

Strategic Planning and Programme Implementation Meeting between RUFORUM and Ghent University



Meeting Report

Establishing and Piloting Postgraduate Programmes for
Supporting Agricultural Development in Post Conflict Countries of
Central and Eastern Africa-ADECEA

FED/2013/320-203

RUFORUM Secretariat, Kampala Uganda 17th March, 2016

1. Background

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) is a Network of 55 universities in 22 African countries. RUFORUM supports capacity building efforts across Africa through a partnership led approach involving a range of actors in accordance with its Theory of Change (TOC). The strategic application of the theory of change allows RUFORUM's impact to be felt at various levels and increases the participation and actor involvement in RUFORUM activities. Accordingly RUFORUM engages with actors within and outside Africa to deliver of the strategic vision and mission as well as allied objectives. One of such partnerships exists with Ghent University and AGRINATURA. Through this partnership RUFORUM, Ghent University and AGRINATURA have collaborated in joint project application and implementation. In 2012, together with Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT), Makerere University (MAK), and African Biodiversity Conservation and Innovations Centre (ABCIC), RUFORUM and AGRINATURA submitted application to the ACP-EU Co-operation Programme in Higher Education (EDULINK II) with a project proposal focused on “Establishing and Piloting Postgraduate Programmes for Supporting Agricultural Development in Post Conflict Countries of Central and Eastern Africa-ADECEA Project - FED/2013/320-203”. This project proposal was successful (<http://www.acp-edulink.eu/content/establishing-and-piloting-postgraduate-programmes-supporting-agricultural-development-post-c>) and is under implementation year II.

As part of continued engagement and wider partnership between RUFORUM, AGRINATURA and Ghent University, Prof. De'Haese undertook a mission to RUFORUM Secretariat, Kampala to discuss arrange of issues including project implementation and other subsequent collaboration arrangements. A partnership and planning meeting was subsequently held at the RUFORUM Secretariat with the following objectives:

- Review joint programmes implemented
- Develop a comprehensive understanding of the RUFORUM and Ghent University engagements
- Develop a clear focus on the current possible projects and provide way forward
- Explore future collaboration and enhanced resource mobilisation for RUFORUM from Belgium



Meeting Agenda

Item	Focus issue
Over view of engagements with Ghent	-the length of RUFORUM-UGent engagements
EU-calls <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erasmus+ 2016 • Europe Aid • Intra-Africa Mobility • Erasmus+2017 • African Union calls-EU-Africa calls at AU. 	-Status of calls -Areas of collaboration and how -Who takes lead -Proposals areas of focus -documents required for submission -timelines for submission
Agreements signed	-what are the expectations from RUFORUM.
EduLink <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation issues of this project 	-Areas of success -Areas needing strengthening -Further focus in the project -how to leverage from other fronts
Biennial Side Event	-UGent and EduLink side event at the 2016 Biennial conference.
Future projects and engagements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. De'Haese reaching to Belgian Foundations/Government and Philanthropists for fund raising for RUFORUM • Other possible projects between UGent and RUFORUM 	-Resource mobilisation on a more sustainable basis -Continued engagement between UGent and RUFORUM

2. Meeting proceedings and evolving discussions

2.1 Engagements with Ghent University

The planning and partnership meeting was cordial with introductory remarks and profile presentations. Prof. De'Haese provided his background as an Agricultural engineer with vast experience in practice on a global having served in Cambodia, Burundi, Rwanda and South America as well as across Europe. He has served and managed various portfolios including the Belgian Technical Corporation (BTC) and helped to initialize transformative educational programmes in Burundi, Mozambique and South Africa. These transformative programmes are illustrative of his impact and career in the professional practice.

Prof. De'Haese serves at Ghent University; a high world ranking university. Ghent University is number 90 on a global ranking of universities and its Faculty of Agronomy is between number 20 to 22 on a global rankings of Faculties of Agriculture. The Faculty of Agronomy at University of





Ghent has about 3000 students with more than half of the student population being international students and 45% of the PhD Fellows are foreign nationals. This demonstrates that Ghent University is keen at the internationalisation of programmes and has a wealth of experience developed over time to manage and mainstream internationalisation processes and programmes.

