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ANALYSIS

An evaluation of the Swedish Research  
Links programme

# Building Research Partnerships





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# 1. Executive Summary

The Swedish Research Links programme aims to stimulate research cooperation between researchers in Sweden and researchers in Asia, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and South Africa. Joint research activities between the research partners, such as exchange visits, seminars, workshops and publications, are supported with up to SEK 250,000 a year over three years. Since 2002, about 280 research cooperation projects have been approved. Almost half of the ongoing projects concern cooperation with Asian institutions.

The Links programme is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and administered by the Swedish Research Council. Sida funds the programme with approximately SEK 36 million annually, about half of which funds cooperation with the Asian region. The South African part of the programme is cofunded with the National Research Foundation (NRF).

The evaluation focuses on the impact of the Links programme over the programme years 2002–2006. Special attention is given to the experience of the researchers participating in the programme. The programme is evaluated in terms of participation, impact and administration.

- **Programme Participation**

Researchers participating in the Links programme: what are their scientific fields, academic levels, geographical distribution, institutional affiliation and gender?

- **Programme Impact**

Impact of the programme in relation to the programme objectives:

- Does the programme promote cooperation between researchers in Sweden and in the partner countries?
- Does the programme promote research quality and excellence?
- Does the programme contribute to internationalisation of the research institutions involved?
- What is the long-term perspective of the funded projects?

- **Programme administration**

Administration of the Links programme in terms of coordination between the programme agencies, application procedure and procedure for the evaluation for applications: how does it work?

It is concluded that, in scope and objectives, the Links programme occupies a unique position among research funding programmes in Sweden. The programme has clearly succeeded in stimulating research cooperation between researchers in Sweden and researchers in the partner countries. The research partnerships established within the programme are characterised by a very high degree of equality and mutual benefit.

The number of applications has doubled over the programme years, from 95 applications in 2002 to some 190 in 2006. Programme participation is dominated by established researchers in the natural sciences, engineering and medicine. The scientific quality of the funded projects is satisfactory.

Scientific competence and enthusiasm are key features of the Links research partnerships. The programme contributes positively to ongoing processes of internationalisation of the participating institutions, through the organisation of joint seminars and workshops. The knowledge gained in the course of cooperation is disseminated jointly by the research partners to a satisfactory extent. Although the long-term effect of the programme is hard to assess, the programme has without doubt laid the foundations of a number of presumably lasting partnerships.

On a general level, the main achievement of the Links programme resides in the creation of common grounds and arenas of communication between researchers in Sweden on the one and researchers in developing countries on the other. Communication and exchange are facilitated by the relatively small scale of the cooperation projects. Through the exchange of ideas, methods and materials, shared processes are developed between the participating researchers. These shared processes, practical as well as intellectual, constitute a fruitful basis for long-term research cooperation.

The programme is operated by a number of agencies, in Sweden and in the partner countries. This network of agencies contributes significantly to the outreach of the programme. In addition, the programme agencies in the partner countries provide invaluable feedback into the programme on national and regional research issues.

If Sida wants to contribute to the strengthening of research partnerships between researchers in Sweden and researchers in developing countries, the Links programme should be continued. An extension of the geographical scope of the programme, for example to the Latin American region, should be considered, as should cofunding with the partner countries. More attention should also be directed towards the goal of achieving sustainable research partnerships.

Coordination between the funding and administering agencies in Sweden and the partner countries should be reinforced in order to achieve programme cohesion. The participation of regional and national research agencies should be maintained and possibly developed. The manifold agreements regulating the programme should be revised and replaced by a comprehensive programme document. The procedure for assessment of grant proposals should be made more efficient and harmonised in order to support programme cohesion.



# 2. The Swedish Research Links Scheme

## 2.1 Organisation of the Programme

The Swedish Research Links programme is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and administered by the Swedish Research Council.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the following Swedish governmental agencies take part in the programme: the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research (FAS), Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning (Formas) and Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems (VINNOVA). Policy issues related to the programme, such as scope and development of the programme, are the main responsibility of Sida.

Sida funds the programme with a total of approximately SEK 36 million a year. About half of the programme budget is directed towards research cooperation with Asia. In addition to the Sida funding, the South African National Research Foundation funds the South African part of the programme with approx. SEK 4–5 million annually. The project grant period is normally three years. Hence, each year, funding for new collaborative projects with Asia is available at approx. SEK 6 million; approx. SEK 3 million with the MENA region and SEK 4.5 million for cooperation projects between Sweden and South Africa (the latter being joint funding of approx. SEK 3 million from Sida and SEK 1.5 million from the National Research Foundation).<sup>2</sup>

The Links programme is modelled on the research partnership programme between Sweden and South Africa established in 1999.<sup>3</sup> In the Sweden–South Africa programme the Swedish side is represented by Sida and the National Research Foundation acts as the implementing agency for the South African government. The programme is cofunded by and coadministered with the South African National Research Foundation.

In 2002, the Asia and MENA regional programmes were established and added to the Links programme. Since then, the Swedish Research Council has been responsible for the administration of the two regional programmes. In 2004, the administration of the Sweden–South Africa

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<sup>1</sup> The responsibilities of Sida and the Swedish Research Council are laid out in an agreement signed in 2002 and revised in 2004.

<sup>2</sup> For the programme period 2000–2005 a total amount of approximately ZAR 25 million (about the same in SEK) was allocated by the National Research Foundation for the approval of 126 research projects.

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed background to the Links programme, see *Sida Idé-PM 2001-04-17* and *Sida Insatspromemoria 2002-01-28*.

programme was transferred from Sida to the Swedish Research Council. The Swedish Institute Alexandria acts as regional programme partner in the MENA programme.<sup>4</sup> There is no regional programme agency in the Asian part of the programme.

An expert panel has been set up by the Swedish Research Council with the main task of evaluating applications to the programme. Moreover, it is the duty of the Swedish Research Council to report application statistics, including the research fields and sex of each main applicant in Sweden and in the partner countries.

The agreements that regulate the roles of the participants are listed in Appendix 8.2.

## 2.2 Programme Objectives

The programme aims to stimulate research cooperation between researchers in Sweden and researchers in more prosperous developing countries.<sup>5</sup> The programme supports research cooperation with Asia, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and South Africa. Funds are granted for projects of high scientific quality. The programme is open to all academic fields. The basic idea is that researchers from Sweden and researchers from the partner countries should cooperate on scientific issues of mutual interest.

Further aims of the Links programme are:

- To produce new knowledge and enhance understanding in fields of mutual concern and relevance.
- To promote research excellence and quality.
- To establish a basis for long-term research cooperation between researchers.
- To encourage the internationalisation of research institutions.
- To foster research collaboration that demonstrates a significant benefit to the quality of the research.

Projects funded by the Links programme should be guided by principles of mutual benefit, equity and fairness. It is an aim of the programme to contribute to mutual scientific and socio-economic development of the countries involved. Further, the programme strives at achieving a balance between the number of male and female researchers participating in the programme.

## 2.3 The Links Grant

The Links grant is intended to facilitate cooperation, through funding of travelling, workshops and publications. Cooperation costs are funded for up to three years with a maximum of SEK 250,000 a year (total 3 years: SEK 750,000). One-year planning grants are also funded (SEK 75,000). Basic research costs, such as salaries and project equipment, are not funded. The opportunity of applying for funding for equipment

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<sup>4</sup> The Swedish Institute Alexandria is an autonomous part of Sweden's Foreign Service, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

<sup>5</sup> The following countries are included in the Links programme:

Asia: Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, East Timor, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Rep., Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam.

Middle East and North Africa region (MENA): Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestinian adm. areas, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, Yemen.

The Republic of South Africa.

is specific to the South Africa Links programme (max. approx. SEK 50,000, first year only).

The funds are granted to the research partners jointly. In the Asia and MENA programmes, the grant is disbursed to the Swedish partner, who in turn disburses part of the funds to the cooperation partner as agreed in the proposal. In the South African part of the programme, grants are disbursed to the Swedish partner by the Swedish Research Council and to the South African partner by the National Research Foundation.

### **Applying to the programme**

The annual call for proposals is announced in January or February. The closing date is two to three months after the call. In Sweden, the call is published on the web sites of Sida, Swedish Research Council, FAS, Formas and VINNOVA. In South Africa, the call is announced on the web site of the National Research Foundation and in the MENA region by the Swedish Institute Alexandria and the Academy of Scientific Research and Technology, both in Egypt. The call announcement consists of an introductory text describing the programme and, in PDF (Portable Document Format), *Guidelines for Applicants*, including a link to the electronic application form.<sup>6</sup>

The application must be signed by the principal researchers of the collaborative project and heads of department or other scientific institution to which the principal researchers are affiliated. Proposals signed by one party only are not considered. The electronic application is submitted to the Swedish Research Council's web site (VR-Direct). No other form of application is accepted. When the electronic application is submitted, a printed appendix is generated. The appendix should be signed by the partner applicants and the heads of department where the research is to be conducted.

Applications to the Sweden-South Africa programme are submitted both electronically to the Swedish Research Council and, on a special application form, to the National Research Foundation in South Africa.

### **Procedure for evaluation of applications and grant decision**

For the evaluation of applications to the Links programme, an expert panel has been set up by the Swedish Research Council. The panel has about ten members, including scientific experts and representatives from four government agencies: the Swedish Research Council, FAS, Formas and VINNOVA.

The panel's main task is to evaluate and rank applications to the Links programme. The expert panel has each proposal reviewed by two to three experts, commonly one panel member and one to two reviewers external to the panel. At least one reviewer must be external to the expert panel.

In the case of the Asia Links programme, the panel's ranking is reported to Sida and grant decisions have hitherto been taken by a committee composed of the chair of the expert panel and Sida representatives.

Applications to the MENA part of the programme are evaluated in parallel in Sweden and in the MENA region. The evaluation of applications within the MENA region is subcontracted by the Swedish Institute

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<sup>6</sup> Before the introduction of the electronic application form in 2006, a Word-format application form was attached to the call announcement.

Alexandria to the Egyptian Academy for Scientific Research and Technology. The Academy for Scientific Research and Technology contracts reviewers in the MENA region and compile a ranking list of the evaluated applications. It is the aim of the MENA assessment procedure that each application should be reviewed by an expert from a MENA country other than that of the applicant. All in all, a proposal to the MENA Links programme is reviewed by three to five experts. The grant decision is taken by a joint committee comprising representatives of the Swedish Research Council and scientific experts from the MENA region.

Proposals to the South African programme are evaluated in parallel in Sweden and in South Africa. The South African evaluation procedure follows the regular evaluation procedure of the National Research Foundation (NRF). The NRF procedure involves three to four reviewers per application, some of which are proposed by the applicant. At the NRF, the proposals are ranked by an expert panel set up specifically to evaluate applications to the Links programme. The composition of the panel, about ten members, largely reflects the research profile of the proposals to the programme. All in all, proposals to the South Africa Links programme are reviewed by five to seven experts, in Sweden and South Africa jointly. The grant decision is made by a joint committee composed of representatives of the Swedish Research Council and the South African NRF.

# 3. Aim and Scope of the Evaluation

This evaluation aims at an assessment of the impact of the Links programme. Following the directives given by Sida for the evaluation, special attention is given to the experiences of researchers participating in the programme. (cf Appendix 8.1, Terms of Reference)

This evaluation targets programme activity within the Asia and the MENA regional programmes 2002–2006.<sup>7</sup> For the South African part of the programme, the evaluation focuses on the programme years 2004 to 2006.

The initiative to evaluate the Links programme was first taken by the South African programme partner agency, the National Research Foundation. Following this initiative, Sida decided to undertake an evaluation of the programme. The evaluation was commissioned to the Analysis Unit, Department for Research Policy Analysis of the Swedish Research Council. The work was carried out by Lena Johansson de Château between June and November 2006. Sara Billfalk processed the application statistics and questionnaire data included in the report.

