



# UR MONTHLY

The official newsletter of the University of Rwanda

## UR, INES and REMA team up to develop effective research for evidence based policy making



Research team from the University of Rwanda (UR), Institute of Applied Sciences (INES-Ruhengeri) and Rwanda Environmental Management Authority (REMA) convened to devise ways to develop a 5 year research plan that will address national and global development challenges. The trio is expected to come up with concrete joint research plan which, in one hand will generate knowledge and inform policy while promoting academia-industry linkage in the other hand.

The meeting follows a science discussion that was held at REMA which brought together REMA staff and the team of researchers composed by UR and the Swedish Institute of Agricultural Science (SLU). The two universities are already implementing the subprogram called Engendering Rural Transformation for Sustainable Development (ENTRUST) of the UR-Sweden Programme.

According to Prof Alfred Bizoza who is the ENTRUST team leader, the collaboration will trigger quality services to the Rwandan Citizens in addressing the most pressing challenges that fall into REMA mandate. The move will also see the link between research and policy strengthened mainly in the area of environment and sustainable development by ensuring that conducted research can effectively inform the evidence based policy making.

"The collaboration is in line with the University mandate to educate and produce high qualified graduates who would support the policy formulation and its implementation" Bizoza said.

Amb. Dr Charles Murigande labelled the meeting an important milestone for both the University of Rwanda and the country. As a university that strives to be a research-led institution, Murigande noted that through the collaboration, UR is poised to be a key player in addressing the developmental challenges of Rwanda through generating knowledge with direct impact to the people of Rwanda and beyond.

"Primarily as a public institution, our priority should be to address challenges that Rwanda is confronted with" said Murigande who is UR Deputy Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement.

Speaking on the occasion, Eng. Coletha Ruhamyia, the Director General of REMA hailed the collaboration which will complement the vision 2050 and other

international and national obligation that her institution wants to achieve. Ruhamyia further stated that the initiative will promote local researchers who are much reliable since they understand the culture and context of the country in which they are operating from. The collaboration will result into research with direct link to policy in thematic research areas such as : •Agro ecology intensification and agro diversity •Climate Change and Variability •Biodiversity and Ecosystem.

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UR students were taken through the Commonwealth opportunities mainly the scholarships to further their studies. The session was organized in line with the Commonwealth Day which is celebrated on 9th March. The event came at the right time as Rwanda is poised to host the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) slated in June in Kigali, Rwanda.

During this session, students got insights about Commonwealth and related academic benefits. The Commonwealth scholarship beneficiaries shared the experience and encouraged students to try available opportunities.

Emerance Umurerwa is one of the beneficiaries of the Commonwealth Scholarships. She pursued an online Master's degree in Human Rights Law from Oxford University, England. She testified that it was a noble opportunity she couldn't get unless through the Commonwealth scholarship.

"With this scholarship, I have been able to study in the most reputable University as I continued my work", she said.

She highlighted that perseverance is key to her success. Emerance won the scholarship which was competitive as the whole continent was allocated to only 40 seats. She was the only Rwandese to be admitted. Students were taken through the whole process and were promised guidance during the application process.

In his remarks, Amb. Dr Charles Murigande, UR Deputy Vice Chancellor in charge of Institutional Advancement commended the organizing team of this session and emphasized that such sessions of educating students about Commonwealth and existing opportunities will keep on being organized.

"For Rwanda to be honored to host CHOGM meeting after few years of admission, it is a testimony of how much Rwanda is appreciated in achieving the Commonwealth objectives", said Murigande.



## UR students briefed on Commonwealth opportunities ahead of CHOGM 2020

Amb. Murigande added that UR being a member of the Commonwealth Universities Associations has tremendously benefited the university.

"We entered to Common Wealth not only to benefit from it but also to contribute to its mandate". With this association, UR gets visiting lecturers and students' knowledge exchanges with those from other Common Wealth Universities.

The theme for CHOGM 2020 is 'Delivering a Common Future : Connecting, Innovating, Transforming'. Ahead of the meeting, members of parliament, youth and gender activists, and representatives from civil society and business will meet at special forums to make sure the voices of women, young people, businesses and other organizations are heard at CHOGM.

