

RUFORUM Quarterly Report July-September 2016

Summary

This report presents a summary of progress and achievements for the first quarter (July-September 2016) of the 2016/17 financial period. The report adopts a new structure aligned to the RUFORUM Capacity Building Framework as outlined in the Strategic Business Plan 2015-2020 which guides the overall RUFORUM activities. Below are a key highlights for the quarter:

1. The RUFORUM network expanded from 55 Member Universities to 66, with representation in each of five geographical regions, transforming the network into a continental organization with both reach and programmatic focus
2. Strengthened engagement in new forms of partnerships at national, regional and continental level including engagements with African national governments to support higher education and further ground RUFORUM's role as a network that fosters university engagement with African agriculture, science and technology stakeholders, continent-wide.
3. Conducted an external audit, an independent examination of the financial statements that revealed RUFORUM satisfactory compliance to both industrial standards and statutory regulations
4. Initiated an Africa-wide initiative to support curricula to better respond to developmental challenges through improved university community engagement and entrepreneurship to foster value addition, agribusiness and entrepreneurship through science led approaches to address African socio-economic challenges. This initiative is supported through an USD27.1 million grant from The MasterCard Foundation.
5. Board Executive and Finance and Administration committees convened in August 2016 as stipulated in the RUFORUM governance manual and provided strategic guidance to the Secretariat as part of continued efforts to strengthen the Secretariat functions.

The details of the achievement are structured basing on the strategic areas below.

1. Demand Driven Training and Research

In line with the commitments in the SBP 2015-2020 of placing increased emphasis on quality assurance and on forging alliances with agriculture development agencies for turning research results into innovations of value to small-scale producers and the private agro-enterprise, the following initiatives were accomplished during the reporting period:

- a) Provided mentorship and technical backstopping to research teams implementing on-going research projects through field visits and virtual engagements as part of implementation oversight at member universities for progress tracking. This resulted into significant improvement in the quality of the reports. Efforts are also underway to cluster research teams by thematic areas and we have initiated process of establishing virtual thematic cluster platforms for enhanced collaboration among research teams and member universities

- b) Further strengthened university-community engagement through brokering linkages with farmer organizations to jointly develop proposals to compliment the on-going Community Action Research Programme (CARP) activities under the cassava value chain.
- c) Awarded 10 Field Attachment Program Awards as part of dissemination of university research, documented students' field experiences and synthesised their research for dissemination.
- d) Designed an expanded community action programme (CARP+) to work with smallholder farmers with additional emphasis of supporting enhancement of educational value chain involving engagements with the TVET institutions in Kenya and Uganda.
- e) Awarded 14 Nurturing Grants to member universities to strengthen research implementation and design in identified gap areas. As part of this process, 70 MSc students are being trained.
- f) Supported establishment of a multi-disciplinary team in the fields of agriculture, environment, and health and ICT sciences to develop a collaborative proposal¹. The teams were drawn from two universities (Haramaya University in Ethiopia and Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology in Kenya) and three colleges in Uganda. This is a pilot initiative of involving university multidisciplinary teams to address smaller holder development challenge.
- g) Engaged in two events to enhance doctoral training in Africa. This included (a) a 3-day meeting organised jointly by DAAD and IUCEA (Inter-University Council of East Africa) on quality doctoral education - a prerequisite for strong universities in Africa" and (b) a planning meeting to review two Regional PhD curricula.
- h) Developed standard operating procedures, recruitment tools, assessment criteria and evaluation processes for poor but deserving graduate and undergraduates students under TAGDev Project supported by The MasterCard Foundation.
- i) Completed Post Doc and field attachment to two CGIARs (ICARDA and ICRISAT) for six RUFORUM students' placement in CGIAR for professional development. Placement of additional six students under the same arrangement is ongoing

2. Institutional Strengthening

In the efforts to promote human capital development and intra-African academic mobility, exchanges and joint research, the following activities were implemented during the quarter:

- a) Mobilized and engaged 27 research teams and linked university consortia to private sector to identify priority research area in response to the Food and Business Applied Research Fund (ARF) and the African Union Research Calls, among other calls.
- b) Developed a Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) briefing note to the RUFORUM Executive Committee giving an update on progress, challenges, and areas requiring executive intervention and execution by member universities. To date 30 PhD students are undergoing training under the GTA arrangement, a contribution of

¹ Faculty of agriculture and Environment of Gulu University; Makerere University College of Health Sciences, College of Information and Communication and Information Sciences, College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology and College of Natural Sciences

US\$1.8 million by African universities. This is a home grown initiative by African Vice Chancellors of RUFORUM member universities to provide doctoral training to their staff and streamlining implementation modalities to promote the adoption of this cost effective training model across the continent. A paper documenting the GTA model and its success, challenges and opportunities is under review. During the reporting period, six new students' placements were secured, cumulatively bringing the number of GTAs to 36 since inception. More placements are expected in the coming quarter and Vice Chancellors will review the initiative on 17 October 2016 during the RUFORUM Board Meeting in Cape Town, South Africa.

- c) Continued engagements with line Ministries in Uganda and Kenya to support each additional four African Higher Education Centres of Excellence (Kenya has already 3 (US\$18 million investment) and Uganda four (US\$24 million investment) under the World Bank IDA support).
- d) Continued to play a brokerage role of linking and nurturing partnerships among member universities and other higher education institutions globally. During the reporting period, Gulu University and Egerton University were linked to Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences for collaborative engagement on agri-business and entrepreneurship training. In addition, Gulu University (Uganda), Egerton University (Kenya) and Haramaya University were linked to Hame University of Applied Sciences in Finland and they have submitted a joint proposal for support from the Finish Government
- e) Negotiations with West African Universities and non-university actors is on-going. Teams from Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon, etc were mobilized to respond to the African Union Research Call and Intra Africa Mobility Call for Proposals. Three of the teams won grants (each about US\$1.8 million) and the teams are led by Kenyatta University (Kenya), University of Abomey-Calavi (Benin) and Moi University (Kenya). Each of these teams will train about 25 Masters and 10 PhD students drawn from across Africa,

3. Service to the network

a. Communication and technology platforms

1. As part of keeping the network members informed of new developments and innovations within the network and the broader higher education sector, five editions of the RUFORUM News digest were published. In addition, a call was made for universities, research institutions, the private sector, NGOs and other stakeholders in the RUFORUM Network to showcase their innovations by participating in the exhibition at the RUFORUM Biennial Conference 2016. Over 30 institutions expressed interest in participating.
2. Reached out to the broader global community through various channels including radio and on-line media to advertise RUFORUM engagements and on-going initiatives. Of particular note was participation in an interview with SABC of South Africa in a panel discussion on Research Africa, and Africa-EU Science, Technology and Innovation Portal.
3. Launched an online community of practice for RUFORUM Alumni on the D-groups platform <https://dgroups.org/cta/ruforum/ruforum-alumni>. The community has 1152

members based in at least 17 countries in Africa and two from outside Africa. RUFORUM Secretariat moderated discussions on the platform concerning the role of RUFORUM Alumni in supporting the RUFORUM agenda. RUFORUM sees this as a strong anchor for building and maintaining a vibrant Alumni Network.

a. knowledge hub for Agricultural Higher Education

As part of enhancing knowledge management and communication to improve learning, collaboration and practices within universities and the clients that RUFORUM serves, the following were accomplished during the reporting period;

