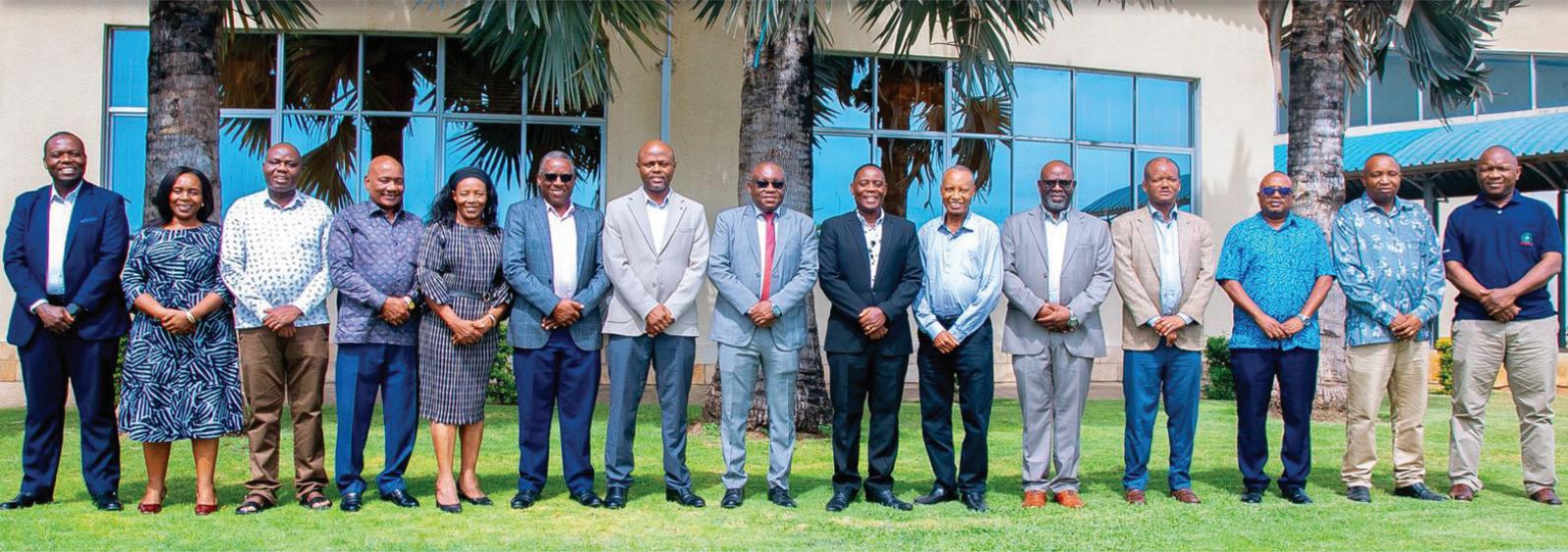


News Flash

The Open University of Tanzania



Professors of the Open University of Tanzania (OUT) pose for a group photograph with the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Alex B. Makulilo (centre), during the Sixth Professors' Forum held at the APC Conference Centre, Mbweni, Dar es Salaam, from 23 - 24 February 2026

Prof. Makulilo Rallies Academics to Champion Strategic Research for Vision 2050

The Open University of Tanzania (OUT) has reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening research, increasing scholarly publications and aligning its institutional priorities with the Tanzania Development Vision 2050, in a strategic move aimed at enhancing the University's contribution to knowledge creation, innovation and national development.

The commitment was announced by the Vice Chancellor, Alex B. Makulilo, during the opening of the Sixth Professors' Forum held at the APC Conference Centre in Mbweni, Dar es Salaam, from February 23-24, 2026. He underscored that research remains a key indicator of a university's standing and a critical driver of socio-economic transformation.

Prof. Makulilo acknowledged ongoing achievements but noted that the University continues to face challenges, including a limited number of active research clusters, low levels of grant applications and insufficient high-impact publications contributing to national and global development. He described these challenges as an opportunity to strengthen OUT's research architecture and enhance the quality and competitiveness of its scholarly output.

He called upon professors to lead strategic research agendas, generate solutions to pressing societal

challenges and mentor emerging scholars in order to increase research productivity and academic excellence.

