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A Daily Brief on the 18th RUFORUM AGM Week #RUFORUMAGM2022

Forum for African Women Vice Chancellors Officially Open



The Forum for African Women Vice Chancellors, (FAWoVC) was officially opened on 12 December 2022 in Harare by the Honourable Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development, Professor dr Amon Murwira.

Held under the theme ‘Enhancing Gender Equality and Inclusiveness for Sustainable Higher Education,’ the Forum saw a gathering of women in leadership

positions from universities across the African continent.

Speaking at the event, the Honourable Minister urged female Vice Chancellors to focus on real issues, which bear resonance with their lived realities, and contexts, adding that it was important to exercise insightful leadership in understanding and

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addressing issues relevant to the aspirations of Africa and her development trajectory.

The Honourable Minister premised his address on four aspects of leadership, which are integrity, insight, inspiration and attention. Integrity, he said was being true to the mission of educating people, and making a deliberate effort at mentorship. Insight was the ability to deduce the real issues affecting the African continent, and providing solutions for its transformation. Inspiration was the process of motivating the next generation of scientists important for Africa's development, while attention related to the need to focus on activities that advanced the cause of women such as the restoration of dignity eroded through the centuries, and the ultimate goal of attaining equality between men and women.

The Minister cited that the Zimbabwean legal and policy environment recognized gender equality, with sections 17 and 56 of the Constitution providing for the same.

In her Welcome Remarks, Vice Chancellor of Gwanda State University in Zimbabwe, Professor Doreen Moyo recognized the commitment of the Higher Education Ministry to gender inclusivity and for ensuring that all University Councils in Zimbabwe had a 50% female representation.

Chairperson of FAWoVC, Professor Mary Okwakol traced the establishment of the Forum, which was launched in 2016 in Nairobi, Kenya by ten female Vice Chancellors, led by Professor Mabel Imbuga of Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture, who signed a declaration for its formation.

Specific objectives that informed the founding of the Forum included understanding leadership and management of Universities in Africa; mentoring of female senior staff members in universities and research institutions; exploring the impact of women networks in supporting women leaders in higher education; sharing of experiences and benchmarking with peers.

Providing statistics, at that time, only 41 out of 1500 universities were headed by women.

Professor Okwakol highlighted that the main pur-

pose of the symposium was to deliberate on strategies to increase women participation and leadership roles in African universities in particular, and higher education in general.

“The key agenda is to promote gender equality and inclusiveness for sustainable higher education on the continent. Specifically, the Symposium will deliberate on gender mainstreaming policies and



Some of the participants who attended the Women's Forum Meeting

practices that maximize impact in higher education in Africa; sharing lessons and experiences in regard to strengthening institutional capacities to nurture women leaders in higher education; gender equality and inclusiveness in higher education leadership and management; and enhancement training for upcoming leaders,” she said.

In her keynote address, Professor Mary Imbuga outlined that gender equity is a key focus in higher education, and there was still need for an increase in women empowerment and female representation in leadership and decision making positions. She added that despite the legal and policy frameworks to support the achievement of these goals, not many gains had been made towards the equitable representation of women in leadership in African universities.

Story by: Sharai Muonwa, Great Zimbabwe University, Contact: smuonwa@gzu.ac.zw and 0772587828

Youth Research Unlocks Entrepreneurship



One of the Young Entrepreneurs showcasing her products during the Exhibition at University of Zimbabwe

Parallel sessions of the 18th Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) Annual General Meeting (AGM) kicked off with the Entrepreneurship and Youth Employability discussion at the University of Zimbabwe.

The AGM is being run under the theme, “Strengthening Africa’s Agri-food System in the Post Covid-19 Era – Opportunities and Challenges,” and students from various member universities presented their research and recommendations to overcome the various challenges affecting the agri-industry.

With Professor Patience Mshenga from Egerton University, Kenya chairing the session, students from universities across Africa presented their research, highlighting the impact they can have on

youth employability and entrepreneurship.

Bindura University of Science Education’s (BUSE) Sandra Timburwa presented her research paper on, “Profitability of Moringa leaf meal as a broiler production cost reduction path among smallholder broiler farmers.”

She said this project will lead to reduced costs in broiler chicken production as her research proved that unit price cost was 25% less when using Moringa compared to conventional methods.

“The objective of the project is to assess the profitability of leaves as a protein substitute at 25% inclusion ton conventional feeds. The results show that it is cheaper to produce broiler chickens using Moringa although it takes 2 more weeks to reach optimum weight,” said Sandra.

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Mathapelo Molapo, an MSc in Agribusiness Management student from Egerton University, Kenya, highlighted the need to have more women involved in meat processing and called for policymakers to create alternative funding for young people in order to encourage them to invest in value addition in meat processing.

This was also echoed in Mr. N. Nyakapene's presentation that youth constitute 70% of Africa's population, yet uptake of entrepreneurship was still low.

"Factors influencing entrepreneurship include low business returns, family assets, level of education as well as entrepreneurship experience.

"I recommend training and workshops on entrepreneurship and businesses to upscale youth experiences and returns in business. Also, parents should invest in supporting entrepreneurship uptake by youths," said Nyakapene.

Dr. Helen Kongai from Uganda's Busitema University highlighted that Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) can act as alternative financing for youths' entrepreneurship endeavours.

She noted that in her research on VSLA, 97.5% of respondents found them to be beneficial.

"97.5% of the respondents found VSLAs to be beneficial to the household because they enabled them to multiply their savings and access credit for medical bills, school fees and even dowry," said Dr. Kongai.

The overwhelming undertone that pervaded the session was the need for Africans to identify solutions within themselves and grow entrepreneurship capacity through young people.

This was Zimbabwe's Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development Honourable Professor dr. Amon Murwira's core message during the opening of the Scientific Conference ceremony.

Prof dr. Murwira said, "Human needs must inform education and education must produce industry. Industry must satisfy human needs. Research must lead to innovation and industrialisation."

From Free State University's FAMACHA diagnostic tool to BUSE's Moringa project, young researchers have moved from merely producing research with no industrial output to pioneering groundbreaking innovations that will leave them as employers and not employees.

on science and technology development. Professor Sinsin concurred with Okori, that there was need to intensify investment in training in human capital for agricultural research.

Professor Sinsin explained that soil fertility depletion was ultimately linked to lower employment levels and increased poverty given the fact that most African nations were agro-based. Investment was needed through the green revolution, crop seed improvement, introducing drought tolerant and pest resistant. He added that the traditional subsistence agriculture was not sufficient to meet the demands of Africa's food requirements and called for African governments to intervene and promote commercial agriculture through opening lines of credit for farmers. Investment in research and capacity building was also required, and that policies should be put in place to curb soil depletion.

Story by: Tinashe Chuma, Bindura University of Science Education



Download Photos from the Various AGM 2022 Sessions



[Click here to view and download images from the various sessions happening during the RUFORUM AGM](#)

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A great occasion to showcase what I'm doing at [@Water4Dev](#) to give back to my community as a result of the inspiration and skills I got from the program



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