

GRUPHEL towards a Fourth Phase

– an Assessment

Bertil Egerö

**Department for Research
Cooperation**

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Sida Evaluation 02/26

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Abbreviations

DTCP	Department of Town and Country Planning, University of Natal, South Africa
GRUPHEL	Gender Research on Urbanisation, Planning, Housing and Everyday Life
ISAS	Institute of Southern African Studies, NUL, Lesotho
LU	Lund University, Dept of Architecture, Sweden
NIR	National Institute of Research, UB, Botswana
NUL	National University of Lesotho
SIB/Lund	Statens institut för byggnadsforskning (National Swedish Institute for Building Research), the Lund branch, Sweden
UB	University of Botswana
ZARD	Zambia Association for Research and Development
ZWRCN	Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network

Editorial note

The text below is in part descriptive, in part analytical or assessing. Where proposals or recommendations to Sida are integrated in the text, they are given in *italics*.

Executive Summary

Assessment of the GRUPHEL Programme, January – March 2002

Initiated in 1991 by Swedish scientists with longstanding research cooperation in Southern Africa, GRUPHEL has from the start required qualified scientific and management contributions from its Swedish participants. Recent organisational changes are intended to strengthen the ownership of its Southern Africa members. The assessment addresses the impact of these changes, significance of network cooperation for members' careers, GRUPHEL relevance for their respective institutions, and sustainability of the network activities. It does not address the quality of scientific production from GRUPHEL activities. Nor does it relate to a new GRUPHEL component proposed for the next project phase; exchange of researchers and students between southern Africa and Sweden.

The assessment entailed an initial phase of reading of all relevant written documentation since project start, which supported semi-structured interviews with the two Swedish participants. A preliminary analysis of issues and questions guided subsequent data collection in Lesotho (with responsible coordinator and her host institution, and with network members), Botswana and South Africa (with members and host institutions). Additional information was later collected from network members via e-mail.

GRUPHEL has members in six of the nine southern Africa countries (Angola, Malawi and Moçambique excluded). During its three phases, 34 members have taken part in the activities, six of them during two phases. Since 1999, full responsibility for the project lies with ISAS at NUL (the National University of Lesotho). The 'GRUPHEL model' of combined training and research, with the network providing a continuous resource for its members, has remained the same through the three phases. The network is based on individuals and lacks any formal contact to their institutions.

Through the stepwise transfer of responsibility to ISAS, Southern Africa ownership has been greatly enhanced. However, while management by a Swedish institution was relatively simple and expedient, with Lesotho as a base institutional constraints impede programme effectiveness. Most important are constraints in cross-national financial transfers from Lesotho, centralised financial control in Lesotho, and non-rational fund instalment practices all the way from Sweden to individual members. Coordinated adjustments in financial management procedures are required by Sida and ISAS/NUL to reduce the obstacles.

The two Swedish researchers in GRUPHEL have made important contributions to scientific training and supervision of individual members, to the editing and publishing of research results etc. Little progress has so far been made in balancing their competence with that of colleagues in the region. In part, this is linked to low levels of remuneration in the project, but also to weak scientific competence in gender-related matters in the region.

The membership profile shows a wide diversity of backgrounds, from those with little experience of research to advanced researchers, from NGO to academicians and business staff. This reflects the ways GRUPHEL grants are marketed, and also the lack of specified member focus in the project. While justified in early phases, project sustainability most likely requires a more focused orientation, linked to a more clear choice between GRUPHEL as a training programme and as a programme for scientific work and collaboration.

GRUPHEL has made a clear contribution to raising gender awareness and make gender-related scientific publications available in the region. However, based on individual participation and commit-

ment, the network has no built-in relation of influence in participating institutions (except in Lesotho), and works more through members' personal influence and published works. Run during a period of growing university attention to gender, at least in Lesotho and Botswana, GRUPHEL activities have also gained from a generally favourable environment. Much has been achieved with a budget that lacks provision for covering time expenses of the researchers and only permits fairly limited field work.

The assessment clarified a series of questions for a future 'GRUPHEL model' of continuous R&T (research and training) with stronger institutional affiliation, wider country participation in Southern Africa and more broad-based links to counterparts in the North. One of them is how to create and nurture mechanisms for more active member participation in constructing a successor to GRUPHEL. To engage university institutions in this issue might be necessary, not least as a way to reduce the vulnerability of a project highly dependent on individual commitment.

1 The assignment and its implementation

The assignment is part of Sida's assessment of GRUPHEL and other research networks in the gender programme (see ToR, Annex 1). Sida is currently considering support to a fourth phase of the programme.