The timing of the evaluation, close to the end of the initial programme period (March 2007) and before a continuation of the programme, has guided the scope of the evaluation. It is thus both a retrospective assessment of the programme and a prospective assessment of future scope for the Links programme.

The following issues are evaluated:

- **Programme participation**

What is the volume of the programme in terms of applications and grants? What are the scientific scope, academic level, geographical distribution, institutional affiliation and gender of the researchers funded by the programme?

- **Programme impact**

Has cooperation between researchers in Sweden and in the partner countries been promoted by the programme? How are funds used? Does the programme promote research quality and excellence? How are results disseminated? What is the long-term perspective of the funded projects? Does the programme stimulate research cooperation beyond the grant period? Does the programme contribute to internationalisation of the research institutions involved?

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<sup>7</sup> The first call for proposals was in 2002. The first three-year project grants were disbursed in 2003–2005.

- **Programme administration**

How do the application procedure and the procedure for evaluation of applications work? Does the evaluation procedure promote quality and excellence? What is the performance of the expert panels evaluating applications?

### **3.1 Notes on Evaluation Method**

The evaluation is based on material collected in programme documents, interviews and a questionnaire directed to researchers participating in the programme. The *programme documents* were provided by the participating agencies (Sida, the Swedish Research Council, the National Research Foundation in South Africa, Swedish Institute Alexandria and Egyptian Academy of Scientific Research and Technology) and range from programme agreements and meeting protocols to statistics on applications (Appendix 8.2).

*Interviews* were carried out with a number of programme stakeholders. All in all 35 researchers, programme officers and scientific experts were interviewed (Appendix 8.3). All interviews were conducted by Lena Johansson de Chateau. The interviews were semi-structured, following an outline that was adapted to the category of the respondent (researcher, programme manager, administrator or scientific expert; Appendix 8.4). Most of the interviews were carried out on an individual basis, but in some cases group interviews were preferred. For practical reasons, most of the interviews were made with stakeholders in Sweden and one of the programme regions (the MENA region).

Parallel to the interviews, a *questionnaire* was sent to the researchers funded by the programme in Sweden and in the partner countries (Appendix 8.5). The web-based questionnaire was addressed to the principal collaborative researchers that received Links funding from 2003 to 2006 (three-year project or planning grants), i.e. applications submitted in 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005. The questionnaire was received by 523 principal researchers, and 270 researchers submitted their responses.<sup>8</sup> The questionnaire was anonymous. All questions had to be answered for the form to be submitted. For most of the questions, ticking of only one option was allowed. Five questions were open-ended. The questionnaire was sent at the end of June 2006, with a reminder in early August, and closed in mid-August 2006.

The overall response rate to the questionnaire was 51%. The response rate was 55% for Sweden and 56% for South Africa. For Asia and the MENA region response rates were somewhat lower: 42% in Asia and 46% in the MENA region.

The large majority of the respondents – 218 respondents (81%) – were men. Only 52 (19%) respondents were women.<sup>9</sup> The proportion of female respondents varied quite substantially between the partner regions: from 7% in the MENA region and 9% in South Africa to 19% in Sweden and 33% in Asia. About half of the respondents are full professors<sup>10</sup>, in most cases aged over 50.<sup>11</sup> For South Africa, respondents are on average younger and at an earlier stage of their careers.

The research conducted by the respondents is mainly in the domains

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<sup>8</sup> Not all principal researchers funded by the programme received the questionnaire. Researchers entering no email address in the application were not reached by the questionnaire. In addition, about 46 questionnaires were returned as undeliverable.

<sup>9</sup> The gender composition in the programme as a whole is 80% men and 20% women.

<sup>10</sup> Appendix 8.5, Question 1.1.

<sup>11</sup> Appendix 8.5, Question 1.3.

of natural sciences and engineering (164 researchers, 61%) and medicine (71 researchers, 26%). Of the total of 270 respondent researchers, 29 (11%) work in the humanities and social sciences and six in the educational sciences (2%).

Several factors should be kept in mind in the interpretation of the interview material and questionnaire responses. Firstly, the participating scientific stakeholders are mainly from the natural sciences, technology and medicine, which makes it difficult to generalise regarding the humanities and social sciences. Secondly, cultural differences among stakeholders of the programme regions are probably at play. Further, the voices of stakeholders in the Asian programme countries and South Africa are less pronounced in the evaluation material than those of Sweden and the MENA region. The fact that the evaluator was connected to one of the programme agencies (the Swedish Research Council) might also have influenced the respondents.

# 4. Programme Participation

The following chapter focuses on programme participation. Numbers of applications by programme region and country are presented, as is the distribution of applications in different scientific fields. The numbers of men and women participating in the programme are also discussed. Finally, the participation of Swedish host institutions is addressed. The analysis is based on applications submitted mainly in 2004 and 2005.

## 4.1 Asia – the Largest Programme Region

The total number of applications to the programme has doubled over the programme years: from 95 applications in 2002 to some 190 in 2006.<sup>12</sup> Proposals for collaborative research projects between Sweden and Asia account for about half of the applications to the Links programme (59 of a total of 152 applications in 2004, and 89 out of 176 applications altogether in 2005) (fig. 1).

The number of applications to the MENA Links and South Africa Links programmes is lower. Applications to the MENA Links programme account for about a third of the total number of applications (49 applications in 2004, 51 in 2005), South Africa a little less (44 applications in 2004, 36 in 2005). The approval rate is high throughout the programme, mostly above 50% (57% in 2004, 59% in 2005). In 2004 and 2005, the approval rates for the three programmes were: for Asia, 63% in 2004 and 52% in 2005; for the MENA region, 45% in 2004 and 63% in 2005; and for South Africa 64% in 2004 and 69% in 2005.<sup>13</sup>

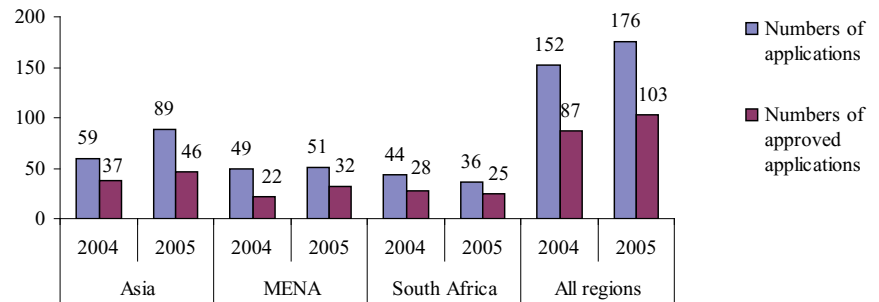
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<sup>12</sup> The inclusion of the Sweden–South Africa partnership programme in 2004 only partly accounts for this increase in applications.

<sup>13</sup> In the Sweden–South Africa partnership programme, a total of 302 applications were received during the programme years 2000–2005. Of these, 126 projects were funded, i.e. the approval rate averaged 42%.

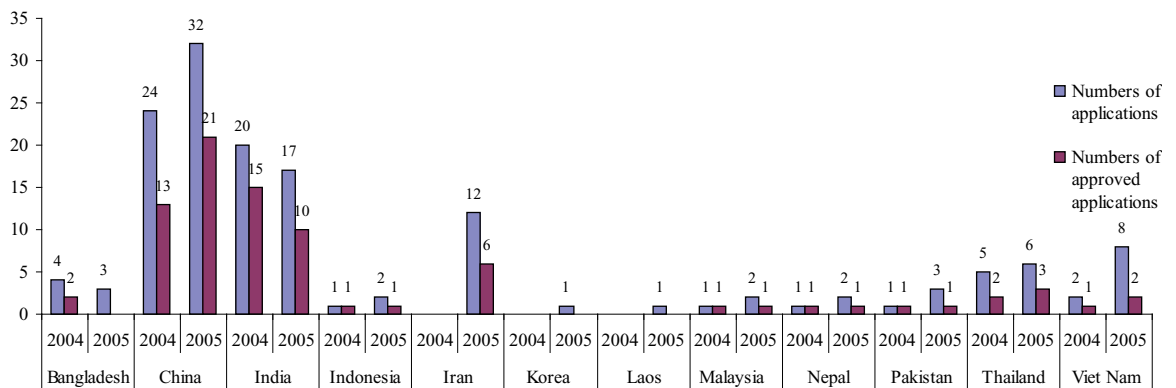


**Figure 1. Numbers of applications and approved applications by programme region/country, Links programme, 2004 and 2005**



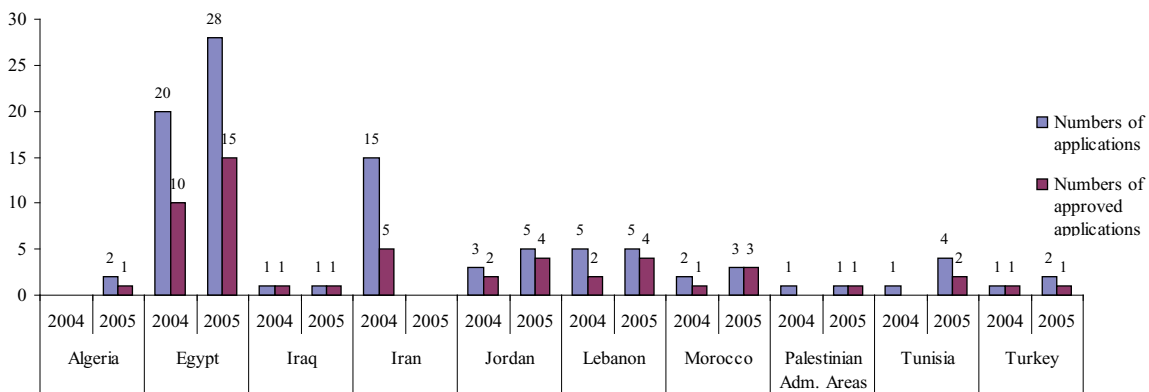
Proposals for collaborative research projects with China constitute more than a third of the applications to the Asia Links programme (fig. 2). Proposals for collaborative projects between Sweden – India and Sweden – China are also predominant among applications to the Asian part of the programme. In the MENA Links programme, proposals aiming at collaborative research projects with Egypt account for about half of the applications (fig. 3). Countries like China, India and Egypt, with high numbers of applicants, show an approval rate around 50–60%. Countries with few researchers applying, such as Thailand, Indonesia, Nepal, Korea, Morocco, Iraq and Palestine, have an approval rate of 80–100%.

**Figure 2. Numbers of applications and approved applications to the Asia-Links programme, divided by programme country, 2004 and 2005**



NB. Iran was transferred as a programme country from the MENA-Links programme to the Asia-Links programme in 2005.

**Figure 3. Numbers of applications and approved applications to the MENA-Links programme, divided by programme country, 2004 and 2005**



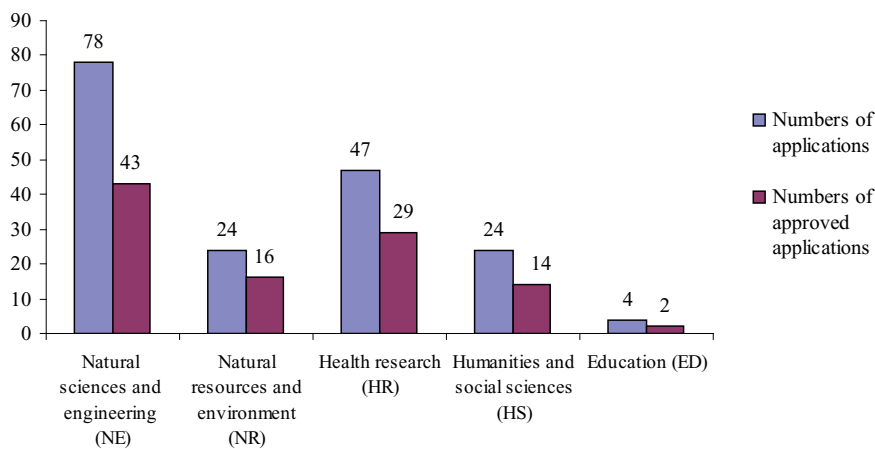
NB. Iran was transferred as a programme country from the MENA-Links programme to the Asia-Links programme in 2005.

