



12-December, 2022 | Volume 1, Issue 2

A Daily Brief on the 18th RUFORUM AGM Week #RUFORUMAGM2022

Building A Movement for Change Makers in Africa



Empowering deserving Scholars. Mastercard Foundation, Head of Scholars Program, Eastern and Southern Africa Partner Network, Pauline Gangla during the Change Makers event in Harare, Zimbabwe.

The 2022 edition of the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Africa, (RUFORUM) is underway in Harare, Zimbabwe with the session on “Building a Movement of Change makers in Africa”, being the highlight of the continent’s blue riband academic and research event on Sunday, 11 December, 2022.

Organized in conjunction with the MasterCard Foundation, the event that was held at the Harare International Conference Centre showcased the impact and successes of RUFORUM and MasterCard’s joint transformative agricultural initiative in African Universities, meant to contribute meaning-

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fully to Africa's growth and development, more commonly referred to as TAGDev.

Addressing the gathering, Chairperson of the session and member of the TAGDev steering committee, Professor Mbatia outlined how the African youth has immense potential to contribute to economic development, noting that this realization was one of the major reasons why RUFORUM and Mastercard had partnered to support interventions that catalyze sustained long term changes for young people. Professor Peter Mbatia further highlighted that to this end, RUFORUM and Mastercard have partnered on an eight year TAGDev programme.

In his keynote address, outgoing RUFORUM Executive Secretary, Professor Adipala Ekwamu, reiterated the importance of investing in the youth by emphasizing that, "it is time for the youth to be leaders of today not tomorrow. Today is about building a movement of change makers in Africa.

"If we empower young people it will make a difference to our continent. We must do this for ourselves. The change we want we must deliver for ourselves. I am optimistic that we will deliver the change we want by 2063", added Professor Adipala. In order to provide impetus to the African Agenda 2063, Professor Adipala stated that RUFORUM is committed to delivering ten thousand change makers (young men and women) for the continent in the next ten years.

The Mastercard Foundation, Head of Scholars Program, Eastern and Southern Africa Partner Network, Pauline Gangla reiterated that Africa has the fastest and youngest growing population in the world which can serve as a force for Africa's transformation given the relevant skills. The Mastercard's scholars programme, therefore, provides holistic, wrap around support to young people in this regard.

In order to deal with the challenge of youth unemployment, Gangla revealed that work is in progress on expanding TAGDev to create more opportunities for young people. This will equip young people with transformative skills to improve livelihoods while also empowering ten percent of young people with disabilities and at least seventy-five percent women.

TAGDev alumni who received scholarships from the MasterCard foundation to advance and complete their studies, shared how the initiative had enabled them to find meaning and fulfillment in Community Service while other MasterCard beneficiaries got the opportunity to share their entrepreneurship journeys.

Away from the key note speakers, the audience were impressed by the panel discussions featuring



Some of the beneficiaries at the TAGDEV event

TAGDev alumni, around finding meaning and fulfillment in community service. The speakers included Simone Assocle, Nelson Koliesuah, Anthony Emaru and Olivier Nihimbazwe who all provided vivid insights into how their business were impacting positively on the socio economic well-being of their communities. A second panel discussion featured Gabriel Mahindu Kwendo, Helvi Unoovene; Ochama Juliet and John Mugonya and focused on translating entrepreneurship into viable business.

The RUFORUM Annual General Meeting for 2022, also referred to as the 18th Annual General Meeting is being held under the theme, "Strengthening Africa's Agri-food Systems in the Post COVID-19 Era – Opportunities and Challenges" with several events lined up throughout the week.

Story by: Simbarashe Namusi; Great Zimbabwe University. Contact +263 773 257 449. Email address: snamusi@gzu.ac.zw

Zimbabwe Hosts Continental Universities' AGM as Founding Executive Secretary Retires



Professor Adipala Ekwamu (Center) engaging with delegates during the TAGDEV event in Harare, Zimbabwe

The eighteenth Annual General Meeting-AGM of the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture-RUFORUM kicked off in Harare, Zimbabwe this past weekend, with hundreds of participants from across Africa and beyond in attendance.

The government of Zimbabwe is hosting the AGM with RUFORUM member universities led by the University of Zimbabwe as co-hosts, during which an array of diverse activities will take place over the seven days of the meeting.

President Emmerson Mnangagwa will officiate the opening on Wednesday 14 December, where he will lead three of his cabinet ministers to the event, including Prof Amon Murwira, Minister of Higher

and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science & Technology Development.

At least 14 ministers of Education Science and Technology plus Agriculture will participate and hold a ministerial roundtable, and for the first time Angola will take part represented by Prof Alice de Fátima Pinto de Ceita e Almeida, Secretary of State for Science, Technology and Innovation.

More than 1000 delegates are expected to attend the hybrid event majority of them physically, and whose theme is ‘Strengthening Africa’s Agri-food Systems in the Post COVID-19 Era – Opportunities and Challenges’.

In attendance are representatives of donors and char-

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ity organizations, development partners, Vice Chancellors, college principals and deans, university managers, students, farmers and innovators.

Notably, this will be the last AGM for founding Executive Secretary Professor Adipala Ekwamu who leaves the position this December after 18 years at the helm of the organisation he helped found in 2004.

The Ugandan national will be succeeded by Dr Patrick Okori, also Ugandan, and formerly Principal Scientist with the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) where until mid this year he worked as the Deputy Director for [Global Research Programme on Accelerated Crop Improvement](#).

“This year’s AGM will serve as a catalyst for leveraging resources and foster mutually beneficial partnerships among universities in and outside RUFORUM network as well as with other stakeholders,” said Prof Adipala.

In addition, the AGM will reflect on the first Operational Plan 2018-2022 part of RUFORUM’s Vision 2030 sought to attract and a new generation of scientists and development practitioners to spur growth in Africa through the generation of technologies and innovations, he noted.

The objectives of the meeting among others are to provide an opportunity for various RUFORUM governance organs to reflect on progress made on the implementation of different programmes and initiatives, and to provide an opportunity for scientists, researchers and students to share their scientific findings and experiences.

It will also act as a platform for members of the 161 universities’ network to establish partnerships and teams to respond to different opportunities, and to engage governments to offer more support for higher education in Africa.

“The AGM is an opportunity to share lessons and build on the strengths of each other within a multi-stakeholder environment, so as to chart the most plausible way forward, added Prof Theresia Nkuo-Akenji RUFORUM Board Chairperson.

Some of the highlight activities include the scientific conference to be staged at the University of Zimbabwe hall, with a focus on different agriculture, livestock, environment and natural resources themes on Monday. It will run alongside training for graduate and post-doctoral fellows in research design and data analysis, and curriculum training for trainers and universities managers.

Other training sessions will focus on Proposal Development and Scientific Writing for the category as well.

Equally important is the symposium for the Forum for African Women Vice Chancellors which will hold various sessions on different days, with one of the activities being mentoring sessions for young female scientists.

The 2022 Vice Chancellors forum will also be happening as part of the AGM and will evaluate the frameworks that have been put in place for human capital development in Africa, also exploring how capacity for universities can be enhanced through investment in partnerships between public, private and industry.

The VCs forum will also look at what needs to be done to ensure that universities produce quality graduates, and in order to take leadership to harnessing ST&I for transformation of education.

Following in the footsteps will be a principals of colleges and deans symposium that will run parallel to the other AGM activities.

The meeting will close on Friday 16 December in a ceremony that will among others recognise outstanding farmers, young scientists, young innovators and entrepreneurs.

Other universities co-hosting the AGM include Great Zimbabwe University, Lupane State University Africa University, Midlands State University, Marondera University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology, Bindura University of Science Education, Chinhoyi University of Technology.

**Story by: Maina Waruru; University World News.
Email: mainawaruru@gmail.com**



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