



RUFORUM 21ST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2025

CONCEPT NOTE

Empowering inclusive excellence: institutional gender and inclusion workshop



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:

GICC

Date: 27th - 28th November 2025

Time: 08.00-17:00 Central African Time (CAT)

Contact Persons: Dr. Irine Akite (i.akite@ruforum.org)

Background

African Higher Agricultural Education Institutions (HAEIs) are crucial drivers of transformation in food systems and rural livelihoods. However, their potential is hampered by persistent gender disparities and weak inclusion frameworks. Young women, refugees, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are severely underrepresented and marginalized, facing systemic barriers like gender-blind curricula, inaccessible environments, and limited safeguarding. For example, women represent only about 24% of tertiary academic staff and a mere 2–3% of vice-chancellors in sub-Saharan Africa. Tertiary education inclusion for displaced persons remains below 5%, despite Africa hosting over 30% of the global refugee population. Aligned with Agenda 2063, the SDGs (4 & 5), and CESA 16-25, RUFORUM and partners are organizing a pre-conference workshop to catalyze institutional change through transformative Gender, Inclusion, and Safeguarding (GIS) practices.

Objectives

The principal objective is to enhance the African universities' institutional capacity, foster inclusive practices and strengthen collaborations on promoting gender equality, inclusion and safeguarding for young women, persons with disabilities, refugees, internally displaced persons and other disadvantaged groups. The workshop specifically seeks to;

1. raise awareness of gender, inclusion and safeguarding challenges, drawing on research and experiences
2. share evidence frameworks, tools and best practices to enhance institutional capacity.
3. build institutional competencies and explore practical strategies support vulnerable groups.
4. operationalize a continental community of practice for GIS in African Higher education institutions.

Approach

The workshop will use participatory and evidence-based approaches, including keynote presentations, parallel training sessions on young women-centered design, repositioning Higher Education Institutions as conscious centers for gender advancement and, (the inclusion and support of refugees and internally displaced persons. This will be followed by interactive case-based group work and breakout sessions for assessing gaps and drafting institutional action plans.

Expected outcomes

1. Increased awareness of young women-centric, inclusive and safeguarding best practices.
2. Enhanced institutional capacity to support disadvantaged groups.
3. Strengthened partnerships for GIS-focused education reform.
4. A functional Community of Practice for gender equity, inclusion and safeguarding.

Participants

University staff and leaders (Principals, Deans), education regulators, TAGDev 2.0 secretariat, students, development partners, and safeguarding experts.

Organizers

RUFORUM, Mastercard Foundation, and TAGDev 2.0 gender, inclusion and safeguarding committee.

Venue: Tsodilo

Session Chair: Dr. Akite Irine

Rapporteurs: Winston Abanaitwe

08:00-08:30	Arrival and settling	Dr. Abigael Otinga
08:30-08:35	Opening remarks	Dr. Florence Nakayiwa, Deputy, Executive Secretary, RUFORUM
08:35-08:40	Opening remarks	Pauline, Mastercard Foundation
08:40-09:00	State and status of Gender, Inclusion and safeguarding in RUFORUM member universities: Evidence from Institutional Studies.	Dr. Irine Akite
09:00-10:30	Presentations on perspectives and insights gained through the ASK HER tool for university-wide young women programming	Representatives from TAGDev 2.0 Universities
10:30-11:00	Tea/Coffee/Health Break	Service Providers
11:00-1:00	Gender Centric Programming in Development and Higher Education: Repositioning the Place of Women in Agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Women in agriculture; is it a new thing in away?• Institutional priorities	Esther/Joyce/Dr. Aster, Mastercard Foundation
13:00-14:00	Lunch Break	Service Providers
14:00-17:00	Repositioning Higher Education Institutions as Conscious Centers for Gender Advancement for Equitable Development <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deconstructing inequalities in higher agricultural education• Shifting gender norms in development and education• Approaches to gender; dangers of essentialists & instrumentalists' approaches, and strategic approaches (using this for repositioning institutions) as best bet pathway.	
	AWARD	
16:50-17:00	Closing remarks	Prof. Anthony Egeru

FRIDAY 28TH NOVEMBER 2025

08:00-08:30	Arrival and settling	Dr. Abigael Otinga
08:30-08:35	Recap of Day 1 Activities	Dr. Irine Akite
08:35-08:45	Opening remarks	Ms. Karen Meyer, Head RDP, Mastercard Foundation
08:45-10:30	Building Inclusive Higher Education for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons: The role of university leadership. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional readiness and policy frameworks for inclusion • Academic access, integration and support mechanisms 	WUSC
10:30-11:00	Tea/Coffee/Health Break	Service Providers
11:00-13:00	Building Inclusive Higher Education for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons: The role of university leadership. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships, resource mobilization and collaboration • Leadership Commitments and institutional Action plans 	WUSC
13:00-14:00	Lunch Break	Service Providers
14:00-16:45	A community of practice for Gender equity, inclusion and safeguarding with Country Working Teams: Using the Strategic Approach to Gender Oriented Development, identify barriers and Develop Interventions and Actions for that Gender Centric Higher Education Institutions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women in Higher Education and Women in Agriculture • Inclusion of Differently Abled Persons, • Inclusion of refugees and internally displaced persons, and • Safeguarding students and staff 	Dr. Abigael and Dr. Irine Akite
16:45-17:00	Closing remarks	Prof. Anthony Egeru