

Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture Secretariat Quarterly Report

1st July- 30th September 2020

Summary

This report highlights key achievements and progress made during the period 1st July-30th September 2020 (the first quarter of the Financial Year 2020/2021, and the third year of implementing the [operational plan-2018-2022](#) of RUFORUM [Vision 2030](#)). The Operational Plan is designed around four (4) flagship programmes underpinned by activities to support regional collective action and learning to give stimulus to achieving the RUFORUM vision for *vibrant transformative universities catalysing inclusive agricultural development to feed and create prosperity for Africa*. The four flagship programmes are:

- Transforming African Agricultural Universities to meaningfully contribute to Africa's Growth and Development (TAGDev) seeks to transform African agricultural universities and their graduates to better respond to developmental challenges through enhanced application of science, technology, business and innovation for rural agricultural transformation.
- Cultivating Research and Teaching Excellence (CREATE) seeks to realign universities' research and teaching functions into a more integrated model with a focus on problem solving and enhancing the capacity of the entire university academic practice and outreach system mainly.
- Regional Anchor Universities for Higher Agricultural Education (RANCH) seeks to escalate the setting up of a network of linked universities as African anchor universities/African centres of excellence and academic leadership in agricultural higher education and learning.
- Knowledge Hub for University Networking, Partnership and Advocacy (K-Hub) builds on RUFORUM's convening power and facilitates the creation, capture, organising, sharing and refining of information and content across teams and geographic locations – thus increasing access to latest evidence based information and knowledge.

Activities for this first quarter in financial year 2020/2021 have been implemented within the context of restriction and response to the challenges generated by the COVID-19 pandemic. **Below are the highlights of progress made across the flagships:**

- a) RUFORUM engaged Gulu and Egerton University to develop, reconfigure and operationalise online learning and translation of academic programmes into online-adapted programmes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Five academic programmes at Egerton University were digitized. Based on the pilot academic programmes currently offered on-line, the university has fully adopted online learning for other academic programmes in line with Government of Kenya regulations for standardisation.
- b) RUFORUM extended psychosocial support to continuing students in Gulu University and Egerton University participating in the TAGDev Programme. This included continuous mentorship and counselling, additional upkeep, internet access and online trainings.
- c) RUFORUM recruited additional thirty (30) bright but disadvantaged youth from Africa to undertake Master's degree studies in Egerton and Gulu Universities with support from Mastercard Foundation.

- d) There has been increased engagement between universities and the private sector through partnerships and commercialisation of Research and Innovations under the agribusiness hubs.
- e) RUFORUM Community Action Research Projects continued to develop innovations to support smallholder farmers. This included value added products, grain and clean planting materials which attracted the attention of development partners and respective local government resulting into securing funding for scaling out the innovations developed.
- f) Five students from five African Universities were supported to complete PhD studies under the RUFORUM Graduate Teaching Assistantship programme. Additional five students were facilitated to undertake GTA studies, bringing to total 143 students supported under the GTA arrangement.
- g) As part of response to the COVID-19 pandemic RUFORUM conducted [ten](#) (10) webinars for purpose of lesson learning and galvanizing collective response.

INTRODUCTION:

The narrative below details RUFORUM Secretariat's activities progress and the achievements made during the period 1st July- 30th September 2020, the first quarter of the financial year 2020/2021. The report is arranged by Flagship Programmes of the RUFORUM [Vision 2030](#).

Flagship programme: TAGDev-Transforming African Agricultural Universities for Africa's Growth and Development

This flagship programme is largely supported by the Mastercard Foundation, initially anchored in two early adopter universities, Gulu University in Uganda and Egerton University in Kenya. It has expanded to encompass twenty three (23) universities under the Community Action Research Programme (CARP), RUFORUM Entrepreneurship Challenge (RECAP) and the nurturing support.

a) Design and roll-out online adapted academic training programmes at early adopter universities

Egerton University and Gulu University were supported to build staff capacity for online learning and translation of academic programmes into online adapted programmes. Five (5) academic programmes (MSc Soil Science, MSc Horticulture, MSc Agricultural Extension, MSc Agri-Enterprise Development and MSc Natural Resources Management) at Egerton University were successfully digitized and will be offered online this coming academic year 2020-2021.

