

MAKERERE



UNIVERSITY

DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE TRAINING

THE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH AGENDA (2013-2018)

Approved by Senate

December 9, 2013

1. INTRODUCTION

Makerere University is implementing the 10-year Strategic Plan 2008/9-2018/19 with a vision '*To be a leading institution for academic excellence and innovations in Africa*'. The vision will be achieved through *providing innovative teaching & learning, research and services responsive to national and global needs.*" The plan recognizes research and innovations as one of the core functions under two strategies:

- i) To provide robust supportive environment for a research-driven university by 2016. This is to be achieved through developing and operationalising the University research agenda; strengthening research capacity for staff and students; strengthening research management and coordination, mainstreaming gender in all research activities, and mobilising more research funds

- ii) To increase capacity for knowledge transformation and innovation and dissemination to be achieved through developing a research dissemination strategy; promoting commercialisation of innovations; exploiting intellectual property and enhancing networks with teaching, research and cultural institutions.

The plan is further supported by the Makerere University Research and Innovations Policy (2008) whose goal is to strengthen the research capacity and output, and increase the contribution of Makerere to the world of knowledge and innovation.

The strategic objectives of the policy are:

- To create an enabling, harmonious, transparent and efficient environment for research and innovations
- To strengthen research management and coordination
- To improve research and publications culture
- To improve funding for research and innovations

The university strategic plan and the research and innovations policy require development of a university research agenda to guide investment in this key function.

2. The Makerere University Priority Research Areas

In 2009, Makerere University developed research priority Research Areas that formed the university research agenda in preparation of the call for Sida Phase III proposal. The research thrusts were generated out of consultative meetings with key stakeholders, namely: UNCHE, UNCST, UIRI, MoFPED, MoE&S, NARO. The 2009-2013 Research Agenda set out to:

a) Improve the human resource and the environment for conducting research, and dissemination of findings through the following strategies:

- Human resource development through training at Masters, PhD and postdoctoral level,
- Joint research projects with mentoring and supporting young scientists
- Improvement of research related Infrastructure and facilities (ICT, Library, Laboratories, field sites etc)
- Improvement in research management and coordination through administration reforms to support research; national, regional and international networks among others
- Dissemination of research finding through public/private partnerships, dissemination conferences, locally hosted peer review journals, with development of a research dissemination/communication policy.

b) Identified priority research thrust, namely:

- Research in health, indigenous knowledge and health systems
- Environment and Natural Resources Management
- Agricultural production and productivity (crop and livestock),

nutrition, Food security and value addition

- Technology and basic sciences
- Governance, human rights and economic management

The following areas were identified as cross-cutting, namely:

- Gender
- Quality Assurance
- ICT
- Biotechnology

3. Development of a Successor Makerere University Research Agenda

The process of developing the successor research agenda begun in June 2012 with a desk review of the College strategic plan and priority research areas, benchmarking exercise that was undertaken in the University of Witwatersrand, South Africa, the University College Dublin, Ireland and University of Guelph, Canada. The findings of the study informed the Makerere University research agenda process. The successor Research Agenda was also guided by national and global aspirations and development frameworks including the National Development Plan (2010/11-1014/15); the National Science, Technology and Innovation Policy and Plan (2009); the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in addition to the Makerere University Strategic Plan (2008/9-2018/19) and Makerere University Research and innovations Policy (2009)

The development of the successor Makerere University research agenda was highly participatory. Initially, Colleges were requested to submit college research agendas in July 2012. There after Dean's Retreat was held July 12,2012 to develop a roadmap for the University Research Agenda basing on the College Submissions. A committee with representation from each college met on February 27, 2013 and harmonized the college research priorities into six themes and four (4) cross cutting areas. To arrive at the harmonised research themes, the committee considered the following:

- Areas where Makerere University is strong

- Vision of where the world is heading (10-20 years from now)-Strategic areas for academic investment
- Linkage with National, Regional and International Development agenda
- Basic/Fundamental Research

In March 2013, a consultative meeting was held with Deans and the final priority areas were agreed upon. The draft research agenda was, thereafter, circulated to the University Community for input. The draft research agenda was presented and discussed by the Board of Research and Graduate Training on 1st August 2013, and forwarded the Research Agenda to Senate for approval (see minute extract).

4. The Makerere Research priority areas 2013-2018

The research thrusts to guide Makerere University for the next five years are:

1) Health and Health Systems

- Health continues to be a priority area in national development and poverty alleviation. This is also an area of Makerere's strength and was still relevant globally

2) Agricultural (crop & Livestock) transformation, Food Security and Livelihoods

- Agriculture continues to occupy a vantage position in the socio-economics of this country. Agriculture commonly refers to crop growing, thus the need to highlight both crop and livestock
- 'Agricultural' goes beyond agriculture to include land use, inputs, methods and outputs
- 'Transformation' is a pertinent concept that embraces issues of integration of agriculture with other sectors of the economy (industry, trade, technology etc)

- ‘Livelihoods’ is all embracing to include household income, quality of life and other services e.g. health, water, transport among others

3) Natural Resources Management and Climate Change

- Natural Resources include forestry, petroleum, bio-fuels, renewable energy, water among others
- Governance – is specifically with reference to natural resources to cover issues of extraction, processing, utilization, legal framework and sustainability issues. This is different from the general concept of good governance

4) Education and Education Systems

As a HE institution, it is important for Makerere University to focus on research in Education and Education systems and how education translates to employment, poverty reduction, governance among others.

5) Governance, Culture, Visual Arts, Social Justice, Communication and Sustainable development

- Governance includes issues of ethics, integrity, professionalism, democracy
- Social justice embodies human rights, equity among others
- Culture covers social relations, poetry, performing arts, literature
- Sustainable Development encompasses economic development, empowerment, poverty reduction

6) Science and Technology

- This covers foundation science and caters for both basic research and applied research.
- Includes research in areas of infrastructure, ICT, innovations, technology, engineering

Cross-cutting areas

- Biotechnology

- Knowledge Translation
- Gender
- Human Resource Development

Conclusion

The research thrusts are quite broad and this is intended to promote multi-disciplinarity in addressing research problems and also build research capacity in the identified areas. The University's resources both internally generated and those sourced from funding agencies and development partners will be directed towards these priority areas of focus. However, researchers are free to source funding to address their research interests that are outside of the university priority areas.

Approved by the Board of Research and Graduate Training

The research agenda to guide Makerere investment in research was approved by Makerere University Senate sitting on December 9, 2013.