

## Monthly Newsletter - February 2009

### Featuring *THE SCARDA PROJECT*



#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) was contracted to be the lead service provider in implementing a capacity building project called Strengthening Capacity for Agricultural Research and Development in Eastern and Central Africa (SCARDA-ECA). SCARDA is a two-phased 30 month programme of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) and its Sub-Regional Organizations (SROs), i.e. ASARECA, CORAF and SADC. The first phase (**Inception**) has been implemented and ended in December 2007. The second phase (**Implementation**) started in January 2008 and ends in 2010.

#### WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF SCARDA?

The goal of SCARDA is to strengthen the institutional and human capacity of African agricultural research and development systems to identify, generate and deliver research outputs that meet the needs of poor people. SCARDA FOCUSES ON two components of in terms of strengthening.

- (a) Competencies and capacity in agricultural research management,
- (b) Capacity for professional development in agricultural research and development.

#### EXPECTED OUTPUTS OF THE SCARDA PROJECT

1. Agricultural research management systems and managerial competencies to conduct high quality research will be strengthened in the ECA-NARS;
2. The capacity of ECA-NARS to undertake quality agricultural research for development will be strengthened and made sustainable;
3. Tertiary agricultural education and training institutions will be empowered to match capacity building offered to changing market demand;

The SCARDA-ECA approach for capacity strengthening is documented, validated with and owned by stakeholders

#### STAKEHOLDERS OF THE SCARDA-ECA PROJECT

DFID, FARA, ASARECA, NRI, 3 Focal Institutions (ISAR, ISABU, ARC) and the following Universities (Egerton, Makerere, Nairobi, Sokoine, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture & Technology and Agriculture Research Cooperation)

#### RUFORUM'S ROLE IN THE SCARDA PROJECT

The Regional Universities Forum plays two critical roles related to MSc Training and the Capacity Strengthening of the NARS

##### 1. MSc Training

RUFORUM has been actively involved in developing criteria for accreditation of universities to provide the training and recommend to ASARECA. Currently training is being managed in six RUFORUM Universities in Eastern and Central Africa. RUFORUM tracks the progress of the training and ensures that quality programmes are being delivered.

The table below indicates some on the universities and courses offered

| University    | Courses Offered                                                 |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Egerton       | AICM, Animal Breeding, Natural Resource Management              |
| Makerere      | Plant breeding, Soil Management, Extension and Sociology        |
| Sokoine       | Soil Science & Horticulture                                     |
| Jomo Kenyatta | Research Methodology                                            |
| Nairobi       | Range Management & Animal Science                               |
| ARC           | Plant Breeding, Soil & Water Management and Organic Agriculture |

To view the biodata for the SCARDA students please visit the RUFORUM website [www.ruforum.org](http://www.ruforum.org)

### The SCARDA-ECA MSc Training is unique because

- Students have mentors in their respective fields of study
- Skills enhancement programs for the students i.e. proposal writing workshops, web tool training, online statistics training
- Regional Staff exchange programmes to ensure the exchange of ideas among staff and students

## 2. Capacity Strengthening of the NARS

RUFORUM as the lead service provider had the mandate to match the service provision needs of focal institutions with the capacities and competencies of potential service providers. Accordingly, a call of expression of interest was issued by RUFORUM & ASARECA, following the four thrusts that were identified by the focal institutions namely:

### i) Strengthening Research Management capacity in the NARS

This thrust seeks to strengthen the research management capacity in the three focal NARIs. The key intervention areas identified included: Planning, monitoring and evaluation; Basics of financial management for non-finance experts; Human resource management: management of teams, alliances and individuals including conflict management; Project / programme management; Information, communication and advocacy

### ii) Building capacity for quality research through short courses

This thrust aims at enhancing skills and competencies of technicians and scientists in specific areas through short courses for:

**a) Technicians Training** - the course focuses on Laboratory management, which includes laboratory operations and management as well as procurement and equipment maintenance. The course will also aim at developing hands-on skills of the technicians in executing experimental and preliminary processing of data as well as management of clean seed production and green houses.

**b) Research scientist's skills enhancement** - the focus is on crop protection, with special emphasis on molecular diagnosis of potato viral and bacterial diseases, information and communication management, grant proposal development, and scientific writing, design of experiments and data management

### iii) Developing and implementing a mentoring strategy and plan

In addition to short courses, mentoring was identified as one of the key strategies for enhancing the skills of research scientists in the NARI. This thrust aims to strengthen the capacity of the NARI scientists by attaching a dedicated group of eminent scientists in specific disciplinary areas to the focal institutions, over a specified period of time.

### iv) Analysis of Demand for graduates of agricultural sciences

The thrust aims at carrying out a study in targeted ASARECA countries to assess the relevance of the training received by university graduates of agricultural sciences to current job markets.

The Project Management Team reviewed all the concepts that were submitted in response to the call for expression of interest was issued using set criteria. The best concept bidders were requested to develop full proposals. Subsequently, the proposals were evaluated by the PMT members in a transparent procedure. The

following service providers were selected PICO Team (for thrusts i and iii), NaCCRI-NARO Uganda (for thrust ii), and Malcom Blackie et al (for thrust iv)

#### **RUFORUM'S ACHIEVEMENTS ON THE SCARDA-ECA PROJECT**

- Currently 34 students are undertaking training in six RUFORUM Universities under the coordination of RUFORUM.
- A criterion of an accreditation of the Universities to offer MSc Training was developed.
- Service providers for Research Management and Research Quality have been identified
- SCARDA-ECA approaches are being utilized widely
- One short training for skills enhancement in Monitoring & Evaluation and Communication was conducted (20 people trained)
- Already 70 students have been trained in Proposal Development and Technical Writing
- More funds were leveraged from other sources (AGRA, DELPHE & RUFORUM), totaling US\$740,000.

*For further information please contact Dr Wellington Ekaya, who is the SCARDA focal person in RUFORUM and his email address is: [ekaya@africaonline.co.ke](mailto:ekaya@africaonline.co.ke)*