

## Summary Report for the Period April-June 2016

This report presents summary of activities conducted by the Secretariat in the Fourth Quarter (April-June 2016) of Financial/Activity year 2015/16. The report has been arranged based on RUFORUM Core Areas.

### **Core Area 1: Core Area 1: Competitive Grants Programs: Demand-driven research, community action, institutional strengthening and activities that guide and support research**

In this quarter, opportunities arising from multi-stakeholder engagements were exploited to connect smallholder farmers with universities as part of demand articulation. In Uganda, RUFORUM worked with the Popular Women's Knowledge Initiative (P'KWI) a national NGO working in Eastern part of the country, collaboratively with Makerere University to strengthen the Cassava value-chain through the development of community based seed systems; and the Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) nodes in Northern and Eastern Uganda in the use of ICTs to promote uptake and adoption of innovations addressing bottlenecks in soil-health, cowpea and cassava seed systems and value addition. For details see [here](#). In Tanzania, the University Research Team at the Nelson Mandela African Institute of Science and Technology (NMA-IST) implementing the Livestock/Diary Value Chain Community Action research Programme (CARP), is engaging smallholder farmers through farmer dairy societies. Examples of participating cooperative societies include Tanga Development Cooperative Union, *Umoja wa Wafugaji Lushoto* (UWALU), *Umoja wa Wafugaji Shume* (UWASHU) and *Umoja wa Wafugaji Mwangoi* (UWAMWA); farmer networks, such as UVIWATLO and MVIJUMLA and input suppliers (JOSERA and Kadiru Agrovet) as well as policy makers and implementers (District Council officials, District Livestock and Fisheries Officers, and Subject Matter Specialists). Similarly, multi-stakeholder engagements with university-based research teams undertaking community action research have resulted into functional collaborations/partnerships with the CGIAR (International Livestock Research Institute (ILIRI) in Tanzania, International Center of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE) in Kenya, International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and World Vegetable Centre (AVRDC) in Uganda; and the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) on wheat research in Ethiopia. The sub-grants have thus, provided opportunities and created spaces for collaboration and increasing the participation of supported researchers in wider international research consortia. As an example see story from [Kananu Murungi](#). This has helped to enhance the quality of peer support, experiential graduate training and research.

There has also been engagement across countries and sub-regions. For example, the Graduate Research Grant Team at Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique is working in collaboration with researchers and centres in CIRAD in La Reunion in Angola. In the process this has helped to leverage research and training resources. The now established outreach platform in Malawi at the

Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) has continued to provide continental leadership in training and research in Fisheries and Aquaculture and has linked with the University of Eldoret, Kenya, and University of the Cape Coast, Ghana, Makerere University, Uganda and Ethiopian Agricultural Research Institute (EAIR). Efforts have been similarly made to engage with national government agencies as a mechanism to disseminate research, strengthen engagement and development of responsive research outputs that are mainstreamed into government activities. To this end, focused engagement among research teams has been evident with the Agriculture Research Corporation of Sudan, National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) in Uganda, and County Governments of Kiambu, Baringo and Garissa in Kenya, and the Departments of Water Affairs and Range Management in Lesotho, among others. Other engagement has been championed through network aggregation with RUFORUM facilitating activities of Work Package Capacities under the broad Platform for African-European Partnership in Agricultural Research for Development (PAEPARD). This actor aggregation has successfully engaged University of Abomey Calavi in Benin, Uganda Christian University, University of Eldoret, Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) with backstopping for research for development processes by PAEPARD Partners on key agricultural commodity value chains.

Field visits and support to research teams to enhance compliance and quality of implementation were conducted. Four field visits were undertaken by both mentors and RUFORUM Secretariat staff in Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Malawi. These visits provided opportunity for joint working and collaboration. For instance, in Kenya, all projects at University of Nairobi, Kenyatta University and Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology were jointly monitored. Accordingly, a closer collaboration between the teams has emerged with a call to hold a joint National Forum engagement meeting for the universities in Kenya. In Ethiopia, research teams at Haramaya University and Mekelle University were involved in processes of linking their research to development for greater community benefit and economies of scale and scope. The RUFORUM Secretariat will pursue a request from the research teams in Ethiopia for a more focused effort to capacitate university-based research teams in value chains development and analysis and streamlining engagement with industry.

RUFORUM Secretariat also strengthened its Platform for research dissemination. In this regard, a total of over 420 extended abstracts were received in response to the [Call](#) and announcement for the 5<sup>th</sup> African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Biennial Conference slated for 17 – 21 October, 2016 in Cape Town, South Africa. The submissions are now under peer-review prior for publication in the RUFORUM Working Document Series. In addition, the African Journal of Rural Development (AJRD) has now been institutionalized as platform for disseminating relevant research that links research to rural development. Two issues have been published. See for details the following links. (<http://www.afjrd.org/>) ([Vol 1 \(1\)](#)) and [Vol 1\(2\)](#)) and [Vol 1, No 2 \(2016\)](#) published. The third is expected to be released in August 2016. RUFORUM funded research has further continued to generate impact with shared impact stories indicating novel ideas with potential for commercialization by [industry](#). This clearly shows that RUFORUM is indeed addressing real felt

needs and gaps through research with potential for greater impact at community, national and regional level.

As part of strengthening the recognition of entrepreneurship and innovation among African youth, the [Young Africa Entrepreneurs \(YAE\) competition](#) was launched. It is open to all African youths below the age of 40 years. This competition has so far attracted over 350 entries from over 18 countries. This competition will run till the 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2016. Unique to this call has been expression of interest from Young Innovators outside Africa to enter into the competition, with submission coming from Costa Rica, India and the United States of America (USA).

For the period April-June 2016, action was taken to provide small grants to eight students as part of promoting dissemination and uptake of innovations in agriculture, nutrition and health nexus. The eight students are registered with Makerere University studying Public Health and are non-Ugandan coming from Ghana, South Sudan, DR. Congo, Burundi and Kenya.

Institutionalization of RUFORUM supported projects is a key strategy to ensure sustainability of initiated activities and drawing from examples such as the community engagement projects at Gulu University (Uganda) and Egerton University (Kenya), the need for longer term engagements are considered by both the academia and non-academic multi-stakeholder actors as a pre-requisite for social change. This has become a key reflection point for RUFORUM and reinforces the Foundation's strategy to concentrate in anchor geography. As a Network, the RUFORUM Secretariat is well positioned to promote spill-over effects and efforts highlighted in the above are part of dissemination of research outputs within country as well as across borders and sub-regions in Africa.

## **Core Area 2 –Regional Masters (MSc) and Doctoral (PhD) Programs**

### **2.1 Capacity Development Strategy**

During the quarter, the RUFORUM Capacity Development Strategy was approved by the RUFORUM Board Executive Committee. The strategy is an operational and companion document to the RUFORUM Strategic Business Plan 2015-2020. Arising from the process, RUFORUM Secretariat developed a synthesis paper on Capacity Development in RUFORUM Member Universities is still under review by an international journal.

