Towards an open, transparent and competitive process of research funding for capacity building

An evaluation of the launching of Sida Bilateral Research Training and Capacity Building Programme – Bolivia and Rwanda 2012
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List of abbreviations and acronyms

AU  African Union
CN  Concept note in capacity building
EUA European University Association
ERA European Research Area
EU  European Union
HRST Human Resources in Science and Technology
ICT Information and Communications Technology
LoI Letters of Intent
LMC Low or Medium Income Countries
NUR National University of Rwanda
OECD Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
R&D Research and Development
PRSP Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RBM Results-Based Management
RTP Research Training Partnership
SADC Southern African Development Community
SAREC Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation
Saura Southern African Regional Universities Association
SCHE Swedish Council for Higher Education
SEC Scientific evaluation Committee
SRC Sida Research Council
Sida Swedish International Development Agency
UMSS University Mayor de San Simon, Bolivia
UMSA University Mayor de San Andrés, Bolivia
UNESCO UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UN United Nations
UR University of Rwanda
VR Swedish Research Council
WEI World Education Indicators
WTO World Trade Organization
3GU Third Generation University
Foreword

The purpose of this evaluation is to study what worked well and what did not in the Sida Bilateral Research Training and Capacity Building programme that was launched in 2010 and started to be implemented in 2012, first in Bolivia and Rwanda and followed by other countries later on. It is not an evaluation of the RTP and capacity programme as such, but the process of planning, implementing and administrating it. The new model aims at a broader use and implementation of the programme through open and competitive calls in combination with partnership building between universities and university departments in Sweden and universities and departments in the recipient countries.

The forming of the new RTP and capacity building model comprises a number of actors, institutions and individuals over longer time perspectives. Firstly, it has to be stressed that the programme as such has a long term orientation by supporting doctoral studies for a big number of candidates in the countries concerned. Secondly, the time horizon also relates to the time from calls to projects and the quality assessment, administrative procedures and negotiations needed to implement the programme.

The process as such can be discussed with regard to a number of policy concepts or quality indicators such as: research quality, policy intentions, innovations, capacity development, local ownership and trust, administrative routines and simplifications and more generally transaction costs to promote research training and capacity building.

The report does not result in a quick fix to design a better process. The aim is more to look at the process from a broader perspective and to see where the process functions well and in what contexts improvements could be recommended. The time constraints for the evaluation have made it difficult to have a deeper look at certain functions of the system. The sources for the evaluation comprise 30 interviews with persons being involved at different RTP levels in Bolivia, Rwanda and Sweden and analyses of relevant background reports from Sida or other actors/research departments as well as contributions from other donors. This study should not be regarded as a scientific evaluation but more as a working document for Sida and its partners in the mission of further developing the bilateral programmes for research training and capacity building. Finally I want to thank the persons being interviewed and Sida, in particular Hannah Akuffo and Teresa Soop, Sida for good support during the evaluation process.

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Executive summary

The development of the new research training and capacity building partnership, (the Sida RTP model) was initiated in 2010, underwent a long consultative process within Sida and with external researchers and several Swedish agencies culminating in the launching of the first call in 2012. It was an effort to implement a new system for research policy formulation at the target university level in the form of concept notes as strategic programmes at university level and a two steps application process.

The latter part comprised letters of intent and full applications being assessed by an external scientific evaluation committee giving recommendations to Sida for further screening and possible support. Major objectives of the new programme were to introduce an open, transparent and competitive process in the RTP collaboration and to broaden the pool of potential partners in Sweden and in the recipient countries.

The purpose of this evaluation study is to look into what worked well and what did not function so well in the new system. Sida describes the new model in the following way in the Background and guidelines for the applying institutions:

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

This report is divided into three sections. The first section reflects on current global development of higher education and research, a background note of Sida development research and comments on transaction costs and need for simplification in the research granting process. The first section also describes the Sida Research Training and Capacity Building Partnership programme and the outline of this evaluation. The second section covers the results of interviews and document studies with regard to the evaluation of the Sida bilateral RTP programme and the third section focusses on recommendations to Sida for further improvement of the programme.

