SPEECH BY

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EMBU,

PROF. DANIEL MUGENDI, DURING THE EMBU COUNTY CHILD PROTECTION NETWORK (ECCPN),

HELD ON

WEDNESDAY, 26TH FEBRUARY 2020,

AT 10.45 A.M.
Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel greatly honoured and delighted this morning to be part of this great initiative, The launch of Embu County Child Protection Network (ECCPN). I congratulate Embu County Area Advisory Committee (AAC), the Department of Children Services-Embu, the Development Partners, Action Aid and the School of Education and Social Sciences in the University of Embu, for organizing this event.
Ladies and Gentlemen, when I read the invitation letter to this meeting, I took note of the words “Child Protection”. This sparked a series of questions in my mind, “What does child protection mean?”, “Why do children need protection?” and “Who abuses children?”. A thought then crossed my mind, for children to be in need of protection, it means that the adults who are supposed to create a safe environment for them, are not doing so. This leaves the children vulnerable to abuse. The fact that adults who should protect children abuse them instead, is a painful reality. As such, there is a dire need for a child protection network to increase accessibility of services for abused children.

At a personal level, I am and have been a Sunday school teacher for many years. I have enjoyed working with children. Every time I go to the Sunday school class, I marvel at how honest and true children are. But, I also notice that they look “feeble” “fragile” and “weak”.
Yet, in each one of them, I sense a spirit for survival, determination and resilience. The moments I spend with the children are most fulfilling in my life (By the way I am a soil scientists). So the invitation here today, has drawn my attention to child vulnerabilities. It is also worth noting the key roles played by the Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC), which is mandated to promote children’s welfare “in the Best Interest of the Child” and the Constitution of Kenya 2010, Article 53 which addresses the matter of child protection.

The Constitution of Kenya 2010 (Article 53) recognizes the need for all children to be protected from abuse, neglect, harmful cultural practices, all forms of violence, inhumane treatment and punishment, and hazardous or exploitative labour. It further affirms that children have basic rights, including the right to education, nutrition, shelter, health care and parental care. These provisions are aligned to those cited in both the Convention on
the Rights of the Child, and the Africa Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, to which Kenya is a signatory. As such, there is need for scholars to interrogate and document issues related to child protection, as provided by the law, in an effort to inform the policy.

Upon reflecting on the role of the university in child protection, I was not sure if there is any university in this Country that has been in the forefront of this conversation this far. Yet, universities are mandated to develop capacities and generate knowledge on important issues that affect society. Matters of Children and Child protection also require practitioners who are knowledgeable, skilled and competent. As such, universities should endeavour to take the lead in generating relevant knowledge and building capacity in this field. Favourable response by universities will go a
long way in mainstreaming the work of child protection.

Ladies and Gentlemen: I also acknowledge that there are several actors both state and non-state dealing with violation against children. In the University of Embu, we have designed programmes in child studies – for example, **Master of Child Studies** – designed for child practitioners; **Bachelor of Criminology and Security Studies** – a specialization in deviance and delinquency; **Bachelor of Laws** – which has a specialization in Family Law and; the **Bachelor of Education** which for a long time has produced professionals working with children in this Country. I am aware and it is worth noting that, the School of Education and Social Sciences runs funded projects focused on: *The role of chiefs in administration of justice on crime against children; The changing face of sexual violence against children; Implication of climate change on children welfare in Mbeere region,*
among others. As such, this is what I bring to this network “**Capacity development for child practitioners and research capacity for policy formulation.**”

Ladies and Gentlemen, As I launch the Embu County Child Protection Network this morning, I am confident that:

1) The practitioners have a framework for networking and a referral system among service providers in child rights and child protection;
2) There will be coordinated effort in organizing and planning major children activities such as the Day of the African Child, the World Orphans Day and the County Children’s Assembly;
3) The Network will collect data and publish articles on child rights violations and response plan for policy formulation;
4) The Network will spearhead campaigns to sensitize the community on issues of children
rights, child protection and gender-based violence; and finally,

5) The Network will mount a media campaign against worst forms of child rights violations in Embu County (defilement, neglect, child labour and gender–based violence) among others.

With these few remarks, ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to officially Launch the Embu County Child Protection Network.

Thank you and God bless you all.

Prof. Daniel Mugendi Njiru, Ph.D
VICE-CHANCELLOR