### **2.2 Scholarship Awards**

During the April-June 2016 period, 85 scholarships were awarded under the *Carnegie Corporation of New York* grant support to RUFORUM as follows:

- 1) Seventeen (17) Doctoral two-year research grants
- 2) Twenty three (23) research grants targeting the Intra ACP Academic Mobility for PhD students
- 3) Twenty eight (28) Doctoral research grants targeting the beneficiaries of the Graduate Teaching Assistantship Program

4) Sixteen (16) Doctoral finalization grants for students registered in the RUFORUM Regional PhD programs.

The awardees hail from **15 African countries** representing the Eastern, Central, Southern and West African regions.

*DAAD:* A report for the RUFORUM-DAAD Scholarships pre-selection of 16 candidates was submitted to DAAD for further selection of the 8 awardees for 2016. The call drew applications from 10 African countries from Eastern (80%), Central (5%), Southern (5%) and West African (10%). The skewness of the applications towards Eastern Africa is because of the nature of the call which targeted Higher Education Institution in the East Africa Community (EAC) countries plus Ethiopia. Applicants from other regions will be studying in EAC as per the call requirements. The grant Award letters and feedback to the applicants will be completed by the end of July 2016, based on the updated DAAD schedule. Additionally two students under the DAAD previous support completed their doctoral degree studies.

#### *ICRISAT*

The present project followed a signing of MoU between the CGIAR consortium office and the African Union to support African Capacity to implement the Science Agenda for Africa and MoU between ICRISAT and RUFORUM signed in November 2014. The 3-year Project contributes directly to building capacity by increasing the number of highly qualified scientists are able to conduct research in the area of dry land cereals that is relevant to the rural poor in Africa. The Project also recognizes the important need to strengthen the capacity of African research institutions by ensuring that scientists have the relevant skills and knowledge to run programs relevant to the management of dryland cereals in Africa as a means to improve the productivity of dryland cereals in Africa. It builds on, and supports development of capacity for dry land cereals research to consolidate and scale – up, successful lessons from African universities through the RUFORUM network. The project is providing research funds and mentorship to post-doctoral fellows and graduate students by linking them with on- going CRP research initiatives.

The first call for applications was issued in 2015 and is support six graduate students attached to various ICRISAT and ICARDA centers. The second call was launched with a deadline of August 30<sup>th</sup> 2016. All the grant applications are received and eligibility and compliance check completed through the dedicated online system (RIMS).

### **2.3 Engagement with member universities**

- **University of Antananarivo, Madagascar:** A new MSc. Program in Agro-ecology, Biodiversity and Climate change (ABC) enrolled 16 students and eight of them are funded by RUFORUM through a nurturing grant No. RU 2014 NG 24. Two of the students sponsored by RUFORUM and one self-sponsored student will present papers during the Biennial 2016 conference in Cape Town South Africa.

- **University of Rwanda:** RUFORUM participated in PhD curricula development by the College of Agriculture, Animal Science and Veterinary Medicine (CAVM).
- **GTA:** The RUFORUM Graduate Teaching Assistantship Programme (GTA) is an initiative by African University Vice Chancellors to increase the pool of PhD trained faculty in their universities. Under this programme each university may send 5 faculty staff for PhD training in other member universities. The member universities providing PhD training waive fees and provide accommodation for the staff under training while sending universities pay for upkeep and research costs for their staff. During the quarter, four graduate students were successfully placed under the GTA making a total of 30 GTA fully placed. RUFORUM has contributed research funds for these students, thanks to support from the *Carnegie Corporation of New York*, as a way of boosting the program. The review team that awarded the grant noted the tremendous progress in the implementation of the GTA programme. The Committee that evaluated the grant applications was impressed with the number of participating member universities in the GTA mechanism, and appreciated the fact that most of the students have reported for studies. The Committee however advised the RUFORUM Secretariat to review the GTA arrangements with the member universities to ensure that they fulfill fully their obligations as stipulated in the MOU. It is expected that the sending universities provide travel expenses, salary, upkeep/stipend and fund the student's research.

#### **2.4 Training Academic staff in Grant Proposal Writing and Management**

A training write-shop in '*Project development, implementation and tracking of outcomes*' with a focus on the European Union (EU) Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Scheme's 2016 Call for Proposals was organized in Entebbe, Uganda (19-23 May 2016). A total of 37 participants attended, representing 12 teams from 15 member universities of RUFORUM located in Central, Eastern, Southern and Western Africa. As a result of this training, one third of all proposals successfully submitted to EU (11/34) were from RUFORUM-facilitated teams through this training. A total of 7 projects will be awarded out of 34 eligible proposals. The results of the EU-African Union Selection process is expected to be out by end September 2016 yet to come out.

#### **2.5 Engagement with CGIARs and other Stakeholders to increase students Experience**

RUFORUM Secretariat participated in a panel discussion on "*Human Capital Development for Poverty Alleviation*" as a part of the 2016 Science Forum organized by the CGIAR Independent Science and Partnership Council (ISPC) and co-hosted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in April 2016 in Addis Ababa. During this panel RUFORUM tabled issues of mismatch between success stories that are being piloted by CGIAR and other partners with the narrative in Africa on deepening extreme poverty and increasing numbers of the rural poor and the role of universities not being adequately harnessed to support capacity development to support efforts by other partners. Training models that inspired the RUFORUM training which fosters the narrowing of gap between research and training were discussed. These include, but are not limited to, land grant model of US, the integration of research and universities in Denmark, Netherlands and other EU countries. A call on the CGIAR for greater collaboration with universities in Africa,

focusing on identification and provision of needed skills to support impact orientation and meeting of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the next few years was issued and was noted as one of the key recommendations of the Science Forum 2016 (SF16) meeting. Accordingly RUFORUM Secretariat has planned a Session on fostering collaboration across CGIAR- Regional Economic Commissions, Sub Regional Organisations- National Agricultural Research Systems and Universities during the October 2016 Biennial Conference in South Africa.

## 2.6 Other Activities

The Secretariat also undertook the following activities during the 2015/16 period:

1. The Secretariat facilitated the following four staff exchanges:
  1. **Dr Jimmy Omonyi** from the Netherlands to teach a module entitled “Bioinformatics and Functional genomics” in support for the PhD Plant Breeding and Biotechnology program at Makerere University.
  2. Prof. **Patrick Okori** from ICRISAT, to support the PhD Plant Breeding and Biotechnology program at Makerere University in module teaching and providing technical backstopping to PhD students writing their theses.
  3. **Prof. Hussein Shimelis** from the university of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa visited Makerere University from 18-22/6/2016 to participate in planning sessions on how the University of KwaZulu-Natal will engage in the implementation of the recently won African Higher Education Centre of Excellence (ACE) in Plant Breeding and Biotechnology (MACCI) at Makerere University. The ACE is funded by the World Bank.
  4. **Dr Thomas Odong** from Makerere University, Uganda visited the University of Ghana Legon’s Africa Centre of Excellence (WACCI) where he taught a module entitled “*Advanced Biometrics, genetics, and Bio-information*” to PhD students from 4-11/8/2016.
  5. **Dr Denis Aheto** from the University of Cape Coast in Ghana (UCC) visited the RUFORUM Secretariat from 16-18/5/2016 where he interacted with researchers from Makerere University and the University of Venda, South Africa, about collaboration opportunities in the area of Fisheries and Blue Economy. He also participated in the proposal writing training workshop organised by RUFORUM from 19-23/5/2016 where he led a team which submitted a proposal to the EU supported Intra African Academic Call for proposals to support training of Masters and PhD students in universities across Africa. The Aquaculture and Fisheries team is composed of UCC, University of Eldoret in Kenya, Makerere University in Uganda, University of Abomey Calavi in Benin, Rhodes University in South Africa, and Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) in Malawi. LUANAR has also recently been selected by the World Bank to host an African Higher Education Centre of Excellence. During the writeshop, 10 other teams prepared and submitted proposals to the Intra African Academic Mobility Call. Results are expected by end of September 2016.
2. The RUFORUM Secretariat presented to stakeholders attending the Seventh Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa Science Week the current status of its Regional programs in terms of their contribution to the STISA 2024 Priority One and obtained contributions from SROs and RECs on possible improvements to better align RUFORUM Regional Programs to

the African Union's STISA 2024. This meeting took place in Kigali, Rwanda in June 2016 where RUFORUM was responsible for Human Capital Development thematic area.

