



RAE ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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Summary

The Research and Education Agency (RAE, www.rae.co.ug) is a Non-Governmental Organisation operating in Uganda and other African Countries to support efforts to improve livelihoods of rural communities by enhancing access to basic education, agricultural technologies, drinking water and basic health services. RAE specifically focusses on working with marginalised and underserved rural communities to foster inclusive rural development through improved access to development opportunities. This Report provides a synopsis of actions taken during 2024, which aimed to consolidate on delivery of previous efforts and to respond to the targets for the first year implementation of the RAE Strategic Plan for the period 2024-2030 ([link](#)).

For 2024 the activities focused on:

1. Setting up and operationalizing the RAE Coordinating Unit (RCU)
2. Development of policy and operational guidelines
3. Establishing collaborative arrangements with strategic partners
4. Designing initiatives for implementing some of the RAE thrusts
5. Resource mobilization
6. Networking for learning and information sharing

Background

Generally, poverty, social, economic and political exclusion as well as climate change constitute key challenges that coexist at global and national levels necessitating tailored interventions to provide adequate solutions. In spite of the prevailing interventions, effects of climate change and local conflicts continue to devastate global and local populations, rendering millions of people displaced within and across countries inevitably resulting in fragile and deplorable situations necessitating deliberate tailored interventions. Besides, in Sub-Saharan Africa, consequent to socio-economic exclusion, about 70% of the population live in rural areas experiencing livelihoods characterised by limited access to education, low productivity and incomes, poor housing, poor health, etc, with majority remaining uneducated, unskilled and unemployed. This leaves them, especially the youth and women with no option, but to engage in subsistence farming and related employment. In dire circumstances they resort to early marriage, alcoholism, substance abuse and gender violence thus high levels of crime and families breaking down. It is against this background that Research and Education Agency (RAE) is focussed on garnering partnership for increasing access to education, employable skills development, agricultural productivity improvement and commercialisation and environmental health sustenance, among others, targeting especially rural disadvantaged communities. During the year 2024, RAE engaged, and worked with Partners to strengthen access to secondary and university undergraduate education as well as lobbying for Technical and Vocation Education Training (TVET). RAE envisages strengthening these partnership undertakings and increased engagement with universities to enable students from rural communities access education and for joint partnership with other actors to support rural transformation for increased productivity, access to basic amenities and business development. In these efforts RAE will largely play the role of a catalyst and facilitator of joint initiatives.

RAE 2024-2030 Strategic Plan

RAE's 2024 – 2030 strategic plan, developed through comprehensive stakeholder consultative processes, provides a framework against which RAE's operations will be based for the next five years. Drawing from the long-term strategy, RAE's Ambition, Vision, Mission and Strategic Objectives are:

- **Ambition**

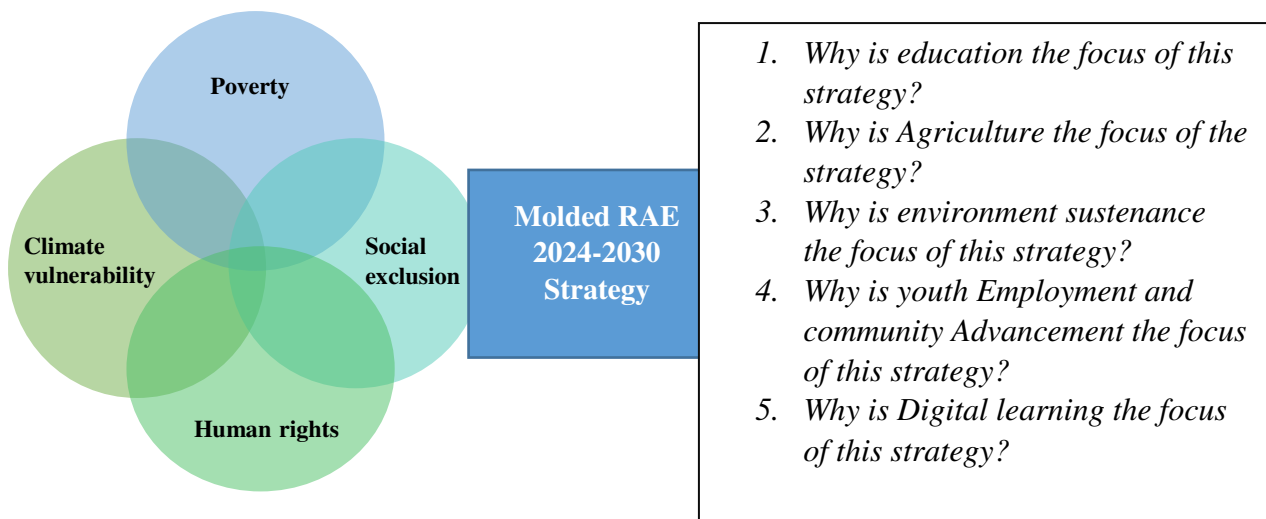
Transforming Lives through Inclusive Education and Skill Development for Job Creation

