

High Level Policy Dialogue

Declaration for

Building Africa's Human Capital to Underpin Its 21st Century Development Needs

Windhoek, Namibia

15th August 2024

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity building in Agriculture "RUFORUM" and other partners including representatives from government ministries of Uganda, Namibia, Zimbabwe, DRC, Ethiopia, Malawi and Sudan, together with partners from the African Union, the European Union, global, regional and sub regional research agencies: Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa, African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services, Centre for Coordination of Agricultural Research and Development for Southern Africa (CCARDESA); West and Central Africa Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF), the CGAIR, Vice Chancellors from RUFORUM member universities, development partners, private sector actors, farmer organizations and other stakeholders converged during the Second RUFORUM Triennial Conference held in Windhoek Namibia under three (3) targeted but complementary policy dialogues to discuss and deliberate on imperatives for developing a road-map for designing and delivering transformative education required to underpin science led economic growth in Africa. Three policy dialogues, were hosted.

1. Africa - Europe high level policy dialogue on higher agricultural education;

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2. Refugee education framework for inclusion and access to higher and tertiary education in Africa and;
3. Building Africa's human capital to underpin its 21st century development needs.

These High-Level Policy round tables were intended to:

1. Create convergence on the design-to-implementation imperatives for developing a continental framework to guide strategic investments in developing 21st Century human capital for Africa's agriculture and related disciplines;
2. Build consensus on how to support the completion of education by displaced students, while unlocking opportunity for others to join higher education institutions in their respective current host countries or communities;
3. Leverage the convening power of both RUFORUM and AGRINATURA¹ and their partners to engage and co-create policy directions for transformative African and European higher education, research, and innovation agendas.

The ultimate aim of the high-level policy dialogue was to provide guidance and recommendation to the African Union Commission to create a Technical Working Group that will champion development of the road map for human capital for Africa for Agriculture and related discipline and related processes.

Recognizing that:

1. The African Union has established frameworks that support human capacity development, agriculture, science, technology and development. Specifically:
 - a) The AU focus for Year 2024 is Education under the Theme "Educate an African fit for the 21st Century - Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa;"

¹ Agrinatura is an Association of European Universities and Research centres. <https://agrinatura-eu.eu/>

- b) The African Union has launched the second 10-Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063, (STYIP). The plan for execution of the second decade of Agenda 2063 focusing on acceleration (2024-2033), is expected to leverage earlier investments to create prospects for the "The Africa We Want," with a target of 100,000 PhDs 25% of which will be in STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). STYIP provides the strategic direction that necessitates a balanced education system to increase ability to unlock opportunity for young talent.
- c) The strategic thrust of the agri-food systems sector in Africa will be shaped by the development of the CAADP post Malabo agenda for Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods which is in the final stages of review for the Kampala Declaration 2025.

Noting that:

1. Although Africa is home to the largest expanse of arable land, and the bulk of the population is dependent on food insecurity is increasing and the youth who are the majority of the population do not have the appropriate skills and resilience to withstand external shocks to an already fragile agri-food systems.
2. With an average Gross Enrollment Ratio of less than 10%, human capacity development and tertiary enrollment in Africa remains relatively low. Yet increased demand from youth completing secondary schools education continues to exert pressure on already struggling higher education institutions that are predominated by undergraduate studies.

The number of PhD Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) per 100,000 of agricultural populations is still less than 7 FTEs, compared to Brazil that has 31 PhD FTEs, limiting the ability for science-led growth of the continent's agriculture sector.

Recognizing:

3. The need to invest in human capital is essential to support transition to knowledge-based economies. Achieving the AU STYIP aim of 100,000 PhD requires convergence on the design-to- implementation imperatives for developing a continental framework to guide strategic investments in developing human capital for Africa's agriculture and related disciplines for 21st Century. Such platform can be used by Senior Leaders of the agricultural education and development ecosystems as a forum to plan and collaborate

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on initiatives that will help draw in funding to expand Africa's tertiary education sector and deliver the necessary human capital.