The summary follows Sida questions in terms of reference.

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2 The focus of this report is to highlight the initiation and implementation of a new form of bilateral research capacity building, which started in 2012 in Bolivia and Rwanda and then followed by the same organizational pattern in Tanzania and Uganda.
Impact on scientific quality and capacity building

- It is, for various reasons, difficult to develop criteria and indicators showing to what extent the scientific quality has increased if one considers assessment of Sida staff or the scientific evaluation committee. It depends on problems of comparability between the different cohorts of doctoral students and final Ph.D.-graduates and also that not all research officers have followed both steps in the respective country.
- To make a comparative content assessment of old and new applications one should call for a blind design where a peer review team could compare applications submitted at different calls, which in itself is a complicated and time-demanding task. It is also difficult to assess to what degree the scientific quality increased in the single projects, which are doctoral training projects designed to cover certain relevant policy fields.
- It is likely, however, that an open, transparent and competitive model in the long run will produce “more quality” than the traditional talent matching model. On the other hand, there have been obvious time constraints in the new model that could have negative repercussions on the quality of the applications. Quality is also related to the balance between a more coherent and a more fragmented research design.
- If one recognizes the views from recipient universities it is quite evident, however, that persons in leading coordinating positions report that there has been a significant quality development in a broader context of research capacity. It is too early, however, to state if the new venture will strengthen capacity development with respect to number of scholars, publications in reference journals and other indicators of academic progress.

The new model is labour-intensive and time-consuming:

- Overall, the new RTP model is experienced as very labour-intensive and time-consuming in comparison with the previous research partner matching model. Firstly, the process from calls to contract has been extended. Secondly, Swedish partners, the targeted universities as well as Sida staff experienced an increased workload. Thirdly, Swedish partners complain due to a very short time to write Letters of intent or full applications, and especially when Sida is suggesting revisions of plans and ideas.
- The time-consuming dimension is complex. The process as such is perceived as very long, while some steps (e.g. revision of applications) could be perceived as too much up-speeded and stressful. The time for partner search in Sweden could also be time-consuming and prolonged for partners from beneficiary countries and universities.
- In spite of elaborated instructions, there has been some uncertainty in the process and a number of hidden day to day decisions, need for coordinating and feedback from different levels, which is also time consuming. A relevant question is if it would have been possible to test and develop the design more on beforehand and some uncertainties being solved.
Critical comments from the Scientific Evaluation Committee on formal and functional issues

- There is an extensive criticism of the objectives, function and forms of the work by the Scientific Evaluation Committee (SEC). The members highlight shortages on the formal regulation, administrative support and issues related to publicity and privacy, records and documentation, lack of forms and structures of LoI and full applications (as lengths of application, CV etc.). Some SEC members also mention the high work load and need to print out extensive texts (1500 pages), too long resumes, lack of track records on various previous efforts.
- Furthermore, SEC members point at the unclear relation to Sida and Sida Research Council and the fact that some projects, not being recommended by SEC, still proceed in the Sida internal priorities and get support. Finally, SEC members stress the need for more feedback and dialogue with Sida on the mission, role, tasks and working forms of the Scientific Evaluation Committee, SEC and the division of work between Sida Research Council.

Challenges in the new open, transparent and competitive model:

- Concept notes, CN have acted as a stimulus and catalyst for institutional learning and capacity development and research issues being more visible on the academic arena both inside and outside the department or the university.
- CN have also functioned as a bridge for building partnership by stimulating contacts and scientific encounters with committed research departments in Sweden.
- All in all, the new model has been accepted and opens up more opportunities for researchers in partner countries to apply for support, but also at the cost of more rejections due to budget constraints and Sida policies’ priorities and quality assurance matters.