"The University is finalising a 25-year vision and the 2026-2031 Strategic Plan, in which research and innovation have been placed among top priorities in alignment with the National Development Vision 2050. Universities must produce research that provides practical solutions to societal and economic challenges," he said.

Prof. Makulilo further emphasised that the success of Vision 2050 will depend largely on the capacity of higher learning institutions to generate knowledge and innovations capable of supporting government and private sector development initiatives. In line with this objective, OUT plans to reinstate its Internal Research Fund in the coming financial year under a competitive and accountable framework, particularly to support early-career academics who have recently completed their PhD studies.

Speaking at the forum, the Chairperson of the OUT Professors' Forum, Deus Ngaruko, stressed that research is the defining function that distinguishes universities from other education institutions. He urged professors to spearhead strategic research initiatives that address national development priorities.

▶ The Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic, Research and Consultancy, Saganga M. Kapaya, noted that professorship fundamentally carries a research mandate alongside teaching responsibilities. He emphasised the duty of professors to lead research, nurture academic talent and advance the national development agenda through scholarship and professional consultancy.

the forum, professors have been tasked with providing strategic leadership in advancing solution-oriented research, mentoring young scholars and increasing high-quality academic publications.

The University has pledged to continue utilising such platforms to strengthen research planning, expand academic partnerships and contribute meaningfully to the implementation of the Tanzania Development Vision 2050 for the broader benefit of society and national progress.

The Sixth Professors' Forum has laid a strong foundation for reinforcing OUT's academic contribution to research and innovation. Through



The Deputy Vice Chancellor - Academic, Research and Consultancy, Prof. Saganga Kapaya (centre), and the Deputy Vice Chancellor - Planning, Finance and Administration, Prof. Josiah Katani (second left seated), join representatives from the National Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NACTVET)

OUT Champions Harmonized Curriculum Development in Collaboration with NACTVET

The Open University of Tanzania (OUT) convened a high-level Stakeholders' Consultative Meeting on Curriculum Matters, bringing together representatives from the National Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NACTVET) and higher learning institutions across the country. The meeting focused on harmonizing and enhancing curriculum development, with OUT taking a central role in coordinating efforts to ensure quality, relevance, and alignment with national priorities.

During the opening session of the Stakeholders' Consultative Meeting on Curriculum Matters held on 27th February 2026 at the Open University of Tanzania (OUT), the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic, Research and Consultancy, Prof. Saganga Kapaya, highlighted the University's

strategic role in leading and coordinating curriculum development initiatives. As a well-established institution with extensive experience in open and distance learning, quality assurance, and academic programme design, OUT is well positioned to spearhead the development of standardized and industry responsive curricula. He emphasized that this responsibility reflects the confidence placed in the University's institutional capacity, academic expertise, and nationwide presence.

"The Open University of Tanzania is prepared to take a leading role in the development and harmonization of curricula in collaboration with NACTVET and other institutions. With our broad academic expertise, strong quality assurance frameworks, and experience in curriculum design and

delivery, we are confident in our ability to coordinate this process effectively and produce curricula that are responsive, relevant, and aligned with national priorities." Said Prof. Kapaya.

Ag. Dean of the Faculty of Business Management (FBM), Dr. Renatus Mchembe, highlighted the OUT's commitment to contributing academic expertise across a wide range of fields, emphasizing the importance of leveraging this expertise to support curriculum development that is comprehensive and aligned with national priorities. He added, "The Faculty of Business Management (FBM), as one of the faculties of the Open University of Tanzania, is ready to collaborate with NACTVET and other stakeholders in developing comprehensive and responsive curricula that effectively prepare

▶ graduates to meet the evolving needs of the nation.”

Manager for Curriculum Development from the National Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NACT-VET), Mr. Twaha A. Twaha, emphasized the importance of collaboration with higher learning institutions to ensure that curricula

meet regulatory standards and industry requirements. He noted that NACTVET’s involvement is crucial in guiding curriculum development, monitoring quality assurance, and ensuring that programmes contribute effectively to the national skills development agenda.

