celebrate your daughters' education and achievements.

### 3. To students

- a. Speak up when you see injustice.
- b. Use art, technology, and student leadership to model a culture of **equality, justice and dignity**.

Paulo Freire said, "*Education changes people. People change the world.*" **You** are those people.

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When girls thrive in this mix, communities thrive, and our nations prosper. As Kemi Adetiba puts it, "The future of a nation is determined by the status of its women and girls." Let's work together to ensure every girl child has access to quality education, healthcare, and opportunities. Let's challenge stereotypes, break barriers, and create pathways for girls to lead. Together, let's invest in the girl child – for global gain.

Today, I call on each of you: support a girl child in your community. Sponsor her education, mentor her dreams, or advocate for her rights. Let's turn words into action – let's change lives!

## Conclusion

**Investing in the girl child** is investing in the future of Uganda and the world. **Transforming culture** is our collective responsibility and the **Global gain** begins here and today with the choices we make at University of Kisubi.

Thank you, and may God bless you all.

For God and my country.

## Happy International Women's Day



ACP Canon Dr Barbara ALUNGAT psc (R), PhD

**Commandant Police Senior Command and Staff College -Bwebajja/Chief Guest**