3. The Secretariat organized the following seminar presentations:
  - a. *"The Use of DNA finger printing to track adoption of improved crop varieties"* targeted at PhD students in Plant Breeding and Biotechnology at Makerere University. The Seminar was delivered by Dr Leonard Oruko, an experienced M&E specialist in Agri-systems. A total of 12 (five women and seven men) students and 7 staff attended the seminar.
  - b. *"Experiences on Innovation Platforms for Articulating Research Training and Extension Demands of Universities"* by Prof. Moses Tenywa from Makerere University. The seminar was meant for PhD students in Agriculture Rural Innovation at Makerere University. A total of 15 Students (7 women and 7 men) and 5 RUFORUM staff attended the seminar.
  - c. Dr Teye Ernest and Dr Sidney Nzeako, from Universities of Cape Coast, Ghana, and Port Harcourt, Nigeria, respectively, made seminar presentations at RUFORUM Secretariat on 6th May 2016. The two Research fellows were at Makerere University for a 3-month staff exchange within the framework of the EU funded Academic Mobility Project on Sharing Capacity to Build Capacity (SHARE) project. Their presentations focused on lessons learnt regarding the staff exchange programme and opportunities for further collaboration among participating universities and other network members. Participants for the seminars included RUFORUM Secretariat staff, SHARE Mobility Coordinators, and students.

These seminars are intended to broaden the knowledge and perspectives of doctoral students in their respective areas of specialization and thus sharpen their critical thinking. They also help both the Secretariat and participating universities to learn on lessons learnt and implementation issues.

## **2.7 Reflections and emerging lessons from this core area are:**

1. RUFORUM sees Academic exchanges as a way of promoting networking and nurturing communities of practice currently being established in the RUFORUM network.
2. There is a need to review the GTA arrangements to ensure that the universities meet their obligations as stipulated in the MOU.
3. Retooling Academic staff in skills such as Grant Proposal Writing and Management, scientific writing, and doctoral supervision is appreciated by several participating member universities and it should be scaled up.

## **CORE AREA 3: Information Technology, Communication & Knowledge Management (ICKM)**

### **3.1 Information Technology**

The Secretariat continues to leverage ICT's to strengthen the capacity to achieve its goals and service to the network at large. The RIMS remains a vital tool at the Secretariat and support was

provided to both the units at the Secretariat and the network at large to ensure effective utilization of the resource. This involved mostly technical back stopping and guidance on use of the system. Improvements and development of the remaining modules will make RIMS a more effective tool at the Secretariat. A number of systems were also upgraded and updated to improve their efficiency, effectiveness and allow the Secretariat to receive more benefits from their application.

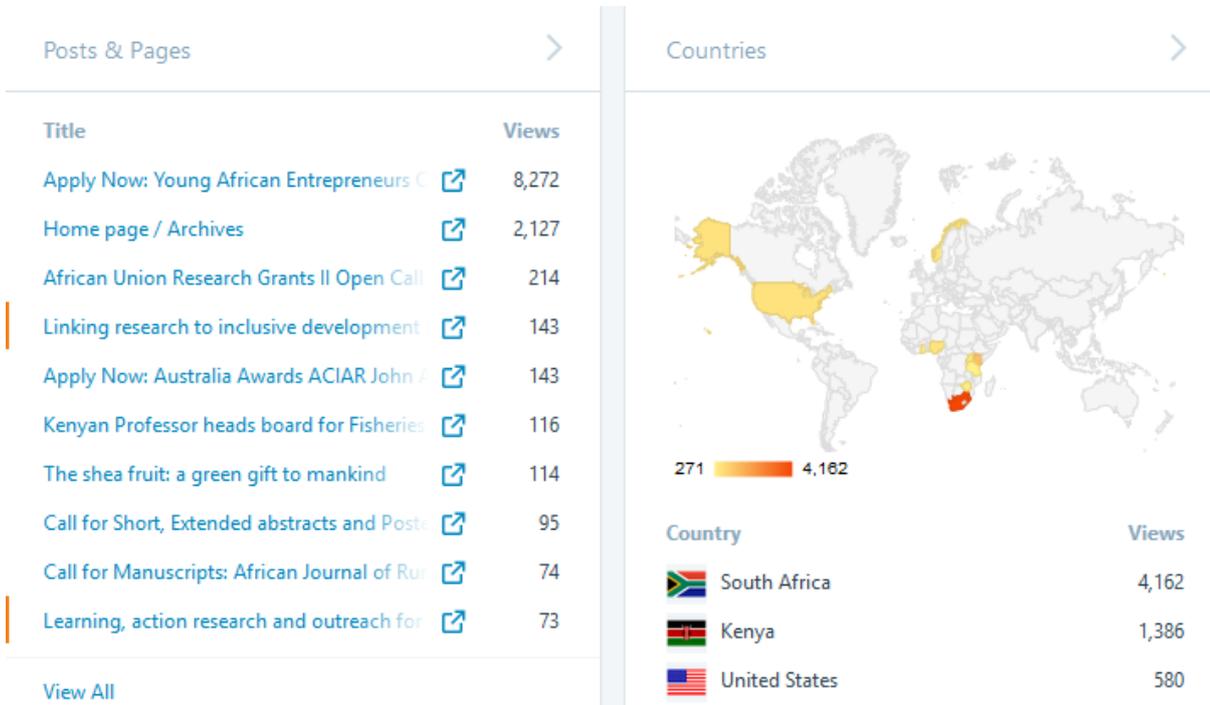
Efforts were made to improve the in-house capacity to handle most of the ICT requirements of the Secretariat and reduce the dependency of the Secretariat to outside service providers. The first step was to cancel maintenance contracts of some of the office equipment and directly take over these activities. Necessary tools to facilitate these tasks were procured. Subsequently, the 5<sup>th</sup> RUFORUM Biennial website and mobile application have been developed in-house. For previous Biennial Conferences these were handled by external service providers. For the 2016 Biennial Conference, the mobile application and website will not only remain intellectual property of the Secretariat with open access to all uploaded resources but will also allow for future improvements, adjustments and development, including timely provision of additional resource materials.

### **3.2 Communication**

#### **Using Social Media to increase visibility, brand and dissemination**

RUFORUM online platforms continue to attract traffic and connect the network. The RUFORUM News portal blog registered at <http://blog.ruforum.org/> attracted 27,781 views, 13,988 visitors for the last quarter with June, 2016 closing at its strongest. The news portal has gained over new followers bringing the total to 3725 followers.

