

## Media Monitoring: Extract of Press News on Higher Education in Africa

### 1. University World News

#### **RUFORUM to hold triennial conference in francophone Benin (Benin)**

In a move that could mark an important step in breaking the boundaries that divide the African continent along the lines of the languages of their former colonisers, the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) has made a landmark decision to host a major continental event in a French-speaking country. RUFORUM has announced that it will hold its triennial conference in December 2021 in the francophone West African country of Benin. It will be hosted by the University of Abomey-Calavi, with the support of the Benin government, said Professor Adipala Ekwamu, RUFORUM executive secretary. The university was one of the first institutions in the region to join the RUFORUM network. Ekwamu said the decision is aimed in part at “promoting regional learning and inter-cultural and language exchange”. In reference to the COVID-19 pandemic, he said: “We are hopeful that things will return to normal to enable RUFORUM to hold its landmark meeting in a French-speaking West African country.” An offer first made in 2018: Ekwamu said in 2018 the government of Benin had sent its minister of higher education and scientific research with the offer to host a RUFORUM event, and made a follow-up during the 2019 annual convening of the organisation held at Ghana’s University of Cape Coast, underscoring the weight which some African governments are increasingly attaching to higher education events. “The offer was gladly accepted. In the various countries where RUFORUM has held meetings since 2005, member state’s governments have provided substantial financial and logistical support towards hosting the events in their respective countries,” Ekwamu told University World News. The University of Abomey-Calavi has, since joining RUFORUM in 2015, been a “very active” member university of the organisation, participating in events and staff and student exchanges. It has also played a strong advocacy role to bring more universities from West Africa into RUFORUM, he said. As part of its operation and networking function, RUFORUM holds its conferences in different countries and regions of the continent, with the aim being to enable exposure and learning about different countries and regions, he said. Until last year most gatherings were hosted in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa but in 2019, for the first time, the annual conference was held in Ghana.

Read more [here](#)

### 2. All Africa News

#### **Mastercard Foundation Launches 10-Year Plan to enable 3 Million Young People in Uganda to access dignified Work (Uganda)**

The Mastercard Foundation today announced its Young Africa Works strategy in Uganda, which has set a goal to enable more than 3 million young people in the country to access dignified and fulfilling work opportunities by 2030. Under Young Africa Works, the Foundation has committed \$200 million to ensure young women, men, and refugees in Uganda have access to economic opportunities. Presiding over the virtual launch of the strategy, His Excellency President Yoweri Museveni noted Young Africa Works’ alignment to the government’s national development plan. “I commend Mastercard Foundation for your efforts towards youth empowerment and transformation in Africa over the last decade. I am glad to note that your focus over the next decade is on uplifting young people by expanding employment opportunities. The Young Africa Works strategy is in line with the work that our government is doing to achieve the goal of a healthy, educated, and prosperous population” said His Excellency President Yoweri Museveni during his keynote address, which was live-streamed from the State House. Young Africa Works in Uganda focuses on three economic sectors, including agriculture, tourism and hospitality, and construction/housing. The Mastercard Foundation is working with a range of partners to realize its goals under Young Africa Works. Partners already working with

