Summary
This brief highlights RUFORUM engagements, forthcoming events and work in progress from member Universities.

We are pleased to release our first volume with engagements from the previous Annual General Meeting held 12-16 December 2022 in Harare, Zimbabwe, and stories from alumni supported by our development partners.

About RUFORUM
The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), is a consortium of 163 African universities operating 40 countries of the continent. RUFORUM is coordinated by a Secretariat hosted by the Government of Uganda, at Makerere University, with Regional Nodes in Benin and Malawi.

UPCOMING EVENTS

AGM 2023
The RUFORUM Network will hold the 19th RUFORUM Annual General Meeting (AGM) for 2023 in Cameroon

About the RUFORUM AGM
The Annual General Meeting is the supreme decision making organ of the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) that guides the overall orientation of our mission and programmes.

The RUFORUM Network will hold the 19th RUFORUM Annual General Meeting (AGM) for 2023 in Yaoundé, Cameroon. The meeting will be hosted by the Government of Cameroon and RUFORUM Member Universities. The AGM will draw participants from across the 163 RUFORUM Member Universities, as well as partners across the world.
T he Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) extends appreciation to the RUFORUM Board and Vice Chancellors, RUFORUM Partners, University Management, Students and all our stakeholders in the Higher Agricultural and Tertiary Education sector from the 40 RUFORUM Member Countries across Africa. We are also grateful to all other organizations, including our National Governments, for their efforts in managing the COVID-19 pandemic and working towards a quick return to normalcy and recovery in growth of Africa’s economy. Because of your collective efforts, universities and other higher education sectors have been able to resume full operations, for which we congratulate all management, staff, and students.

In a special way, on behalf of the RUFORUM Network, I would like to thank the Government of Zimbabwe and the RUFORUM Member Universities in Zimbabwe for hosting the 18th RUFORUM Annual General Meeting and Conference (AGM) of 2022 that was held in Harare, Zimbabwe. The theme of the AGM was, “Strengthening Africa’s agri-food systems in the post COVID-19 era – opportunities and challenges.” The conference attracted over 1000 participants including higher education and agriculture leaders, researchers, policy makers, development partners, private sector actors, students and farmers, among others. The mutually reinforcing meetings included: (a) A Vice Chancellors Forum for lesson sharing across member universities; (b) Presented 129 scientific papers; (c) Recognized leading personalities in higher education in Africa; (d) Recognized young innovators and; (e) Showcased exhibitions from African Universities and their partners. Additionally, a ministerial meeting on higher education that generated policy recommendations for growing Africa’s higher education sector was held. The AGM business meeting was held, and it heralded a change in leadership at the Secretariat, with Professor Adipala Ekwamu, RUFORUM’s founding Executive Secretary, passing the baton to the new Executive Secretary. The RUFORUM Board, and indeed the entire network and higher education community in Africa and globally, thank Professor Adipala Ekwamu, for his outstanding contribution to Human Capital Development in Africa, promoting University-Community engagement, University-Policy-Industry linkages, as well as mobilising funding for strengthening Higher Education, Agriculture, Science, Technology and Innovation Development in Africa.

As we move forward in 2023, RUFORUM would like to bring to your attention a key principle of solidarity, that has kept our network together in the past and is critical for our collective future. We have found solutions to our problems by working together, such as the need to build each other’s human resources. Through the Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) Program, championed by the Vice Chancellors, we are building capacity for Africa by Africa. To date, 252 GTAs (65 female, 187 male) from 55 sending universities have been placed in 44 host universities across the RUFORUM network. These GTAs are from 55 member universities of the RUFORUM network. I would like to congratulate the Vice Chancellors of participating Universities, as well as their management and staﬀ, on taking this courageous “leap of solidarity.” Let us continue to support one another in research, teaching and learning as well as development delivery.

We are pleased to announce that the Government of Cameroon together with the RUFORUM Member universities in the country will host the 19th RUFORUM Annual General Meeting in Yaoundé. The conference will take place in the last quarter of 2023, and more details will be communicated soon. Several pre-conference events will be held virtually, allowing us to engage with stakeholders at different levels. Kindly visit the RUFORUM and conference website for updates.

The five-year RUFORUM Operation Plan is currently under development and will be launched later this year. RUFORUM envisions vibrant, transformative universities catalysing sustainable, inclusive agricultural development to feed and create prosperity for Africa. To achieve this vision, we need a collective effort to educate people in agriculture and intensify gender inclusion. The secretariat will seek your wisdom and guidance to help us develop a viable and impactful operation plan. Finally, This newsletter contains highlights of happenings in our network that you all have made and continue to make grow. Thank you and God bless you all.

**VOICES OF IMPACT - “Touching lives, Creating Opportunities”**

**Ms. Ntsiapane Alina, PhD Student, University of Free State, South Africa**

The Sheep wool value chain project supported by RUFORUM and Mastercard Foundation at the University of Free State, has been a lifetime experience for me. When I joined the project in 2020, I did not have experience in wool and its value-addition. Through the project, I gained skills that I now use to train unemployed women and farmers in the community on wool value-addition. Thus, the project has opened doors for me including connecting with several mentors. Further, because of the entrepreneurship orientation, I have been able to start a small business that helps to build capacity of smallholder wool farmers to be more competitive and profitable in their production. I plan to grow this business moving forward.
It is my singular honor and privilege to officiate at this opening ceremony of the 18th Annual General Meeting of the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM). The theme of your meeting "Strengthening African agrifood systems in the post COVID-19 era - opportunities and challenges" is appropriate, given the importance of strengthening agricultural food systems on our continent and the critical role of the agricultural sector in the industrialization of Africa.

Agriculture must be made an attractive and lucrative sector for our young people to undertake. Increasing production, productivity and profitability, while ensuring added value to our raw products is necessary. It is also essential to establish strong marketing strategies and market linkages for products in the agricultural value chain. Universities have a responsibility to develop greater capacities in agricultural engineering so that our young talents can develop affordable tools and applications for use by small-scale farmers. Likewise, our industries and communities are encouraged to access innovation hubs and industrial parks to intensify the development of a culture of innovation. Scientific research must be harnessed and used as a tool for the transformation of lives, livelihoods, incomes and ultimately our African economies. This would undoubtedly contribute to the realisation of the vision of the African Union which is that of "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force on the international arena".

Undeniably, a well-configured higher education sector is a powerful catalyst for the transformation of our economies, towards knowledge-driven economic growth in our African continent. An African continent harnessing its potential, knowledge, skills and technologies must transform our respective economies and lift many people out of poverty into prosperity.

These are, among other things, the aspirations of this forum, of which I invite all of you here present to make concerted efforts to attract more partners, entrepreneurs and innovators for coordinated cross-sector and cross-border research and projects. In this regard, partnership with scholars, researchers and other diaspora stakeholders should also be leveraged. The links between agriculture and nutrition must also be strengthened to improve the health and well-being of our African people. As the current generation of African leaders, we are committed to putting in place the required education, agricultural ecosystems, infrastructure and responsive policies to drive the food systems transformation agenda underway on our continent.

I congratulate the winners of this conference's awards, including innovative farmers, graduate students and outstanding scientists. Well done to you all.

Finally, allow me to express my gratitude to the organizers and stakeholders for successfully hosting the 18th Annual General Meeting of RUFORUM. This 2022 edition should mark the turning point towards an African continent full of solutions and able to feed itself, based on a dynamic higher education sector relevant to the needs of humanity.

With these remarks, it is now my singular honour and privilege to declare the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture Annual General Meeting officially opened and the Journey Book launched. I wish you all fruitful deliberations. God bless you all. God bless Africa. I thank you...
Correct education, causes development. Examining the design of an education system is therefore a critical step, before using education as a development instrument.

Education must be linked to the provision of solutions to the human needs. These needs include food, water, shelter, connection and sleep among others. Causing the capability of satisfying human needs must be at the center of the education system in post independent Africa. The colonial education system of Africa does not correspond to its needs. Curricula must respond to the human needs. Consequently, higher education must develop knowledge and skills that effectively deliver tangible goods and services. There must be a deliberate linkage of the human needs, education and industry. This industry should be driven by higher education.

Honorable guests, dear participants, ladies and gentlemen, progress has undoubtedly been made since the Ministerial Round Table of the 15th Annual General Assembly of RUFORUM in Cape Coast (Ghana) with a view to transforming our education system. Allow me to give practical examples from Zimbabwe, where the transformation of the education system from Education 3.0 to Education 5.0 based on our ancestral values has brought about an abundance of innovation and industrialization in our agricultural universities.

We have built and operationalised agro-innovation parks at our higher education institutions. We are using science, technology, and innovation (STI) on our God given fruits to add value to them, consequently empowering local communities from the sale of the abundant fruits which are part of our heritage. Using STI, we are improving the quality of our national herd through the artificial insemination programme at Chinhoyi University of Technology (CUT) where we now have capacity to produce more than seven million straws of bull semen per annum with potential annual revenue of USD 140 million. We have also set up a dairy programme at CUT, that has a state-of-the-art 24-point herringbone milking system. We are also making medicinal feeds and have set up cattle fattening pens, that can keep up to 600 cattle.

In line with Agenda 2063 of the African Union Commission, of achieving inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development, it is high time that we come together as African leaders to solve the problems that are currently facing us. We salute RUFORUM for creating this window that brings high level delegates to network and strengthen our linkages. Our linkages can be strengthened if we all have a common vision of providing the required sound higher education to the nation and beyond. This is a great event and we look forward to higher-level discussion with positive interactions.

I thank you
The Scientific conference was held during the 18th RUFORUM Annual General Meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe from 12th to 14th December 2022. It aimed to bring together leading academicians, scientists, researchers, and research scholars especially from the continent to exchange and share their experiences and research results on all aspects of agriculture and agricultural-related sciences, and emerging development concerns with a focus on climate-smart innovations. It was also an opportunity for graduate students to share their findings. Eight thematic areas were covered, including: i) Enhancing agricultural productivity and earnings for farming communities, ii) Strengthening the performance of livestock production systems, iii) Digital innovations in agriculture and education, iv) Environmental and natural resources management, v) Climate smart innovations, vi) Enhancing post-harvest management, value addition and nutrition, vii) Entrepreneurship and youth employability, and viii) Upscaling impact of university and community connectedness. A total of 172 oral presentations were made during the conference and 105 posters presented.

The Forum for African Women Vice Chancellors (FAWoVC) was officially opened on 12 December 2022 in Harare, Zimbabwe by Honorable Professor Dr. Amon Murwira, the Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science & Technology Development, Republic of Zimbabwe, under the theme “Enhancing Gender Equality and Inclusiveness for Sustainable Higher Education.” The Forum brings together women in leadership from universities across the African continent. The key agenda of the Forum is to promote inclusiveness in higher education on the continent. The Forum further organises mentorship sessions to explore the impact of women networks in supporting early career women scientists and young women leaders in higher education and research institutions.
The 18th Annual General Meeting, 12-16 December 2022 in Harare, Zimbabwe
Eighteen years ago, African universities entrusted you to grow and lead their new organisation, the RUFORUM. They selected one of their own to champion their cause as an advocate, resource mobiliser, academician and leader to grow their organisation to a higher level. Looking back, we can say that that mission has been fulfilled over and beyond the wildest dreams of that time. Today, RUFORUM is found in 40 of the 54 Africa countries and from 10 members Universities in five countries at its inception to 163 member universities. From no PhD program to several PhD programs, including post-doctoral fellowships; from one major partner to multiples of partners across the world. Under your leadership, RUFORUM became the voice of higher education in Africa. Time and space would fail us to mention all the milestones delivered. Please accept our gratitude to you and the people that you have led over the years; as well as the entire RUFORUM Network and its leadership, that together have turned the previously small organisation into a vehicle for championing human capital development and growth of the agricultural sector to secure the prosperity of the Africa. The RUFORUM Secretariat wishes you success in all your endeavours.

Professor Adipala,
Thank you for believing in me. Thank you for guiding me. Thank you for mentoring me. Thank you for your great and admirable leadership in RUFORUM and beyond. The RUFORUM network is greatful for your service to Africa and the World at large especially for championing the cause of higher and tertiary education in Africa, your unwavering support and endeavours in championing diversity and inclusion as well as impact-delivery by African universities is highly appreciated. The good work you have done over the years has laid a solid foundation that the Network will build-on for years to come.

Accept our best wishes and success in your future endeavors”

PROFESSOR THERESIA NKO-O-AKENJI
RUFORUM BOARD CHAIR AND VICE CHANCELLOR
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BAMENDA, CAMEROON
Dear Professor Adipala,

On behalf of the Knowledge Hub Unit, I would like to express our sincere appreciation for your outstanding contribution to Africa and the world through your dedicated leadership of RUFORUM. Your unique combination of character and traits has made you a gifted leader, and we are grateful for the high standards you uphold and your excellent mentorship. As a technology team, we recognise and appreciate your understanding of our role. Your insightful leadership has been invaluable to us, and we have gained a lot from your direction, especially in terms of work attitude and commitment to the right cause. It is difficult to describe your exceptional qualities adequately, as you possess such a remarkable blend of traits, including a strong memory, quick thinking, hardworking nature, and down-to-earth personality. You truly are one of a kind. We would like to extend our deepest gratitude for being a mentor to us, showing us the right path, and always checking on us. Your simplicity and dedication to Africa have inspired us, and we were moved by the outpouring of love we witnessed in Harare during your farewell. May the Almighty God continue to bless you and your family with good health and happiness.

KNOWLEDGE HUB TEAM

“Do this for the RUFORUM Network.” This was Professor Adipala’s task assignment to me in July 2016 when he appointed me as the Regional Coordinator for the Transforming African Agricultural Universities to Meaningfully Contribute to Africa’s Growth and Development (TAGDev) programme. It has been seven years of learning new ways of doing things, re-orienting RUFORUM programming, and gradually developing the transformative education approach for the RUFORUM Network.

During this period, Professor Adipala, you have been supportive, inspirational, and willing to learn from the TAGDev team in the Secretariat and across the implementing universities. From two pilot universities, with your insights, we have been able to test different areas of the transformative education approach. Openness, humility, willingness to take risks, and confidence in the thoughts and judgment of everyone, young and senior, are the virtues we have gained in working with you.

“It is not over until it is done,” is yet another statement that lives in our minds about you. Indeed the task of transforming higher education in Africa is not yet done. In your book the Unfinished Journey, you reiterated this message. We continue to build our dreams on the Unfinished Journey. We will walk the next mile by continuing to the next generation of change-makers for Africa. Thank you!

PUBLICATION ASSISTANT
AFRICAN JOURNAL OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Dear Professor Adipala,

Thank you for allowing me to serve as a publications assistant in the African Journal of Rural Development at the RUFORUM Secretariat. I can not thank you enough for believing in me and mentoring me to learn several skills. I am so happy to have been led forward by a person like you, and it was a privilege to work under your leadership which has helped to elevate my work experience and created opportunities for me to learn more. I will carry this with me wherever I go.

May God bless you with good health and blessings.

PROGRAM MANAGER
TRAINING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
My name is Sonnie Rose Kesselly, a 2023 PhD graduate from the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, School of Food Technology, Nutrition and Bio-Engineering, Makerere University, Uganda. I am a Liberian and a lecturer at the University of Liberia, College of Agriculture and Forestry. I began my PhD Journey in February of 2020 as a RUFORUM Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) at Makerere University. When I reported for school in February 2020, the University got closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic and this closure lasted for about 10 months. During these 10 months, I was strongly encouraged and supported by my principal supervisor Professor Yusuf B. Byaruhanga to develop my research proposal. I presented the proposal on December 5, 2020 and got approval to begin the research, again the entire country went into locked down which lasted for about 7 months. During the locked down, I requested for permission from my school to conduct work while observing the health protocol outlined by the Ministry of Health of Uganda. It was a challenging period but I endeavored to conduct work despite the circumstances. There were days I had to sleep in the bakery, drying cassava and cowpea. My blood levels dropped from staying long hours around the hot air oven dryer and almost lost two of my fingers to a flour mixer; but that did not stop me from working. If a task was assigned to me to do for one month, I pushed myself to finish it within two weeks. I was collecting data, analysing, discussing the results all at the same time; and made sure to publish a paper immediately I completed a study objective. In six months, I published two papers and was able to defend my Thesis in January this year which qualified me for graduation. I worked myself to the maximum and was effectively and efficiently supervised by my supervisors Professor Yusuf B. Byaruhanga and Dr. Robert Mugabi.

Thank you to RUFORUM for the opportunity given to me to achieve this great milestone.
My journey as a RUFORUM scholar began in August of 2019 at the Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (BUAN). My academic journey was divided into two phases: Year 1 (coursework) and Year 2: Research. In Year 1, I took and successfully passed 16 courses and in Year 2, I defended my proposal and began my research. My research project was titled “The influence of Nitrogen and Phosphorus Nutrition on Growth and Yield Components of Safflower (Carthamus tinctorius)”. The main purpose of this research was to establish the suitable application rates of nitrogen and phosphorus for the successful growth of safflower in Botswana since it is a new crop. The introduction of this crop was and still is a success because many Batswana are now interested in growing it. This crop offers a wide range of benefits which include extraction of oil considered as good as olive oil from seeds, petals which can be used to treat fertility problems, and leaves which can be used as vegetables, hence the large attraction.

My research was divided into two planting seasons: October 2020 and April 2021. My research year was filled with setbacks due to the COVID-19 pandemic that saw the whole world stand still. The lockdowns that were imposed in Botswana made it difficult to travel to and from the research site hence delaying the research progress. Despite the setbacks, I managed to complete my research even though it was a year after the intended completion date. I graduated in November 2022 with a MSc in Crop Science (Horticulture). I have never encountered any problem with the RUFORUM Secretariat, the staff always checked on my progress and they delivered on what they said would be the benefits of the scholarship, that is, the stipend and book allowances and also the laptop to help my journey be as enjoyable as possible.

The success of my MSc as a RUFORUM scholar would have not been possible without the mentorship of my supervisors, Professor Vallantino Erone Emongor, and Dr S. Moroke. They both made the research journey as smooth as possible despite being overwhelmed by the whole process at times. I am everlastinglly grateful for their support. I would also like to appreciate the RUFORUM Network for organizing seminars that provided many business lessons and the R-Programming Language Training. I will forever be indebted to RUFORUM for the opportunity it has awarded me by supporting me through sponsorship under the Mastercard Foundation and I hope that in the next chapter of searching for a PhD sponsorship, I will still be a RUFORUM fellow. I believe that the experience I got during my MSc journey has fully prepared me for a PhD journey and a career in science as a whole.

The Light Up Bio project (LUB) involves a small-scale power supply in rural farming communities, using locally available agricultural wastes as feedstock for small-scale power production. The LUB project produces organic manure and fertiliser as a complimentary product from remaining wastes after power production. The LUB involves a small-scale power supply in rural farming communities that use locally available agricultural wastes as feedstock for small-scale power production, specifically targeting small scale and largescale piggery farmers. Further, LUB is working to establishing a bio electricity plant in Zambia as a new business. The power plant will serve as a waste management facility for the surrounding communities. Thus, a small-scale biomass power plant is a potentially sustainable option for addressing the energy needs of agricultural communities as well as for better waste management.
Professor Adipala handing a package from RUFORUM to the Sudan Ambassador to Uganda, His Excellency, Mr. Ahmed Ibrahim Ahmed during his visit to the RUFORUM Secretariat in Kampala, Uganda.

Professor Tahra Elobeid, a new member of the RUFORUM International Advisory Panel from Qatar, visited the RUFORUM Secretariat to discuss the potential areas of partnerships with the RUFORUM Network and Qatar University and other players in agricultural research areas.

Professor Patrick Okori (Centre), the Executive Secretary of RUFORUM, with the senior management of the University of Cape Coast and Kwame Nkrumah during a recent visit in Ghana.

RUFORUM Executive Assistant, Dr. Sokona Dangoko, attended the graduation ceremony at Muni University, a RUFORUM Member University in Arua district in Northern Uganda.

Participants in the capacity building workshop for e-learning content development and delivery at grand global hotel in Kampala, Uganda.

Graduate teaching assistants from Botswana, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo and a post-doctoral fellow from Ghana with whom the Executive Secretary of RUFORUM met during a recent visit to Ghana.

Students from Uganda Martyrs University exhibiting their innovations at the RUFORUM Secretariat in Kampala, Uganda.
19th RUFORUM Annual General Meeting, 2023

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Links to RUFORUM Knowledge Products

- RUFORUM Institutional Repository can be accessed via repository.ruforum.org

IN THE REPOSITORY
- Theses/Dissertations from RUFORUM sponsored students
- Research Briefs, TAGDev Resources, Policy Briefs, Newsletters, Book chapters
- The Impact platform accessed via www.ruforum.org
- The African Journal of Rural Development (AFJRD) afjrd.org
- The RUFORUM Working Document Series (RWDS) repository.ruforum.org

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