- **Vision**

Vibrant inclusive rural communities that have improved access to good quality information and are employed in generating sustainable livelihoods from agriculture

- **Mission**

To ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and job opportunities for underserved, marginalized and vulnerable communities especially in rural Uganda and other parts of Africa, as enablers of human development



Zoomed-out development challenges that often co-exist and intertwine

Figure 1: Underpinning the ‘Big five’ Development Challenges

Strategic Objectives

1. Narrowing the **access to education** gap (especially for **young girls and women** and other excluded demography)
2. Addressing the issue of **youth unemployment**, especially since a vast majority of the youth will not attain university education so as to enhance youth **integration into the cash economy** as workers and employers of all types
3. Turning **technologies** into innovations that **improve livelihoods** (science in action)
4. Enhancing access to **digital technologies** and learning for **rural schools and communities**

Key thrusts for 2024-2030

Focus Area 1: Providing remote populations with greater access to basic education

Focus Area 2: Implementing and improving digital learning in communities and schools in remote areas

Focus Area 3: Advancing agricultural education through learning labs and school gardens

Focus Area 4: Enhancing rural communities access to information for improved agricultural and business innovations

Focus Area 5: Boosting rural youth and women's groups involved in agricultural value streams' entrepreneurship potential

Focus Area 6: Boosting rural communities' ability to withstand climate shocks and encourage the sustainability of the rural environment

Governance and Management

RAE Governance structure consists of the Board as an apex body that provides policy guidance and oversight to RAE operations, a Technical Advisory Committee that reviews and guides RAE's initiatives and the RAE Coordinating Unit that implements RAE initiatives (Figure 1). Please refer to Appendices 2 and 3 for the Board and Technical Committee members' lists.

