

Training Partnership Programmes as an Integral Part of Institutional Research Capacity Strengthening

2014

BACKGROUND

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	3
1.1 The point of departure.....	3
1.1.1 History of Swedish support for research capacity strengthening in low income countries ...	3
1.1.2 The current situation	3
1.1.3 Swedish Government’s Policy and Strategy for “Research for Development” 2010-2014	4
2 “Research Training Partnership Programme as an integral part of Institutional Research Capacity Strengthening”	5
2.1 The emphasis	5
2.2 Expected outcomes.....	5
2.3 Summary of approach.....	5
2.3.1 Time perspective of the partnership	6
2.3.2 Who can apply?.....	6
2.4 The process	6
2.4.1 Ownership and transparent processes for development of concept note.	6
2.4.2 Both Old and New partnerships are possible	7
2.4.3 Co-funding of target country universities’ concept note by other donors/funders of research capacity strengthening.....	7
2.5 Administration of the programme.....	7

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The point of departure

1.1.1 History of Swedish support for research capacity strengthening in low income countries

Research cooperation supported by Sida has evolved over the years. From establishing contacts with scientists in low income countries, the support has evolved to support to establishment of research oriented universities in low income countries. The Swedish investment in research cooperation over the last 37 years has resulted in islands of research capacity that can be targeted for concerted research training with the aim to develop local training in target countries. With these developments, Swedish research cooperation has stepped up to organise bilateral/regional research capacity strengthening cooperation in accordance with normal praxis of research, i.e. open calls for collaboration. This is in line with the Swedish Government's Strategy for Sida's Support for Research Cooperation 2010-2014¹.

1.1.2 The current situation

With the emergence of the knowledge economy, there is growing recognition of the importance of higher education and research for poverty reduction and sustainable human development. It is now widely recognised that for any nation, global competitiveness and economic success depends on the existence of capacities to create, develop, consume, package and disseminate knowledge. Capacity for research plays an important role in this endeavour and while such capacities have increased considerably in many low income countries in the last decades, they remain woefully weak compared to the countries' needs. The communiqué from the World Conference on Higher Education, held in Paris in July 2009 noted that '... At no time in history has it been more important to invest in higher education as a major force in building an inclusive and diverse knowledge society and to advance research, innovation and creativity'². The conference reaffirmed the need to strengthen institutional, national, regional and international collaboration in order to support the establishment of a high-quality African higher education and research area. These sentiments apply equally to all low income countries.

The urgent need for increased number of well-trained academic personnel at Post-graduate (Masters and PhD) level in most low income countries is due in part to the expansion of the education system that has resulted in a large cohort of young people seeking higher education, and the increased number of universities being established in most countries. At the same time, the countries (independently of the expansion of education) require a cadre of researchers able to provide the country with the competitiveness necessary for development. For example, the first in a series of **African Innovation Outlook**, for 2010³, which is part of Africa's Consolidated Plan of Action for Science Technology and Innovation, provides data on the low number of researchers in 19 pilot countries. South Africa, of all the countries surveyed, has the highest number of human resources available for R&D activities, with a researcher density of 825 per million inhabitants, followed by Senegal with 635 researchers per million

¹ [Policy for research in Swedish development cooperation and Strategy for Sida's support for research cooperation 2010-2014.](#)

² UNESCO (2009a) *2009 World Conference on Higher Education: The New Dynamics of Higher Education and Research for Societal Change and Development*, Paris, 5–8 July 2009. Final Communiqué.

³ http://www.nepad.org/system/files/June2011_NEPAD_AIO_2010_English.pdf

inhabitants. At the lower end of the scale, Mozambique, Uganda and Ghana are reported to have a researcher density of fewer than 25 per million inhabitants.

The modalities used by Sweden to support “research for development” over the years have been deemed successful. With time the university programmes have evolved well, with enhanced ownership by the target country universities. The time is ripe for the establishment of inter- university partnerships of mutual benefit to both partners. Sida is proposing new modalities, which allows for training of a larger number of people to PhD in a quality assured fashion. The “Research Training Partnership Programme as an integral part of institutional research capacity strengthening” will contribute to improved quality assurance of local research training in target country institutions.

