UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

REMARKS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, PROF. PETER M.F. MBITHI DURING THE VALIDATION WORKSHOP: CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE SOCIETIES FOR WEALTH CREATION PROJECT HELD ON THURSDAY, MARCH 9, 2017 AT 4.00 P.M. IN OLD COUNCIL CHAMBER
Workshop Organizers,

Invited Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,
It gives me pleasure to preside over the official opening of this Validation Workshop on the Construction of Knowledge Societies for Wealth Creation Project. The project was conceived in 2013, three years after Kenya had adopted a new constitution in 2010 and the first government with devolved county units had been elected in office.

Principally the project was about knowledge creation in the targeted counties within the context of the 2010 constitution and a new system of government. It was about improving people’s capacities to engage in better
decision-making on the choice of their leaders, and to effectively hold their leaders to account. The project also intended to promote knowledge of the 2010 constitution with respect to human rights, governance, leadership and livelihoods.

Construction of Knowledge Societies project aims at empowering communities for wealth creation. The project is dubbed “Elimika” in Kiswahili. Its implementation framework is both innovative and adaptable and informed by the need to maximize avenues and strategies for constructing knowledge
societies in five counties namely; Nairobi, Makueni, Turkana, Kwale and Homa Bay. Led by the University of Nairobi, the initiative is collaborative and embraces partnership with diverse institutions across the country.

Broadly, the project aims at empowering communities in Kenya for prosperity by equipping them with broad based knowledge on good governance, leadership and human rights as enshrined in the Constitution of Kenya, 2010.
The specific objectives are to:

i) Gauge current levels of understanding of good governance, leadership and human rights among local community members, groups and organizations.

ii) Identify knowledge gaps and intervention (training) needs for the strengthening of communities understanding of and demand for good governance, transparent and accountable leadership and respect for human rights.

iii) Increase the communities’ level of awareness and informed participation in political, governance
and leadership processes.

iv) Improve the communities’ awareness of the basic human rights guaranteed to them by the Constitution of Kenya 2010.

The project was implemented principally as a University of Nairobi Initiative under the UNESCO Chair for Peace but with the partnership and participation of a diversity of institutions.
The evaluation of the project, which was done between January and March 2017, established that the project had achieved varied results in the five target counties of Nairobi, Kwale, Turkana, Homa Bay, and Makueni.

The project generated several knowledge products including: a comprehensive literature review that guided the baseline studies; baseline studies in the five counties; a training manual in both English and Kiswahili, and several pamphlets on Governance and Devolution, Philanthropy, Leadership and Integrity, and Bill of Rights; and an edited volume drawing from
the findings that was being finalized at the time of this evaluation.

The baselines yielded important information on areas of priority and gaps in each of the counties. This knowledge is an important resource for researchers, the county governments as well as other policy actors in the five counties.

The project has also emerged as an important link between the University of Nairobi in particular and the communities where the project was implemented.
The shifting of the learning space from university lecture theatres and seminar rooms to local communities is a significant step in bridging the divide that has traditionally characterized the relationship between the university and ordinary citizens.

The step by the project to bring the partners to the university for an interaction and feedback session as was done in 2016 was also an important recognition that knowledge does not only flow one way but that the partners at local levels also have something to share with the university.
In total, 25 University-Community meetings were held bringing together university scholars and community members and leaders. Participation in these meetings has included local community members, Imams, church leaders, governors, deputy governors, county commissioners, sub-county commissioners, chiefs and other local administrators, ward administrators, Members of County Assembly (MCAs) and schoolteachers. In Nairobi 2 meetings were held, 5 meetings in Kwale, 3 meetings in Homa Bay, 5 in Turkana and 10 in Makueni.
It is gratifying to note that scholarships and internships were extended to university researchers as well as some beneficiaries at the county level. The project awarded 5 partial scholarships, one to a PhD student, one to a master’s student, one to an undergraduate and one to a volunteer at the county offices to undertake qualifying studies at the Kenya School of Law. The support to the volunteer for studies at the Kenya School of Law appears to have yielded significant results as he is now working with the county government of Makueni as a legal officer.
4 internships were also awarded, two at the UNESCO Chair’s office and two at the county level. Despite the limited number, interviews revealed that these benefits were important in improving the skills and increasing the job opportunities of the beneficiaries.

A communication strategy was also developed under the project, which involved fruitful partnerships with various media houses such as Citizen TV, KTN and Nation TV. Many radio stations provided support to the work of the project particularly at the county levels including Radio Kaya and Radio Ranet in Kwale, and
Radio Pamoja in Nairobi Mbaitu FM, County FM and Mwata FM in Makueni. An Elimika website <http://unescochair.uonbi.ac.ke/> was also developed with information on the project.

A number of issues that require a review of the project and reflection by the Elimika Project Team have been identified from various discussions since the evaluation as follows:

1. **Linking knowledge to policy.** The project generated very high quality data and knowledge in the baseline studies as well as the book currently being
finalized. These products are an excellent resource for researcher interested in the issues in focus in these counties. However, the products do not communicate effectively to policy makers who have limited time and technical knowledge to read through the various studies. Recommendation: The project should consider translating the data and information into more easily consumable policy briefs that can be used by policy actors at the county level.

2. Information materials for community beneficiaries:

Awareness creation trainings were appreciated by
many of those interviewed. However, continuing learning would have benefitted more if reading materials in Kiswahili and English were available to the beneficiaries. These could have served as easy reference materials even after the trainers have left.

Recommendation: In phase III of the project, learning materials should be made available to the participants after the trainings.

3. Limited number of awareness creation trainings: A number of those interviewed as key informants
noted that the time taken in awareness creation training was limited as sometimes the trainers had to move from one group to the other in one day. In addition, several were of the view that they needed repeat trainings given that the beneficiaries were adult learners who were also dealing with new complex concepts and issues.

This is an issue that the Project Team needs to reflect on particularly as it may require balancing the need for repeat trainings in the areas where the project has already been implemented with the
demand to move to other areas to benefit new groups.

Recommendation: Since more trainings have cost implications, the project should consider investing more in training of local groups as trainers so that they can undertake more trainings themselves at a lower cost.

4. Building on existing interventions by other actors.

The project was correct in linking its interventions to the priorities of county governments and in enlisting the support and partnership of both
county and national government where it was implemented. In addition to county governments and national governments however, there are other factors such as civil society groups and religious groups involved in civic awareness in these counties.

Recommendation: It would be useful for the project to evaluate who else is involved in similar work so as to assess what local capacities and infrastructure exists that can complement the Elimika Project interventions
5. Scholarships. It was not clear what direct benefits were generated by the extension of academic scholarships to those they were awarded. On the other hand, short term training opportunities for those working at county levels would be a sound investment as they could easily become the local trainers for the project.

Recommendation: Phase III should have a follow up process to ensure gains from the scholarships and internships are harnessed towards fulfillment of the goals of the Elimika project.
With those remarks, I now declare this validation workshop officially open.

Thank you.

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AND
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