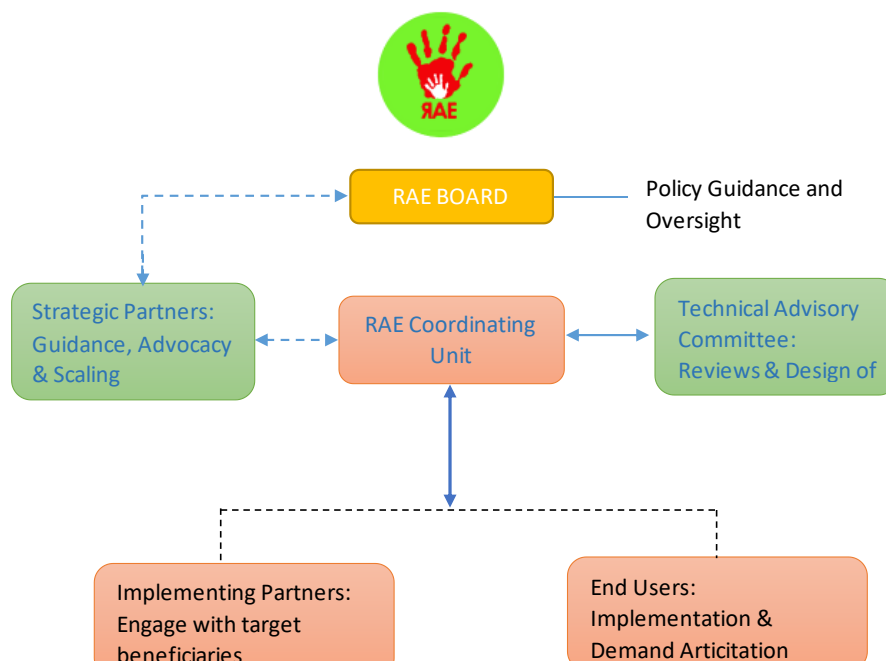


Figure 2: RAE Governance Organogram as Approved by the Board on 01 December 2023

RAE Policy Documents

The following is a list of RAE Board Approved Policy and Operations Instruments

- a. RAE Articles of Association
- b. RAE Governance Manual
- c. RAE Finance Manual
- d. RAE Human Resource Manual
- e. RAE Gender Equality Policy
- f. RAE Safeguards Policy
- g. RAE Anti-Fraud Policy
- h. RAE Whistle Blower Policy
- i. RAE Conflict of Interest Policy
- j. RAE Investment Plan and Policy
- k. RAE 2024-2030 Strategic Plan

Programmatic Highlights for 2024

This Annual Report presents highlights of the key activities undertaken in 2024 and provides a glimpse on future direction of RAE as it works towards delivering on its Vision and Mission.

1. Setting up and operationalizing the RAE Coordinating Unit (RCU)
2. Development of policy and operational guidelines
3. Establishing collaborative arrangements with strategic partners
4. Designing initiatives for implementation of some of the RAE thrusts
5. Resource mobilization
6. Networking for learning and information sharing
7. External Audit of RAE Books of Account for the Financial Year 2024

1. Establishment and operationalization of RAE Regional Coordinating Unit

The RAE Coordinating Unit was moved in 2023 from Plot 54 Factory Road in Ntinda, Kampala to Plot 2, Edimu Close, Naalya, Wakiso, Uganda. It is now operational with the following Staff in place: Executive Director, Adjust Programme Director, Head Education and Skilling, Head Community Advancement, Gender and Safeguards, Adjunct Head Research and Development, Program Officer Networking and Communication, Program Officer for Administration and Human Resource, Adjunct Finance Officer, and an Administration and Publication Assistant.

2. Development of policy and operational guidelines

During the year 2024 RAE Coordinating Unit co-creatively developed additional operational Instruments to guide implementation of RAE Projects and operational activities. Specifically, the following were developed and operationalised:

1. RAE Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Strategy, designed to provide a framework against which RAE's planning, monitoring, evaluation and learnings are based and it has been operationalized;
2. RAE Communication and Dissemination Strategy;
3. RAE Information & Communication Technology (ICT) Policy;
4. RAE Knowledge Management Strategy

3. Establishing collaborative arrangements with strategic partners

During the year 2024, RAE's effort was geared towards developing Partnerships and collaboration arrangements with a number of agencies as part of a strategy to leverage experience and resources for scaling up delivery of RAE Services. In that regard, RAE signed an MOU with 36 African Institutions as part of collaborative arrangements to undertake activities to support rural transformation in Africa, especially in terms of increasing access to education, skilling youth and women groups, and fostering agricultural transformation in the continent. For example, formal partnerships were established between RAE and various

women groups, Tertiary and Vocational Education Training (TVET) institutions, universities, among others. The partner institutions are from Benin (West Africa), Cameroon and DR Congo (Central Africa), Malawi and Zimbabwe (Southern Africa), and Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda (Eastern Africa).

