INSTITUTIONAL CAPABILITY STATEMENT

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) is a network of African universities. Until 2004, the Network had operated as a programme of the Rockefeller Foundation beginning in 1992 known as Forum for Agricultural Resource Husbandry (FORUM). FORUM focused on capacity building to enhance food and nutrition security, working with faculties of agriculture in 10 Universities in 5 countries (Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda and Zimbabwe).

RUFORUM is now registered in Uganda as an International Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) with a membership of 126 universities in 38 countries across the African continent. Membership to RUFORUM is open to African postgraduate degree-awarding institutions with faculties, schools institutes or equivalent units in the field of agriculture and related sciences and those offering science, technology and innovation programmes.

Why RUFORUM exists

Institutionally, RUFORUM aims to:
- Foster integration of African universities into the national agricultural innovation systems (NAIS).
- Provide a platform for training quality graduates to support development processes in Africa.
- Rationalise resource use and enhance economies of scale and scope.
- Provide a platform for networking, resource mobilisation and advocacy for agricultural higher education, science, Technology and Innovation in Africa.

To achieve the above aims, RUFORUM developed its Vision 2030 Strategy through a wide-ranging consultative prioritization and consensus building process among the member universities and other actors from within and outside Africa for implementing the three strategic goals.

Vision

Vibrant, transformative universities catalysing sustainable, inclusive agricultural development to feed and create prosperity for Africa

Mission

RUFORUM’s Mission is to strengthen the capacities of Universities to foster innovations responsive to demands of small-holder farmers through the training of high quality researchers, the output of impact oriented research, and the maintenance of collaborative working relations among researchers, farmers, national agricultural research institutions, and governments

To help achieve its vision and mission, RUFORUM’s internal operations are guided by ten core Values and Principles of:
1. **Inclusiveness** – by promoting both a balance in the gender of researchers (faculty, student and partner agencies) and in the inclusion of a gender perspective in the project proposals;

2. **Social responsibility** – by promoting links with, and understanding of, conditions in rural areas and to expose students and faculty to the rewards of service through the projects supported;

3. **Long-term change** – through a focus on systemic change and capacity building;

4. **Sustainability** - through awareness of the environmental impact of the proposed research;

5. **Diversity** – by recognising and valuing differences and similarities in perspectives, by ensuring an appropriate balance between generic and disciplinary approaches to problem solving;

6. **Creativity** – by providing faculty and students with opportunities to develop innovative solutions both in addressing the problems faced by smallholder farmers, and in managing research projects in remote areas;

7. **Collaboration** – through the multi-agency teams encouraged through the CARP and to a lesser extent the GRG. Through these teams RUFORUM is dedicated to the emergence of pro-active networks and better communication which is further consolidated through the establishment of a National Forum;

8. **Excellence** – through an independent selection of the best proposals and a mentoring and monitoring system to ensure quality in its programs and awards, through encouraging such systems in all member faculties, and through building the reputation of the research and networking that emerges from the CGS;

9. **Equity** – by investing in the member institutions which are under-represented in grant awards so that they may compete effectively in the future; and,

10. **Enhanced human capital** - by encouraging timely graduation and commitment to serving African development

Specifically, RUFORUM recognizes the important and largely unfulfilled role that universities play in contributing to the well-being of small-scale farmers and economic development of countries in Africa. The Network has several unique features for building Africa’s innovation capacity and for engaging universities in development process and practice; i) It is owned and managed by Africans; ii) It derives its agenda largely from the continent wide policy frameworks especially of the African Union-New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) the wish by African Heads of State and Government outlined in the Malabo Declaration on sustaining CAADP, the Higher Education, Science and Technology (HEST) Strategies of Development Partners and Multilateral Agencies, the Science Agenda for Agriculture in Africa (S3A), the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA), the Agricultural Education and Skills Improvement Framework (AESIF) and the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) of the member States and Governments and constant review of global trends and foresight planning to ensure Africa has the required capacity for global competitiveness; iii) it allows for joint action by the member universities. This is enhanced through joint faculty appointment for the 126 universities, payment of local fees by graduate students and national mechanisms (National Forums) which ensure wide stakeholder participation in the RUFORUM programmes; and iv) the Network provides a wide array of training opportunities for stakeholders, and is in the process of implementing a harmonization and quality assurance mechanism among the member universities.
RUFORUM Strategic Goals

- **Building synergy from networks of specialisation** to develop quality human resources and capacity required to intensify and increase Africa’s agricultural productivity and competitiveness.