b) Support continued professional development of University and TVET Staff in entrepreneurship to strengthen the entrepreneurial acumen and skills in TVET institutions and Universities

RUFORUM supported training of fifty nine (59) persons at Bukalasa Agricultural College, Uganda in entrepreneurship with focus on commercializing potato and potato value chain products. Five products including; crisps, cookies, waffles, frozen French fries, and potato composite flour, have been developed and undergoing market feasibility prior to full scale commercialization.

c) Recruit students to complete graduate studies in agricultural sciences in Gulu University, Uganda and Egerton University, Kenya

With support from the Mastercard Foundation, thirty (30) students (16 Females and 14 Males) from eleven (11) African countries including Burundi, Cameroon, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Somalia, Zambia and Zimbabwe have been recruited to undertake Masters Degree studies at Egerton and Gulu University effective academic year 2020/2021. To-date 385 students including 25 PhD, 175 Masters and 185 undergraduates have been recruited and undertaking studies with support from the Mastercard Foundation. Thirty students (13 female, 17 male) have already completed their studies under the programme.

d) Support community action research teams of supported students and faculty at each university to engage with communities and strengthen commodity value chains for smallholder farmers

During the reporting period, research teams implementing CARP+ projects supported smallholder farmers in various activities. Examples include supply of clean planting materials and training in value addition. These efforts are aimed at increasing productivity and stimulating transition of participating smallholder farmers towards agribusiness-led production. For the smallholders from Northern Uganda, participating in the Rice CARP+ has increased yield, the farmer group harvested 2,790 tons equivalent to UGX483,000,000/= (US\$133,000).

Increased yield for rice farmers attached to the Gulu University CARP+ catalysed several spin-offs including: engagement of the research teams by Nwoya District Local Government under Operation Wealth Creation (OWC) to supply nine (9) tons of quality assured seed equivalent to US\$6,200; securing of equipment for agricultural mechanization; and, competitively securing a matching grant worth UGX 350,000,000 (US\$96,000) for establishing a processing facility to enhance the quality and value of milled rice in Northern Uganda

Under the Community Based Incubation Initiative, Gulu University in Uganda has been contracted by five District Local Governments in northern Uganda to support the skilling of rural entrepreneurs prior to and after receiving the Government of Uganda investment funds for enterprise development. Gulu University has subsequently trained 61 farmer groups of 186 farmers engaged in 19 different agribusiness enterprises and value addition franchises. The local communities including government agencies are thus increasingly recognising the key role played by universities in driving economic development and prosperity.

Activities under the sixteen Community Action Research Projects focusing on: apiary (Sudan), baobab (Benin), cassava (Kenya), cereals, legumes and water harvesting (Zimbabwe), encroacher bushes (Namibia), famine crops (Sudan), piggery (Uganda), natural resources management (Sudan), pineapple (Ghana), potato (Kenya and Uganda), rice (Uganda), safflower (Botswana), sheep and wool (South Africa) and vegetables (Sudan) continued. These have directly impacted on 295,000 livelihoods in the implementing countries since inception.

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Enhancing Livestock Community Adaptation through Climate Resilient Agriculture: Encroacher bushes value chains initiative in Otjozondjupa Region, Namibia

The **UNAM AWD Biomass Hub** is a 4-year program funded by the **Mastercard Foundation** through the **RUFORUM Community Action Research Programme PLUS**. We aim at capacitating community members to sustainably utilise and add value to encroacher bushes through the establishment of a bush biomass hub.

e) Support the development, scaling-up and commercialisation of innovations emerging from agribusiness incubation centres for greater impacts

Despite the interruptions caused by COVID-19 induced university closures, agribusiness incubation operations at Egerton University (Kenya) and Bishop Stuart University (Uganda) continued with some of the students' enterprises functional. Ten (10) student-led enterprises are active in Kenya with 42 employees. Egerton University is further establishing a TAGDev incubation hub that will serve a wider university community, sectors, and private sector actors in Kenya and beyond. The agribusiness incubation hub at Bishop Stuart University has partnered with the Innovation Village, UNDP/Youth Go Green and the UNHCR to support youth training in business and entrepreneurship skills development.