In carrying out the assignment, written documentation has been collected primarily from the two Swedish resource persons to GRUPHEL, who in addition have generously accepted long interviews followed by frequent returns for clarifications and additional information. In January, a visit was paid to Lesotho and Botswana, with local programmes arranged by ISAS and the Botswana coordinator respectively. Several hours in transit at Johannesburg International Airport made possible personal meetings with GRUPHEL participants from South Africa. Some more information was later collected via email to key persons in Southern Africa, and to the two Swedes.¹

For the sake of clarity, it should be noted that two areas of potential interest are not included in the ToR. Firstly, only a brief overview of the GRUPHEL research publications is requested. Secondly, the ToR contains no reference to the ISAS application to Sida for funds to a fourth phase of GRUPHEL where a new component is added; exchanges of researchers and students between the network and Sweden.

¹ At the time of writing, a few answers are still pending. We hope to get them in time for the full assessment report.

2 GRUPHEL's three phases – an overview

Preparations for GRUPHEL started in 1991 as part of a SAREC Women's Research Programme initiative. The two Swedish researchers Anita Larsson and Ann Schlyter had for several years been collaborating with individual colleagues in Southern Africa; GRUPHEL was a "formalisation" of the network that would enable the group to make a common application for funding to SAREC (Schlyter 2000). A reconnaissance mission to Southern Africa concluded that there was no suitable academic institute or department in Southern Africa with an interest in engaging in a research programme on gender and housing. Thus the first phase of GRUPHEL was based on institutional cooperation with ZWRCN, a Zimbabwean NGO.

SIB/Lund, a Swedish research institute, had the coordinating and financial responsibility for GRUPHEL I (1992–94). Technical cooperation with ZWRCN lasted from initial preparations through to the publication phase. However, organisational changes on the side of ZWRCN led to an enforced transfer of editorial responsibility to Sweden (Larsson & Schlyter 1995). The GRUPHEL I volume was published in 1995 by ZWRCN.

Renewed efforts to move the center of coordination to Southern Africa led to ISAS, the Institute of Southern Africa Studies at the National University of Lesotho, taking part responsibility for GRUPHEL II (1994–96) and full responsibility for GRUPHEL III (1999–2001). Through all the three phases, the two Swedish senior researchers (with changing institutional arrangements) have participated both as resource persons and as participant researchers in the research programme

Country distribution and turnover of participants

The following overview shows the de facto distribution of GRUPHEL members by country of residence in each phase:²

Country ³ Phase	Botswana	Lesotho	Malawi	South Africa	Swaziland	Zambia	Zimbabwe	Total
I		1		3		2	4	10
II	2	5		6		1		14
III	3	3	3	4		2	1	16

The GRUPHEL management sees it as valuable to have participants in one phase also take part in the next. However, there is no clear policy either to stimulate them to continue, or to replace them with new members. Nor is there any deliberate action to maintain contact with ex-GRUPHEL participants once they have concluded their contract. The following overview shows the turnover/continuity profile for the three phases (excl. the two Swedes):

² The numbers are not exact, due to differences between different sources. Namibia appears never to have had any participation.

³ Country of residence of researcher, not rarely different from her/his nationality. In Botswana, all participants so far have been expatriates. One of the South African participants in GRUPHEL II and III is from Swaziland, and did her fieldwork there.

Phase	Category	Total Number	Number that did not participate in next phase
I	New	10	8
II	From I	2	2
	New	12	8
III	From II	4	not appl.
	New	12	

Throughout GRUPHEL, university staff and affiliates have dominated among its members. They were joined in GRUPHEL II by some government employees and in GRUPHEL III by a few persons from the private sector.

The “GRUPHEL Package”

The GRUPHEL programme was the same in all the three phases. The “GRUPHEL Package” is based on a network of members who plan, implement and report on individual projects within a common time and budget frame. All are supposed to participate in joint activities, to carry out an empirical study on household level with qualitative methods, and to present their research in the form of a paper for inclusion in a joint volume. Each phase covers a three-year period and consists of the following elements:

- Formulation of a guiding theme for the phase.
- Announcement of GRUPHEL in concerned countries, with an open invitation to apply for a grant for a specific research project.
- Suitable applicants – normally more than can be admitted – are invited to a seminar where the GRUPHEL package is presented and educational inputs are given on ‘gender’ and on (qualitative) data collection methods. All research proposals are presented and discussed, and issues for revision identified.
- A final selection of participants follows, contracts are signed and first instalments paid.
- A joint half-way meeting of all participants provides the opportunity to check on progress in field-work and discuss problems. A second instalment is paid.
- During this period, national group meetings are to be held.
- The phase concludes with a seminar for the presentation and discussion of drafts to the papers for the publication. This is followed by a period of individual revisions and exchange with the resource persons, before the paper is finally approved. That clears the way for the release of the final instalment.

Apart from the paper, participants are free to use their research findings as they find best. However, during GRUPHEL III an additional request was made on the participants, to prepare a comprehensive research report for publication by ISAS.

