

The Seventh African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Triennial Conference 2021

Date: 09th December 2021

Venue: Palais des Congres de Cotonou, Benin

Time: 1430-1830 Benin Time (GMT +1)

Registration Link: <https://bit.ly/2WhsBYR>

Theme: Promoting Inclusivity in Research and Development

Background

Although women's access to higher education across Africa has been improving, the number of female researchers at 31.8% and higher education leaders (2% female Vice Chancellors) remains low compared to the number of men. Moreover, these vary significantly across countries and by discipline (19.7% for agricultural sciences). Persistent gender inequality in accessing career opportunities coupled with the traditional demands on women to rear children severely limit women in the academe from achieving their potential and effectively contributing towards turnkey Research for Development (R4D).

Several global and regional frameworks have been put in place to promote women participation in science in Africa and contribution towards development challenges. The Sustainable Development Goals, The African Agenda 2063, as well as regional bodies such as East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) have all adopted frameworks for inclusive development and to promote women's participation and leadership in Science, Technology and Innovation (ST&I). Such initiatives demonstrate that the different actors realize that gender and ST&I have a significant role in development and it is important to build capacity and harness the potential of women contribution to development through ST & I. **Why then does the problem still exist?** The need for continued exploration cannot be over emphasised.

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) a Consortium of 129 African universities in 38 countries across the African continent has a vision for '*vibrant, transformative universities to catalyse sustainable, inclusive agricultural development to feed and create prosperity for Africa*'. RUFORUM has

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adopted different pathways to promote inclusive agricultural development, from promoting youth engagement in agriculture to mentorship, role modeling and providing early and mid-career women professionals opportunity for advanced degrees and prospects to undertake ST&I research. Female participation is (46%) at the Masters and (42%) at the PhD level, and females represent (28%) in grant awards.

Further, RUFORUM recognizes that the stepwise approach is suitable as a mentorship avenue where early career women interact not only with their peers but with experienced researchers and university leaders. Women in top leadership positions can inspire and mentor upcoming academics and are better placed to offer advice to emerging female scientists on how they can overcome challenges along the academic path. Indeed, through initiatives such as the Forum for Women Education in Africa (FAWE), African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) and Forum for Africa Women Vice Chancellors (FAWoVC), RUFORUM believes that both male and female university leaders are well placed to address the gender gaps in science, technology and innovation.

The RUFORUM annual convening is an opportunity that brings together academics, policy makers and other stakeholders to deliberate on topical issues for the development of Agricultural Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovations (AHESTI). This year, 2021, the annual convening will be hosted by member universities in Benin with support from the Government of the Republic of Benin. The Convening scheduled for 6th – 10th December 2021 will take place at both the University of Abomey Calavi and Palais des Congres de Cotonou, Benin.

Building on previous initiatives, the convening will attract academics, senior policy leaders, and other professionals. RUFORUM will use this opportunity to tap into the expertise of these professionals to provide mentorship and role modeling to young female academics and students, and brainstorm on how best to promote inclusivity in Research and Development in Africa, and beyond. Male and female young academics together with policy makers will dialogue on pathways to promote female participation in science, technology and innovations. Building on the experience of seasoned policy makers and senior university leaders, the discussion will explore processes, inhibitors and enablers for increasing the number of females in science, in research and development and in academic and university leadership positions.

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Although the challenges facing females in academia are well documented, the dialogue will explore individual, institutional and policy based perspectives on the challenges and opportunities for promoting inclusivity in research and development. Incrementally, these will contribute towards pathways to close the ‘leaking pipe’.

Purpose and Objectives of the discussion

Main Objective:

To stimulate dialogue on pathways for promoting inclusivity in research and development in Africa.

Specifically:

- 1- What processes and enablers are at our disposal or can be put in place to increase the number of women accessing advanced degree opportunities?
- 2- How can policy makers at university and public sector level promote inclusive participation in R&D?
- 3- How do we address challenges that inhibit females from pursuing ST&I and R&D goals?
- 4- Lesson sharing by university and other leaders especially those that have been able to break the ‘glass ceiling’

Approach and Methodology

Keynote and plenary discussions on emerging key inclusivity issues

Venue

Palais des Congres de Cotonou, Benin

Date

Thursday, 09 December 2021

Time

1430-1830 West African Time (GMT +1)

Event

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM)

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Draft Programme

Director of Cérémonies : Associate Prof Nadia Fanou, University of Abomey
Calavi, Benin

Theme: Promoting Inclusivity in Research and Development	
Session Chair: Professor Theresia Nkuo-Akenji, RUFORUM Deputy Board Chair & Vice Chancellor, University of Bamenda, Cameroon	
14:00-14:25	Arrival and Participants take their seats
14:25-14:29	Documentary: Launch of Forum for Africa Women Vice Chancellors
Session 1: Opening	
1430:1440	Welcome Remarks: Hon. Prof Éléonore Yayi Ladekan, Minister of Higher Education & Scientific Research, Bénin
1440: 1500	Official Opening Address by Her Excellency Madam Chabi Talata, Vice President, Republic of Benin
1500-1520	Keynote Paper by Her Excellency Prof Ameenah GuribFakim, Former President of Mauritius
1520-1550	Plenary Discussion
Session 2: Promoting Inclusivity in Research for Development: Current Status and Emerging Issues	
1550-1610	Lead Paper: Gender Analysis of the Current Investments in Agricultural Research and Development: Nienke Beintema, formerly with International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)
1610-1630	Plenary Discussion

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Panel Discussion: Insights on Promoting inclusivity in Governance and Research for Development	
1630-17:30	Hon. Prof. Intisar Soghayroun Elzein Soghayroun, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Sudan
	Hon. Agnes Makonda NyaLonje, Minister of Education, Malawi
	Hon. Lady Howard Mabuza, Minister of Education and Training, eSwatini
	Hon. Prof. Ansu D. Soni, Sr, Minister of Education, Liberia
	Dr Stella Williams, Founder, Nigerian Women in Agricultural Research for Development
	Prof. Peter Mbatia, Vice Chancellor Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU), South Africa
17:30-18:00	Open Discussion
18:00-18:15	Concluding Remarks by Panellists
18:15-18:25	Summary of emerging issues and way forward: Prof Christine Dranzoa, Vice Chancellor, Muni University, Uganda
18:25-18:30	Concluding Remarks by Session Chair Professor Theresia Nkuo-Akenji, RUFORUM Deputy Board Chair & Vice Chancellor, University of Bamenda, Cameroon

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