4. Designing initiatives for implementation of some of the RAE thrusts

During the period 2024, RAE in collaboration with partners designed three initiatives:

- i. Strengthening digital learning for rural schools and communities
- ii. Increasing access to basic and Higher education for female students and training mid-career Women scientists (Masters Graduates) for Africa in Africa.
- iii. Promoting environmental health and sustenance through land restoration and greening.

The Frameworks are in place and the focus now is to mobilise resources for operationalizing the three initiatives.

5. Resource Mobilisation Efforts

During the period 2024 RAE placed special emphasis on mobilizing funding for its activities and for collaborative undertakings with other partners. The RAE Coordinating Unit developed and submitted proposals and solicitation letters to Development Agencies in Europe, Middle East, and USA, and these are being followed up. The proposals focus on:

- i. Increasing access to basic and TVET education, especially for disadvantaged rural communities, including refugees and displaced persons with particular attention to girl children and women.
- ii. Training mid-career women scientists
- iii. Skilling school and out of school youth and women groups
- iv. Enhancing access to education for refugees and other disadvantaged communities
- v. Infrastructure development in needy and underserved rural communities
- vi. Promoting uptake of improved agricultural practices and technologies
- vii. Increasing access to digital learning for rural schools and communities
- viii. Promoting community-based activities for enhancing environmental health and sustenance
- ix. Promoting Intra-Africa Academic Mobility

RAE continued with its Crowd Resourcing efforts for maintaining the girl child in School and schooling for disadvantaged rural school students. RAE also continued efforts towards operationalizing the *Women in Food Security Series*, an initiative being championed by Her Excellency Prof Ameenah-Gurib, former President of Mauritius, and His Excellency Dr Sidi Ould Tah, the President of the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa.

Achievements

Meetings and Workshops

RAE benefitted from partnership with the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) that enabled RAE to engage with several Stakeholders as well as holding stakeholders' meetings at the sidelines of the 20th RUFORUM Annual General Meeting and Triennial Conference held 12th – 17th August 2024 in Windhoek, Namibia. The Namibian Triennial Conference enabled RAE to:

- i. Held consultations with key stakeholders on needed actions to support rural transformation in Africa. The main outcome was the consensus to establish a collaborative mechanism for engagement of different universities, research institutions, and community-based organisations for joint undertakings to support rural transformation in Africa. Accordingly, 36 institutions signed an MOU to facilitate collaborative undertakings with RAE serving as the facilitating unit for the joint undertakings.
- ii. Facilitated regional review meetings for five 2023 successful Intra-Africa Academic Mobility teams, which enabled the teams to finalise recruitment of mobility students and other supporting instruments. The convening also enabled advanced planning by the university teams to respond to the 2024 Intra-Africa Academic Mobility Call.
- iii. Initiated development of seven collaborative proposals involving Benin, Cameroon, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe.
- iv. RAE participated in the review of AU-EU Food and Nutrition Security for Sustainable Agriculture (FNSSA) Research and Innovation 2016 – 2026 Roadmap Program that involved holding consultative meetings with participants from Africa and Europe and providing recommendations for the design of the proposed 2027-2037 Roadmap.
- v. The RAE Executive Director and staff held a number of meetings with key stakeholders including the Honorable Dr Sombo Ayanne Safi Mukuna Marie-Therese, Minister of Education of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Hon Dr Itah Kandjii-Murangi, the Minister of Higher Education, Technology and Innovation of Namibia to discuss issues of i) mobilizing resources for basic and higher education and TVET training in Africa, ii) mobilizing resources for training students from underserved communities, refugees and other disadvantaged communities, and c) Training female scientists.



RAE Executive Director (Prof Adipala Ekwamu, fourth from right) and university leaders from the Republic of Benin at the sidelines of a meeting in Windhoek Namibia on 14 August 2024.