the Mastercard Foundation include: the Private Sector Foundation Uganda, The Innovation Village, Gudie Leisure Farm, GOAL Uganda, the National Social Security Fund, and Equity Bank Uganda. Speaking at the launch, Mastercard Foundation President and CEO Reeta Roy noted that the implementation of Young Africa Works is already underway and discussed the importance of collaboration among all stakeholders involved in Young Africa Works. “We have formed partnerships with a number of organizations and together, if we are successful, they already represent 30 percent of the goal of having 30 million people in dignified and fulfilling work,” she said. “What’s special is how our partners have come together to intentionally collaborate and leverage each other’s strengths,” she added. During the launch, speakers recognized the impact of COVID-19 on various economic sectors in Uganda. In April, Mastercard Foundation announced the Mastercard Foundation COVID-19 Recovery and Resilience Program in Uganda to mitigate the adverse effects of the pandemic on businesses, the education sector, and on communities, while strengthening the country’s public health system and response. To date, the Foundation has committed approximately \$23.7 million to its COVID-19 response in Uganda. The Mastercard Foundation has been working in Uganda since 2008 and has invested a total of more than \$282 million in expanding access to finance, education, and/or skills training to more than two million people, including farmers, students, teachers, and out-of-school youth across the country. “In many ways, the Foundation’s relationship with Uganda is special. Uganda was the Foundation’s first partner country in Africa,” said Samuel Adela Yalew, Country Head at the Mastercard Foundation. He also noted that Young Africa Works would be building on a decade of work and achievements.

Read more [here](#)

### 3. The World Bank Group Blog

#### [The Big Bad Wolf moves south: How COVID-19 affects higher education financing in developing countries \(Africa\)](#)

In a recent blog, we retold the tale of the three little pigs as the story of tertiary education financing in Western Europe, with COVID-19 as the big bad wolf shaking the foundations of various funding models. We observed how privately and publicly funded systems, especially those that rely heavily on fees from international students, have come under pressure due to the coronavirus. Is the crisis playing out in a similar way in developing countries? What are the risks for tertiary education funding in low- and middle-income countries? Many countries where the World Bank works share several features: (i) insufficient public funding for tertiary education (between 0.3 and 0.8% of GDP), (ii) rigid allocation mechanisms that provide no incentives for performance, (iii) uneven development and quality of private provision, and (iv) limited financial aid to compensate for the acute social disparities in access and success that continue in spite of rapid enrollment growth. As country after country imposed partial or total lockdowns, the number of universities and colleges closing their campus and switching to e-learning soared. However, few institutions were well prepared for this sudden, disruptive move. Scrambling and improvisation has occurred as administrators, instructors, and students struggled to implement broad-based online learning. In developing countries, students from disadvantaged groups are facing tremendous difficulties. Limited internet access and low broadband capacity have severely constrained opportunities for online learning, especially in rural areas. Many students from low-income households – sometimes even faculty members – don’t own a laptop or a tablet. In addition to these digital-divide challenges, colleges and universities in poor nations have struggled to rapidly launch quality distance learning programs. Many lack experienced instructional designers, sufficient educational resources, an adequate grasp of the specifics and nuances of online education, and strong institutional capacity to deliver it. The African University Association has already signaled that, among the 700 universities operating in Sub-Saharan Africa, very few are well prepared and sufficiently equipped to deliver their programs online. Connectivity remains an issue, and in some countries of the region governments have difficulties guaranteeing continuity in power supply.

Unlike in high-income countries, many governments of developing nations have not been able to provide stimulus packages to support the tertiary education sector during the pandemic. Instead, their financial responses have tended to reallocate resources away from the education budget to help meet the soaring expenses of the health emergency. In Kenya, for example, the Commission on University Education reallocated the equivalent of US\$2.5 million of its development fund to the COVID-19 emergency fund. In Nigeria, the federal government intends to cut about US\$130 million from the education sector to support its pandemic response initiatives. And even within education, there may be an inclination to move funds away from the tertiary sector to lower levels whose needs are considered more pressing. While there are many uncertainties about the prospects for universities reopening in the next academic year, the medium-term outlook is grim in developing countries. For most higher education institutions, especially private ones that are fully dependent on tuition fees, financial survival will be seriously tested during the deep recession that many economists predict. Millions of students with limited resources could drop out of higher education altogether or shift to more affordable public institutions. It's not unrealistic to expect many private colleges and universities to close their doors permanently. Students graduating this year are also likely to face huge employment challenges. Similarly, working students who lose their jobs may not be able to continue studying. Read more [here](#)

