

RUFORUM Quarterly Progress Report for the Period April-June 2017

Report Summary

This report presents a summary of RUFORUM progress and achievements for the last quarter (April- June) of the 2016/17 RUFORUM financial period. Below are key highlights for the quarter:

1. RUFORUM awarded two new CARP Projects focused on Pig value chain and Potato Value chains in Uganda and Kenya, respectively. These new projects will include in addition to the usual CARP approach, a mandatory collaboration with technical, vocational education and training institutions;
2. Monitoring visits were made by the Secretariat and Technical Committee to eight countries (Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe) to provide technical backstopping support and to review progress of the RUFORUM supported projects in these countries;
3. Additional placements for the RUFORUM's Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) were made. Linkages were made with the World Bank African Centres of Excellence (ACE) initiative who require the recruitment of international PhD and Masters Students, among other fund disbursement linked indicators. The Secretariat provided strategic support to the ACE programs of RUFORUM member universities and identified modalities for future support from the Secretariat;
4. Developed and piloted a rigorous student recruitment process to identify disadvantaged but intellectually deserving students. The process was used to recruit 30 BSc and Masters students with support from the MasterCard Foundation;
5. Continued to strengthen the capacity of network members to enhance their visibility through online presence. RUFORUM further produced a new print summary publications of its work and achievements "RUFORUM at a Glance" and improved the website "look and feel";
6. The Secretariat initiated a quarterly publication 'the RUFORUM Quarterly' with the first issue to be released in early July, 2017.
7. Various meetings were held to enhance RUFORUM mission and objectives including meetings with Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia to discuss the need for building high level skills to support agricultural led growth in Liberia
8. Discussions were held with the African Development Bank (AfDB) to discuss collaboration between RUFORUM and AfDB.
9. Conducted mid-term review of the SBP 2015-2020 to assess implementation and emerging outcomes. The review resulted in several recommendations for consideration towards improving the SBP;
10. Initiated a 'visioning process' to reflect on how RUFORUM can play a 'catalytic role' in driving agricultural transformation in Africa building on its lessons and achievements towards meeting the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa.

INTRODUCTION

This report presents a summary of RUFORUM progress and achievements for the last quarter (April- June) of the 2016/17 RUFORUM financial period. Below we provide key highlights for the quarter:

1. DEMAND DRIVEN TRAINING AND RESEARCH

a) Competitive Research Grant (GRGs)

As part of monitoring progress on implementing research grants and students' training and providing technical backstopping during project implementation, the Secretariat and Technical Committee members visited eight countries (Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, Mozambique, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe). The teams supported strengthening implementation mechanisms of community focused research along value chains, including partnerships with key stakeholders. Projects are working to improve value chains in potato, sweet potato, maize, beans, cassava; livestock and fisheries (aquaponics, poultry, dairy) as well as in the less researched and underutilized commodities such as indigenous vegetables and agro forestry (See <http://wp.me/aUB9T-QQ>).

The Field Attachment Programme Awards (FAPA) were awarded to five students to share their research findings with relevant institutions, beneficiaries and to intern at prospective employer institutions (more information on FAPA can be found at <https://blog.ruforum.org/tag/field-attachment-program-award-fapa>).

b) Community Action Research Programs (CARPs)

RUFORUM continued to provide technical support to implementation of three on-going community action research projects (CARPs) on dairy in Tanzania, cassava seed multiplication and marketing in Uganda, and wheat seed systems in Ethiopia. The three CARPs are piloting the strengthening of the value chains through strong partnerships around university expertise to respond to specific community problems. The Cassava Project in Uganda, for example, brings together partners (Brewery industry, farmers' organizations, research and CSOs) to improve cassava production, processing and marketing including to address the Cassava Brown Streak Virus Disease, a serious constraint to cassava production in the region. The current three CARP Projects build on lessons from the previous CARPs executed between 2010 and 2013 which among others resulted in the establishment of outreach coordination units.

RUFORUM awarded two new CARP Projects focused on Pig value chain and Potato Value chains in Uganda and Kenya, respectively. These new projects will include in addition to the usual CARP approach, a mandatory collaboration with technical, vocational education and training institutions.

c) Collaborative BSc, MSc and course-based PhD Programs

RUFORUM has continued to strengthen intra-African academic training and research through the regional collaborative PhD and MSc training programmes. During the reporting period, RUFORUM facilitated staff exchanges involving Buea University (Click here see [story](#)) in Cameroon, University of Abomey Calavi in Benin, Makerere University in Uganda, Egerton University in Kenya, Gezira University in Sudan, and Haramaya University in Ethiopia. This enabled staff to share experiences and identify best practices in teaching, research and resource mobilization across Africa (A blog article on the visits can be accessed [here](#)). The participating

staff highly appreciated the experiential learning and collaborations opportunities that come with mobility.