1.1.3 Swedish Government’s Policy and Strategy for “Research for Development” 2010-2014

The shift in the emphasis/format/modality of supporting research capacity in target country institutions is in line with the Swedish Government’s Policy for research in Swedish Development cooperation and the Swedish Government’s Strategy for Sida’s support for research cooperation 2010-2014 which emphasises **“increasing the number of research graduates in the partner countries, primarily through research training at universities in these countries”**. The policy is based on an understanding that access to scientifically based knowledge is an important condition for poverty-reducing development in low income countries. Such knowledge may be used by governments to implement their policies, by private enterprises to develop their capacity for a sustainable economy, by civil society organisations and popular movements to question and demand accountability from their governments when deemed necessary. The policy recognises that in a knowledge-based society, universities and research institutions represent fora for critical analysis. People with PhDs are needed for doing research, but also to train Masters and PhD students to be lecturers with competencies to improve quality and update curriculum at their institutions of higher learning and instil the principles of research into university students. Interaction between research and education is crucial for development within both areas. Research findings enrich the content of educational programmes and courses, primarily at higher study level. The quality and content of the education offered is in turn a decisive factor in the recruitment of researchers.

Research serves the important function to provide a basis for decision-making (evidence based). Domestic analytical capacity and area-specific expertise through research are key components in this context, and are essential if a country is to take part as an equally knowledgeable partner in the international discussion of important issues.

As universities expand in terms of student numbers the maintenance of quality becomes critical and research trained lecturers are then likely to offer the competences for current and relevant teaching and capacity for analysis.

Sida has been supporting research training for decades and Swedish higher education institutions have been key actors in this endeavour. Initially the rate and pace of finalisation of examination tended to be slow in many target countries, however, things are improving and the number of PhDs in place in key areas is increasing. Thus, the time is opportune to address the needed increase in numbers of trained staff through partnerships that endeavour to develop local and innovative modalities of research training. Such partnerships will imply more responsibility for both the target country and Swedish universities.

Regional and South-South partnerships will also play a key role in research training partnerships.

2 “Research Training Partnership Programme as an integral part of Institutional Research Capacity Strengthening”

2.1 The emphasis

The Sida funded new re-enforced “Research Training Partnership Programme as an integral part of Institutional Research Capacity Strengthening” supports the strengthening of institutional research training capacity at universities in Sweden’s target countries and regions, contributing to increased number of research graduates.

2.2 Expected outcomes

- **Quality assured research training programmes within prioritised areas of national/regional importance established and run in universities of Sida’s target countries/regions**
- **Long-term institution-based postgraduate research training partnerships between universities in Sida’s target countries/regions and Swedish universities established and maintained and are of mutual benefit**
- **Joint integrated research training programmes of high international standards which build on the principles of mutual recognition of studies and qualifications are established⁴.**

2.3 Summary of approach

Postgraduate research training may aim at

- i) **local PhD training**, or
- ii) **start/continue with masters training programmes for the recruitment of competent candidates**
or
- iii) continue **sandwich training at Swedish universities coupled with establishment of local courses** until the number of researchers allows the initiation of local research training.

Comprehensive partnerships between **individual universities or a consortium of universities** and research institutions which contribute to the development of human resources and the research capacity of higher education institutions in target countries are encouraged. Partnerships should aim for **scaling up of the number of high quality research graduates in prioritised areas**. Twinning of PhD students from target country and Swedish institutions is possible.

Funding of research supporting components that strengthen the conditions for carrying out research and research training, within the target country/regional universities (such as research management, library

⁴ Mutual recognition of studies and qualifications may be obtained through diverse methods. Joint or double degrees **may** be opted for by the target university and agreed upon by Swedish university.