The meeting was held at the OUT Headquarters, attended by uni-

versity leaders, faculty representatives, and officials from NACT-VET, as well as representatives from higher learning institutions across the country. Participants emphasized the importance of collaboration, expertise, and industry alignment in developing curricula that effectively prepare graduates to meet Tanzania’s evolving workforce needs. ■

OUT Expands International Partnerships with Norwegian Universities

The Open University of Tanzania (OUT) welcomed a delegation from Molde University College and the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (HVL), marking the beginning of academic and research partnership between the institutions. The visit underscores a shared commitment to advancing knowledge exchange, fostering innovation, and building sustainable academic collaborations aimed at generating meaningful impact for communities in Tanzania, Norway, and beyond.

Representing the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Alex Makulilo, the Deputy Vice Chancellor - Academic, Research and Consultancy of the Open University of Tanzania, Prof. Saganga Kapaya, officially opened the programme and highlighted the university’s expanding influence across Tanzania and the wider Eastern and Central African region. With over 8,000 students enrolled and 32 regional centers, OUT has grown into a leading Open and Distance Learning (ODL) institution, delivering most of its programs through the Moodle platform



The Deputy Vice Chancellor - Academic, Research and Consultancy of OUT, Prof. Saganga Kapaya, engage in discussions with a visiting delegation from Molde University College and the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (HVL) during their official visit to the OUT Headquarters in Kinondoni, Dar es Salaam, on 16 February 2026.

supported by blended learning approaches. Prof. Kapaya emphasized that the visit provides a key opportunity to strengthen institutional collaboration, foster strategic partnerships in academia, research, consultancy, and innovation, and explore joint research, staff and student mobility, and capacity building initiatives.

“This visit provides an important opportunity for us to exchange knowledge, share experiences, and identify sustainable areas of cooperation. We believe this engagement will lay a strong foundation for long-term partnership between our institutions” said, Prof. Kapaya.

Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at OUT, Dr. Dunlop Ochieng, emphasized the importance of strengthening academic collaboration with the Norwegian University College. He noted that since its establishment in 1992,

OUT has continuously sought international partnerships to enhance teaching, knowledge exchange and research to expand into multiple thematic areas, including disability.

Dr. Mariana Makuu, Head of the Department of Sociology and Social Work and Coordinator of the NOREC Project, said the NOREC Project has created a valuable platform for cooperation and shared research between the two institutions, allowing OUT staff to gain important exposure and skills from Norway, while Norwegian students and researchers also benefit from Tanzania’s experience, strengthening academic programmes and creating meaningful impact in their societies.

Christine Oeye, Pro-Rector for Research and Professor at the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, strengthened

on academic and research collaboration with the Open University of Tanzania (OUT). She noted that their expertise in logistics, health sciences, and applied social research will complement OUT's programmes and support joint Master's and PhD initiatives, enhancing skills development, promoting

exchange, and driving innovation for lasting impact in Norway and Tanzania.

The visit, held on February 16, 2026 at the Open University of Tanzania headquarters, brought together representatives from both institutions and provided a platform to strengthen discus-

sions on academic collaboration, joint research, and capacity building. It highlighted shared goals of knowledge exchange, innovation, and the development of long-term partnerships aimed at benefiting students, staff, and communities in Tanzania, Norway, and beyond.

OUT Hosts M&E Training to Enhance Competency-Based Education

The Open University of Tanzania (OUT) has reaffirmed its commitment to advancing the government's implementation of the 2014 Education and Training Policy (2023 Edition), which prioritizes the production of skilled graduates through hands-on, competency based education. In line with this national agenda, the University recently conducted a specialised Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) training that brought together participants from diverse institutions across the country. The programme aimed to strengthen participants' competencies in project planning, implementation and evaluation, while promoting data-driven decision-making, institutional accountability and improved performance outcomes.

Speaking during the closing session on behalf of the Director of OUT's Consultancy Bureau, Dr. Noel Nkombe, Short Course Training Coordinator Dr. Bilhuda Chamshama underscored the University's continued focus on capacity building, professional development and knowledge sharing through practical training rather than purely theoretical instruction. She emphasised that M&E knowledge must be applied to improve management systems, strengthen accountability and deliver measurable institutional results.

