

A report on the TAGDev side event on Transformative Higher Education: Experiences from Collaborative Action, held on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023 in Palais des Congres, Cameroon



# **TAGDev side event on Transformative Higher Education: Experiences from Collaborative Action**

## **1.0 Overview**

The 19<sup>th</sup> RUFORUM Annual General Meeting (AGM) was organized by the Government of Cameroon and RUFORUM member universities in Cameroon, under the coordination of the Vice Chancellor of the University of Bamenda and RUFORUM Board Chair Prof Theresa NKuo-Akenji. The AGM event, held in Yaounde, Cameroon from 28<sup>th</sup> October to 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023, brought together policy makers (including Ministers and Technical Experts), Higher Education Leaders in Africa, Development Partners, Private Sector Leaders, Researchers, Innovators, Students, and Farmer Organizations, among others. Egerton University participants included Prof. Richard Mulwa, the Ag. Deputy Vice Chancellor Administration, Planning and Development who represented the Vice Chancellor; Prof. Nancy W. Mungai, the TAGDev Program Coordinator & Ag. Director, Research and Extension; Prof. Patience Mshenga, the Dean Faculty of Agriculture & Assistant Program Coordinator; Prof. Anthony Kibe, the PI, Seed Potato Value Chain CARP project, Ms. Virginia W. Njuguna, the TAGDev Program Administrator and three TAGDev Alumni namely Lilian Anyango, Victor Gordon Akejo and Aaron Cheruiyot.

The theme of the AGM was ‘Transforming higher education to sustainably feed and create prosperity for Africa.’ The AGM provided a platform for discussing emerging technologies, agrifood systems transformation, commodity value chains, transformative education, work preparedness and the future of work, how to make agriculture attractive to the young people, triggering positive changes in the education ecosystems among others. The TAGDev side event was held on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023 in Tripatite Room, in *Palais des Congres*. The event provided TAGDev alumni from both Egerton and Gulu Universities to share their experiences as beneficiaries of the innovative education model. The Vice Chancellors had an opportunity to discuss how institutions of higher learning can enhance transformative education. This report provides highlights of the TAGDev side event held on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023

## **2.0 The TAGDev side event**

### **2.1 Engagement with the Vice Chancellors**

The Vice Chancellors, Egerton and Gulu Universities were invited to share their insights on transformative education during the TAGDev side event held on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023. Egerton

University Vice Chancellor was represented by the DVC (APD), Prof. Richard Mulwa. The DVC was asked to highlight some of the things universities need to do to enhance transformative education. It was noted that academic programs must remain relevant to meet the needs of students and society, while universities must establish strong relationships with students and the community to promote student success, contribute to well-being, and fulfill their broader societal responsibilities. These aspects are interconnected and crucial for the long-term success and impact of universities. Academic programs must equip students with the knowledge and skills that are in demand in the job market. This ensures that graduates are well-prepared for their careers and can contribute effectively to their chosen fields. The academic programs offered at Universities should address pressing societal challenges for graduates to make meaningful contributions. Through establishment of a strong relationship with students, universities make strong contribution to students' academic success. When students feel connected to their university, supported and valued, they excel in their studies and are able to complete their studies in a timely manner. In addition, valuable feedback on the quality of academic programs can be received from students to make continuous improvement.

Gulu University Vice Chancellor, Prof. George Openjuru provided an overview of TAGDev program implementation at Gulu. It was noted that the program has resulted in transformation at students, institution and community level. Students have been nurtured as change agents for the community and they have demonstrated their ability to continuing engaging with the communities even after graduation. The university has benefitted from curriculum development and review, a stronger university-community engagement through the community action research projects and linkages with industry. He urged that universities need to adopt mechanism for enhancing transformative education, empowering students to become well-rounded individuals capable of making meaningful contributions to society and adapting to the challenges of an ever-changing world. Universities need to promote active learning and enhance experiential learning to bridge the gap between theory and practice in preparing students for future career. In the digital era, there is a need for universities to also incorporate technology into the curriculum through online resources, e-learning platforms among others. To produce critical thinkers, universities need to present students with real world problems, challenge them to collaborate and apply their knowledge to develop solutions

Prof. Jim French from Global Confederation of Higher Education Associations for Agricultural and Life Sciences (GCHERA) on the other hand was tasked to provide insights into what universities need to do to transform the community. Transformation is a process and the key issue is how to bring the change. Students training should be transformative and envisioning the impact to be created. Universities therefore need to collaborate with industries and government agencies to address real-world challenges. They need to promote research with practical applications and societal impact, and to continuously monitor and assess the needs of the community and adapt programs and services accordingly. Engaging with local communities through service-learning programs, community projects, and outreach is key in enhancing community transformation. On the other hand, to enhance transparency and accountability, universities need to establish mechanisms for feedback from the community, students, faculty, and staff. Universities need to also showcase their success stories by highlighting what the students, faculty, and alumni have achieved as a way of demonstrating the impact of the university. Universities commitment in vision for change is important in response to emerging trends and challenges in the community.

The panelists interactive session with audience led to the following deliberations

1. That transformation greatly entails mindset change. For instance, It require change of mindset for university management to uphold community engagement as an achievement and criteria for promotion
2. That both Egerton and Gulu universities piloting the transformative education model have ensured the transformation agenda is aligned to the national and global development agenda
3. That sustainability of approaches used by universities need to be considered in their education models
4. The critical things that universities need to consider in the transformation journey include:
  - Defining their vision of change
  - Developing a plan
  - Leadership embrace the strategy for change
  - Policy change

### 3.0 Conclusion

The discussions indicated that institutions of higher learning have the potential to transform Africa’s agricultural ecosystem through delivery of transformative education. Universities have been contributing towards transforming the graduates and communities in diverse ways that contribute to national and global development goals. Through transformative education and collaboration with community and other stakeholders, universities are producing well-rounded individuals who are making meaningful contributions to society by addressing real-world challenges. Universities responsibility of designing curricula that foster critical thinking, creativity, and personal growth remain pertinent. The curriculum must remain relevant in challenging students, encouraging interdisciplinary learning, and providing opportunities for exploration. Universities should ensure collection of feedback from graduates regarding their transition experiences and use the information to make improvements in the support and services offered. There is need for universities to have clear definition of the change they want to see and draw an implementation plan. The university management plays a crucial role in adaptation of the change strategy and review of policies.



**Figure 1: Egerton staff during the 19th RUFORUM Annual General meeting in Cameroon**



**Figure 2: Prof. Richard Mulwa, DVC APD, at the TAGDev @Egerton Exhibition booth**