f) Support Universities to pursue partnerships with industry to spin out start-ups based on commercialisable research outputs and knowledge products

During the quarter, eleven (11) students undertaking community action research in Benin, Ghana and Zimbabwe have focused on translating their research innovations into enterprises. This is the first step for commercialisation of research and innovations and productive engagement with the private sector. The enterprises include sesameal porridge (Zimbabwe), butchery for pork and other meats (Zimbabwe), pineapple value addition-processing (Ghana) and pineapple marketing (Ghana), but they still require support and mentoring to grow their enterprises to maturity.

g) Support Student field attachment to communities and mentorship for Cohort I, II, III and IV undergraduate and Cohort II and III post-graduates

Owing to university closures and interruptions of classroom-based learning, field attachments of students to communities was interrupted. However to date, RUFORUM-supported students have spearheaded community-based initiatives in their various communities in delivering agricultural

extension services to 2,200 smallholder farmers in Kenya and Uganda. Cumulatively, these students have engaged with 9,818 smallholder farmers in delivering agricultural innovations. Further, at Gulu University with support from the TAGDev programme, the University has launched a Community Engagement Strategy Policy that, among others, seeks to consolidate the university's central focus on community transformation. The University is expanding the Call Centre that allows for the interface with the farmers on various aspects of agriculture and agribusiness. Linked to the Call Centre is the University's action to revitalize the Campus radio to support its efforts in the delivery of complementary extension services. Students at the University will be central to both the Call Centre and Campus radio programming.

h) Provide additional psychosocial support and learning options for continuing students to enable them manage the COVID-19 pandemic

With support from the Mastercard Foundation, RUFORUM disbursed emergency assistance to all students supported under the TAGDev programme at Gulu University and Egerton University. Further, 290 students at Egerton University (144), Gulu University (134) and Ndejje University (12) received internet connectivity support to enable them continue accessing online learning materials as well as attend all online facilitated trainings and engagement events. All the international students that still reside at Egerton University and Gulu University campuses receive continuous counselling and engagement. With respect to all other RUFORUM supported students, the Secretariat has continued to keep in touch through routine communication and monthly meetings, and provide limited financial support to 80 needy students, including university staff undertaking graduates studies under the Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) programme.

i) Document, synthesize and share lessons emerging from the TAGDev programme

During the quarter, publication of Voices from the Field Vol. 4 “Transforming cassava production through Delivery of Clean Planting Materials and Business Development in Coastal Kenya” with 12 articles has been finalised. The publication shares the transformation journey and progress made by the Cassava CARP project implemented by the University of Nairobi in Kenya and in Uganda.

Three articles sharing the life stories and outcomes of the TAGDev programme through translation of the research results and innovation were published. These include;

- [The unexploited nutrient benefits of Sesame \(*Sesamum Indicum*\) oil seed crop for smallholder farmers in rural areas of Zimbabwe.](#)
- Ms. Aipa shares the impact of the programme on her life and the transformational journey and action she has undertaken at community level under the theme; [education is a change catalyst.](#)
- Mr. Andrew Waaswa shares his life experience in ['the tough but promising journey'](#) article in which he describes the impact of the scholarship to him and his family.

The “TAGDev Stories: Young Africans seeding agri-entrepreneurship in African universities” book manuscript has been finalised. The book explores three interweaving threads of personal,

institutional and societal transformation that together tell a story about the complex processes of building human capacity across African agri-food systems and creating conditions of opportunity and empowerment for young people in Africa.

j) Mid-term review of the TAGDev programme

The TAGDev programme supported by the Mastercard Foundation in its fifth year of implementation is undergoing a mid-term review. The consultant Graide International, has undertaken wide ranging consultations and field visits to various projects sites, and conducted interviews. The assignment is expected to be completed by December 2020.

k) Feasibility Study on Youth employment, entrepreneurship and agro-innovation development in Uganda

With support from the Arab Bank for Economic Development (BADEA), RUFORUM in Partnership with the Government of Uganda Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovations engaged Geotropic Consults Limited to undertake a feasibility study on Youth employment, entrepreneurship and agricultural sector development Uganda project. The Inception Report, outlining the detailed methodological approaches and the survey/data capture tools to be used was completed.

