

**PROF.**  
**MAYUNGA HABIBU**  
**HEMEDI NKUNYA**

**In Memorium. 1952 -2021**









In Memorium. 1952 -2021  
**PROF. MAYUNGA  
HABIBU HEMEDI  
NKUNYA**

# Executive Secretary's message on the death of Prof. Mayunga Habibu Hemedi Nkunya

**It was with utter shock and disbelief that I received the news of the sudden demise of Prof. Mayunga Habibu Hemedi Nkunya, the Chairman of the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU), a former Executive Secretary of TCU and the former Executive Secretary of the Inter - University Council for East Africa (IUCEA), which occurred on 20th July 2021 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.**

Prof Nkunya's legacy is the major role he played in deepening the East African Community (EAC) integration process in regard to the development of higher education quality harmonization, networking and collaboration with other sectors.

When he joined IUCEA in 2010, he developed a road map that constituted a precursor to a subsequent strategic plan: 2011/12 - 2015/16. It involved seven key strategic areas, namely (a) promoting higher education access opportunities to support the transformation of East Africa into a knowledge-based economy; (b) developing higher education quality enhancement systems to promote and maintain the region's global socio-economic competitiveness; (c) developing systems for harmonization of higher education to make East Africa a common higher education area; (d) promoting graduate employability

through strategic interventions to enhance skills, competence, social ideals, and entrepreneurship culture; (e) promoting research linked to education, post graduate training, innovation and community engagement; (f) developing and maintaining a robust higher education information management system; and (g) linking the academia to private enterprise through engagement with the public sector.

Prof. Nkunya played a big role in the harmonization of higher education quality assurance systems, and he was instrumental in the formation of the East African Quality Assurance Network (EAQAN) which brings together EAC based Quality Assurance practitioners and other regional and international stakeholders in quality assurance matters. He on the other hand spearheaded the development of policies and guidelines for academic mobility involving staff and students.

On inter-sectoral collaboration, he championed and advocated for the formation of a consortium of inter-sectoral institutions - Academia - Public - Private Partnership Forums (APPPF) and exhibitions. Since 2011 the forum brings together on an annual basis, all key players in the three sectors to bridge the gap between knowledge and technology generators and users.

These initiatives contributed to the declaration of the EAC as a Common Higher Education





A GREAT EAST AFRICAN WHO LEFT BEHIND A POWERFUL LEGACY OF COMMITMENT AND DEDICATION TO QUALITY EDUCATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF EAST AFRICANS.

Area in 2017, a key milestone for the role of Higher Education sector in the realization of the EAC Common Market Protocol.

On the institutional governance and administration, Prof. Nkunya led the review of IUCEA's legal and institutional frameworks to ensure effective operationalization of the Council's mandate. IUCEA is grateful for his outstanding contribution and promise to honor his legacy by ensuring realization of the envisaged key goals of the IUCEA mission.

Today, we mourn the passing of a great son of the United Republic of Tanzania and a great East African who has left behind a powerful

legacy of commitment and dedication to quality education for the development of East Africans.

The entire Inter-University Council for East Africa and I, stand with the bereaved family, the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania Commission for Universities, government, and the people of the United Republic of

Tanzania for the great loss at this moment of deep sorrow. May the Almighty God rest his soul in eternal peace.

**Prof. Gaspard Banyankimbona**  
Executive Secretary, IUCEA





PARTICIPANTS AU  
FORUM-ATELIER  
ORGANISÉ À  
L'INTENTION  
DES RECTEURS  
D'UNIVERSITÉS.  
PLAIDOYER POUR  
L'IMPLANTATION  
DU SYSTÈME  
D'ASSURANCE  
QUALITÉ DANS  
LES INSTITUTIONS  
D'ENSEIGNEMENT  
SUPÉRIEUR AU  
BURUNDI, NGOZI,  
HÔTEL LES  
PLATEAUX, 11-12  
MARS 20013

# Homage à Professeur **MAYUNGA HABIBU HEMEDI NKUNYA**, qui nous a quittés inopinément le 20 Juillet 2021

By Dr Sylvie Hatungimana

Pour Feu Professeur Mayunga H.H. Nkunya,

Il est difficile de rendre hommage à quelqu'un dans une langue qu'on ne maîtrise pas, et parfois, qui traduit trahit. Permettez-moi de m'exprimer en français, 2ème langue au Burundi en même temps ma langue de travail au quotidien.

S'il fallait faire une synthèse de la tranche de la vie du Professeur Nkunya, -que j'ai eu la chance de connaître, en sa qualité de Secrétaire Exécutif du Conseil Interuniversitaire de l'Afrique de l'Est « IUCEA » en sigle en anglais (2010-2015)-, je dirais ceci de lui : *Un grand érudit, un homme au grand cœur, un passionné de la qualité*

*de l'enseignement supérieur, des enseignements, des enseignants et des chercheurs. Son rêve le plus cher était de voir l'Afrique de l'Est devenir un espace harmonisé d'enseignement supérieur.* La Déclaration des Chefs d'Etat lors du Sommet de Dar es Salam le 20 mai 2017 est une preuve tangible de la réussite de son rêve. Il reste sa mise en œuvre effective et durable.

Sa disparition inopinée survenue le 20 juillet 2021 nous rend sincèrement tristes. Cependant, lui rendre hommage ne doit pas signifier nous enfermer dans la douleur ; nous devons plutôt continuer à être fidèle à ses idéaux et continuer le chemin qu'il nous a tracé, exactement comme si



nous étions encore avec lui.

En effet, de l'avoir côtoyé en ma qualité de point focal pour le Burundi (2008-2021), j'ai eu l'opportunité d'hériter de lui tout ce qu'il a donné et initié en faveur du système éducatif pour l'EAC en général et en particulier pour le Burundi que je représentais au sein du Conseil Interuniversitaire pour l'Afrique de l'Est. Et **c'est la grande richesse qui reste après son** départ : le système d'assurance qualité, l'harmonisation des programmes de l'enseignement supérieur au sein de l'EAC, la déclaration de l'EAC comme espace commun d'enseignement supérieur, sont les quelques unes de ses multiples réalisations.

Pour le Burundi, il a contribué au plaidoyer pour l'implantation du système d'assurance qualité, lorsqu'en mars 2013, il a été accueilli en personnalité digne de son rang avec les danses des Tambours ; c'était à Ngozi, à l'hôtel les Plateaux, lors du Forum-atelier regroupant les recteurs des universités, témoins du démarrage du processus d'assurance qualité dans les institutions d'enseignement supérieur œuvrant au Burundi.

Les cérémonies avaient été rehaussées par deux Dames Ministres : Honorable Annonciate SENDAZIRASA, Ministre de la Fonction publique, du travail et de la sécurité sociale et Honorable Léontine NZEYIMANA, Ministre à la Présidence chargée des Affaires de la Communauté Est Africaine.

Le travail ne s'est pas arrêté là, « IUCEA » a continué à appuyer le Burundi dans la production et la traduction en français d'un des outils d'assurance qualité : « *A Road map to Quality : Hand book for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. Volume 1 & 2* » (Bujumbura, 2015).

Le processus d'harmonisation de plus d'une trentaine de programmes de formation, initié au Burundi depuis 2015 ainsi que la culture de l'évaluation des institutions et des programmes sont des œuvres initiés sous sa gouvernance.

Je reste convaincue qu'il n'est pas parti ; il est juste passé dans une autre pièce, là où il pourra continuer à nous inspirer.



Prof. Mayunga Nkunya en compagnie de l'Honorable Léontine NZEYIMANA, Ministre à la Présidence Chargée des Affaires de la Communauté Est Africaine, Forum-atelier de Ngozi, Hôtel les plateaux, 11-12 mars 2013

Le plus grand et sincère hommage que tout acteur de l'éducation peut lui rendre, c'est de poursuivre l'ouvrage qu'il a commencé et qui reste inachevé : l'amélioration de la qualité de l'éducation en général et de l'enseignement supérieur en particulier, afin de permettre aux jeunes des pays de la Communauté Est Africaine d'acquérir des compétences qui leur donnent des opportunités d'être compétitifs sur le marché du travail et ainsi promouvoir leur autonomie sociale et économique.

Je termine cet hommage du Professeur Nkunya par ces mots de l'écrivain et poète Français Christian Bobin (janvier 2019) : « *Vous pouvez mettre en terre un vivant, mais vous ne pouvez pas mettre en terre ses paroles, vous ne pouvez pas mettre en terre son cœur...* »

**Dr Sylvie Hatungimana**

Directeur des Services Académiques, Université du Burundi.





HE GAVE US  
THE GIFT OF  
CONFIDENCE,  
EXCITEMENT,  
AND SELF-  
WORTH  
BECAUSE  
YOU THINK  
OF HOW YOU  
MATTER AT  
WORK THAT  
GOES SO  
MUCH DEEPER  
THAN JUST  
WORK.

# Nkunya thrived off making his staff happy

By Dorine Rwehera

**Where do I start? This was a man famous for his meetings that ran over till 11:00pm, workdays that stretched into work nights/dinners/happy hours that sometimes ran till 3am and were just fun.**

This was a man who loved and cared for his staff. He valued each one of us, in fact he thrived off making us happy. You could tell it was the joy of his life to upscale the then (2011) IUCEA salary structure to that of the East African Community, which was far better. His belief in us (staff) was steadfast, his love for IUCEA was contagious.

He created a culture of inclusivity, comradery, and fun. He made us want to come to work because we saw how he wanted to be there

too, and how happy he was to see us. We got the sense that he didn't feel like "I HAVE to come to work" but instead he saw it as "I GET to come to work today." It is an experience one had to be there to truly understand, and that's why I believe that those of us who have worked under Prof. Nkunya feel some sort of unspoken bond about a time in our lives that no words can entirely describe. What a legacy!