She urged participants to translate the knowledge gained into action, noting that its true value lies in practical application within institutions and communities. Also addressing participants, Baraka Mfilinge, Chairperson of Youth Monitoring and Evaluation globally, described the five-day programme as a rich learning experience that enabled participants to acquire new knowledge, exchange experiences and deepen their understanding of

the strategic role of M&E.

He noted that M&E should not be viewed merely as a reporting tools, but as a critical management tool for institutional learning, performance improvement and enhanced accountability in both public and private sectors. He further observed that the training had contributed to participants' professional and academic growth, particularly for those pursuing postgraduate studies.



The Short Course Training Coordinator at the Open University of Tanzania, Dr. Bilhuda Chamshama (seated centre), poses for a group photo with participants of a five-day specialized training on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) held from 9 - 13 February 2026 at the OUT Headquarters in Dar es Salaam.

Among the participants, Patrick N. Mbise from the Tanzania Civil Aviation Authority expressed appreciation for the programme, highlighting its relevance to professional responsibilities and its potential to strengthen M&E systems that support sustainable institutional and community development.

The five-day training, held from 9th to 13th February 2026 at the headquarters of the Open University of Tanzania in Kinondoni, Dar es Salaam. It focused on strengthening skills in project planning, implementation, evaluation, results-based performance management, and data-driven decision-making. Participants also shared experiences on implementing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems across diverse organisational and national contexts.

The programme brought together participants from a wide range of public and private institutions, creating an opportunity for cross-sector learning and knowledge exchange. Through initiatives such as this training, the Open University of Tanzania continues to position itself as a key partner in strengthening institutional capacity and supporting the national drive toward practical, skills-based education.

OUT Deepens Global Internship Collaboration at IAESTE Winter Exchange Session In Istanbul

The Open University of Tanzania (OUT) has reaffirmed its commitment to internationalization and global academic collaboration following its participation in the IAESTE Winter Exchange Session held in Istanbul, Turkey.

The session brought together leaders of the International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience (IAESTE) from across the world to deliberate on strategies for expanding international internship opportunities, strengthening institutional partnerships and enhancing mobility for students and young professionals.

During the high-level meeting, the Vice Chancellor of OUT, Alex Boniface Makulilo, held closed-door engagements with the IAESTE Global President and other senior officials to discuss avenues for broadening collaboration between OUT and the global IAESTE network.

The discussions centered on expanding international internship

exchanges, connecting more academic institutions and employers to IAESTE programmes, and creating additional opportunities for Tanzanian students and professionals to gain international work experience.

Speaking during the session, Prof. Makulilo underscored the university's commitment to advancing IAESTE's global mission through stronger institutional linkages and wider participation in international exchange programmes. "The Open University of Tanzania is fully committed to advancing IAESTE's mission by connecting more institutions and employers to international exchange opportunities. We look forward to welcoming the global IAESTE community to Tanzania and ensuring that future engagements are enriching, impactful and truly world-class," he said.

A key outcome of the deliberations was a preliminary discussion on the possibility of OUT hosting the IAESTE Annual

Conference 2027 in Tanzania in February 2027. The proposed conference would bring together IAESTE representatives from member countries worldwide to review progress in international internship exchanges and chart future collaboration.

University officials noted that the prospect of hosting the global conference reflects OUT's growing influence within the IAESTE network and its increasing role in promoting international academic and professional exchange.

During the session, the university also highlighted Tanzania's readiness to host international interns while expanding outbound opportunities for Tanzanian students seeking professional placements abroad. The initiative forms part of OUT's broader strategy to strengthen global partnerships and position the institution as a key contributor to international knowledge exchange and workforce development.

OUT Leads In Strengthening Experiential Learning Through Strategic Partnership with Shimulimuli



The Head of the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Unit at the Open University of Tanzania, Dr. Straton Ruhinda, shows a project reports to stakeholders during a mid-term evaluation meeting held on 27 February 2026 in Morogoro, as part of efforts to strengthen experiential learning through the university's strategic partnership with Shimulimuli.

The Open University of Tanzania (OUT) has reinforced its commitment to experiential learning after entering into a strategic partnership with Shimulimuli, a Dar es Salaam based media production company, aimed at linking students with real-world professional environments. The collaboration also includes the establishment of a digital museum that will systematically collect, preserve and showcase Tanzania's cultural and tourism heritage through modern technology.