Strong and weak parts of Letters of Intent and Full applications

- The persons being interviewed gave various comments on the role of LoI and Full applications. One SEC member pointed at the fact that LoI and full application were too similar and that the LoI could be shortened. Others stressed the value of LoI as it functioned as an integration platform between partners in Sweden and recipient countries, which is important when you want to match research interests.
- The criteria used for the assessment process are too complex and detailed and could be organized in the form of clusters or more general categories. The participation in the process and the meetings between different cultures, academic environments, and commitment to change and capacity development has been a positive mutual learning experience and feedback in the job.
- It is an urgent need to specify instructions, forms and structures of Letters of Intent, full applications and the character of an application form as well as specification of CV and other information. Today, the RTP application system might be too generous with regard to lengths of documents, number of pages, summary, CV and lists of publications etc. There is an overload of background information but less focus on
which scientific issues to be answered, and if methods, infrastructure and empirical sources are able to answer the questions.

Is the new model cost-efficient?

- On a more general level, it is hard to keep costs down without sacrificing quality. The introduction of an open, transparent and competitive process is a form of institutional learning, with higher introduction costs but more reasonable costs when the model is implemented. It is evident, however, that there is a dynamic tension between quality promotion and capacity building on the one hand and need for simplification and efficient administrative routines on the other.
- The lack of an integrated and digital model for introduction of calls, project applications, assessment process and recommendations will increase the administrative costs and make the system less efficient, especially if there are a growing number of applications. A more developed system of application with integrated ICT-support would certainly facilitate the process and also, in the long run cut costs.
- The cost for SEC and the research administration at UHR seems reasonable, but it also depends of the institutional structure and competence profile of the agency. Normally, a research administrator could manage two or three peer review committees at a research funder or research council with efficient ICT-tools and administrative support. In the absence of this supportive environment, the work load increases for the research administrator. It is more difficult to assess administrative cost in the internal Sida administration, where a number of experts are involved and also the negotiation and monitoring processes that follow at the local level.

Is it possible to shorten the process without losing quality?

- To answer this question one needs to look at different parts of the RTP-application process and see how they could be shortened. The implementation process for concept notes cannot be too rapidly organized. It has to develop within the context of research capacity development at the targeted university and could take between one to two years. In a future context, however concept notes or strategic university plans will be a more normal activity for the university leadership: a process that might be renewed every fourth or fifth year. The promotion of strategic plans for higher education and research in partner countries has to interact with the development of research politics on a national level. At best, Sida initiatives could take the form of catalysts in this process.
- There are various ways to shorten the process, but it is also important to consider what would be the impact of the changes of procedures, administrative routines, and quality issues. In principle, there are two ways to discuss simplification and make the process shorter. The first is to cut steps in the process from calls to contracts, and the second one is to develop parallel processes with regard to the scientific evaluation and internal Sida policy control. The simplest way to cut the process is to skip the Letter of Intent and only demand a full application, which could be assessed in two steps by the
Scientific Evaluation Committee. It seems likely however, that the primary function of LoI is to define the joint research platform, which is an important part of the process. The final part of the report, however, provides some recommendations on simplification and shortening of the process.

- Letters of Intent have taken the form of a pre-application and not a short document presenting research ideas. A possible modification would be that the LoI should be much shorter and illuminate policy ideas and fields of research that could be tested in possible full applications. One change in the selection process might be that Sida is making an assessment of LoI from a policy relevance point of view, and decide which applicants could send in their full applications to be assessed by the Scientific Evaluation Committee, SEC (Sida assessment of the Letters of Intent were accepted, SEC could have an in-depth look at the full applications in order to save time).
- The other way is to shorten the internal Sida process or to have two processes in parallel, thus saving time for SECs review, selection and recommendation to Sida. It is necessary to look at possibilities to tighten up Sida's internal research administration and implementation process and perhaps reduce the time loops substantially. A way to deal with these issues is to set up a time frame: for example, that the time between the announcement and submit the application must fulfill certain time frames.
- Finally, the assessment and quality assurance process could be shortened if the selection and promotion of Letters of Intent would take place in the beneficiary country by introducing a model of self-evaluation of research ideas, and a more strict choice of which full applications the targeted university wants to submit to Sida to be assessed by the Scientific Evaluation Committee, SEC.