This is a man who took pride in bringing out the best in his co-workers. By doing so he gave us the gift of confidence, excitement, and self-worth because you think of how you matter at work that goes so much deeper than just work.

Go well...stay well...always, Prof. Mayunga H.H. Nkunya.

*Dorine Rwehera is the Scholarship Officer/EAC Scholarship Programme*



# He positioned IUCEA into a Central Role to Coordinate Higher Education

**By Prof. Nelson Ijumba**

**I received the news of Prof. Nkunya's passing with disbelief, great shock, and sadness. We have been friends and colleagues since we were students and subsequently staff at the University of Dar es Salaam. We interacted even more after he was appointed Executive Secretary of IUCEA. We worked together on several initiatives about quality and harmonization of higher education in the EAC Region.**

Prof. Nkunya was very much committed to quality in higher education and the harmonization of standards in the Region. Among the policies that he personally put his energy into was the Higher Education Qualifications Framework for East Africa and the Common Higher Education Area. Prof. Nkunya provided excellent leadership in positioning IUCEA to play a central role in the coordination of higher education in the region. He believed in the importance of good leadership of HE institutions. It is for this reason that he was committed to various capacity building initiatives for the leaders of higher education institutions. Prof Nkunya was also committed to ensuring that HE formed effective partnerships with industry for relevance and impact.

He was warm hearted, good natured and friendly, qualities which enabled him to form many personal and professional networks. His sense of humour will be highly missed too. May the Lord rest him in eternal peace and give comfort to his family, friends, and colleagues.

***Professor Nelson Ijumba, Emeritus***  
*Professor - University of Rwanda*

*Honorary Professor University of KwaZulu Natal*



**HE WAS WARM HEARTED, GOOD NATURED AND FRIENDLY, QUALITIES WHICH ENABLED HIM TO FORM MANY PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS**





# Nkunya was humble

**By Jolly Atuhaire Kamwesigye**

In April 2015 I received a phone call from Prof. Nkunya. “Hello Madam, my name is Mayunga Nkunya, the Executive Secretary of Inter University Council for East Africa. I am calling to inform you that you were our best candidate for the position you applied for. Please pick your appointment letter from our office. Congratulations.”

It was such a surprise. I had worked in HR for almost 20 years and changed employment four times but had never received a call direct from a CEO. It had always been the HR or the Secretary to the CEO who would call me to pick the appointment.

Prof. Nkunya was such a humble man and hard working. Although I only worked with him for five months, I saw his commitment. He would spend sleepless nights to read all documents sent to him and would give guidance on each document sent to him.

I will always remember how he allocated me

the current office I occupy. I was only one month in IUCEA when we shifted offices from the East African Development Bank building in the city centre to Kyambogo. IUCEA had not allocated an office to the Principal HR Officer since the position was new. Prof. Nkunya took me to a self-contained office that had been earmarked for the Deputy Executive Secretary (Finance and Administration). He said, “Madam Jolly, I am giving you this office. I am sure by the time the Deputy Executive Secretary is on board, your contract will have ended.” It is coming to seven years since that day and I believe that the ‘prophecy’ is being fulfilled.

Prof. Nkunya was so committed to Higher education that even after retirement from IUCEA, he never retired from higher education. He worked tirelessly to promote the quality of education in East Africa and beyond.

We will miss you Prof, Nkunya. Fare thee well.

*Jolly Atuhaire Kamwesigye is the Principal Human Resource Officer at IUCEA*



# He was a great leader who cared about people

**By Dr. Jonathan Mbwambo**

Prof. Nkunya was a Professor of Chemistry and a leader in higher education transformation in his own country, Tanzania and the East African Region. Prof. Nkunya had a passion for higher education development and spent most of his time at the Inter-University Council for East Africa, Tanzania Commission for Universities and the University of Dar es Salaam to build systems and instruments for quality assurance. He didn't take this mission because it was easy. Rather, he took this mission for the good of higher education in East Africa. His passion and hard work led him to becoming the great leader that we so miss.

Prof. Nkunya loved people and was willing to do the hard work it takes to build all kinds of relationships. He intentionally built the kind of relationships in the communities he worked in that would bring people together and work for a common vision. Because he was so good at relationship building, things got done with excellence.

It would have been easy for him to slip into authoritative power mode, but Prof. Nkunya's humility was the real power in the relationships that he cultivated. As a human being, Prof. Nkunya made his share of mistakes. The difference between him and other leaders is that he pondered those mistakes and quietly learned from them. They weren't made a second time, and he grew and developed because he had a learning mindset.

His humanity extended to his family, friends, and anyone else who knew him. People liked him. He was easy to know, an open book. We all thought we knew him, but now we

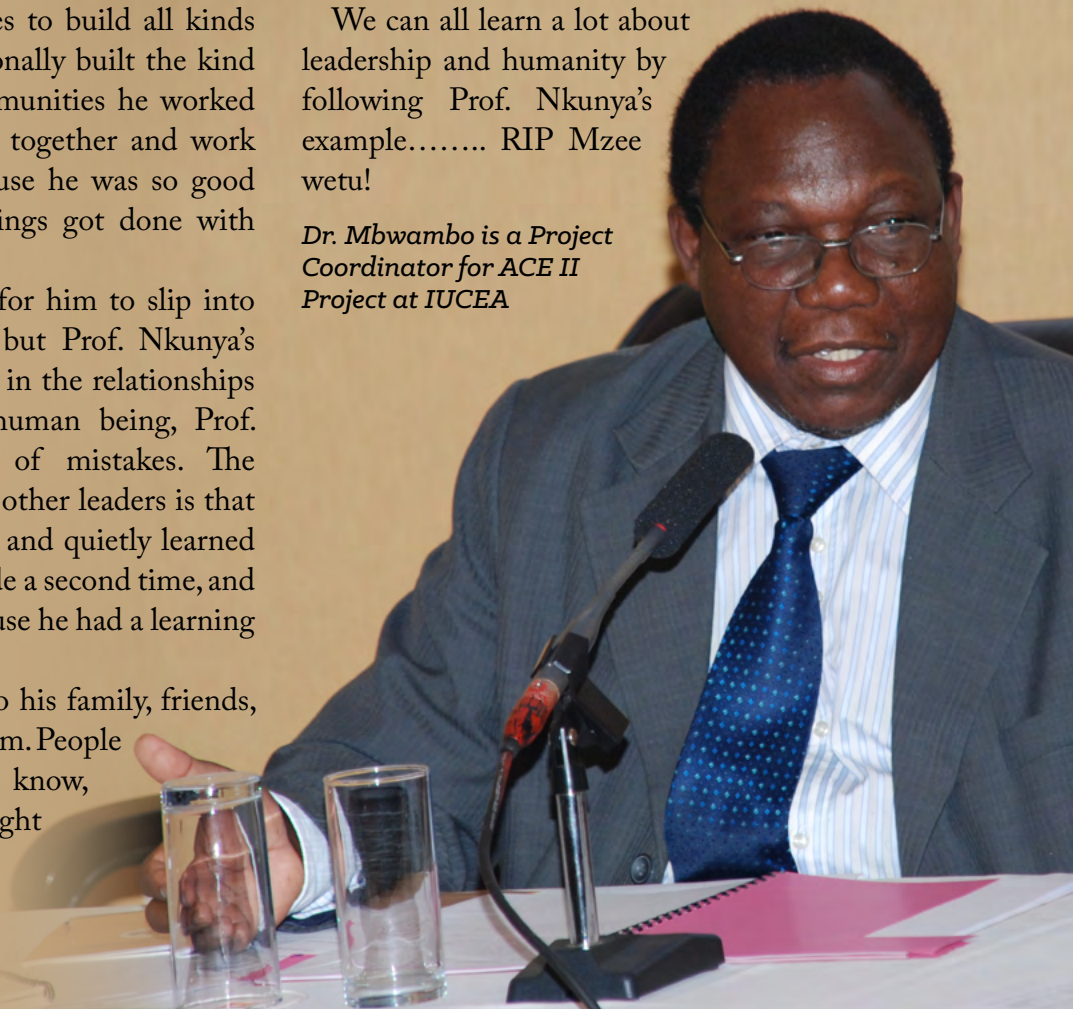
know that we would have liked to have known him even better and had him stay around longer.

Prof. Nkunya was known for mentoring others in the profession he loved; he was the "go to" person for young leaders to gain the self-confidence needed to do the difficult work of public service. He sought to develop the people who worked in his organization because he knew they would be better leaders as a result of what they learned.

It seems trite to say that Prof. Nkunya will be missed, or that he went away too soon. But it's true. The bottom line is that he was a great leader. And when you pulled back the curtain of all that entails, you can also see that he was also good person who cared about others.

We can all learn a lot about leadership and humanity by following Prof. Nkunya's example..... RIP Mzee wetu!

*Dr. Mbwambo is a Project Coordinator for ACE II Project at IUCEA*





### By Professor Ephata E. Kaaya

**I started working closely with Professor Nkunya years back as a lecturer at the Muhimbili University College of Health Sciences, a constituent College of the University of Dar Es Salaam (now MUHAS). At that time, in 1994, he was a Professor of organic chemistry and Associate Dean, Faculty of Science. Professor Nkunya would then move on to be the Chief Academic Officer of the University of Dar es Salaam from 1999 to 2006.**

Upon completing his tenure as Chief Academic Officer in 2006, Mayunga Nkunya was appointed Executive Secretary of Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) in 2007 - a post he held until 2010 when he joined IUCEA as the Executive Secretary.