## 4.2 Predominance of Natural Sciences and Engineering

Although the programme is open to researchers from all academic disciplines, the programme has mainly attracted researchers from the natural sciences, engineering and medicine. More than half of the applications to the programme are in the domains of natural sciences and engineering (2005: 57%). Applications in medicine and health research account for about a quarter of the total (2005: 27%), while applications from the humanities and social sciences, including educational sciences, make up around a sixth (fig. 4).

There are some differences in the participation of researchers from different scientific fields between the programme regions. For example, in the MENA part of the programme the natural sciences and engineering predominate even more than in the rest of the programme, while there are very few projects in the social sciences and humanities.

**Figure 4. Numbers of applications and approved applications in different scientific fields, Links programme, 2005**

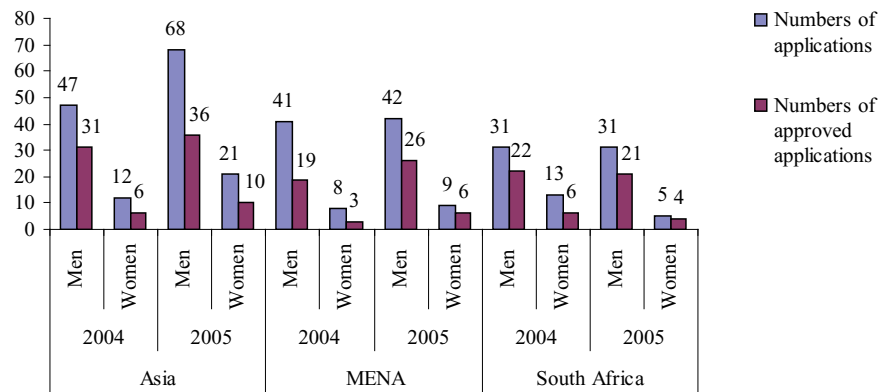


NB. In the text, “natural sciences and engineering” refers to both NE and NR together in this figure.

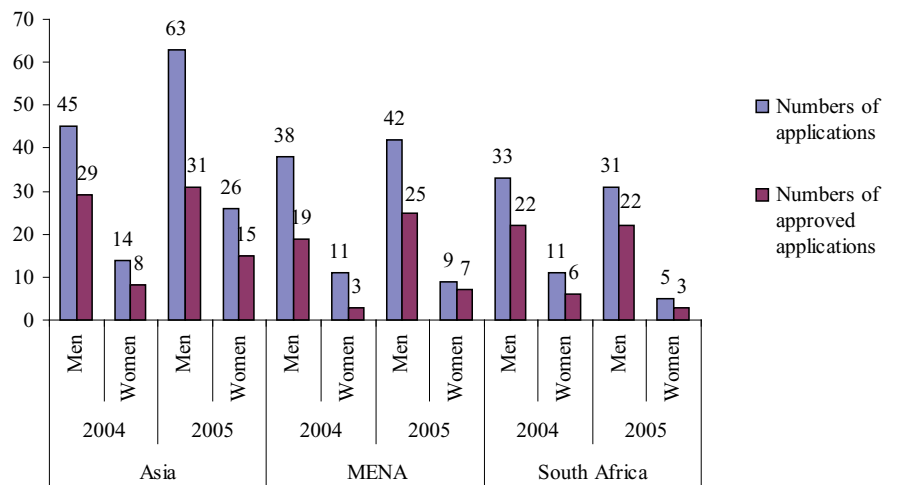
### 4.3 Large Majority of Male Researchers

There are far more male than female researchers participating in the programme. In 2005, 21% of the main applicants (in Sweden and the partner regions) were women and 79% were men (Swedish applicants only: female 20%, male 80%) (fig. 5). The approval rate is about the same for men and women. Relatively more women apply to the Asian part of the programme: about 30% of the principal researchers from Asia are women (fig. 6).

**Figure 5. Numbers of men and women applying from Sweden to the Links programme, 2004 and 2005**



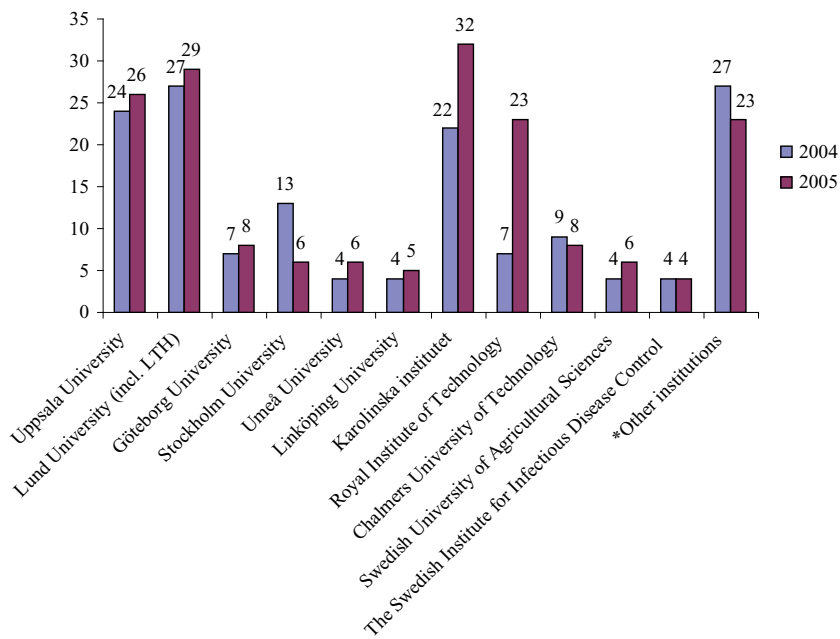
**Figure 6. Numbers of men and women applying from Asia, MENA region and South Africa to the Links programme, 2004 and 2005**



### 4.4 Swedish Researchers from Large and Established Institutions

In Sweden, the vast majority of the researchers participating in the Links programme are affiliated to large and well-established research institutions, such as Karolinska Institutet, Lund University, Uppsala University and the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) (fig. 7). The number of proposals from researchers affiliated to recently established universities and university colleges is fairly limited.

**Figure 7. Numbers of applications from Swedish universities, university colleges and other institutions, Links programme, 2004 and 2005**



\*) The following universities, university colleges and institutions submitted up to three applications a year in 2004 and/or 2005: Dalarna University College, Ersta Sköndal University College, Karlstad College, Karolinska University Hospital, Kristianstad University, Luleå University of Technology, Mälardalen University, Stockholm Institute of Education, Stockholm School of Economics, Södertörn University College, The Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences, University College of Borås, University College of Gävle, University College of Kalmar, University College of Malmö, Örebro University, AstraZeneca R&D, Corrosion & Metals Research Institute, National Food Administration, National Institute for Working Life, Nordic School of Public Health, STFI-Packforsk, Swedish Geotechnical institute, Swedish Institute of Computer Science, Swedish National Testing and Research Institute, The Museum of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Antiquities, The Swedish Institute for Food and Biotechnology, The Swedish Museum of Natural History.

# 5. Programme Impact

## 5.1 From Contact to Cooperation

The main objective of the Links programme is to stimulate research cooperation between Swedish researchers and researchers in the partner countries. With this aim, the programme seeks to contribute to the joint production of knowledge in fields of mutual concern and relevance.

This evaluation is mainly based on experience gained from projects funded from 2002 to 2006. More precisely, the statements in this report refer to those researchers that answered the questionnaire or were interviewed. A total of 280 collaborative research projects were funded by the Links programme in the years 2002–2006. Currently, about 230 collaborative projects receive funding within the Links programme. For some 50 projects, the grant period has ended.

The evaluation concludes that the Links programme has successfully stimulated research cooperation between Sweden and the partner countries in a spirit of mutual benefit and relevance.

To a large extent, the programme has had the effect of turning previous research contacts into real partnerships, with joint work plans and budgets, active exchanges and shared building of knowledge. The programme successfully promotes cooperative endeavours on mutually relevant research issues between the partners. The research cooperation projects are characterised by a high degree of equality, reciprocity and mutual benefit.

About half of the researchers that form Links partnerships were collaborating with each other before they applied to the programme.<sup>14</sup> The initiative to apply to the Links programme comes both from Sweden and from the partner countries. In the MENA and the South African parts of the programme, Swedish researchers and the partner researchers alike take the initiative to establish Links partnerships.<sup>15</sup> In the Asian part of the programme, however, only about a fifth of the partnerships were initiated by the Asian partner. This may be explained by the fact that there is no national or regional programme agency in the Asian part of the programme to promote regional initiatives for research cooperation with Sweden.

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<sup>14</sup> Appendix 8.5, Question 3.2.

<sup>15</sup> Appendix 8.5, Question 2.3.

The partners use the Links grant mainly for exchange visits to the participating institutions (travel, accommodation and subsistence).<sup>16</sup> Holding workshops and issuing publications are important activities for successful collaboration, but account for relatively small proportions of the total funds used. In some cases, part of the grant is used to cover costs not specified in the budget, mainly equipment and consumables purchased.

With the costs allowed at present (exchange visits, workshops, publication), there is no reason to adjust the size of grant. However, an extension of funding to include salaries, scholarships and equipment would greatly facilitate the collaborative projects.<sup>17</sup> Funding of administrative resources related to the cooperation and scholarships for PhD students and post-doctoral fellows would make the programme more attractive to Swedish researchers.<sup>18</sup> In the partner countries, funding of minor equipment and consumables to be used in collaborative projects is the main priority.<sup>19</sup>

## 5.2 Balanced Partnerships

There is a striking shared feeling of equality within the Links collaborative projects. In about 85% of the projects, the participants report that the research partners contribute equally to the collaboration. However, equality between the partners is not always achieved when it comes to budgeting and the use of funds.<sup>20</sup> In quite a few cases, the Swedish partner sets up the budget for the subsequent agreement of the research partner. Several researchers, particularly in Asian and MENA countries, report that they have limited control over the budgeting and use of funds.

In the South African part of the programme, equality in budgeting and use of funds is achieved to a satisfactory extent. Equal conditions are promoted by the fact that in the Sweden–South Africa partnerships, the funds are disbursed to the partners by the respective national research councils. However, since total Sida funding amounts to twice the amount of the total National Research Foundation funding, the Swedish and the South African project partners are sometimes funded at different levels. This is unsatisfactory. As a Swedish research partner commented: “... the Swedish partner got all the funds they had applied for whereas the South African partner only got one third of what they applied for. This makes the project unequal in a troubling way ...”

In some cases, the funds are kept at the Swedish institution in agreement between the partners, in order to avoid institutional bureaucracy in the partner country. Also, in very few cases, the partners seem not to have communicated sufficiently regarding use of grant, and all the funds are kept in Sweden. These cases, however, are not significant for the programme as a whole.

Joint budgeting and use of funds are key processes in the building of equal partnerships. It is recommended that more attention be given to these processes in the programme. The importance of joint budgeting should be stressed in guidelines for applicants. In the longer perspective, cofunding should be considered with other programme countries, other than South Africa (e.g. China Egypt, and Turkey).

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<sup>16</sup> Appendix 8.5, Question 6.4.

<sup>17</sup> Appendix 8.5, Questions 6.5, 6.6 and 7.4.

<sup>18</sup> Appendix 8.5, Question 6.5.

<sup>19</sup> Appendix 8.5, Question 6.5.

<sup>20</sup> Appendix 8.5, Questions 4.4, 6.1 and 6.6.