Emerging lessons and issues

University operations have been impacted by the restrictions/closures as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic. This has slowed down several of the planned activities.

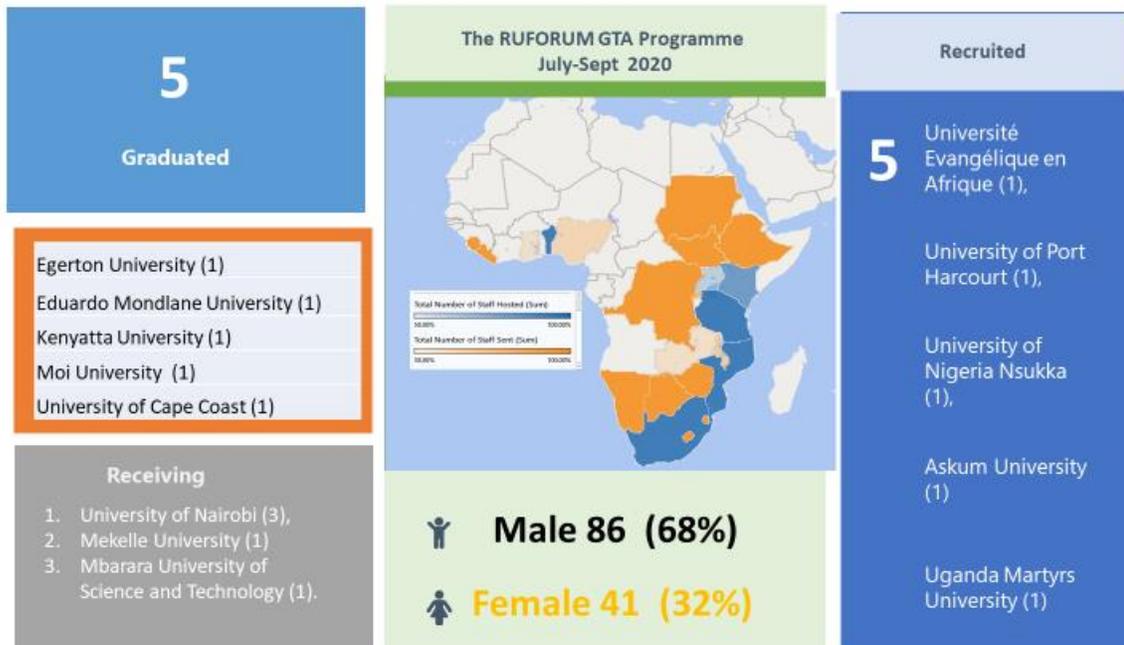
Flagship programme: CREATE-Cultivating Research and Teaching Excellence

a) Facilitate Academic Staff Development (ASD) Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) programs

During quarter, five (5) GTA students (1 female, 4 male) completed studies at five RUFORUM Member universities (Egerton University, Eduardo Mondlane University, Kenyatta University, Moi University and University of Cape Coast), bringing to total sixteen (16) GTA students that have so far completed studies under the GTA program. Additional five (5) students were recruited from five universities; Université Evangélique en Afrique (1), University of Port Harcourt (1), University of Nigeria Nsukka (1), Askum University (1) and Uganda Martyrs University (1) to undertake studies at the University of Nairobi (3), Mekelle University (1) and Mbarara University of Science and Technology (1). A total of 127 (41 female, 86 Male) GTA students are still undertaking Masters and PhD studies in several member universities.

With support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York under the *Deepening Early Career Engagement To Support Enrolment And Research Capacity For African Universities* project, RUFORUM awarded two-year Doctoral research [grants](#) to 42 (29 males, 13 females) current Graduate Teaching Assistants from 21 member universities to undertake participatory action research with

a range of stakeholders. This is part of RUFORUM's quest to strengthen Doctoral training to increase the pool of science, technology and innovation (ST&I) leaders in Africa.



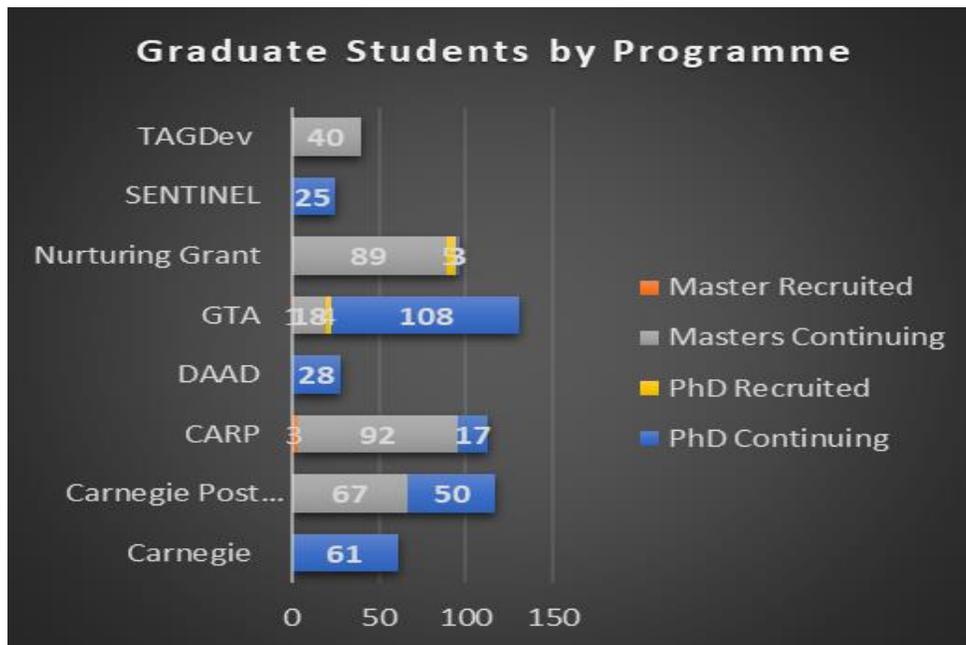
b) Support Regional Academic Mobility for academic and administrative Staff in Africa to promote access to quality academic programmes, strengthen inter-regional, inter-cultural exchange and collaboration in the field of higher agricultural education and research

With support from Carnegie Corporation of New York RUFORUM awarded three fellowships for the Academic Staff Mobility fellowship for 2020/2021 Academic year. The beneficiaries are engaged in teaching, mentoring and research supervision at the African Centres of Excellence at Makerere University Regional Center for Crop Improvement (MaRCCI) with a focus on plant breeding and biotechnology, and Uganda Martyrs University (UMU)- African Centre for Agro-Ecology and Livelihood Systems (ACALISE) with focus on Agroecology and food systems. More staff exchange fellowships will be awarded in the next quarter. For now, due to travel restrictions posed by COVID-19 Pandemic, no travel grants are awarded, rather focus is being placed on online delivery of courses and mentoring across RUFORUM Member Universities.

c) Provide opportunities for Doctoral training to increase the pool of science, technology and innovation (ST&I) leaders in Africa with a focus on fragile States

To boost higher education and research systems across the member universities, RUFORUM has given special focus to countries experiencing or emerging from conflict. In this quarter, RUFORUM Secretariat supported three candidates from Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria under the Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) programme. To-date, 300 doctorate students (99 female, 201 male) are still undertaking studies, including 72 (47 male, 25 female)

students from Democratic Republic of Congo (30), Liberia (10), Nigeria (12), South Sudan (1), Sudan (11) and Zimbabwe (8).



Number of continuing students with support from RUFORUM

d) Support students share research findings, obtain mentorship support and skills enhancement

During this quarter, emphasis has focused on supporting students to receive online-based mentorship and skills enhancement. The RUFORUM Secretariat coordinated a network-level online training for entrepreneurship that benefited students from different member universities. The training in partnership with Tripxio attracted 567 participants from seven African countries; Burundi, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Malawi, Somalia and Zimbabwe.

