



RUFORUM 21ST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2025

CONCEPT NOTE

Communication for Impact



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:

Gaborone International Conference Center, Moremi 1&2, Gaborone, Botswana

Date: 3rd December 2025

Time: 14.00-16.30 SAT

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Background

African universities and the national research systems in general are pivotal role in advancing the continent's development agenda. From universities and the national research systems, research outputs in form publications and technologies often remain unnoticed by policy makers, development practitioners and the wider public. This could be due to a persistent gap between academia and researchers on one part and the user of research products and processes. Indeed, Africa contributes less than 2 percent of the global scientific output. Yet the refreshed new strategy the Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan (STYIP) of Agenda 2063 sets a target of translating at least 50% of Africa's research output into innovation and production . Given that Universities are home to diverse scientific capacity, it is imperative that the knowledge products they generate are translated into development solutions such as policy and business innovations. This way universities will directly contribute to delivery of the STYIP targets and therefore remain relevant to society. However, numerous African universities face challenges in communication capacity, thereby exacerbating the divide between academia and development practitioners. Indeed, most research output remains confined to academic journals – rarely reaching policymakers, industry leaders, media or local communities. This disconnect limits the visibility, global competitiveness, and societal contribution of African universities in meeting national development priorities and the achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) and other development blue prints national to continental.

Building the capacity for “Communication for Development Impact” is an initiative by RUFORUM in collaboration with the MasterCard Foundation and the University of the Free State. This effort aims to strengthen the ability to utilise knowledge produced by universities and their partners to promote social and behavioural change for development. It aims to engage and equip university and partner communication staff with necessary for greater outcomes in agriculture, education, entrepreneurship, environment and policies related thereto through dialogue, co-creation of end user friendly communication products.

Objectives

The aim of this workshop is to review and or create result-oriented communication frameworks for use by RUFORUM member universities. This will involve both the strategy/framework and the skilling of University communicators for effective and efficient influence of institutional and national development narratives and institutional visibility.

Specifically, the workshop will:

1. Review and inform the design of result-oriented communication frameworks of participating universities;
2. Maximize the translation and dissemination of research outcomes;
3. Understand the importance of shaping narratives and managing reputation;
4. Enhance the global and local reputation of African universities.

Approach

The workshop will employ co-creative and participatory approaches that combine expert presentations with interactive group discussions. Presentations will be used to introduce innovative strategies for communication for impact, exploring how universities

can reposition their communication functions to achieve greater influence and visibility. Group discussions will enable participants develop compelling narratives that demonstrate their institutions' impact at individual, institutional, and community levels. Plenary sessions will examine the institutional systems, human capacity, processes, and practices necessary to strengthen mutual-accountability, enhance learning, and boost institutional effectiveness.

Participants

This workshop will be attended by communication personnel from RUFORUM member universities, RUFORUM staff and development partners.

Organizers

This event is jointly organised by the RUFORUM, the Mastercard Foundation, and the University of the Free State.

3rd December, 2025

Venue: GICC, Moremi 1&2, Gaborone

Session Moderator: Onkgopotse Moreri, Head of Communications Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources

Rapporteurs: Luise Mwangapo, Evalin Acan, Chinyelu Irene Nwokolo

Time		
14:00 — 14:05	Remarks	Dr. Sokona Dagnoko, RUFORUM
14:05 — 14:10	Remarks	Annette Mutuku, Mastercard Foundation
14:10— 14:35	Managing public affairs and communications: Communication for impact - Experiences from the Mastercard Foundation	Annette Mutuku (Mastercard Foundation)
14:35-15:05	Group discussion: Different elements of impact communication e.g. Messaging/narrative, policy, digital, thought leadership	All
15:05-15:20	Lead Discussants: Research and policy agency: Ministry of Higher Education, Botswana	TBC – Ministry of Higher Education
15:20-15:35	Health break	
15:35-16:05	Communication for impact	Lacea Loader, University of the Free State
16:05 – 16:35	Fireside chat: Experiences from Makerere University & Africa University on building reputation 1. Eunice Rukundo, Senior Public Relations Makerere University 2. Tawanda Chiwara, Communications Manager, Africa University	Moderator: Onkgopotse Moreri
16.35-17:00	News or media - Botswana	TBC
17.00-17:30	Plenary discussions and wrap up	