

Happy International Women's Day 2026

"Give to Gain"

"To build a truly equitable and sustainably developed world, what mentorship do women need and what knowledge are you prepared to give to gain it?"

As we reflect on building a truly equitable and sustainably developed world, one truth stands clear: women and girls need intentional, transformational mentorship.

We need mentorship that builds confidence before titles, that transfers strategic knowledge about how systems work, and that affirms we can lead without losing our authenticity. Sustainable development requires empowered, well-equipped women.

But mentorship is not a one-way street, it is reciprocal. To be good mentees, we must bring humility to learn, courage to act, and excellence in our preparation. And as we rise, we must be willing to pass on what we know - turning every lesson into a ladder for another woman.

Equity will not be built by individual success, but by women who mentor, support, and uplift one another. Today, I commit not only to seeking mentorship, but to becoming a more intentional and impactful mentor.

Happy Women's Day.



Unity Chipunza
Program Officer - Digital
Academy

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Nada Siddig Abdalla Musa

Programme Assistant,
Partnership

Life is challenging, and in many cases it is even harder for women. Building a truly equitable and sustainably developed world therefore requires collaboration, mutual support, and shared responsibility because, as the saying goes, **“one finger cannot lift a rock”**. By nature, I am a social person who values connecting with and supporting others. I believe development cannot occur if either women or men are left behind.

While I support both, I place particular emphasis on mentoring women, who are often disadvantaged due to the many responsibilities they carry as the backbone of families and communities. Women need mentorship that builds not only their academic and professional capacity but also their confidence and resilience.

In my professional role at the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture, I contribute to knowledge sharing and capacity building across Africa. I also support Sudanese migrants affected by war and mentor young people in their education and recovery. Through these efforts, I aim to help build resilient communities and a more equitable future.

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Evaline Acan

Communication Assistant

To build a truly equitable and sustainably developed world, women in the communication space need intentional mentorship that strengthens their capacity for strategic leadership, digital influence, policy advocacy, and decision-making at institutional and global levels. Beyond technical media skills, they require guidance in navigating power structures, shaping narratives that influence policy, leveraging digital platforms responsibly, and positioning themselves as thought leaders in development spaces. Mentorship should also nurture confidence, negotiation skills, and visibility, enabling women communicators to move from supporting roles to agenda-setters who amplify marginalized voices and drive transformative change.

In contributing to this vision, I am prepared to share my knowledge and experience in development communication, ethical and impactful storytelling, media engagement, and strategic messaging for institutional growth. By equipping women with practical tools, professional networks, and leadership insights, we can collectively strengthen our voice, expand our influence, and accelerate sustainable development outcomes.

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Runyararo Jolyn Rukarwa
Senior Programme Officer,
Human Capital Development

This International Women's Day, I am reflecting on what mentorship truly means for women and the role it plays in building an equitable, sustainable world. In my experience as a Senior Programme Officer for Human Capital Development, I have seen firsthand that women thrive when mentorship is intentional, practical, and creates safe spaces to explore ideas, navigate challenges, and connect with networks that open doors.

Through my work supporting faculty, students, and young professionals, I have learned that mentorship is most impactful when it combines guidance with opportunities to practice skills, experiment, and lead. I am committed to sharing my knowledge in experiential learning, capacity building, and peer-to-peer exchange to help women turn potential into action, ideas into innovation, and ambition into leadership.

Mentorship is not just about giving; it is about shaping futures. By investing in women today, we gain leaders who drive change, champion inclusivity, and create sustainable solutions. This is my contribution to “Give to Gain,” ensuring women are at the center of transformation

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Abigail N. Otinga

Senior Programme Officer -
Systems Strengthening and
Operations

In the highly competitive, demanding and cutthroat space of academia and research, young women need to know that they are not alone; that others have walked the road ahead of them and that, yes, it may be difficult, but not impossible. I believe that in this regard, mentorship should be intentional, practical and courageous not only teaching skills but also building confidence, sharing networks, opening gates and affirming that women belong in science, leadership and community transformation.

As I grow in this space, I am committed to giving what I have built and gained over the years in research, teaching and supervision, systems strengthening and community engagement including how to lead with integrity, translate knowledge into solutions, build, nurture and maintain partnerships and remain committed and grounded in service.

I believe that when women give knowledge, time and encouragement to fellow women, we do not lose, rather, multiply impact. Together, we build steadier institutions, nourish communities and shape a more just and inclusive future.

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This International Women's Day, I am reflecting on the 2026 theme: Give to Gain. True equity is not just about having a seat at the table; it's about pulling out the chair for the woman behind you i.e speaking her name in rooms she has not entered yet.

As I reflect on the 2026 theme for international women's day; Give to gain, true equity means investing our social capital into the advancement of others, ensuring that our presence at the table serves as a bridge. To build a sustainably developed world, women do not just need advice, we need sponsorship and mentorship. We need mentors who share the 'unwritten rules' of power.

In return, I am prepared to sharing my journey, my failures, and my network to ensure the next generation of women leaders does not have to start from scratch, rather; foster a sustainability mindset, create a resilient workplace where knowledge is not hoarded, but multiplied for the benefit of everyone.

