



Bridging Research, Education, and Outreach for Innovation and Economic Development in Uganda



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Order of Presentation



- Introduction and Motivation
- Methodology
- Documentaries
- Findings
- Recommendations



Introduction and motivation



- **University's Progress in Research & Innovation:**
 - Years of donor and government support have strengthened Universities' research capacity.
 - Staff and students now possess strong skills to support community and national development.
 - Significant advancements achieved in research and innovation outputs e.g. Kiira Motos.



Introduction . . .



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- **The Challenge – Limited Research Impact:**
 - Disconnect between university outputs and real-world/community outreach.
 - Innovations and findings often remain within academia.
 - Limited engagement with government, business, and community stakeholders on research findings.
 - Growing concern about the **low development impact** of university innovations and their research output.
 - Look at the university neighborhood – Katanga, kikoni, kavule . . .



Introduction . . .



- **Alignment with Uganda's Growth Priorities:**
 - Uganda's growth strategy (NDP IV) focuses on **Agriculture, Tourism, Mineral-based Industrialisation, and Science & Technology (ATMS)**.
 - Universities should thus align their research, innovation, and training to support these priority sectors.



Introduction . . .



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- **There is thus Need for Stronger Linkages and Impact Mechanisms:**
 - No structured mechanisms to connect research and innovations with communities and industries.
 - Limited guidance for farmers, businesses, and policymakers on applying university research.
 - Need for collaborative platforms to boost uptake and drive socio-economic transformation of the country.



The study



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- The main objective of this project was to establish an **integrated framework** that connects university research, innovations, and capacities with **industry, government, and communities** to drive the national development.



The study's Interventions:



1. Comprehensive Mapping

- Identify existing research outputs, innovations, and capacities in universities.
- Align them with Uganda's key growth sectors.

2. Needs Assessment

- Determine collaboration opportunities between universities, industry, government, and communities.
- Highlight entry points for impactful engagement.



Interventions . . .



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3. Piloting Applications

- Test real-world application of university knowledge and innovations.
- Support government, businesses, and communities in ATMS sectors to spur growth in the country.

4. Knowledge-Sharing Platform

- Create a platform to share knowledge, research and innovations.
- Foster continuous collaboration among universities, industries, and communities.



Significance of the study



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- The project encompasses a blend of research, outreach, and capacity-building initiatives and draws lessons from global examples where universities play a direct role in community development.
 - It leverages university research, innovations, and the skills of staff and students to enhance productivity in key sectors, spur economic growth, and increase employment opportunities for Uganda's substantial youth population.
- This follows the fact that Universities are facing a challenge in the uptake of their research outputs and stakeholders are increasingly concerned about the need to strengthen its research impact.
 - Thus, through **capacity-building programmes, interdisciplinary research, and outreach initiatives**, the project enhances business performance, agricultural productivity, industrialisation, and overall economic development.
 - Enhance collaboration between Universities, government agencies, private sector actors, and communities, ensuring that research outputs contribute directly to increased productivity, employment, and innovation



Activities conducted in this study



- Baseline assessments of the situation as it is.
- Training workshops for MSMEs and policymakers,
- Policy briefs and business toolkits.
- A dissemination (knowledge sharing) platform.



Methodology



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- The project adopted a **mixed-methods approach**, combining participatory action research, digital outreach, and stakeholder engagements.



Methodology . . .



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- Conducted mapping of existing research, innovations and out reach programs by:
 - Visiting all public universities and interviewing heads of units (head of research and innovations, departments, deans, principals, Academic Registrar and eminent researchers).
 - Visiting the location of the university projects and interview the people around to ascertain the relevance of university research and initiatives.
- Conducted Needs assessment of the communities from the universities through FGDs and deep interviews.
- Desk Review of existing innovations, research and outreaches.



Methodology . . .



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- Carried out one-on-one interviews with government representatives at selected district level (e.g., CDO, DCOs; parish chiefs), industry, and influential community leaders to gain strategic insights.
- Organized and conducted FGDs with specific groups (e.g., small and medium enterprise owners, research project beneficiaries, farmers, local innovators, community, women and youth groups) to capture diverse perspectives and collective needs.



Target Groups



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- **University stakeholders:**
 - Director of research, innovations and graduate trainings, researchers, innovators, and students.
 - Other tertiary institutions that engage in research and innovations.
- **Government MDAs**
- **Communities:**
 - farmers, miners, tourism operators, MSMEs & SMEs, SMIs, industrialists, entrepreneurs, etc.



Interview Guide



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1. Kindly tell me about any activities/ programmes that are being implemented in this community by the university. (probe: Agriculture, Tourism, Mineral-based industrialization, and Science and Technology (ATMS)).
2. Kindly share with me the particular programs or activities implemented by the university that you have benefited from.
3. How did you know about these activities/programmes funded?
4. Are there particular individuals or organizations that the university works with to implement these activities/programmes? (Collaborations working to increase productivity and employment)
5. Is the community engaged in the cocreation/design of different university programmes/ activities and how are they involved?
6. What are the existing mechanisms done by the institution to translate research findings, ideas and innovation outcomes to impact on policy, industry, business and the economic activities of local communities? (probe: Agriculture, Tourism, Mineral-based industrialization, and Science and Technology (ATMS)).
7. Are there any impacts from these activities/programmes in regard business performance, agricultural productivity, industrialization and overall economic development?