In each phase, the final seminar has provided an opportunity for participants to comment on the work and its organisation, as well as for joint discussions of research priorities for a new phase. No systematic “programme evaluation” by its participants has been organised in any of the three phases.

Purpose and objectives of GRUPHEL

The GRUPHEL package is intended to “Stimulate and support gender research (or ‘gender researchers working’) within the theme of urbanisation, planning, housing and everyday life”.⁴ Further, “the aim is that the undertaken studies shall contribute to a better empirical and theoretical understanding of gender relations in Southern Africa”.⁵

As a response to the lack of interest at academic or departments or research institutes for gender-related scientific work in Southern Africa, the architects of GRUPHEL initially focussed on supporting individual (would-be) researchers to strengthen their personal competence, while in the process producing useful scientific knowledge about important development problems. Thus, although raising the scientific quality of research activities is part and parcel of the programme, it has never aimed at supporting either academic careers (eg through postgraduate degrees) or institutional capacity strengthening. Publication of reports is part of the programme, while systematic dissemination of results is left to other actors (Schlyter, verbal information).

⁴ Quoted from the SASDA 1995 evaluation of GRUPHEL I (see Lexow et al. 1995 p. 20). The bracketed quote is from the official agreement with ISAS for GRUPHEL II.

⁵ Quoted from the official agreement with ISAS for GRUPHEL II.

3 Management and coordination of the GRUPHEL network

From Sweden to Southern Africa

The ownership of GRUPHEL has gradually been transferred from Sweden to Southern Africa:

- For *GRUPHEL I*, SIB had formal responsibility for all aspects of the programme, and collaborated in its implementation with ZWRCN.
- For *GRUPHEL II*, SAREC funds were channelled through and monitored by Lund University (successor to SIB), while ISAS (in an agreement with Lund University) assumed formal responsibility for programme execution.
- *GRUPHEL III* was executed under a direct agreement between Sida/SAREC and ISAS.

The two Swedish participants have been instrumental in all aspects of the programme. In *GRUPHEL I*, they appear to have been the sole scientific advisors. In *GRUPHEL II*, they shared this task with three selected “most experienced researchers” from *GRUPHEL I* (SIB application 1994). This arrangement was in *GRUPHEL III* formalised to a six-member scientific committee⁶ responsible for assessing research proposals, selecting participants, guiding the research and the production of drafts for publication. In practice, however, the two Swedes have assumed major responsibility for the scientific support throughout all phases.

ISAS

ISAS is a research institute in NUL, mandated to promote research with particular emphasis to national development needs. It has a well-staffed documentation division, and publishes books, reports and a journal. Its research division engages in both research and consultancies, across all faculties. ISAS regularly receives guest researchers and students. Its director left last year for Cape Town, and the post is currently vacant. Another potential concern for further ISAS management of a new *GRUPHEL* phase is the so-called transformation process currently underway at NUL, a search for restructuring solutions to address i.a. a continuous braindrain of academicians to other countries.

Institutionally, ISAS appears fully capable of running programmes such as *GRUPHEL*, and could most likely also house visiting guest researchers and students in a programme linked to *GRUPHEL*. However, the *GRUPHEL* coordinator is, like all capable professionals in the region, engaged in several different undertakings and has for part of *GRUPHEL III* not had sufficient administrative support. Without a clear commitment from ISAS and NUL to create a satisfactory lasting solution to this problem, it might be advisable to avoid enlarging the cooperation in this respect.

The running of *GRUPHEL* entails transfers of funds to different countries in the region. Not unexpectedly, ISAS has some problems related to financial management, which need to be addressed if a fourth phase should be undertaken.

Firstly, currency exchanges is a serious issue. Contracts between NUL and *GRUPHEL* participants specify the value of a research grant in US dollar. At the same time, bank transactions involve conversion from SEK via dollar to the Lesotho currency Maloti, in a local bank account. The instalments to participants

⁶ From ISAS, the programme coordinator and the head of research division; from Sweden the two resource persons; from the Southern Africa region two professionals (ISAS Application 1998).

require a new conversion from Maloti to relevant national currencies. Currencies may change considerably during 2–3 years, and during GRUPHEL III non-dollar currencies have generally fallen in relation to the dollar.

Were the funds spent only within Lesotho, the difference might be acceptable. However, all participants receive their instalments in their national currency, without adjustment for depreciation.

A necessary solution to this problem is that NUL opens a foreign currency account for the Sida contributions. From there, instalments in dollar can be arranged to all non-Lesotho participants.⁷

Secondly, ISAS needs a better control over GRUPHEL funds. At NUL, all financial management is centralised. ISAS has access to statements, and prepares requests for payments. Up-to-date information on the balance of the account is not available. At an important moment of GRUPHEL III, this prevented ISAS from replacing a resigning administrative assistant to the GRUPHEL coordinator, as the bursar's accounts showed that funds were lacking.

