



02ND RUFORUM
Triennial Conference
12-16 August 2024
Namibia



2nd RUFORUM TRIENNIAL CONFERENCE

CONCEPT NOTE

NAMIBIA HIGHER EDUCATION DAY

Date: 8th August 2024 **Time:** 8:30-17:00 SAT

Venue: University of Namibia Main Campus, Windhoek, Namibia

Registration Link: <https://bit.ly/3WIXjqH>

Contact: Prof Nelago Indongo

Prof. Charles Makanyenza

BACKGROUND

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) will hold its second Triennial Conference and the 20th Annual General Meeting (AGM) from 12th to 16th August 2024 at Mercure Hotel, Windhoek, Namibia. The theme of the second RUFORUM Triennial Conference is ***“Operationalising higher agricultural education and research ecosystems for innovation, industrialisation and economic development in Africa: A Call for Action”***. This theme is underpinned by Africa’s development blueprints specified in Governments’ Vision 2030 & 2040 Development Plans, and the Continental Agenda 2063, “the Africa We Want.” Nevertheless, our continent is making slow progress towards achieving many national, continental, and global commitments including the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme among others.

Namibia, the host of RUFORUM’s Triennial Conference is no exception to the challenges responsible for the slow progress towards achieving national development aspirations that the rest of Africa faces, namely food insecurity, youth unemployment, and unsustainable pathways for growing a competitive economy in the 21st century. Like many sub-Saharan African countries, Namibia has a large agriculture dependent community, most of whom are subsistence farmers. The sector needs to grow, but sustainably and in an economically rewarding manner. Indeed, the National Agriculture Policy¹ aspires to deliver these aspirations noting the challenges of limited innovations, drought, and climate related stresses among others as key drivers of low productivity among subsistence farmers who account for nearly 41% of the arable land use. Between July 2023 and March 2024, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification reported that up to 26% of Namibia’s population was experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity and requires urgent action to reduce food gaps and protect livelihoods. Climatic shocks, economic decline, and rising prices were identified as key drivers of acute food insecurity in Namibia.

The country, like the rest of Africa has a very young population with 78% of its citizens being below the age of 35 years. This youthful population is projected to double in the next 25 years yet at the current

¹ <https://www.npc.gov.na/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Namibia-Agriculture-Policy-2015.pdf>



population, youth unemployment is at a rate of 38.4% as of 2023. Developing strategies to create fulfilling work opportunities for young people in Namibia is a priority for the Government of Namibia.

Namibia’s Vision 2030, the national development blueprint, envisions a prosperous and industrialized Namibia, developed by her human resources, enjoy peace, harmony, and political stability. To achieve this vision of success, meaningful dialogue among diverse stakeholders in the economy not least involving the actors in the tertiary education sector (universities and vocational education institutions), the Government of Namibia, Private sector, and other employers is necessary. These actors must find practical pathways of meaningfully engaging in defining their responsibilities while establishing resourcing and accountability mechanisms while delivering national development solutions. It

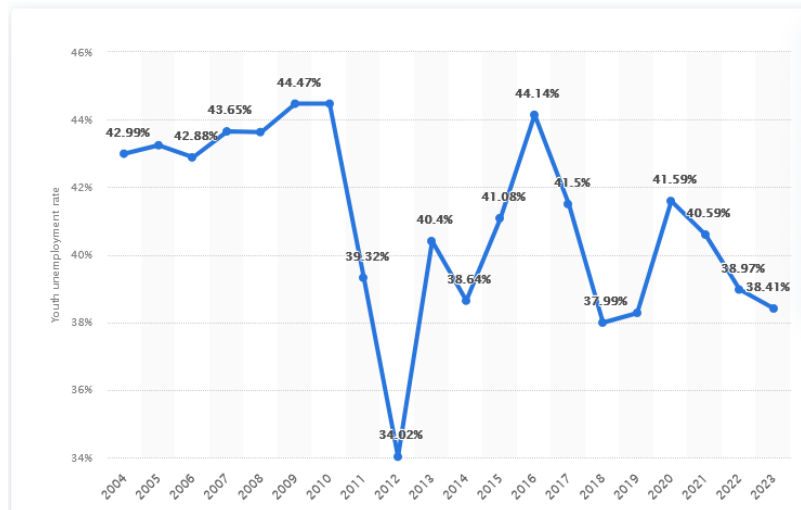


Figure 1: Namibia youth unemployment rates between 2004 and 2023 (Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/812268/youth-unemployment-rate-in-namibia/>)

is a widely accepted fact that the trajectory and speed of any country’s development depends on its level of science, technology, and innovation (STI). Universities and other knowledge centres, being pillars in STI, have a role to play in generating science, technology, and innovation solutions as key actors in the national innovation system². As such, a platform for engaging universities is thus required to mobilise their expertise and make them accountable to the government and other stakeholders in society who provide financial and other forms of support to them.

As part of the 2nd Triennial Conference, the RUFORUM member universities in Namibia have organized the Namibia Higher Education Day to discuss and develop pathways to addressing the challenges facing the country. This event aims to examine ways to improve the role, relevance and impact of universities and other higher education institutions in meeting the country’s current and future human capital, STI, and development needs. The meeting will bring together key stakeholders of the higher education ecosystem in Namibia including public and private universities, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutes, national policy agencies, international partners, industry and civil society, young people, and educators. Collectively, they will dialogue on transformative education measures required to create the 21st century human capital, science, technology, and innovations for Namibia. The conference will cover the issues below.