A key post that attracted a lot of online engagement was the *Call for Youth African Entrepreneurs*. This particular post attracted 8,272 with 2,000+ shares on social Media and 19 comments. This is the highest engagement we have seen online. Below is a summary of the activities.



A table below shows the different statistics for the months of April, May, and June 2016 from the blog.

Months	Views	Visitors	Posts Published
April	8,075	4,133	15
May	8,263	4,058	11
June	11,443	5,797	10
<b>Totals</b>	<b>27,781</b>	<b>13,988</b>	<b>36</b>



The intensification of social media engagements continued with an upward trend in the social media followers (Twitter now at 1,724 from 1,553 followers (**171 new**); Facebook: 3,772 likes from 3,423 likes (**349 new**); Alumni Group: 564 from 548 Alumni members (**16 new**), Blog: 3,362 from 3,228 followers (**134 new**). The RUFORUM Mailing list has grown to 7,968 subscribers from 7,523 subscribers (**445 new**). The revamped website registered an increase in new visitors to 63.9% from 57.5% and returning, at 36.1%. An online discussion platform (D-group) continues to facilitate dialogue and sharing among the Social Media Reporters to support Social Media Community of practice for RUFORUM in support of Higher Agricultural Education. Membership has been maintained at 43 members in 8 African Countries that are subscribed and active. See <https://dgroups.org/cta/ruforum/ruforum-smr/>. Keeping the social media platforms active and relevant whilst ensuring quality needs a dedicated personnel to ensure optimum online engagement and interaction.

## Website Visits as June, 2016:

Country	Sessions	% Sessions
1.  Kenya	1,313	16.56%
2.  Uganda	1,148	14.48%
3.  South Africa	674	8.50%
4.  United States	377	4.76%
5.  Tanzania	325	4.10%
6.  Ethiopia	318	4.01%
7.  United Kingdom	268	3.38%
8.  Nigeria	258	3.25%
9.  Sudan	249	3.14%
10.  Malawi	202	2.55%

[view full report](#)

## Exhibitions for Promoting and Communicating RUFORUM's Impact

Three exhibitions were held during this quarter. RUFORUM participated in the following exhibitions to showcase its contribution at country and continental level;

1. GCARD3 Conference under the theme: No One Left Behind; Agri-food Innovation and Research for a Sustainable World. 5-8 April, 2016 in Johannesburg, South Africa.
2. The 7<sup>th</sup> Africa Agriculture Science Week (AASW) and FARA General Assembly under the theme: Apply Science, Impact Livelihoods. 13-16 June 2016 in Kigali, Rwanda
3. University of Venda and Ugandan Universities learning and Sharing held at the Secretariat on 16<sup>th</sup> May, 2016

## Branding and Visibility

This is a continuous process by the Secretariat to ensure that all documents are branded. We recently launched the Biennial Logo and Email Signature as efforts to promote the Biennial Conferences also known as the African Higher Education Weeks scheduled for 17 – 21 October 2016. This also applies to all RUFORUM Online Platforms to ensure that they have the same look and feel.

## Promoting RUFORUM's level engagement in Higher Education, STISA and Agenda 2063

Six Press releases were made. Below are the links to the different engagements as RUFORUM lobbies for increased investment in Higher Education, Science and Technology.

1. [Development of human capital key limitation for achieving African vision](#)
2. [African Union Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology receives RUFORUM Recognition Award](#)
3. [Her Excellency Dr. Mrs. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, President of the Republic of Mauritius to address the RUFORUM Biennial Conference and African Higher Education Week in Cape Town South Africa as part of joint efforts to strengthen Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation in Africa](#)
4. [Her Excellency, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma receives a RUFORUM Award for Her exemplary leadership and Advancement of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation](#)
5. [African Journal of Rural Development publishes inaugural issues](#)
6. [Universities recognised as important stakeholders in enhancing the impact of Agricultural Research for Development – RUFORUM at the GCARD3 Conference](#)

## Reflections:

- Social Media and communications training within the network universities continues to ignite dissemination of ongoing activities and improves openness. The platform improves visibility of universities and the Network as a whole.
- Secretariat staff engagement and use of Social Media has greatly improved the quality of content being published online and the level of engagement. All staff are encouraged to use Social media while on official duty as part of dissemination and creating awareness on RUFORUM's engagements.
- The Back To Office (BTO) Template was revised to improve the quality of contacts in the Mailing list. The awareness of use of approved templates is a continuous process to ensure the Secretariat captures the correct details such as first name, second name, organisation and email.

## 3.2 Knowledge Management

- The quest to improve access to resources in the institutional repository has continued with the upgrade and reconfiguration of the design and technologies used for the repository in order to make it compatible with Google scholar. This is an on-going activity.

- RUFORUM's knowledge repository, the network's information hub continued to grow in volume. The collection now features close to 1,600 resources with an addition of 17 resources in the last quarter -mostly student theses and journal articles. As almost all the knowledge resources held at the Secretariat have been uploaded on the repository, the focus now is on mobilizing resources from current students and alumni whose publications are not yet captured. It is noteworthy that increasingly, students are publishing their research in open access journals making their knowledge more accessible. However, the requirement by some open access journals for payment of special fees to make published papers openly accessible still poses a challenge to open access to knowledge. Although publication costs are inbuilt into some RUFORUM projects, this provision should be mainstreamed into all future projects.
- Four issues of the RUFORUM news digest were published between April and June 2016 (<http://us2.campaign-archive1.com/home/?u=8da7957c2a43545cd0f6b3c57&id=1fcfb8a0b>). There is strong appreciation of the digest especially among member universities as it gives a snapshot of current news, events, funding opportunities and new publications both from within and outside the network. The publication is now also appreciated as a medium for information dissemination as evidenced by a number of requests from network members to profile their activities and publications.
- To support more technical and formal reports that showcase the impact of RUFORUM's work, the Secretariat has continued to use the story-telling to reach out to a wider group of stakeholders. During the reporting period, the Secretariat solicited for such impact stories from students, lecturers and research teams. These were repackaged and shared through the RUFORUM blog and the news digest which have an audience of over 8,000 members. Some of the stories shared during the period include:
  - [Hydric soils: A new dimension to stemming wetland degradation](#)
  - [The shea fruit: a green gift to mankind](#)
  - [How a farmer group moved from seed multiplication to value addition: The case of cassava composite porridge](#)
  - [Makerere University engages farmers to evaluate Striga-resistant rice varieties](#)
- Negotiations were held with Access Agriculture ([www.accessagriculture.org](http://www.accessagriculture.org)) on implementing a joint project for integrating video-mediated learning (VML) for farmers in university curricula. Access Agriculture has long experience in creating farmer-to-farmer learning videos and has funded a number of MSc and PhD research on the same. Riding on the success of this approach in increasing agricultural productivity through increased farmer adoption of new tools and techniques, Access Agriculture and RUFORUM will co-organise three workshops to create awareness of VML and support development of a curriculum for use by university faculties of agriculture. It is anticipated that through this project, students will be empowered with a new technique for effective knowledge dissemination and learning in farming communities. The first such workshop shall be convened at the RUFORUM Biennial Conference in October 2016 and will focus on validation of the graduate research findings as well as sharing of experiences on successful integration of VML in curricula.