The initiative was announced on February 27, 2026, in Morogoro during a mid-evaluation meeting attended by officials from

▶ OUT, Shimulimuli, the Ministry of Information, Culture, Arts and Sports and other stakeholders. Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at OUT, Dr. Dunlop Ochieng, said the project is designed to produce graduates equipped with practical competencies aligned with labour market demands.

“If we expect students to learn by doing, we must collaborate with companies that are already in the field. Through this project, our students gain hands-on professional skills and develop critical thinking. The digital museum will serve as a modern platform for preserving and presenting our cultural heritage,” Dr. Ochieng said.

He noted that OUT has allocated approximately TZS 70 million to sponsor students participating in the programme. Last year, five students were selected and sponsored to participate in cultural practical engagement and data collection activities. As part

of their graduation requirements, they were required to prepare professional reports in the Tourism and Hospitality, Journalism and Public Relations programmes.

Shimulimuli’s Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Felician Tomeka, said the organisation formalised its partnership with OUT to strengthen cultural preservation through practical training.

“You cannot move forward if you do not understand your roots. We have been documenting traditions, customs, indigenous cuisines and traditional dances.

Through OUT, students gain direct experience that ultimately benefits the nation,” Tomeka said. He added that some of the participating students have since launched tourism-related projects and contributed to decision-making processes within their local councils, reflecting the positive community impact of the initiative.

A Senior Cultural Heritage and National Ethics Officer from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, Mr. Tito Lulandala, underscored the importance of compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks, including the signing of consent forms to prevent potential disputes. He further advised the introduction of cultural broadcast segments to highlight OUT’s field contributions.

On behalf of Prof. Matobola Mihale, Director of Research, Publication and Innovation (DRPI) of OUT, Coordinator of Innovation, Dr. Straton Ruhinda said the discussions demonstrated a shared commitment to advancing research, innovation and student engagement in addressing societal challenges. Through this partnership, OUT continues to integrate theory with practice, leveraging technology to safeguard Tanzania’s heritage while producing skilled, innovative graduates capable of contributing directly to national development. ■

FROM SETBACK TO CONTINENTAL LEADERSHIP: How OUT Transforms Determination Into Success

When Baraka Leonard Mfilinge completed his A-level studies, he stood at a crossroads familiar to many young Tanzanians. He had ambition. He had academic qualifications. He had determination. What he did not have was financial certainty.

Born into a modest family and the first to attend university level, Baraka carried not only his own dreams but also the hopes of those who had never had access to higher education. That milestone was truly historic for his family. However, the road ahead quickly became uncertain.

Like many students from low-income backgrounds, he strategically applied to an education degree program, believing it would increase his



Baraka Leonard Mfilinge, an alumnus of the Open University of Tanzania, during the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) Conference held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

chances of receiving support from institutions that offer

higher education loans. It was a decision shaped by reality



Baraka Leonard Mfilinge, a Monitoring and Evaluation specialist and alumnus of the Open University of Tanzania, hands over the EvalYouth Torch to the Prime Minister of Tanzania, Hon. Kassim Majaliwa, during Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Week 2025. The symbolic handover highlighted youth leadership and participation in strengthening evaluation practices for development

rather than passion. When his name did not appear among loan beneficiaries, his university dream was abruptly deferred. For three years from 2012 to 2015, higher education became a postponed ambition. But postponement did not mean surrender.

Choosing a System Designed for Real-Life Use.

In 2015, Baraka made a decision that would redefine his trajectory: he enrolled at the Open University of Tanzania (OUT) to pursue a Bachelor of Arts in Education. Unlike conventional universities that require full-time physical attendance and upfront annual tuition payments, OUT offered something different, a model designed around the lived realities of Tanzanians. Baraka enrolled while teaching

at White Lake High School and Green Acres International schools. His mornings were dedicated to students in the classroom. His evenings were spent on lectures, assignments, and exam preparation. The schedule was demanding. It required discipline, sacrifice, and resilience.

At one-point, financial hardship forced him to pause his studies. In many institutions, that break could have ended his journey permanently. But at OUT, flexibility is not just a slogan; it's a fundamental part of the system. He restructured his finances and was able to pick up where he left off without losing his academic standing.