The matter is said to be under scrutiny within the overall NUS transformation programme now in preparation. *Sida is advised to seek ways of requesting more efficient management systems (decentralised spending under a specified budget?) in the contract negotiations.*

Thirdly, the instalment method needs to be reviewed. Funds are released in instalments, from Sida to ISAS and from there to individual participants. Three consecutive instalments are made, linked to a stepwise progression in the GRUPHEL programme, and made simultaneously for all participants. Delays may occur at several stages from the Sida desk via a Lesotho bank and the central NUL administration to ISAS, and from there through similar chains to the different participants.

At the time of the consultant mission in early 2002, some participants who had delivered a final paper early in 2001 were still waiting to get their last instalment. ISAS' request to Sida was sent close to mid-year 2001. Sida processed the instalment in August and – due to bank problems in Lesotho – ISAS had not yet received information that the money was available.

Sida might consider sending relevant instalments well in advance of an expected completion date, and ISAS might consider forwarding instalments sequentially rather than in one step.

⁷ Even the SEK has lost in relation to the US dollar. Ideally, Sida's contract with ISAS should be specified in dollar.

4 GRUPHEL – what has it meant for its members?

GRUPHEL grantees are not a homogenous group. In addition to their different institutional affiliations, members are highly dissimilar in respect of their acquaintance with scientific work. At the one end are senior university staff members with a record of post-doctoral research work, at the other planners and other “practical workers” with very little personal experience of the research process. To make the picture clearer, the participants are informally grouped in three broad categories.⁸

The less experienced academic

In many of the Sub-Saharan universities, the majority of teachers have little opportunity to pursue their scientific interests once they have done their thesis work. As fulltime teachers they have poor access to new publications, scientific debates and general furtherance of knowledge. To get into the GRUPHEL network has meant to “try one’s wings” in the area of research, all the way to a final product appearing in a printed volume.⁹

Many in this category express a kind of gratefulness to the programme for enabling them to acquire this experience. Some appear to have gained considerably in self-confidence. To some, the qualitative method has offered little of initial difficulties, as it seems not to require the strictness and systematic approach of quantitative field surveys.

In some instances, employers have agreed to working hours being used for the research, in others the GRUPHEL participant has used up weekends, holidays and similar non-working time in order to carry out the work.

The dependence on network support means that well-functioning national networks, exchanges with the scientific committee and the joint GRUPHEL seminars have been very important. Still, the step from fieldwork to a final paper has been long and difficult, adding considerable burdens on resource persons.

A more systematic review of this group might confirm the impression that their professional career has gained from improved technical competence and, not least, from a degree of self-confidence that has opened their horizons for new options.

The senior academic

This category appears to be drawn to GRUPHEL for the opportunities it offers to explore the gender dimension. Common among such participants is a willingness to do the work in less than the normal 2–3 years per phase, and a perception of the project itself as a relatively minor task (with a small budget). The forms of exchange within the network (workshops and seminars with mutual ‘critique’) are appreciated not least for what they offer in more profound understanding of ‘gender’ in different research themes.

⁸ This summary is based on interviews with a number of GRUPHEL members, reading of some correspondence, and discussions with ISAS and Swedish senior staff.

⁹ There is no doubt that to have an article in print for some participants was a very important event, which indicates that even university staff may have published little or nothing in their career so far.

Senior researchers in general voice at least initially a scepticism in relation to the request for qualitative methods, and some are not immediately attracted by the idea of doing the interviewing themselves. They seem, however, to have come to appreciate the method as complementary to quantitative methods.

The GRUPHEL grant is regarded as small, but their general working conditions appear to permit these members to carry out a small fieldwork and take part in all other phases of the GRUPHEL programme on this size of GRUPHEL budget. Some express impatience at the slow pace of moving towards and reaching the state of publication, which at the same time means delays in receiving the final instalment.

The professional business person

This category of participant differs from the others in important respects. Firstly, they might not be sufficiently acquainted with scientific conduct, and indeed not sufficiently interested, to abide by the quality rules of a research process. Secondly, the gentle tempo of a five-day GRUPHEL seminar and a 2–3 year research process is not easily incorporated into their busy diaries.

On the other hand, such participants can generally be closer to the realities of politics and policies, to people's real options in housing markets and to groups and organisations engaged in the housing sector. Thus they might bring important practical experiences to the discussions over project approaches. When results are disseminated, they might have interesting channels for communication to centres of policy making.

