

Report for the 5th Annual Convention held in Denver, Colorado.

The fifth annual ICOB convention was held in Denver, Colorado, from August 2-6, 2007, under the theme of working together to build Kigezi. It was attended by delegates who came from as far away as Burundi, Canada, Denmark, Kenya, Malawi, Poland, Rwanda, Sweden, Uganda, and the United Kingdom; as well as the many who flew in from twelve of the 50 US states.

Conventioneers arrived throughout the day on Thursday and checked into their rooms. As attendance exceeded our expectations, the official convention hotel, the Magnolia, sold out, and the overflow delegates were accommodated a few blocks away at the Curtis Hotel. No formal functions were planned for the night, so delegates mingled and socialized in the various eateries and watering holes along the 16th Street Pedestrian Mall, before retiring for the night.

Friday saw the first full day of the convention. After welcoming and housekeeping remarks from the organizing committee chair, ICOB President Frank Byamugisha gave an update of ICOB's accomplishments in the year since the previous convention held in Toronto. Kabale's own Geoffrey Anguyo gave a presentation on the role civil society is playing in Kigezi. Following a short break, Margaret Tuhumwire spoke about the Entebbe Women's Association and the work it is doing through its Children HIV/AIDS project in Rukungiri. Next, Hadidja Nyiransekuye presented a paper on how families forced to relocate to the diaspora after fleeing their homes in the interlacustrine region because of political and social strife can better cope. After a lunch break, Kaguri Twesigye spoke about the

state of education in Kigezi, highlighting the role his school at Nyaka is playing in educating orphaned children.

This was followed by Phillip Odera's presentation on strategies for funding the KEF. After a short break, ICOB youths led a panel discussion on what they can do for their contemporaries in Kigezi. The panel consisted of Marjorie Betubiza, Jeremy Byamugisha, Michelle Byamugisha, Nyabweza Itaagi, and Kabarungi Mulera. The day's conference session concluded with a panel discussion on the topic "Where do we go from here?" The panel was moderated by Jeannette Bisamunyu and consisted of Beatrice Hamujuni-Smith, Nkunda Kabatereine, and Muniini Mulera. Delegates then had an evening on their own.

On Saturday morning, delegates boarded buses for the 30-mile drive to Boulder, home of the world's atomic clock. They were treated to a picnic at the Boulder Reservoir, where adventuresome youths took to the water while the rest played games in the park and others sat drinking *obushera* under a large tent sheltering them from the relentless hundred-degree sun. After a meal and lots of fluids, delegates boarded buses and were driven through the scenic mountainside city of Boulder, before returning to the hotels to rest and get ready for the evening.

The evening program was held at the Denver Convention Center, where delegates were joined by several Denver localites. It started off with a cash bar and light music, followed by a grand banquet, a cultural dance extravaganza featuring *intoore*, *ekitaguriro*, and the inevitable *okusooma*. During the KEF fundraising drive, Eustacius Betubiza delivered a moving powerpoint presentation on the challenges facing the many in Kigezi who are unable to proceed

beyond P7 or S4. The evening culminated in a DJ dance that went into the wee hours of Sunday morning.

Sunday started with an eleven O'clock ecumenical service officiated by Elvis Muhaabwa and Rev. Stanley Katungwensi. The annual general business meeting, which included the election of some office bearers, followed in the afternoon. In the evening, delegates sat down for a sumptuous dinner in the Magnolia Ballroom, which was followed by a DJ dance that was attended by many locals as well.

The convention ended Monday as gloomy-faced delegates checked out of their hotels, no doubt pondering the fact that it would be one very long year until the next convention in New York.

ICOB Denver Convention '07 Organizing committee:

Primrose Cox, Transportation

Patrick Kalenzi, Secretary

Andrew Katarikawe, Chair

Stanley Katungwensi, Treasurer

Kenneth Magoye, Registration & Security

Judie Nkusi, Foods & Beverages

Committee members:

Charity Atukunda Shawn Cox

Harry Hakiza Nyabweza Itaagi

Sharon Kalenzi Olive Katarikawe

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