



# MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

## RESEARCH AND INNOVATIONS FUND (MAK-RIF)



MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

Mak-RIF Monthly

March 2025

# NEWSLETTER

## Word from the Chair

Dear Reader,

Welcome to this issue of the Mak-RIF Monthly Newsletter.

In March 2025, Mak-RIF trained PhD students on crafting policy briefs and issue briefs as crucial knowledge translation tools for evidence-informed decision making. To celebrate International Women's Day, Mak-RIF hosted a webinar with a special focus on women in research, where researchers shared their work which is contributing towards women's empowerment.

From 8th to 10th April 2025, Makerere University will host a Research and Innovations Week at the Freedom Square and the Main Administration Building. During the 3-day event, we will demonstrate the impact of the Government

of Uganda's investment in research and innovations through Mak-RIF, and highlight key projects contributing to national development and socio-economic transformation, as well as projects that are addressing pressing societal challenges and fostering sustainable economic growth.

His Excellency, General Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, the President of the Republic of Uganda, will officiate at the grand opening of this event and deliver a keynote address on 8th April 2025. I take this opportunity to invite you to participate in Makerere's Research and Innovations Week 2025.

**Prof. Fred Masagazi-Masaazi,**  
Chairperson Mak-RIF Grants Management Committee (GMC).



# Project of the Month

## Project Improves Inclusive Education at Makerere, Kyambogo

By New Vision, March 13, 2025



The project team led by Dr. Leah Sikoyo (2nd R), the project's Principal Investigator, during a dissemination workshop at Esella Country Hotel on 12th March 2025.

A total of 180 learners and staff from the Universities of Makerere and Kyambogo have benefitted from the five year Unlocking the potential of enhanced teaching and learning with visual impairment in Uganda's public universities: The role of assistive technologies (ATEVIL) project.

The multi year project was implemented by Makerere University in partnership with Kyambogo, National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), and the Uganda National Association of the Blind (UNAB).

Funded by the Government of Uganda through the Makerere University Research and Innovations Fund (Mak-RIF), the project, according to

implementers, has seen the enrollement of students with visual

impairment at universities increase as a result of the country's response to achieving inclusive education.

Speaking during the final stakeholders' dissemination workshop held at Esella Country Hotel in Kampala on March 12, 2025, Dr. Zahara Nampewo, a representative of the Mak-RIF Grants Management Committee, emphasized the significance of assistive technologies in enhancing teaching and learning for visually impaired students in Uganda's public universities.

Dr. Nampewo lauded the project team on their innovative approach, which she said not only positively influences government development policies and programs, but also individual lives, hopes, and dreams.

Mr. Latif Lugudo, one of the beneficiaries, praised the project, which he said has enabled him to navigate learning using technological assisted devices. "We received trainings on using software such as job access with speech, talkback, among others," Lugudo said.

Dr. Leah Sikoyo, the project's Principal Investigator and a lecturer at Makerere University, commended the Government of Uganda for having supported visually impaired learners to achieve their dreams.

## Crafting policy and issue briefs for evidence informed decision making



Participants after a 4-day capacity building training on crafting policy and issue briefs from 4th – 7th March 2025.

In a bid to enhance the impact of their research, PhD students at Makerere University underwent a capacity building training on crafting policy briefs and issue briefs, crucial knowledge translation tools for evidence-informed decision making.

Led by Dr. Susan Babirye, a research fellow in the Department of Health Policy, Planning, and Management at the Makerere University School of Public Health, the training aimed to equip PhD students with the skills to develop concise and impactful policy and issue briefs that can inform decision-making at various levels.

Dr. Babirye emphasized the importance of distinguishing between policy briefs, issue briefs, and technical briefs, each tailored for specific audiences and purposes. She noted that not all research findings require policy decisions, and that each kind of brief is effective for influencing specific action. Dr. Babirye also provided examples from her own research experience, highlighting the importance of using clear language, focusing on key messages, and keeping the brief concise.

The capacity building training which took place at the College of Computing and Information Sciences (CoCIS) was attended by over 25 PhD researchers from different Colleges. The training covered topics

like reporting, financial management and accountability, knowledge translation, engaging with the media, and others.

Participants were tasked with crafting policy and issue briefs, using a provided template with guidance on word count and content. The exercise aimed to help students apply the concepts learned during the training to their own research projects. They developed 8 policy briefs and 18 issue briefs which they will continue to refine with the support of the training facilitators and the Mak-RIF Secretariat.

Mr. Joseph Mulindwa, one of the PhD students who attended the training, during an interview said that he is focusing on improving the quality of cocoa beans in Uganda. Mulindwa's research involves identifying the microorganisms involved in cocoa bean fermentation, with the goal of developing a starter culture that can produce consistent flavors and aromas.

“Uganda's cocoa industry supports over 200,000 households, but the quality of the beans remains a major concern,” he said. Mulindwa's research aims to address this issue, which could lead to higher prices for Ugandan cocoa on the global market.

Meanwhile, Ms. Hajara Birunji is researching ways to enhance the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Uganda's manufacturing sector. Hajara's research highlights the challenges faced by SMEs, including high energy costs, limited access to capital, and poor product quality.