- As part of the RUFORUM Secretariat's internal knowledge organisation to support operations, a database of all trip reports from 2009 to date was created and will in the next quarter be made available on the staff intranet. This database is an index of all the reports and captures basic information including travel destination, travelers, dates of travel, purpose of the trip and related core areas. When complete, a link to the actual report will also be available. The database can be searched and customized reports created for further analysis, for example, a report of all networking events attended by staff in a defined period of time. In future, the database will be expanded to help with tracking implementation of recommended actions arising from the trips.
- Cleaning and updating of data in the RUFORUM Information Management System (RIMS) begun in order to provide more accurate data for planning, monitoring and reporting on RUFORUM funded projects and students. Although the use of RIMS has now been mainstreamed into the grant application and reporting process there is still a challenge of ensuring that Principal Investigators continuously update the system.

#### **CORE AREA 4: Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (PMEL)**

During this quarter, the Secretariat recruited one (1) additional staff to support collation of M & E data on all on-going RUFORUM projects, establish progress against set baseline values/status and consolidate key lessons learnt from previous projects. As a result monitoring and evaluation data for all on-going RUFORUM projects was collated to establish progress against established baseline values/status using data from progress reports. The projects with data collated and updated included; EDULINK online platforms, IAGRI, CARNEGIE II, ADECEA, BMGF II, ICRISAT, PAEPARD III and World Bank. Project profiles were also prepared (Carnegie II, World Bank, INTRA-ACP-METEGA, INTRA-ACP-health, Online platforms and INTRA-ACP-CSAA). This process is now a quarterly requirement for the unit and all project data will be uploaded on the RUFORUM website after peer reviewing.

Similarly, documentation of key lessons from previous projects were collated and combined into a single document indicating the project name, key issues and key lessons learned. The lessons were extracted from projects; ERESA, BMGF I, AGRI ENTERPRISE, CARNEGIE I, CCA-Access, EDULINK 33, GO4IT, PAEPARD I & II, SCAIN, AgSHARE II, WATERCAP and RUFORUM MLE. A database for these lessons will be created and availed online as part of knowledge emerging from these endeavors. In addition, students' data were extracted from the RIMs and systematized. Data were re-organized into calls, themes and the target value chains. The major themes were crop improvement, resource-use efficiency, livestock improvement, agronomy and, climate change and environment. The process also involved arranging data according to Member University, Degree programmes and quality assurance through eliminating duplicate student entries. Preliminary analysis conducted using MS Excel indicated that the current student ratio is 65 % Males and 35 % Females with the majority student coming from Uganda (29.8%), followed by Kenya (24.2 %) and then Zimbabwe (7.8). With respect to degree program level; MPhil, MSc and PhD were 0.5, 64.8 and 14.7 % respectively. This process will continue as data are continuously being updated and uploaded.

During the Quarter an internal Mid-term review was conducted to; (a) review progress with respect to the agreed milestones in the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) support to RUFORUM, (b) determine the effect of BMGF intervention in RUFORUM's undertakings, (c) Facilitate learning by determining emerging lessons from each core area of implementation of BMGF II grant, and determining challenges experienced both from internal and external influence, and (c) determine any emerging issues that need to be considered during the remaining period. The Review finding is attached as Annex 1 of this report. The review was internally facilitated and involved both selected students, university representatives (both staff and students) and other key stakeholders including farmers' representatives to solicit for their feedback. Below are the highlights

1. The BMGF Grant has helped RUFORUM to transform to a continental organisation with credibility, voice and leverage in terms of scope and scale to engage and influence continental policy directions on Agricultural Science, Technology and Innovations in Africa. RUFORUM has now been mandated to be a lead implementer of the African Union's Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024 (STISA -2024), Priority Area One on "*Eradication of hunger and achieving food and nutrition security*".
2. RUFORUM is increasingly recognised at national level as an organisation with credibility and capacity to engage and influence higher education issues in member countries. RUFORUM directly engaged eight (8) African governments of Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia, to fund higher education in their countries under the World Bank's African Higher Education Centres of Excellence (ACEs) initiative. Indeed the World Bank is providing as direct support to the Universities US\$144 million to support establishment of 24 ACEs in Eastern and Southern Africa. This is in addition to over USD 70 million raised directly by RUFORUM through other initiatives to support the member universities.
3. The Community Action Research Programmes (CARPs) are emerging as important pathways for establishing innovation platforms that are supporting identification of national research priorities for selected commodities in the BMGF anchor countries in Eastern Africa (Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda). The CARPs are facilitating engagements of universities with multi-stakeholder actors to strengthen commodity value chains and enhance incomes of smallholder farmers. An example is the Cassava CARP in Uganda, which highlights the importance of farmer engagements that have redirected research priorities to address limiting factors in the cassava value chain of new outbreaks of Cassava Brown Streak Disease (CBSD) and the Cassava Mosaic Disease (CMD), unforeseen factors during programme design.
4. RUFORUM has innovatively utilised the grant to reach out beyond the initial BMGF focus countries (Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda) to the Foundation's anchor countries in West Africa (Ghana, Nigeria, and Mali) as part of measured expansion of the network to the region.
5. RUFORUM's footprint at national levels is increasingly being recognised from the work and testimonies of alumni and Principle Investigators (University Project leaders) for contribution to the National Agricultural Innovations Systems. For examples see the following links: (a) [\*Alumni Stories: I set up my farm to inspire others\*](#); (b) [\*Building the Capacity of the Next Generation of Scientists for Africa: RUFORUM's Hand into the Future\*](#) (c) [\*Producing Entrepreneurs to support Value Chains – A story of a RUFORUM student at Gulu University\*](#) and (d) [\*Meet RUFORUM\*](#)

[Graduate Research Student, Mzengereza Kumbukani, Meet RUFORUM Graduate Research Student, Mzengereza Kumbukani](#)

6. National governments and stakeholders now recognize RUFORUM's role in facilitating and promoting engagement of African universities in development process. Member Universities are increasingly engaging in national and sub-regional agricultural policy dialogues to influence investments, public expenditure and practice in the sector. For example Dr Margaret Mangheni of Makerere University is engaging policy makers including Parliamentarians to develop a new Nutrition policy for her country.

## **CORE AREA 5: Governance and Network Management**

### ***5.1 Strengthen and ensure functionality of the RUFORUM governance structures***

The Secretariat has ensured functionality of its governance structures. The 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of the RUFORUM Board Executive Committee was held on 5<sup>th</sup> April, 2016 in Kigali, Rwanda. The Board Executive meeting recommended admission of five new member universities and expansion to Mali and Egypt, bringing to 60 the total number of member universities as envisaged in the RUFORUM Strategic Business Plan 2015-2020. The Board Executive Committee meeting was preceded by the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the RUFORUM Board Finance and Administration Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2016 at the same location. Both meetings were hosted by the University of Rwanda.

During the period RUFORUM Secretariat received oversight support from its Technical Committee (TC) and International Advisory Committee (IAP) through online communications. Both the IAP and TC will hold their face to face meeting during the next period on 16 and 17<sup>th</sup> October, 2016 in Cape Town, South Africa.