RUFORUM continued working with its member universities to pilot of an online interactive platform with three of its member universities - Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT), Egerton University, and Makerere University. The support for this initiative is from the EU's EDULINK II Project.

2. INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

RUFORUM continued supporting the review and strengthening of curriculum for community engagement, agri-business and entrepreneurship education¹, with initial activities at two universities (Click to see examples at [Egerton](#) and [Gulu](#)). The programs supported through institutional strengthening grants and the MasterCard Foundation is providing lessons for the provision of complementary agriculture advisory services by university students. In this regard, RUFORUM undertook a continental scoping study to assess and gauge how member universities are currently implementing these community focused approaches. A draft RUFORUM community engagement framework and strategy has been developed to facilitate community engagement with universities at their center.

RUFORUM, with support from the MasterCard Foundation developed and piloted a rigorous student recruitment process that is tailored to identify dis-advantaged but deserving students. Following an advert, 103 candidates were shortlisted from 506 applicants. A household validation visit was conducted for the 103 shortlisted applicants prior to award of 30 scholarships. The 30 awards are from Ghana (1); Nigeria (1), Malawi (1), Zimbabwe (1); South Sudan (1), Tanzania (1), Rwanda (1), Kenya (10) and Uganda(13).

RUFORUM in collaboration with AWARD, conducted a four-day gender and leadership training in Malawi. The training attracted 20 mid-level managers from Ministries, Parastatal bodies, and the four public universities in Malawi (Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR), Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST), Mzuzu University and University of Malawi). The overall objective of the training was to strengthen leadership roles of mid-career women professionals.

RUFORUM held a training workshop in Entebbe, Uganda for skills enhancement in competitive proposal writing for 42 researchers from 12 African countries (Uganda, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, Egypt, South Africa, Malawi, Zambia, Sudan, Benin, Cameroon and Ethiopia) in grant managements.

RUFORUM Secretariat commissioned a scoping study on vocational training in Kenya and Uganda to identify strategic fits of RUFORUM interventions and existing educational systems. The scoping study will provide recommendations for the development of models to strengthen the linkages between universities and TVET institutions.

¹ RUFORUM is collaborating with the EARTH University in Costa Rica to provide mentorship support to RUFORUM member universities in the new training approach.

Four institutional strengthening grants were awarded to train 74 MSc students from Sudan (University of Gezira–20, University of Kordofan–17, Peace University–17, and University of Khartoum–20) to support strengthening training and research capacity for the Sudan National Agricultural Research System. In addition, an institutional strengthening grant was awarded to Gulu University to train 10 MSc students from disadvantaged backgrounds in Africa.

Under the RUFORUM GTA program (Click [here](#) for more information), seven placements were made bringing to total 47 staff being trained under the GTA arrangements. RUFORUM Universities have committed to train 325 PhDs through the GTA. The Secretariat also held meetings with the World Bank African Higher Education Centers of Excellence (ACE) leaders to explore placements of GTAs through the ACEs. Areas of support from RUFORUM to the ACEs were identified, and already 15 GTA's from across Africa have been committed to train under the ACE I project at University of Port Harcourt for training in Oil and Gas areas. (See <https://blog.ruforum.org/2017/06/19/call-for-phd-applications-opportunities-in-oil-field-chemicals-research-petroleum-and-environmental-studies/>)

3. SERVICING THE NETWORK

a) Communication and Information Technology

For enhancing visibility and communications, an updated publication on RUFORUM was published 'RUFORUM at a Glance' (See <https://blog.ruforum.org/2017/05/25/new-publication-ruforum-at-a-glance/>). RUFORUM also produced two documentaries; *RUFORUM An African Success Story* and *Training the Next Generation of Leaders for Africa's Agricultural Transformation* which can be accessed at <https://youtu.be/d45GnHPrl5s> and <https://youtu.be/2Yvk9OIjPQA>, respectively.

Six editions of RUFORUM Weekly digest were released during the reporting period.

Facilitation of online platforms continued including for discussions of the Social Media Reporters and Communities of Practice (CoP) to foster constructive conversations on topical issues on higher education in Africa (Visit <https://dgroups.org/cta/ruforum/ruforum-smr>). The number of online followers continued to increase Blog – 8,095 followers, Mailing list – 9540, Twitter – 5,182 followers and Facebook – 21,811 followers.

RUFORUM trained 16 university staff from the departments of ICT, Public Relations, Quality Assurance and distance learning at the Busitema University. The two-day training focused on "Building Capacity for Increased Visibility and Strategic Communication." (See link to the story: <https://blog.ruforum.org/2017/05/23/social-media-changing-african-universities/>). One of the campuses has developed an institutional blog.

b) Knowledge hub for Agricultural Higher Education

RUFORUM is currently exploring the use of open data to increase research accountability, and to facilitate efficient use of resources. An event was organized with the Africa Open Science Platform (AOSP) and further discussions will be held with the Research Data Alliance and the thematically focused Global Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition (GODAN) initiative to drive and adopt this agenda by member universities.