#### 4. Relief Web

##### [African Development Bank commits \\$1.04 million towards two COVID-19 research projects in Angola \(Angola\)](#)

Funds from the African Development Bank's ongoing Science and Technology Development Project have been committed towards two research projects to mitigate the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in Angola. The Science and Technology Development Project which is being executed by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, aims to contribute to Angola's economic diversification through scientific and technological research, and by promoting an innovative enabling environment. The Angolan Government intends to promote research and enhance capacity in the health sector, against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Epidemiological, Clinical and Laboratory Profile of COVID-19 in Angola and the Building COVID Capacity in Angola research projects received \$431,590 and \$613,029, respectively. A signing ceremony organised by the Angolan Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation was held on 20 July in the Angolan capital with virtual participation. The event included a presentation of the research projects, as well as the signing of the funding agreements between the project implementation unit coordinator, Ricardo Queirós, and the respective principal researchers: Fernanda Dias, Professor at the Medicine Faculty of Agostinho Neto University, a local university; and Joana Afonso, General Director of the National Institute Research of Health Research. These research projects include the participation of reference research entities from Brazil, Portugal, Sweden and UK. The project is also being conducted in collaboration with the World Health Organization and the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. Minister for Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, Maria Bragança Sambo, who spoke at the ceremony, reaffirmed his Ministry's commitment to supporting the Ministry of Health's efforts through a 'One Health' approach towards strengthened research on COVID-19. Joseph Ribeiro, African Development Bank Country Manager for Angola, who attended the ceremony virtually, commended the Government of Angola for its well-articulated efforts toward combating and mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic. "The results of the scientific research will contribute to the construction of new knowledge about the virus, while strengthening national capacity in terms of staff training and availability of laboratory equipment for the health sector," Ribeiro said, emphasising the importance of the presented research projects. He further highlighted the significant participation of women researchers in the coordination and composition of the project teams, which is in line with the objectives of the Bank-financed project.

Angola currently has over 800 confirmed cases, 226 recoveries and 33 deaths, representing one of the highest death rates within the southern region of Africa. The country remains under a continued State of Calamity, declared on the 25th of May 2020.

Read more [here](#)

## 5. HowwemadeitinAfrica

### What is the future of online higher education in Africa? (Africa)

At one point during the global Covid-19 pandemic, 1.6 billion young people in 161 countries were out of school – close to 80% of the world’s enrolled students. This has spurred a significant surge in using technology to deliver education – with mixed results for students. Many establishments were ill-prepared for the changes needed to make learning online a good experience for students. The question now is whether the Covid-19 crisis will result in a more permanent shift to online education delivery, and can this be sustained in Africa?

Africa has the world’s fastest-growing youth population. Yet, there is a stark undersupply of quality, affordable higher education across the continent. Current tertiary enrolment rates across Africa stand at roughly 8% – well below the global average of 32%. Four years ago, CDC invested in UNICAF, Africa’s largest online university. This was underpinned by the belief that online education has the potential to increase access to higher education by making it cheaper, more flexible and more relevant and therefore opening up opportunities for higher education for a wider set of students. As of May 2020, UNICAF has offered bachelor, master’s and PhD degrees to almost 30,000 students across every country in Africa through either a fully online or a blended learning format from its campuses in Malawi and Zambia. Students can get affordable degrees accredited from globally recognised British, American, European, and African universities. Last year, we set out to evidence the impact that UNICAF has on its student base. Results of surveys with over 1,000 students are outlined in our insight study ‘What’s the impact of online higher education in Africa?’ We found that overall, UNICAF fulfils its promise to provide a more affordable and flexible higher education. Its degree programmes are explicitly designed to allow people to keep working while studying. A large part of UNICAF’s student base is therefore made up of older students (aged between 25 and 39) returning to education. Of the students surveyed, 86% worked while studying. UNICAF students pay \$4,000 on average for a postgraduate degree, in small monthly payments. This is significantly cheaper than any standard postgraduate degree available in most countries, particularly Nigeria and Kenya. Student satisfaction is high. Critical to improving access to online higher education in Africa is the need to improve connectivity across the continent. A stable internet connection remains difficult to access for the majority of Africans, especially those living outside the hubs of Nairobi, Lagos or Johannesburg. Additionally, many Africans leave secondary education without the necessary digital skills to take advantage of online programmes. Connectivity is low in most countries and data prices across Africa are amongst the highest in the world. Across Africa only 18% of households had access to the internet in 2019. The majority of Africans use the internet on their mobile, and whilst cost is still prohibitively high for many, phones and data bundles are getting cheaper year on year.

