

# Huduma Fellowship Valedictorian Speech

Delivered by Edgar Mwine on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2022

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I received the news of being selected as the valedictorian for the inaugural class of the Huduma Fellowship with a deep sense of honor and gratitude. Each one of my colleagues is as deserving of this as I am, some even more.

The fifteen of us are a diverse group of uniquely talented youthful people whose energies, convictions, and personalities are complementary.

On behalf of the fellows, we are greatly indebted to [LéO Africa Institute](#) and [Konrad Adenauer Stiftung](#), whose shoulders we stand and shine on today.

To [Awel Uwihanganye](#) and the team at LéO Africa Institute, we are very grateful for your sense of purpose and your dedication to the growth of young leaders, not only in Uganda but also on the African continent.

To [Anna Reismann](#) and everyone at Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, we appreciate your investment in ideas and the nurturing of talent. That commitment represents greater ideals and values upon which we ground a new spirit of public service.

To [Angelo Izama](#) and the entire faculty, we are thankful for the intellectually enriching content; and the knowledgeable team of facilitators that delivered the same. You shared your collective wisdom and resources with the fellows and bestowed upon us a profound feeling of obligation that today overshadows the joy of graduation.

Fellows, it is thus our obligation to discover how the insights we have shared at this fellowship are relevant to the demands for change in the world we live in and significant in **creating the Africa we want**.

Initiatives like the Huduma Fellowship create a circle of opportunities that support the aspirations of young people and shape for them a sense of having a place in the larger society. A place not only to discover oneself but also to identify causes to which they can lose themselves in the service of others.

It took the Huduma Fellowship and a back and forth with Awel for [Daraus Bahikire](#) to discover and accept that he is an activist. Yet, in the past weeks, we have seen him buried in the deepest and remotest areas of Karamoja doing vaccine activism.

The clarity with which [Cynthia Kyofuna](#) applies herself when she writes and the definitiveness based on her independent knowledge. The emotional awareness and empathy that [Dinah Achola](#) espouses when teaching a crowd of naughty little ones.

The consistent and aggressive commitment to the idea of Mazungumzo makes you think [Eric Diogo](#) is one of the highest-paid Chief Executives in town even when he is just a volunteer. For these and many other examples, I am proud of the authentic leadership that the Huduma Fellowship has bred believe the LÉO Africa institute is too.

Fellows, today we mark the formal end of the fellowship. But we graduate into a vast area of responsibility to cultivate the spirit of the Huduma Fellowship in our workspace. To reject cynicism and parochial attitudes and lead a new generation of thought leadership. We have been empowered and need to exercise that power because power only manifests in its application.

We ought to stand out even in the minority of one. Because each one of us is, as Theodore Roosevelt put it, **“the man in the arena.”** Let us go out and get our faces marred in the dust of criticism, in the sweat from hardships but convicted that the measure of our worth is in daring unceasingly and that our place will never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.

I, therefore, pledge, on behalf of the fellows, that we shall make a significant impact in the three areas (dialogue, environmental conservation, and policy & advocacy) that we have identified and committed to in the coming two years. We are delighted to be moving the fellowship from the boardroom to the grassroots.

Recognizing the extent of destruction of forest resources in Northern Uganda and the resultant environmental and climate adversity, we have chosen to take action through policy advocacy, mindset change programs, and re-afforestation campaigns.

We are also mindful that norms and values that made the public service institutions valuable, functional and selfless have begun to unwind. The undoing of these principles has left a leadership void that remains filled by the force of organized money and corruption. We commit to structured engagements through inter-generational dialogue to resolve generational warfare and address the value deficiencies in public service.

In appreciation of the knowledge and resources that the fellows have acquired at this fellowship, the Huduma class of 2021 has decided to make a tangible contribution to this most profound bank of knowledge by contributing to the LÉO Africa Institute Library.

Carriers of knowledge, books are a ladder of the progress of human beings. Libraries physically represent the value of creativity, literature, and the need to transfer knowledge from the past to the future.

To that end, on behalf of the inaugural class of the Huduma Fellowship, I would like to hand over our initial contribution of 15 books as our opening stock to the LÉO Africa Institute Library. We also commit to an annual contribution of the same number of books for the knowledge development of the Huduma Fellowship going forward.

Once again, congratulations to the inaugural Huduma Fellows, LÉO Africa Institute, and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung for seeing through a very successful birth of this grand idea.