### ***5.2 Strengthen RUFORUM Secretariat's management capacity***

Preliminary work has been undertaken to prepare for the upcoming External Audit for the financial year 2015/16. The external audit will be undertaken by Deloitte and Touche. The audit report will be presented to the Finance and Administration Board Committee scheduled for 19<sup>th</sup> August, 2016 in Lilongwe, Malawi, and subsequently to the Annual General Meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2016 in Cape Town, South Africa. The Secretariat continued to pursue the retirement of outstanding balances and accountabilities from Member Universities. Visits were made to Universities who have not paid their membership fees for three years to remind them of their obligation to pay annual membership fees. The Secretariat also continued to provide timely quarterly financial status updates (income and expenditure) to the Board Executive Committee. During the reporting period, the Secretariat prepared and submitted due reports to its partners, including the Carnegie Corporation, and BMGF. A draft RUFORUM Institutional Risk Management Strategy has been developed to support institutional management. In addition the Human Resources and Finance Management manuals have been revised and updated and will be presented to the Financial and Administration Committee in August 2016. A Draft Youth Protection Policy is also under review, and RUFORUM

Secretariat is working with its two member universities, Egerton and Gulu University to develop a similar policy.

Internally, the Secretariat Human Resource capacity has been strengthened through filling core positions to support effective programme delivery and provide network services in view of expanding and evolving mandate of the network. A new staff member for M&E has been recruited and three interns have been recruited to build their professional skills while supporting Secretariat activities.

### **5.3. Advocacy, Networking and Partnerships**

To harness expertise from policy, research and academic institutions within and outside Africa, RUFORUM formalized partnerships with strategic institutions to increase its reach and impact within the Continent. MoUs were signed with the Association of Agricultural Professionals in the Diaspora (AAPD) and The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) through its Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA). As part of implementation of the MoU with African Union Commission, the Chairperson of the Commission accepted to deliver a key note address during the 5<sup>th</sup> African Higher Education Week and Biennial Conference in October 2016. RUFORUM also provided a report on implementation of STISA 2024 Priority One which was subsequently featured in the African Union Human Resources, Science and Technology department (HRST) Report of 2015, as a contributor to Africa's Science and technology and innovation capacity development actor. A STISA 2024 priority Area One implementation progress reporting side event was co-organized with African Union Commission for Human Resource Science and Technology (HRST) department during the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) Science Week held in Kigali, Rwanda on 14 June 2016. This was done as part of the MOU between RUFORUM and the African Union Commission which mandated RUFORUM to develop a plan and lead the implementation of Priority Area One of the Africa's STISA 2024.

RUFORUM's influence in Africa's agriculture and higher education sector discussion and deliberation continues to grow. RUFORUM participated in various events and dialogue meetings including: meeting with the President of Mauritius to support RUFORUM's cause with initial engagement being the RUFORUM 5th Biennial Conference and African Higher Education Week. The President, Her Excellency Dr. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim committed to deliver a key note address during the Conference in Cape Town, South Africa. A dialogue for possible joint initiatives between the RUFORUM and the African Development Bank (AfDB) was held at the AfDB headquarters in Abidjan, Ivory Coast in April 2016. The two institutions discussed possible joint implementation of activities similar in their strategic plans. Negotiations are on-going and initial engagement will be through the RUFORUM Biennial Conference in South Africa. Courtesy visits were also made to International Development Research Centre and the Rockefeller Foundation Africa Offices in Nairobi, Kenya to understand their current thrusts and seek possible collaboration and support to the RUFORUM Network. RUFORUM also participated in the third Global Consortium for Agricultural Research for Development Conference (GCARD 3) held in South Africa. RUFORUM was instrumental in

developing a concept for the capacity development programme to train 1000 PhDs in agricultural sciences in a consortium of global actors including Global Confederation of Higher Education Associations for the Agricultural and Life Sciences (GCHERA), The European Alliance on Agricultural knowledge for Development (AGRINATURA), Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR), among others. The meeting was also an opportunity to engage the South African partners such as SANBio to support capacity building in Agriculture with emphasis on Masters and PhDs students training in the region. RUFORUM also participated in other continental and global agricultural and higher education fora upon invitation to deliver key note papers and exhibitions, including;

1. The FARA Science Week held from 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> June, 2016 in Kigali, Rwanda. The main purpose was to create a wider awareness and participation in the STISA framework and selected implementation mechanisms to relevant stakeholders within and outside the continent. During the occasion RUFORUM and the African Union Commission organized a side event on progress in implementation of STISA Priority Area 1. RUFORUM also exhibited its approach and achievements in capacity development in agriculture and organized side business meetings with its partners
2. The Global Food Security Consortium and the Leroy & Barbara Everson Seed and Biosafety Symposium at Iowa State University where RUFORUM presented a paper on capacity development for African agriculture.
3. The Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Network (FANRPAN) strategic planning meeting where RUFORUM's made input into the FANRPAN's Strategic plan.
4. AGRINATURA General Assembly in Lisbon, Portugal where RUFORUM delivered a keynote presentation. A renewed commitment between RUFORUM and AGRINATURA was made in this meeting especially in joint foresighting and resource mobilization for agricultural research and higher education in the two continents
5. The "REAL Sustainability" Conference or the Real Engagement in Agricultural Livelihoods Conference held in Washington DC. The objective of HLM3 is to showcase the experience of country institutions to use knowledge for effective service delivery and share these solutions with domestic and international peers. In particular, HLM3 brought together multiple stakeholders from multiple sectors and countries around the world to: a) Take stock of knowledge sharing experiences and learn how building institutional and operational capacities for knowledge sharing has an impact on delivery of public services; b) Showcase the success and potential of knowledge sharing in thematic areas that are critical to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and c) Deepen the political momentum around countries' institutional and operational efforts, and embed knowledge sharing in the SDG implementation by bringing together the members of the Global Partnership on Country-Led Knowledge Sharing.

RUFORUM also hosted a number of partnerships meetings at its Secretariat. These meetings were held to forge partnerships within and outside the Network as well discuss implementation of existing partnerships and projects. RUFORUM also held meetings with MasterCard Foundation to understand RUFORUM's approach to capacity building. The World Bank, North Carolina State University, Borlaug Higher Education for Agricultural Research and Development, South African High

Commission in Uganda, AGRINATURA, University of Ghent, and University of Greenwich, among other RUFORUM partners visited the RUFORUM Secretariat. The Vice Chancellor of the University of Venda, Prof. Peter Mbatia and the University Dean of Agriculture, Director Communications and Marketing and Director International Relations visited the Secretariat to learn about RUFORUM operations and link with Ugandan universities. The University of Venda joined RUFORUM in 2014 and the delegation among others sought to get a comprehensive appreciation of programmes that RUFORUM offers to member universities, and how University of Venda can benefit from the same and establish a concrete partnership with Makerere University and other Ugandan Universities (Gulu University, Uganda Technology and Management University and Uganda Martyrs University). During the period, the Vice Chancellor of Uganda Technology Management University (UTAMU), Professor Benon Basheka and two other staff also visited the Secretariat during the period.