He retired from public service in 2015 but was appointed Chairman of the Tanzania

Commission of Universities in 2020, the post he held until his passing on 20th July 2021.

Through his passion for quality, Professor Mayunga Nkunya is credited for establishing the East African Regional Quality Assurance System under the IUCEA and developing harmonization systems that laid the groundwork for the declaration of East Africa as a Common Higher Education Area in 2017.

He is remembered for championing the collaboration between academia and the private sector to foster quality graduates fit for the current job market, among many other activities. I remember Professor Nkunya, in one of the meetings, saying, “the academia alone will not be able to produce graduates with the relevant skills without the intervention of the private sector”.

At the continental level, he was the Interim Chairman of the African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN) during its early years and later its first President up to 2011. Internationally, he was a co-opted Board Member of the



International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) from 2013 to 2014. Professor Nkunya received the 2015 Global University Network for Innovation – African Quality Assurance Network award to recognize his contribution to the development of quality assurance on the African continent.

Prof. Mayunga Nkunya was a good human being, an empathic listener, an excellent collaborator, and an outstanding leader who respected everybody regardless of age, seniority, status or ideology. With these values, he would not deliberately do something wrong or stand in the way of another's progress. Always, Professor Nkunya was more than willing to help and support all individuals in whatever means possible, creating partnerships and nurturing the relations for sustainability. These attributes were indispensable for many national, regional, and international alliances he made for higher education.

I remember in 2007 when I visited him in his office when he was the Executive Secretary of TCU to get his advice and support for my university's (MUHAS) intention to transform its programmes from traditional to competency-based education. He listened to me with exceptional warmth, enthusiasm, and encouragement and immediately offered his support to guide us whenever we faced challenges.

He indeed kept his promise, for he continued to inquire about the progress of the transformation of the programmes even after he moved to IUCEA in 2010. When he could not attend our meetings, he sent his well-informed officer for technical support during the whole process. Fortunately, we did not disappoint him. We completed that transformation in 2012 before he retired from IUCEA. This was yet another unique quality of Nkunya, as we called him, of following up and supporting innovations and

ensuring they are transformed into outcomes.

It is not often that you find intelligence, maturity of character and humility combined in one person. Professor Mayunga Nkunya was exceptional because he was well known for combining all these attributes and more in himself. Although no longer in a material dimension that we on this side can directly relate to, Mayunga Nkunya will continue to be alive in our hearts. His spirit will live with us as he will also live in the minds of many who knew and interacted with

him. Indeed, the higher education community has been fortunate to have had Mayunga Nkunya among its leaders for his profound and long-lasting impact in academia and higher education leadership. He will continue to be deeply and sadly missed. Thus, it is never easy to say goodbye to someone who has been such a rich part of our lives in higher education circles.

For many of us, there won't be any more greetings, phone calls or invitations from him to gather as a higher education family and discuss higher education quality and other challenges together.

In celebrating his life, and during this challenging time of loss and grief, it is, therefore, essential to remember the good memories we all have of Mayunga as a colleague, a leader, a scientist, but above all, a person who "lived with quality" of higher education in his veins. Only when we keep these fond memories safely in our hearts can we understand the valuable times we had together with him and keep his memory alive in our hearts.

"The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD."

*Professor. Ephata E. Kaaya is Provost Kilimanjaro Christian Medical University College; former Vice-Chancellor, Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences.*

HE LISTENED WITH  
EXCEPTIONAL  
WARMTH,  
ENTHUSIASM, AND  
ENCOURAGEMENT  
AND IMMEDIATELY  
OFFERED HIS  
SUPPORT TO  
GUIDE WHENEVER  
WE FACED  
CHALLENGES.

# Tribute to Mzee Mayunga



Outgoing Executive Secretary Prof. Chacha Nyaigotti Chacha hands over to incoming Executive Secretary Prof. Mayunga Nkunya in 2010

**By Professor Charles Domminick Kihampa**

I pay this tribute to the life of Prof. Nkunya who was not only our mentor but our father, confider, counselor and a friend.

Mzee Mayunga's personal worth on earth were his patience, love and sympathetic concern for the well-being of others irrespective of background, nationality, faith and race. He transformed the lives of many people within and outside Tanzania. Indeed, Mayunga devoted his life to the development of others.

Some of us have become what we are today because of the mentorship, loving care and endless effort he exhibited on us. More than twenty-five years ago I met Prof. Nkunya at

the University of Dar es Salaam when I and my colleagues were in our mid 20s'. He deliberately gathered us, nurtured us like a father, introduced us to scientific research and granted scholarships for further education up to the PhD level. Remarkably, Mayunga continued following up and guiding us in our careers until his death. Our prosperity in education, career, and life in general cannot be separated from Mzee Mayunga.

Prof. Nkunya had a vast experience of more than 40 years in Higher Education both within and outside Tanzania either as a mentor, leader, administrator, advisor, expert, manager, consultant, etc. He held various leadership positions including Dean in the Faculty of Science, and Chief Academic Officer (now called



Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs) at the University of Dar es Salaam. He was the Executive Secretary of the Tanzania Commission for Universities and Executive Secretary of the Inter-University Council for East Africa. At different times, he was Chairperson, President, or member in different Boards, Networks and Forums both within and outside the country. He participated at different capacities in various Higher Education reforms, transformations, standards and guidelines, advisory bodies, to mention a few both within and outside Tanzania.

As an academician, Prof. Nkunya was a guru of Organic Chemistry in particular Natural Products Chemistry and he was globally respected on the same. He authored a number of books, publications, scientific reports, provided scientific lectures and presentations in internationally renowned conferences, and lectured at different Universities within and outside Africa. At the University of Dar es Salaam he formed a very strong research group of Natural Product Chemistry through which he trained more than 50 students at Masters and PhD levels.

Some of his students are holding various positions in both public and private institutions within and outside Tanzania including Chief Executive Officers, Permanent Secretaries, Ministers, and the like. Until his death, he was a Professor Emeritus at the University of Dar es Salaam where he continued giving lectures to undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

He was the founding member of the Tanzania Chemical Society (TCS), an association that gathers Chemistry professionals in the country, and until his death he was an active member of the society and member of the Governing Council of TCS. He was also a founding member of Natural Products Research Network for Eastern and Central Africa (NAPRECA), a

network of natural products chemists.

Prof. Nkunya served as Executive Secretary of the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) between 2007 and 2010, and later Chairman of the Commission from September 2019 until his death. He transformed the institution and made it visible within and outside Tanzania. He instituted systems of quality assurance in higher education in the country and operationalised the Commission's functions of regulatory, advisory and supportive roles. During his tenure as Executive Secretary of TCU, he introduced an historic system for quality assurance of admissions into higher education. A system popularly referred to as the Central Admission

System (CAS) that was the first of its kind on the African Continent such that in 2012 CAS was ranked by the African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN) as the best Good Practice in Quality Assurance in Africa. He was a founding member of various higher education quality assurance networks and forums both within Tanzania and at

international levels.

I feel proud for the opportunity to work with him, first as my mentor and later colleague in academia and quality assurance in higher education, as Senior Academician, and Chairman of the Commission. Mayunga instilled in us discipline, and above all self-confidence for which we are most grateful. The only comfort I have is that I got the opportunity to work with him even during the last days of his life and took care of him in hospital until his death. I still recall his last words while lying in the hospital bed "*Charles I am here, that's life*". Rest in Peace Professor Mayunga Habibu Hemedi Nkunya, you will always be in our hearts. Amen

*Professor Charles Domminick Kihampa is the Executive Secretary of the Tanzania Commission for Universities and Chairman of the Tanzania*

MAYUNGA  
INSTILLED IN  
US DISCIPLINE,  
AND ABOVE  
ALL SELF-  
CONFIDENCE  
FOR WHICH  
WE ARE MOST  
GRATEFUL.

## A TRIBUTE TO PROF MAYUNGA NKUNYA

# A knack for spotting & nurturing talent

**By Prof Mike Kuria**

**Prof Mayunga Nkunya did not suffer fools gladly. Foolish behavior suffered his wrath irrespective of the rank of the offending person. He was not arrogant, just forthright. Indeed, if he saw talent, he nurtured it no matter how fickle it was. He had a knack for spotting talent.**

I first met him in the year 2006. My vice-chancellor at Daystar University- Prof Godfrey Nguru, another man with a propensity to nurture talent, had rather unceremoniously thrust me into Quality Assurance (QA). He had been nominated to the QA committee of the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) but could not find time for it. He sent me to represent him every time he was invited for the committee meetings. That is when I began interacting with Prof Nkunya who was then chairing the QA standing committee of IUCEA.

IUCEA and DAAD were just about to start a collaboration to develop a regional quality

assurance framework for higher education in the East African Community (EAC) Partner States. As part of that initiative Prof Nkunya led a group of us to Oldenburg University in Germany where we went through a two-week rigorous capacity building workshop as university QA officers. I was given some menial tasks such as chairing small groups, rapporteuring and reporting back in plenary sessions. Prof Mayunga Nkunya noted something. One evening he accosted me in a hotel lobby and said 'Mike, you are going to help me run QA capacity building workshops for universities in Tanzania'.





*First cohort of QA officers under the IUCEA-DAAD Regional QA Initiative in Oldenburg, Germany with Prof Nkunya as leader of the delegation.*

I was taken aback. I had no clue what he was talking about. He was then the Executive Director of the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU). He had just won a grant to improve higher education leadership in Tanzania. He knew what he wanted and what he was looking for. By this time, we had developed the first draft of the Roadmap to Quality: A Handbook for Quality Assurance in Higher Education with the support of the German Academic Exchange Services (DAAD).

