



Shona Bezanson
Head of the Eastern and Southern Africa Partners Network, Scholars Program, Mastercard Foundation

Closing Ceremony Remarks, on behalf of Development Partners

Good afternoon,

Thank you once again for inviting Mastercard Foundation to this important event. It's been a very full week, with thought-provoking sessions, interesting exhibits, great networking opportunities, wonderful conversations, and connecting with friends old and new.

I believe I speak on behalf of all development partners when I say thank you so much to the organizing team. All of us in this room have, at some point, organized convenings, so we know the incredible amount of work that goes into realizing an event like this. Thank you Adipala and your team at RUFORUM; let's clap for them. Thanks also to the leadership, management and students of the University of Cape Coast for

hosting us.

I will not provide remarks today on Mastercard Foundation or our strategy, Young Africa Works. Those of you here for other sessions have heard me share these things earlier this week. What I would like to do is reflect on some of the themes I've heard this week:

- One: that the education agenda needs to be owned by countries in Africa themselves, and designed to reflect the outcomes desired by the nation. This is not to say that countries should become isolationist, rather than they should connect with others and seek partnerships with development partners, on their own terms.
- the need for universities to become more inclusive – to ensure that rural youth, women, refugees, displaced youth, young people with disabilities can get into the classroom and successfully learn. We've talked a lot about innovation, and I truly believe that diversity in our universities is a spark for this.
- We've talked about the need to connect science, technology and innovation education in universities to the realities of local communities. Taking science and technology out

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of the lab and into the fields and communities, to listen to what local people need and to solve local challenges.

- The need to better connect what's taught in universities and the realities of the local labour market. This requires engaging private sector, employers, and local businesses: bringing these stakeholders into universities in an advisory capacity, curriculum review, engaging directly with students.
- We have heard about the need to interrogate and transform the way students are taught in universities, shifting to an approach that advances learning. Experiential activities, teamwork, service projects. So that while students are learning about technical content, they're also learning about values, as well as transferrable skills and leadership.
- We've heard about the need to nurture and support young agriculture and science and technology entrepreneurs. Young people are finding and creating work everywhere in agriculture. Just look at the awardees this morning. Africa needs these job creators, and universities should find ways to help them build and scale their ideas.

Two more themes; and these ones are really important.

- Climate change. This is a reality that will hit countries in Africa hard. How do we leverage science, technology and innovation to address climate change, and its predicted impact?
- The meaningful inclusion of women in the science, technology and innovation agenda. We cannot make real advances when half the population is under-represented in the classrooms, in the policy space, in the leadership, in the dialogue. I applaud the (few but mighty) young women who were recognized for their entrepreneurial projects this morning, as well as the Forum for Women Vice Chancellors who met earlier this week. Female VCs, keep elbowing your way into the mainstream discussion at this forum and others.

What has struck me most about this gathering is the way in which RUFORUM perfectly reflects some of the values and approaches Mastercard Foundation holds dear. And that all of us as development partners should cherish and emulate:

- Coming together for a shared goal; working together to achieve the best outcomes; leveraging one another's strengths and assets; listening to each other; generously sharing insight and experience so we can all learn.
- This is a very powerful network – both in scope and depth. It is mission oriented, it is owned by its members, and it lives here, in Africa.

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Mastercard Foundation is proud to be a partner in this network. We applaud RUFORUM's leadership and efforts and commit to continuing to accompany RUFORUM in its critical mission. Thank you.

This is our fifteenth issue in a series of articles we are releasing as part of our RUFORUM AGM 2019 Digests. You can get more details about the meeting at <http://www.ruforum.org/AGM2019/> and more information about RUFORUM at www.ruforum.org. You may also join us online using Social Media for real time updates. Our Official hashtag is #AGMGhana2019.

About the Author:

Shona Bezanson is Head of the Eastern and Southern Africa Partners Network, Scholars Program at Mastercard Foundation. Prior to joining the Foundation, Shona served as a child protection advisor on Save the Children UK's emergencies team, working in Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Chad. Before that, she managed programs for refugee youth with Right To Play and the Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees, in Thailand. Shona completed a Masters in International Development Studies at Dalhousie University and a Bachelor of History and Political Science at Mount Allison University, in Canada.