Ghent University has specialized units that focus on various calls including specific offices handling the EU calls such as the Erasmus+, ACP and others. This level of specialisation has allowed the university to have a focused attention and the development of high quality proposals with high success rates. It is this sort of support that Ghent University endorsement letters did not have any eligibility questions because Ghent University has a sound understanding of the Erasmus+ processes and Ghent University is already implementing these type of projects. It is also important to note that Ghent University's involvement is not about money but rather a matter of commitment to support quality education processes in the global south. RUFORUM member universities could explore this sort of arrangement; in at least developing a special programmes offices to provide support functions to academics.

The travel mission to Kampala was on two fronts; firstly, a visit to the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) as part of the technical persons in the World Bank ACE II selection process, and secondly, to follow-up with RUFORUM on a range of issues including among others discuss the several collaboration agreements that were signed by Ghent University during the Erasmus+ application process.

2.2 RUFORUM institutional progress

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) undertook a functional analysis as a felt need to ensure that the institutional restructuring takes into cognizant the growing functions and services portfolio and expanding network base. The functional analysis led to increased staffing capacity at the RUFORUM Secretariat to better serve the network as well as to better engage with other actors on various fronts. RUFORUM's role and mandate have not changed, however, there is a greater focus and attention currently underway to link universities with industry as a strategic action to developing entrepreneurial graduates and better support graduate transitions.

RUFORUM has launched a refreshed "Coming of Age" Strategic Business Plan; with a key focus being on the sustainability of the organisation. Since then there has been a diversification of funding base mobilisation with a key focus on Governments with the governments of Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya and Malawi having been engaged for budget support. RUFORUM also initiated crowd funding and been able to so far raise US\$4000 amidst some fund transfer challenges. RUFORUM is exploring options as to whether other individuals from within the universities can



provide contributions to finance RUFORUM activities. RUFORUM is therefore focused at identifying marketable and specific range of services it offers to various actors and stakeholders interested in RUFORUM business. The SBP has also undertaken segmentation through a market streams analysis.

2.3 Collaboration Agreements with University of Ghent

RUFORUM is appreciative of all the technical and support role that Ghent University continuously and undeservingly offers to the Network during competitive proposal development. In the 2016 Erasmus+ Ghent University supported RUFORUM network efforts to submit four competitive proposals:

- Harnessing Online Platforms to Improve Delivery of Academic Programmes in African Universities (HOPU)
- Developing Agricultural Higher Education Institutional Investments, training and research Capacity indicators for strengthening Agricultural Higher Education in African Universities (AGriData)
- Escalating Doctoral training through joint development and delivery of PhD Programmes (ESDOP)
- Operationalizing Harmonized Quality Assurance for Agricultural Training and Research Among RUFORUM Member Universities (QAM)

Ghent University is further willing to continue supporting RUFORUM's efforts to develop quality competitive proposals that will bring resources to the network. Accordingly, Prof. De'Haese will share with RUFORUM a range materials that facilitate this process including among others; a checklist for EU competitive proposals, indicators of quality of research, indicators for scientific and technological impact of research i.e. indicators that describe what the impact of your research on agriculture and how it can be measured.

2.4 EU calls, Potential projects and Technical support from Ghent University

RUFORUM appreciates the resident technical capacity at Ghent University and wishes to further engage Ghent University to provide backstopping and learning on an array of focus areas. These focus areas needing Ghent's support include:

- Food security assessment methodology and tools
- Quality assurance mechanisms for universities
- Erasmus+ evaluation criteria, processes and related issues
- Parameters the EU is using to evaluate Erasmus+ proposals.



2.4.1 ERAMUS+

RUFORUM is also working with member universities to develop additional proposals for the forthcoming 2017 Erasmus+ call. Three proposals are currently under development and will require Ghent University's participation as a partner. The proposed projects being developed and will be modified as teams further work together include:

- Joint Agro-meteorology MSc Programme for Eastern, Central and Southern Africa Universities (JAT)
- Strengthening Biometry and Research Methods Graduate training in West and East African Universities
- Scaling Agri-Entrepreneurship and Community Engagement in Postgraduate Agribusiness Training in Eastern and Southern Africa

In order to appropriately prepare for the 2017 Erasmus+ Call, it is vital for teams to critically develop projects and programmes that the outputs link well and provide clear, measurable and achievable deliverables. It will also be vital for RUFORUM to work in advance to obtain indications of what the European partners actually need. In the projects, developing course content is generally cheap and offers timely deliverables as the low hanging fruits during project implementation. The key focus areas that have been ably appreciated in this regard include; Food security, Small scale farming, Project planning and management, and Agribusiness. Project developers will therefore need to take a thorough project development process whilst taking into account the key deliverables at various timelines.