A few professionals from South Africa belong to this category. The experience gained from cooperation with them might enable GRUPHEL to formulate a policy in relation to applicants from different backgrounds. It appears that GRUPHEL in its current construction is not the ideal package for that category. If the GRUPHEL management judges that their participation is of value to other participants, a systematic reflection over how to better meet their needs in the GRUPHEL process would be justified. Alternatively, the management might decide to formulate standards e.g. of scientific experience such that its membership becomes more homogenous.¹⁰

¹⁰ In contrast to many other fields of science, “building research” appears not to need to reflect on the distinction between ‘policy science’ and pure exploring science. GRUPHEL objectives and purposes do not explicitly relate to this distinction, except by stating that the programme is aimed to “Critique existing housing and development practices and paradigms” (GRUPHEL III application to Sida).

5 What impact on members' institutions?

It is my firm impression that 'gender' and more concretely the role of women in development, has come to be recognised and attended to in Southern Africa academic institutions in ways perhaps even comparable with the Swedish experience. Women activists, scientists, managers and politicians are now fully visible. In Botswana as well as Lesotho, the university is committed to engaging all departments and staff in learning about and applying gender dimensions in their teaching.

To pinpoint more exactly the contribution of GRUPHEL in this process is of course not possible. GRUPHEL is part of a social movement. Its relative success through three phases is in itself an expression of how concerned people value the opportunities it offers. Perhaps its main contribution is the way it has 'empowered' its members as gender advocates, in a sector (housing) where governments are active and interested in progress.

When GRUPHEL was launched, the Southern Africa institutions interested in cooperation were all national NGO. Individual university staff joined the programme, and made gender issues 'visible' through workshops, publications and other forms for publicity. For some, like the ISAS coordinator, the GRUPHEL programme has facilitated the creation of institutional capacity to engage in course work, research supervision, advocacy in-house and in relation to government etc., all of which has left imprints on the environment.

Various comments from GRUPHEL members have made it clear that they over time have gained some public recognition as 'gender-in-housing specialists' and are called to various events within or outside of the country. See §4 above. These are examples of how GRUPHEL has contributed to, for instance, the growing university commitments observed for Botswana and Lesotho.

6 Scientific production and its use

In accordance with its objectives, GRUPHEL has resulted in one publication in each phase. They were published in 1995 (by ZWRCN, Harare) and 1998 (by ISAS, Roma) respectively. A third volume with GRUPHEL III papers is expected later this year. There are no records kept of later individual publication that draws on the GRUPHEL research, or of the participation of ex-GRUPHEL members in e.g. international scientific encounters. An example of the latter is a seminar held in Lund in 1995, where three GRUPHEL members gave papers that were later published (see Schlyter, ed. 1996).

A range of comments by GRUPHEL members points in the following direction:

- Given the dearth of accessible scientific publications on gender/urbanisation/housing issues in the region, the GRUPHEL publications are an important contribution;
- In the countries visited, the GRUPHEL publications are available widely;
- Announcements and reviews have appeared in local as well as international journals, making the books known widely;¹¹
- Interviewed GRUPHEL members mentioned that they frequently use the books, or individual papers/research reports to GRUPHEL, in their position as academic teachers.

Computer records from the ISAS publications department show regular sales of the GRUPHEL II publication in Africa South of the Sahara. ISAS is also a member of the Oxford-based ABS network, which ensures global advertisement and sales of its publications.

It is a well-known fact, that most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have highly insufficient access to international book markets. For this reason, the Nordic Institute of African Studies in Uppsala has a policy of free distribution of its publications i.a. to libraries in the region. In the absence of special funding, ISAS is not able to perform similar services. Thus most likely the GRUPHEL publications are more widely available only in a small number of countries in the region.

Sida might consider adding a distribution component to its GRUPHEL support, to enable a wide distribution and access to its publications.

¹¹ Reviews have been made in Agenda (date missing); Den Ny Verden (1996); Development Policy Review (1997); EASSRR (1996); Environment and Urbanisation (1966, 1999); The Zimbabwean Review (1997) and various other journals.

7 Momentum and sustainability of network activities

According to its objectives, the GRUPHEL package is not directed to creating and maintaining a ‘permanent’ or continuous network. Each phase of the programme is a new start, which creates a network that lasts for the length of that phase. However, some people have taken part in two phases and thus provided informal links to earlier networks. Each GRUPHEL member also remains with a useful set of personal contacts, which is kept alive to the extent (s)he finds it useful. This means that the GRUPHEL networks tend to extend beyond the period of their “official” life, through various informal and formal contacts.

GRUPHEL has seen three phases, all implemented in good agreement with programme plans and with virtually every network participant fulfilling her/his contractual commitment. This is in itself an unusual achievement and a clear indication that the programme package is both realistic and attractive. Provided the institutional weaknesses are addressed (see § 3 above), this momentum can most likely be kept up for yet another round.

The two Swedish resource persons have played a key role not only in initiating GRUPHEL but also in consolidating it through its three phases. The GRUPHEL package is well tested and – with the pros and cons summarised in § 4 above – fit for another round with mainly new participants. However, that round would have to be run with only one of the two Swedes participating.