### 5.3 Promoting Scientific Quality

In this evaluation, research quality and excellence are evaluated on the basis of reviewers' assessments and the self-assessment of researchers participating in the programme. An in-depth assessment of the scientific quality of the Links cooperation projects is beyond the scope of the present commission. It is concluded that the general scientific quality of the collaborative projects funded by the Links programme is satisfactory, but not always excellent. The procedure for evaluating applications is convincing in terms of promoting projects of high research quality. Proposals are assessed by peer reviewers in relation to international standards, and established national policies of conflict of interest are respected.

The scientific quality of funded projects is thought to have improved during the programme years. The scientific quality of proposals seems uneven and some of the funded projects appear to be of somewhat lower quality than the research in Sweden funded with regular project grants by the Swedish Research Council.

The research is relevant to the participating researchers across disciplines and countries. Knowledge is jointly developed and actively shared among participating researchers and institutions. Results emanating from the projects funded through the Links programme are disseminated jointly by the research partners to some extent. Coauthoring and joint publishing could, however, be given more emphasis in the programme.

The various career patterns and traditions of publication in different research areas are reflected in how results are disseminated in the Links-funded projects. In the natural sciences, technology and medicine, there are established routines for coauthoring, which are applied in the collaborative projects. In these fields, the results gained in the Links projects are published in peer-reviewed journals and conference papers.<sup>21</sup> In the social sciences and humanities, however, results do not appear to be disseminated jointly to a satisfactory degree. Because of the career patterns, participants in the humanities and social sciences prefer to publish individually, acknowledging the contribution of other project participants. It should be noted, however, that it is difficult to assess the impact on joint publishing in the social sciences and humanities from the few Links-funded projects in these fields.

Overall, there is a positive attitude towards joint publication among the researchers and the results of the Links cooperation projects are published jointly to a large extent.<sup>22</sup> It is evident that workshops and exchange visits promote copublishing. Several positive effects of coauthoring are reported by the participating researchers: joint publication benefits the partners' commitment to the project, promotes the sharing of knowledge and furthers internationalisation of the research. As noted by a Swedish researcher: “[joint publication] is a very good approach which can involve all partners committing themselves to the project while sharing the research results.”

One lesson learned is that joint publication takes time but benefits the production of knowledge. Copublication with institutions in developing countries is sometimes experienced as challenging by the Swedish researchers. Time delay caused by hierarchical structures is one example. Language is another challenge encountered in the process of joint publication.

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<sup>21</sup> Appendix 8.5, Question 5.1.

<sup>22</sup> Appendix 8.5, Question 5.2.

## 5.4 Building Sustainable Partnerships

The programme has successfully contributed to the establishment of research partnerships between the partner countries. Most of the Links-funded projects are presently running or are recently finished. As of now, the grant period has come to an end for about 50 cooperation projects (grant period expired at the end of 2005). Within such a short time perspective, no full assessment of the long-term impact of the programme is possible. However, for those projects where Links funding is finished, most partners are still collaborating and intend to continue their research cooperation.<sup>23</sup> Although most partners are committed to continue cooperating after the grant period, there is uncertainty about funding for further cooperation.

It may be advisable to consider the long-term aspect of the collaborative partnerships more closely. Judging from the interviews with participating researchers, the programme does not fully measure up to the goal of long-term cooperation. Grant mechanisms that would contribute to sustainable partnerships, such as doctoral and postdoctoral exchange scholarships, should be considered, as should funding of continuation grants for outstanding cooperation projects.

In the course of the evaluation, stakeholders have come up with a number of suggestions on how to promote cooperation in the long term. One frequent suggestion is that long-term relationships are best promoted by engaging researchers at an early stage of their academic career. This implies active enrolment of PhD students and postdoctoral researchers in the Link collaboration projects. Senior researchers stress that inclusion of PhD students and post-docs in the Links projects is crucial to the long-term viability of the collaboration. In order to engage the PhDs and post-docs, the possibilities for research exchange visits need to be improved. Including doctoral and postdoctoral scholarships in the programme is proposed by a large number of Links researchers. These scholarships would allow extensive mutual research visits of, perhaps, six to 12 months, at PhD and postdoctoral level, by the Links partners.

In order to facilitate the participation of doctoral students, many researchers in the partner countries propose extending the grant period to four years. Further, boosting research advisory resources (PhD level) of the host institution is identified as a means of promoting long-term cooperation. One proposal from the researchers is partial funding of advisory resources at the partner institutions. This could encourage the hosting of PhD students and junior researchers and, hence, promote long-term cooperation.

## 5.5 Internationalisation of Research Environments

The programme clearly furthers internationalisation by reinforcing ongoing internationalisation processes at the institutions involved. Institutional environments in the collaborative countries are generally positive towards the hosting of Links-funded collaborative projects. In addition to the project members, researchers and advanced students of the host institutions take part actively in workshops and seminars arranged within the Links projects. Copublishing of Links projects' results has had a favourable impact on the internationalisation of the institutions involved.

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<sup>23</sup> Appendix 8.5, Question 3.3.



The majority of Links researchers have previous experience of international research cooperation.<sup>24</sup> In Sweden, the programme tends to promote researchers who are already well established in international research cooperation, including cooperation with developing countries. From a Swedish perspective, the programme has had limited impact on fields or disciplines that are poorly internationalised.

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<sup>24</sup> Appendix 8.5, Question 3.1.

# 6. Programme Administration

## 6.1 Programme Outreach

Currently, information about the Links programme is spread by the programme agencies via web announcements and, to some extent, in journals, newsletters and posters. Most researchers learn about the programme through web sites and from academic contacts.<sup>25</sup> The web site of the Swedish Research Council is the main source of information about funding for Swedish researchers. For the South African research community, the web site of the National Research Foundation is the main information source. Researchers participating in Asia and the MENA region learned about the programme mainly through personal contacts, rather than web sites.

Efforts should be made to promote the programme further in the research community, in Sweden and in the partner regions. Promotion activities should be addressed at all scientific fields. Special efforts should be made to invite women and researchers from the social sciences and humanities to the programme.

Promotion and information activities need to be conducted on several levels, using multiple channels. The research agencies and scientific institutions forming networks in the partner countries are key players in achieving this goal. Programme information on the web should be easy to locate and provide clear contact information.

In Sweden, programme information should be more pronounced on the web sites of the programme agencies (Sida, Swedish Research Council, FAS, Formas and VINNOVA). The featuring of successful Links projects in newsletters and journals is recommended in order to promote the programme. Contact and information meetings with the universities' grants offices (or the like) would probably promote the programme among Swedish researchers.

Finally, it is important for programme information to specify clearly which agency one should contact with inquiries.

## 6.2 Improved Application Procedure

The application procedure is managed by the Swedish Research Council and, in the case of the South Africa Links programme, coadministered with the National Research Foundation. Applications are submitted electronically.

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<sup>25</sup> Appendix 8.5, Question 2.1.

The application procedure has been improved during the programme years and is currently working satisfactorily. The introduction of an electronic application in 2006 is a major improvement.<sup>26</sup> Applicants find the application procedure straightforward and easy.<sup>27</sup> This is particularly so for applicants from the partner regions. Applicants who have been in touch with the programme agencies are generally satisfied with the assistance provided.<sup>28</sup> Frequently asked questions regard the type of costs funded, the scope for applying for equipment or consumables and whether doctoral students may be included in the project.

The guidelines for applicants regarding budget and project description need revising. Amendments should focus on the application budget (Part V – Budget Description) and the project description (Part III – Detailed description of the project). The requirement of both a separate and a joint budget is difficult to meet in an appropriate way. In order to ensure an appropriate evaluation of the application, the applicant should be clearly instructed to focus on the description of the collaboration part of the project, rather than the constituent research projects.

The joint signatures by the research partners should be dealt with more efficiently, e.g. through the parallel signing of separate appendices to the application, one for each partner.

Many researchers in the partner countries would like assistance with finding a research partner in Sweden. A database currently developed by the National Research Foundation in South Africa will serve this purpose for the South African part of the programme. However, the matching of researchers is not recommended as a task to be included in the Links programme.

### 6.3 Extensive Evaluation of Applications

Applications to the Links programme are evaluated primarily in terms of scientific quality and assessed in relation to international standards of scientific excellence. Gender issues and environmental issues are assessed if relevant to the research conducted. The applications are assessed according to the following criteria:

- *Scientific quality* in relation to the research standards currently applicable within the field or discipline.
- *Relevance* in relation to the objectives established for this programme.
- *Competence* of the applicants in relation to the proposed research assignment and in relation to their academic standing and track record.
- *Gender* – the project's relevance to and effect on women and men, as well as the integration of the gender-theoretical perspective in research in cases where the project's direction makes the gender perspective obvious and relevant.
- *Environmental issues*, if relevant to the research conducted.
- *Commitment* and interest shown by the host institutions in both countries in support of the application.
- *Budget* in relation to the project plan and funds available. The basic funding must come from other sources.

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<sup>26</sup> Until 2005, applications were submitted in paper form (one original and 20 copies) to the Swedish Research Council with additional copies for the regional or national programme agencies. For the MENA programme, an additional copy of the application was previously to be sent to the Swedish Institute Alexandria. For the South Africa programme, the application was submitted in five paper copies to the NRF, in addition to the copies submitted to the Swedish Research Council. Proposals submitted in one country only were not considered.

<sup>27</sup> Appendix 8.5, Question 2.4.

<sup>28</sup> Appendix 8.5, Questions 2.5 and 2.5.1

- *Balanced cooperation* – both research partners should contribute equally to the project.

A specific evaluation sheet has been set up for the evaluation of applications to the Links programme. In the South Africa programme, the South African evaluation follows the regular procedure of the National Research Foundation. The NRF evaluation criteria differ somewhat from the criteria applied in the rest of the programme. For example, the criteria of gender and environment are not assessed by the NRF. The assessment criteria ‘national priority’ addressing the importance of national capacity building, is specific to the South African assessment.

The procedure for evaluation of applications works well in most respects: criteria for scientific excellence are given priority in the assessments and agreement is reached within the assessment panels and committees. Conflicts of interest appear to be dealt with satisfactorily throughout the programme. The Swedish expert panel follows the Swedish Research Council’s policy for conflict of interest. In the South African assessment, the policy of the National Research Foundation is applied.

Although meeting the goal of promoting proposals of highest scientific quality, the procedure for evaluation of applications has its drawbacks.

Firstly, the fact that different assessment procedures with slightly divergent criteria are applied in different parts of the programme is unsatisfactory. Applications to the programme should be evaluated according to the same criteria, using the same assessment sheet throughout the programme.

Secondly, the contracting of external reviewers is a laborious procedure, the size of which is questionable in relation to the overall programme budget and the size of grant. In order to improve cost-effectiveness in the programme, one should strive for a more streamlined assessment procedure with fewer reviewers and, preferably, the exchange of reviews. The total number of reviewers per application should be limited to two or three. This could be achieved by the exchange of reviews between the national programme agencies before the ranking of proposals. It should be noted that participation of the regional and national partner agencies in the evaluation of applications contributes significantly to the perception of the Links programme as equal and fair. It is therefore essential for a revised procedure for the evaluation of applications to include international reviewers of the programme countries.

Thirdly, gender representation among reviewers is highly imbalanced. In the Swedish expert panel, three out of ten members are women. About 15% of external reviewers contracted by the Swedish Research Council for the assessment of grant proposals to the Links programme are women. Similarly, the National Research Foundation reports that gender balance is difficult to achieve in the South African assessment panels. Also, in the MENA assessments, no more than a fifth of the reviewers are women.

Fourthly, the application form should support the evaluation procedure. The project description must include a concise and clear description and work plan for the cooperation project primarily in order to ensure a correct and smooth evaluation. Presently, members of the Swedish expert panel find that the proposals often suffer from unclear project descriptions. Several members of the panel perceive a vagueness in the proposals that sometimes make assessments difficult. As described by one reviewer: “It is often difficult to grasp the actual collaboration

project, rather than the underlying research project, in the proposals.” One major observation is that the application form and instructions should be more precise on this point.

