

# Strengthening Opportunities for Online Delivery of Post graduate Programmes in African Universities

## RUFORUM-European Union Partners Meeting Report



Date: 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2016

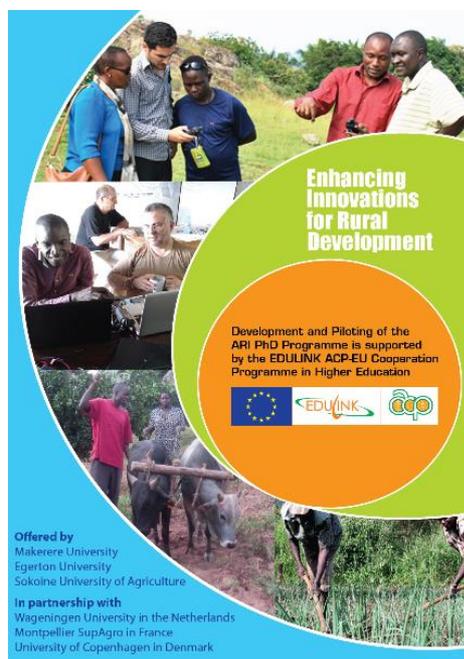
Venue: RUFORUM Conference Room | Time: 2:00-5:00pm

Audience: RUFORUM Staff and Member University Implementing partners

## Introduction

There is increasing need for university teaching staff to develop skills and approaches towards teaching and student learning in institutions of higher education. Specifically the need is towards providing them with the pedagogical tools that will enable them to document and harness student learning. African Universities have over the years implemented online delivery approaches with the aim of increasing access to quality education. RUFORUM through working with academic staff under the regional programs has developed over 34 post graduate courses which are available on an Open access platform at <http://www.ruforum.activemoodle.com/>.

Despite the number of courses developed by university faculties and accessed on the online platforms, there has been limited uptake from the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) member Universities as distance learning or online postgraduate courses accessed without limitations within the region. RUFORUM is working with various partners such as the Association of African Universities (AAU), South African Institute of Distance Learning (SAIDE) and Agrinatura to build capacity of staff and students. This is being done through skills enhancement courses on online delivery and access of teaching and learning. RUFORUM is also working to influence eLearning Policies in African Universities and providing a platform for cross learning among partners and universities.



During his visit at Makerere University, Prof. Didier Pillot, met with RUFORUM staff and representatives from Makerere University on the [regional PhD programme in Agricultural and Rural Innovation \(ARI\)](#). ARI is implemented by a consortium of three East African Universities (Makerere University in Uganda, Egerton University in Kenya and Sokoine University of Agriculture in Tanzania) in partnership with European universities. The ARI II project aims to strengthen human resource capacity to foster Agricultural and Rural Innovation in Eastern Africa ([FED/2013/320-091](#)).

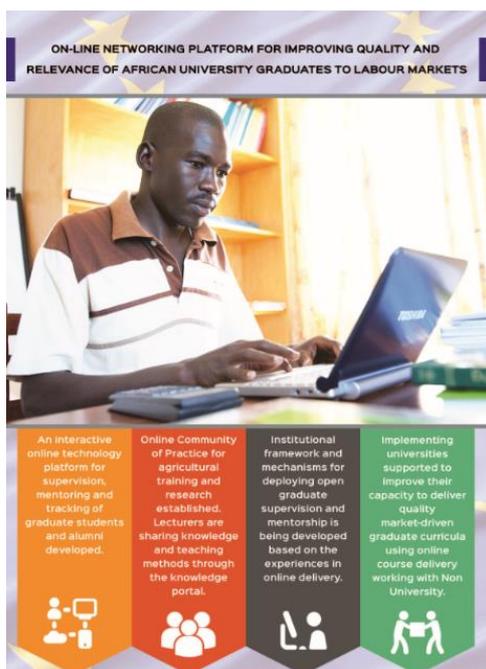
Currently, the ARI program has [21 students](#) of which 13 are male and 8 female. More information of the graduate profile on the ARI program can be accessed at <http://ariphdprogram.org/index.php/ari-program/>. A similar PhD programme, the Agricultural Transformation through Innovations (AgTrain) is implemented by a consortium of European Universities.

Another joint partnership with Agrinatura is through the [ADECEA project](#). This project focuses on establishing and piloting postgraduate Programmes for supporting agricultural development in post conflict countries of Central and Eastern Africa ([FED/2013/320-203](#)).

A scoping study conducted by RUFORUM and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in 2010 revealed that civil war had divested human and infrastructure capacity in several sectors including agricultural education. The study recognized that higher educational institutions had lost most of their staff including the capacity to champion reforms, had dilapidated laboratories and there was generally lack of effective administrative structures in place.