The question of momentum and sustainability needs to be subdivided into a series of sub-themes: Future demand in the sub-region; extension over countries; objectives and methodology; institutional capacity of ISAS; relation to the Swedish resource base; additional components to the basic GRUPHEL package. We take them in order.

Future demand in the sub-region

Southern Africa experiences a phase of rapid urbanisation, the result of natural increase and migration. Urbanisation and poverty are intimately linked, urban households are unstable and women in particular face constant threats to their efforts to uphold a minimal social and economic security. Thus the focus of GRUPHEL is very well chosen.

The attitude of some governments in the region to universities and their contribution to development is ambiguous. Other governments see the necessity of high-quality academic institutions as part of their overall development strategies. Where universities are faring less well, other institutions tend to emerge in society in response to donor demands for commissioned research, or as new platforms for independent scientific work. Government-run bodies responsible for urban and housing issues tend to develop their own capacity for studies to feed their work. Thus, if the GRUPHEL option is sufficiently disseminated, the demand should be expected to lie well above GRUPHEL capacity.

Extension over countries

GRUPHEL has so far included only a part of the countries in the sub-region. The GRUPHEL network is intended to cover ‘Southern Africa’, a sub-region that is nowhere properly defined. Namibia, a country never represented in the network, had by the time of GRUPHEL I just attained its independence. Swaziland has so far only been represented by a national who is resident in South Africa. Malawi joined the programme in phase III.

Mozambique's growing integration in the sub-region is seen through the way English penetrates its institutions. Today, most likely a number of Mozambican social scientists would be interested in joining GRUPHEL if conditions of work etc. make this possible. Tanzania is often regarded as part of the East African scene, while due to some historical circumstances it has developed important links to Southern Africa not least in the area of scientific exchange.

If GRUPHEL were to become a regular part of inter-country opportunities for scientific training and cooperation, a more active position vis-à-vis the country coverage would be needed. There is no reason to doubt that demand exists in countries that are not yet part of the network.

Objectives and methodology

The GRUPHEL objectives have remained the same throughout. The methodology specified in the package has, like all other elements in the package, remained the same. This can be interpreted as an implicit recognition by the GRUPHEL management that the objectives and the package are optimal and have proved their worth. There is no evidence in the GRUPHEL documentation that either has been subjected to open and critical discussion.

Throughout its three phases, the core objective of GRUPHEL has remained to improve the scientific understanding of 'gender' in social science, and of the value of qualitative methods in data collection. Despite this orientation on training, the GRUPHEL package is a compromise between a training programme and a research programme. While fairly inexperienced persons are accepted, formal educational inputs in lectures and studies are minimal¹² and most education takes the form of collective "on-the-job" training through a research process. If seen as a research programme, the individual projects are kept within the limits of a programme title, but not steered in the direction needed for comparative studies.

Institutional capacity of ISAS

As an institution, ISAS appears to have all the capacity required to continue as responsible for a new GRUPHEL phase. The uncertainties – if any – revolve around two factors. A "transformation process" is currently underway in NUL. The outcomes are not yet known. ISAS might be subjected to restructuring in ways that could affect its role, positively or negatively. However, given the appreciation of GRUPHEL at the highest levels of the university, this factor is deemed of little risk.¹³ The other factor is the person in charge of GRUPHEL in ISAS. She is very capable, and has mastered challenges and obstacles very well. In order to sustain her productivity, she needs good support for all administrative tasks. Ideally, she would need a "second-in-command" to assume greater responsibilities in periods beyond the fourth phase.

Relation to the Swedish resource base

So far, the GRUPHEL network is a Southern Africa network, drawing on the competence of two Swedish senior researchers. No broadening of the Swedish participation has taken place during its three phases. Currently, only one of the two Swedes remains to continue the cooperation. Her own judgement is that she is well placed to continue the cooperation, and her current links with students and

¹² Lectures on 'gender' and on 'qualitative studies' respectively are part of the first joint seminar of each phase, before the final selection of participants. Texts for reading have been made available. There is no evidence that members have been recommended to do systematic reading (and report on it) as part of their GRUPHEL work.

¹³ I have requested information on the process and its impacts on ISAS, and will forward it when available.

staff in Göteborg university provide her with an interesting resource base for improved links to GR. Her experiences from exchange programmes at the NIAS, Uppsala, are reflected in the presentation of an exchange programme in ISAS' application to Sida, and the staff requirements detailed there.

Additional components to the basic GRUPHEL package?

There seems no doubt that a demand for a GRUPHEL package exists in the Southern Africa region, and that more countries could fruitfully be brought into the network. The 'Achilles heel' of the programme is its continued dependence on two individual persons, in ISAS and in Sweden respectively. This dependence is in part related to the small programme budget, which makes it viable only under such conditions for work as are given in university environments. With budget resources available for institutional capacity building, more people in respective institution could be drawn in, thus broadening the institutional base.