- **Ensuring the products, processes and knowledge developed** through university research directly respond to and are used by value chain actors in the agri-food system to catalyse transformation.

- **Marshalling resources and strategically allocating** them to enable African universities to transform into viable institutional entities responsive to national aspirations and conditions through intensive knowledge-sharing and collective action.

RUFORUM Flagship Programmes

As a network of universities, RUFORUM has a strategic vision and accumulated experience and leadership skills to drive programmes that take on the challenges of transforming the higher education and agricultural sectors in Africa while bringing stakeholders together around a shared, long-term vision and influencing decision-makers at the highest levels. To achieve its vision, RUFORUM established four (4) flagship programmes for diffusion to drive results for transforming agriculture in Africa.

1. **TAGDEV - Transforming African Agricultural Universities for Africa’s Growth and Development**: Strengthen Agricultural universities and TVET institutions to produce innovative, entrepreneurial and society responsive graduates.

2. **RANCH - Regional Anchor Universities for Higher Agricultural Education**: Escalate the setting up of a network of linked universities as African Anchor Universities/Centres of Excellence and academic leadership in agricultural higher education and STI.

3. **CREATE - Cultivating Research and Teaching Excellence**: Support the design and implementation of high impact capacity development innovations that provide an environment and opportunities for quality training, experiential learning and engagement by faculty, students and communities.

4. **K-HUB - Knowledge Hub for University Networking, Partnership and Advocacy**: Promote a culture of learning and knowledge sharing aimed at improving policy and practice.

Instruments and Protocols for Implementation of Flagships

RUFORUM employs various instruments and protocols for implementing its programmes:

- **a) Academic Staff Development (ASD)** through the Graduate Teaching Assistantships, scholarships, fellowships and short-term training schemes to enhance and support excellence in academic practice at RUFORUM member universities across leadership and management, professional skills, research, teaching and learning.

- **b) Regional Academic Mobility Scheme (RAMS)** an intra-university academic mobility scheme promoting cooperation among African higher education institutions and supporting mobility in Africa with the aim of increasing access to quality education while strengthening the competitiveness and attractiveness of the institutions themselves.

- **c) RUFORUM Postdoctoral Fellows (Postdocs)** – providing opportunities for RUFORUM graduates to continue conducting professional research after the completion of their doctoral studies (typically a PhD). The ultimate goal of a postdoctoral research position is to undertake additional research, training or teaching in order to hone skills for the purposes of pursuing a career in academia, research or any other field.

- **d) Research Chairs** – to attract and introduce new research leadership capacity, while retaining excellence, with the intention of expanding
scientific research and innovation capacity, improving research and innovation competitiveness, increasing the capacity of institutions to supervise postgraduate students, creating research career pathways for young and mid-career researchers, increasing diversity and achieving equity, and preventing brain drain.

e) **Research Grants Scheme (RGS)** for influencing the strategic orientation of research to work closely with all stakeholders along the value chains to strengthen uptake and influence policy; and to increase Africa’s contribution to global, national and local knowledge through scientific publications, R&D collaboration, technology transfer and knowledge diffusion.

**Organisation and Governance**

The RUFORUM Governance structure is designed to promote ownership of the organization by the member universities while at the same time ensuring good international practices and quality. There are seven main governance organs that are serviced by a Regional Secretariat. Each of these organs has distinct responsibilities that are interlinked or feed into each other. The governance structure of the Network consists of the following elements:

**FIGURE 3: RUFORUM Governance Structure**

### Annual General Assembly

This is the annual meeting of RUFORUM member universities and other stakeholders and it is the supreme organ of the Organisation. The functions include:
- Guide the overall orientation of RUFORUM mission and programmes
- Approve annual work plan and budget
- Receive and consider external auditor’s report
- Appoint external auditor for the following year