- a) Published stories from universities and alumni documenting innovations, best practices and impact. Selected examples include: a) Improving productivity of indigenous chicken in Northern Uganda (<https://blog.ruforum.org/2016/09/23/improving-productivity-of-indigenous-chicken-in-northern-uganda/>); b) Women farmers in Eastern Uganda reap big from cassava processing (<https://blog.ruforum.org/2016/09/15/women-farmers-in-eastern-uganda-reap-big-from-cassava-processing/>); c) Intra-ACP Mobility scholarship and RUFORUM award reshaped my career (<https://blog.ruforum.org/2016/09/06/intra-acp-mobility-scholarship-and-ruforum-award-reshaped-my-career/>); d) Meet Rose Nangonzi: Producing virus free planting materials for cassava farmers (<https://blog.ruforum.org/2016/08/04/meet-rose-nangonzi-producing-virus-free-planting-materials-for-cassava-farmers/>).
- b) Strengthened the publication capacities of research teams by setting demands for extended abstracts and corresponding posters for students which would be peer-reviewed and subsequently presented at the upcoming Fifth African Higher Education week (RUFORUM Biennial). These publications will also be uploaded to the RUFORUM Instructional Repository and therefore made openly accessible online as part of the RUFORUM Working Document Series (http://repository.ruforum.org/ag_dlios-by-doctype/17977/RUFORUM%20Working%20document%20series)
- c) To promote a culture of continuous reflection, learning and knowledge sharing within the RUFORUM Secretariat itself, all programme and managerial staff of the Secretariat wrote extended abstracts capturing their experiences, reflections and lessons learned during implementation of their various roles. These abstracts will also be peer reviewed, presented as part of proceedings of the RUFORUM Biennial Conference 2016, and published online in the RUFORUM Working Document series
- d) To showcase impact and relevancy of the African universities to small holder farmers, three documentaries were produced;
 - a. Reviving an Industry: [Universities take on challenges](#)
 - b. Small Grants Significant Impact: [A RUFORUM Graduate Research Grant Story](#)
 - c. Climate change challenges researchers: [Building resilience and mitigation strategies](#)

b. Monitoring and Evaluation

- a) Initiated project exit actions for the two pilot CARPs after conducting their end of project evaluations. The emerging lessons are enriching the new programmatic dimensions of the CARP+
- b) Collected data from 50% of Member Universities' on their characteristics (Student output, staff numbers and financial strength) as part of estimating RUFORUM's commitment to contribute to the African Union's second edition of the Annual Continental Activity Report (RACA) on Education, Science, Technology, Innovation and Youth in Africa.
- c) Three 12-months progress implementation reports for the three on-going CARP Value chain projects received and oversight for streamlining implementation to fit community engagement approaches provided
- d) Fulfilled the annual reporting and met 360 degree accountability requirements for the Financial Year 2015/2016
- e) Initiated planning process for the FY 2016-17 through setting smart targets and Milestones
- f) Developed two synthesis publication capturing emerging lessons and the evolving role of monitoring and evaluation in enhancing tracking of university performance and contribution to economic growth and development. These are: i) *A paradigm shift from monitoring and evaluation to interdisciplinary evaluative systems thinking: The status of evaluative processes and use in African Universities* (<http://repository.ruforum.org/documents/paradigm-shift-monitoring-and-evaluation-interdisciplinary-evaluative-systems-thinking>); and ii) *African Universities by numbers: Monitoring and evaluation dilemma* (<http://repository.ruforum.org/documents/african-universities-numbers-monitoring-and-evaluation-dilemma>)

4. Partnerships and Policy Outreach

In the efforts to strengthen and amplify both RUFORUM demand and policy advocacy for higher education, the following actions were undertaken;

- a) Formalized partnership arrangements with Access Agriculture, an international NGO developing and showcasing agricultural training videos in local languages, to co-host a workshop on integrating video-mediated learning in university curricula at the RUFORUM Biennial Conference 2016. RUFORUM will fund selected participants from its member universities and the wider network to participate in this event and identify opportunities to pilot this initiative among member universities to enhance teaching and knowledge management.
- b) Spearheaded the selection of [15 young African entrepreneurs from a pool of 756 applicants from 38 African countries](#). The selected young entrepreneurs will be featured in a panel session and hold a series of meetings with business developers and potential funders. [A total of 139 top rated applicants](#) will be serialized in the brand new "RUFORUM Young African Entrepreneurs series".
- c) Under The MasterCard Foundation Project, initiated discussions with over 20 agribusiness companies (private sector) in Uganda and Kenya. The engagement is seen as initial step for agricultural private sector to engage with RUFORUM member universities.