Further, it is strongly recommended that the grant decision, including a short comment on the decision, be sent to the partner applicants (usually two). Since the grant decision in 2006, the decision (without comment) has been sent to the principal researchers included in the application. This change of procedure meets in part the request of numerous applicants from the partner countries.

Finally, the multiple programme goals are difficult to relate to in the evaluation of proposals. The multiple goals are perceived as unclear by some reviewers. In fact, for one programme officer, the multiple programme goals constitute the main obstacle to the evaluation process. Thus, simplification and prioritisation of the programme goals are recommended.

# 7. Conclusions and Recommendations

*“Thanks to this programme, true research cooperation was reached”*  
(citation grant holder in the MENA region)

In the following section, the main conclusions of the evaluation are summarised, and recommendations for improving the Links programme are put forward. Finally, there is a note on lessons learned in the course of the evaluation.

## 7.1 Main Conclusion: Success in Fostering Research Cooperation

The Links programme has clearly succeeded in stimulating research cooperation between researchers in Sweden and researchers in the partner regions. In scope and objective, the Links programme holds a unique position among research grant programmes in Sweden. Research partnerships established within the programme are characterised by a high degree of equality and mutual interest. The scientific quality of the cooperation projects is satisfactory, but not always excellent.

Above all, the achievement of the Links programme resides in the creation of common work foundations and arenas of communication between researchers in Sweden and researchers in developing countries. Communication and exchange are facilitated by the small scale of the projects. The enthusiasm and open mind sets of the participating researchers are keys to many successful projects. Through the exchange of ideas, methods and materials, mutual knowledge and understanding between the participating researchers are fostered. These shared processes, practical as well as intellectual, constitute the basis for long-term research cooperation.

The evaluation suggests that the Links programme should be continued. An extension to other programme regions, such as Latin America, should be considered. In addition, an extension of the number of networking programme agencies, particularly for the Asia Links programme, should be considered.

## 7.2 Recommendations

### Focus on long-term cooperation

More attention should be directed towards strengthening research cooperation in a long-term perspective. The inclusion of instruments that directly contribute to sustainable partnerships should be considered (e.g.

scholarships for doctoral students and post-docs, remuneration of host advisors). Extension grants (for 3–4 years), to be awarded for outstanding cooperation projects, should be included in the programme.

#### **Allow more flexibility in the grant**

Introduce funds for research networks on a broader, thematic level, in connection with the Links projects, e.g. for the organisation of regional thematic workshops. Consider the funding of costs for equipment and consumables up to approx. SEK 50,000/year.

#### **Promote gender balance**

Reach out to female researchers; encourage female researchers by identifying successful cooperation projects headed by women. Further, the Swedish Research Council's guidelines for gender representation should be applied throughout the procedure for evaluation of applications. Programme evaluation panels should be balanced, with male and female members making up 40–60 per cent.

#### **Invite the humanities and social sciences**

In the overall efforts to promote knowledge about the Links programme, special attention should be paid to researchers in the humanities and social sciences. Seminars and programme workshops should be organised by the programme agencies with the aim of promoting researcher cooperation in the humanities and social sciences. A grant for networking in the humanities and social sciences should be considered.

#### **Create programme coherence**

The regional programmes (Asia, MENA, and South Africa) should be harmonised in one comprehensive, global programme. The programme objectives and guidelines should be revised to support programme coherence and facilitate the application and evaluation procedure. A comprehensive programme document regulating the role of the participating agencies, including communication plan and division of tasks, and the procedures for application and assessment of applications, should be drawn up. Coordination between the programme agencies needs to be strengthened. Regular exchange of best practice between the programme officers is suggested.

#### **Simplify the procedure for evaluation of applications**

The procedure for evaluation of applications should be simplified. Two reviewers per application are recommended (one from Sweden, one from the partner region/country). Agree on common evaluation criteria for the comprehensive programme. It is recommended that the evaluations are exchanged between the national/regional programme agencies in the process of ranking grant proposals. Consider the introduction of a global (Sweden, Asia, MENA and South Africa) assessment panel for the final ranking and grant decision. Ad hoc panels should be avoided.

#### **Improve follow-up of granted projects**

Routines for the follow-up of Links-funded collaborative projects should be improved, in particular with regard to scientific reporting. Scientific follow-up of Links-funded projects is crucial both for the assessment of the quality of the projects and, more generally, for the quality of the Links programme as a whole. Reporting and scientific follow-up should be looked at as means of improving the programme and guiding policy-making concerning the programme.

## **7.3 Lessons Learned**

### **Research with developing countries takes time**

Building research partnerships with institutions in developing countries is sometimes a slow process. It takes time to identify and formulate common research agendas, carry out joint research and, finally, jointly disseminate the results. Programme goal achievement would benefit from an extension of the grant period from three to four years and the inclusion of scholarships for exchange PhD students and postdoctoral researchers.

### **Fruitful network of programme agencies**

The network of programme agencies (research councils, scientific agencies, etc) in the partner regions is crucial to promote outreach of the Links programme. This network promotes understanding of research issues in the programme countries. Through the network of agencies, the Links programme is promoted in the national/regional research funding schemes. With the exchange of best practices between the agencies within the programme network, the agencies' general competence is strengthened.



## Annex 8.1

# Terms of Reference for Evaluating the Swedish Research Links Programme

### **Organisation**

The evaluation of the Swedish Links programme will be carried out by the Analysis Unit, Department for Research Policy Analysis, of the Swedish Research Council.

### **Tasks**

- Analyse if the main objectives, as stated in the programme guidelines, have been reached. Is there an increase in research cooperation between Sweden and the partner countries/regions that can be attributed to the programme?
- Assess the impact of the programme. Have new research contacts been established? If so, have these contacts led to new research collaboration? Does the programme stimulate long-term research collaboration, or does collaboration end with the funds? To what extent do joint publications and/or workshops emanate from the cooperation funded by this programme? Does the programme contribute to internationalisation of the research institutions involved?
- Assess various aspects related to the applicants, e.g. research field/subject area, university, geographical distribution, research experience, age and gender. A questionnaire should be sent to a number of researchers funded by the programme (in Sweden and in partner countries/regions) to investigate their perceptions of the programme.
- Assess different aspects of the application handling process and evaluation procedure. How does the application process work? How have the joint technical committees performed? Panel members (in Sweden, MENA and South Africa) and key staff members at the Swedish Research Council, Sida, NRF and the Swedish Institute in Alexandria, as well as applicants, may be interviewed.
- Suggest recommendations for improvements of the Swedish Research Links scheme.

### **Budget and Time Schedule**

Budget SEK 300,000 (approx. €31,650)

The evaluation should be reported by 30 September 2006 at the latest.

## **Appendices to Terms of Reference**

Guidelines for the latest round of applications.

Paper from workshop on 'The Image of the Other and research cooperation', Istanbul 17–18 February 2005.

Suggested questions for questionnaire.

# Annex 8.2

# List of Programme Documents

## **Agreements**

Avtal mellan Sida och Vetenskapsrådet om hantering av Swedish Research Links 2002–2006. Bilaga 1–5. (VR Dnrs 133-2002-2379, 1333-2002-446).

Bilaga 1: Sida insatspromemoria 'Utlysning av forskningsamarbete – Swedish Research Links' (Sida Ds 2001–004104, 2002-01-28)

Bilaga 2: Administrativ process

Bilaga 3: Budget

Bilaga 4: Sida insatspromemoria 'Swedish Research Links – ansökningssomgången 2003 och utlysning 2004' (Sida Ds 2001-4104, 2003-11-28)

Bilaga 5: Sida/SAREC Beslut om insats 2003-12-16, NB 31/03 (Sida Ds 2001-4104 (Asien)/1999-1087 (Sydafrika).

Tillägg till Avtal mellan Sida och Vetenskapsrådet om hantering av Swedish Research Links 2002–2006 (Sida Ds 2001-4104/190). Innehåll: Sida/SAREC beviljar VR extra medel för systemmodifiering av ansökningssystem. Underlag för tillägg till avtal enligt beslut Sida/SAREC 2005-004380, 2005-11-09. (VR Dnr 133-2002-2379).

Implementing agreement between the Government of Sweden and the Government of the Republic of South Africa regarding the establishment of the South African–Swedish research partnership programme. Sida Ref. No. 1999-011087/150.

Avtal mellan Sida och Svenska institutet i Alexandria om hantering av Swedish Research Links programmet mot Mellanöstern/Nordafrika (MENA)-regionen 2002–2006 (Sida Ds 2001-4104/7)

Bilaga 1: Sida Insatspromemoria 'Utlysning av forskningssamarbete – Swedish Research Links', (Sida Ds 2001-004104)

Bilaga 2: Administrativ process

Bilaga 3: Budget

Memorandum of Understanding between the Academy for Scientific Research and Technology, Cairo, and the Swedish Institute in Alexandria. Signed on 24 February 2005.

## **Sida Insatspromemoria**

Sida insatspromemoria 2002-01-28. Utlysning av forskningsamarbete – Swedish Research Links' (Sida Ds 2001-004104).

Sida Insatspromemoria 2002-11-05. 'Stöd till Swedish Research Links, Asien och Mellanöstern–Nordafrika'.

## **Minutes of Meetings**

Swedish Panel meetings on 23 February 2005, May 2005, 19 September 2005 and 18 January 2006.

SRL/Asia meeting, 6 October 2005.

JTC meetings: JTC/MENA, 4 October 2005.

## **Documents Related to the Application Procedure and Evaluation of Applications**

Swedish Research Links programme. Asia/MENA/South Africa. *Guidelines for Applicants 2006*, including Application form.

Asian Swedish Research Links programme. Guidelines for Applicants 2005.

The Middle East and North Africa Swedish Research Links programme. *Guidelines for Applicants 2005*.

South African Swedish Research Links programme. *Guidelines for Applicants 2005*.

Instruktion för bedömningspanel för hantering av 'Swedish Reserch Links' vid Vetenskapsrådet (VR). GD Beslut nr 2002:63, 2002-05-07, (VR Dnr 311-2002-5726).

Criteria for the assessment of project proposals — *Guide for Reviewers*, including Evaluation form. Swedish Research Council and Sida.

Evaluation sheet for the Sweden/South Africa Cooperation Programme and letter to the reviewer. NRF, Central Grants Administration, International Science Liaison.

'Synpunkter kring ansökningarna till Swedish Research Links, Sidas Asien och MENA program'. Mötes-PM Annika Rabo, augusti 2002.

# Annex 8.3

## List of Interviews

### Researchers

#### Sweden

Gustaf Arrhenius, Torgny Segerstedt Research Fellow, Department of Philosophy, Stockholm University. Sweden–South Africa Grant, 2004. Stockholm University, 26 June 2006.

Else Marie Friis, Professor, Head of Department, Department of Palaeobotany, Swedish Museum of Natural History. Sweden–Asia Grant, 2004. Swedish Museum of Natural History, 9 August 2006.

Tomas Hökfelt, Professor in Histology with Cell Biology, Department of Neuroscience, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm. Sweden–MENA Grant, 2003. Karolinska Institutet, 23 August 2006.

#### MENA region

Erhan Piskin, Professor, Head of department

Nimet Bölgen, PhD student

Sinan Edri, PhD student

Chemical engineering/Bioengineering Department, Faculty of Engineering, Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey. Grant 2004. Tübitak Center for Biomedical Technologies, Ankara, 10 May 2006.

Morsy Abu-Youssef, Associate Professor, Inorganic Chemistry, Chemistry Department, Faculty of Science, Alexandria University, Egypt. Grant 2002. Swedish Institute Alexandria, 6 June 2006.

Mohamed A.S. Goher, Professor, Chemistry Department, Faculty of Science, Alexandria University, Egypt. Grant 2004. Swedish Institute Alexandria, 6 June 2006.

