



## The Fifth African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Biennial Conference, 17-21 October, 2016

### Training African Scholars to Improve Research for Development Communication using Social Media Platforms

#### Concept Note

##### Background

A key criticism for knowledge generators has been the inability to effectively share research findings and outcomes with relevant audiences. While the dissemination of research findings through peer reviewed journals has been the standard means of communicating, this often results in effective sharing, but within a closed group of scientists. Advances in information communication and technology (ICT) and particularly the advent social media tools and the commonality of app enabled phones provides a means of supplementing currently existing platforms and tools. . At the same time, there are rapid changes in academic publishing, dissemination and science communication, as well as the need to track online engagement with scientific content, digital literacy, and this has become an essential skills set for the modern scientists.

In today's society social media<sup>1</sup> presents a potential avenue for adapting to new quick and cost-effective ways of disseminating and tracking online engagement in contributing to debates in the realms of agriculture and other human needs. The outcomes from the world's first Twitter Scientific Poster conference (Randviir EP, Ilingworth SM, Baker MJ et al) revealed that Twitter helped to "increase the potential audience, facilitated ease of knowledge exchange, reduced travel requirements and the carbon footprint". The authors of the paper also alluded to the fact that "numerous researchers were reached across the world, participants managed to share their work not only with academics, but also with other interested parties such as writers, industries, friends and family, and even policy makers, researchers reached an audience potentially as large as 375,000 people and allowed for research to be shared more quickly and

<sup>1</sup> **Social media** is the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. These include Twitter, Blogging, Facebook and Youtube

#### CO-ORGANISERS:





cheaply. The authors are optimistic that “the hybridisation of the academic conference and social media is something that could and should be seen more regularly in the future”. They expect the use of social media to also “significantly expand scientific conferences due to the advantages identified above, and also to be utilised alongside conferences where physical participation occurs”.

RUFORUM is a dynamic regional network with a membership of 60 African universities operating in 25 African countries and has over the years trained over 1300 Masters and 315 students who are currently engaged within research and development institutions to solve Africa’s food security challenges. RUFORUM’s training model involves activities to ground students and staff to real farmer problems. The focus is to respond to current training challenges, and to ensure impact through focused and response research. The RUFORUM Strategic Business Plan 2020 emphasises the renewed commitment by the RUFORUM Vice Chancellors for a demand-driven education and research portfolio of bringing African Universities closer to farmers. RUFORUM recognises the importance of strengthening communication of research results beyond the scientific community particularly towards policy makers, but also to other major stakeholders and the public at large. Communication has been underscore an essential skills for graduates, based on feedback from employers.

Accordingly, RUFORUM is organizing a social media training workshop as part of its capacity building activities to equip the postgraduate students with relevant soft skills that will enable them to tell their stories about research in a simple, cost effective, efficient and sustainable manner to abroad range of audiences using cost-effective tools. With the skills imparted, in future RUFORUM could consider to run some of the scientific conferences using social media platforms.

**Purpose of the Side Event**

The purpose of this side event is to empower African graduates with social media skills to enable them to actively participate in social media networks allowing them as scientists to disseminate their research findings quickly and effectively as well as raise their own profile or of their institutions.

**CO-ORGANISERS:**





## Objectives of the side Event

1. To build capacity of the graduates in the use of Social Media for live reporting and communication.
2. Use Social Media to promote visibility of the research results for graduate students.
3. Engage graduates in experiential exercises to report on the RUFORUM Biennial Conference.

## Approach and Methodology

A team of experienced resource persons will conduct the training workshop. The training will be intensive, interactive and highly practical and all participants will have an opportunity to practice newly acquired skills of social media tools. Variety of tools will be used throughout the training which will include cameras, smartphones, laptops and tablets to ensure the trainees are equipped with the different skills on how use of the available technology. The focus platforms will be Blogs, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

## Outputs and outcomes of the training

The expected outputs and outcomes include:

- At least over 200 graduate students trained on use of social media
- Graduate students trained on relevant skills for communication and disseminating of research outputs
- Increased visibility of research results presented at the RUFORUM Biennial, 2016
- Opportunities for reporting on the live events of the Biennial Conference

## Venue and Participants

The side event will be convened on 15<sup>th</sup> October at Crystal Towers and on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2016 at the Century City Conference Centre (Hall D, CCCC). It will focus on students from the RUFORUM Network.

## Side Event Organizers and Contact

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM)

P.O Box 16811 Wandegeya - Kampala, Uganda

Tel: +256-417-713-300 (Office)

Contact: **Miss Joan Apio**

(Program Officer - Communications, Publicity & Marketing)

Email: [j.apio@ruforum.org](mailto:j.apio@ruforum.org) ) &

**Mrs. Sylvia Mkandawire**

Page 3 of 6

## CO-ORGANISERS:





(Program Officer, Training)  
Email: [schindime@ruforum.org](mailto:schindime@ruforum.org)

CO-ORGANISERS:



**Side Event Programme**  
**Day One: Crystal Towers**

SESSION:		
MAIN THEME		
Time	Sub Theme	Responsible
08.30 - 08.45	Welcoming remarks	Dr. Osiru Moses
09.00 - 09.15	Self-Introductions and registration	Joan Apio and All Reporters
09.15 - 09.45	Open Discussion – Identifying Skill strengths and expectations	Sylvia Mkandawire
09.45 - 10.00	<b>Working Tea break</b>	All Reporters
10.00 - 11.30	Presentation: Introduction to the Social Media and Concepts	Joan Apio
11.30 - 13.00	Practical Session: Creation of accounts and Navigation of RUFORUM Platforms	Sylvia, Joan and All Reporters
13.00 - 14.00	<b>Lunch</b>	All Reporters
14.30 - 15.00	Presentation: Brief about RUFORUM and the Biennial - Highlights, and Key products expected from the Group	Sylvia Mkandawire
15.00 - 16.00	Forming groups and allocation of review of poster materials for dissemination	Joan Apio and All Reporters
16.00 - 16.45	Practical Session: Tweeting and Photograph	Joan Apio and All Reporters
16.45 - 17.00	<b>Tea and end of day one</b>	<b>All Reporters</b>

**Day Two: Hall D, Century City Conference Centre (CCCC)**

SESSION:		
MAIN THEME		
Time	Sub Theme	Responsible
08.00 - 08.30	Recap of Day one – Each group to be represented by a volunteer (Group leader)	All Reporters
08.30 – 09.00	Presentation: Blogging and Facebooking	Sylvia Mkandawire
09.00 – 11:00	Practical Session: Blogging and Facebooking	Sylvia Mkandawire and All Reporters
12.00 – 13.00	Talk/Presentation: Importance of documenting Research – <i>The Art of communication through Videography and Photography</i>	Go Trolley
13.00 - 14.00	<b>Lunch Break and end of day</b>	<b>All Reporters</b>
14.00 - 15.00	Practical: Demonstration on use of Smart phones for documenting and sharing	Go Trolley

**CO-ORGANISERS:**



16.00 - 16.45	Group Work: Video capturing by students on their posters and presentations	Sylvia, Joan and All Reports
16.45 - 17.00	Assigning of events and Closure	Sylvia, Joan and All Reports

CO-ORGANISERS:

