



RUFORUM 21ST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2025

CONCEPT NOTE

**Learning from the field and from farmers:
Safflower farmers open day**



THEME

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: Sunday 30th November, 2025

Time: 8:30 – 17:30 Central African Time (CAT)

Contact: Moses Waswa (m.waswa@ruforum.org)

Background

Water limited environments in Africa such as the arid and semi-arid lands require innovative solutions for livelihood resilience building. Despite being water limited environments, African communities in these locations remain dependent on crop agriculture and livestock husbandry whilst experiencing significant vulnerabilities and losses. These patterns call for exploration of sustainable solutions. Accordingly, in 2014, the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) provided a Graduate Research Grant (GRG) to Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (BUAN) to implement a capacity building project focused on safflower a crop adapted to drought, marginal productivity and saline soils. This small grant of US\$60,000 funded by Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) provided the opportunity for germplasm evaluation for cultivars adaptable to Botswana conditions. Following the good performance trials and evidence of adaptability of safflower in Botswana, RUFORUM provided additional grant (US\$300,000) through the Community Action Research Project Plus (CARP+) projects initiative. This was supported from a partnership between RUFORUM and Mastercard Foundation through the Transforming African Agricultural Universities to Meaningfully Contribute to Africa's Growth and Development (TAGDev) program.

The Community Action Research Projects (CARPs) projects are designed as innovation platforms that represent spaces for learning and change, bringing diverse actors together to co-design, co-innovate, co-produce and co-implement innovations and solutions responsive to challenges faced by the actors in the agricultural system. With the funding under the TAGDev program, BUAN was able to establish a Safflower Innovation Platform in Botswana bring stakeholders together and advance research and scale-out technologies dissemination. Through this project, the research team was able to develop (08) cultivars; Kiama Composite, PI 407616 BJ-213 Turkey, PI 537598 SINA USA, PI 30441 BJ-2621 Iran, PI 5376321038-USA, PI 314650 MILUTIN 114 Kazakhstan, PI 537634-1040-USA, and PI 537668-BJ-1085-USA that in part are being promoted in the country.

Through the project's engagement, various Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) of Government of Botswana were engaged, farmer groups were created and farmer adoption of safflower started to flourish leading to the creation of safflower farmer cooperatives. The Government of Botswana has adopted safflower as one of the national strategic groups owing to its adaptiveness to the semi-arid conditions and its ability to thrive under limited soil moisture conditions. It is estimated that over 11,000 (74% female farmers) people in Botswana are now benefiting through various products and services and are earning reliable income. Safflower products and by-products are also supporting a vibrant livestock among smallholder farmers as well as commercial livestock sector from the safflower feed cake. Safflower producers have started safflower seed production and supply to Government of Botswana as well as to export to other countries within the region. Given the level of adoption and scaling taking place in the country, the safflower initiative has demonstrated that universities can move from research to science translation for livelihoods and wealth creation in the economy.

Objective

Learning from the field open day seeks to provide higher education institutions, development partners, students, farmers, policy and decision makers the opportunity to take stock of the transformative

journey of research to technology, innovations and management practices introduction into society and the role that universities can play to sharp lives and livelihood in communities and their economies.

Specific objectives

1. Provide a platform for communities to demonstrate the relevance of engagement with the universities.
2. Provide opportunity for listening, unlearning and relearning from the project participants at community level.
3. Explore opportunities for collaboration and partnerships with stakeholders within Botswana and outside of Botswana for scaling operations and advancing research.

The Host: Kweneng North Horticultural Cooperative

The host of this event shall be Kweneng North Horticultural Co-operative Society the cooperatives support women in growing and selling safflower and generating a range of safflower products including; vegetables, seeds, herbal tea, and animal feed. The Cooperative has been recruiting additional members and providing training to other farmers at a fee, which has become an income stream to the cooperative.

Participants

The open day participants shall include among others; development partners, university researchers, TVET personnel, private sector partners, young entrepreneurs, government leaders and policy decision leaders, and other farmers.

Venue: Safflower Farm
 Session Chair: Luise Mwanyangapo
 Rapporteurs: Branis Nafula

Group One: Mastercard Foundation and Principals and Deans

Time	Event	Person in charge
08:30-09:00	Travel from Gaborone to Kweneng North Horticultural Co-operative	Logistics Team and Prof. Vallantino Emognor
09:00-09:30	Arrival, Meet and Greet (Cultural Troope)	Farmers Cooperative
09:30-10:00	About Kweneng North Horticultural Co-operative and testimonial	Farmers Cooperative
10:00-11:00	Farm Tour	All Participants
11:00-12:00	Interactions with the Farmers in the respective stalls	Participants
12:00-12:30	Personal Stories and Testimonials Interviews	Farmers Cooperative with visitors
12:30	Departure back to Gaborone	Group one Participants

Group Two: Mastercard Foundation and TAGDev Coordinators

Time	Event	Person in charge
14:00-14:30	Travel from Gaborone to Kweneng North Horticultural Co-operative	Logistics Team and Prof. Vallantino Emognor
14:30-15:00	Arrival, Meet and Greet (Cultural Troope)	Farmers Cooperative
15:00-15:30	About Kweneng North Horticultural Co-operative and testimonial	Farmers Cooperative
15:30-16:15	Farm Tour	All Participants
16:15-16:45	Interactions with the Farmers in the respective stalls	Participants
16:45-17:15	Personal Stories and Testimonials Interviews	Farmers Cooperative with visitors
17:15	Departure back to Gaborone	Group one Participants