

# RUFORUM MONTHLY

The Monthly Brief of the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture

## Germany provides €25 million for University Excellence in Development Cooperation



**Above:** Participants attending the launch of the German Centers of Excellence in support of developing countries. Center in black jacket is Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Ms. Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul

Five German universities and their partners in developing countries will in each case receive up to €5 million for promoting development cooperation over the next five years. They are winners in a competition involving 44 outstanding university projects. This joint initiative of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) seeks to strengthen Germany's cooperation with developing countries in educational matters.

"Education is the prerequisite for development and universities are the primary schools of globalisation. This is why we promote research for development and the scientific networking of universities in developing countries and industrialised nations. They are to join forces

**The RUFORUM Website ([www.ruforum.org](http://www.ruforum.org)) is currently under reconstruction. We apologize for any inconveniences**

For more information about the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), Contact: The **Newsletter Editor**, RUFORUM Secretariat, Plot 151 Garden Hill, Makerere University Main Campus, P.O. Box 7062, Kampala, Uganda. Fax: +256 414 534153; Tel: +256 414 535939; E-mail: [secretariat@ruforum.org](mailto:secretariat@ruforum.org); Website: [www.ruforum.org](http://www.ruforum.org).

- *RUFORUM Monthly* is an e-newsletter providing information on activities of the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture.
- This *Monthly Brief* is circulated by the last week of every month ■

### INSIDE STORIES

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### ANNOUNCEMENTS

RUFORUM Annual General Meeting. Mombasa, Kenya. 26th-28th August, 2009

African-European Deans Meeting, 31th August -2nd September, 2009

IFS East African focal node launch Meeting. 28th September to 2nd October, 2009 Entebbe-Uganda

**More information on RUFORUM activities can be accessed on the RUFORUM BLOG at <http://ruforumsecretariat.blogspot.com>**



as excellence centres for promoting the Millennium Development Goals”, explains the Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Ms. Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul. DAAD Secretary General, Dr. Christian Bode, adds: “These excellence centres will provide a forum for German scientists and students to cooperate at eye level with their partners in developing countries within the scope of joint lecturing and research activities so as to deal with the pressing challenges of the future. We are convinced this will sustainably strengthen university structures in the developing countries and likewise reinforce the importance of development cooperation in German universities.”

The award-winning university projects will focus on topics covered by the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations. The universities cooperate with each other in a partnership network and hence help strengthen the partner universities and facilitate their integration into the international scientific community. Together with their partners, they will set up think tanks for the purpose of

disseminating development-related expertise in the developing countries and Germany.

In this vein, the project topic of the Technical University of Braunschweig is “Excellence through Dialogue – Sustainable Water Management in Developing Countries”, the University of Hohenheim will set up a “Food Security Center”, the University of Kassel will establish an “International Center for Development and Decent Work”, the Cologne University of Applied Sciences will establish a “Centre for Natural Resources and Development”, and the Ludwig-Maximilian University of Munich will create the “LMU Center for International Health”. The Food Security Center initiative in Africa will be managed by RUFORUM. It will involve training 10 PhD students in Germany, 10 PhDs under sandwich arrangement with African Universities and several staff exchanges among Germany, African, Asian and Latin American Universities.



German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Ms. Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul (left), Prof. Manfred Zeller from the University of Hohenheim (center) and Prof. Dr. Henning Jensen, Vice-Rector for Research, University of Costa Rica share a light moment after the official announcement of the Award.

## NEWS & EVENTS

### ENHANCING QUALITY OF REGIONAL GRADUATE PROGRAMMES

#### *The Graduate Research Mentorship Week*

The coursework part of graduate training is normally well structured and planned afore. It remains the responsibility of the lecturers to deliver the course material in the best possible way. The students therefore are guided by a well structured timetable of lectures, practical exposure and field trips. In contrast, the scenario and demands on the student after completing coursework is strikingly different. The student is expected to transform the knowledge imparted into practical ideas for shaping his/her research problem (s).

The Graduate Research Mentorship Week is a concept being introduced to RUFORUM's regional PhD Programmes. The objective is to enhance quality of student research by building their capacity to conceptualize, refine and plan their research projects through mentorship. During the Graduate Research Mentorship Week, renowned researchers and practitioners are invited to share their experiences, provide live examples of success and challenges, provide some hands on exercises, and facilitate students in refining their research ideas. The first Graduate Research Mentorship Week took place at University of Nairobi from 30th June – 3rd July 2009.