Hassan N. Sallam, Professor in Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Clinical Director Alexandria Fertility Center, Alexandria, Egypt. Grant 2005. Swedish Institute Alexandria, 7 June 2006.

Hassan M. Younis, Professor, Department of Pesticide Chemistry, Faculty of Agriculture Alexandria University, Egypt. Grant 2004. Swedish Institute Alexandria, 6 June 2006.

Ahmed Hassan Sayed Hassan, Professor, Department of Histology, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Assiut University, Egypt. Grant 2003. Karolinska Institutet, 23 August 2006.

Madeha Darwish, lecturer, Department of Animal Hygiene, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Assiut University, Egypt. Grant 2003. Karolinska Institutet, 23 August 2006.

### **South Africa**

Peter Dunsby, Associate Professor, Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics, University of Cape Town. Grant 2002. Telephone interview, 10 August 2006.

### **Scientific Experts**

#### **Swedish expert panel**

Olle Stendahl, Chair, Professor, Linköping University. Swedish Research Council, 19 June 2006.

Karl-Fredrik Berggren, Professor, Theoretical Physics, Linköping University. Telephone interview, 5 July 2006.

Hans-Örjan Nohrstedt, Director, Head of Department of Research, Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning (Formas). VINNOVA, 16 August 2006.

Annika Rabo, Associate Professor, Stockholm University. Swedish Research Council, 19 June 2006.

Ulla Riis, Professor, Department of Education, Uppsala University. Telephone interview, 17 August 2006.

Lars Wärngård, Director, Head of Competence Areas Division, Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems (VINNOVA). VINNOVA, 16 August 2006.

### **MENA region**

Adel Mohammadein, Vice President, Faculty of Engineering, Alexandria University. Advisor to the Swedish Institute Alexandria for the Sweden-MENA Links programme. Swedish Institute Alexandria, 7 June 2006.

### **Programme Agency Representatives**

#### **Sida/SAREC**

Marianne Boqvist, Research Advisor. Sida, 2 August 2006.

Björn Paulsson, Research Advisor. Sida, 28 June 2006.

#### **Swedish Research Council**

Pär Omling, Director General, Swedish Research Council, 17 August 2006.

Annette Moth Wiklund, Head of International Unit. Swedish Research Council, 10 August 2006.

Anna Sjöström Douagi, Research Officer, International Unit. Swedish Research Council, 30 June 2006.

Anna Åhlund, Research Administrator, International Unit. Swedish Research Council, 5 September 2006.

**Swedish Institute Alexandria**

Jan Henningsson, Director. Swedish Institute Alexandria, 7 June 2006.

Maha Gaama, Assistant to the Director. Swedish Institute Alexandria, 7 June 2006.

**Egyptian Academy of Scientific Research and Technology (ASRT)**

Group interview at the Swedish Institute Alexandria, 7 June 2006:

Mohamed H. Swellam, PhD., Assistant Supervisor, Science and Technology Center.

Gailan Abdel Gawad, Senior Programme Officer, Science and Technology Center.

Merhan Hefny, Assistant, Science and Technology Center.

**South African National Research Foundation (NRF)**

Group telephone interview, 13 September 2006:

Stephen Dlamini, Acting Professional Officer, International Science Cooperation Grants.

Siphokazi (Mpozi) Ndudane, Professional Officer, Science & Technology Agreements Funds (STAF).

Bernard Nthambeleni, Research Officer, International Science Cooperation Grants.

Lutanani Rambau, Liaison Officer, Central Grants Administration, International Science Liaison.

# Annex 8.4

# Questionnaires for Interviews

## 8.4.1. Questionnaire for Interviews with Principal Investigators/ Grant Holders, Projects Granted 2002–2005

### 1 Principal Investigator and Project Information

1.1 *What is your academic position?*

Assistant Professor  
Associate Professor  
Professor  
Other

1.2 *Sex*

Female  
Male

1.3 *What is your age?*

under 30 years  
31–40 years  
41–50 years  
51 years or more

1.4 *In what field is your Links-funded project?*

Educational Sciences  
Humanities and Social Sciences/political studies and philosophy  
Medical Sciences  
Natural Sciences and Engineering

1.5 *What type of grant do you have?*

Project grant 2–3 years  
Planning grant 1 year  
Both planning and project grant

1.6 *When were you first granted funds from the Links Programme?*

2002  
2003  
2004  
2005



1.7 *In which region/country is your collaborating Links-partner located?*

Sweden

Asia

MENA (Middle East and North Africa)

South Africa

I have different Links-grants with different regions

## **2 Programme Information and Application Procedure**

2.1 *How did you learn about the Links programme?*

Web-site of the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet)

Web-site of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)

Other web-site

Personal contact

Newsletter

Other

2.2 *What is your opinion on the programme information available on the web?*

([www.vr.se/srl](http://www.vr.se/srl), [www.Sida.se/links](http://www.Sida.se/links))

No opinion

Very unsatisfying

Unsatisfying

Neither satisfying, nor unsatisfying

Satisfying

Very satisfying

2.3 *Who initiated the application for a grant from the Links programme?*

I did

My Links partner

Another researcher participating in the project

Other

2.4 *What is your opinion on the Guidelines for Applicants?*

No opinion

Very unsatisfying

Unsatisfying

Neither satisfying, nor unsatisfying

Satisfying

Very satisfying

2.5 *Did you contact any of the programme agencies for support with the application procedure?*

No

Yes, Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet)

Yes, Sida

Yes, Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)

Yes, National Research Foundation, South Africa (NRF)

Yes, several of the above agencies

2.5.1 *If YES, how was the assistance you received?*

No opinion

Very unsatisfying

Unsatisfying

Neither satisfying, nor unsatisfying

Satisfying

Very satisfying

2.6 *What is your overall opinion of the application procedure?*

### **3 Previous and Future Collaboration**

3.1 *Did you have any previous experience of international research collaboration before applying to the Links programme?*

Yes

No

3.2 *Did you and your Links partner collaborate before you applied to the programme?*

Yes

No

3.3 *Is the grant period finished?*

Yes

No

3.3.1 *If YES, are you still collaborating with your Links partner?*

Yes

No

3.3.2 *If NO, do you plan to continue collaboration with your Links partner after the grant period?*

Don't know

Yes

No

### **4 Mode of Co-operation**

4.1 *Are research exchange visits by the principal investigators included in the project work plan?*

Yes

No

4.2 *Are exchange visits for doctoral students included in the project work plan?*

Yes

No

4.3 *Are workshops organised within the project?*

Yes

No

4.4 *How would you describe the balance between the partners in terms of contribution to the collaboration project?*

No opinion

Extremely unequal – the Swedish partner alone contributes to the project

The Swedish partner contributes more than the collaborative partner

Equal contribution by both research partners  
The collaborative partner contributes more than the Swedish partner  
Extremely unequal – the collaborating partner alone contributes to the project

4.5 *Describe your Links collaboration briefly. What joint research activities are there in your project (e.g. research visits, exchange of Ph D students, workshops)?*

## **5 Dissemination of Results**

5.1 *How are the results of your Links project mainly disseminated (actual or planned)?*

Article(s) in peer-reviewed journal  
Other article/paper(s)  
Conference paper(s)  
Monograph(s)  
Web-publication(s)  
Poster(s)  
Other

5.2 *Do you publish jointly with your collaborative partner (actual or planned)?*

Yes, all results are published jointly  
Yes, some of the results are published jointly  
No, there is no joint publication in the project

5.3 *What is your experience concerning joint publication from the Links-funded project?*

## **6 Budget and Use of Funds**

6.1 *Who set up the budget in the application?*

I did  
My Links collaborating partner  
The budget was set up jointly by me and my collaborating partner

6.2 *Have you encountered any administrative problems when transferring the funds to your collaborating partner?*

Don't know/Not applicable  
Yes  
No

6.3 *According to the Links programme guidelines, a maximum of 250 000 SEK per year may be used for travelling, accommodation and subsistence, co-authored publication and project workshops. What is your opinion on the sum granted for these additional collaborative costs?*

No opinion  
Highly insufficient  
Insufficient  
Neither sufficient, nor insufficient  
Sufficient  
Highly sufficient

6.4 *How are the funds mainly used in your project?*

Travel, accommodation and subsistence  
Workshops  
Publications  
Other

6.5 *Besides the costs presently funded by the programme, what type of cost do you think is the most important to be funded, if the programme guidelines were to be changed?*

No opinion

Salaries

Consumables/material equipment

Property rights (patents, copyrights etc)

Personal insurance

Other

6.6 *What is your overall experience of the joint budget and use of funds?*

## **7 General Experience of the Research Collaboration Project**

7.1 *What is your general experience of the research collaboration project?*

No opinion

Very negative

Negative

Neither negative, nor positive

Positive

Very positive

7.2 *How is your Links collaboration project perceived at your institution?*

No opinion

Very negative

Negative

Neither negative, nor positive

Positive

Very positive

7.3 *How do you assess the quality of the research carried out in your Links collaboration project?*

No opinion

Very low

Low

Neither high, nor low

High

Very high

7.4 *How could the Swedish Research Links programme be improved?*

## **8.4.2 Aide Memoire for Interviews with Programme Managers and Administrators in Sweden (Swedish Research Council and Sida)**

### **Funktion**

Vilka är Dina arbetsuppgifter inom SRL programmet?

### **Information, 'Outreach'**

Hur har informationen om programmet spridits?

Fungerar den informationen som finns? Vilka hör av sig? Vilken typ av frågor får Du?

Har Du förslag till förbättringar av information kring programmet?

### **Samarbete VR-Sida och övriga organisationer**

Hur fungerar samarbetet mellan Sida och VR? Ev. förslag till utvecklat samarbete.

Hur fungerar samarbetet mellan VR/Sida/NRF/SwedAlex?

### **Administration och beredning av ansökningar**

Vilka är Dina erfarenheter av att administrera programmet – vad fungerar bra och vad fungerar dåligt?

Hur fungerar den befintliga beredningsorganisationen?

Vilket är Ditt intryck av arbetet i den svenska expertpanelen?

Hur tycker Du att samarbetet mellan VR/Sida/NRF/Svenska institutet i Alexandria fungerar i beredning av ansökningar?

De olika 'modellerna' Asien, MENA resp Sydafrika – fördelar och nackdelar. Vilken modell tycker Du fungerar bäst?

Egna erfarenheter av diskussionerna i JTCs. Hur fungerar JTC-mötena?

Är det lätt/svårt att komma överens?

Är det tillräckligt med administrativ personal för att hantera programmet? Har personalen rätt kompetens? Om inte, vad behövs?

## **8.4.3 Aide Memoire for Interview with the Director General, Swedish Research Council**

### **Bakgrund och mål för programmet**

Programmets tillkomst – vem initierade?

Hur uppfattar Du målen för Links-programmet? Hur har målen diskuterats fram mellan VR och Sida. Tycker Du att VR har tillräckligt inflytande på programmets mål och utformning?

### **Myndighetskontakter, särskilt VR-Sida**

Vilka myndighetskontakter har Du kring Links-programmet? I vilka frågor?

Hur fungerar samarbetet mellan Sida och VR?

Hur tycker Du att samarbetet mellan VR och NRF respektive SwedAlex fungerar?

### **Links-programmet inom VR**

Hur ser Du på målen för Links-programmet i förhållande till VRs mål om excellens och förnyelse?

Hur uppfattar Du Links-programmet i förhållande till VRs internationella mål och strategier?

Programmets anknytning till ämnesområden – hur skulle det kunna förbättras?

### **Framtiden**

Hur ställer sig VR till en förlängning av avtalet med Sida? Vilka förändringar är intressanta ur VRs perspektiv, t ex avseende geografisk utvidgning. Vilka länder/regioner (DAC) skulle VR vilja prioritera? Policyutveckling – enligt avtalet bär Sida yttersta ansvaret för utveckling av programmet. Hur kan VR bidra till utveckling av programmet?