He wanted Prof Josephine Arasa, who was then in charge of QA at the United States International University (USIU-Africa), and I to help disseminate this tool to DVCs and Deans from Tanzanian higher education institutions. During the implementation of the project on leadership for higher education institutions in Tanzania, I had many opportunities to travel with Prof Nkunya from Dar-es-salaam to Mzumbe University in Morogoro where the QA and leadership capacity building workshops were held. We always stopped somewhere on the way





to buy roasted maize which we enjoyed as we travelled. Although he was way too senior for us, the camaraderie was unmistakable. It was during these workshops that I had the opportunity to interact with people who would later occupy high positions in government in Tanzania such as Prof Mchome and Prof Kabudi. Prof Nkunya, in my view, mentored them.

Prof Nkunya was generous almost to a fault. He always insisted on picking the bills whenever we went out. One time, tired of being on the receiving end of his generosity, Josephine and I decided to give him a treat. We identified a high-end restaurant on the shores of the Indian Ocean in Dar-es-Salaam and invited him. We were shocked when the bill came to be told that the hotel did not take credit or debit cards. We had not carried Tanzanian money thinking we should use cards so he could have whatever he wanted.

Prof Nkunya came to the rescue and would not allow us to refund him the money later.

One of my most memorable trips with him was to Burkina Faso. Prof Nkunya and I arrived in Ouagadougou late at night only to be told the organizers had failed to book us at the conference hotel. It was full. With the help of locals, we found a dingy place that I did not like at all. I was complaining bitterly.

‘Relax Maike’, he always pronounced my name with a Tanzanian accent, ‘I can even sleep on a form if I have to’. His humility was amazing. He was a man who was at home with the high and mighty yet made his juniors such as me comfortable in his presence. The following day he made our presentation and responded to questions without any hint of bitterness or frustration.

He was not uptight. He could let his hair down



if he had to. In Bonn I dodged him one evening because I was dog tired. I really wanted to sleep. He and some German friends wanted to go to a night club where there was dancing. We were having a last minutes meeting the following day. They went and returned in the wee hours of the morning. Amazingly he was in time for that meeting as sharp as a razor. His stamina was unparalleled.

He had a great sense of humour too. He liked to tease people. He once got us all into stitches at Mikumi National Park in the United Republic of Tanzania when he declared to a waitress that he would not pay for a local chicken that we had grilled. The conversation went like this:

‘Binti, njoo’ [young lady, come here], he said. The waitress came and meekly stood in front of him.

‘Shikamoo baba’, (I salute you my male elder/father) she said.

‘We ordered a full chicken, right?’ he asked.

‘Yes’, replied the waitress

‘Where is the neck’

I CAN EVEN SLEEP  
ON A FORM IF I  
HAVE TO. HIS  
HUMILITY WAS  
AMAZING. HE  
WAS A MAN WHO  
WAS AT HOME  
WITH THE HIGH  
AND MIGHTY  
YET MADE  
HIS JUNIORS  
COMFORTABLE IN  
HIS PRESENCE.

The waitress looked at us flabbergasted. She was caught completely off guard.

‘Wapi shingo’ [where is the neck?] Prof Nkunya insisted as firmly as he could, ‘I am not paying if there is no neck’.

No amount of explanation would convince him that the neck is not grilled and served as part of the whole chicken. The waiters scrambled around trying to locate where the neck of the chicken might have been dumped. Prof Nkunya kept sipping his drink without as much as a smile on his face. We nearly took him seriously. The waitress came back with a male waiter to explain how and why the neck of the chicken had been disposed of. Prof Nkunya chased him away and then told the waitress with a big smile on his

face, ‘wewe mtani wangu mbona huelewi utani’ [I am only teasing you, how come you do not get my jokes]. He paid her for the bill and included a generous tip.

I always felt indebted to Prof Nkunya. I had always wanted to do something for him. I am glad that in May 2021, Prof Gaspard Banyankimbona- the new IUCEA Executive Secretary- and I travelled to Dar-es-salaam for a Sectoral Council meeting of the ministers of education in the EAC Partner States. We discovered in our conversation that Prof Nkunya was a man of our mutual admiration and that both of us

really wanted to treat him to something special. We invited him for dinner. Prof Nkunya took us from our hotel to a nice nyama choma joint on the outskirts of the city of Dar-es-Salaam. This time we persuaded him in advance that the bill was on us. He reluctantly agreed. We had a great evening. The following day he sent his driver to bring us each a couple of vials of Fukiza Unadol, a traditional herb product manufactured by the University of Dar es Salaam

(UDSM) purposely to fight COVID-19 free of charge. Prof Nkunya believed in science. During our meeting he had his sanitizer and a mask. Little did we know that would be the last time we saw him. To say that his death shocked me is an understatement. I still catch myself wondering if he really is dead.

P/s I know that he had a manuscript on chemistry written with a group of his friends. I hope someone somewhere will have that manuscript published. Perhaps this is something IUCEA should do in his honor as former Executive Secretary.

*Professor Mike Kuria is the Deputy Executive Secretary, IUCEA*





# I cherished each day I worked with him

**By Immaculate Kebirungi**

I first met Prof. Nkunya, at the interview for the position of Secretary at IUCEA in December 2019. Prof. Nkunya commonly called me Imma. I had the pleasure of working in his office to assist the late Alice Mulondo (RIP) his Personal Secretary who was almost retiring. He mentored me, I learnt a lot from him. He taught me good communication skills.

Whenever you sent him a document even if it was midnight, he would reply. Working with him made me a better person. Prof. Nkunya believed in me and promoted me to the position of Personal Secretary to the office of Deputy Executive Secretary. He believed that everyone in the organization contributed towards the achievement of the organizational goals. I must say I cherished each day I worked with him.

Among the contributions he made to the academia, most noteworthy: his passion about education development in the region. He agitated for a paradigm shift in higher education and believed that East Africans needed to embrace the education that will solve the problems of the region and thus pioneered the Academia, Public-Private Partnership Forum held annually to debate and find solutions on the kind of skills needed in the job market other than producing graduates who will be redundant. He was the main brains behind the development of the concept of East Africa becoming a Common Higher Education Area. He also promoted quality assurance in the universities of East Africa.

Prof. Nkunya was very analytical and had negotiation skills which led IUCEA to winning grants such as the Africa Centers of Excellent project, DAAD grant to train Quality Assurance Officers in member universities, amongst others.

Socially, he was humorous and a person who loved to socialize, network and enjoy himself.

The region lost a brilliant mind and valuable professor. His family lost a dear father and a grandparent. Prof. Nkunya memory and legacy will remain forever etched in the minds of students he taught, the colleagues he worked with and all who knew him. May His Soul Rest in Peace!

“What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others.” History of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides, classical author

*Ms. Immaculate Kebirungi is the Senior Personal Secretary to the Deputy Executive Secretary.*

## Prof. Nkunya shaped my career

**By Professor Josephine Arasa**

It is not always that you meet someone who shapes your life in totality. Prof. Nkunya, shaped my career, interests and life in general. He noticed potential in me and gave me all the help I needed to succeed in the space of quality assurance.

“WHAT YOU LEAVE BEHIND IS NOT WHAT IS ENGRAVED IN STONE MONUMENTS, BUT WHAT IS WOVEN INTO THE LIVES OF OTHERS.”  
HISTORY OF THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR, THUCYDIDES, CLASSICAL  
AUTHOR



## Tribute to late Prof. Mayunga H.H. Nkunya

**By Prof. Pontien Ndabaneze**

**I came to know Prof. Mayunga Nkunya in 2010 when he was appointed the Executive Secretary of the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) and I was his Deputy. We spent five years of hard and successful work together. He was a wonderful, hard worker, generous and visionary man.**

When we joined IUCEA, it was an association of East African universities with limited capacity and uncertain future. Prof Mayunga Nkunya understood that IUCEA could not accomplish effectively and in a sustainable

manner its mission of coordination of East African universities in that capacity. His vision for IUCEA was to be an institution of the East African Community (EAC) and contribute effectively to the implementation of the EAC agenda. IUCEA was mainstreamed in EAC in 2002 and was therefore entrusted to implement among others the Common Market Protocol, 2010 in its provision related to free movement of learners and labour within the Community. IUCEA attracted more member universities and became more visible internationally.

Prof. Mayunga Nkunya was one of the pioneers of Quality Assurance in East Africa. He contributed immensely in the development of the Handbook for Quality Assurance in



Higher Education, which is the corner stone of quality education and training in East African universities.

The Handbook has paved the foundation for an East African Quality Assurance framework towards harmonisation of higher education systems. The experience in higher education and exposure of Prof Mayunga Nkunya made him an undisputed expert in Quality Assurance in EAC and worldwide and he was often invited to share EAC experience in quality education in international fora. Prof. Mayunga Nkunya initiated partnerships with other regional coordination bodies of higher Education and with international research institutions worldwide (ASARECA, ASEAN, IAU, CAMES, EAIE, AAU, SARUA, RUFORUM).

He strengthened collaboration with international organisations such as UNESCO, GIZ, DAAD, World Bank. In the same partnership the World Bank has funded establishment of centres of excellence for capacity building in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) in East Africa as a support for the development agenda.

Prof. Mayunga Nkunya was aware that as an EAC institution, IUCEA had to focus on strengthening quality assurance in EAC universities for the sake of harmonisation of the education systems and competitiveness of graduates at regional and international levels.

A harmonised East African Qualifications Framework was developed and national regulatory bodies developed theirs accordingly. Legal instruments to ease harmonisation of higher education were prepared and approved by the relevant authorities of the East African

Community.

