

RUFORUM MONTHLY

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

Increasing Utilization of Web 2 Tools for Learning and Change in Africa

Wikipedia describes 'Web 2.0' as the second generation of web development and web design. It is also often described as 'the business revolution in the computer industry caused by the move to the Internet as a platform, and an attempt to understand the rules for success on that new platform'. The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) seeks to use emerging technologies and opportunities offered by ICTs, and particularly Web 2 Tools, to hasten achievement of her mission. RUFORUM's mission is to strengthen capacities of universities to foster innovations responsive to demands of small-holder farmers.

In line with this vision, RUFORUM and the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) organized a Web 2.0 training course in Entebbe Uganda 22-26 June, 2009. The Training focused on the development of e-content for RUFORUM supported Regional



Above: Participants attending the Web 2.0 Training Course in one of the training sessions

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The RUFORUM Website (www.ruforum.org) is currently unavailable. The Website is being reconstructed to improve usability of the site. We sincerely apologize for any inconveniences caused.

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- *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

RUFORUM FIFTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING scheduled for 26-30 August, 2009, Mombasa, Kenya. This will be hosted by University of Nairobi. Full Details on Page 4.

SADC Network Meeting in Soil & Water Management, held in Dar es Salaam. See Page 3.

Meeting of Deans of Agriculture, 31 August—3 September, 2009, Mombasa, Kenya. See Page 4.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

IFS-RUFORUM Women in Science Meeting to be held 28 September—2 October, Entebbe, Uganda

6th GCHERA Conference to be held in Nairobi Kenya 23-27 November. Visit <http://www.gchera.com/gcherakenya.shtml>

Regional Platform on Climate Change and emerging issues to be held October 13-16, 2009 in Entebbe, Uganda.

More announcements inside

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



NEWS & EVENTS

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Postgraduate Training Programmes. Initially, 20 courses are to be digitized. But the larger vision is to ensure that by 2014, all content for the RUFORUM supported Regional Programmes are available electronically. This will ensure that actual physical attendance during learning sessions will be minimized and capacity and reach of training institutions will be greatly improved. To date, five staff have already submitted the first Chapter or Unit One of their courses/ modules.

A total of 20 university staff participated in the training course representing six RUFORUM Universities, namely, Africa University in Mutare, Zimbabwe; Bunda College of Agriculture, Malawi; Egerton University in Njoro, Kenya; Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda; University of Nairobi, Kenya; and, University of Zambia. The workshop was facilitated by Dr. Washington Ochola (RUFORUM), Ms. Nodumo Dhlamini (RUFORUM), Mr. Nicholas Kimolo (Futuristic), and Dr Joseph Onyu (Makerere University).

The workshop was officially opened by Dr Wellington Ekaya, RUFORUM's Manager for Training and Quality Assurance. More trainings are planned and will be announced to relevant stakeholders.



Above: Dr. Mick Mwala from the University of Zambia receives certificate of completion

RUFORUM Strengthens Universities Research Capacity to Engage with and Support Rural Agricultural Based Innovation

RUFORUM has received a grant of US\$ \$12.731M from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to strengthen Research capacity to engage in and support rural agricultural-based innovation. Through this Grant, RUFORUM member universities will be able to pool resources to:

- introduce and sustain a 'business unusual' orientation into university research, training and outreach activities focused on the rural poor;
- build human resource and institution capacity to support knowledge generation linked to improving agricultural productivity and wealth creation, especially among rural communities in the eastern, central and southern Africa region;
- forge and sustain national, regional and international partnerships between universities and other development agencies in the public and private sectors for lesson learning and economies of scale and scope;
- provide a powerful platform for networking, advocacy and resource mobilisation for addressing the priority problems of the rural poor.

Overall programme purpose is to support improved agricultural productivity and wealth creation by developing effective agricultural universities with graduates dedicated to improving rural livelihoods and by promoting research relevant to smallholder farmers in Africa.

The Project Inception planning meeting was held in Entebbe, Uganda 2 - 4 June 2009 marking the start of substantive project implementation.



