

“University is the birthplace of innovation, and this innovation [should be] mainly guided by the needs of the communities,” says Prof. William Bazeyo, Dean of the Makerere University School of Public Health in Uganda.

Throughout 20 years of teaching, he has directed his academic pursuits to strengthening the well-being and stability of communities. Now he is doing the same thing as the leader of the ResilientAfrica Network (RAN), uniting 100,000 African scholars to work closely with local partners and achieve their own vision of resilience.

RAN, which was established in 2012, seeks new and transformative methods to combat long-standing barriers to resilience. The network is led by Makerere University and is part of the U.S. Global Development Lab’s Higher Education Solutions Network (HESN). RAN has engaged its network of 16 universities throughout Africa—four of which are regional hubs with unique resilience priorities—to conduct analysis on the drivers of resilience and carry out community consultations to find innovative solutions to the most pressing challenges.

The universities also bring together non-academic partners, such as government agencies, the private sector, civil society and development practitioners. Bazeyo views innovation as a precursor to resilience. Destabilizing forces such as natural disaster, conflict, chronic illness or rapid urbanization are not new to many of the areas in which RAN operates.

Although these issues are often recurring, many communities remain unable to deter, mitigate or recover from these shocks and

Nurturing and Catalyzing Innovation to Build Community Resilience



stresses in a way that makes them stronger. By facilitating dialogue between communities and technical experts, RAN is able to “design community originated innovation that is acceptable, usable, affordable and, most importantly, builds or strengthens resilience.” And, adds, Roy William Mayega, RAN’s deputy chief of party: “Innovative projects ... once supported to scale will be game-changers towards strengthening resilience in African communities and beyond.” Details on: <https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/frontlines/resilience-2015/resilientafrica-network-aims-live-its-name>

To date RAN has 21 projects incubated under her four Regional Resilience Innovation Labs and looking to onboard other innovative projects under upcoming grant calls like the Resilience Innovation Challenge for Chronic Conflict (RIC4CONF) and the students’ call which is currently open; The Youth Spark Innovation Grants #YSiG2016. Students can access the grant call opportunity via; www.grants.ranlab.org

or www.ranlab.org.

RAN has continued to support innovators from the university who include faculty and students by organizing capacity building events like Human Centered Design courses, Need finding, Resilience courses and other innovation events which include; the monthly innovation Garage, weekly Pitch sessions, Design Clinics, Bar Camps, Peer-to Peer sessions, Business Modeling workshops, Grant writing sessions and many others. The RAN Lab is strategically positioned and has helped faculty and students to get technical support, seed grants for their innovations coming from the HESN, innovation hubs and other development partners. The Lab is open to research scholars, innovators, entrepreneurs, community to get support or even get connected to mentorship and grant opportunities, we encourage all to tap into these opportunities.

As we build for the future

Deborah Naatujuna Nkwanga