These are: Regional Quality Assurance Framework, East African Qualification Framework for Higher Education, Staff mobility Framework and Students mobility Policy. These tools were aimed at facilitating achievement of a Unified Higher Education System where the quality of education and training output would be harmonized.

In order to sustain the quality assurance initiatives, Prof. Mayunga Nkunya facilitated establishment of an East African Quality Assurance Network comprised of quality assurance practitioners from universities and members of National Commissions/Councils for Higher Education from the Partner States.

All these initiatives culminated in the establishment of the East African Common Higher Education Area that was declared by the EAC Heads of State on 20th May 2017.

It is important to mention that IUCEA constructed its Headquarter under the leadership of Prof. Mayunga

Nkunya. He received a strong support from the EAC Partner States to implement the project and IUCEA is accommodated in its own premises since 2015. The host Partner State, Uganda offered a land located at Kyambogo hill for the construction of the Headquarter.

The death of Prof. Mayunga is indeed a big loss for the family, The United Republic of Tanzania, The East African Community, and the academic community in general. Meanwhile, he left a significant legacy for which he will be remembered forever.

*Prof. Pontien Ndabaneze  
Former Deputy Executive Secretary (2010-2016)*

PROF. MAYUNGA NKUNYA WAS AWARE THAT AS AN EAC INSTITUTION, IUCEA HAD TO FOCUS ON STRENGTHENING QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EAC UNIVERSITIES FOR THE SAKE OF HARMONISATION OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEMS AND COMPETITIVENESS OF GRADUATES AT REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS.







## A superior sense of Duty and Professionalism

**By Dr. Benedict Mtasiwa**

Prof. Mayunga Nkunya joined Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) in 2011.

He was instrumental in the development of key institutional systems and programmes in Thematic Clusters that replaced the traditional subjects and specialized committee meetings. As Executive Secretary of IUCEA, he facilitated the development of the EAC Quality Assurance System and Qualifications Frameworks and related instruments. He operationalized Academic Thematic Cluster Meetings, the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and operationalization; Policy for Research and Innovation; Staff and Students' Mobility Policy and the Operational Guidelines. These efforts led to the declaration of the EAC as a Common Higher Education Area by the Summit of the EAC Heads of State in Dar-es-Salaam in 2017.

He successfully implemented the Strategic Plan 2011/12-2015/16 which ran under his tenure backed by the improved funding from Partner States and staff working conditions. He effectively oversaw the design of the IUCEA

Headquarters and construction of its Phase One that enabled IUCEA to move from the rented facilities. It was during this period that IUCEA became an exemplary institution of EAC on effective governance systems with clean Audit Reports to date, thanks to facilitation of a reviewed and effective internal Audit function.

He was an effective leader who strived to instill sense of duty and professionalism among the staff and was inspirational on transformational processes at personal and institutional level. He was a good team player and interactive with people, irrespective of their age and various aspects of status. He was a good leader, possessing a high sense of accountability to Higher Education, EAC authorities and stakeholders.

The EAC region and his country, United Republic of Tanzania, have lost a great citizen with exemplary virtues that are worthy being inculcated in our human development systems for a knowledgeable and competitive citizenry.

May His Soul rest in Eternal Peace

*Dr. Mtasiwa is Chief Principal, Partnerships and Linkages at IUCEA*

# Mentor, Teacher, Advisor and Friend

**By Dr. Cosam Chawanga Joseph**

**Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2021 was one of the saddest days of my life. My benefactor, mentor, teacher, and friend Prof. Mayunga Nkunya, who hugely shaped my view on life, work, and many other things, had passed away. I have never met someone as supportive, impressive, diligent, full of life with a sense of humour and grounded as Mayunga.**

It is not that common at this stage of our careers to have professors who shape our intellect, interest and life in general. But my mentor Prof. Nkunya did that. To me he was an accomplished mentor and academician, especially a total chemistry professor. While we were originally brought together by academics, I soon began to learn from his views and perspectives and his wealth of knowledge about how to become a responsible academician and a citizen of this world. I hope that everyone, when such people cross their paths, never take them for granted. I certainly never did, and never will.

I met Dr. Nkunya as one of his undergraduate students in chemistry at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), Tanzania in 1988. Since then, from the classroom interactions, we built a special bond and academic relationship which grew over time to become a special mentor-mentee relationship. Prof. Nkunya was truly an unparalleled Tanzanian academic patriot who foremost valued academic merit than any other criteria in selecting from

among his many students to join his research group. His origin is Tabora Region and I am from Mbeya Region - two different regions and I am sure until his untimely death he didn't know my tribal or ethnic origin. This is one of his legacies, entrenched by the Founding Father of the United Republic of Tanzania, Mwalimu Nyerere, that Tanzania is one and Tanzanians are one. In his academic life he mentored over 15 PhDs and 40 M.Sc. students, and these originated from almost all corners of Tanzania. Some of them were from outside of Tanzania such as Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia. From my recollection only one of his postgraduate students came from Tabora, on merit. He established a modern organic chemistry research laboratory for postgraduate training at Masters, Ph.D. and staff research which attracted students from Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar and Europe.

I joined his research group in 1991 after my undergraduate studies for my M.Sc. degree in natural product chemistry under his supervision. After successful completion of my M.Sc. in 1993, I immediately embarked on my Ph.D. studies in chemistry (organic synthesis) at The

Katholieke University of Nijmegen (now renamed Radboud University) in the Netherlands, on a Dutch government scholarship that was solicited through his natural product research group at UDSM. He was one of my supervisors during my Ph.D. programme.

Upon completion of my Ph.D. in 1997, back at UDSM, I joined his research group and

**BUT WHAT WOULD  
HAVE BEEN WORSE  
IS NEVER TO HAVE  
MET HIM. THEY SAY  
FRIENDS ARE THE  
FAMILY WE CHOOSE.  
BEING CHOSEN  
BY HIM WAS THE  
GREATEST MOMENT  
OF MY LIFE**





he entrusted me to assume the leadership of the group since by that time he was busy with management duties at the University and later at the Tanzania Commission for Universities. It was through the research group that he mentored me into conducting multidisciplinary research, project management, fundraising, quality supervision of postgraduate students and impact-oriented chemistry research. I was able to supervise 10 Ph.D. and 14 M.Sc. students in chemistry and related research areas. My association with Prof. Nkunya helped me to make new regional and international friends, partners, and networks with various funding agencies for higher education such as Carnegie Cooperation of New York, Rockefeller Foundation, McArthur Foundation, NIH-USA, Sida, NORAD, WHO, ICIPE, DAAD and UNESCO, among others.

Through his academic and leadership mentorship, I was highly ranked as one of the

active and productive young academicians and researchers, through which I was able to publish 40 original scientific papers. I was entrusted to coordinate a number of research projects such as: Faculty of Science Coordinator - Research Capacity Building Project, Sida/SAREC, 2003-2007; Project Coordinator, Natural Insecticides and Repellents for Malarial Mosquito Control, WHO/TDR/MIM-ICIPE, Nairobi, 1999-2003; Principal Investigator, Medicinal Constituents from Tanzanian Herbal Remedies, VLIR-Belgian Programme 1999-2004; Project Coordinator, Development of Natural Pesticides for Human and Animal Health, UDSM-NORAD 2005-2008; University Coordinator, Rockefeller Foundation Research & Innovation Programme 2006 – 2008; Project Coordinator: Utilization of indigenous knowledge on insecticides for pre-harvest food security, UDSM-Rockefeller Grant 2005-

2008; University Coordinator, Minority Health International Research Training (MHIRT), Hampton University-UDSM NIH-USA exchange programme, 1998 – 2008; Programme Officer, Natural Product Research Network for Eastern and Central Africa (NAPRECA), 1997-2004; Project Coordinator, Bioactivity and value-added processing of Medicinal Plant products for the Management of HIV/AIDS fungal infections in Lake Victoria Basin, VicRes, Inter-University Council for East Africa, 2006-2008.

During my time in Chemistry at UDSM, I shared the office with Professor Nkunya for almost 10 years. While in the office together, we shared a lot of things in common ranging from social, personal development, academic, including strategies for advancement of chemistry and natural product research at UDSM. I travelled with him almost all corners of the world on various academic missions.

He was the first person who introduced me to Quality Assurance (QA) in higher education in 2006 while he was the Chief Academic Officer at UDSM while I was the Head of Chemistry Department. Successively, I developed passion and enthusiasm for QA. When the position of QA Officer was established at IUCEA, I competitively applied for the job and joined IUCEA in 2008. Working with him at IUCEA when he was the Executive Secretary of IUCEA from 2010 to 2015 was my best and most productive working life with him through which we contributed to the transformation of higher education landscape in East Africa. We developed various regional policy documents related to harmonization of higher education, Quality Assurance and Qualifications Framework, that contributed to the transformation of East African Community as a Common Higher Education Area in 2017.

MAYUNGA, I AM  
VERY PROUD  
AND CONFIDENT  
THAT I AM A  
BETTER PERSON  
FOR KNOWING  
YOU AND BETTER  
FOR HAVING MET  
YOU IN MY LIFE.  
MAY YOU BE AS  
BLESSED IN THE  
NEXT LIFE,

One of the key contributions to the region is the establishment of the East African Quality Assurance Network for Higher Education (EAQAN) in 2012. Prof. Nkunya and I actively participated and contributed significantly to the harmonization of higher education at continental level, such as the Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF), Harmonisation of African Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAQAA) through the African Union and European Union Partnership Strategy. At global level we were also actively

involved in QA matters through the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and at some point he was a Board Member of INQAAHE representing Africa.