- d) Through the Intra Africa Mobility Project on training Crop Scientist for Africa, faculty from 12 African universities were brought together in August 2016 to discuss successes and challenges in agricultural training in Africa, and develop a follow up proposal.
- e) Engaged with the potential farmer organisations with a footprint to help scale out and engage at impact sharing including Shiloh Farms (Uganda) and Growth Shoot (South Africa)
- f) RUFORUM Secretariat participated in ASARECA Strategic planning meeting.
- g) Jointly with AWARD, implemented the 3rd in series of Leadership programme for agriculture research and development which drew participation from 11 African countries. The training took place 12th -16th September 2016, in Nairobi, Kenya.
- h) Jointly with AWARD organized a training course in negotiation skills for women in senior leadership positions including those from RUFORUM 11 member universities, which was held 4th – 10th July, 2016 in Lilongwe, Malawi
- i) Supported the founding of the Forum for African Women Vice Chancellors, FAWoVC which was launched on 24th August 2016, during the women leadership meeting on Higher Education for economic empowerment. For details see: <http://uoeld.ac.ke/home/?q=Forum-for-African-Women-Vice-Chancellors-Launched> <https://blog.ruforum.org/2016/08/26/forum-for-african-women-vice-chancellors-launched-empowering-african-women-leaders-for-economic-development/>
- j) Engaged Entrepreneurship for Impact (E4IMPACT) from Italy to partner with RUFORUM Universities in agri-entrepreneurship development, with a pilot project to be launched at Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, and will subsequently be scaled out to other RUFORUM universities.
- k) A partnership with Egerton University and Gulu University to train 220 students and undertake a collaborative engagement to enhance educational value chains that brings TVET institutions to work with universities has been signed.
- l) Partnership with Finish, Norwegian and Swedish Universities was initiated. One proposal was developed where RUFORUM and its member Universities partnered with the Finish Universities, and plans are underway to submit proposals to the EU Erasmus+ call, due to be released in October 2016.
- m) Partnership was also initiated with a Finnish university network – the ‘Finland University Partnership for International Development’ for collaborative proposal development.

5. Governance and Management of the Network

a. Strengthening organization governance and management

The actions below were conducted to further maintain the strong corporate governance culture of RUFORUM

- i. Financial Expenditure verification was undertaken by Deloitte and Touche for grants awarded to Kyambogo University (Uganda), Haramaya University and Mekelle University (Ethiopia), and University of Eldoret and Egerton University (Kenya) as part of the 2015/16 audit.

- ii. The Finance and Administration Committee and the Board Executive Committee met in August 2016 to review 2015/16 Financial reports, and budget proposal for 2016/17 Financial period

b. Financing organization's operations

In a bid to strengthen the financial health of RUFORUM the following actions were accomplished

- i. A database of RUFORUM Alumni with 1152 records was developed and is being updated based on responses from the Dgroups.
- ii. Engaged Government of Uganda for possible annual budget support to RUFORUM as well as establishment of a research University in Uganda.
- iii. Three proposal development Write-shops were organized in Entebbe, Uganda and Accra, Ghana in collaboration with the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA). Six RUFORUM Secretariat Staff and over 60 researchers from universities, national research system, and the CGIAR were engaged in Proposal writing that targeted the African Union Research Call
- iv. A total of 20 proposals were developed and submitted to the African Union Research Call, MacArthur Foundation, Dfid (SPHIER), and Finnish Higher Education Institutions Call for Proposals.

6. Planned activities for the next quarter

- a) Convene the RUFORUM Biennial, also referred to as the African Higher Education Week from the 17th-21st October 2016 in Cape Town, South Africa.
- b) Hold the RUFORUM 12th Annual General Meeting on 18th October 2016 in Cape Town, South Africa.