Hur arbetar VR med PGU? Links-programmets utformning i förhållande till PGU verksamhetsmål.

#### **8.4.4 Aide Memoire for Interview with Programme Managers and Administrators at the National Research Foundation, South Africa**

##### **Outreach**

What channels are used for spreading information about the Links programme in South Africa? (web, other announcements)?

How would you assess the outreach of the Links programme within in the South African research community?

- senior and junior researchers?
- those not previously experienced in international research cooperation?
- historically disadvantaged groups?

##### **Applicants and application procedure**

What is your opinion on the overall application picture regarding:

- research field?
- academic affiliation; well-established, highly ranked research institutions versus more recently established institutions?
- spread of researchers in different stages of their research career?
- male/female applicants?

What type of questions do you get from the applicants?

What is your overall assessment of the application procedure?

##### **Evaluation of applications**

Is it easy or difficult to find appropriate reviewers?

How many reviewers are there per application on the South African side?

How is the balance between male and female reviewers?

How are the external reviews dealt with in the compilation of a ranking list?

How are conflicts of interest dealt with in the evaluation procedure?

How would you assess the working climat of the Joint Technical Committee meetings?

Do you feel that, ultimately, the right granting decisions were taken?

How could the evaluation procedure be ameliorated?

##### **Funding**

What is your opinion on the sum granted for the collaborative costs (R 150 000 per year, total sum for three years + R 50 000 the first year for equipment)?

What is your experience of the joint funding procedure NRF-Sida?

How would you describe the cooperation with the other programme agencies

(Sida and the Swedish Research Council)?

##### **Aim of programme**

One of the objectives of the Swedish Research Links programme is *to promote research excellence and quality*. Do you feel that this goal is attained?

Another objective is to *establish a basis for long-term research cooperation between researchers in South Africa and Sweden* – is that goal attained?

### **Eventual extension of the Swedish Research Links programme**

What are the main priorities should the Links-programme be extended?

### **8.4.5 Aide Memoire for Interview with Members of the Expert Panel of the Swedish Research Council**

#### **Outreach**

Has the right group of researchers been reached by the programme?

- senior/junior researchers?
- experienced/not experienced in international research cooperation?
- broad disciplinary outreach/ narrow disciplinary outreach?

#### **Distribution of applications**

Is the distribution of applications satisfactory with the respect to:

- research field; current dominance of applications from Natural Sciences and Engineering, Natural Resources and Environment (NR/NE)?
- academic affiliation of applicants; well-established, highly ranked research institutions versus more recently established institutions?
- spread of researchers in different stages of their research career?
- male/female applicants?

#### **Application procedure and administration**

Did the panel members get the information needed in order to correctly assess the applications?

- from the applicants?
- from the funding agencies (Sida, Swedish Research Council)

#### **Evaluation**

The composition and size of the Swedish panel. Research areas, researchers-council representatives, male-female etc.

The Evaluation form – is it appropriate, easy to fill out?

Experience of working with external reviews within the panel. Difficult/easy to find appropriate reviewers? Balance male/female reviewers?

Where the applications correctly assessed?

How are conflicts of interest dealt with? (jäv)

The Joint Technical Committee – performance, working climat?

Suggestions alternative evaluation processes?

#### **Funding**

What is your opinion on the sum granted for the additional collaborative costs (250 000 SEK per year, total sum for three years 750 000 SEK)?

Disbursement of funds between the collaborating partners – panel opinions, experiences?

#### **Aim of programme**

One of the objectives of the Swedish Research Links programme is *to promote research excellence and quality*.

How would you assess research excellence and quality in the applications you have reviewed?

Another objective is to *establish a basis for long-term research cooperation between researchers in the MENA region and Sweden* – is that goal attained?  
How could long-term research cooperation be promoted otherwise?

#### **Eventual extension of the Swedish Research Links programme**

What are the main priorities if the SRL programme should be extended?  
What changes could be made (funding level, costs granted, use of funds, research areas etc)

### **8.4.6 Aide Memoire for Discussion with Stakeholders in the MENA Region (Scientific Experts, Programme Managers and Administrators)**

#### **Outreach**

Has the right group of researchers been reached by the programme?

- senior/junior researchers?
- experienced/not experienced in international research cooperation?
- broad disciplinary outreach/ narrow disciplinary outreach?

#### **Distribution of applications**

Is the distribution of applications satisfactory according to:

Research Field; dominance of Natural Resources and Environment (NR). Health Research/Medicine and Humanities and Social Sciences less than half of NR.

Academic affiliation of applicants; well-established, highly ranked research institutions versus more recently established institutions. Senior researchers (Full professors) vs Junior researchers (Associate professors)  
Balance male/female applicants?

Research field of applicant in relation to national research priorities?

#### **Application processing and administration**

Did the panel get the information needed in order to correctly assess the applications?

- 1) From the applicants?
- 2) From the funding agencies (Sida, Swedish Research Council)

SwedAlex as coordinator of the MENA-programme – how does it work?

#### **Reviewing**

MENA-panel; composition and size. Scientific balance, balance male-female members

The Evaluation form – is it appropriate, easy to fill out?

External reviewing, experience of working with external reviews within the panel. Difficult/easy to find appropriate reviewers? Balance male/female reviewers?

Where the applications correctly assessed?

How are biased situations dealt with?

The Joint Technical Committee – performance, working climat?

Suggestions alternative review processes?



**Funding**

A maximum sum of 250 000 SEK per year is granted for additional costs arising from the international collaboration (travelling, accommodation and subsistence, co-authored publication, project workshops). Total sum for three years collaboration costs is 750 000 SEK.

What is the opinion on the sum granted for the additional collaborative costs?

**Aim of programme**

One of the objectives of the Swedish Research Links programme is *to promote research excellence and quality*.

How would you assess research excellence and quality in the applications you have reviewed? (In general and in relation to other research projects in the MENA region)

Another objective is to *establish a basis for long-term research cooperation between researchers in the MENA region and Sweden* – is that goal attained?

How could long-term research cooperation be promoted otherwise?

**Eventual extension of the Swedish Research Links programme**

What are the main priorities if the SRL programme is to be extended?

What changes could be made (funding level, use of funds, research areas etc  
Web-based questionnaire to principal investigators

# Annex 8.5

# Web-based Questionnaire to Principal Investigators

Questionnaire to Principal Investigators	Sweden		Asia		MENA		South Africa		Total	
	Number	(%)	Number	(%)	Number	(%)	Number	(%)	Number	(%)
<b>1 Principal Investigator and Project Information</b>										
<b>1.1 What is your academic position?</b>										
Assistant Professor	6	4%	3	6%	8	27%	2	6%	19	7%
Associate Professor	51	33%	13	25%	7	23%	12	38%	83	31%
Professor	82	53%	28	54%	14	47%	10	31%	134	50%
Other	16	10%	8	15%	1	3%	8	25%	33	12%
	<b>155**</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>269**</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>1.2 Sex</b>										
Female	30	19%	17	33%	2	7%	3	9%	52	19%
Male	126	81%	35	67%	28	93%	29	91%	218	81%
	<b>156</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>1.3 What is your age?</b>										
under 30 years	0	0%	1	2%	1	3%	0	0%	2	1%
31-40 years	20	13%	9	17%	7	23%	10	31%	46	17%
41-50 years	58	37%	22	42%	10	33%	9	28%	99	37%
51 years or more	78	50%	20	38%	12	40%	13	41%	123	46%
	<b>156</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>1.4 In what field is your Links-funded project?</b>										
Educational Sciences	3	2%	1	2%	0	0%	2	6%	6	2%
Humanities and Social Sciences	19	12%	3	6%	2	7%	5	16%	29	11%
Medical Sciences	38	24%	19	37%	5	17%	9	28%	71	26%
Natural Sciences and Engineering	96	62%	29	56%	23	77%	16	50%	164	61%
	<b>156</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>1.5 What type of grant do you have?</b>										
Project grant 2-3 years	134	86%	44	85%	22	73%	28	88%	228	84%
Planning grant 1 year	14	9%	5	10%	3	10%	1	3%	23	9%
Both planning and project grant	7	5%	3	6%	5	17%	3	9%	18	7%
	<b>155**</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>269**</b>	<b>100%</b>

Questionnaire to Principal Investigators		Sweden		Asia		MENA		South Africa		Total	
		Number	(%)	Number	(%)	Number	(%)	Number	(%)	Number	(%)

### 1.6 When were you first granted funds from the Links Programme?

2002	19	12%	2	4%	3	10%	5	16%	29	11%
2003	34	22%	18	35%	3	10%	1	3%	56	21%
2004	32	21%	10	19%	6	20%	6	19%	54	20%
2005	71	46%	22	42%	18	60%	20	63%	131	49%
	<b>156</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%*</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>100%*</b>

## 2 Programme Information and Application Procedure

### 2.1 How did you learn about the Links programme?

Web-site of the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet)	51	33%	2	4%	2	7%	0	0%	55	20%
Web-site of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency	33	21%	11	21%	3	10%	0	0%	47	17%
Web-site of the National Research Foundation, South Africa (NRF)	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	16	50%	16	6%
Web-site of the Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)	0	0%	0	0%	2	7%	0	0%	2	1%
Other web-site	3	2%	1	2%	0	0%	0	0%	4	1%
Personal contact	54	35%	35	67%	15	50%	12	38%	116	43%
Newsletter	4	3%	1	2%	4	13%	4	13%	13	5%
Other	11	7%	2	4%	4	13%	0	0%	17	6%
	<b>156</b>	<b>100%*</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%*</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>100%*</b>

### 2.2 What is your opinion on the programme information available on the web? ([www.nrf.ac.za/funding/swedishcall.stm](http://www.nrf.ac.za/funding/swedishcall.stm), [www.vr.se/srl](http://www.vr.se/srl), [www.sida.se/links](http://www.sida.se/links))

No opinion	19	12%	9	17%	5	17%	4	13%	37	14%
Very unsatisfying	2	1%	0	0%	1	3%	2	6%	5	2%
Unsatisfying	7	4%	3	6%	3	10%	1	3%	14	5%
Neither satisfying, nor unsatisfying	27	17%	3	6%	3	10%	3	9%	36	13%
Satisfying	94	60%	31	60%	13	43%	18	56%	156	58%
Very satisfying	7	4%	6	12%	5	17%	4	13%	22	8%
	<b>156</b>	<b>100%*</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%*</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 2.3 Who initiated the application for a grant from the Links programme?