Mayunga my best friend is gone too soon and is a big tragedy to me. But what would have been worse is never to have met him. They say friends are the family we choose. Being chosen by him

was the greatest moment of my life and when Mayunga passed on, it was the worst moment of my life. Though Prof. Nkunya may have left this world his legacy and contributions to chemistry, especially natural product chemistry will live forever. Prof. Mayunga Nkunya has left a big name carved in my heart and a legacy in me that I can write pages and pages to infinite. Maybe it would be just and fair to write a book about him.

Mayunga was not only my friend, but our families also became family friends. My wife Martha and I felt that we lost a beloved family member. To Cheka his wife, and his girls Tunu and Nyamizi, we convey our heartfelt condolences. Rest in Peace Prof. Mayunga Habibu Hemedi Nkunya.

*Dr. Cosam Chawanga Joseph is Project Coordinator for East Africa Skills Transformation and Regional Integration (EASTRIP) at IUCEA*





# Prof. Mayunga Nkunya

## The Great Quality Assurance Mentor

**By Prof. Michael Mawa**

**The news of the passing away of Prof. Mayunga H. H. Nkunya came as a shock to many who knew him as a mentor in their higher education quality assurance career. Although he is physically gone from this earth, Prof. Nkunya's legacy in building a sustainable higher education quality assurance system in East Africa remains as a strong reminder of the efforts of a man so passionate, committed and strategic in his shared vision for a common higher education area for this region.**

Perhaps Prof. Nkunya's mentorship role – a role he loved so dearly and played to his last days on earth – will remain in the hearts and minds of a large family of higher education quality assurance practitioners in East Africa. He nurtured the potential of young men and women in the higher education institutions, national councils and commissions and at the Inter-University Council for East Africa.

This article is a personal tribute to Prof. Nkunya – my mentor who not only identified my potential to contribute to the higher education quality assurance service but actually nurtured me to grow in the quality assurance practice in the region for he was my trainer, guide, father and friend both in principle and in practice. He taught me the principles of higher education quality assurance as well as the practice of establishing and managing a functional quality assurance system. He often gave timely critical feedback to my input in the development of quality assurance concept papers, assessment

reports, draft standards and guidelines, training manuals and project reports. It is not possible to document here all the nurturing activities in my Mentor – Mentee learning experience with Prof. Nkunya but highlighting on a few of those learning moments will suffice to illustrate the mentorship role of the quality assurance giant of East Africa who has gone to rest with his Almighty Creator.

The year was 2007 when the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) in collaboration with the German Academic Exchange Services (DAAD) invited me to participate in a regional quality assurance training in the University of Oldenburg, Germany. Although the signatory to my letter of invitation for this training was Prof. Chacha Nyaigoti Chacha, the principal coordinator for the East African Quality Assurance Initiative was Prof. Mayunga H. H. Nkunya. The first day of this quality assurance training was the turning point in my higher education quality assurance journey. It was the first encounter with Prof. Nkunya the mentor. Like Socrates with his student Plato in the ancient Greece, Prof. Nkunya asked me, as he did to every participant, 'why are you here?' It quickly dawned on me that I was here not for a tour of Germany but for a serious mentorship programme whose coordinator was a no-nonsense person. Prof. Nkunya had given stinging feedback to some of the participants who were not sure why their Vice Chancellors had chosen them for the training. I was a nobody considering the profiles of many of the participants from the National Councils and Commissions and from the historically well-established universities like Makerere University and University of Dar-es-Salaam. *'My name is*





*Michael Marwa from Nkumba University. I am here to learn about quality assurance so that I can contribute meaningfully in establishing a quality assurance system for my university'. I waited for a rebuttal to my response from my mentor but it was a great sigh of relief when he turned to ask the next participant. It was years later when I learnt from Prof. Nkunya and Mama Ina Grieb, our principal trainer from Germany, that I had displayed humility and great potential to be nurtured during that encounter.*

A series of quality assurance training workshops in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda were organized to build the capacity of the trainees in different components of quality assurance including programme assessment, institutional assessment and implementation of quality assurance systems as guided by *The Roadmap to Quality: A Handbook for Quality Assurance in Higher Education*. In these training sessions, each participant was asked to make a presentation on the progress

of establishing quality assurance systems in their respective institutions. My confidence was growing and so was the confidence of my mentor in building my capacity. It soon became clear to me that my mentor had affirmed his belief in my potential when he asked me to share my learning experience in quality assurance with the second cohort of participants in 2009 in Dar es Salaam. As years passed, my mentor assigned to me and my colleagues more critical roles. This was a strategic action of our mentor to build the capacity of a core team of quality assurance experts from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda – the original Partner States of the East African Community.

In 2011, the first East African Higher Education Quality Assurance Forum was held in Nairobi, Kenya. This important dialogue event was yet another milestone in my mentorship journey with Prof. Nkunya. Through his strategic guidance, he implored me to accept to lead the

Interim Committee for the establishment of a regional quality assurance network, a task I took with great humility and honour. With my colleagues Prof. Mike Kuria from Kenya, Prof. Masoud Muruke and Dr Jennifer Sesabo from Tanzania, we begun the development of a constitution for the establishment of the East African Higher Education Quality Assurance Network (EAQAN). The team was given one year to deliver on the mandate and to organize the second East African Higher Education Quality Assurance Forum scheduled to take place in May 2012 in Entebbe, Uganda. The process of developing a constitution for a regional network and organizing an annual higher education dialogue event was truly an exhausting mentorship activity to say the least. Prof. Nkunya could not settle for less than the benchmark set by the first regional QA Forum in Nairobi. *‘Michael and Mike, review this concept, change this programme, contact these speakers, draft these speeches,’* were the constant words that Prof. Nkunya would say as he played his mentorship role. The performance indicator of his mentorship role in these activities could be seen in the successful organization of the subsequent regional annual QA Forums in Kigali, Arusha and Limuru in 2013, 2014 and 2015 respectively. Prof. Nkunya had not only nurtured and built a core team of experts to organize these events but nurtured a growing family of quality assurance practitioners in East Africa.

The development of quality assurance standards and guidelines, subject benchmarks and training materials were yet critical sessions in Prof. Nkunya’s quality assurance mentorship programme. The year was 2015 and the regional quality assurance family had gathered for its annual reunion and dialogue event. The one-week event was exciting but for many, it was the first experience of winter in Africa. Limuru was very cold. As a mentor who believed in shaping mentees in all aspects of life, Prof. Nkunya retained the core team to continue for

yet another three days to draft QA training materials. Perseverance in challenging moments was the value he had wanted to pass onto us. The team gathered around the fire place to deliberate on the content of the training materials and to draft the specific modules assigned to each member. Later in that year, the team was called to Entebbe to review what had been done. It was clear that the joint module was not yet fully developed and had not met the quality standard our mentor had set. While raising his voice in expression of displeasure at the quality of the module, Prof. Nkunya begun to call the group of the three drafters: *‘Michael, Mike and Muruke, you are the ones who worked on this not so? Now you go down to the basement and work on this module again’*. Hearing my name being called first, it was as if my mentor had singled me out as the leader of a notorious group that did not heed to his wise counsel. I immediately picked up my working tools and begun to head to the basement; my colleagues followed me to what the team baptized as the “the cooler” for reflection and perfection. After a whole day of isolation, the team returned, shared their produce and Prof. Nkunya was satisfied with the progress. To confirm his positive appraisal of our work, Prof. Nkunya called out: *‘Ladies and Gentlemen, it has been a whole day of hard work, now you deserve a treat at the beach. Let us go and have fish together’*. This was our mentor! He believed in creating the social space for greater networking and nurturing. He would tell many stories in such social meetings to enable us to learn from real life experiences.

Oh Prof. Nkunya, you are physically gone from us;

We shall miss your fatherly love and your enriching mentorship sessions;

Your critical and honest feedback to your mentees will be greatly missed;

You have not lived long to see the full benefits of your labour in establishing EAC as a Common





Higher Education Area.

But your legacy lives on;

Your legacy is written not only in the hearts and minds of those whom you mentored and worked with but also in the ink of the documents that define the regional quality assurance landscape;

Your legacy has been confirmed by the independent evaluators of your quality assurance initiative when they wrote:

*“We have documented and witnessed training seminars, quality assurance forums, books, and the establishment of a network as an important outcome of the project. The trajectory of the project, the general approach assumed and the outputs so far recorded give us considerable confidence in stating that a strong, robust and sustainable quality assurance culture in East Africa has been successfully introduced, as a result of this project.”*

We can now only say Thank You for this great gift; Thank You for coordinating the regional quality assurance initiative; Thank You for nurturing our potential in higher education quality assurance; Thank You for giving us the professional and social space to develop our careers and serve our community; Thank You for building a regional family of quality assurance practitioners by giving us EAQAN;

Thank You for inculcating in us the spirit of “One People, One Destination”.

Bye bye our Regional Quality Assurance Guru;

Bye bye our Mentor - my Mentor;

Bye bye Prof. Mayunga Nkuya;

But never will we say bye bye to your legacy.

Rest in Peace, Prof. Mayunga H. H. Nkunya.

*Professor Michael Mawa is a Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Associate Professor at Uganda Martyrs University*

# He brought East Africans together

**By Prof. Masoud H Muruke**  
 Prof. Mayunga H. H. Nkunya passed away on 20th July 2021 after a brief illness. This tribute is based on the author's recollection and some information gathered from the Department of Chemistry, University of Dar es Salaam. It is by no means comprehensive and representative of his life and legacy.

