



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Country Level Study on the Status of the Higher Agricultural Education Sector in Malawi

June, 2015

Background

Science, technology and innovation is critical for responding to the challenges of African agriculture and to elevate its performance and contribution towards economic development and poverty alleviation. Universities have a key role to play in producing the next generation of the African workforce, including researchers/scientists, extension and advisory service practitioners, input dealers and other development practitioners that are expected to generate, translate, extend and share knowledge with rural farmers to increase agricultural productivity, agribusiness and incomes. Trained human resources in a wide range of topics, aligned to the Science Agenda for African Agriculture, are central to stimulating science-based technology innovation. Research has shown the returns to investment in higher education are around 20%, and in Africa closer to 30% (Borland et al., 2000; Montenegro and Patrinos, 2013; USAID, 2014). These are higher returns to investments than in both secondary and primary education.

Although higher education enrolment and graduation rates have increased considerably gross enrolment ratios remain low, with only 6% of Africans enrolled in universities (Bloom *et al.*, 2006) compared to 40% in Latin America and 94% in North America¹. Moreover, the increase has come at the expense of quality with expenditure per student falling significantly. There is thus an urgent need to invest in higher education and for higher education to transform itself to produce the quality of graduates and knowledge needed to achieve the African Unions Agenda 2063.

The current expansion in both public and private higher education system in Africa without strategic reform is not likely to respond to the challenges the agriculture sector is facing and may rather exacerbate current institutional challenges. The low number of qualified faculty members (PhD level staff in most universities range between 20-40% of academic staffing) are likely to be stretched further to meet the teaching and other demands of the expanding education systems. Only a small proportion of the about 1500 public and private universities offer graduate

¹ See <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.TER.ENRR/countries>



programs (Hayward and Ncayiyana, 2014). Key reported challenges for universities include: a) increased student enrolments that are not balanced with requisite staff increases, nor infrastructure and facilities, nor funding; b) inadequate opportunities to undertake research and for training at MSc and PhD level; c) low funding and investments in higher education institutions; and d) weak monitoring and evaluation frameworks that do not adequately link performance of universities to funding frameworks.

Rationale and objectives

African higher education needs to be transformed so that it produces the graduates and research that will increase the use of science, technology and innovation for economic growth and ensure an Africa that is food secure. Investments must be targeted to ensure the development of strong local post-graduate programmes and to transform universities so that they use modern technologies applied to local situations to provide the human resources that Africa needs for tomorrow. **The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) invites suitably qualified individuals** to undertake an assessment of higher education systems, with specific emphasis on the agricultural sector with view of identifying current gaps to support science and technology in national agricultural innovation systems. At least four countries will be assessed including Malawi. The assessment should provide information on the current gaps and strengths at selected African universities. These assessments will provide the base material for input into policy dialogues and finally towards decisions at the Heads of States meeting in January 2016.

The overall objective of the assignment is to assess the current status of the higher education sector in Malawi to identify current challenges and gaps and develop specific recommendations towards enhancing their performance and their contribution to the science, technology and innovation at national level.

A. Roles/ activities of the Consultant

The role of the consultant will be to undertake the following:

1. Internalize higher education documents, including overall objectives and expected results from the perspective of RUFORUM in undertaking the study;
2. Review and document current status of the higher education sector in the selected country, where relevant making use of lessons, if any, from initiatives to improve higher education at country level;
3. Develop a methodology and tools for implementing the assignment;
4. Analyse the wider higher education system but with special attention on the higher agricultural education sector;



5. Consult with key higher education sector stakeholders at national level, including the national higher education commissions, the ministry of education, faculty and staff (of Faculties/Colleges of agriculture), university management, and key stakeholders and the national agricultural research system and others to identify their perceptions of universities in the region;
6. Review literature on higher education in the country including, national education policies and practices and others that enhance or impede its application higher education;
7. Review financing of higher education over the last decade to provide a trend
8. Assess current teaching and learning approaches being used in the Faculties/colleges of agriculture in the targeted Universities with respect to their effectiveness/relevance, strengths and limitations;
9. Identify and describe best practices that may be in existence at higher education institutions and how such practices could be adopted and/or scaled up in African universities. Describe the methods and tools that have been successfully applied;
10. Make own arrangements for logistics including accommodation, local transport, stationery, computer services and any other as detailed in the contract;
11. Ensure confidentiality / proprietary issues; and,
12. Recommend detailed options for the strengthening higher education systems in the selected country;
13. Share results of the desk review in the form of draft report with the RUFORUM Secretariat and incorporate feedback into the final report;
14. Present final results of the desk review at a synthesis workshop involving a synthesis team organised by RUFORUM to finalise a synthesis report and participate actively in the strategy formulation.

B. The role of RUFORUM will be to;

15. Provide background and overall direction to the study
16. Facilitate the tasks and activities of the consultant.

C. Deliverables

The following deliverables are expected from the Consultant:

1. A draft report that will include the following:
 - a. A review of the current statistics (including investment) available on Higher Education in the country with a focus on those relating to Science, Technology and Innovation;



- b. A comprehensive review of the literature to establish issues, gaps and challenges for Higher Education, particularly in the various science related faculties;
 - c. A review of the literature on what universities need to do in order to meet the articulated demand for high quality skills and research that is needed to achieve a food secure and prosperous Africa;
 - d. Identification of the key issues, challenges related to the below topics and recommendations for approach and process for their establishment:
 - i. An 'African university ranking system' that recognizes the specific need for African agriculture and would encourage universities to address those needs;
 - ii. A continental 'accreditation standards and credit transfer system' to allow students and staff to switch between universities and widen their exposure;
 - iii. An 'academic mobility scheme' and strengthen centers of excellence to enhance mobility, regional level training and enhance economies of scope and scale.
 - e. Detailed recommendations for strengthening higher education at national level and the possibly role of the RUFORUM National Forums;
2. A final report incorporating suggestions from RUFORUM.

D. Qualifications

Applicants will be evaluated against the following prequalification criteria:

- a. Good references for reliability, dedication and an ability to work unsupervised;
- b. Familiarity with the universities in Africa;
- c. Demonstrated knowledge of African universities systems and setting;
- d. Competent in participatory approaches to enable engagement at different levels (stakeholders- research, universities, Non-governmental Organisation; Private Sector);
- e. Ability to work in teams;
- f. Facilitation, communication and writing skills; and,

E. Duration of the task

The task is expected to take a total of approximately 20 working days per country over a period of one month. The country studies should be completed and reports submitted by end of July, 2015.



REPORTING

It is the responsibility of consultant to ensure timely and quality reporting for each phase and deliverable in the assignment. All reports will be submitted to the RUFORUM Contract Manager on dates as may be agreed during the inception and stipulated in the contract.

Interested individuals or teams of consultants should submit (be email) their Proposals by **close of business 30 June, 2015** to the address below.

The Executive Secretary

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