



Masters Programme in Sustainable Integrated Rural Development in Africa (SIRDA)

College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

Department of Agricultural Economics, Agribusiness and Extension

KNUST - GHANA

Background

The Sustainable Integrated Rural Development in Africa (SIRDA) masters programme at KNUST was initiated by the United Nations University (UNU) under its Education for Sustainable Development in Africa (UNU – ESDA) Programme. Sustainable development as defined in this study-program is in line with the term coined in the paper “Our Common Future”, released by the Brundtland Commission (Sustainable development is the kind of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs). Sustainable development has become an increasingly important developmental issue, particularly in Africa. This is because it is widely recognised that Africa faces a major challenge in overcoming the myriad of environmental, economic and social problems to reduce poverty and improve human living conditions, especially in the rural areas where the majority of the people live. In these rural areas, low incomes, nutritional deficiency, food insecurity, famine and limited access to safe drinking water have been compounded by a host of other adverse factors including: low agricultural productivity, land degradation, etc. In many instances, these adverse conditions have generated social conflicts, unemployment and rural youth migration. The UN acknowledges that these conditions constitute an unacceptable paradox given that these unacceptable conditions continue to persist in the midst of natural resource-rich continent Africa. To reverse these adverse trends, promotion of sustainable development initiatives is critical. It is in the spirit of this context that the United Nations University developed the “Education for Sustainable Development in Africa (UNU – ESDA) programme with a focus on Environmental, Economic and Social Development. Three Masters Programmes have subsequently been developed from the broad programme with selected universities in Ghana (i.e. University of Ghana, University for Development Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology) to focus on training and developing the skills, intellectual and human resources needed for sustainable development of Africa. The SIRDA programme is therefore designed to help achieve this aim. The programme is innovative, demand-driven, action oriented and underpinned by a philosophy of human capacity development. Field demonstrations and other practical aspects of the programme take place through hands-on training in rural communities.

Philosophy

- The programme is to produce a critical mass of post-graduates equipped with the skills and competencies needed to address challenges of sustainable development in Africa.

Aims

- The programme aims at producing a crop of postgraduates with the right competencies (attitude, skills and knowledge) for addressing the complex multi-disciplinary and multi-faceted developmental challenges of rural communities in Africa.

For more information, please contact:

- **Dr. Amos Mensah**
SIRDA – Coordinator, KNUST GHANA
+233 (0) 555025310 mensahamos@yahoo.co.uk
- **Dr. Victor Owusu**
Head – Dept. Agric. Econ. Agrib. & Ext. KNUST GHANA
+233 (0) 242832330 victowusu@yahoo.com

Objectives

The objectives are to train and equip students with the necessary capacities to:

- Define, identify, assess and appreciate the different ramifications of the complex nature of sustainable and integrated rural development challenges in Africa.
- Apply a system thinking approach in addressing stakeholder oriented problems in sustainable development in Africa
- Research into the multi-faceted problems in Africa, communicate and advocate for policy changes in addressing sustainable and integrated rural development challenges.

Expected Outcome

- Graduates will have the capacity to engage with relevant stakeholders in a concerted effort to effectively address sustainability and rural development issues in Ghana in particular and in Africa as a whole.
- Graduates will have the capacity to deal with complex socio-economic development problems.
- Graduates will understand the complexity of community service and adopt measures that would promote community ownership of development programmes.
- Graduates will be in a prepared position to resolve development conflicts
- Graduates will be good advocates and contribute to policy issues on sustainable and integrated rural development.

Alignment with the Mission of KNUST

- The programme has greatly improved the institutional visibility of KNUST due to its multinational and innovative, practical training approach to sustainable development. It is serving as an important linkage between KNUST, the UN and other international organisations and institutions in executing the national and international agenda for rural development. The international nature of the programme has enhanced the post-graduate training and has augmented the contribution of the university to the national capacity building needed to deal with contemporary issues in sustainable and integrated rural development.

Enrolment

- The programme is practically designed and adopts contemporary Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM) principles and approaches that are critical to the performance of graduates in all sectors of the economy. Consequently, the programme is open to all practitioners and academics in various sectors that need to upgrade their competency skills to be able to effectively deliver on their mandates and roles in resolving the complex ever evolving sustainable development challenges.

Beneficiary institutions

- Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, District Assemblies, Non-Governmental Organisations, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Forestry Commission, Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, Ministry of Energy and Mines, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Ministry of health, Law Enforcement Agencies.