### Board of Directors

The Board of Directors (131 members) is composed of representatives of Vice Chancellors (126), Civil Society & Private Sector, NARS/Regional Research and Training Networks and organisations, and continental/ International organizations (5) as spelt out in the Articles of Association of RUFORUM. The Board meets at least once a year and undertakes the following functions;
- Legal representation of RUFORUM
- Approval of policies
- Approval of budgets
- Recruitment of regional staff
- Nomination of specialized committees, including the Board Executive Committee, Audit Committee, Finance & Administration Committee, International Advisory Panel and Technical Committee
- Supporting resource mobilization
- Link to national governments
- Marketing of RUFORUM
- Approval of guidelines for eligibility and grants awards

**Board Executive Committee**

This Committee is composed of: the Board Chair, the Deputy Board Chair, the Chair Finance and Administration Committee, the Chair Audit Committee, one representative from each of the 5 Geographical regions of Africa, one female representative, one representative of private sector/farmer organizations, and the Executive Secretary, as secretary to the Committee. The Committee acts on behalf of the Board and especially serves to provide closer oversight of the Secretariat. It meets at least twice a year.

**Finance and Administration Committee**

This Committee consists of four members of the Board, constituted to ensure that at least one of them is from outside the University System. The Executive Secretary serves as the Secretary to the Committee. The Committee meets at least twice a year and serves to:
- Oversee finance management and human resource issues of the Secretariat
- Review and advise on budget on behalf of the Board
- Review performance of regional appointed staff
- Guide resource mobilization strategy

**Audit Committee**

This Committee consists of four members of the Board, constituted to ensure that at least one of them is from outside the University System. The Executive Secretary serves as the Secretary to the Committee. The Committee meets at least twice a year and serves to:
- Oversee audit issues of the Secretariat
- Review Internal and External audit reports
- Review and recommend appointment of External auditor
- Guide on Audit issues

**Technical Committee**

This Committee is composed of three elected representatives of the participating Faculties in RUFORUM and four representatives of stakeholders from outside the university system. The Committee has an elective chair who serves for 3 years and the Executive Secretary is the Secretary to the Committee. The Committee meets usually twice a year. The functions of the Committee are:
- Review and approval of grant proposals
- Advice to the Secretariat on calls for proposals and emerging issues
- Advise on capacity development thrusts
- Oversee research and training activities

**International Advisory Panel (IAP)**

Consists of eight eminent international experts, 4 from within and 4 outside Africa. It serves to support international recognition of RUFORUM and its programmes. The IAP major functions are to:
- Provide international oversight and Quality Assurance
- Mobilise international support and partnerships
- Provide policy advice to the Secretariat and Board
• Advice to the Board on research, training and outreach thrusts.
The Board may also appoint from time to time Honorary Members of the International Advisory Panel, distinguished personalities to help market RUFORUM and advises as necessary.

**Principals and Deans’ Committee**

Consists of Deans and Principals of participating faculties. It meets at least once a year. Its functions are:

- Review of issues from the National Forums and Regional Thematic Groups and feedback of information to the Secretariat and Technical Committee
- Advice to the RUFORUM Secretariat on activity progress and issues emerging at individual university and country levels.

A sub Committee of the Principals and Deans Committee serves to follow up on actions and issues from the main Committee. It meets at least twice a year and consists of the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Principal and Deans Committee and four others constituted to ensure there is regional and female representation.

**Executive Secretary and Secretariat**

The Secretariat operates as a facilitating unit and internal service provider to the organisation. Its main management functions are:

- Facilitation of implementation of Board, IAP, Audit, Finance & Administration, Technical Committee and Principals and Deans Committee deliberations
- Development and implementation of budgets and Financial Management
- Coordination of programmes
- Link the Board, National Forums and other stakeholders
- Facilitation of Monitoring and Evaluation

- Provision of documentation for use by members and general public
- Resource mobilization and advocacy
- Organisation of learning and other events of interest to RUFORUM
- Brokering partnerships for the organisation.

The Secretariat is managed by a team of experienced international experts led by the Executive secretary as the Chief Executive. There is an efficient and transparent financial management system that is audited by an international firm. Because of this RUFORUM manages several regional and international programmes such as those of NEPAD, FARA, COMESA, CCARDESA and ASARECA.