RAE staff, Prof Nancy Chitera Vice Chancellor Malawi University of Business and Applies Science (4th from left), staff from Islamic University in Uganda (5th from right/left and first on the right) and Mastercard foundation official, Tina Muparadzi (6th from Left) after a Meeting on 15th August 2024 in Windhoek, Namibia



RAE Executive Secretary (Prof Adipala Ekwamu) meeting with Hon. Dr. Itah Kandjii-Murangi, the Namibia Minister of Higher Education, Technology and Innovation on 13th August 2024 in Windhoek, Namibia

RAE continued to facilitate the training of needy students from disadvantaged communities that were supported to join secondary and High School education (30), mostly from Karamoja region in North-Eastern Uganda. Pleasingly, four of the students completed high school education and joined university Education in 2024. In addition, 12 of the students supported by RAE for undergraduate training at Ndejje and Gulu universities in Uganda completed their studies.

RAE continued to pursue efforts to enable some of the disadvantaged rural schools establish digital learning facilities. As part of this effort, RAE funded a baseline study covering 36 schools in North-Eastern Uganda to assess the status of ICT training and digital learning in seven districts of Uganda (Amolotar, Amuria, Dokolo, Kalaki, Kaberamaido, Kapelebyong and Serere). As part of this effort 21 schools have been identified for possible support. This is an ongoing effort and RAE is continuing to pursue efforts to mobilise support for enabling digital learning in selected rural schools and communities, including Women Farmers Groups.

External Audit. RAE received a clean Audit for the period 2023. The Audit was undertaken by Price & King. The Report also advised focus on Resource Mobilisation for RAE Operations.

Challenges

In the case of Uganda and probably in other African countries, there continues to be a very high school drop-out rate, especially for rural school students with over 70% of the students not progressing beyond primary school education. This is very alarming and is leading to gross marginalization of especially rural communities and indeed exclusion from development

processes. This requires interventions by national governments and development Partners to establish and strengthen initiatives to increase access to and retention of rural and other disadvantaged students in schools. As such this will be a key thrust for collaborative undertaking by RAE and Partner Agencies.

Further, while schools are keen to integrate digital learning as required by the Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports, most of the rural schools lack the infrastructure required to achieve the digitization goal. Besides, most of the rural schools face the challenge of very low internet connectivity. This also requires government and development partners' intervention.

The other evolving challenge is the crises caused by civil strife in the region, resulting in millions of people being displaced and becoming refugees in foreign countries especially in Uganda and South Sudan. This calls for humanitarian interventions to help such disadvantaged and vulnerable persons and communities. RAE is working with Universities in South Sudan and Uganda to mobilise funding to help some of the affected youth and women access education and skilling opportunities.

Learnings

Clearly the above opportunities and challenges require a multifaceted approach and alliances amongst different stakeholder groups, including policy. Thus, RAE will give priority to forging alliances with strategic partners to try to help some of the rural communities improve their livelihood opportunities. Accordingly, RAE will partner with other organisations to support efforts to extend education and other services to marginalized and underserved rural communities, including refugees, displaced persons and persons with disabilities. In these efforts RAE will continue to focus on retaining the girl child in school, supporting their post-primary education and training a pool of mid-career (MSc level graduates) women scientists. RAE will also prioritize initiatives to strengthen entrepreneurship skills and business development especially for School and out of School Youth and Women groups.

