2nd RUFORUM TRIENNIAL CONFERENCE

CONCEPT NOTE

Strengthening E-learning for Inclusion

Date: 14th August 2024 **Time:** 14:00 –16:30 CAT

Venue: Mercure Hotel, Room KUISEB 1**,** Windhoek, Namibia

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Background

The landscape of education in Africa is rapidly transforming due to advancements in digital technologies and a growing demand for accessible and inclusive learning opportunities. As Africa strives to meet sustainable development goals, education becomes essential in fostering innovation, industrialization, and economic growth. E-learning has emerged as a critical tool to expand educational access, especially in areas with limited infrastructure.

However, many African communities, particularly in rural and remote regions, face significant barriers to quality education, including physical distance, lack of infrastructure, and socio-economic challenges. Further, marginalized groups, such as people with disabilities, women, and economically disadvantaged populations, often struggle to fully participate in educational opportunities. Additionally, traditional educational methods may not adequately equip students with necessary skills like digital literacy and critical thinking, and educational institutions often lack the resources and capacity to effectively implement e-learning programs.

E-learning addresses these challenges by providing flexible, scalable, and inclusive educational opportunities. It can accommodate large numbers of students across diverse locations, reduce costs by minimizing the need for physical infrastructure, offer personalized learning experiences, and bridge educational gaps for marginalized communities. Technology-enabled learning environments also foster innovative teaching methods and enhance student engagement.

The 2024 RUFORUM Triennial Conference, themed "Operationalising Higher Agricultural Education and Research Ecosystems for Innovation, Industrialisation and Economic Development in Africa: A Call for Action," offers an ideal platform to discuss and promote e-learning initiatives. The side event on "Strengthening E-LEARNING FOR INCLUSION," aims to bring together stakeholders from various sectors to explore the potential of e-learning in creating inclusive educational opportunities and driving sustainable development.

Target Audience
- RUFORUM member university representatives
- Education regulators
- E-learning and educational technology experts
- Agricultural education and research stakeholders
- Development partners

Objectives
The primary aim of this session is to explore and enhance the role of e-learning in providing inclusive, accessible, and high-quality education across Africa. By bringing together stakeholders

from various sectors, the session aims to foster discussions, share experiences, and develop strategies to leverage e-learning for the socio-economic development of the continent.

The session will specifically;

i.   Assess the current state of e-learning initiatives in Africa, identifying key successes, challenges, and lessons learned.

ii. Develop actionable strategies to make e-learning more inclusive, particularly for marginalized and underserved populations.

iii. Provide a platform for institutions and experts to share their experiences and insights on implementing successful e-learning programs.

iv. Encourage collaboration and partnerships among universities, development organizations, and technology providers to enhance the reach and effectiveness of e-learning.

v.   Explore how emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, can be integrated into e-learning platforms to improve accessibility, personalization, and overall learning outcomes.

vi. Discuss and develop solutions for technical performance and accessibility issues associated with e-learning platforms.

Expected Outcomes

i.   Participants will gain a comprehensive understanding of the current state of e-learning in Africa, including the progress made, key successes, and existing challenges.

ii. Development of practical and actionable strategies to make e-learning more inclusive, especially for marginalized and underserved populations, ensuring that no one is left behind in the digital education revolution.

iii. Enhanced collaboration and partnerships among universities, development organizations, technology providers, and other stakeholders, leading to more coordinated and effective e-learning initiatives.

iv. Identification of opportunities and strategies for integrating emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, into e-learning platforms to improve personalization, accessibility, and overall learning outcomes.

v.   Development of solutions and strategies to address technical performance issues and improve the accessibility of e-learning platforms, ensuring they are user-friendly and effective for all learners.

vi. Formulation of actionable recommendations and a roadmap for future e-learning initiatives, guided by the insights and discussions from the session, to drive forward the agenda of inclusive and high-quality education in Africa.

Methodology

The session will employ a diverse and interactive methodology designed to engage participants, facilitate knowledge sharing, and foster collaborative problem-solving. The methodology will

include a mix of presentations, panel discussions, case studies, and interactive group activities to ensure a dynamic and productive session.

Session Programme
Session Chair: Dr Francis Otto

Time	Item	Responsible
14:00-14:05	Arrival and registration	
14:05-14:10	Welcome remarks by RUFORUM	Prof. Mathias Fonteh, Chair RUFORUM Principals and Deans Committee
14:10-14:50	Statements from Partners	1. Dr. Moses Siambi, CIMMYT 2. Representative from FAO 3. Representative from BADEA 4. Representative from MCF
14:50-15:10	Elearning: What have we learnt?	Prof Jude Lubega, Vice Chancellor, Nkumba University
15:10-15:40	Panel discussion 1. Dr Precious Gawanani, LUANAR 2. Dr Drake Mirembe, Makerere University 3. Prof. Patience Mshenga, Egerton University 4. Prof. Emmanuel Tanyi, University of Buea	Dr. Francis Otto, Moderator
15:40-16:00	Virtual learning: Experiences from UNISA that can inform scaling efforts across Africa	Professor Monde Ntwasa, UNISA
16:00-16:10	Overview of the RUFORUM E-learning Platforms	Eng. David Amitu, RUFORUM
16:10-16:35	World Café (discussion groups) i) E-learning Platforms: opportunities and challenges ii) Integrating AI with E-learning iii) Technical Performance and Accessibility	 Prof. Bouchaib Boulanouar, Facilitator Dr. Drake Mirembe, Facilitator Dr. Precious Gawanani, LUANAR
16:35-16:55	Presentation of summary outcomes and closure	Facilitators