Read more [here](#)

## 6. University World News

### Champion of higher education reforms Professor Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang to contest elections as first female vice-president (Ghana)

Former vice-chancellor of the University of Cape Coast, Professor Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang, the first woman to hold that position, has been nominated to partner former president John Mahama of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) as a vice-president in the 2020 elections in Ghana following her nomination and approval by the party’s executive. Opoku-Agyemang served as Ghana’s minister of education under president Mahama from 2012 to 2016.

If Mahama wins the election, Opoku-Agyemang will become the first female vice-president in the country's history. If the party allows her at the end of the four-year term, she will become the first female presidential candidate in 2024. Her nomination has been generally welcomed, with feminist groups in particular arguing it may have finally "broken the glass ceiling". Her former deputy minister of education, Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, praised her as "a great role model", a distinguished scholar, a woman of integrity and a true nationalist. Okudzeto Ablakwa said, as minister of education, Opoku-Agyemang successfully championed reforms such as the conversion of polytechnics into technical universities, the upgrading of colleges of education into tertiary institutions, and a reduction in teacher absenteeism from 27% to 7%. She also led negotiations with the World Bank which secured for Ghana the flagship Secondary Education Improvement Project and the African Centres of Excellence initiative, resulting in the establishment and funding for the West Africa Centre for Crop Improvement, the West African Centre for Cell Biology of Infectious Pathogens, both at the University of Ghana, and the Regional Water and Environmental Sanitation Centre at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. Okudzeto Ablakwa said it was during her time that the ministry abolished the quota system at the colleges of education which led to enrolment increasing from 9,000 to 15,400. In addition, Opoku-Agyemang worked to bring about the upgrading of facilities in colleges of education, supervised the completion of the University of Health and Allied Sciences in Ho, and secured funding and initiated work on the University of Environment and Sustainable Development in the Eastern Region. She also oversaw infrastructural expansion in public tertiary institutions. As minister of education, Opoku-Agyemang helped to increase student loan beneficiaries from 13,833 in the 2012-13 academic year to 24,951 in 2015-16, said Okudzeto Ablakwa.

Read more [here](#)

## 7. University World News

### Concern over cuts to higher education, science budgets (South Africa)

Budget cuts and the diversion of resources to ameliorate the effects of COVID-19 are set to negatively impact higher education in South Africa, as well as national science and research systems, casting doubt over the system's ability to meet postgraduate and PhD targets, and sparking fears of staff reductions further down the line as the pandemic continues to slow down the economy. "The post-COVID-19 sustainability of universities is of deep concern and a lot will depend on what the situation is with regard to subsidy levels for 2021. There are also deep short-term crises that are currently being dealt with. This may result in staff cutbacks, but it is still too early to say," according to Professor Ahmed Bawa, the chief executive of the country's representative universities body, Universities South Africa (USAf). A special USAf board meeting to explore the financial status of the higher education sector is set to take place on Friday 24 July and will include chief financial officers of South African universities. The meeting will look at the factors impacting the long-term sustainability of the higher education sector, scenarios for 2021 and beyond, as well as what the future holds for the sector. According to a report on the USAf website, the meeting will also explore the idea of a stimulus package for the sector. Anticipated cuts to the budgets of the government departments of higher education, and science and innovation follow a call by Minister of Finance Tito Mboweni on 24 June for every government department to reduce its budget by 20%. However, it emerged during a meeting of the Select Committee on Education and Technology, Sports, Arts and Culture on 15 July to discuss the special adjustment budgets that the Department of Higher Education and Training had been successful in convincing National Treasury that its budget should not be cut by as much as 20% given the implications for the post-school sector and the level of "reprioritisation and expenditure at the institutional level, including the support to students". Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology Blade Nzimande told MPs in the National Council of Provinces on Tuesday 21 July that the department's total adjustment budget cut for 2020-21 was ZAR9.857 billion (US\$596 million) – a reduction of 8% of the original allocation of R116.857 billion for the