Key Strategic Thrusts for the Year 2025

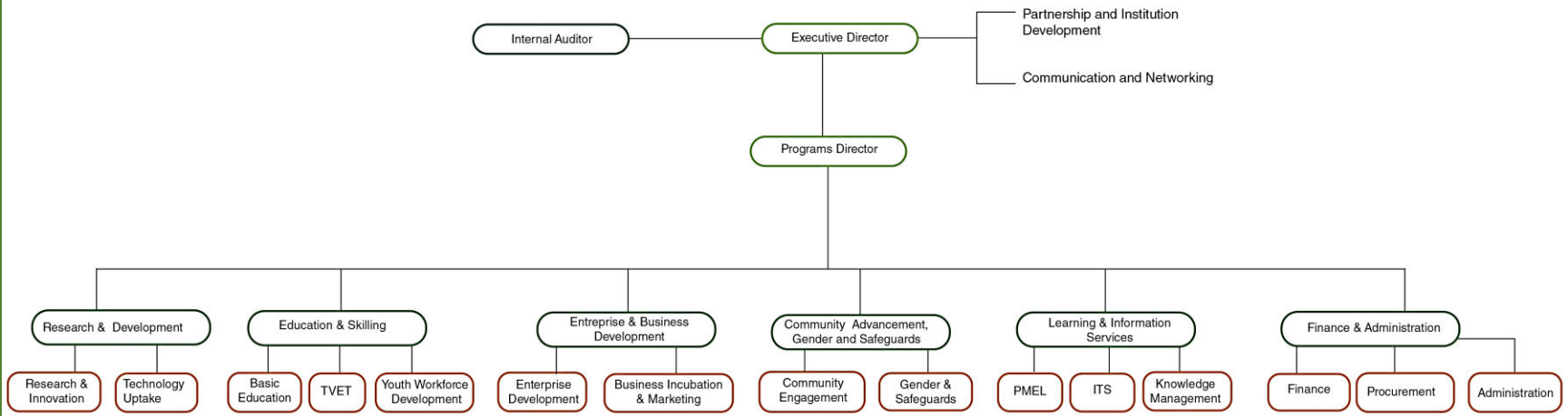
The RAE Board Meeting of 4th December 2024 approved the following as Key Thrusts for the Year 2025:

1. Strengthening operational capacity of the RAE Coordinating Unit
2. Enhancing access to education and skills development for rural youth especially for the girl child and other disadvantaged students including refugees
3. Skill development for School and Out of School Youth
4. Digitalization in both operations and interventions
5. Implementation of at least three initiatives
6. Resource Mobilisation for RAE operations and partnership with collaborating institutions

7. Networking and Strengthening Strategic Partnerships for enhanced delivery and quality of RAE services.
8. External Audit for the Financial Year 2024

Annex 1: RAE Services and Management Organogram

RAE Coordinating Unit Board Approved Organogram 31 December 2023



KEY
 PMEL: Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
 ITS: Information Technology Services

Annex 2. List of RAE Board Members

- a. Mr James Okello, Academic Registrar, Soroti University and RAE Board Chair
- b. Dr Damalie Akwango, National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO), Uganda and RAE Board Deputy Chair
- c. Dr Joseph Oryokot, an Agricultural Specialist, Board Member
- d. Dr Robert Kawuki, Agricultural Specialist, Board Member
- e. Prof. John Akec, Information Technology Specialist and former Vice Chancellor, University of Juba, South Sudan, Board Member
- f. Prof. Julius Ochuodho, from University of Eldoret in Kenya, Board Member
- g. Prof. Adil Deifalla, an Agriculturalist from University of Gezira in Sudan, Board Member
- h. Associate Prof. Tahra El-Obeid, a Food Science Specialist at Qatar University in Qatar, Board Member
- i. Dr Mary Shawa, a Gender Specialist from Plan International in Malawi; Board Member
- j. Prof. Kay Muir-Leresche, Education and Sustainable Development Specialist based in South Africa, Board Member,
- k. Dr Milton Edimu, Engineer and Founding Director of RAE, Board Member
- l. Prof Adipala Ekwamu, Executive Director and Founding Director of RAE, Board Member and Board Secretary

Annex 3. List of RAE Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Members

- a. Dr Abigael Otingal, from RUFORUM Secretariat; Chair of TAC
- b. Dr Drake Mirembe, an IT Expert at Makerere University; TAC Member
- c. Dr Duncan Ongeng, from Gulu University in Northern Uganda; TAC Member
- d. Mr Malenge Baker, the Principal of Moroto Technical Institute in Karamoja, Northern Uganda, TAC Member
- e. Dr Babra Zawede Mugwanya, NARO Zonal Director & Expert on Entrepreneurship and Business Development, TAC Member
- f. Mr. Owen Singura, Youth Skill Development Expert, TAC Member