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**Amb. Dr Charles Murigande**





### Our Mission

Contribute to the creation of a better world for the community through youth engagement to the environment.

### Our Vision

To inspire and mobilize young people for a better environment.

### Our Values

- Unity
- Determination
- Integrity

## Meet Grace, UR graduate and fervent advocate for green environment

Ineza Umuhoza Grace is a graduate in Water and Environmental Engineering from the College of Science and Technology. After her graduation, she started up an NGO known as "The Green Fighter" which recently won a grant worth 42,000\$ from the Global Environmental Facility. We caught up with her and she talks about her experience and journey so far.

It is such a privilege to be a student of UR because we have access to most of the resources in terms of knowledge. It is up to us to turn what we learn in something worth for our community.



**You are the founder of "Green Fighter" NGO ; what was the inspiration behind ?**

The turning point was my participation to the UNCCD COP 13/Youth forum at Ordos, China in September 2017. From there, I learned about community impact and community empowerment being a pillar in achieving sustainable development. For an African country like Rwanda, the environment protection component plays an essential part in this. Returning to Rwanda, I exposed myself to the unexploited opportunity that rests in youth ambition and commitment ; there was no existing platform (accessible easily by everyone) to share environment opportunities with youth interested or engaged in the environment sector.

By combining the experience in UNCCD COP 13 Youth forum and MOREMI leadership experience as I was among the 27 young emerging girls' leaders across Africa and its diaspora in 2017, I founded the first youth lead environmental non-governmental organization in Rwanda, starting in my community to bring solution for the sustainability/protection of the environment by using available opportunities.

**What does Green Fighter stand for?**

The Green Fighter stands for "Friends of the Environment and the Community."

We are a group of ambitious youth who are ready to meet any challenge in the path of protecting the environment while ensuring sustainable development in the community. We are a youth organization that increases our contribution to environmental protection, we have advisors and elders who guide us in our growth.

## What has “Green Fighter” achieved for far ?

Since its creation in 2017, the organization has major activities completed in the community on the national and international levels. The organization designed and implemented three projects meant to address the pressing issue in the environmental community. We organized more than ten community awareness/ environment education program with more than 1,500 young people as direct beneficiaries, we advocate for the youth activities and engagement in the civil society sector on the international level. Last but not least more than ten youths are empowered in increasing their skills/ knowledge in climate change issue ranging from project design to negotiation under the United Nation Framework Convention to Climate Change.

## Can you link your education from UR to what you have achieved so far ?

The University of Rwanda played exceptional role in our achievement. The University of Rwanda is the first public institution that supports us to ensure that we are in the position to excel in our choice of vision. The University of Rwanda supported us with facilities in addition to the knowledge we received preparing us to understand and draw the big picture of what we want to achieve. We now have an MoU with the University of Rwanda to introduce “Green Campus.” It is the first

public institution we received, and it is a clear message that the university is taking the risk to invest in the youth passion and ambitions.

## What are your prospective plans ?

Our plan ahead is to write good projects for our community. Our team is aiming to be an idea generator for the Rwandan community in the manner of ensuring environmental protection and climate change resilience. Additional to this, we want to advocate that youth organizations cannot achieve everything but with the right support, we can achieve one thing that will affect everything.

## A message to UR graduates and ongoing students

It is such a privilege to be a student of UR because we have access to most of the resources in terms of knowledge. It is up to us to turn what we learn in something worth for our community. If you are not part of the problem, you can be part of the solution ; influence home grown solutions for home protection.”

At last, I would like to recall the word of HE Paul Kagame during the youthkonect “To go fast go alone, to go far go together but it is possible to go far and fast altogether.” We don’t have to underestimate the power of unity, team and common vision.



A young and ambitious team “The Green Fighter”





## Mpinganzima, a rare Female PhD holder in Mathematics -Inspirational figure for youth



Lydie Mpinganzima, PhD  
Lecturer at UR-CST

I share with students real-life applications of mathematics and my experiences as a mathematician, lecturer, researcher, woman, and mother

**M**pinganzima Lydie is one of the rare female lecturers holding a PhD in Mathematics in Rwanda. She graduated in 2014 at Linköping University under the support of Sida through UR-Sweden Programme, a partnership dated since 2000 between Rwanda and Sweden. She currently serves as a lecturer mainly for postgraduate students in applied science, the Department of Mathematics, at the University of Rwanda.