Above: The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Project Inception Meeting Participants

SADC Universities Networking Meeting in Soil and Water Management

Kunduchi Beach Hotel, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 22-24 June, 2009

A three day networking meeting was held at the Kunduchi Beach Hotel in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, 22-24 June, 2009 to increase stakeholder access to university R&D products in soil and water management. The meeting brought together 20 university researchers from the eight countries involved in the initiative. The countries were Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. RUFORUM Secretariat co-organised the meeting and supported the compilation of these abstracts related to soil science from universities in the SADC region, and also Kenya and Uganda. Some of the issues noted on soil and water research and training programmes in the SADC region included:

- Courses offered in various universities in the area of soil and water are too traditional, and lack cross-cutting and contemporary issues such as marketing, entrepreneurship, communications, and climate change that would improve the overall quality of the graduates.
- All training programmes in the region, with the exception of the University of Botswana, lacked gender balance, with fewer women than men in soil and water management programmes. In most of the programs, women comprised less than 30%.
- Participants noted that the low preference for soil science courses could be due to the general low regards for agriculture courses, and particularly soil science .
- Student exchanges were identified as an important strategy for strengthening research and training across the region.



Above: Nyambilila Amuri (Tanzania), Oagile Dikinya, Kulthoum Omari (Botswana) and Justice Nyamangara (Zimbabwe) outside Kunduchi Beach Hotel

- Members noted the language problems affecting particular universities- particularly the Portuguese and French speaking countries within SADC. This will affect exchange programmes.
- Participants identified lack of a mechanism to facilitate staff, student and other exchanges across universities as a major contribution/ hindrance to quality of higher education in the region. The need for a harmonized credit transfer system was identified as a priority action point for SADC and RUFORUM.
- It was suggested that universities undertake inventory of equipment available in each institution, as well as human resource at technician level to operate the equipment.



Meeting participants from Lesotho, Tanzania, and Swaziland listen attentively during the Meeting

NEPAD- TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS DIALOGUE

28-30 July, 2009, Accra, Ghana

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) will hold a Dialogue for Tertiary Institutions 28-30 July in Accra, Ghana .The Dialogue will be conducted in the framework of the partnership between the NEPAD Secretariat, the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) in conjunction with the Technical Center for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation (CTA), InWent, as well as, African Regional University Networks and Forums. For more information, please contact the NEPAD Secretariat (nepadregistry@nepad.org).

NEWS & EVENTS



MEETING OF DEANS OF FACULTIES OF AGRICULTURE AND RELATED SCIENCES

31 August – 4 September, 2009 – Mombasa, Kenya

Theme: Reshaping Tertiary Education in Agriculture - Meeting of African Deans. Universities and colleges should be enabled to adopt modern approaches to stimulating learning, teaching and research, underpinned by training materials and tools that are not only up-to-date but also relevant and correspond to the circumstances in which the graduates will pursue their careers in holistic and diverse agricultural innovation systems. RUFORUM, together with partners will be holding a meeting of Deans of Faculties of Agriculture and the related sciences from 31 August to 4 September, 2009 in Mombasa Kenya. The overall objective is to improve the contribution of agricultural colleges and universities in building the critical mass needed for improving agricultural performance, employment and the food and nutrition situation in Africa. **For more information**, please contact the RUFORUM Secretariat (Secretariat@ruforum.org).

RUFORUM'S FIFTH ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 26-30 AUGUST 2009, MOMBASA, KENYA

RUFORUM's governance structure is designed to promote ownership of the organisation by its member universities while simultaneously ensuring good international practices and quality. **The Annual General Assembly** (also known as the AGM) is one of the seven RUFORUM organs. It is the supreme organ of the organization and serves to:

1. Guide the overall orientation of the RUFORUM mission and programmes
2. Approve the annual work-plan and budget
3. Receive and consider the external auditor's report
4. Appoint the external auditor for the following year.

To date, four AGMs have been held and this **FIFTH AGM** coincides with a number of key developments at the Secretariat and within its networks including expansion of human resource base through employment of key personnel and the launch of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation funded project on "Engaging African Universities to support agricultural development in the region" as well as implementation of a number of specific projects targeting a variety of capacity building activities. The RUFORUM AGM 2009 will be hosted by the University of Nairobi and will take place **26-30 August 2009** in Mombasa, Kenya. It will be officially opened by the Honourable Minister for Higher Education, Dr. Sally Kosgey.

The AGM theme "*Repositioning RUFORUM member universities to respond to the CAADP agenda in an evolving environment in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa*" is also the annual working theme of the RUFORUM's network that has been addressed in several other activities, workshops and projects ahead of the AGM.