**National Forums**

The National Forums are established at country level, according to the specificity of each country. Each is composed of representatives of participating universities, other actors such as policy makers, national farmer organisations, national agricultural research and extension systems, and members of the Technical Committee for that country. It is chaired by a distinguished person outside the university system and has a secretariat based in a member university. Each National Forum meets at least once a year and has the following functions:

- Championship and coordination of stakeholders and activities
- Assessing demand for university R&D, prioritising research, planning and monitoring of activities
- Analysis of interventions, learning lessons and foster adaptation of the research and training efforts
- Advocacy and resource mobilisation
- Document and publicize the activities of RUFORUM both at national and international levels.
Contributing to Broad Development Issues

To date, all our graduates are employed in different sectors, and are contributing to national and regional development. RUFORUM graduates are involved in policy-making, are active in the commercial sector, some are with national research institutions, some are research scientists with the CGIAR and others are working as frontline actors with NGOs and other community based organizations. At university level, postgraduate programmes have been strengthened and some of the universities are now in position to move beyond MSc to PhD training programmes, while some are able to engage in internationally competitive cutting edge research. RUFORUM has ensured continued visible engagement of universities in development processes and practices so that institutional and human capital is not lost.

Promoting Female Participation

RUFORUM has a deliberate policy to promote women-education, primarily through increasing opportunities for graduate training, and working with them and other actors to advance their academic careers. RUFORUM works with the member universities to mainstream gender in their programmes, and to establish deliberate plans to increase access to especially postgraduate education and job placement of women and other disadvantaged groups. RUFORUM research and development activities are also designed to ensure active women participation.

Partnering with International Organisations

RUFORUM is linked to and conducts joint activities with several institutions both within the region and internationally.

RUFORUM thrust is to foster collaboration and strong engagement:

- Strengthening youth employability and entrepreneurship skills development and developing capacity of emerging scientists and leaders for Africa
- Research to generate technologies and innovations to improve communities’ livelihood in Africa
- Working with other partners, to strengthen access to primary, secondary and tertiary education for disadvantaged communities and fragile communities in Africa
- Partnership with other agencies for supporting Africa’s development agenda as enshrined in Agenda 2063

It has linked and works with CGIARS, has joint academic programmes with Northern partner universities, strong south-south partnerships in research and training, has joint learning platforms with partners such as African Union Commission (AUC), NEPAD, Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), Association of African Universities (AAU), The World Bank, The Technical Center for Agricultural and Rural Corporation (CTA-EU), Centre de Cooperation International en Recherche Agronomique pour le Development (CIRAD), Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FARNPAN), African Technology Policy Strategy Network (ATPS) etc. Besides formal institutional linkages RUFORUM senior staff have participated in continent wide activities sponsored by several organisations such as FAR A, AAU, AUC, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), FAO, NEPAD, United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), The World Bank and Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA).

RUFORUM is a learning institution. Its programmes and activities are based on lessons learnt and foresight on likely scenarios for agricultural development in Africa and globally, and the role of higher education in Agriculture and development.
RUFORUM is looking ahead and has developed four initiatives for strengthening higher education and ST&I in Africa.

**Components:**
- Developing entrepreneurship and innovation skills & technology
- Support training, demand-driven research, staff exchanges
- Regional Anchor Universities championing transformation

**Build Capacity in:**
- Sustainable innovative technologies
- Engineering and renewable energy
- Ag. markets, trade & policy
- Data management & ICT
- Science education

**SASTIE:**
- Strengthening Africa’s Innovation and Entrepreneurship Capacity

**BASTIC:**
- Building Africa’s Science, Technology and Innovation Capacity for Economic Growth

**RISSCAW:**
- Regional Initiative to Strengthen Staff Capacity and Increase the Pool of Women Scientists in African Universities

**AfriDAP:**
- African Digital Agricultural Programme: Digital technologies for agricultural transformation

**Pillars:**
- Digital learning and sharing technologies
- Digital agricultural innovation and incubation

**Outcomes:**
- Create a critical mass of staff
- Increased pool of women scientists
- Strengthened university-industry relations
- Enhanced research and development support

FIGURE 4: RUFORUM’s Regional Initiatives Strengthening Higher Education and ST&I in Africa

RUFORUM is an African success story that is now being widely utilised as a model for building African human and institutional capacity and for engaging African universities in development process and practice.
# Appendix: RUFORUM Member Universities

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<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>City/ Town Location</th>
<th>Year of Joining RUFORUM</th>
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