



Biennial Plenary Session 8

Venue: Kenyatta International Conventional Centre (KICC)
Contact person: Mr. David Ekepu
Email: d.ekepu@ruforum.org

Session Name: Increasing the pool of women scientists in Africa

Date: Thursday; 25 October, 2018
Time: 11:00-13:00
Room: Tsavo C
Venue: KICC, Nairobi, Kenya

Background/ Introduction

According to the United Nations Women reports, Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and Agenda 2063 represent a commitment of African continent to achieve social, economic and environmental justice for a sustainable world. Advancement of gender equality, and equitable science, technology and innovation (STI) are explicit objectives under several of the SDGs, but they also underpin all of them. Economics literature further highlights Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) as key masterpiece to growth and transformation of the continent. Among the potential determinants of the projected growth are factors like human capital formation, labor, and a composite including managerial skills and organizational culture. In Africa this potential has been hindered by limited number of individuals engaged in scientific activity per capita on the continent.

The need to build a critical mass of experts in STI and providing equal access for both men and women cannot be overemphasized. However, evidence shows that the number of women who pursue Science, Technology and Innovations programmes in higher education institutions are significantly fewer than men. It is further documented that, the ability to retain the few women who embark on training in science disciplines is hindered by discrimination and suppressed motivation. Yet women are a cornerstone to African economic development and constitute half of the world's population. They make up about 70% of the agricultural labor force and 90% of all food is produced by women. Women are therefore a key driver of Africa's growth and development. Their significant role continues to be recognized. For instance, The World Bank Gender Action Plan (2006) in conjunction with the One Campaign, the World Bank (2014) called investments in women and gender equality "smart economics" and key in Empowerment and Development towards Africa's Agenda 2063.





Despite such interventions, most African women are predominantly employed in the informal sector or they occupy low-skill jobs with wages lowest among all regions of the world. This weak status among women in Africa is partly due to illiteracy. Women have less college and graduate degrees than men; moreover, Primary education of females is still at a strikingly low rate of 67 % despite international endeavors such as the second Millennium Development Goals to achieve universal primary education by the year 2015 (men 72.6%). Illiteracy remains a major challenge with only 51 per cent of all women above the age of 15 being able to read and write (compared to 67.1 percent for men). The gender gap persists, and to a greater extent particularly in STI (science, technology and innovations). Science has the ability to provide women with significant leadership opportunities as well as to improve their daily lives. According to some studies, engaging women in sciences or any field historically dominated by men, leads to an increase in the general knowledge in that field.

There is therefore an urgent need for African governments and other stakeholders to focus on bridging the gender gap in science by increasing the female participation to support of Agenda 2063 vision of quality education and gender equality.

Session Aim:

To provide a platform for stakeholders to establish progress made, effective ways of building women's capacity in science and technology and identify key areas of improvement, collaboration for escalating involvement of African women in science for enhanced employment opportunity and inclusive growth. And specifically to explore ways of increasing the pool of women scientists in Africa

Specifically, the session will,

- Assess progress made in increasing women participation in STI by identifying challenges, priorities and opportunities that will support the Agenda 2063
- Identify key areas for capacity building and strategies to increase African women participation in Science in support of Agenda 2063
- Identify strategies for increasing the pool of women scientists in Africa
- Advocate for the inclusion of critical actors in the region in order to support and strengthen the African women involvement in Science, Technology and Innovation
- Come up with key recommendations and actions for training women in STI in order to enhance their employment opportunities and career paths for inclusive growth
- Identify areas of synergies/collaboration for stakeholder's implementation of the strategies identified.

Session contributions:

Moderator: Dr. Peggy Oti-Boateng, ANSTI, UNESCO





- Very briefly introduce the topic and the presenters (5 Minutes)
- Ensure that speakers keep to their allocated time (10 Minutes, spread over the session)
- Facilitate audience participation during the discussion session and ensure short questions for presenters rather than long statements (40 Minutes)
- Provide an opportunity for all presenters to participate in answering questions
- Direct questions to a particular presenter rather than allowing each one to answer each question, unless a question has been addressed to a specific presenter
- Present a brief summary of salient points and needed actions at the end of the discussion and close the session

Lead Speaker:

Prof. Umezuruike Linus Opara, Stellenbosch University, South Africa - A reflection on SDGs and Agenda 2063 in support of women inclusion in the development agenda

- Provide an overview of key issues in building high level capacity to support SDGs and Agenda 2063
- Tease out some key questions that will support the discussions by Panelists

Panelists and Suggested topics

1. **Mrs. Martha Rose Lunyolo Muhwezi**, Forum for African Women Education (FAWE), Kenya
Suggested topic of discussion: Women engagement, leadership and policy coherence in line with Agenda 2063
2. **Prof. Christine Dranzoa**, Vice Chancellor, Muni University, Uganda
Suggested topic of discussion: Women in Leadership; challenges, opportunities and looking ahead. How do we increase the numbers?
3. **Professor Alice Pell**, Cornell University, USA
Suggested topic of discussion: Creating supportive policies in promoting women's education – what has worked and not worked well and what needs to be done?
4. **Dr. Wanjiru Kamau-Rutenberg**, Executive Director, AWARD
Suggested topic of discussion: Best practices and key emerging issues in engaging women in Science, Technology and Innovations to support Agenda 2063
5. **Dr. Tade Akin Aina**, Executive Director, PASGR
Suggested topic for discussion: Women and governance: facilitating achievement of excellence and Institutional Transformation

Discussions: *(Q&A with the audience)*

Rapporteurs: [Dr Sally Chikuta & Dr Emmanuel Afutu](#)





Mode of session contributions:

- You will be seated at the front of the room. A power point presentation is not preferred
- You will discuss and provide your perspectives as regards to the theme of the session (15 minutes)
- Keep your answers to the questions from the audience short to the point

Proposed session line up

Time	Activity
11:00-11:05	Moderator introduces session
11:05-11:15	Prof. Umezuruike Linus Opara, Stellenbosch University, South Africa (<i>Lead speaker gives an overview of the Session</i>) <i>Question and Answers</i>
11:15-11:25	Mrs. Martha Rose Lunyolo Muhwezi, Forum for African Women Education (FAWE), Kenya <i>Question and Answers</i>
11:25- 11:35	Prof. Christine Dranzoa, Vice Chancellor, Muni University, Uganda <i>Question and Answers</i>
11:35-11:45	Professor Alice Pell, Cornell University, USA <i>Question and Answers</i>
11:45-11:55	Dr. Wanjiru Kamau-Rutenberg, Executive Director, AWARD <i>Question and Answers</i>
11:55-12:05	Dr. Tade Akin Aina, Executive Director, PASGR <i>Question and Answers</i>
12:05-12:45	General Discussions
12:45-12:50	Closing Remarks from the Panelists
12:50-12:55	Closing Remarks from the Lead Speaker
12:55-13:00	Moderator summarises the plenary and closes the Session.





Expected take away messages:

- Strategic action plan with time frame to increase the pool of women scientists that will support Agenda 2063 implementation for sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development of Africa.
- Key action points that Universities need to undertake to strengthen inclusivity in University Training programmes and to increase access to university education.

CO-ORGANISERS:

