

RUFORUM Annual General Meeting 2019

Date: 30th November, 2019

Skilling post graduate fellows to effectively support research and teaching Institutions in Africa

Concept Note

Background

Postdoctoral training is vital for new PhD graduates. This is a period of “apprenticeship” for a newly-minted researcher to hone their skills in a research environment. It typically follows completion of the doctoral degree. Depending on the scientific field and other factors, training can last a year or two and beyond. This apprenticeship provides young postdocs with critical experience and helps to develop the skills they need to become seasoned research leaders. Yet, very few African universities offer postdoctoral training, primarily due to a lack of mentorship. There are simply not always enough senior, qualified faculty staff; those with PhDs who can provide the necessary support.

And even if they are able to get postdoctoral places at African institutions, young early career researchers from the continent face four main challenges. First, they lack access to resources at their home institutions. Second, they haven’t been properly trained in grant writing, an essential skill for accessing competitive funding for their research. Third, they lack mentors or supervisors. And finally, postdoctoral positions tend to be poorly paid.

Postdoctoral training is a critical element of building Africa’s population of researchers. The continent needs to develop its capacity for globally competitive postdoctoral training, as this is essential to promoting scientific and research excellence and leadership. These globally competitive scientists are key to transforming universities into research hubs equipped with skilled staff to mentor the next generation of well-trained scientists to feed ongoing

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knowledge-based African economies. This level of talent can only be recruited and retained with sustained funding and infrastructure. For this to happen, Africa must commit to investing more in research and development.

There is an urgent need to invest in talented individuals to ensure that Africa has a strong foundation of researchers, producing high quality research, and able to train successive generations. But it is vital that these investments in people are designed to strengthen the wider research base in universities and their faculties and departments.

The Post-Doctoral Fellowship program Initiative by Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture with funding support from Carnegie Cooperation of New York offers several pathways for incentivizing graduate students to increase retention at universities in addition to honing skills and enhancing the careers of the newly graduated students. One of the key pathways is strengthening their soft skills through intensive coaching and mentorship programs by both higher education and technical specialists. Another is providing them with networks and opportunities to share ideas.

Accordingly, RUFORUM is organizing a side event at the 15th Annual General Meeting to bring together the Post-Doctoral fellows and other graduate students who will interact with each other as well as well- recognized scientists from within Africa, from the diaspora, and other international partners.

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Rationale and Purpose of the side event

The demands on the newly graduated faculty staff after completing their doctoral training is strikingly higher than expected. The graduates are expected to transform the knowledge imparted during their training into practical ideas for shaping their institutions within a short period of time. The myriad teaching and managerial responsibilities assigned to them and the complexity of their institutions can be both exhilarating and overwhelming. Almost overnight, these newly graduated faculty are confronted with teaching overload, academic student research supervision, departmental engagements and how to fit their own research and teaching ambitions in the institutions. It is often tormenting to the new graduates and many end up leaving their institutions due to frustrations. Such faculty are often at cross roads. Furthermore, these challenges and tasks stretch beyond their capacity or skills to manage. The purpose of this side event is to allow post doc fellows update RUFORUM of their progress so far.

Objectives of the side Event

The objectives of the side event include the following;

- To provide a platform for interaction and sharing of key topical issues that relates to the young faculty staff development and career advancement.

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Approach and Methodology

Each of the 19 Post Doc fellow is supposed to present on:

1. Brief overview of their post doc fellowship
2. Progress so far / Achievements
3. Challenges encountered
4. Next steps in post doc implementation
5. Plans beyond the post doc program – sustainability issues

The meeting will be supported by 10 senior scientists from the RUFORUM member universities who will technically backstop the fellows.

Venue and Participants

The side event will take place on 30th November 2019 at the University of Cape Coast, Sasakawa Conference Hall. The RUFORUM Post- Doctoral Fellows will be expected to participate fully.

Expected Outputs

- (i) Increased knowledge and understanding on key topical aspects as related to training and research at institutions
- (ii) Opportunities for strengthening the post-doctoral research and training objectives to advance graduate training and professional development

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Programme of the Post Doc Fellows Presentations

Time	Activity	Responsible
6:00-6:05	Registration	Runyararo J. Rukarwa
6:02-6:20	Introductions	All
6:29-6:25	Welcoming remarks	Adipala Ekwamu
6:25-6:30	Objective of the meeting	Alice Mweetwa
PRESENTATIONS ON EXPERIENCES LESSONS AND CHALLENGES OF FELLOWSHIP		
6:30-6:35	Genetic Improvement of Dryland Legumes (groundnut, pigeon pea) and cereals (sorghum, pearl millet) for Nutrient and Resistance to Biotic stress to Enhance Food and Nutrition Security in Malawi and Uganda'	James Mwololo
6:35-6:40	Integrated management of herbicide resistant Plantago (Plantago lanceolata L.) and Rye (Lolium perenne L.) herbicide resistance in viticulture'	Joyful Tatenda Rugare
6:40-6:45	Cowpea Breeding and Seed Systems in Ghana (CB2SG)	Emmanuel Afutu
6:45-6:50	Towards development of market-led kersting's groundnut [Macrotyloma geocarpum (Harms) Maréchal & Baudet] varieties in Benin'	Eric Agoyi
6:50-6:55	Development of optimal bioeconomic options and sustainable value chains for rational exploitation of fisheries resources along Lake Malawi'	Wales Singini
6:55-7:00	Building capacity in Fragile Ecosystems Management in Eastern Africa	Joseph Ssekandi
7:00-7:05	The genetic basis of heat stress tolerance in wheat genotypes in Zambia	Sally Chikuta
7:05-7:10	Development of insects resistant high yielding cowpea varieties in Benin	Symphorien Agbahoungba
7:10-7:15	Evaluation of selected crop varieties for resistance to pest and diseases for enhancing crop production and marketing	Hellen Kongai Biruma
7:15-7:20	Improving the culinary quality of cowpea grains in Nigeria	Blessing Adanta Odogwu

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7:20-7:25	An Out of Hospital Health Access and Monitoring Framework Using Internet of Things (IoT)	Peter Ochieng
7:25-7:30	Unearthing the potential of participatory and information and communication Technologies (ICT) led extension and learning approaches in Approaches in Agricultural and Environmental Education in Africa	Gabriel Karubanga
7:30-7:45	Genetic diversity and assessment of genes associated with prolificacy, milk production and resistance to Peste-des-petits-ruminants virus in indigenous goats from South Kivu, Eastern part of DR Congo	Bwihangane Birindwa Ahadi
7:45-7:50	Management of Fall Armyworm (<i>Spodoptera frugiperda</i>) on Maize through Host Plant Resistance and Monitoring of the Pest Population Density	Felister M. Nzuve
7:50-7:55	Strengthening research and leadership capacity for technology generation and dissemination through a post-doctoral fellowship at Busitema University in Eastern Uganda	Deborah Alio
7:55-8:00	Fostering inter-disciplinary research to enhance rural smallholder farmer innovation and technology uptake intention using the farmer group approach	Richard Sebuliba
8:00-8:05	Ecohydrological Connectivities and Complexities: Deciphering Transformative Landscape Change in the Drylands of Northern Uganda (ECOLAN)	Anthony Egeru
8:05-8:10	Unravelling agroecological and climatic approaches to understanding restoration of watersheds	Sarah Akello
8:10-8:15	Building capacity in field based aquaculture innovations for sustainable aquaculture industry in Uganda	Jane Yatuha
8:15-9:00	General Discussion	Runyararo J. Rukarwa
9:00-9:05	Wrap -up	Alice Mweetwa
9:05-	Dinner	Wivine Adidja

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