## Birth and education

Prof. Mayunga Nkunya was born on 20th December 1952 in Ugowola village, Tabora District, Tanzania. He received his primary education at Usoke Primary School from 1960 to 1966. He then joined Kazima Secondary School in Tabora for his O-level secondary education from 1967 to 1970. He later obtained advanced secondary education at Tambaza High School in Dar es Salaam from 1970 to 1972, studying Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics. Upon completion of high school education, he joined the army for compulsory one-year National Service in 1973.

In 1974, Prof Nkunya joined University of Dar es Salaam to pursue a Bachelor of Science majoring in Chemistry and Statistics culminating in his graduation in 1976. He immediately proceeded with Master's degree studies in Organic Chemistry at the University of Dar es salaam (1977-1979). He also pursued

his PhD studies by conducting research in the Chemistry of Natural Products at the University of Dar es Salaam and the Catholic University of Nijmegen, the Netherlands.

## Employment and work experience

Immediately after completing his first degree in 1976, Prof Nkunya was employed as a Tutorial Assistant at the Chemistry Department, University of Dar es Salaam. He then quickly rose through the academic ranks to Assistant Lecturer in 1978, Lecturer in 1981, Senior Lecturer in 1986, Associate Professor in 1989 and Professor in 1994. After retiring from public service in 2015, Prof Nkunya continued to offer his academic and mentorship services at the University of Dar es Salaam on a contractual basis and in 2020 was nominated Professor Emeritus in Chemistry.

## Teaching and mentorship

Prof Nkunya taught several courses in Organic





Chemistry at the University of Dar es Salaam, including Organic Synthesis, Organic Spectroscopy and Chemistry of Natural Products. He also served as External Examiner in many institutions within and outside Tanzania and East Africa. All in all, Prof Nkunya was a great teacher and a man of integrity. His scholarship and his commitment to public service was admired by peers and students alike. Though strict and meticulous, he was renowned for being a good orator who made seemingly difficult Chemistry concepts simple and enticed students at all levels to like his courses and research projects. He provided not only much-needed leadership but also opportunities for students to demonstrate their talents.

### **Administration, management and leadership**

As a leader, Prof Mayunga Nkunya was a visionary, ambitious and ready for change. He believed in thinking big and outside the box. During meetings and discussions, Prof Mayunga Nkunya was very engaging, open minded and convincingly advanced his arguments. During his distinguished career, he served in several administrative positions in Tanzania, East Africa and beyond. Below are some examples:

- ❑ Associate Dean, Academic Affairs, Faculty of Science, University of Dar es Salaam, 1994 to 1996;
- ❑ Acting Dean, Faculty of Science,







University of Dar es Salaam, July 1996 to June 1997;

- Dean, Faculty of Science, University of Dar es Salaam, July, 1997 to October 1999;
- Chief Academic Officer (Equivalent to Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs), University of Dar es Salaam, October 1999 to December 2006;
- Executive Secretary, Tanzania Commission for Universities, July 2007 to November 2010 and
- Executive Secretary, Inter-University Council for East Africa, November 2010 to 5th November 2015.

Prof Nkunya has also served several Presidential appointments in Tanzania including:

- (a) Chairperson, Tanzania National Radiation Commission: May 2001 to June 2004;
- (b) Chairperson, Advisory Council for National Education, United Republic of Tanzania: November 2006 to October 2010;
- (c) Chairperson, National Construction Council for the period February 2016 to February 2019; and
- (d) Chairperson, Tanzania Commission for Universities for 3 years with effect from September 2019.

### **Academia and research**

Prof Mayunga Nkunya was very industrious and a definite guru of Chemistry of Natural Products. He has supervised and graduated many students from both within and outside East Africa at master's and PhD levels. Some of his students are now renowned scientists, administrators and managers holding important positions in Tanzania, East Africa and beyond. In terms of research output, Prof Nkunya has published widely (over 100 publications) in reputable international media including journal articles and books.

### **Networks and networking**

Prof. Nkunya spearheaded and coordinated the establishment of various networks in academics, research and leadership such as the Natural Products Research Network for Eastern and Central Africa (NAPRECA), the Tanzania Chemical Society (TCS), African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN), the Higher Education Quality Management Initiative for Southern Africa and the East African Higher Education Quality Assurance Network (EAQAN). While working in Tanzania and specifically at the University of Dar es Salaam, Prof Nkunya managed to attract funds for research and institutional capacity building from many institutions and development partners such as NUFFIC, NORAD, Sida/SAREC, DAAD, IFS, UNESCO, the Rockefeller Foundation, WHO and many others.

### **Team building**

Prof Mayunga Nkunya will be remembered for bringing together many East African Professors and Lecturers through quality assurance training programmes, meetings and conferences that were coordinated and co-funded by IUCEA, DAAD, HRK, Commissions and Councils for Higher Education, EAQAN and Universities. He pioneered the establishment of the East African Higher Education Quality Assurance Network (EAQAN), a network that has brought East Africans together to work and function like one family. To many of the QA practitioners, Prof Nkunya was an inspiring teacher, mentor, father, hero and a good friend. His legacy is a profound and lasting one.

### **Social life**

As a person Prof Nkunya was a jovial, friendly and generous man who freely interacted with people from all walks of life. Prof. Nkunya leaves behind his bereaved wife, two daughters and his mother. RIP, Prof. Mayunga Nkunya. You were a truly great man, and an inspiration to all of us.

# Nkunya was a leader in higher education

**By Prof. Faustine Bee**

## **ORIGIN AND FAMILY**

The late Prof. Mayunga Habibu Hemedi Nkunya was born on 20th December, 1952 in Tabora, Tanzania. He is the son of Hemedi Shabani and Zainabu Saidi (Mlume) Nkunya. Prof. Nkunya married Cheka Ramadhani Semindu. His children are Msafiri, Tunu and Nyamizi.

## **Educational Background**

Prof. Nkunya studied Bachelor of Science at the University of Dar es Salaam and graduated in 1976. He attained his Master of Science at the University of Dar es Salaam in 1979. He further attained his Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Dar es Salaam in 1984.





### **Relationship with Prof. Nkunya**

I have known Prof. Nkunya since he was at the University of Dar es Salaam. We interacted more when he was at TCU and IUCEA. We met at various meetings while I was the Principal of then Moshi University College of Co-operative and Business Studies (MUCCoBS) and later Vice Chancellor of Moshi Co-operative University (MoCU) and also when I became the Vice Chancellor of the University of Dodoma.

During his time as the Executive Secretary, IUCEA registered tremendous achievements towards the development of higher education in the EAC region. He prioritized quality education and assurance and laid the groundwork for the declaration of EAC as a Common Higher Education Area by the Heads of State Summit in May 2017. He also championed linkage and collaboration between Academia, Industry and Public.

Prof. Nkunya has worked with the University of Dodoma to search for officials for management roles including Principals, Deputy Vice Chancellors, Vice Chancellors, Chairpersons of the Council and Chancellors. He has also helped the University in giving lectures to Members of the Council during trainings on Academic Leadership.

Whenever we needed some advice on leadership, we consulted him and he was always

### **CAREER**

He is the pure son of the University of Dar es Salaam because he studied and worked at the same University. He is Professor Emeritus at the Chemistry Department. Prof.

Nkunya was a chemistry educator and researcher. He was also a German Academic Exchange Service fellow of the University of Erlangen, Germany (1987); NUFFIC fellow University Nijmegen (1988, and 1993); Institute for Fiscal Studies research grantee since 1991. He was also a Member of the African Association of Pure and Applied Chemistry Council since 1995. He has published more than 100 papers.

there to support. Although he was a true patriotic son of the University of Dar es Salaam, he also helped UDOM and other Universities in Tanzania to excel. The higher education sector in Tanzania, East Africa and the world at large has lost a very important man. There is a proverb that says: *"When an old man dies, a library burns to the ground"*. Prof. Nkunya was not only an old man but also an intellectual giant who has helped to transform education sector in Tanzania, East Africa, and the world at large.

In his free time, Prof. Nkunya loved sports and gardening. He knew various flowers and plants. He loved various sports too. He was a great soul to live with.

### **Death**

Prof. Nkunya passed away on 20th July, 2021 at Muhimbili National Hospital, Dar es Salaam where he was receiving treatment. His final respects were paid in Dar es Salaam and Tabora. He was buried in

Tabora on 22nd July, 2021.

I would like to extend our sincere condolence to his family, relatives, friends, the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania Commission for Universities, the Inter University Council for East Africa and every institution that he worked with. We pray to our Almighty God to Rest his Soul in Eternal Peace. Amen!

*Prof. Faustine K. Bee is the Vice Chancellor, University of Dodoma*

# A humble and holistic mentor

**By Clarence Anthon Mgina**

**I knew Prof. Nkunya from the early 1990s at the University of Dar es Salaam, while I, and other undergraduate colleagues, were studying Organic Chemistry and he was teaching us Organic Spectroscopy and Stereochemistry, and Natural Products. He handpicked some of us to join the natural products research group as M. Sc. students joining a group of other senior students. It is then when a memorable and life-long journey for the young us and this holistic mentor started.**

As a supervisor, Prof. Nkunya was strict and detailed. He used to visit each and every one of us three times a day in the laboratory. We equated this to a medical doctor supervising a three times dosage a day - in Swahili 'kutwa mara tatu'. However, strict as he was, he always found time to talk with you about your social and family life outside the lab. He was a caring brother. He wanted you to progress holistically. He was an all-round mentor and friend indeed. As we approached graduation, he would start advising on the next steps to ensure that you continue to advance in your career and life. His was an open-ended mentorship.

Most of us ended becoming academicians just like him because we could not help it. He had a number of research grants and networks and he used these to open a world of opportunities to his students. He also held various leadership positions nationally and internationally hence was able to see and advise on other avenues after graduation. To have him as a referee in your CV was a good guarantee for a successful job application. His mentorship left a trail of over 50 M. Sc. and Ph. D students who are now holding

various academic, research and leadership positions in various countries. Has also left a trove of more than 100 scholarly publications.

Prof. Nkunya was a very well-respected scientist in Africa and elsewhere who was humble and able to make long-lasting friendships and networks. He functioned as a key contact person between scientists in Africa and the western world. Nkunya held several positions in various societies in Africa, most notably as Executive Secretary of Natural Products Research Network for Eastern and Central Africa (NAPRECA). His primary focus was not his scientific career (although he became a well-known and world-wide respected university professor), but he felt committed to the advancement of education and science in Africa.

When he was about to retire, he returned to the University of Dar es Salaam and resumed his teaching and research. He insisted teaching the same courses, resumed supervision and insisted to have the same office. We had to share it. What a humble person. We miss Prof. Nkunya a lot already, especially at this very important period of his life of retirement where he became even more available to us, advising and sharing his immense experience and not forgetting sharing jovial occasions. We felt as if he was back to supervise and mentor us again, one last time. Mayunga, humble, transcendent, indefinite, and holistic indeed!

We have lost a great and charismatic leader, scientist, adviser, father, brother, friend, colleague and teacher; a loss that is hard to replace.

Prof. Nkunya, we promise to do our very best to build on the solid foundation you have laid to us your students, and to make great impacts in Africa.

May your soul rest in perfect peace.



ing knowledge driven  
y/industry partnerships™  
el, Kigali, Rwanda



**FROM THE ARCHIVE**

# IUCEA Strategic Plan 2011 – 2016: We have made good progress

When the Fourth East African Community (EAC) Development Strategy 2011 – 2016 whose aim is on Deepening and Accelerating Integration was developed, it redefined IUCEA as a strategic institution of EAC responsible for the development and coordination of higher education and research in the Community. It is on this ground that, in 2011, IUCEA developed a roadmap for guiding its transformation into an all-embracing research and human resources development institution of the EAC. The roadmap guided the development of the IUCEA Strategic Plan 2011 – 2016, which also included redefined institutional visions and missions.

The current vision is for IUCEA to become an EAC strategic institution responsible for promoting, developing and coordinating human resources development and research in the region. The mission focuses on promoting strategic and sustainable development of strong higher education systems and research systems for supporting East Africa's socioeconomic development and regional integration.

The Roadmap revolved around seven key strategic areas, namely (a) promoting higher education access opportunities to support the transformation of East Africa into a knowledge-based economy; (b) developing higher education quality enhancement systems to promote and maintain the region's global socio-economic competitiveness; (c) developing systems for harmonization of higher education to make East Africa a common higher education

area; (d) promoting graduate employability through strategic interventions to enhance skills, competence, social ideals, and entrepreneurship culture; (e) promoting research linked to education, postgraduate training, innovation, and community engagement; (f) developing and maintaining a robust higher education information management system; and (g) linking the academia to private enterprise through engagement with the public sector.

As we are approaching the end of the 5-year Strategic Plan 2011 – 2016, it is the right time to look back and assess the achievements we have made, establish the challenges ahead and then chart the way forward. As I look back from where we took off, I am pleased to confirm that we have made good progress. IUCEA has strengthened institutional governance, management and operational framework, developed quality assurance and higher education harmonization systems, and enhanced research development, coordination and support systems. Support to university academic and networking systems have also been enhanced. These are important preconditions in ensuring that IUCEA responds to the expectations of the EAC Partner States in terms of higher education institutions producing high-level human resources and research output that can promote and sustain socio-economic development and regional integration.

The East African Qualifications Framework for Higher Education that has been developed



and approved by the EAC Council of Ministers in April 2015. It is intended to facilitate harmonization of education and training systems and the qualifications attained by clearly indicating the programme learning outcomes, the different qualification levels, a regional credit system, and recognition of prior learning, among others. The regional framework is also aimed at facilitating mutual recognition of qualifications across the East African region, as envisioned in the EAC Common Market Protocol.

The growth trend in higher education in East Africa that is being facilitated by the liberalization of higher education delivery in all the EAC Partner States, which started in the mid-1980 by allowing private providers to come in, has led to a continuous surge in the number of private higher education institutions being established. Therefore, in order to ensure that this trend in rapid expansion of higher education does not lead to compromising of the quality of education provided, efforts to harmonize quality assurance systems in higher education in the region became a paramount necessity. IUCEA immediately took the lead in this endeavor. This was done from 2006.

To mobilize and engage key stakeholders, build partnership and strengthen stakeholders' capacity in implanting the IUCEA programmes and projects, IUCEA focused on advocacy to operationalize its Strategic Plan. Therefore, sensitization seminars with members of the East African Legislative Assembly, university students and higher education institutions took the center stage. Meetings were held with Heads of commissions/ councils for higher/ university education and coordinators of quality assurance programmes in universities. Sharing knowledge, experiences and new developments and other topical issues related to higher education with Vice Chancellors during Annual Meetings gave the IUCEA Secretariat an opportunity to be guided on achievement of the vision and mission, and on how to strategize for the way forward.

The five years of implementation of the IUCEA

Strategic Plan 2011 – 2016 has given us invaluable lessons in teamwork, networking and collaboration, which have contributed towards improving the quality of services to stakeholders. Notwithstanding the substantial momentum and progress made, IUCEA needs to place special emphasis on creating more opportunities for collaboration, both within and outside the region. Therefore, paying attention to the feedback we receive from stakeholders in order to evaluate our work and its impact on the development of human resources and research in the region is inevitable. There is also a need to devote efforts in strengthening partnership with diverse stakeholders: the private sector and other higher education stakeholders.

I would like to thank the Governments of the East African Partner States for their confidence in IUCEA and for the support provided through the Ministries responsible for Higher Education and East African Community Affairs, and the national commission/ councils for higher/ university education. I take this opportunity to thank the EAC Secretary General for his support and guidance, and the IUCEA Chairperson and members of IUCEA Executive Committee and Standing Committees for their support and policy guidance. I would also like to express sincere appreciation to the Germany Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Germany Rectors' Conference (HRK), Sida of Sweden, UNESCO, and the World Bank for the support they provide in implementing IUCEA programmes and projects. I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to my colleagues for their tireless efforts and support despite inadequate resources and human capacity. IUCEA is where it is today because of collective and individual efforts and commitment. As I exit from IUCEA as Executive Secretary, I look forward to IUCEA continuing to be an exemplary institution within EAC. I wish the new Executive Secretary and staff success and promise to continue being IUCEA ambassador wherever I will be.

*Statement by Prof. Nkunya as the Out-going Executive Secretary of IUCEA in 2015.*

# He will be spoken of highly for years to come

**By Dr. Rita Makumbi**

On behalf of the Quality Assurance fraternity, and as an East African, I find so much pride in his accomplishments most notable the growth of quality assurance in the region through actualisation of the East African Higher Education Quality Assurance Network (EAQAN) and the publication of The Road Map to Quality guides that are used all over the continent. He had a successful career and will be thought and spoken of highly for many years to come.

Prof Nkunya was truly an exceptional person that nurtured others, at times to a fault. I will never forget how helpful he was to me in Johannesburg, South Africa when I was still learning and grappling with all this Quality Assurance lingo and practices. He noticed I was stumbling and took over so fast and tactfully that I doubt anyone noticed it was not even planned! I learnt of his humility despite knowing so much and being the expert he was. This act of kindness and simplicity is something I emulate to date.

Prof Nkunya was a role model, a caring and supportive mentor in the journey of quality assurance in higher education for many of us in the EAC region. He was undoubtedly one of the biggest pillars as seen in the literature that we have today.

I would like to leave you with some direct address to Prof Nkunya that I feel directly represents the way in which I choose to honor and remember him.

15th Executive Committee Meeting at Sun N Sand Beach Resort, Mombasa on 20th March 2014.

“Your work towards the Quality Assurance Activity in the East Africa will continue to influence and nurture more educationists in the region and beyond. Prof Nkunya, I truly cherish the impact of your work in my life and the few times that God allowed us to meet... I know that you are at peace now”.

*Dr Rita Makumbi is Director, Quality Assurance at Ndejje University, President UUQAF and Outgoing President EAQAN (2018 – 2021)*





# Nkunya saw our potential

**By Jennifer Kasanda Sesabo**

I met Prof Mayunga Nkunya for the first time in 2007 when I attended the Training for Quality Assurance Officers from universities in East Africa in Oldenburg, Germany. Prof Nkunya was a great man who contributed richly to the development of the East African Quality Assurance System. I thank him for seeing the potential in some of us and inviting us to work with him to build a quality culture in higher education in the East African Community(EAC) Partner States. He was an outstanding leader and

the best mentor.

Prof Nkunya inspired me in his leadership. He showed me that leadership and service to others should be full of fun. I learned that no matter what my role is I can and should make a difference. As a brother, mentor and friend, I thank him for especially touching my life. His legacy of good leadership and commitment in the East Africa region quality assurance fraternity will live forever.

*Jennifer Kasanda Sesabo, Mzumbe University, Tanzania*



In Memorium.  
1952 - 2021

**PROF.  
MAYUNGA  
HABIBU  
HEMEDI  
NKUNYA**



**Inter-University Council for East Africa**  
Plot M833 Kigobe Road, Kyambogo, Kampala  
P.O.BOX 7110, Kampala, Uganda  
[www.iucea.org](http://www.iucea.org)