2.4.2 EuropeAid

The EU International Cooperation and Development office (https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/home_en) ran a call for proposals through a common call code "EuropeAid". RUFORUM wishes to respond to this call for proposals and will be mobilizing member universities to take particular interest in the call and respond to it as well. RUFORUM will make effort to link with Nancy at Ghent University who is the specialist on EuropeAid projects. The response streams will include:

- Food fortification-Jomo Kenyatta University of Science and Technology (JKUAT)
- Value Chain-RUFORUM
- Value Chain-Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR)

Prof. De'Haese will help with soliciting food fortification partners and experts in Europe to take part in the application process and further engage at implementation if the submitted projects are successfully funded.



2.4.3 Intra-Africa Academic Mobility

The [Intra-Africa Academic Mobility call](#) is out and RUFORUM is mobilizing research teams from member universities to respond with submission of quality competitive proposals. Mr. Emmanuel Okalany (Programme Officer, Resource Mobilisation) will send the draft list of proposed projects and research teams to Prof. De'Haese for his information as he sources for possible partners and actors willing to participate in the application process.

2.4.4 Africa Union call

The Africa Union call for competitive proposals was expected sometime last year however it did not come through. Information available indicates to the extent possible that it come through in the later part of 2016. It is a research focused based call that seeks to fund research interventions. RUFORUM will circulate the call once it is released and will further engage in putting together research teams from member universities to apply. In this regard, it is important for RUFORUM to clearly articulate what it requires in a summarized write-up so that it facilitates ease of partnership brokering in Europe.

2.5 EDULINK II project implementation

The EDULINK II project (FED/2013/320-203) is now at its second year of implementation. This project that focused at establishing and piloting postgraduate programmes for supporting agricultural development in post conflict countries of Central and Eastern Africa has registered some successes but also met some challenges. The project was in position to launch two Masters Programmes at the RUFORUM Annual General Meeting in Namibia, 2015. It also hosted a dialogue side event at the AGM as well as another partners meeting during the RUFORUM Biennial Conference that was held in Maputo, 2014. The programme developed in Madagascar programmes are in place and on course for implementation. However, Burundi registered both success and setback. One programme developed was submitted and was accepted. The political situation in Burundi has though moved the country back into a conflict mode, this has created a complex operation environment. In addition administrative changes at the University of Burundi in the Faculty of Agriculture took some time to take effect and further constrained project progress. These events have constrained Prof. De'Haese's travel arrangements and engagements in Burundi. A number of options are now available:

- Prof. De' Haese can offer the same course in Madagascar as a trial but he has not received a response as yet following his communication with the Madagascar team.
- There is need to request for a no-costs extension from the EU considering the several challenges that the project has faced. An early dialogue with the EU will be a good start on this front.



- There is need to organise a partners meeting; this can possibly take place at the sidelines of the RUFORUM Biennial Conference in Cape Town, October, 2016.
- Organise for a dialogue with Prof. Majaliwa and organise for way forward
- On the part of RUFORUM check activities under RUFORUM mandate to confirms status
- The partners need to begin planning to host a side event at the RUFORUM Biennial Conference, 17th-21st October, 2016 in Cape Town, South Africa. Following the successes of the 2014 side event particularly the lessons and learning, the proposed side event will provide another opportunity to meet with partners and generate lessons to improve project management and implementation.

RUFORUM has continued to support the implementation of the project through various mechanisms including advocacy and own contribution. The institutional support RUFORUM has provided also includes conflict resolution and convening of various partners in the project. RUFORUM has also supported the relocation of four (4) Burundian students to train at Makerere through an Institutional Strengthening Grant (Nurturing Grant) to allow the students continue with their studies.

2.6 Support function to RUFORUM Resource Mobilisation

RUFORUM is desirous to engage Prof. De'Haese in resource mobilisation efforts in Europe particularly in Belgium given his vast experience and contacts. Prof. De'Haese will act as a RUFORUM ambassador in Belgium. RUFORUM Executive Secretary and Deputy Executive Secretary will make a visit to Belgium at an opportune moment after further consultation with Prof. De'Haese. In the meantime, Prof. De'Haese undertakes a scanning of the funding landscape and institutions in Belgium and RUFORUM will follow suit to make arranges for a familiarization visit.



Persons Present for the meeting

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