

Monthly Newsletter – March 2009



The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture runs EDULINK Inception Workshops for the 3 ACP-EU funded projects.

On the 23rd to the 25th of February 2009, RUFORUM ran inception workshops for the following 3 projects that have been funded under the ACP-EU:

1. **Catalysing Change in African Universities:** Strengthening leadership, management and cross-cutting professional skills of east and southern African universities (CCAU)
2. **Enhancing Research capacity and skills** in Eastern and Southern Africa (ERESA)
3. Strengthening Capacity of Universities in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa to Offer **Quality Graduate Training (QA)**

The workshop was held at Imperial Botanical Beach Hotel in Entebbe and the main facilitator was Dr Paul Kibwika. Forty-six participants attended the three day session and they came from as far as The Netherlands, United States of America, France, South Africa, United Kingdom, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

The objectives of the workshop were:

1. Common understanding of the three projects within the RUFORUM context
2. Harmonized implementation plans for the three projects comprising of:
 - Detailed methodology(ies) and activities
 - Time lines for activities
 - Intermediate outputs for each activity
 - Activity based budgets
3. Roles and responsibilities of partners clarified
4. Strategies for enhancing success

The Regional Coordinator Professor Ekwamu Adipala officially opened the workshop, by thanking the EU Representative (in absentia) and explaining that the support that RUFORUM got from EU had come through Networking linkages that the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Development (CTA) and the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) had fostered. He also thanked all the Partners in the EDULINK projects for accepting to work with RUFORUM. He recognized the contribution of NATURA, our counterpart Network of European Agricultural Universities and Research Institutions. Professor Adipala also recognized the presence of colleagues from the USA, representing The Ohio State University and Michigan State University. He indicated that RUFORUM would like to strengthen linkages with these two and other North American Universities, and indeed establish South-South linkages with institutions in Brazil, India, etc. Professor Adipala also recognized the role and presence of representatives of the Inter-University Council of East African, Southern African Quality Assurance Network, the Commission of Higher Education in Kenya, and the Uganda Council for Higher Education, and the various university representatives.

The FARA (Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa) Chair, Dr Denis Kyetere graced the occasion and in his remarks he underscored the importance of the focus of the 3 projects that were being incepted. He indicated that strengthening leadership, management and professional skills in universities, improving research capacity and skills and implementing quality assurance were closely related to FARA's programme for Strengthening Capacity for Agricultural Research and Development in Africa (SCARDA). Since RUFORUM was a Lead Service Provider for SCARDA, FARA looked forward to an exchange of experience between the RUFORUM EDULINK collaborators and SCARDA. Dr Kyetere indicated that he envisaged that SCARDA would provide real life case studies of weakness and capacity gaps in the areas covered by the EDULink programmes. His hope was that the benefits of the training would impact beneficially on the capacity strengthening services provided to SCARDA.

Highlights of the presentations

The inception workshop program began with a plenary session that was punctuated by a number of very enlightening presentations. The first one was from **Ms Nodumo Dhlamini** from **RUFORUM** who gave a context of the EDULINK intervention and the RUFORUM strategy.

Ms Judith Francis from CTA (Technical Centre for Agriculture & Rural Cooperation) challenged us with the following key message *“If ACP faculties of agriculture or agricultural colleges and universities disappeared who would miss them – Will there be a public outcry?”*

Professor Didier Pilot from **Montpellier SupAgro** in France reminded us that in terms of Quality Assurance “we must write what we do and do what we write”.

Dr Cosam C. Joseph from the **Inter-University Council of East Africa** (IUCEA – Uganda) clarified the mandate of IUCEA, its key result areas and underscored the fact that the success and effectiveness of the harmonization process being introduced by the IUCEA depended on full support by the universities, National Higher Education Regulatory Agencies and the respective East African countries.

Dr T.N. Ngwira gave the SADC perspective on Quality Assurance in institutions of Higher Education. The SADC equivalent of IUCEA is called **HEQMISA** and was formed in 2002. He emphasized the need to include Lusophone and Francophone collaborators in the dialogue on Quality Assurance (QA). He also informed the audience that the fear of QA by Higher Education Institutions staff was real.

Professor Michel Lejeune the Executive Secretary - **Commission for Higher Education in Uganda** gave a very moving presentation that focused on leadership and management. He reminded us that it was imperative that we involve the young people to map their future and that Vice Chancellors must evolve and become executives who are in touch with what is happening on the ground.

The briefs on the three EDULINK projects were done by:

1. **Mrs Claire Ntwali**, from **RUFORUM** who explained what the Research Methods project was all about.
2. **Mrs Agnes Akwang Obua-Ogwal** from **RUFORUM** who highlighted the background of the Leadership and Management project.
3. **Miss Sylvia Chindime** from **RUFORUM** who gave an overview of the project that will focus on strengthening the capacity of universities in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa to offer

Quality Graduate Programmes

Other very important presentations were delivered during the group sessions and they will be detailed in the final workshop process report. After these presentations the participants were split into three groups, with each group focusing on its project. Dr Paul Kibwika facilitated the Leadership and Management aspect, Dr Patrick Okori facilitated the Quality Assurance and Dr G. Tusiime and Professor E. Adipala facilitated the Research Methods component.

On the last day of the workshop an inspiring and thought provoking presentation was given by **Dr Hamish Gow** from **Michigan State University**. It focused on “**learning by immersed discovery**” based on partnerships for industry development. Industry, Universities and farmers get together to design and implement programs that address the problem of “how to create appropriately trained talent in the form of university graduates”. Graduate Students are seen as agents of change and carefully selected and taken through a well thought curriculum including experiential learning, resulting in a product that will solve problems and become an agent of change.

The final workshop proceedings will be posted on the RUFORUM website www.ruforum.org

The RUFORUM Secretariat would like to thank all those that participated in the EDULINK inception workshop and made it the success that it was. We hope that we will continue to own the implementation processes that have been begun and ensure that we deliver on the 3 projects.