A Quarterly newsletter has been initiated to share reflections on emerging issues in higher education and agriculture in Africa. It is hoped that the publication will help to create awareness on emerging issues as well as influence policy dialogue and decision making. The inaugural education focus will focus on the theme, “*From productivity to impact: The role of higher education*”.

c) Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

A survey of subscribers to RUFORUM communication products during the period showed great appreciation for the digest, especially information on scholarships, research grants and conference announcements.

During the period, RUFORUM developed an offline planning and monitoring dashboard that is aimed at supporting the Secretariat to effectively manage projects through facilitating strategic planning and tracking achievements of project milestones. The emerging lessons will be used to inform the scale-up and applicability of the tool through the entire Secretariat’s programmatic operations.

Student’s baseline data for the 30 students going to Gulu and Egerton member universities were collected as a part of the initial quasi-experimental design to strengthen impact assessments and evaluation of the new training approach at the Secretariat.

A mid-term review of the Strategic Business Plan (SBP) 2015-2020 aimed at assessing institutional performance towards realizing the objectives and targets set out in the RUFORUM SBP 2015-2020 was undertaken. The review resulted into several recommendations for consideration towards improving the relevance and effectiveness of RUFORUM as well as providing a firm foundation for the envisaged RUFORUM Vision 2030. The review recommended some programmatic restructuring that will be presented to the RUFORUM Board during the financial year 2017/18 for consideration.

Data collection on university staffing, student enrollment, research investment and outputs is underway at the 66 member universities in partnership with IFPRI/ASTI. The effort will build on the earlier data collected and is being refined to populate a joint online open access Higher Agricultural Education portal. Preliminary results will be presented during the October 2017 RUFORUM Annual General Meeting in Malawi.

4. NEW PARTNERSHIPS AND POLICY OUTREACH

a) Strengthening Partnerships and Policy Outreach

Committee of 10 Heads of States

RUFORUM held a planning meeting (2-3 May 2017 in Malawi) together with the Government of Malawi to discuss and plan for a Summit of the Committee of 10 African Heads of State championing education, science and technology in Africa (C10). The meeting also was designed to bring on board other partners, particularly higher education networks in Africa to coalesce around the C10 agenda. The Malawi event included representation also from the Association of African Universities, African Capacity Building Foundation, African Academy of Science, Inter University Council of East Africa and the respective government representatives to plan for the Summit. A technical expert team is drafting background papers for the Summit.

A delegation from RUFORUM visited Liberia 14-16 June 2017 and met with her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia. The purpose of the visit was to discuss higher education challenges in Africa, and specifically to dialogue with key government ministries and the President on building high level skills to support agricultural led growth in Liberia. More information is available on <https://blog.ruforum.org/2017/06/27/3330/>. Her Excellency confirmed willingness to work with RUFORUM when she leaves office in October 2017. She also confirmed availability to participate as a key note speaker at the 2018 RUFORUM Biennial in Nairobi, Kenya.

A two-person delegation from RUFORUM Secretariat visited the African Development Bank (AfDB) offices in Abidjan to discuss collaboration between RUFORUM and AfDB. Discussions focused on the participation of RUFORUM in the Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT), Youth Enable and other projects of the AfDB. The team held discussions with the Dr. Jennifer Blanke, AfDB Vice President, the agricultural team, and the Education team. The meetings also discussed the joint working on STI in Africa, including collaboration on the Committee of 10 Heads of State and the World Bank new initiative on higher agricultural education, to which the President of the Bank has offered support.

RUFORUM hosted a side event during the Association of African Universities (AAU) 50 year celebrations to consult on the Future of Higher Education in Africa, and to solicit for input towards the planned Committee of 10 Heads of State in November 2017. The event builds on previous consultations with Association of Research Universities in Africa (ARUA) and generate input into the RUFORUM's interventions tailored to the West African context. RUFORUM had an exhibition during the event. See <https://twitter.com/ruforumsec/status/871674813181460481>

National Forums

A consultative meeting on the design of National Forums was held at the RUFORUM Secretariat with representation of universities and research institutions. The meeting noted the need to adapt to country level policies and agricultural sector structures and learning from best practices from institutions such as FAO.

MoUs and institutional partnerships

Various partnerships have been initiated or strengthened to further RUFORUM's alliance towards agricultural transformation on the continent. These included with ANAFE, Agrinatura, Ghent University (Belgium), BecA, Moscow State University, the Eurasian Center for Food Security, FAO, and AWARD. RUFORUM continued to engage with ICRISAT to develop a joint CRP for dry land legumes and Cereals.

