



Statement

by Prof. Mabel Imbuga PhD EBS

Vice Chancellor

Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology

during

the Official Opening Ceremony

Gemology Course

Taita Taveta Campus

Tuesday January 18, 2011

Hon. Prof. Margaret Kamar

Assistant Minister for Environment and Mineral Resources

Area M.P's

Area Local Administration

Deputy Vice Chancellors

Campus Principals

Deans of Faculties

Chairmen of Departments

Course facilitators

Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you Hon. Minister to the JKUAT Taita Taveta campus to officiate at the inaugural gemology training programme aimed at empowering our small scale miners in the Taveta Taveta region. It is also fitting for me to welcome the 20 participants who reported yesterday anxious to undertake the course.

As you may be aware, JKUAT is an institution of higher learning mainly tasked to offer higher training, conduct research and innovate to generate solution for national development. However, as a technological university, we are also actively involved in transfer of knowledge and skills crucial in enhancing Kenya's social, economic and technological transformation.

For over 15 years, JKUAT in collaboration with Japan aid agency JICA had been mounting annual training focussing on rural women farmers drawn from all districts of the country. The purpose of these training programmes was to impart modern agricultural skills to women intended to increase their agricultural production. Results from the field indicate that the programme was highly successful as demonstrated by its impact that has transformed a number of our rural farmers to venture from subsistence based agriculture to commercial production.

Similarly, we have also been offering short term technology transfer courses in value addition to our rural people. Our Chemistry Products Centre, for example, has been active in this by providing skills that has enabled our Jua Kali entrepreneurs to add value to their products. Some of the beneficiaries such as Rijoy Herbal Processors who hail from Voi are now some of the many rural people reaping the benefits of our training. Indeed, the small and medium enterprises now specialise in processing herbal products in terms of lotions, soap, creams and many more other products.

It is therefore not difficult for me to explain why JKUAT has launched this program. It is refreshing for me to inform you that this facility that is now JKUAT Taita Taveta campus was allocated to us mainly to offer training in mining and mineral processing engineering. Its was therefore natural that the programme had to relocate from the main campus in Juja to this campus- the proximity of a mineral rich belt covering most of the Counties of Coastal Kenya. This was to provide a practical exposure to the students thus enabling them to relate theory to practice which is a hallmark of our engineering disciplines. This practice is intended to offer our students firsthand experience before they graduate.

Indeed, part of our promise and obligation as we acquired this facility was to integrate the activities of the community into our curriculum. And one such obligation was our commitment to offer technical support and services to foster their mining activities.

The promulgation of the Gemology Course for Small Scale Miners is therefore a start towards the provision of technical services, particularly aimed at indigenous small scale miners. The course content has been carefully chosen after a thorough Training Needs Assessment, conducted over a two-week period by the University. The study identified key challenges faced by small scale mining groups in the area such as .

- Limited knowledge in key areas such as Mineral prospecting, selecting areas with high potential and identification of gemstones
- Cutting and polishing, Safety requirements and entering into contracts with buyers
- Managing personal finances earned from mining
- Group development/dynamics
- Applying for findings proposal development
- Marketing- little market information and value assessment

- Limited equipment and poor quality of tools thus making mining a tedious process. Even
- Other challenges include little market information and value assessment, weak groups that can't easily attract support, lack of capital to invest in mining, and poor Infrastructure

The course was therefore developed as an attempt address some of the challenges faced by small-scale miners. The aim of the course is to improve gemstone recovery and therefore increase income from mining. It is our expectation that, at the end of the Course, participants will be able to identify source rocks for the gemstones and thus reduce exploration time. In addition, the training will enable the beneficiaries to identify the various gemstones with ease, employ the most economical mining methods and initiate and manage their business and projects efficiently.

On a broader note, one of the goals of Vision 2030 is to alleviate poverty among our people. By mounting this course and others we at JKUAT are convinced that we are on track in driving the country's development agenda.

I note that for this training, we have acquired specialised equipment that cost the university over Shs 2 million to purchase. This include the Lapidary Machine, a unique gemstone cutting and polishing machine, the only equipment key to this training in the country. You will also be using a Gemology microscope with a camera to analyse the structures of the gemstones while in your practical's, you will use a gemmological kit comprising of a hardness tester, dichroscope, polariscope, refractometer and electron balance. Computers, scanners and laptops have also been acquired for this course. Your training will also include field work where I am told you will carry out practical activities related to mining.

As you may be aware, it is quite costly to mount this course due to the high cost of equipment required some of which you saw as you went round. It is therefore my hope that your Ministry would mobilise resources to support future programmes. May I pay tribute to all the organisers of this training drawn from JKUAT Research, Production and Extension division, and other faculties as well as the taita Taveta campus? Finally, I thank the facilitators and Mr. Nakara Matemu the gemologists from Tanzania who will be taking you through the practical's in gemstone cutting and polishing.

It is now my pleasure to invite the Minister to deliver his speech and open the course.

Thank You