



## RUFORUM 21<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2025

### CONCEPT NOTE

**High level dialogue on unlocking higher  
education for Africa's young refugees and  
displaced persons**





## THEME

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### **Positioning Africa's Universities and the Higher Education Sector to effectively impact development processes on the continent**

#### **Hosts:**

The Government of Botswana and  
RUFORUM member Universities in Botswana led by Botswana University of  
Agriculture and Natural Resources

#### **Venue:**

Field, Gaborone, Botswana

**Date:** 2nd December, 2025

**Time:** 8:30-10:30 Central African Time (CAT)

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## Background

Investing in human capital is critical for facilitating the transition to knowledge-based economy. Indeed, local, continental, global agencies, as well as meetings such as the World Economic Forum, emphasise the need of preparing Africa's youth for an increasingly competitive labour market. Unfortunately in some parts of Africa, fragility of countries disrupts efforts to build the requisite human capital for development. The African Development Bank (AfDB) characterizes fragile states and situations as nations or circumstances that present distinct developmental hurdles stemming from fragility and conflict. These challenges encompass inadequate institutional capacities, ineffective governance, economic and geographic isolation, as well as disruptions in both economic and social spheres, alongside prevailing insecurity. Fragility undermines economic growth because key pillars of development such as human capital, infrastructure, production and aligned investments are compromised . UNICEF estimates that over 4.4 million children of primary and lower secondary school going age are displaced across SSA, and risk missing crucial education. At tertiary and higher education levels, comparable levels of displacement occur. For example, the recent conflict in Sudan has displaced nearly one third (397,807) of its university students within a year. Such students are currently stranded as refugees in neighboring host. Education provides a crucial support system for refugees and displaced persons, offering them stability and a semblance of normalcy in their lives. Access to education fosters rehabilitation, instills hope, promotes stability while facilitating the acquisition of new skills for work in their home or host country .

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), exercising its solidarity principle and in the case of displaced young people, RUFORUM's key principle of solidarity provides for leverage of the networks' broad 175 members across 40 countries of Africa to unlock education opportunity for refugees in the region. RUFORUM recognizes the need to work with other actors, countries and development agencies to design stop-gap measures that enable skilling of displaced learners in their communities or when they return to their native countries.

## **Purpose**

The objective of this convening is to establish consensus, implementation mechanisms, and work opportunities in order to advance the 2024 framework proposals for enhancing access to education for refugees and disadvantaged individuals, particularly at the upper and tertiary levels.

## **Objectives**

The policy roundtable dialogue will build consensus on how to implement key resolutions from the 2024 Namibia meeting for enhancing education of displaced students in their respective current host countries or communities. The specific objectives to be achieved in the round table meeting include:

### **Review the resolutions and identify:**

1. Key actors and appropriate action plan for strengthening human, organizational and institutional capacity in Post conflict and fragile states for teaching learning and research; and,
2. Strategic partnerships between entities in fragile and stable countries to provide immediate access and completion of education

## **Approach**

The meeting will review the 2024 resolutions and receive updates on actions taken in the implementation of the framework. Participants will be drawn from the higher education ecosystems of fragile countries, development partners, governments and youth-led

organisations supporting young displaced people among others. The meeting will be held using a mix of plenary presentations and discussions. Statements will be made by key institutions from Africa, philanthropy, African Governments and development banks. See annex 1 of the draft programme.

## **Expected outputs**

The following outputs are expected to be produced from the roundtable:

- a) A Technical Working Group established along with preliminary Terms of Reference.
- b) A road map and the requisite processes and actions identified and the next action areas prioritized.
- c) Requisite institutions/partnerships engaged to inform, enrich, support and implement the refugee and displaced education framework.

## **Organizers**

This meeting is organised by RUFORUM and the Mastercard Foundation.

**Venue:** Board Room  
**Session Chair:** Prof Egeru Anthony  
**Rapporteurs:** Dr Akite Irine

Time	Activity	Responsible
<b>Session 1: Official Opening Ceremony: Call for Action for meeting Africa’s displaced and refugee education for its young people</b> <b>Session Chair:</b> Professor Richard Tabulawa, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Higher Education, Botswana		
08:30-08:40	Welcome Remarks	Prof. David Norris, Vice Chancellor, University of Botswana, Botswana
08:40-08:50	Statement from Sudan	Prof. Ahmed Mudawi Musa, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Sudan.
08:50-09:00	Statement from African Union Commission	Dr. Mahaman Bachir Saley, Senior Scientific Officer, Department of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (ESTI), African Union Commission, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
09:00-09:10	Statement: Unlocking opportunity for Africa's young refugees and displaced people through education	Hon. Janet Kataaha Museveni, First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, Uganda.
09:10-09:20	Statement: Young Africa works-the Mastercard Foundation’s approach for inclusive education and productive work force	Esther Dassanou, Director Gender, Mastercard Foundation
09:20-09:30	Statement: The refugee crisis in Fragile states: lessons from Tchad	Son Excellence Dr. Tom Erdimi, Minister of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation, Tchad
09:30-09:45	Official Opening Address	Hon. Prince Maele, Minister of Higher Education, Botswana
<b>Session 2: Convergence and way-forward planning for implementation of the refugee framework</b> <b>Session Chair:</b> Prof. Address Malata, Vice Chancellor, Malawi University of Science and Technology, Malawi		
09:45-10:00	Lead Paper 1: Imperatives for strengthening refugee education in sub-Saharan Africa: Lessons learnt and new opportunities.	Presenter: Manal Stulgaitis, UNHRC
10:00-10:20	Action planning: Discussion of proposed implementation to identify quick wins for immediate action	Moderator: Dr. Victor Afari-Sefa, Regional Director for ICRISAT in West and Central Africa, Mali
	Alliances: Strategic partnerships, and a task force for moving forward the action plan nominated and engaged	
10:20-10:30	Resolutions	RUFORUM