Under the partnership with FAO, specialised training was offered to family farmers under the Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF) as well as Community Field Attachment Programme Awards (FAPA). Three trainings focusing on i) entrepreneurship and business management skills training; ii) ICT to raise awareness and improve skills of family farmers; and, iii) innovation platforms to build capacity of family farmers to engage in innovation platforms were delivered to 45 students and family farmers.

Furthermore, RUFORUM organised two (2) skills enhancement trainings on GIS, Image Analysis and structural Equation Modelling as well as qualitative research methods for doctoral students sponsored through the UK Research and Innovation funded Social and Environmental Trade-offs in African Agriculture (SENTINEL) project. Thirty (30) participants (22 Males and 8 Females) benefitted.

e) Support RUFORUM Post- Doctoral Fellows undertake thematic research to strengthen agri-food systems, inclusivity and environmental sustainability

With support from Carnegie Cooperation of New York, RUFORUM aims to increase and ensure high retention rate of graduates in Africa to help strengthen staff capacities in African universities and research institutions to meet the growing demand for higher education and research for creating knowledge and prosperity in the continent. The emphasis is on facilitating recent PhD graduates in ways that will improve their teaching, research, leadership and mentoring skills. A total of [10 Post-Doctoral Fellowships](#) were awarded to former PhD beneficiaries of Carnegie Cooperation of New York funded through RUFORUM.

f) Support thematic research to strengthen agri-food systems, inclusivity and environmental sustainability

In initial phases is the partnership with Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases (GRA). As part of the collaboration, RUFORUM issued a [call for proposals](#) aimed at providing grants to university academics to support graduate training in the field of greenhouse gas emissions in Africa. A total of 72 applications were received and are under external review.

Emerging lessons and issues

The COVID 19 pandemic has posed a serious challenge to students undertaking studies in foreign countries. Extra psychosocial and financial support as well as communication has been key in enabling the students remain committed towards their studies.

Online processes have been a key mode of engagement with the students. The Secretariat and the member universities have to explore and leverage partnerships and other e-process for comprehensive realisation of academic (teaching, learning and research) and other socio considerations.

Flagship programme: K-HUB-Knowledge hub for university networking, partnership and advocacy

a) Organize national forum meetings to link universities (students and staff) to national agricultural innovation system actors for demand articulation and exposure to the needs of the sector

In Kenya, National Forum activities were taken by Egerton University and included a webinar focusing on de-maizing Kenya that explored alternative food crops for Kenya as a means to addressing food security in the country. These webinar series attracted a total of 648 participants from 15 universities in Kenya, 5 TVET institutions, private sector, national and regional research and development agencies in and outside Kenya. This national forum meeting generated debate and engaged policy and decision leaders to collaboratively work with universities to further tackle the food security bottlenecks in Kenya.

The National Forums in Kenya build on other Forums that target RUFORUM-supported activities to generate dialogue on key policy issues and the offering of Higher Agricultural Education. For example, the February 2020 National Forum by the Faculty of Agronomic Sciences of the University of Abomey-Calavi (FSA/UAC) was attended by 150 participants and discussed the broad structure, functioning and opportunities under RUFORUM. The event also examined the foundation and expectation of the 2021 RUFORUM triennial conference to be hosted by Benin in December 2021. Planning Committees for Triennial 2021 were set up and have commenced work

- b) *Integrate RUFORUM online platforms to facilitate and enhance systematic access to information. These platforms include: Higher Agricultural Education Capacity Indicators portal and database, Online Impact Portal and platform, Ideas Bank, Management Information System, Knowledge Repository, Website and Blog, and digital communication and social media platforms*

The RUFORUM Secretariat continued to strengthen the use of information technology to support systematic access to information. To document the status of ICT development within RUFORUM member universities and provide recommendations for knowledge sharing and targeted interventions, the Secretariat undertook the second [ICT Gap Analysis](#) and online review of eLearning platforms among the member universities. The analysis established that 45% of the institutions do not have an e-learning policy in place, 37% of the institutions provide incentives for staff using ICT in teaching, learning or research, and 47% of the institutions had a total bandwidth of at least 100Mbps thus slow internet speeds.

