

Makerere University ResilientAfrica Network (RAN's) Resilience Innovation Acceleration Program launched

ResilientAfrica Network (RAN) held an Innovations Exhibition in the Makerere University Main Hall on Friday March 14th, 2014. This was an opportunity for the faculty, students, private sector, Government, NGOs and the community at large to showcase their prototypes or projects that would be considered for acceleration in the Eastern Africa's Resilience Innovation Lab (EA RILab).

This type of exhibition is one of the main ways that RAN is using to identify promising innovations from within partner universities and local innovation hubs. Such innovations will be entered into RAN's Resilience Innovation Acceleration Program where teams will receive technical support by leveraging expertise within RAN and the HESN, mentorship, capacity building and financial support to help them, accelerate the development, piloting and scaling of their innovations.



Multidisciplinary exhibitors endeavor to explain their projects to all, especially the judges

The Makerere University Deputy Vice Chancellor, Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe graced the occasion and officially launched the EA RILab’s Resilience Innovation Acceleration Program. ***“It is such programs like ResilientAfrica Network (RAN) that have enormously contributed to Makerere University’s great achievements including being the 4th best University in the whole of Africa. Faculty, students and the community benefit a lot from such initiatives.”*** He was flanked by Prof. Celetino Obua, the Deputy Principal at the Makerere University College of Health Sciences who noted in his remarks that ***“Mr. Deputy Vice Chancellor, RAN is yet another testimony that we, who you sent out to do the work, are actually doing it. We pledge to further take Makerere University greater heights”.*** He also noted and acknowledged the great work by the students, faculty and community innovators both present at the exhibition and elsewhere.



Makerere University Deputy Vice Chancellor Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe (extreme right) joined RAN Chief of Party/ Dean Makerere University School of Public Health Prof. William Bazeyo to congratulate the best teams

The event was a great success and it was exciting to see over thirty projects being exhibited by both students and faculty teams. In line with RAN’s strategy to foster multi-disciplinary collaboration, these teams were drawn from six out of eight colleges, representing at least 15 different academic disciplines from Makerere University (Software Engineering, computer Science, Data Communications and Networking, Architecture, Survey, Electrical Engineering, Forestry, Environmental Geographical Sciences, Agricultural Sciences, Food Science, Nutrition and Bio-Engineering, School of Law, Animal Resources and Bio-Security, Humanities and



Social Sciences, Peace and Conflict and School of Health Sciences). There was also a huge turnout from the university community and the general public who engaged the exhibitors on their innovations. In acknowledging the great turnout and vibrant atmosphere in the hall, Prof. William Bazeyo in his remarks noted, “*Look at the brains in this room, the potential this institution brings together and the ability of Africans to provide solutions to their own challenges-solutions through innovations. All is evidenced here*”.

Selection of the promising innovations was done by a competent and experienced team of judges drawn from within and outside RAN. These included Prof. David Serwadda-RAN Technical Advisor, Dr. Wanjiku Nganga-RAN Director of Innovations, Dr. Roy William Mayega-RAN Deputy Chief of Party, Dr. Dorothy Okello-EA RILab Director, Dr. Julius Ssentongo-RAN EA RILab Program Coordinator and Mr. Michael Niyitegeka-Facilitator at Franklin Covey Uganda, and a well-respected innovation thought leader in the region. In making their selections, the judges were required to ascertain the potential for an innovation to strengthen resilience in line with the EA RILab thematic areas of climate change and chronic conflict, as well as establishing technical and financial feasibility and potential to scale in target communities. The judges took time to appreciate and understand all aspects of a given innovation, by interacting with the teams, asking questions, testing some of the innovations and awarding scores. It was also an opportunity to emphasize the linkage between the innovations and resilience arms of the RAN project.

Out of the thirty-two projects exhibited, six including; *RootIO*, *KUDU*, *Unearthing the potential of Earth Worms as livestock feed*, *FINDIT*, *Improved Pull & Push Approach in Northern Uganda* and *Integrated Backyard Farming* were selected after a very thorough vetting by the judges. These six teams were further required to pitch their innovations to the judges and the public during an interactive question and answer session. Three projects, namely, *RootIO*, *KUDU* and *Unearthing the potential of Earth Worms as livestock feed* were finally selected for consideration to join the EA RILab’s Resilience Innovation Acceleration Program. These innovations address key resilience aspects that were identified from the EA RILab’s community consultations including community mobilization and knowledge sharing, economic empowerment/poverty eradication, diversification of livelihoods and environmentally friendly production methods. The exhibition participants had been asked to vote for their preferred innovation with a view of enriching their experience and participation, and the team ‘*Community-based legal mobile clinic*’ led by female students from Makerere University’s School of Law, which provides legal assistance pro-bono to vulnerable communities received a unanimous vote for the “Peoples Choice” Award.





The Innovators from the top three project teams and the ‘People’s choice’ pose for a photo with Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe, Prof. William Bazeyo and the judges

RAN is proudly led by Makerere University (School of Public Health) as one of the seven development labs within the USAID-funded Higher Education Solutions Network (HESN). It is a partnership of 20 African Universities in 16 countries focused on strengthening the capacities of vulnerable communities to withstand natural and man-made shocks and stresses. One of the core objectives of RAN, is to strengthen resilience at the individual, household, and community levels to natural, man-made stresses and shocks through innovative technologies and approaches to development, which will be identified, incubated, tested, scaled and evaluated through the RAN in collaboration with its partners <http://www.ranlab.org>.

RAN carries out its operations within four Resilience Innovation labs. These are: The Eastern Africa RILab, Horn of Africa RILab, Southern African RILab and West Africa RILab. The Eastern Africa RILab is located in Makerere University School of Public Health with a mandate to source innovative ideas in line with RAN’s thematic focus from within the academic community and support their incubation, areas of development and piloting. This was the first event organized by the Eastern Africa RILab to source for innovations that provide solutions to community challenges.