As an administrative officer who 'Gives to Gain' I recognize that my desk is not a terminal, it's a stepping stone for every woman who walks past it.



Jackline Amwony
Administrative Officer

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Building a truly equitable and sustainably developed world requires intentional mentorship that equips women not only with technical competence, but also with confidence, strategic thinking, ethical grounding, and leadership courage.

In my role as Finance and Administration Manager at RUFORUM, where I supervise diverse teams of both women and men. I have learned that mentorship for women must go beyond task supervision. Women need mentors who affirm their voice in decision-making spaces, expose them to leadership opportunities, and guide them in navigating institutional dynamics with integrity and professionalism.

I am prepared to share knowledge grounded in practical experience: disciplined financial management, ethical stewardship of resources, team leadership across gender and age differences, and the importance of continuous learning. I am also prepared to share lessons in resilience—leading with confidence even when supervising senior colleagues, balancing firmness with empathy, and upholding values even when faced with pressure.



Judith Nakyobe

*Finance and Administration
Manager*

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Lois Nanono

Program Officer - Business
Development Services

Women in the research and agribusiness sectors need mentorship that focuses on industrial decoding. Many of us possess the technical expertise and the innovations, but we need mentors who can guide us through the “last mile” of commercialization navigating the complexities of venture capital, industrial scaling, and the transition from a university-led project to a market-ready enterprise. Those mentors help us turn “shelf-ready” research into “market-moving” solutions. Therefore, women should look out for people that can support them achieve this.

To gain this, I am prepared to share my knowledge on ecosystem integration. Specifically, I offer my expertise in building “innovation transfer” frameworks, the art of aligning academic research with the strategic interests of global partners and rural communities. I am ready to share how we can craft professional narratives that turn local agricultural challenges into compelling investment cases, ensuring that woman-led enterprises are seen not just as beneficiaries, but as vital delivery partners for impact and global development

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Loyce Angoku
Senior Management
Accountant

On this special women's day, I celebrate the beauty, strength, courage, and resilience that lives within every woman. We women are dreamers, leaders, nurturers, builders, and changemakers in our own unique ways.

As a woman, I am proud of how far we have come and inspired by how much further we can go. In every step I make, I will offer support, a listening ear, a safe space, and words of encouragement when they are needed most. I take the privilege to remind all women of our empowerment, strength, our worth, and our limitless potential.

To all the women who come my way, I pledge to offer my authenticity showing up as my true self so others feel free to do the same. Collaboration is key and not competition, because we rise higher when we lift each other with love, respect, and solidarity through every season, every challenge, and every win!!!!

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Mary Kulabako

*Programme Officer - Education,
Access, Skilling & Training*

Women need mentorship that goes beyond technical skills. It must nurture confidence, resilience, and the courage to lead in spaces where their voices have often been overlooked. True mentorship should open doors to networks, provide guidance on navigating institutional systems, assurance that someone believes in them, and affirm the value of diverse perspectives in shaping sustainable development.

What I am prepared to give is knowledge rooted in experience: the importance of transparent processes, the discipline of documentation, and the power of collaborative leadership. I am ready to share lessons on building inclusive frameworks, amplifying marginalized voices, and translating vision into action. In giving this knowledge, I hope to gain something deeper, the growth of a new generation of women leaders who will carry forward the work of equity and sustainability with creativity, strength, and conviction.

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**Selma Ndapewa
Nghituwamhata**

*Programme Assistant - Doctoral
Training*

As a woman navigating both career growth and family life, I have come to appreciate how important mentorship is in shaping professional journeys, confidence, and purpose. Through my work at the RUFORUM Secretariat supporting the Doctoral training programmes, I have seen how investing in women's education and leadership can transform lives and institutions.

I also learnt that mentorship must go beyond academic and professional success. Women need guidance to navigate life holistically - balancing career aspirations with building families, nurturing relationships, and sustaining their wellbeing. At the same time, building equitable societies should not be seen as a competition between women and men, but as a journey where both rise together.

In the spirit of “Give to Gain,” I remain committed to sharing my experiences and supporting fellow women to grow and lead meaningful change. When we give our knowledge, courage, and support to others, we do not only empower individuals - we help shape stronger families, communities, and futures

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Fatiina Namakula
Procurement and Human
Resource Officer

This year as we celebrate the International Women's Day, I would like to appreciate the "Give to Gain" theme and I am surely glad to be part of it. As women we need not just succeed but need mentorship that equips us to understand and influence systems, which is a sustainable approach to our existence in workspaces. We need the confidence to radiate Executive presence and courage to occupy spaces without apology and as such address the issue of how we can fairly be placed in roles. As such I am prepared to give knowledge to younger women on how they can position themselves, what hiring panels look like and how to prepare for interviews.

As a Human Resource professional, I think women also need exposure to Labor law literacy which ensures sustainable, ethical and fair workplace practices. They need to be aware of all policies that shape workplace equity.

As we all know, Knowledge reduces vulnerability and the Give to Gain speaks to us to not only mentor individuals but mentor system changers. A happy women's day to all the ladies on the continent.