### **Resource Mobilization for the RUFORUM Network**

Implementation of RUFORUM's approved Strategic Business Plan 2015-2020, requires the continual strengthening of RUFORUM's institutional position, deepening engagement with current donors, bringing on board new donors and diversifying sources of funding. During the period, RUFORUM Secretariat supported development of over 50 Proposals to various funding envelopes including to the Government of Kenya, Government of Malawi, the Government of Rwanda, Government of Uganda, World Bank African Higher Education Centres of Excellence, The MasterCard Foundation, EU Erasmus+ programme, Intra Africa Academic Mobility, EU Sustainable Value Chains and Nutrition Security Food & Business Applied Research Fund (ARF), NEPAD BioFISA II Programme, Energy and Environment Partnership Programme with Southern and East Africa Phase II, McKnight Foundation, DFID's Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education Innovation and Reform, IDRC, and Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research.

As a result of the various engagements, RUFORUM won 13 grants amounting to about US\$ 60 Million for universities and US\$27.1 for the Secretariat. The US\$27.1 for the Secretariat was granted by the MasterCard Foundation to train 220 students (110 undergraduate and 110 Masters) in Gulu University and Egerton University and deploy community action research as a mechanism for transformation of African higher education. RUFORUM also received US\$10,000 from International Food Policy Research Institute through its Agricultural Science and Technology Indicators programme to profile African University Capacity in agricultural training and research. The African Women in Agricultural Research for Development (AWARD), ICRISAT and Harvard University also contributed US\$18, 000, US\$16,500 and US\$70,000 towards the Biennial Conference to be held in South Africa in October 2016. The South African National Research Foundation also provided US\$150,000 towards organisation of the Biennial 2016 Conference.

## **Annex1: Bill and Melinda Gates Phase II Project 2014-2019**

### **Key Highlights of Mid-Term Review**

**1<sup>st</sup> -2<sup>nd</sup> June 2016, Kampala, Uganda**

#### **Introduction**

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), is an association of 60 African universities in 25 African countries, with mission to ‘strengthen the capacities of Universities to foster innovations responsive to the demands of smallholder farmers and value chains through the training of high quality researchers, the output of impact-oriented research, and the maintenance of collaborative working relations among researchers, farmers, market actors, national agricultural research and advocacy institutions, governments and industry. RUFORUM’s wide network harnesses Africa’s university based resources and makes use of its convening power to leverage economies of scope and scale to facilitate increased agricultural output and use to support economic growth in Africa.

As of 2016, RUFORUM principal promoter has been the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), meeting over 60% of the annual total organisation’s operating costs. The first Phase of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s Grant run up till 2014 and demonstrated the ability of RUFORUM through its universities to (a) produce competitive graduates suited to a differentiated labor market, (b) enhance relevant research targeting smallholders along several agricultural supply and value chains, and (c) create a dynamic regional platform that fosters collaboration, coordination and learning amongst member universities. The external review for the first phase endorsed a program structure built around the three principal objectives, namely teaching, research, and outreach to foster a greater synergy between research, relevance to the smallholder development context, regional collaborative degree programs—together with quality assurance—graduate research grants, and Community Action Research Programs (CARPs) to constitute RUFORUM’s core business, complemented by the work on M&E and ICT.

The Second Phase of the Core Grant (2014-2019), focusses on strengthening governance and management, to increase the achievements and credibility achieved in Phase I, and to leverage greater investment, advances in transformation of Agricultural Higher Education and maintenance of its essential networking function within the region and as a forum for higher agricultural education more broadly. The Graduate Research Grants (GRGs) in Phase II are focussing on sustainable value chains for crops and livestock, and Community Action Research Programmes (CARPs) responding to three selected commodities (wheat, livestock and cassava) and three anchor countries (Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda) of interest to the Foundation. Specifically the Phase II is pursuing the following results:

1. Improved services to the network of member universities, including support for ICT and M&E;
2. improved engagement of faculty and students with smallholder farmers to address their research needs along the full value chain;
3. Better course content and assurance of strengthened skills in essential MSc courses such as Research Methods and Agricultural Information and Communication Management;
4. Enhanced standards of post-graduate education, not only through the competitive nature of its grants but through the spread of its course materials; and,
5. Enhanced RUFORUM’s convening power through, among others, a broad biennial forum that accelerates publication of graduates’ research and brings donors and educators together to review progress

In pursuit of assessing organisational performance in respect of the above contractual obligations, RUFORUM conducted an internal institutional review with specific emphasis on assessing progress towards the target milestones for Phase II of the Bill Melinda Gates Foundation Grant and resultant institutional strengthening from the core fund. The review was internal in nature, but the process solicited for views from a wide constituency outside the Secretariat i.e. students, PIs and one Technical Committee Member and two M&E experts external to the Secretariat. Specifically, the review attempted to answer the following questions;

- a) What progress has been made against planned and actual results achieved?
- b) Are we doing what we committed to do? (**Contractual Obligations**)
- c) To what extent has the BMGF support helped RUFORUM to consolidate, expand and leverage partnerships for its operations?
- d) What are the emerging trends that need attention, but not originally considered?
- e) What lessons have been learned and/or emerging?
- f) What constraints have we experienced?

### Summary of the review findings

#### (a) Institutional review highlights

1. The Grant has transformed RUFORUM to a continental organisation with credibility, voice and leverage in terms of scope and scale to engage and influence continental policy directions on Agricultural Science, Technology and Innovations in Africa. RUFORUM is now mandated to implement the African Union’s Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024 (STISA -2024), Priority Area One on “*Eradication of hunger and achieving food and nutrition security*”.
2. RUFORUM is increasingly recognised at national level as an organisation with credibility and capacity to engage and influence higher education issues in member countries. RUFORUM directly engaged four (4) African governments of Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda and Uganda, to exploit funding opportunities for higher education under the World Bank’s ACE initiative.
3. RUFORUM provided direct support to 14 Member Universities in six (6) African countries (Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda and Rwanda) to mobilise over USD 84 Million to strengthen their training, research and outreach capacities under the World Banks’ Eastern and Southern Africa Higher Education Academic Centres of Excellence (ACE) initiative. This is in addition to over USD 70 million raised from other initiatives over the same period.
4. The Community Action Research Programmes (CARPs) are emerging as important pathways for establishing innovation platforms that are supporting identification of national research priorities for selected commodities in the Foundation’s anchor countries in Eastern Africa (Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda). The CARPs are facilitating engagements with multi-stakeholder actors to strengthen commodity value chains and enhance incomes for smallholder farmers. An example is the Cassava CARP in Uganda, which highlights the importance of farmer engagements that have redirected research priorities to address limiting factors in the cassava value chain of new outbreaks of Cassava Brown Streak Disease (CBSD) and the Cassava Mosaic Disease (CMD); unforeseen factors during programme design.
5. RUFORUM has innovatively utilised the grant to reach out beyond the initial focus countries (Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda) to the Foundation’s anchor countries in West Africa (Ghana, Nigeria, and Mali) as part of measured expansion of the network to the region.
6. RUFORUM’s footprint at national levels is increasingly becoming recognised from the work and testimonies of alumni and PIs and their contribution to the National Agricultural Innovations Systems. See the links: (a) [Alumni Stories: I set up my farm to inspire others](#); (b) [Building the Capacity of](#)

[the Next Generation of Scientists for Africa: RUFORUM's Hand into the Future](#) (c) [Producing Entrepreneurs to support Value Chains – A story of a RUFORUM student at Gulu University](#) and (d) [Meet RUFORUM Graduate Research Student, Mzengereza Kumbukani](#)

7. Internally, the Secretariat Human Resource capacity has been strengthened through filling core positions to support effective programme delivery and provide network services in view of expanding and evolving mandate of the network.
8. National governments and stakeholders now recognize RUFORUM's role in facilitating and promoting engagement of African universities in development process. Member Universities are increasingly engaging in national and sub-regional agricultural policy dialogues to influence investments, public expenditure and practice in the sector.