One of the new components in the ISAS application to Sida might be intended to achieve such effects. To enable African researchers to spend a period in Sweden could strengthen the participation within ISAS and at the same time attract more Swedish students and researchers in engaging in exchange with the GRUPHEL network. The potential synergistic effects are however not spelled out in the application. Nor does it reflect on whether and how such a programme would attract ex-GRUPHEL members to continue in a wider "post-GRUPHEL network", thus contributing to widen the institutional base for the programme in Southern Africa and over time turning its activities into a regular part of social science in the sub-region.

8 Preliminary conclusions and recommendations

GRUPHEL is an interesting partner in the series of research cooperation arrangements that have had Sida/SAREC financing over the years. It is entirely built on cooperation between individuals, in Southern Africa as well as in Sweden. At the same time, it is not a research programme as much as a training programme. The ‘GRUPHEL model’ has proved its worth over a long period of reluctance or disinterest from university departments to engage in network cooperation in the thematic field outlined for GR. The demand for another phase of GRUPHEL would seem beyond doubt.¹⁴

A general comparison of the outcomes of GRUPHEL network activities with the small budgets under which GRUPHEL has operated would justify the conclusion that GRUPHEL has given good value for the money spent.

However, the institutional environment for gender-relevant research is gradually turning more positive in Southern Africa, with GRUPHEL as one of the agents of change. This opens for reflection on whether the GRUPHEL model itself needs revision, both for greater impact in the sub-region and in order to reduce the dependence on a few individuals in the GRUPHEL leadership.

Given the importance to maintain momentum in GRUPHEL, and the need for an early Sida response to the GRUPHEL IV application, the present assessment is made too late to contribute to exchanges over possible revisions in the GRUPHEL IV programme. Thus, *Sida is recommended to provide financing for that phase, including sufficient resources to test the proposed exchange programme in practice.*

At the same time, *Sida is recommended to request the GRUPHEL leadership to create the conditions for a wider discussion on the future beyond GRUPHEL IV, to be started within GRUPHEL IV and using that network as a resource. This requires:*

- *Creating mechanisms for a more active members participation in and evaluation of “the GRUPHEL model” during the course of GRUPHEL IV;*
- *Mobilisation of (earlier and present) GRUPHEL networks for exchanges on alternative future objectives, and their implications for the “GRUPHEL model”;*

Wherever suitable, active host institutions should be invited to participate in the discussions. Questions to be addressed include:

- *Whether to aim at replacing/complementing the current “phase-specific” GRUPHEL network model with a network functioning as a continuous exchange relation with cooperation in research and other matters;*
- *The inter-relations between individual GRUPHEL members and their home institutions;*
- *Whether prime emphasis should still be on training, and the implications for the selection of participants and programme ingredients;*
- *Alternatively, whether more emphasis should be given to research cooperation, and the implications for the selection of participants (e.g. whether or not to accept ‘professional business’ type participants) and programme ingredients;*
- *Mechanisms for the identification of important themes and research priorities;*
- *Whether to promote networking between GRUPHEL and other networks, in the sub-region or elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa;*
- *Ways to replace the current dependence on individuals in the GRUPHEL leadership with a stronger institution-based management;*
- *The future of the South-North cooperation, within GRUPHEL as well as in exchange programmes and other activities.*

¹⁴ Although the 1995 SAREC evaluation had critical comments in relation to GRUPHEL, the successful implementation of three GRUPHEL phases is good evidence that the evaluation itself had some insufficiencies.

Annex 1

Terms of Reference for an assessment of GRUPHEL

1. Background

GRUPHEL (Gender Research on Urbanisation, Planning, Housing and Everyday Life) a research network in Southern Africa has since 1991/92 received support from Sida. The network was originally a part of SAREC's gender programme. When the Programme was initiated, it was co-ordinated by researchers in Sweden (Lund University and the Nordic Institute of African Studies). During a third period of Sida-support (1999–2001), the co-ordination has been managed by an institution in Lesotho, ISAS (Institute of Southern African Studies) at the National University of Lesotho.

The network consists of around 20 researchers from Lesotho, South Africa, Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe. They have a joint research agenda and the Sida-support is divided between the researchers for research in various countries and for organising seminars and workshops.

The goal of GRUPHEL is to foment research on urbanisation and living quarters within a gender perspective. The rapid urbanisation within the region affects the livelihood of women, women-headed households, and women's access to housing, women's legal status when it comes to property rights, etc. Such issues are studied at local, national and regional levels, taking into consideration official planning strategies and lawmaking, while making use of field studies in order to achieve efficient knowledge of the actual situation of women within a state of rapid urbanisation. Apart from mapping and investigate women's situation, GRUPHEL intends to strengthen research capacity within institutions in the region.