In 2018, after years of effort, he graduated. That degree meant more than just academic

achievement. It symbolized the strength of inclusive systems that adapt to students instead of forcing students to conform to rigid structures.

When circumstances change, strategy must adapt

After graduation, Baraka aimed to find a government job through the automated hiring system. But policy changes after the 2015 elections shifted the job market. The stability many graduates depended on was gone. Once again, uncertainty reappeared.

But instead of waiting passively, Baraka pivoted. He immersed himself in research assignments, volunteer engagements and mentorship opportunities. Through exposure to development programmes, he discovered a growing interest

in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), a field central to strengthening public systems and development impact.

Recognizing the need for specialized skills, he went back to OUT in 2019 to pursue a Master of Arts in Monitoring and Evaluation. Once again, flexibility proved to be crucial.

Without stable full-time employment, he depended on consultancies and short-term assignments to fund his studies. The option to register and pay per course instead of committing to a full yearly fee made postgraduate education financially feasible. The extended timeframe allowed him to balance earning income with academic progress. In 2022, he earned his master's degree. He had evolved from a graduate seeking opportunity into a professional creating it.

Building a Continental and Global Profile

Today, Baraka Leonard Mfilinge is a Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) specialist with over eight years of experience in public health, youth empowerment, climate adaptation, disaster risk management, resilience programming, education, and community development.

He serves as the vice-chair of EvalYouth Global and leads the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) Young and Emerging Evaluators (YEEs) for Anglophone Africa.

His work extends beyond Tanzania's borders. He has supported programs in Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda, and has collaborated with professional networks in Rwanda, Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho, Angola, South Africa, and Eswatini.

Among his notable contributions are leading participatory evaluations using mixed-method approaches, designing digital monitoring systems through platforms such as Kobo Toolbox

and ODK, developing Power BI dashboards to enhance data-driven decision-making, and serving as Lead Consultant in designing the National M&E Framework for the Ministry of Health Public Health Emergency Operations Centre (PHEOC). He is also a director and managing partner of Ufanisi Knowledge Hub Consulting Firm. His excellence has earned national and continental recognition. In 2025, he received the Outstanding Leadership and Service Award from the Prime Minister's Office during Tanzania's National Monitoring and Evaluation Week. That same year, he was honoured as Outstanding Rapporteur during the 25th Anniversary celebrations of the African Evaluation Association in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

From delayed university entrant to continental evaluation leader, his journey is both inspiring and instructive.

What Makes OUT Different?

Baraka's success is not only a story of personal resilience. It is a testament to an institutional philosophy. The Open University of Tanzania operates on principles that directly respond to the country's socio-economic realities.

Accessibility, students enrol regardless of geographical location. One does not need to relocate to Dar es Salaam or any major urban centre to earn a recognized degree.

Financial flexibility, payment is structured per registered course rather than through a large annual fee, reducing financial pressure and enabling gradual progression.

Duration flexibility, undergraduate programmes may extend up to six years, while postgraduate programmes allow extended completion timelines accommodating working professionals, parents and individuals navigating financial interruptions.

Inclusiveness, OUT welcomes first-generation students, working adults, entrepreneurs, public servants and those who missed conventional entry pathways. Education is democratized rather than restricted.

These are not abstract principles. They are operational realities that transform lives.

Education Without Boundaries

In a rapidly evolving economy, full-time campus-based education does not serve everyone. Many Tanzanians must work while studying. Others support families. Some live far from urban centres where universities are concentrated. OUT addresses these realities head-on.

Baraka's journey shows that open and online learning is not a second choice but a strategic path for ambitious individuals who need adaptability. His continental recognition challenges outdated views about distance education. Well-structured flexible systems create leaders capable of competing at the highest professional levels.

A Message to Prospective Students

Baraka often reflects that his breakthrough did not come because obstacles disappeared. It came because he found an institution structured to accommodate persistence. You do not need perfect financial conditions to begin. You do not need relocation to access quality education. You do not need uninterrupted circumstances to succeed. You need determination and a system built to support it.

The Open University of Tanzania proves that when education is accessible, flexible and inclusive, setbacks become stepping stones. When opportunity aligns with perseverance, local ambition can grow into continental leadership.