- Double degrees refers to *two* degrees that are based on *two* partially overlapping doctoral programmes leading to at least *one* publically defended thesis and *two* diploma document.
- Joint degrees refers to *two* degrees that are based on *one* doctoral programme leading to *one* publically defended thesis and *one* diploma document
- See for example:
http://www.lth.se/english/international_relations/joint_and_double_degrees_in_doctoral_education/

services including electronic scientific journals, Information Communication Technology etc.) are also encouraged.

Calls will be made for research training partnership with specific target countries or thematic regional programmes and for other research supporting components.

2.3.1 Time perspective of the partnership

Five years, with the possibility of extension.

2.3.2 Who can apply?

1. Target countries with which Sida has research cooperation
2. **Consortia** of universities in Sida focus regions

Applications for research training partnerships will be accepted from the bodies/entities responsible for research training at target universities (i.e. the faculty, vice rectorates, directorates for research or Schools etc.) together with their proposed partner Swedish university bodies/entities responsible for research training and with the right for examination in Sweden.

2.4 The process

- I. Invitation from Sida to target country university to submit a concept note
- II. Submission of joint letter of intent from applying universities based on the concept note
- III. Invitation to submit full proposals for approved letters of intent

2.4.1 Ownership and transparent processes for development of concept note.

Sida will *invite* target country universities to submit concept notes that describe long term plans, aimed at implementing their institutional research strategic plans. The concept note should identify and define areas where needs for Masters and PhD trained people lie, as well as areas that need to be supported to provide the conditions for doing research. These areas should in turn address needs and priorities within national strategies on research and higher education.

2.4.1.1 Concept notes

Sida sends letters inviting selected target country universities to submit concept notes based on clear terms of reference. The concept notes shall be in two parts:

1. A ten year "total" concept of where the university in question wants to go with its research training. This concept note should be so written to allow submission to several donors/funders of research. In addition, the concept note is expected to outline proposed strategies for diversification of funding for their 10 year plan, through other competitive grants, and local funding from their governments.
2. A five year "focused" concept referring to the total concept of what the Partner institution would like Sida to support

Recognising the presence of diverse voices within a university, Sida requires target country universities to develop their concept notes in a transparent and participatory way which allows input from a broad base of

stakeholders. Consequently, the target country universities are to describe the process used to develop a 10 year “total” and a five year “focused” plans presented in the concept notes.

2.4.2 Both Old and New partnerships are possible

Emphasis is placed on a transparent process involving an open call for proposals (letters of intent) followed by independent peer review for recommending areas to be supported and the partnerships that qualify for financial support. This is anticipated to result in both old and new partnerships.

Consortia of universities may apply. Consortia of universities in target countries refer to countries where more than one university has been invited to submit a concept note, or consortia of regional universities. Consortia of universities in Sweden refer to all Swedish universities. Depending on the proposal by the target universities, consortia of Swedish institutions may write a joint letter of intent together with the target institutions.

Mutual benefit and added value in partnerships

The partnerships must represent mutual benefit for all sides. The added value, both in the short term and long term, should be articulated.

2.4.3 Co-funding of target country universities’ concept note by other donors/funders of research capacity strengthening

The principles expressed in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005 and enhanced by the Accra Agenda for Action in 2008, and in Busan in 2011 advocate that donors/funders should align with priorities of countries in which they work, and harmonise their actions and procedures in order to facilitate complementarity among funders and to reduce administrative overload for recipients of funding. Sida continues to aim to work closely with other donors/funders to improve the impact of investments in institutions and people. To this end, the concept notes are to be based on institutional research strategy/national strategy for development and be written in such a way that it may be presented to all potential funders.

2.5 Administration of the programme

Sida will enter into an agreement with the target country university or lead regional university. The directorate⁵ for research cooperation at the target country/regional university will be responsible for the overall coordination of the programme.

Sida will also enter into agreement with collaborating institutions in Sweden.

⁵ The name/designation of this office may vary between countries and institutions
December 2013