#### **Box 1: invited presentations**

1. How to get your PhD in Record time
2. Gender dimensions of dryland management
3. Multi-stakeholder dimensions in natural resources management
4. Project planning, monitoring and evaluation
5. Dryland Management in Eastern Africa: experiences and lessons learnt
6. Climate change adaptation in the dryland of Eastern Africa.
7. Pastoralism and policy in Eastern Africa
8. Planning and managing your research

A total of seven distinguished researchers and practitioners from the Eastern Africa region participated in this event which took place at the University of Nairobi's College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences, Kabete Campus. Titles of the invited presentations are given in box one.

RUFORUM Secretariat encourages researchers and practitioners in the region and beyond to participate in this initiative now and in the future. A list and description of other regional PhD Programmes is available at [www.ruforum.org](http://www.ruforum.org).

#### **MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT: CLIMATE CHANGE AND TRANSBOUNDARY ANIMAL DISEASES, 13-17 OCTOBER, 2009, ENTEBBE, UGANDA**

Due to the strong reliance of African agriculture on rainfed production, climate change (CC) and variability remains one of the biggest threats to humankind ever, particularly for the poor farmers living below the poverty line in sub-Saharan Africa. Some of the related challenges such as epidemics are associated with climate change and variability and nomadic movement of some communities, resulting in trans-boundary diseases (TADs) outbreaks that not only affect livestock but also humans. There has been limited capacity of the universities to competently play a significant role in addressing issues related to climate change adaptation and responding to emerging epidemics such as Transboundary animal diseases. For academic staff and researchers, this limited capacity is partly attributed to the absence for platforms for sharing experiences. Similarly, shared knowledge needs to be translated to policy frameworks in order to sustainably respond to the challenges. There is thus need to share, document and channel research findings and initiatives related to Climate change and Transboundary Animal diseases by universities and other stakeholders towards engaging policy processes on climate change adaptation. The Climate Change and Transboundary Animal Diseases meeting will focus on attainment of five outputs:

1. A common vision for undertaking climate change and TADs research for development in SSA developed;
2. A collaboration strategy for networking and building capacity in climate change and TADs research developed;
3. Strategies for enhanced participation of university lecturers, postgraduate students and research in local, national and international research in CC and TADs enhanced;
4. Linkages created with policy makers and other stakeholders;
5. A community of practice for strengthening collaboration among Higher Learning institutions and other partners in the field of climatic change and TADs research for development (R4D) formed for the SSA region.

Interested scientists and stakeholders are invited to submit papers, 5-7 pages, including summary abstracts of not more than 300 words. Deadline for receipt of papers is 15 September, 2009. Please send abstracts to [secretariat@ruforum.org](mailto:secretariat@ruforum.org) with copy to [m.osiru@ruforum.org](mailto:m.osiru@ruforum.org).



## RUFORUM IMPACTS ON QUALITY OF GRADUATE STUDENT TRAINING IN AFRICA



**Pheonah Nabukalu**, a RUFORUM Sponsored student completed a Masters Degree in Crop Science (Plant Breeding and Genetics) in 2008 from Makerere University through a grant (2005 RU CG 017) awarded by RUFORUM to Dr. Tu-siime Geoffrey. Her research focus

was on Breeding for resistance to Bean anthracnose (*Colletotrichum lindemuthianum*) disease, is one of the most important diseases constraining bean production in Uganda and across Eastern, Central and Southern African region.

She attributes her success to the scholarship provided by RUFORUM, which did not only provide funds for the research and tuition but has mentored her into an assertive scientist interested in understanding and finding solutions to some of the major constraints faced in agricultural crop production. She says "It has supported my professional growth in the field of scientific research, analysis and publication. The experts from RUFORUM and my supervisors

taught me how to network with other scientists, as research is never a one man's show but rather achieved through team-work.

Currently, she has received a scholarship from Louisiana State University, USA to pursue a PhD degree and its focus will be on using conventional and molecular plant breeding technologies to develop protocols for propagating difficult and also endangered plant species such as the Sea Oats.

The RUFORUM sponsorship enabled me to obtain a masters degree, but more importantly has opened up doors for me into my cherished career of Agricultural Research. I will ever be grateful to RUFORUM.