Validation Workshop





Findings



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- Watch the documentary:

https://youtu.be/_x7cOzo6biA



Findings . . .



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- Needs Assessment revealed a significant gap between university research and its practical application in Uganda's key growth sectors—Agriculture, Tourism, Mineral-based Industrialization, and Science and Technology (ATMS).
- Stakeholders, including industry actors, government agencies, and community groups, identified persistent challenges such as **limited collaboration mechanisms with universities, inadequate funding for innovation uptake, and weak institutional frameworks** for research translation.



Findings . . .



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- The assessment highlighted a strong demand for applied research, technical support, and capacity-building initiatives to enhance productivity and innovation.
 - Stakeholders expressed preference for **practical engagement models** such as joint pilot collaboration opportunities linking university innovations to real-world problems.



Findings . . .



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- Inadequate funding for research translation, weak digital infrastructure, limited outreach beyond university location.
- Hence the need for inclusive, well-funded, and digitally supported engagement frameworks.



Findings and Recommendations



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- Findings revealed systemic constraints, including poor internet connectivity, insufficient engagement policies, limited outreach skills among researchers, lack of formalized partnerships, and absence of structured feedback and monitoring mechanisms.
 - The findings thus underscore the urgent need for a coordinated, digital knowledge-sharing platform and stronger institutional support to facilitate sustained university–industry–community collaboration for inclusive economic development.



Findings and Recommendations



- The study findings also show the presence of projects in agriculture, clean energy, environmental conservation, and health.
 - For instance, Gulu University's *Green Charcoal Innovation Project* demonstrates the use of agricultural waste to produce sustainable energy alternatives.
- However, findings revealed limited community involvement in project design, with engagement largely occurring during implementation. Financial constraints remain a major obstacle, restricting the scale and sustainability of community-focused innovations.



Recommendations . . .



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- There is need for Universities to frequently use exhibitions, training, and radio programs to disseminate research and innovations.
- Set up incubation hubs serve as critical mechanisms for transitioning student innovations into viable enterprises.
- Strengthen the inter-university partnerships and attracting private sector funding, with institutions like Stanbic Bank emerging as key partners.



Recommendation . . .



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- A knowledge sharing platform:

<https://dissemination.ug/>

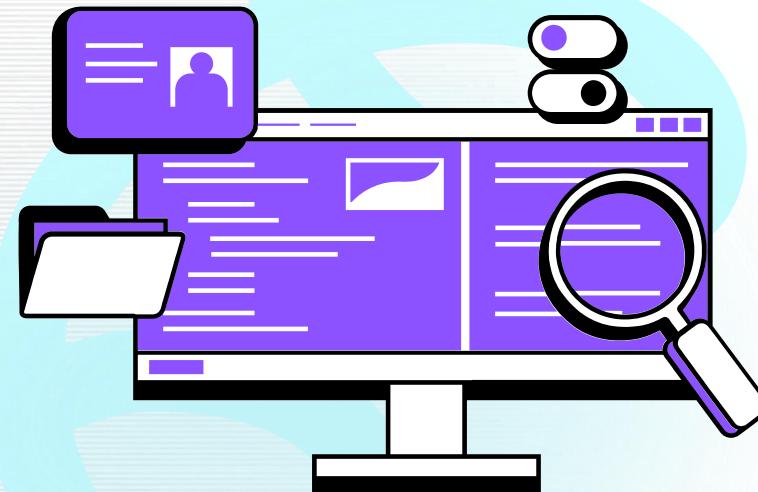


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Uganda's Open-Access Research sharing Platform

www.dissemination.ug





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The platform brings together scholarly work, innovations, training manuals from researchers, students, and institutions across Uganda in one accessible online space.

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Conclusions



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- Coordinated efforts that integrate academic research, skills development, and community and private-sector engagement significantly enhance innovation uptake and relevance.
- Strengthening institutional collaboration, improving incentives for applied research, and aligning curricula with labor market and industrial needs are key drivers of sustainable economic transformation.
- Outreach mechanisms that engage local communities, SMEs, and policymakers are essential for scaling up innovations and ensuring that development outcomes are inclusive and context-specific.



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA



A photograph of a university campus with a large, light-colored building featuring a prominent bell tower in the background. The foreground shows a paved walkway lined with trees and green lawns. The text 'Thank you!' is overlaid in the center of the image.

Thank you!



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Panel Discussion Questions



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- How can we move to ensure that we bridge the gap between research, education, innovations and community, industries, entrepreneurs.
 - How can we ensure our research is utilized to ensure transformation of communities?
 - How do we move from here?