Hajara argues that addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach, including the development of an entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports SMEs. This ecosystem would include institutions, networks, and access to affordable capital.

The capacity building training was funded by the Government of Uganda through the Makerere University Research and Innovations Fund (Mak-RIF).

## MakCoNAS Promotes Science Education in Schools through Astronomy

By Hasifa Kabejja



The Ugandan government has increasingly recognized the critical role of science education in driving the nation's economic development. As such, it has put in place deliberate policies aimed at popularizing science education in schools. The introduction of astronomy and space science as part of the curriculum supports this vision, offering students the tools to explore scientific concepts that will drive future innovation.

In an initiative geared towards bolstering science education in Uganda, Makerere University Department of Physics is leveraging the wonders of astronomy and space science to ignite curiosity and enthusiasm among learners. The project, led by Prof. Florence Mutonyi D'ujanga from the Department of Physics has reached 10 schools in Kampala, Luwero, and Mukono districts, using the vast universe to inspire the next generation of scientists, engineers, and mathematicians. The astronomy outreach

activities have impacted numerous schools across different regions in Uganda.

On 21st March 2025, the project team hosted a dissemination event at Makerere University to present and share their research findings. The event was presided over by Prof. Winston Tumps Ireeta, the Principal of the College of Natural Sciences (CoNAS) and Acting Deputy Vice Chancellor in charge of Finance and Administration at Makerere University. The event was attended by students, school administrators, as well as representatives from Mak-RIF and the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation.

In her address, the Project Principal Investigator (PI), Prof. Florence D'ujanga, emphasized the importance of sparking curiosity in students to encourage them to pursue scientific studies. "By making astronomy and space science more accessible and engaging, this project seeks to inspire greater interest in science education, ultimately benefiting Uganda's long-term development in critical fields such as technology, engineering, and mathematics," she explained.

On behalf of the Chairperson of the Mak-RIF Grants Management Committee, Dr. Mercy Rebekah Amiyo expressed appreciation to the research team for their invaluable initiative in promoting the study of science through astronomy. Dr. Amiyo praised the team's dedication to making complex scientific concepts more engaging. She called upon the project team to secure property rights and take proactive steps toward the commercialization of the project.

In his remarks, the Guest of Honour, Prof. Winston Tumps Ireeta emphasized the importance of nurturing scientists who understand principles rather than simply memorizing frameworks. He emphasized the importance of early exposure for children to develop an appreciation for science. He expressed gratitude to the Government of Uganda for its continued support towards research activities at Makerere University.

## UPE schools sitting on untapped resources, experts say

By Daily Monitor, March 21, 2025



Participants of the ELIUPES assessment workshop at Makerere University on 20th March 2025.

Universal Primary Education (UPE) schools in Uganda are sitting on a goldmine of untapped resources including land, buildings and human capital. According to education experts, these resources could be leveraged to improve the quality of education and transform millions of learners.

Prof. Ronald Bisaso, the Deputy Principal of Makerere University's College of Education and External Studies (CEES), believes that failure to harness these resources is largely due to a mindset problem among school leaders.

To address this challenge, CEES has launched an innovative project titled, "Entrepreneurial Leadership Initiative for Universal Primary Education

Schools (ELIUPES)," which aims to train school leaders and teachers in entrepreneurial skills.

According to Prof. Christopher Mugimu, the Project's Principal Investigator, the project will focus on action oriented and competency based approaches with the ultimate goal of improving learning outcomes. "We want to empower them to become entrepreneurial characters in their schools, so that everybody can make a difference in the educational experiences of learners," he said.

The project, funded by the Government of Uganda through Mak-RIF, also seeks to address the perennial challenge of low learning outcomes in UPE schools.

Dr. Kuluthum Nabunnya, Officer Education Services at Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA), commended the project, saying it will add value to learners in line with the competence based curriculum at the secondary levels.

The initiative is expected to have a ripple effect on the entire education system, with benefits extending beyond the schools to the broader community. "By promoting entrepreneurial thinking and self reliance amongst UPE teachers, we hope to create a new generation of educators and learners who are equipped to drive innovation and progress in the entire education sector," said Bisaso.

Prof. Christopher Mugimu added, "With this project, we are confident that UPE schools can overcome the challenges that have held them back for so long and unlock a brighter future for their learners."

# Upcoming events

## MAKERERE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH AND INNOVATIONS WEEK 2025

Tuesday, 8th April 2025 to Thursday, 10th April 2025

Makerere University Freedom Square and the Main Administration Building

CHIEF GUEST:

**H.E Yoweri Kaguta Museveni**

President of the Republic of Uganda



GOVERNMENT OF UGANDA      MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

**MAKERERE UNIVERSITY**  
welcomes  
**H.E. YOWERI KAGUTA TIBUHABURWA MUSEVENI**  
**AND**  
**HON. JANET KATAAHA MUSEVENI**  
to the Annual  
**Research and Innovations Week**

 **8TH-10TH**  
**APRIL 2025**       **9:00 - 4:00PM**  
 **Freedom Square**



### Editorial

Copiled by **Winnie Kyamulabi**  
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MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

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