The Knowledge acquired from this work will not only benefit USA, where the plant species is very predominant but can also be applied to the propagating of Ugandan difficult and endangered species. A number of plant species are under threat and if we do not work towards restoring them they will become extinct.



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The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), in collaboration with the International Foundation for Science (IFS) and the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) announces a Regional Workshop entitled "Developing Africa through Science and Technology Innovation in Agriculture- Women as the key drivers". The Workshop will take place 28 September to 2 October 2009 at the Imperial Resort Beach Hotel, Entebbe Uganda. Objectives of the Workshop are to a) Officially launch the IFS hub for Eastern Africa; b) build capacity of selected young NARS women scientists in data management and leadership through courses as identified in earlier women training workshops; c) identify priority capacity enhancing needs of the Eastern Africa region, especially of young women scientist.

### Call for Papers

Papers (5 -7 pages with summary of not more than 300 words) are invited on any of the following themes to be submitted electronically to the address below. The papers should provide adequate background on the key issue being addressed and provide policy recommendations. Papers can be submitted either in English or French. Posters will be welcomed.

- Theme 1: Emerging Global Challenges to Development
- Theme 2: ST&I for Sustainable Development and Management of Biological and Water Resources
- Theme 3: Gender issues in S&T Innovations
- Theme 4: Capacity Development for ST&I: Institutional networking and collaborating opportunities
- Theme 5: ST&I and Policy: Options for enhancing women participation

The full papers should be received by 15<sup>th</sup> September 2009 by the Secretariat, Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), Plot 151 Garden Hill, Makerere University Main Campus P. O. Box 7062 Kampala - Uganda Tel: +256- 414 - 535939 Fax: +256 - 414 - 534153. Email: [secretariat@ruforum.org](mailto:secretariat@ruforum.org) with copy to [m.osiru@ruforum.org](mailto:m.osiru@ruforum.org) and [c.ntwali@ruforum.org](mailto:c.ntwali@ruforum.org).

## NEWS & EVENTS

### SCARDA BOOSTS RUFORUM MASTERS PROGRAMMES

In June 2009, Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA), delivered thirty-four laptops to RUFORUM Secretariat. The laptops were purchased under SCARDA-ECA project as part of scholarship for the Masters students sponsored under the same project. The students would eventually carry the laptops to their home countries to help them restart their career at their work place. RUFORUM as Lead Service Provider for SCARDA-ECA received all the 34 laptops for onward delivery to the students, and subsequent report back to ASARECA.

Dr. Joseph Methu, ASARECA's Head of Partnerships & Capacity Development (extreme left) delivered laptops to the students at Sokoine University of Agriculture in Tanzania. The two students, Cyrille and Gloriose (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> left respectively) had in the meantime jointly bought a laptop to share as they waited for the delivery from SCARDA. Present when the students collected the laptops were the students' supervisors (Prof. Johnson Semoka in short sleeved shirt and Dr. Denis Bandushubwenge, ISABU's Director Environment & NRM, who is supervising the students on behalf of ISABU, Burundi.



Students from Makerere and Program Manager (Training & Quality Assurance (holding open laptop) after receiving laptops.



"I feel like this computer has untied my potential as a student" said an excited student.

### Strengthening Capacity of Agriculture Research and Development in Africa (SCARDA)

A continental programme-wide strategies and learning workshop was organized in Ghana, Accra at Forum for Agriculture Research in Africa (FARA) offices from 27<sup>th</sup> April to 1<sup>st</sup> May 2009. The participants for the workshop were representatives of the implementing entities of SCARDA, these are; FARA, RUFORUM, ANAFE, ASARECA, CORAF, SADC, NRI (Natural Resource Institute), CRI (Crop Research Institute, Kumasi Ghana) and the three Focal Institutions ( ISAR, ISABU and ARC) among others. The objectives of the workshop were to: 1. Reflect and capture lessons emerging from implementation and develop mechanisms towards improving the implementation of SCARDA. 2. Share experiences from other sub-regions that would enrich the SCARDA implementation. The major outputs of the workshop included, SCARDA process analysis at regional level, a report on lessons learnt and implication for implementation of SCARDA and formation of working /resource groups for SCARDA on M&E, communication, gender, mentorship for students and focal institutions staff members and change management for the focal institutions within the SCARDA project.