I did	97	62%	10	19%	16	53%	20	63%	143	53%
My Links partner	49	31%	37	71%	11	37%	10	31%	107	40%
Another researcher participating in the project	6	4%	5	10%	3	10%	1	3%	15	6%
Other	4	3%	0	0%	0	0%	1	3%	5	2%
	<b>156</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>100%*</b>

Questionnaire to Principal Investigators		Sweden (%)		Asia (%)		MENA (%)		South Africa (%)		Total (%)	
	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number
<b>2.4 What is your opinion on the Guidelines for Applicants?</b>											
No opinion	10	6%	4	8%	4	13%	3	9%	21	8%	
Very unsatisfying	1	1%	0	0%	2	7%	1	3%	4	1%	
Unsatisfying	6	4%	1	2%	1	3%	2	6%	10	4%	
Neither satisfying, nor unsatisfying	20	13%	0	0%	1	3%	3	9%	24	9%	
Satisfying	108	69%	40	77%	20	67%	22	69%	190	70%	
Very satisfying	11	7%	7	13%	2	7%	1	3%	21	8%	
	<b>156</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%*</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>100%</b>	
<b>2.5 Did you contact any of the programme agencies for support with the application procedure?</b>											
No	89	57%	37	71%	20	67%	19	59%	165	61%	
Yes, Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet)	39	25%	5	10%	4	13%	0	0%	48	18%	
Yes, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)	20	13%	7	13%	4	13%	1	3%	32	12%	
Yes, National Research Foundation South Africa (NRF)	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%	12	38%	13	5%	
Yes, Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)	1	1%	0	0%	1	3%	0	0%	2	1%	
Yes, several of the above agencies	6	4%	3	6%	1	3%	0	0%	10	4%	
	<b>156</b>	<b>100%*</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%*</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>100%</b>	
<b>2.5.1 If YES, how was the assistance you received?</b>											
No opinion	84	54%	30	58%	19	63%	18	56%	151	56%	
Very unsatisfying	5	3%	0	0%	0	0%	1	3%	6	2%	
Unsatisfying	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	6%	2	1%	
Neither satisfying, nor unsatisfying	6	4%	1	2%	1	3%	2	6%	10	4%	
Satisfying	51	33%	13	25%	7	23%	8	25%	79	29%	
Very satisfying	10	6%	8	15%	3	10%	1	3%	22	8%	
(The number of answers exceeds the number of answer "Yes" in 2.5)	<b>156</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%*</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%*</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>100%</b>	
<b>2.6 What is your overall opinion of the application procedure? ***</b>											
Max 1000 characters including space											
<b>3 Previous and Future Collaboration</b>											
<b>3.1 Did you have any previous experience of international research collaboration before applying to the Links programme?</b>											
Yes	142	91%	38	73%	22	73%	18	56%	220	81%	
No	14	9%	14	27%	8	27%	14	44%	50	19%	
	<b>156</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Questionnaire to Principal Investigators									
	Sweden		Asia		MENA		South Africa		Total
	Number	(%)	Number	(%)	Number	(%)	Number	(%)	Number (%)
<b>3.2 Did you and your Links partner collaborate before you applied to the programme?</b>									
Yes	96	62%	36	69%	17	57%	13	41%	162 60%
No	60	38%	16	31%	13	43%	19	59%	108 40%
	<b>156</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>270 100%</b>
<b>3.3 Is the grant period finished?</b>									
Yes	40	26%	15	29%	6	20%	6	19%	67 25%
No	116	74%	37	71%	24	80%	26	81%	203 75%
	<b>156</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>270 100%</b>
<b>3.3.1 If YES, are you still collaborating with your Links partner?</b>									
Yes	37	93%	14	93%	6	100%	6	100%	63 94%
No	3	8%	1	7%	0	0%	0	0%	4 6%
	<b>40</b>	<b>100%*</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>67 100%</b>
<b>3.3.2 If NO, do you plan to continue collaboration with your Links partner after the grant period?</b>									
Don't know/Not applicable	0	0%	1	3%	1	4%	2	8%	4 4%
Yes	21	95%	36	97%	22	92%	23	92%	102 102%
No	1	5%	0	0%	1	4%	0	0%	2 2%
	<b>22***</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>25***</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>108 100%</b>
(The number of answers is lower than the number of answer "No" in 3.3 - Sweden and South Africa)									
<b>4 Mode of Co-operation</b>									
<b>4.1 Are research exchange visits by the principal investigators included in the project work plan?</b>									
Yes	148	95%	51	98%	28	93%	31	97%	258 96%
No	8	5%	1	2%	2	7%	1	3%	12 4%
	<b>156</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>270 100%</b>
<b>4.2 Are exchange visits for doctoral students included in the project work plan?</b>									
Yes	120	77%	35	67%	23	77%	23	72%	201 74%
No	36	23%	17	33%	7	23%	9	28%	69 26%
	<b>156</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>270 100%</b>

### Questionnaire to Principal Investigators

4.3 Are workshops organised within the project?		Sweden	Asia	MENA	South Africa	Total
		Number	Number	Number	Number	Number
		(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Yes		111	37	22	25	195
		71%	71%	73%	78%	72%
No		45	15	8	7	75
		29%	29%	27%	22%	28%
		<b>156</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>270</b>
		<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>4.4 How would you describe the balance between the partners in terms of contribution to the collaboration project? (Answered by the Swedish partner)</b>						
No opinion		4				
		3%				
Extremely unequal – the Swedish partner alone contributes to the project		3				
		2%				
Unequal - the Swedish partner contributes more than the collaborative partner		27				
		17%				
Equal contribution by both research partners		100				
		64%				
Unequal - The collaborative partner contributes more than the Swedish partner		22				
		14%				
Extremely unequal - the collaborative partner alone contributes to the project		0				
		0%				
		<b>156</b>				
		<b>100%</b>				
<b>4.4 How would you describe the balance between the partners in terms of contribution to the collaboration project? (Answered by the collaborative partner)</b>						
No opinion			1			4
			2%			10%
Extremely unequal – (the Asian/Mena/South African) partner alone contributes to the project			0			0
			0%			0%
Unequal - (the Asian/Mena/South African/) partner contributes more than the collaborative partner		6				6
		4%				5%
Equal contribution by both research partners		42				96
		81%				84%
Unequal - The collaborative partner contributes more than the (Asian/Mena/South African) partner		3				8
		6%				7%
Extremely unequal - the collaborative partner alone contributes to the project		0				0
		0%				0%
		<b>52</b>				<b>114</b>
		<b>100%</b>				<b>100%</b>
<b>4.5 Describe your Links collaboration briefly. What joint research activities are there in your project (e.g. research visits, exchange of Ph D students, workshops)? ***</b>						
Max 1000 characters including space						

## Questionnaire to Principal Investigators

	Sweden		Asia		MENA		South Africa		Total	
	Number	(%)	Number	(%)	Number	(%)	Number	(%)	Number	(%)
<b>5 Dissemination of Results</b>										
5.1 How are the results of your Links project mainly disseminated (actual or planned)?										
Article(s) in peer-reviewed journal	123	79%	43	83%	18	60%	22	69%	206	76%
Conference paper(s)	23	15%	4	8%	6	20%	7	22%	40	15%
Monograph(s)	2	1%	3	6%	3	10%	2	6%	10	4%
Web-publication(s)	1	1%	1	2%	0	0%	0	0%	2	1%
Poster(s)	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%
Other	6	4%	1	2%	3	10%	1	3%	11	4%
	<b>156</b>	<b>100%*</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%*</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>5.2 Do you publish jointly with your collaborative partner (actual or planned)?</b>										
Yes, all results are published jointly	102	65%	33	63%	14	47%	19	59%	168	62%
Yes, some of the results are published jointly	34	22%	17	33%	9	30%	10	31%	70	26%
No, there is no joint publication in the project	20	13%	2	4%	7	23%	3	9%	32	12%
	<b>156</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%*</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%*</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>5.3 What is your experience concerning joint publication from the Links-funded project? ***</b>										
Max 1000 characters including space										
<b>6 Budget and Use of Funds</b>										
6.1 Who set up the budget in the application?										
I did	64	41%	3	6%	3	10%	6	19%	76	28%
My Links collaborating partner	9	6%	23	44%	6	20%	2	6%	40	15%
The budget was set up jointly by me and my collaborating partner	83	53%	26	50%	21	70%	24	75%	154	57%
	<b>156</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>6.2 Have you encountered any administrative problems when transferring the funds to your collaborating partner? (Swedish partner)</b>										
Don't know	25	16%								
Yes	37	24%								
No	94	60%								
	<b>156</b>	<b>100%</b>								

### Questionnaire to Principal Investigators

6.2 Have you encountered any administrative problems when receiving and using the funds transferred by your Swedish Links partner? (Asia and MENA partner)

	Sweden (%)	Asia (%)	MENA (%)	South Africa (%)	Total (%)
	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number
Don't know					
Yes	8	15%	4		12
No	4	8%	11		15
	40	77%	15		55
	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>		<b>82</b>
			<b>100%</b>		<b>100%</b>

6.2 Have you encountered any administrative problems when receiving and using the funds granted by the National Science Foundation? (South African partner)

Don't know					
Yes				1	3%
No				6	19%
				25	78%
				<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>

6.3 According to the Links programme guidelines, a maximum of 250 000 SEK (for South Africa 150 000 ZAR) per year may be used for travelling, accommodation and subsistence, co-authored publication and project workshops. What is your opinion on the sum granted for these collaborative costs?

No opinion	8	5%	3	6%	3	10%	0	0%	14	5%
Highly insufficient	11	7%	1	2%	4	13%	6	19%	22	8%
Insufficient	46	29%	11	21%	9	30%	2	6%	68	25%
Neither sufficient, nor insufficient	11	7%	12	23%	3	10%	4	13%	30	11%
Sufficient	79	51%	25	48%	11	37%	19	59%	134	50%
Highly sufficient	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%	1	3%	2	1%
	<b>156</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>100%</b>

6.4 How are the funds mainly used in your project?

Travel, accommodation and subsistence	125	80%	40	77%	21	70%	28	88%	214	79%
Workshops	14	9%	4	8%	3	10%	0	0%	21	8%
Publications	2	1%	4	8%	1	3%	0	0%	7	3%
Other	15	10%	4	8%	5	17%	4	13%	28	10%
	<b>156</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%*</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%*</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>100%</b>



Questionnaire to Principal Investigators	Sweden		Asia		MENA		South Africa		Total	
	Number	(%)	Number	(%)	Number	(%)	Number	(%)	Number	(%)

6.5 Besides the costs presently funded by the programme, what type of cost do you think is the most important to be funded, if the programme guidelines were to be changed?

No opinion	7	4%	5	10%	1	3%	2	6%	15	6%
Salaries	91	58%	17	33%	5	17%	9	28%	122	45%
Consumables/material equipment	50	32%	27	52%	23	77%	18	56%	118	44%
Property rights (patents, copyrights etc)	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%	1	3%	2	1%
Personal insurance	7	4%	1	2%	0	0%	0	0%	8	3%
Other	0	0%	2	4%	1	3%	2	6%	5	2%
	<b>156</b>	<b>100%*</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%*</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%*</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>100%*</b>

6.6 What is your overall experience of the joint budget and use of funds?

\*\*\*

Max 1000 characters including space

## 7 General Experience of the Research Collaboration Project

7.1 What is your general experience of the research collaboration project?

No opinion	4	3%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	4	1%
Very negative	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Negative	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%
Neither negative, nor positive	8	5%	2	4%	1	3%	0	0%	11	4%
Positive	86	55%	21	40%	15	50%	8	25%	130	48%
Very positive	57	37%	29	56%	14	47%	24	75%	124	46%
	<b>156</b>	<b>100%*</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>100%*</b>

7.2 How is your Links collaboration project perceived at your institution?

No opinion	8	5%	1	2%	1	3%	0	0%	10	4%
Very negative	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%
Negative	1	1%	0	0%	1	3%	0	0%	2	1%
Neither negative, nor positive	32	21%	3	6%	2	7%	3	9%	40	15%
Positive	83	53%	22	42%	12	40%	11	34%	128	47%
Very positive	31	20%	26	50%	14	47%	18	56%	89	33%
	<b>156</b>	<b>100%*</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%*</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>100%*</b>

### Questionnaire to Principal Investigators

#### 7.3 How do you assess the quality of the research carried out in your Links collaboration project?

	Sweden		Asia		MENA		South Africa		Total	
	Number	(%)	Number	(%)	Number	(%)	Number	(%)	Number	(%)
No opinion	10	6%	2	4%	1	3%	2	6%	15	6%
Very low	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Low	3	2%	0	0%	1	3%	0	0%	4	1%
Neither high, nor low	27	17%	4	8%	4	13%	1	3%	36	13%
High	86	55%	24	46%	17	57%	19	59%	146	54%
Very high	30	19%	22	42%	7	23%	10	31%	69	26%
	<b>156</b>	<b>100%*</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%*</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### 7.4 How could the Swedish Research Links programme be improved? \*\*\*

Max 2000 characters including space

\* Round-off error

\*\* Answers missing from some of the respondents.

\*\*\* The answers to the open-ended questions 2.6, 4.5, 5.3, 6.6 and 7.4 are summarised in the report. The complete answers are available on request at the Swedish Research Council.



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