

Key Achievements

Training

RUFORUM's training agenda aims to balance the human resource pyramid in Africa with appropriate numbers of scientists, technicians, practitioners and entrepreneurs. This year ending, RUFORUM has and continues to engage 51 member universities, (with scaling out opportunity to all its member universities), who collectively implemented the following activities:



Post-Doctoral Training: This is a new training area of RUFORUM and in the year ending, 39 Postdoctoral fellowships are ongoing in ten thematic areas. These include agricultural extension; aquaculture; climate change; crop improvement; environmental conservation; health; information and communication technology; integrated agriculture; livestock improvement; and, soil improvement.



PhD and Masters Training: RUFORUM has been implementing regional training programmes at its member universities for over a decade. This approach aims to pool resources for training students at selected centres of leadership. It provides for cost-leverage on the capacities of the network to train at undergraduate and post graduate education. Collectively, these programmes have trained 915 graduate students (PhD 420 PhDs and Masters (495)). In the year 2022- 2023 RUFORUM has awarded 36 new PhD and 17 MSc scholarships across the region.



Graduate Assistantship: Through this programme, African universities build capacity for each other using their own resources. This year, 39 placements were made across 14 disciplines. Upon graduation, these will return to boost teaching staff in their universities.



Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET): RUFORUM recognizes the need to re-balance the human resource pyramid especially within the agriculture sector where the conversion of many technical institutions into universities has degraded national ability to train last mile delivery agents. Twenty Technical Vocational Education and Training Institutions (TVET) across Africa have been engaged with the number expected to more than double over the next 2-3 years. They are (Benin 6, Zimbabwe 1, Kenya 6, Botswana 1, Namibia, Uganda 3, Ghana, 3, South Africa 2). TVET training covers agricultural extension, food processing, agroforestry, among others focusing on trainers and young people.



Transformation of Teaching, Learning, Research and Work Preparedness: Its goal was to improve capacity of universities to conduct R4D and equip graduates' with abilities to use innovation, science, and technology to address development concerns while also preparing them for work in the private sector.

Research for Development

In the year ending, RUFORUM and its member universities have continued to conduct research at various levels to generate science solutions for addressing development challenges, improving service delivery, strengthening production to market value chains, value addition and climate science among others. The results are summarized below:



Strategic Research: Climate science and artificial intelligence research grants have been initiated through 20 sub-grants to science teams within the network, generate baseline data on carbon emission and modelling for Africa where this data is mostly lacking.



Applied Research: The Community Action Research Programme (CARP), approach has been designed by RUFORUM and the scientific community in its member universities to engage farming and other value chain actors in the design to adoption of science processes, knowledge and agri-technologies. Currently 16 CARPs are being implemented in 9 countries across Africa.

Outreach and Integrating Youth back into Rural Communities



RUFORUM has piloted innovative approaches of enhancing access to knowledge and knowledge products to unlock agricultural production and productivity. In the past year, two systems have been used: youth-led give-back to community engagements and internship. Four new give back initiatives in crop farming, agroforestry, sanitation and entrepreneurship among others have been implemented. This approach on average involves over 700 rural people per engagement, enabling them to gain quick and steady access to technologies and knowledge, while online give-back actions reach 10,000 value chain actors per intervention. For instance, Gordon Agriculture (<https://vc4a.com/ventures/gordons-agriculturalorganisation-ugandagao-ug/>) created by a RUFORUM alumnus from Gulu University has reached over 5000 farmers in northern Uganda and is offering production to business mentorship services to rural farmers. Lillian Onyango another alumnus in Western Kenya, through her youth-for-green action (<https://ke.linkedin.com/company/youths-action-Kenya>), is promoting climate change mitigation and has planted over 100,000 trees in Western Kenya. This effort and model is now being scaled-out to other regions of Kenya.



RUFORUM and its member universities are implementing actions that equip students with workplace skills such as communication, problem solving, compassion, self-initiative, organization, and self-management among others to prepare them for the future of work. This is being done through internships and apprenticeship training, with 387 students attached under a pilot initiative. The approach will now be scaled-out in over 20 countries this coming year.

Policy Advocacy, Networking and Partnerships

The secretariat continues to perform its advocacy and networking functions from national to continental level. At national levels through its member universities and national forums and at continental level, through strategic engagement with apex organisations and Governments of Africa. Selected achievements are presented below:



Continental Leadership: RUFORUM continues to lead STISA implementation. In the year ending, RUFORUM has continued to advocate for increased resourcing for higher agricultural education research and development through its partners and universities; strategic dialogues have been held leading to strategic investments for increasing agricultural productivity and value addition in sub-Saharan Africa. Pilot initiatives are under discussions in Benin and Gambia for West Africa; Zimbabwe and Malawi for Southern Africa with the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA).



National Dialogues: Member universities are increasingly receiving support from their governments. The Kenya National Forum held its meeting in July 2023 drawing 174 participants involving senior central and local government, research, extension, academia, public and private sector to discuss employment and entrepreneurship of young people. Uganda, the host country of RUFORUM has signed the charter, a product of advocacy emphasizing its support for RUFORUM and its initiatives in Uganda.



New Partnerships include engagements with Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institution (APAARI) and Advanced Technology Higher Education Network Alliance (ATHENA). RUFORUM continues to maintain its large portfolio of partnership engagements to address climate change and climate smart agriculture, entrepreneurship, skilling of out of school youth, and commercialization of research.