

## **RUFORUM POST COVID-19 Strategy: Education, Agriculture Innovation and Livelihoods in times of Crisis**

The global COVID-19 pandemic over the last 17 months has created disruptions in all aspects of life. Education at all levels has equally been affected and this has called for reimagining the manner with which education is delivered and the value of education to society. Higher education institutions have had the opportunity to demonstrate their relevance to society amidst the most challenging time when they equally have to figure-out how learning and their operations have to continue. Universities in Africa are still grappling with the COVID-19 impacts but it is time to move-on and double the efforts to build long lasting resilience in our education systems and communities.

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) a network of 129 universities from across 38 African countries over these 17 months has undertaken a raft of measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, the network has been alive to the realities on the ground and the ever evolving needs and changes required by society from the universities. The network has been successful in responding and addressing some of these challenges but the journey within the current circumstances is rather undefined and requires resilience and flexibility if success is to be realised.

RUFORUM's response ability is built on its track record as a dynamic and resilient network in operation since 2004. Through its collective action, the network has been able to strategically focus on delivering its aspirations enshrined in the vision that seeks for "vibrant, transformative universities catalysing sustainable, inclusive agricultural development to feed and create prosperity for Africa". The network over the years has been active in providing sciences solutions for development especially promoting food and nutrition security through a focused attention on key priority and staple food crops including wheat, maize, rice, cassava among others. RUFORUM has been cognizant of the fact that for Africa to become competitive in the world, human capital development needs to remain a key priority action. In working with African Governments and development partners, building the next generation of scientists for Africa through the regional training and research programmes has been activated and taken to scale. Lately, effort is geared towards responding to the current continental challenge of youth unemployment through a focused attention supporting youth to create enterprises, jobs and expand employment opportunities.

This RUFORUM Post COVID-19 Strategy focused on education, agriculture innovation and livelihoods in times of crisis is a collective reflection of the network and partners arising from a consultative process throughout 2020 to 2021 involving nearly 6,000 participants from across 80 countries. It provides three focus intervention areas in the post covid-19 situation: (1) Stabilizing food security in a transforming agri-food system for smallholder farmers' gain; (2) Stabilizing higher agricultural education delivery through leveraging network strengths; and (3) Facilitating business recovery and enable entrepreneurs re-build in post COVID-19 era. RUFORUM remains committed to approaching these action packs through a collective and collaborative approach leveraging on the extensive networks and partnerships within and outside the network. The network recognises that the successes achieved so far are a result of a collective action and partnerships and as such, in this time of need for doubling our efforts, partnerships will remain key in achieving a resilient higher agricultural education that responds to the priorities and needs of society.



It is therefore my honour to invite you to read and contribute towards moving this agenda forward. We will in due course share Arabic, French and Portuguese versions of the documents, which we will upload on our website ([www.ruforum.org](http://www.ruforum.org))

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Executive Secretary