current financial year. The total “suspension” of funds amounted to R6.734 billion, of which nearly R5 billion (R4.999 billion) would be reallocated for reprioritising expenditure towards COVID-19 activities. “The net suspension amounts to R1.734 billion for normal voted funds,” he said. He said the reallocation of funds is to cater for “reprioritised expenditure towards addressing COVID-19 related activities, including student support”.

Read more [here](#)

## 8. University World News

### Universities turn to online learning as pandemic continues (Sudan)

Public and private universities in Sudan were instructed last week to commence online teaching and learning, four months after all higher education institutions were closed on 14 March owing to the coronavirus outbreak. Experts are concerned about the preparedness of students and staff to handle the transition. In a statement on Facebook, Sudanese Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Intisar Saghiroun said e-learning should commence from 14 July. According to UNESCO, over 204,000 university students have experienced disruption to their studies as a result of closures of Sudan's higher education institutions. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MHESR) is implementing an online support initiative for the teaching process, which provides synchronised and asynchronous teaching materials for students online. The platform will use the capabilities available at the Open University of Sudan which has 18 branches in Sudan, along with TV channels and educational radio. The MHESR has identified six universities to provide educational content and has suggested focusing on the final years of study. The content is currently being prepared and teachers and technicians are being trained, with students being assured of free access to all mobile phone networks (Zain, MTN and other Sudanese networks) during the health emergency period. Academics and IT experts say while e-learning is an obvious solution to the issue, there are many factors challenging its implementation. "At the time of COVID-19 e-learning is necessary but there are many challenges that make it not feasible at present. The most important of these are the weak infrastructure, instability of power supply, availability of internet, and financial problems, with most of the students struggling to access computers and cover the cost of internet," Professor Gamal Abdo, director of the Water Research Center at the University of Khartoum in Sudan, told University World News. A survey by the University of Khartoum of staff and students on their readiness for e-learning revealed a low capacity for e-learning in terms of material and equipment, human resource training and financial resources, according to Abdo. Laboratory work is essential in disciplines such as engineering and will require the physical presence of the students, he added. "If the capacity for e-learning is improved, blended (face-to-face and online learning) could be a feasible option," Abdo said. According to Internet World Stats, out of a Sudanese population of about 44 million, only 13 million have access to the internet. In addition, Sudan is ranked at 164 out of 207 countries when it comes to internet speed. In the 2020 edition of its Inclusive Internet Index, the Economist Intelligence Unit ranked Sudan at 75 out of 100 countries in its affordability index which examines the cost of internet access relative to income and the level of competition in the marketplace.

Read more [here](#)