As part of her research career, she is interested in expanding her PhD thesis on “Cauchy problem for the Helmholtz equation and inverse scattering problems”. Mpinganzima belongs to group in Mathematical modeling which won an impressive grant for the project “Mathematical modeling of cardiovascular-respiratory system for sportsmen and patients in Rwanda”. In 2016, through her research on “Numerical Analysis of nanophotonics” she obtained a Postdoctoral position from the

Gothenburg University and the Chalmers University of Technology in 2016.

Mpinganzima is reckoned as female Mathematics champion countrywide. She is involved in activities aiming to encourage young girls and boys to undertake their studies in Mathematics. In this endeavor, she approaches young girls in their schools. But to make sure to reach a big number of them, she equally visits those studying in mixed schools where she takes an opportunity to encourage young boys so that they don’t stay behind.

“I share with students real-life applications of mathematics and my experiences as a mathematician, lecturer, researcher, woman, and mother,” she proudly said, adding that she has a keen interest in the training of secondary school teachers of mathematics.





## Strengthening interlinked marketing exchange systems to improve water and sanitation in informal settlements of Kigali, Rwanda

Aimé Tsinda, PhD

Dr Aimé Tsinda is a Senior Lecturer of Urban Planning and Environmental Sustainability at the University of Rwanda. He holds a PhD in Environment & Sustainability with dissertation in urban sanitation in Kigali (Rwanda), Kampala (Uganda) and Kisumu (Kenya), University of Surrey, UK, and a Master's Degree in Urban Planning from the University of Montreal (Canada) with a dissertation in Disaster Risk Management (DRM) in the City of Kigali. He researches on policy analysis, urbanization, WASH, environment, sustainability, climate change and natural resource management.



Inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) is a significant health burden in Rwanda. Although current approaches for improving water and sanitation provision to enhance health outcomes are often narrowly associated with monetary exchange, analysis of two informal settlements in Kigali (Gitega and Kimisagara) shows that households attempt to meet their water and sanitation needs through four interlinked exchange systems (market-based, command-based, culturally determined and non-market-based exchange systems).

By focusing on existing social relations and exchange systems, sanitation practitioners may be able to foster and strengthen these interlinked water and sanitation marketing exchange systems embedding in the local context and local capabilities, and as a consequence improve the lives of the low-income communities of informal settlements.

# LEARNING & TEACHING IN CONFINEMENT TO CONTAIN CORONA VIRUS

## STAFF

UR faculty and technical staff are working to ensure that all the modules offered in all academic Programmes are updated and uploaded on UR e-learning platform. Over the last few years UR has built a team of experts in online teaching who are working with all the lecturers to verify the integrity of uploaded modules information (modules description, presentation slides, handouts, notes and key readings). Students will be registered for each module to enable access to the uploaded learning materials in their academic programs. While access to online to online material has become familiar to many, UR is aware that some of students have also recently experienced online assessment.

The period of closure and confinement is about population health, and this must start with everyone. Look at yourself, stay fit and well and stay positive. UR in daily contact with students and Guild Presidents and the Principals and head of campuses are working remotely in different and exciting ways.

Always consider to....

- Stay at home
- wash hands
- Maintain Social Distancing

## STUDENTS

As many of students received learning materials for the modules they are registered for, they are advised to go beyond learning for passing CATs and summative exams and engage with the learning materials so that they can achieve a level of understanding for which they can even teach their peers.

Students should review learning materials of the modules completed in the last semester, and even in previous years of study at UR. This will embed learning through rehearsal but also increase the mastery of the content by working through the parts they did not fully understand the first time. This will help them to understand future material, and to approach learning in new ways

Students will be able to identify their weaknesses in English and they should use this time to challenge themselves and others to create opportunities for improving written and spoken English.

Keep sharing progresses with their peers at UR and with friends studying similar programmes in other institutions, and if a student stays with other students they can begin to teach and test one another while observing the government guidelines for social distancing to prevent the contagion of COVID19.

We remember all those whose work is essential, including our faculty who work in hospitals and other services, our alumni working in so many areas and the small number of staff working to maintain our facilities. Let us use this time to achieve those things that we otherwise might not have achieved.