#### **(b) Programmatic review highlights**

##### **What are the excellent areas (the "highs")**

1. The performance for the period under review exceeded the target contractual obligations. The set targets on each of the milestones with a 2-year completion time horizon were satisfactorily achieved.
2. RUFORUM support is increasing the number of PhD and MSc graduates on the African continent through direct support to students and PIs to conduct relevant research that addresses the knowledge gap and needs of smallholder farmers and industry.
3. The application of the commodity value chain research that gives university research teams a well-rounded experience in terms of dealing with both scientific and social dimensions of research, the community engagement aspects of strengthening linkages between university research and smallholder farmers, and reaching out to different value chains, was regarded as unique and empowering.
4. Publishing the grant calls with succinct application guidelines and evaluation assessment criteria through different media ensured sufficient reach to deserving students and university research teams. The provision of feedback to all grant applicants, regardless of their funding status was considered as a best practice, further promoting RUFORUM's credibility as an accountable and transparent organisation.
5. RUFORUM alumni are passionate about the organisation due to additional support in skills enhancement, mentorship, students' networking, knowledge integration and innovation, and personal mastery that goes beyond the normal scholarships as provided by others. The emphasis on high quality students with both entrepreneurial and leadership skills to meet the industry demands and mobilizing research teams with structured mentorship process that cascades from the PI to young scholars who are students was regarded exceptional.
6. Increased enrollment of women in RUFORUM supported programmes at postgraduate level from 8% in 2004 to 42% in 2015 compared to average female enrollment rates in agricultural sciences South of Sahara of 13%. RUFORUM undertook deliberate measures to increase female participation (both PIs and Students). Principal Investigators are attracting female students to their projects. The Technical Committee also established affirmative actions to reserve a number of awards for females, as a means of closing the gender parity gap. Broadly, RUFORUM supported research provides opportunity for mainstreaming young and emerging scholars including female researchers.
7. Fostering collaboration among member universities and research teams in teaching (e.g. *the regional PhD Programme in Agricultural Research and Rural innovations*), academic mobility (*Graduate, Teaching Assistantship, academic exchange*), and joint resource mobilisation (*Erasmus plus, Intra-ACP, the World Bank's ACE*).
8. The ability of RUFORUM to manage a large portfolio programme with a wide geographical scope, evolving reach and diverse network service demands from members supported by a lean Secretariat human resource was commendable.
9. Timely disbursement of funds and increased communication between the Secretariat and grantees

through feedback and management meetings. This led to timely recruitment of students who are on “normal progress” for all the 55 GRGs and the 3 CARPs under consideration.

10. Efficient and judicious utilization and leveraging resources for RUFORUM activities to provide additional network services to members and facilitating policy engagements at national, regional and continental levels. The later increased visibility and continue to transform RUFORUM’s as a credible continental voice on Agricultural Higher Education (AHE).

#### **What areas need improvement (the “lows”)**

1. There is an expanded scope of deliverables but with limited tracking on how and why the trend (*e.g. more students being trained than was budgeted*). There are so many technologies reported as being generated but there is uncertainty on how they are improving the livelihoods of smallholder farmers  
**Remedial action:** *strengthen monitoring, evaluation and draw lessons to improve on programme quality and inform future designs.*
2. The reporting should go beyond the numbers and draw trends, assess and document impact.  
**Remedial action:** *Undertake qualitative and quantitative analysis of current results, conduct proper documentation of success stories and institutionalize these multiple approaches to measure impact of the different development pathways.*
3. Timely completion, graduation rates of students and close of grants is still a challenge  
**Remedial action:** *Need to engage member universities to strengthen mechanisms for graduate training and research to ensure timely completion and quality publications*
4. The number of female Principal Investigators is still low at 31% of all GRGs awarded.  
**Remedial action:** *Further strengthen existing mechanisms that enhance gender inclusion through affirmative actions*
5. The variance in costs of research both within the research thematic areas and across countries and yet the GRGs have a set cap with standardized costing.  
**Remedial action:** *RUFORUM innovatively exploited the disparities in student training costs in different countries to train more students, but there is an emerging need to conduct a second study on higher education unit cost in member universities to guide on equitable GRG budget allocation cap in the respective countries. However, if the recommendation of differentiating research and training costs per country are implemented, the grants’ administrative costs will variably increase.*
6. There is limited field monitoring visits of the projects and follow up relying on the PIs feedback on students and alumni, but this does not provide comprehensive feedback on student’s training and research progress.  
**Remedial action:** *Institute closer follow up and interactions with the students through existing structures such as the Technical Committee field support and Secretariat staff monitoring visits*
7. National Forums are one of the key results in the proposal but not clear on how they are influencing national agricultural research agenda and the thematic area research direction being funded under the GRGs and CARPs.  
**Remedial action:** *conduct a rapid appraisal on the performance of the already established national platforms do establish the underlying causes of their dismal performance and draw lessons to inform remedial course of action*

#### **What aspects should be done differently?**

1. Need for clear mechanism for students’ mobility as language is still a challenge, lack of proper orientation plan and inadequate social support systems.
2. There is need to recognize the efforts of others. Whereas RUFORUM is deploying a good strategy of capturing ideas from elsewhere, testing and putting them into action and scale for wider adoption, there is a need to recognize the initial efforts of others. RUFORUM worked with ASARECA to design the AICM course, and hence there was need to acknowledge ASARECA.
3. Need to specify the cost of the grant preferably by country. The grants cap budget over the last 10

years was USD 60,000 based on the average unit cost of training then, yet the actual cost of training vary from country to country and have changed over time.

4. Convene events to foster a face to face engagements with the students during the initial stages of their programme.
5. RUFORUM should organize orientation for scholars to know the Secretariat staff and other benefiting students from the region.
6. Strengthen monitoring of RUFORUM programme especially going beyond the numbers providing best practices emerging from implementation that can attract more supporters.
7. Consider awarding Grants to different countries as to meet the same needs but basing on the actual standards of living and support to longitudinal research.
8. Internal evaluations should be more frequent to facilitate learning and taking corrective actions
9. Invest in networking with national and continental partners of choice to build partnerships and collaboration for resource mobilization and joint programming. Intentionally, foster partnerships with CGIAR Centres to offer additional (supplementary) grants to offset shortage of research funds.
10. Improve the RUFORUM alumni networking to stimulate their interest and support to sustain the RUFORUM capacity building vision.
- 11.** Increase opportunities for students' engagement and explore opportunities for investing in arrangements that support internships/placements for further skills enhancement and entrepreneurial capacity development.
- 12.** Develop and expand programmes that support long-term (5-10 year time horizon) engagements with communities to ensure university training, research and outreach positively impacts and transforms rural agriculture.