RUFORUM further made use of popular and mass media channels to promote its work through publishing:

- i. Sixteen (16) editions of the [RUFORUM weekly digest](#)
- ii. [fifteen](#) (15) publications in the form of blogs, calls for proposals, scholarships were posted to the website. These included:
 - a. [The fruit of my PhD journey: Dr. Janet C. Achora](#)
 - b. [RUFORUM awards 42 Doctoral Research Grants](#)
 - c. [RUFORUM awards 10 Post-Doctoral Fellowships](#)
 - d. [From a mud and wattle house to a permanent home. The MasterCard Scholarship has changed my life and that of my family](#)
 - e. [“Keep them in school” I am supporting two children in their primary education](#)
 - f. [Information System for Improved Pineapple Livelihoods for Smallholder Farmers in Central Region, Ghana](#)
- iii. Six editions of RUFORUM [media monitoring extracts](#)

As part of show-casing the visibility of RUFORUMs’ interventions, Facebook likes of the RUFORUM platform have grown from 22,334 to 22,419; Twitter followers increased to 7,612 from 7,306 and the RUFORUM Mailing list subscribers increased from 17,430 to 17,591. The RUFORUM website registered 83.3 % new visitors while the rest (16.7 %) were returning visitors mainly from Uganda, Kenya, United States of America, Nigeria, South Africa and Ethiopia.

Country	Users	% Users
1.  Uganda	693	14.04%
2.  Kenya	630	12.77%
3.  United States	488	9.89%
4.  Nigeria	226	4.58%
5.  South Africa	200	4.05%
6.  Ethiopia	158	3.20%
7.  Ghana	157	3.18%
8.  Tanzania	154	3.12%
9.  China	145	2.94%
10.  India	103	2.09%

The ten top countries that visited the RUFORUM Website during the quarter

c) Foster dialogues on emerging global issues for collective action together with specific focus groups for a needs-oriented network

In keeping the network visible and engaged and to galvanise dialogue on higher education, agriculture and policy response to the COVID-19, RUFORUM hosted 10 webinars. The webinars have emerged as a key engagement platform for African higher education, governments, private sector, development partners and students to respond to COVID-19 and other global emergencies. Some of the outputs emerging from the webinar series include:

- i. Nineteen (19) thought pieces on the COVID 19 pandemic;
- ii. Six (6) synthesis reports; and,
- iii. Ten (10) introductory notes, analytical reports and videos

d) Facilitate the establishment of customized user-friendly Virtual Learning Environments - “Moodle Platforms” to enable universities provide relevant and practical training using the latest electronic means to deliver and enhance the student learning experience

To revive the RUFORUM Moodle platform, the Secretariat undertook an ICT and eLearning readiness survey of Member universities. The survey established that 69% are using the eLearning platform with 43.4% using the Moodle type of platform and 56.6% using other platforms such as Blackboard, Canvas, LearnPress (See the report in this link).

e) Facilitate universities to create knowledge platforms, knowledge hubs and knowledge management units to better respond to the knowledge demand by their stakeholders and partners

Efforts are ongoing to mobilize funding for the operationalization of six regional data hubs with eLearning centres as one of the components in the regional data hubs. Eight (8) pilot courses

have been selected for digitization in collaboration with Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P). Efforts are also being made towards strengthening the existing eLearning centres and broker resource sharing across RUFORUM Network universities and with other global eLearning centres in and outside Africa.

- f) Strengthen knowledge use through dissemination of knowledge products and services, providing easy-to-access on-time information and using specific feedback mechanisms to gauge client satisfaction.*

RUFORUM published [Volume 4 Issue 4](#) of the African Journal of Rural Development with eight (8) papers highlighting three key gaps areas deemed important for Africa in recognizing the goals of the Agenda 2063: education; food nutrition and agriculture; and, soil/agronomic practices, livestock, and forestry. RUFORUM further published volume 17, issue 1 of the [RUFORUM Working Document Series](#) with 117 papers. Through these publications, RUFORUM is providing opportunity for universities and authors from outside Africa to share unique research outputs and outcomes of relevance to rural development.

Emerging lessons and issues

Through the RUFORUM webinar series, the value-add of RUFORUM as a network of universities in Africa has been enhanced. Implementing recommendations emerging from the RUFORUM Webinar series will go a long way in increasing the relevance of higher education institutions in Africa.

The COVID 19 pandemic has demonstrated the need and urgency to strengthen online teaching and learning in enabling continuity of learning amidst natural calamities. Activating the RUFORUM Moodle platform will go a long way in enabling Member Universities share resources and stay connected with students.

Flagship programme: PROGRAM SUPPORT – Technical, administrative and logistical support

- a) Convene dialogues to advocate for political commitment to support and increase investment in higher agricultural education, science, technology and innovation*

As part of the [RUFORUM Webinar Series, Webinar 10](#) was dedicated to understanding what policy makers from the African Union Commission and African countries perceive as the role of researchers, specifically from universities in solving the food and nutrition security challenges in Africa in the context of Africa-Europe partnership on Food and Nutrition Security. The Webinar, attended by the African Union Commission, European Commission, and Ministers of Agriculture from Kenya, Malawi, Liberia and South Africa resulted into affirmation by the European Commission to support Africa as a partner as detailed in its new Strategy. The strategy highlights universities as critical players in research, innovation and human capacity development. The webinar recommended that African universities be actively engaged in

National demand articulation events and platforms to strengthen the relationship between universities and policy makers.

b) Undertake Annual internal and external audits

The External Audit for financial year 2019/2020 is ongoing by PKF Uganda. Unlike the previous audits that included the audit of the Secretariat and five member universities, this particular audit has only covered the Secretariat. This is because the member Universities targeted to be visited are currently closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The report will be presented to the Audit Committee and subsequently to 16th Annual General Meeting during the next quarter.

c) Prepare and submit at least 10 proposals to support implementation of the RUFORUM Vision 2030

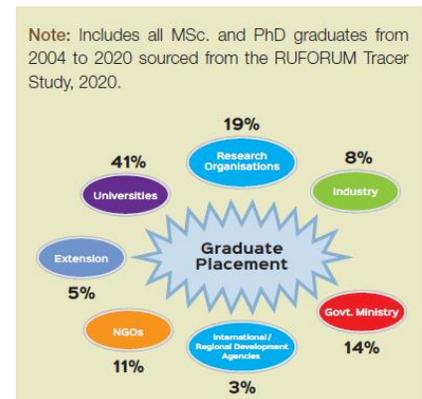
During the quarter, several proposals were submitted to various development agencies focusing on strengthening Africa's science, technology, innovation and entrepreneurship capacity for agricultural and economic development (SASTIE); building Africa's science, technology and innovation capacity (BASTIC); labelled datasets for agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa; and, African Digital Agriculture Programme (AfriDAP).

d) Recurrent Secretariat operations while mainstreaming operations in line with COVID 19

RUFORUM continued to operate in line with the Standard Operating Procedures outlined by the Government of Uganda, Ministry of Health. In addition, psychosocial support has been provided to Secretariat Staff to facilitate coping with the changed working and home environment (see [Link](#)).

e) Finalize the RUFORUM Tracer Study

The RUFORUM 2020 [tracer study](#) was completed and shared widely through the various RUFORUM information platforms. Results indicated that 97.3 % of the Alumni were employed with 86.7% in higher agricultural education, research and advisory services, 97.6% returning to their countries of origin/birth, 51 % finding employment within six months, and 60.4% in full-time salaried employment and with 90% indicating that the knowledge and skills acquired during study were very useful for their job.



Planned activities for the period October -December 2020

Activities under the RUFORUM [operational plan](#)-2018-2022 of RUFORUM [Vision 2030](#) flagship programmes will continue. Specific focus will be made to:

1. Complete the recruitment process for students to undertake Masters studies at Gulu and Egerton Universities under funding support from the Mastercard Foundation
2. Complete the implementation of the Midterm review of the TAGDev Programme
3. Coordinating the Feasibility Study for the Youth Employment, Entrepreneurship and Agro-innovations Development in Uganda
4. Resource mobilisation for the RUFORUM Network
5. Advocacy for the RUFORUM Network
6. Plan and hold the 16th RUFORUM Annual General Meeting
7. Plan for the 7th RUFORUM Triennial Conference scheduled to be held in Benin in 2021