RUFORUM in collaboration with United States African Development Foundation (USADF), the Global Knowledge Initiative and the University of Maryland, Robert H. Smith School of Business co-organized a convening on "Transforming mind-sets to create pathways to prosperity for underserved communities". The convening was held at the Ronald Reagan Conference centre in Washington, DC and attracted participation of 88 USADF Africa Country Program Coordinators, Project Partners, USADF Washington staff and RUFORUM staff (<http://wp.me/aUB9T-R6>). The convening was part of RUFORUM -USADF collaboration.

New World Bank Initiative on Higher Agriculture Education

RUFORUM is working closely with the World Bank to develop a new program to support Higher Agricultural Education in Africa. RUFORUM participated in a convening on “Partnering with Universities to Build a Sustainable Food System in Africa” organised by the World Bank in Washington DC, where the Vice President of the World Bank Africa region committed to strengthening Higher Agricultural Education (HAE) in Africa. Subsequently a team of the World Bank officials held a meeting with RUFORUM at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in Seattle, Washington, USA to explore how to move this initiative forward. RUFORUM has developed a concept note to move forward the process and is working with the Bank and Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources to organise a regional consultative meeting 27 & 28 July 2017 in Gaborone, Botswana.

Resource mobilisation

RUFORUM held discussions with key donors and partners during the period. Visits were made to SIDA and Norad. Discussions are also underway for a proposal to be developed and submitted to the EU in partnership with Agrinatura. Discussions were also held with the European Union through DG Devco (at the European Development Days) and the Dutch organization for international education (NUFFIC).

A delegation from RUFORUM visited Seattle for discussions with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The meeting provided opportunity for the Network to debrief the BMGF staff on progress of implementation of its Grant to RUFORUM, receive update on the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s new investment strategy and identify areas of complementary investment with RUFORUM as it develops its Vision for serving the wider continent. During the visit the RUFORUM delegation participated in a donor roundtable discussion (involving Carnegie Corporation of New York; BMGF, the World Bank and the MasterCard Foundation) on the future of Higher Agricultural Education in Africa.

5. STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

a) Strengthening organization governance and management

- i. The nine months financial report for the period ending 31 March 2017 and proposed budget for financial year 2017/18 were prepared and presented to the Finance and Administration Committee of the Board on 3rd and 6th May 2017 in Lilongwe, Malawi.
- ii. The Internal Audit report for the six months (July to December 2016) was presented by Back House to the Finance and Administration Committee of the Board on 3rd May 2017.
- iii. The Finance and Administration Committee of the Board appraised the performance of the Secretariat Management team on 5th May 2017.
- iv. The Youth Protection policy and the RUFORUM Whistle blower policy were received and considered by the Finance and Administration Committee of the Board on 6th May 2017
- v. Preliminary work has been undertaken to prepare for the upcoming External Audit for the financial year 2016/17. The external audit will be undertaken by Deloitte and Touche. The audit report will be presented to the Finance and Administration Board Committee in September 2017, and subsequently to the Annual General Meeting on 27 October 2017 in Malawi.

b) Resource mobilization

- i. The RUFORUM Secretariat received a US\$ 100,000 Grant from the Carnegie Cooperation of New York. The grant will support consultations with African higher education networks and other actors to map out key issues, actions and target milestones for strengthening African higher education for economic development in the continent.
- ii. RUFORUM Secretariat also supported mobilization of €900,000 from the Food & Business Applied Research Fund (ARF) of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The grant supports research by African Universities in partnership with the private sector, farmer organizations, national research institutions and non-governmental organizations. The Projects will be implemented in Benin, Mali and Uganda under the following respective research areas; *Enhancing Kersting's groundnut (Macrotyloma geocarpum) production and marketability in Benin; Developing economically viable models of foundation seed production for vital food security in Mali; and Development of a Gender Responsive Commercial Seed System for African Indigenous Vegetables in Uganda.*
- iii. The RUFORUM Secretariat also supported member universities to develop and submit proposals to the Intra- Africa Mobility, Bio innovate and the LEAP Agri- calls for proposals. Seventeen (17) proposals were developed and submitted to Intra Africa Mobility, Five (8) to Bio innovate and Ten (10) to LEAP Agri Calls for proposals.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2017/2018

- Hold regional consultations with key stakeholders to develop RUFORUM's future vision for agricultural sector transformation
- Hold RUFORUM 13th Annual General Meeting 25-27 October 2017 in Lilongwe, Malawi
- Jointly with the African Union Commission and Government of Malawi convene a Summit for the Committee of 10 Heads of State championing Higher Education, Science and Technology development in Africa
- Publish a book on the status of Agricultural Tertiary Education in Africa
- In collaboration with African Governments and Development Partners develop Programs for strengthening Higher Agricultural Education and S&T in Africa
- Convene statutory meetings of the RUFORUM Governance organs
- Plan for the 2018 Biennial Conference