



# Transformational Learning and Student Leadership in Agricultural Universities

A Collective Action within Key Focus Area (KFA) 3: *Transforming Organizational and Individual Capacities*

Agricultural and life science universities and departments around the world are keen to continuously review their programmes to adapt to changes in their dynamic environments. Still, a gap exists in producing the right caliber of university graduates that fits the existing market and societal demands. New graduates face challenges in integrating into their professional and decision making environment, and in finding channels to impact the change processes of their societies and the world. They also may feel unprepared to venture into uncharted territory to start their own agricultural enterprises.

Comprehensive transformational learning and student leadership development schemes are needed in our agricultural and life science schools, to develop not only academic skills, but also the intellectual, professional, spiritual and emotional aspects of the students. The schemes should inspire, guide and equip the students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to meet their aspirations, access resources and grow into

qualified and prepared graduates. They must demonstrate employability, leadership aptitude and entrepreneurial agility. They must be able to innovate and lead the integration of their specialized research into society for real developmental impact.

The aim of the GFAR Collective Action on transformational learning and student leadership development is to advise and facilitate the reform led by higher education institutions that are partners in GFAR by adopting a holistic reform model. The model that will be developed by the different stakeholders in higher education will first look into the visions, strategies, governance structures, curricula, instructional techniques and student life programmes of the participating universities. Working back from the outcomes they want to achieve—ensuring that their graduates meet the identified demands and bring value to their working environments—the model will set out the transformations needed to reform higher education in the Agriculture and Life Sciences.



Photo courtesy of Professor Agnes Mwang'ombe

## What we are doing together

More precisely, this GFAR Collective Action was launched in September 2017 at a meeting held at the University of Nairobi, in partnership with RUFORUM, the University of Nairobi, and the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA). A representative number of universities in Africa have also partnered, as well as Partners in GFAR from the private sector in Africa, civil society,

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farmer organizations, local rural youth and women associations and agricultural students associations.

Going forward, the outputs of this partnership of multiple stakeholders are expected to include reformed curricula, restructured governance, rewritten school missions and strategic plans. Co-curricular activities that focus on the physical, mental, spiritual, emotional and professional development of students will also be developed, in addition to student leadership, mentoring and continuous evaluations schemes. Students will be directly engaged with the industries and opportunities in their own and neighbouring communities.

All of this will contribute to turning out qualified, adaptable, global-oriented graduates who meet the identified demands and expectations, who are enthusiastic and committed to using their learning for agricultural research and development, and who are recognized as a value-addition to their environments. Measurable outcomes will be seen in impacts to agricultural and rural transformation around the world.

You are invited to join Partners in GFAR including the University of Nairobi, RUFORUM, FARA, Inter-University Consortium (IUC), GCHERA, GFRAS, YPARD, WRF, CGIAR, Agrinatura, Association of Arab Universities (AAU), Zewail City of Science and Technology, Arab Organization for Admissions, Registration and Student Affairs (ARABACRA), CAAS/China, AARINENA, APAARI and others in this Collective Action.

For more information, contact GFAR Secretariat at [GFAR-Secretariat@fao.org](mailto:GFAR-Secretariat@fao.org) or write to: [Iman.Elkafras@fao.org](mailto:Iman.Elkafras@fao.org)

The outputs of the workshop in Nairobi were well received by the university heads present at the RUFORUM Annual General Meeting in Lilongwe, Malawi in October 2017. The GFAR Collective Action on Transformational Learning and Student Leadership development is now scaling out this reform to other regions through South-South learning and exchange. In February 2018, the Collective Action concept was presented at the Regional Conference on Social and Sustainability Science in ASEAN, with the goal to scale out to the Asia-Pacific Region with APAARI and others. A workshop held in Cairo, Egypt on 1-3 April 2018 began the scale out to the Near East and Northern Africa Region.

The regional workshops held to date have produced the following outputs:

- ❖ Established a representative platform of stakeholders of higher education from among the different constituencies of GFAR and relevant partners of the organizations involved
- ❖ Identified the reform to be undertaken by the participating universities based on representative and equitable dialogue – innovation platform style – of the multi-stakeholders concerned
- ❖ Formulated a shared model of reform that allows for sharing experiences, stories, challenges and opportunities experienced by each university
- ❖ A joint multi-stakeholder concept note that can be used for fundraising needed to scale up the Collective Action

To learn more about this Collective Action, and its scaling out to the NENA Region, watch Dr. Iman El-Kaffass in this TV interview: <http://bit.ly/InterviewChannel2>