1. Feeding and growing Namibia

²The National Innovation System or National System of Innovation) is the flow of technology and information among people, enterprises and institutions which is key to the innovative process on the national level



- a. Leveraging research and innovation capacities to generate solutions for increasing agricultural productivity from farm-to-fork. The aim being to enhance national food security and sovereignty.
- b. Development of partnerships and roadmaps for implementing initiatives aimed to increase agriculture sectoral growth in line with national policy.

2. Educating Namibia for 21st century

- a. Rebalancing the human resource pyramid of the country to create the appropriate number of scientists-to-development targets (populations) required to boost development delivery and impact.
- b. Explore options for quality assurance and training at University and TVET including linking of vocational training to university knowledge and training systems.
- c. Addressing job creation for young people by focusing on skilling for the 21st century with respect to Namibia and the regional needs. This will include the role of ICT such as artificial intelligence.

3. Unlocking inclusive development in Namibia

- a. Dialogues on creation of jobs and the skilling for young people, and the partnerships required to nurture and or develop talent for the country.
- b. Dialogues on how to anchor entrepreneurship and wealth creation in education processes.
- c. Leveraging strategic partnerships between education institutes and private sector to expand funding opportunity.

DATE AND VENUE

The Namibia Higher Education Day will take place at **the University of Namibia (UNAM) Main Campus**, on **Thursday, 8th August 2024** between **08:30 and 17:00 hours Southern African Time**

EXPECTED PARTICIPANTS

The Namibia Higher Education Day will bring together a diverse group of actors operating in the space of agri-food systems, higher education, and scientific research. Other participants include higher education leaders and professors from state and private institutions, development partners, private sector leaders, researchers, the Chamber of Agriculture, Presidents of Regional Assemblies, innovators, students from state and private universities, and the National Farmers' Union.

PROGRAMME

Rapporteurs: Local Organising Committee and RUFORUM Secretariat

Time	Activity	Responsible Institution
Official Opening Ceremony		
Session Chair: Prof Nelago Indongo, Chairperson of the Local Organising Committee		
08:00 - 8:30 AM	Arrival and registration of participants	LOC

Co-organisers





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08.30 - 8:40 AM	Welcome address by Prof Kenneth Matengu, Vice-Chancellor, University of Namibia	UNAM
Session 1: Feeding and growing Namibia		
08:40 - 9:30	<p>Lead Paper 1: Meeting Namibia's Vision 2030 Development aspiration: What have we learnt so far - National Planning Commission.</p> <p>Discussion Panel</p> <p>Panellist I: Industry (MEATCO)</p> <p>Panellist II: IUM</p> <p>Panellist III: Youth in agriculture representative</p> <p>Panellist IV: Ministry of Agriculture</p>	
09:30 - 9:50	Plenary discussion and takeaway messages	
09:50 - 10:00	Opening Remarks from Government Official (Permanent Secretary/Minister)	
10:00 - 10:20	Official Opening by Prime Minister/Designated Minister	
10:20 - 11:00	Exhibition tour	
11:00 - 11:30	Health/Tea/Coffee break	LOC
Session 2 (a): Educating Namibia		
Session Chair: Prof. Charles Makanyenza, Vice Chair of the Local Organising Committee		
11:30 - 12:30	<p>Lead Paper 2: Meeting Namibia's 21st century human capital needs - Ministry of Higher Education Training and Innovation</p> <p>Panellist I: University of Namibia</p> <p>Panellist II: Namibia University of Science and Technology</p> <p>Panellist III: International University of Management</p> <p>Panellist IV: TVET representative</p> <p>Panellist V: Civil society representative</p>	
12:30 - 13:00	Plenary discussion and takeaway messages	
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch/Health Break	LOC
Session 2(b): Skilling for jobs and wealth creation in Namibia for the 21st Century		
Session Chair: Dr Nhlanhla Lupahla, Local Organising Committee		
14:00- 15:00	<p>Lead Paper 3: Namibia's world of work: What are the skills required today and in the emerging future for industry, jobs, and wealth creation - Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, and Employment Creation</p> <p>Panellist I: Private sector</p> <p>Panellist II: Representative of young people</p>	



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	Panellist III: Representative from Industry Panellist IV: RUFORUM Secretariat	
15:00-15:30	Plenary discussion and takeaway messages	
Session 3: World Café : Where do we go from here: Convergence, lessons learnt and looking ahead Session Facilitator: Prof. Ndeyapo Martha Nickanor, Local Organising Committee		
15:30-16:30	Café groups <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research and innovation for food and nutrition security. 2. Inclusion and diversity in training 3. 21st Century skills that universities need to deliver. 4. Entrepreneurship, jobs, and wealth creation 5. Partnerships for effective engagement 	
16:30-16:50	Feedback and plenary discussion	
16:50 – 17:00	Closing remarks	
17:00 -	Tea and departures	LOC

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

At the end of the Higher Education Day:

1. Stakeholders in the national agriculture and innovation system will have a better understanding of the mandate and role of universities in contributing to national development,
2. Mechanisms for effective integration of Namibian universities into national innovations systems and national development processes agreed upon, and
3. Functional mechanism for multi-stakeholder engagement for enhanced university contribution to national development agreed upon.