Sida's support to gender research in Africa was evaluated in 1995 (SAREC Evaluations 1995:1). GRUPHEL was judged in positive terms. Particularly the Programme's efficiency in developing innovative methods and the training in and application of this methodology was stressed. The co-operation between Swedish and African researchers had been fruitful and beneficiary for all parties. However, it was also commented that Swedish researchers had a tendency to dominate and influence the Programme to a high degree. The scientific results from phase 2 of GRUPHEL has been summarised in a volume edited by Anita Larsson, Matselio Mapetla and Ann Schlyter *Changing Gender Relations in Southern Africa, Issues of Urban Life*, ISAS, 1998.

The third phase of the Programme, that now is coming to end, has tried to answer to this critique. The co-ordination has been carried out through ISAS, an independent research institute integrated within the structure of the University of Lesotho. The institute counts upon a research department and a unit for documentation and publication. ISAS has a scientific committee that has been instrumental in providing scientific advice, passing judgement on the scientific content of the various projects, and in strengthening the Programme. The Swedish researchers have participated with their own projects and as instructors and mentors in other projects.

Sida's support to the GRUPHEL programme was during 1999–2001, SEK 1 090 000 in 1999, SEK 900 000 in 2000, and SEK 1 000 000 in 2001.

2. Purpose and scope of assessment

Sida intend to asses the impact of the gender programme and maybe is considering to continue support to the most effective research networks, i.e. those that have come up with innovative research, had an impact on policy making and furthermore have been able to strengthen research capacity. The consultant shall:

- assess the growth of the GRUPHEL network, trends in its composition, organisation and relation to network members.
- assess the momentum and sustainability of the network activities and advice upon the viability of continuous financial support.
- assess the relative importance of the network for the professional careers of individual Southern African participating researchers.
- clarify the type and degree of impact of network activities on the institutional environment of individual participants as well as links to universities.
- comment upon the access to and use of GRUPHEL scientific production in the region.

If possible, the consultant shall try to find out what research themes connected with gender issues the researchers within the GRUPHEL network estimates to be of the utmost importance and whether they have knowledge about and contact with other research environments within Africa that deal with gender issues in an innovative and effective way.

The work will include the following:

- Brief review of history and trends as refers to organisation, countries, institutions and individual members of the network, ownership issues and publication/circulation of results.
- Moving the headquarters to ISAS – experiences and pointers for the future.
- Recruitment of researchers; methods and problems, achievements and setbacks.
- Reflections of GRUPHEL work on the departments or other work places of participating researchers. Broader influence of the work on the status of ‘gender’ in academic activities.
- Access to and use of the scientific production of GRUPHEL in the Southern Africa region (as far as can be assessed through simple methods)
- Scientific production – a brief overview

3. Methodology and time schedule

The consultant shall present a plan, budget and methodology for the assessment. Sida and the partners in the research co-operation should approve of the plan.

The consultant shall:

- read the documents and correspondence as relevant;
- Interview the two Swedish organisers/researchers who have participated in the Programme;
- Visit two countries in Southern Africa, including Lesotho, for interviews and other data collection.

ISAS shall, at the request of the consultant, provide necessary material (proposals, reports, publications, contracts, etc.). They should facilitate for the evaluation team to interview students, researchers, and other project participants. Material may be requested in advance of the visit.

Sida officials are responsible for assigning the consultant and for co-ordinating approvals of the assessment plan and the final report. Sida officials may be interviewed regarding the role of Sida/SAREC.

The consultant shall present a detailed plan for the assessment. This plan should be presented to Sida no later than 31 November 2001.

Copies of a draft report with main findings and recommendations shall be submitted to Sida and ISAS, no later than 1 March 2002.

4. Reporting

The report shall be written in English and should not exceed 30 pages excluding annexes (and a summary of maximum 6 pages). 10 copies of a draft report shall be submitted to Sida and the participating organisations, no later than 15 April 2002. Within two weeks after receiving Sida's comments, a final version in 5 copies and on a diskette shall be sent to Sida. The report shall be written in Word 6.1 for Windows or compatible format.

Annex 2

Documents referred to in the text

Larsson, Anita & Ann Schlyter 1995, Letter to SAREC 22.3.95 (in Swedish) re the SASDA evaluation of GRUPHEL.

Schlyter, Ann 2000, "Experience of cooperation in gender research on urbanisation and housing in Southern Africa, in I. Christoplos, ed., *Power, Resources and Culture in a Gender Perspective: Towards a Dialogue Between Gender Research and Development Practice*, Utsikt mot utveckling nr. 14, The Collegium for Development Studies, Uppsala 2000

SIB Application 1994: *Gender Research on Urbanisation, Planning, Housing and Everyday Life, Phase II*. Application to SAREC April 1994.

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