4. Universities and research institutions have a role and mandate to foster the training of the next generation of academics. There is therefore need to deepen and intensify, trans-and interdisciplinarity/ platforms that focus on the future bringing together different disciplines and generations through foresight studies
5. The CGAIR has been a key partner in promoting research in agriculture, however, the collaboration with universities, regional and national research and extension agencies have the critical mass of human resource that is still weak thus affecting the uptake of technologies.

Emphasizing

Partnerships have a key role in the implementation of the research and innovation agenda for the Africa group. The need for better coordination and communication to leverage the numerous ongoing research projects for maximum impact cannot be over emphasized.

6. The importance of collaboration, planning, and knowledge exchange to amplify the regional research and innovation agenda. There is need for clear funding mechanisms, strong leadership, and embedding in policy processes to ensure visible impact and relevance.
7. The importance of data management and sharing, and the need for appropriate mechanisms to integrate and coordinate data.
8. Global collaboration is important for meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. However, there is an imbalance in the partnerships, with a predominance of north - north collaboration and limited north-south or south-south collaboration.

Acknowledging:

9. The need to revamp curricular that will enhance productivity, transform agriculture and enhance agri-food systems. The higher education sector needs to promote multi-institutional collaboration including linkages with industry and the public sector.



Noting that:

10. Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) currently, has the highest number of fragile states and situations and that the UNICEF estimates that over 4.4 million children of primary and lower secondary school going age are displaced across SSA. Education is one of the most powerful tools that can provide a lifeline for refugees and displaced persons by providing stability and a sense of normalcy. Indeed, access to education fosters rehabilitation, hope, stability and learning of new skills, helping displaced learners/students to reach their full potential and contribute in their new communities, or when they return to rebuild their lives in their native countries.

Among refugees and displaced people there are academic staff who also need to be considered for integration into higher education institutions within different countries/in host countries

Further Noting that:

11. Various barriers exist to refugee communities to access higher education (application, admission, age limits and qualification/entry equivalences) and there is a need to promote access to higher education through target specific programs

Language barriers are common, Arabic vs English vs French, a common issue among African refugees and displaced people

Governments have potential to support and roll-out programs to remove barriers for displaced persons, refugees, returnees and host communities including but not limited to partnerships with Refugee led organizations to support programming for the displaced communities.

Appreciating that

12. Refugees and displacement of populations from their home countries is a global phenomenon. The global target for the Mastercard Foundation program is 15% enrollment of refugees in higher education by 2030 from the current rate of 7% (262, 664) in 2024.

Emergency responses have not focused on higher education, yet the reality is that, refugees are displaced for long periods. Higher education provides

lasting solutions, by providing access to skills, and transition to the world of work.

There are diverse education systems on the continent affecting access, conversion and equating of qualifications and prior learning for refugees, displaced persons, returnees and host communities who often do not move with their academic credentials, there is need to create awareness and design systems that recognise prior learning and integration of refugee communities in the education systems of host countries.

There is need to identify pathways to include refugees in higher education programming, so that no one is left behind

Acknowledging that:

13. The TAGDEV 2.0 program of RUFORUM has committed to reach more than 300K refugees and displaced persons which is 50% of the global target largely focusing on refugee hot spot countries – Uganda, Ethiopia, Sudan and others in the great lakes region.

National policies are not strong and aligned to recognize the complexities of the refugee education systems including the need for documentation, equating qualifications and transition across the education pipeline.

