



18TH RUFORUM ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2022

Interactive Session for Carnegie Corporation of New York funded Fellows and Graduate students

Date: Monday 12th December, 2022

Time: 14:00 - 22:00 CAT

Blended Mode – Link: <https://bit.ly/3UBG06T>

Venue: Diamond Lecture Theatre, University of Zimbabwe

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Background

A doctoral program is an opportunity to learn to think better as a scientist, gain an understanding of the open questions in a field of study, apply existing skills to new problems, and acquire new skills, whether quantitative, experimental, or otherwise. Less obviously, but importantly, it is a chance to gain a sense of “taste” in for example agricultural science – a sense for what is a good scientific problem, what is an important question to answer for practical purposes, what is an elegant solution to a problem, how to be a good critic of one’s own (and others’) results, and when to consider a question solved.

Postdoctoral fellowships are 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 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.

Graduate training and Postdoctoral training is a critical element of building Africa’s population of researchers. The continent needs to develop its capacity for globally competitive graduate and 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 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

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these investments in people are designed to strengthen the wider research base in universities and their faculties and departments. Of critical importance is that the young scientists need to be nurtured to work beyond disciplinary boundaries, because they are expected to work with others to champion and influence development processes.

The Post-Doctoral Fellowship and graduate training program initiative by the 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 their retention at institutions in Africa in addition to honing skills and enhancing the careers of the newly graduated students. A key element of the RUFORUM approach is to build inter-disciplinary and leadership skills of the Fellows. One of the key pathways is strengthening their soft skills is 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, in collaboration with the Makerere University Regional Centre for Crop Improvement (MaRCCI) is organising a side event at the 18th Annual General Meeting to bring together the Post-Doctoral Fellows and other graduate students to interact with each other as well as well-recognized scientists from within Africa, from the diaspora, and other international partners.

Rationale and Purpose of the side event

It is an exciting time to be in science with the continued development of new technologies and approaches to answer biological questions. At the same time, the path to a rewarding career can be bewildering to graduate students and Postdoctoral Fellows. In this interactive workshop group, mentoring will be used in this session, where multiple experts (mentors) and multiple learners (mentees) work in a group setting. Although structured as a group, learning is individual and each mentee works on his or her own unique learning needs and development goals. The Mentors guide rather than train. Both mentors and mentees benefit from participating in-group mentoring. Mentoring groups will explore career development, provide psychosocial support, help build networks and facilitate knowledge transfer. Mentors will guide mentees by sharing experiences, asking socratic type questions, participating in shared activities, allowing mentees to job shadow, and introducing the Fellows and graduates to each other and help further their goals. The Session will help both RUFORUM and its Flagship Programme MaRCCI to gain insights into furthering Graduate and Post-Doctoral Training in Africa.

The objectives of the side event

- To provide a platform for interaction and sharing of lessons and experiences as relates to young faculty staff development and career advancement;

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- Share mentoring and students supervision experiences to help in the professional development of the Post doc Fellows and graduate students; and,
- Gain insights into the needs and future direction for Graduate and Post-Doctoral training in Africa.

Venue and Participants

This blended side event will take place on Monday 12th December 2022 at Diamond Lecture Theatre, University of Zimbabwe (link: <https://bit.ly/3UBG06T>). The RUFORUM Post- Doctoral Fellows, Graduate students, Mentors and other University academics are invited to participate.

Expected Outputs

- Increased knowledge and understanding on implementation of Post-Doc Fellowship and Graduate Training Programmes in an African context
- Opportunities for strengthening and furthering Post-doctoral and Graduate research and training in African Universities

Programme

Time	Activity	Responsible
14:00-14:30	Registration	Dr. Runyararo J. Rukarwa
Session I: Opening		
Chair: Dr. Alice Mweetwa, Deputy Executive Secretary, RUFORUM Secretariat		
14:30-14:35	Welcome Remarks by Dr. Alice Mweetwa, Session Chair	
14:35-14:45	Introductions & Objective of the meeting	Dr. Runyararo J. Rukarwa, Manager, Research and Innovation, RUFORUM Secretariat
14:45-14:55	Opening Remarks	Hon. Prof. Intisar Soghayroun Elzein Soghayroun, Former Minister Higher Education and Scientific Research, Sudan
14:55-15:10	Commentary: Need for building Africa's Science, Technology and Innovation Capacity	Dr. Eusebius Mukhwana, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Industry, Kenya
Session II: 2018/2020 Fellows: Perspectives on Impact of the Post-Doctoral Fellowship on career development of Fellows		
Chair: Dr. Alice Mweetwa, Deputy Executive Secretary, RUFORUM Secretariat		
15:15-16:00	Panel: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr. Deborah Alio, Busitema University, Uganda 2. Prof. Wales Singini, Mzuzu University, Malawi 3. Dr. Hellen Kongai, Busitema University, Uganda 4. Dr. Sally Chikuta, University of Zambia, Zambia 	

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16:00-16:20	Discussion	All
16:20-16:40	Health Break	
Session III: 2020/2022 Fellows: Experiences in the implementation of the Post-Doctoral Fellowship Programme Chair: Dr. Runyararo J. Rukarwa, Manager, Research and Innovation, RUFORUM Secretariat		
16:40-17:30	Panel: 1. Dr. Masabo Emmanuel, University of Rwanda, Rwanda 2. Dr. Rolland Agaba, Makerere University, Uganda 3. Dr. Natasha Mwila, University of Zambia, Zambia 4. Dr. Frank Kumi, University of Cape Coast, Ghana 5. Dr. Arfang Badji, National Crops Resources Research Institute, Uganda	
17:30-17:50	Discussion	All
Session IV: 2022/2024 Fellows: Experiences in Building and Managing a successful Research Team Chair: Dr Runyararo J. Rukarwa, Manager, Research and Innovation, RUFORUM Secretariat		
17:50-18:40	Panel: 1. Dr. Emmanuel Amponsah Adjei, Makerere University, Uganda 2. Dr. Mayada Mamoun Beshir, University of Gezira, Sudan 3. Dr. Bintu Ndusha, 'Université Evangélique en Afrique, DR Congo 4. Dr. Marie Carene Nancy, University of Mauritius 5. Dr. Damalie Akwango-Aliau, Nkumba University, Uganda	
18:40-19:00	Discussion	All
Session IV: Perspective from graduate students being trained under the Fellowships and Doctoral Research Grants Chair: Prof. Flora Chadare, Dean, School of Food Science and Nutrition, National University of Agriculture, Benin		
19:00-19:40	Panel: 1. Nthabeleng Nkoko (Lesotho) 2. Leonard Nuugulu (Namibia) 3. Evaline Sang (Kenya) 4. Aduto Frances (Uganda)	
19:40-20:00	Discussion	All
Feedback session		
20:00-20:30	Guest Mentors 1. Prof. Kay Muir-Leresche, International Advisory Panel, RUFORUM 2. Prof. Patrick Rubaihayo, Prof. Emeritus, Makerere University 3. Prof. Umezuruike Linus Opara, Stellenbosch University, South Africa	
20:30-20:40	Closing Remarks	Prof. Adipala Ekwamu, RUFORUM Executive Secretary
20:40-22:00	Health Break and Dinner	Eveline Aguti

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