## 9. University World News

### Ministry suspends all contact teaching in universities (Zimbabwe)

The Zimbabwean government has ordered all tertiary education institutions to stop face-to-face lectures on campuses immediately and proceed with e-learning as a safety measure to protect students and workers from a sudden spike in the number of cases of COVID-19. In a letter dated 21 July, addressed to 26 principals of tertiary education institutions including teachers' colleges, polytechnics and industrial colleges, Professor Fanuel Tagwira, permanent secretary in the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science

and Technology Development, said students should vacate halls of residence by Friday 24 July. “It is now observed COVID-19 cases are escalating daily and this may put the lives of students and members of staff in our institutions at high risk. “In view of the foregoing, the ministry is hereby directing that all tertiary education institutions, with immediate effect, suspend face-to-face lectures on campus and continue with e-learning,” he said. Tagwira said his ministry was working hard to ensure that all institutions are adequately resourced with the necessary infrastructure to facilitate access to quality e-learning. The switch-over to e-learning by universities and other higher education institutions has run into problems, with students complaining that the new learning method was not affordable to many of the students. The rejection by students forced government to engage mobile network operators to zero-rate universities’ websites, but of the three networks, only Econet Wireless, through its subsidiary Liquid Telecom, acceded to the demand. The decision to suspend lectures is a volte-face by government. Minister of Higher Education Professor Amon Murwira told parliament only last month that government had taken steps to ensure masks and sanitisers were accessible to learners. However, he did say the government would close the institutions if problems arose. Tertiary education institutions that include polytechnic colleges, teachers’ colleges and industrial training colleges opened on 13 July for final-year students while universities opened on 1 June.

Schools and tertiary education institutions were closed on 23 March after government declared the COVID-19 crisis a national disaster on 7 March. The suspension of contact learning comes as Zimbabwe is tightening its COVID-19 lockdown regulations to allow only essential services to operate. By Monday 20 July the country had reported 1,713 confirmed cases of the coronavirus and 26 deaths.

Read more [here](#)

## 10. HowwemadeitinAfrica

### Why Africa should embrace private sector higher education (Africa)

Access to better education infrastructure equals stronger and sustained economic growth. The United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goal 4 is “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. This is a hard reality in Africa: it has a massive shortfall of access at a time when its young population is soaring and the pace of change for the workplace is accelerating away. Bridging the gap and creating the best educational ecosystem is, therefore, critical. An entire continent’s prospects depend on it. The population growth is staggering. Never has a region experienced such rapid population growth. The 2018 World Bank report, Poverty and Shared Prosperity, recognises this, forecasting that unless higher education is dealt with, Africa risks being left behind. By 2030, Africa may be home to almost all the world’s people living in poverty. The region’s largest economy provides an example of the sheer scale of the youth population: Nigeria – the most populous country (over 200 million) on the continent with a median age of just 17.9 years, has a considerable supply-demand imbalance when it comes to accessing higher education institutions. Under a third of students who sit for the requisite exams (Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examinations, or UTME) manage to find a place. Tertiary institutions in Nigeria cannot currently accommodate over a million students seeking admission every year. Extensive research by L.E.K Consulting suggests that for sub-Saharan Africa to grow, the number of higher education seats needs to rise by 2x-3x what is available today. As fiscal gaps widen in the current health crisis, the burden on the public sector is further accentuated and, as the UN Special Envoy for Global Education and former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown points out, international aid for education is declining. Recent trends show that private institutions can go a considerable way to filling the gap. Many of the markets such as India, Senegal, Mozambique, Togo, Niger that have achieved 2x-3x university seat growth have done so in partnership with the private sector. Private institutions clearly need to be accountable. A huge portion of Africa’s future intellectual property and growth is in their hands. So, they need to listen to what young people need and what today’s complex, globalised and evermore digitised world of work needs. The 2019 Pearson Global Learner survey shows us

that people are moving beyond traditional learning. The global survey of 11,083 by pollsters, Harris, (perhaps unsurprisingly) puts English as the most important global language. The second most important is not Chinese – its ‘coding’. Not only does the current population believe that being able to code is important, they also have more faith in vocational and soft skills than before. And, people are increasingly less likely to end up building a career in the university major that they studied. This is, therefore, the challenge for education providers: to build and deliver, often remotely using technology, curricula that meets the needs of the global marketplace and provide undergraduates with the skills they need to succeed in a complex, fast-moving jobs market.

Read more [here](#)

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