The policy dialogues received statements from government Ministries, the CGAIR and regional research organisations and **Recommended that**, A technical working group be established by the African Union Commission to identify pathways and explore opportunities to:

1. Undertake strategic interventions to bolster the capacity of universities to generate the requisite knowledge, skills and innovations to catalyze graduate training and meet the STYIP target of 100,000 PhDs
2. Adopt an ecosystem approach to higher education paying attention to the downstream education pipeline and the upstream, jobs, wealth creation, livelihood and lifelong learning and build resilience to external and system shocks
3. Establish long term and equal partnerships between the AU and EU to promote human capital development especially in Africa, through:



regional research programmes, staff exchanges, sabbaticals, and placements

4. Promote AU-EU collaboration and partnership to undertake multi and transdisciplinary research to provide proactive advice to funders and decision makers about their future investments, priorities & policy design and adopt a bottom-up approach in defining priorities
5. Promote south-south cooperation with frameworks for resource sharing, mentorship, sabbaticals, academic exchange, regional and joint programs that can be fostered under the RUFORUM network
6. Adopt a more intensive communication approach on the mandate and activities of the different research and regional entities to boost collaboration and value proposition that will spur investment in human capacity development
7. Promote linkages with industry and the private sector and adopt an ecosystem approach to education, research and innovation; Enhance practical training and capacity building (establish field schools to build practical skills and continuous professional development)
8. Adopt and promote the International Research Consortium (IRC) as a platform for long-term partnership between African and European countries aimed at enhancing coordination and coherence in research and innovation projects.
9. Strengthen institutional capacity and promote the development of homegrown solutions and context specific initiatives that will further sustainably develop human, research and impact solutions across the continent.
10. Reach out to African governments and other Funding Agencies to **invest** in youth programs (including refugees) that advance requisite technical skills, entrepreneurship and uptake of digital solutions to expand innovation and employability

To support refugee communities

1. Develop a common educational framework that allows training refugees and displaced people in African higher education institutions which can be spearheaded by RUFORUM to strengthen international and regional cooperation to mobilise the necessary resources and a support network

system to promote refugee access to education and integration in host countries.




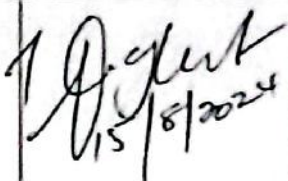


2. Develop capacity among higher education institutions to accommodate the different languages of refugee and displaced people and mobilise resources to offer scholarships and research grants for refugee communities
3. Promote coordination of activities between the countries where refugees come from, through their embassies and diplomatic missions, the host countries and international organisations that settle them to establish reliable data with respect to numbers and the different attributes of refugees
4. Standardize the education system in Africa to ensure alignment and guarantee refugees access to an education that will offer them the same opportunities for employability and mobility as nationals and or host communities.
5. Promote sharing and recognition of credentials, prior learning and acceptance of minimum level of qualification and entrance exams for students that are unable to provide proof of prior learning.
6. Establish:
 - strong in-country coordination of opportunities and regional networks, and create a dedicated and agile platform for engagement/one stop access to information
 - programming schemes to support and motivate refugee students to gain agency and voice to pursue academic programs of their choice
7. Diversify the education models and establish robust online learning systems that will promote learning across a broad spectrum of refugee and host communities.

Strongly advocate to

Leverage regional ecosystem frameworks with institutions such as RUFORUM - to holistically address the human capital and research needs on the continent.

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Signed by

Name	Designation	Country	Date
H.E Prof Safi Sombo Ayanne Marie-Therese	Minister of Higer Education,	DR Congo	 15.09.2024
H.E Godana Kora Tushune,	State Minister for Higher Education,	Federal Republic of Ethiopia	
Hon. Dr. John Chrysostom Muyingo,	Minister of State for Higher Education,	Uganda	 15.08/2024 15/08/24
Hon. Dr. Itah Kandjii- Murangi,	Minister of Higher Education, Training and Innovation,	Namibia	 15/8/2024
Hon. Carl Schlettwein,	Minister of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform,	Namibia	
Prof Theresia Nkuo-Akenji	RUFORUM- Board Chair and VC University of Bamenda	Cameroon	
Dr Simeon Ehui	Regional Director for Africa and Director General IITA	Ivory Coast	 15/08/2024