The project currently has the following results;

- Six Master Programmes have been developed and piloted in Burundi, DRC and Madagascar as targeted countries emerging from conflict.
- Course modules have been developed jointly in a south-north partnership between African universities and European universities. The partnership is ongoing and being expanded to address other thematic areas.
- The education systems of the three targeted institutions in Burundi, DRC and Madagascar have been aligned to the license Master Doctoral (LMD) systems
- Resource Mobilisation: ADECEA won an institutional strengthening grant from RUFORUM worth US \$65,000 to facilitate training of 4 MSc students from Burundi at Makerere University and US \$12,000 for MSc training in Madagascar.



The Online networking platform for improved quality and relevance of the African university graduates to labor - FED/2013/335-687 is another EU project that RUFORUM is partnering in with Agrinatura. This EU project is being implemented by Egerton University and four partners with the aim of strengthening the capacities of three universities in Kenya and Uganda towards reforming graduate curricula training and education with greater participation of the agricultural labour markets. Some of the outputs so far include;

- Six curriculum review engagements
- RUFORUM staff delivered motivational talks to students at Egerton University, Makerere University, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, University of Namibia, Stellenbosch University and Sokoine University of Agriculture.
- RUFORUM engaged EARTH University based on their successful model that builds ethical leaders able to support sustainable natural resource management

through programs involving undergraduate internship and entrepreneurial skill development.

RUFORUM representing African Universities and Agrinatura representing the European universities held a meeting at the RUFORUM Secretariat during the month of March, 2016. Below are highlights from this meeting;

### **eLearning Interventions - Areas of collaboration between RUFORUM and Agrinatura**

The meeting noted that there are existing eLearning interventions. However, there is a need to consolidate lessons and experiences from both European partners and RUFORUM to ensure successful implementation of online delivery of the Postgraduate programs in African Universities.

It was agreed that RUFORUM identifies areas of joint Intervention with Agrinatura. This will focus on establishing a one-stop online platform for access and delivery of online post graduate courses for RUFORUM member universities and others. There is need to identify needs and learning outcomes that are required before looking at the technology (the platform for delivery) and a common theme among universities, then develop online courses or modules for these.

There are ongoing efforts to develop content and deliver it online for the Regional PhD program in Plant Breeding and Seed Systems at Makerere University. Makerere University has developed a Masters in Instructional Design and Technology that is mostly an online programme. The programme is to be launched during the 2016/2017 academic year.

The meeting noted that Makerere University and Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) are partnering with Stellenbosch University to develop and deliver courses online. The [PASUFONS project](#) is a collaborative project funded by the European Union under the ACP-EU EDULINK II programme. It is coordinated by Prof John Muyonga at Makerere University, Prof Marena Manley at Stellenbosch University and Dr Arnold Onyango at Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology. The South African Association of Food Science and Technology (SAAFoST) and RUFORUM are associate partners. The use of the telematic platform will promote the exchange of knowledge and one of the envisaged activities is for the experts to broadcast lectures at the three venues simultaneously. RUFORUM plans to utilize the facility to link three regional Plant Breeding Programmes, the Eastern African Center for Crop Improvement at Makerere University, the West Africa Center for Crop Improvement at the University of Ghana, Legon and the African Center for Crop Improvement at the University of KwaZulu Natal.

### **Reflections on the 2015 Erasmus+ call in preparation for the 2017 call**

There is increased interest in the area of eLearning initiatives. Ghent University in Belgium has shown interest to partner with RUFORUM on two proposals for the 2017 Erasmus+ call. In addition, there is interest to develop proposal to beef up PhD training in African Portuguese speaking countries and other issues such as Quality Assurance and University reforms.

There are several universities that have indicated interest in partnering to strengthen eLearning. Gulu University's interest is in designing and developing eLearning capacity through empowering its academic staff and students. Uganda Technology and Management University (UTAMU) would like to focus on Online delivery of a Master's Programme in Monitoring and Evaluation, Makerere University will piloting the online delivery of the Agricultural Information Communication and Management (AICM) programme and also the Agricultural Rural Innovations (ARI) selected courses. These efforts will be done jointly with the Agrinatura network and others to be brought on board.

#### **EU Side event during the 17-21 October, 2016 RUFORUM Biennial conference**

The meeting agreed that a side event be organized to provide a platform for reflections on Higher Education initiatives and investment being done to strengthen Higher Education in Africa. The meeting will also be used to prepare for the upcoming 2017 Erasmus+ call.

#### **Opportunities for scaling out eLearning:**

1. RUFORUM is keen in moving the eLearning initiatives forward and has already started sourcing for resources to support the initiative.
2. Makerere University is the process of implementing a capacity building project for e-learning.
3. Makerere University has approved a policy for open distance and e-learning. This presents opportunity for institutional support during implementation of eLearning initiatives.
4. Develop a library of modules accessible by universities for use in different training programmes. However, RUFORUM needs to look at the legal issues about IPR and ownership.
5. Explore RUFORUM hosting a platform for e-learning, but with courses offered by universities.

### List of Participants at the Meeting

No.	Name	Position	Organisation	Contact
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