**Broadening of programme, local ownership and spin-off effects**

- The initiative has been successful to include more environments in Sweden, Bolivia and Rwanda. In a Swedish context, there has been an increasing participation of regional university colleges and that some institutions have broadened their collaboration with other departments in the same field. One must also consider the pool of researchers in Sweden, who want to participate in the partnership building and research capacity development and their various constraints with regard to involvement in development research, capacity for research exchange and other research funders who might be more close to their core of research interests.
- On the other hand, it seems evident that departments which have a strong base in development research have partnerships with various Sida supported countries. The programme has also expanded the interest and involvement in the support receiving countries by the expansion of the programme as such and also stimulating other researchers at the targeted universities to participate.
- There is clear evidence that the ownership and commitment for the research training programme has increased substantially in the recipient countries. It is also obvious that there have been integrative mechanisms and organizational changes that have led to that the Sida support is reinforcing an ongoing process of research capacity building at government level or university level both in Bolivia and Rwanda.
• There are various spin-off effects both with regard to teaching and learning for doctoral students, new forms of collaboration between research teams in Sweden, Bolivia and Rwanda and finally, the synergy impact between the Sida programme and current changes at higher education and research level or new governmental policies.
• Other spin-off effects could be that the arena of and interest for bilateral capacity building projects have increased.

Division of work between SEC, Sida and Sida Research Council, SRC (see above)

• Sida should enter earlier in the process and make clear the relevance of selection of projects whose scientific quality was tested by SEC. As regards the research advisors, the coordination within Sida and locally should be enhanced (see above).
• It is important that the division of work between Sida Research Council, SRC and the Scientific Evaluation Committee, SEC is clarified, functional and tested in practice. The research council has a more general policy formation function, while the external Scientific Evaluation Committee has the role of assessing projects and programmes and making recommendations to Sida from a scientific quality point of view.
• Finally, SEC as well as the Swedish partners complain that they do not get enough and relevant information on budget issues.

Towards a sustainable, efficient and quality assuring model for Sida RTP programme

• The introduction of the new model of supporting research training and capacity building partnership can be seen as an interesting form of social innovations aiming at a learning organization promoting value creation in collaborative research exchange. There is no standard model for research financing and capacity building that can be used and elaborated in all countries taking part in Sida research capacity building programmes.
• The three step process of defining research needs and selecting programmes and projects to be financed (Concept notes, Letters of intent and full applications) has to be adapted to national, economic and institutional conditions as well as to character of university structure, departments, number of scholars and scientific traditions and incentives for research careers as well as capacities for local Ph.D.-training programmes.
• The current system of launching and evaluating capacity building, research training and further development of the sandwich model seems to be useful for countries without local Ph.D.-capacities or being far away from developing such capacity. In other countries, like Ethiopia, who do not favour the sandwich model, other financing and selection instruments might be used. In these cases one needs to get more accurate and inside information of the character of the research environment and models being used, which can be evaluated by a bilaterally composed quality assurance team.
• In addition, it might be necessary to adjunct a specific capacity development assessment team to the Scientific Evaluation Committee, with substantial knowledge about national contexts and local academic cultures in various recipient countries with regard to issues as management training, libraries, ICT, infrastructures etc.
Sida has a contract with the Swedish Council for Higher Education to monitor the selection of programmes and projects. The model used today has both advantages and problems and uncertainties that need to be subject to significant changes for the forthcoming work. The lack of an efficient digital application system and a database will make it quite difficult to follow the development over years to come, and especially in a context where the number of applications are increasing. Thus, in the long run, the SCHE collaboration might be vulnerable and create a lot of manual administration instead of using a modern digital system. Thus, there is a growing need to discuss how the future form of quality assessment, programme selection and monitoring can be developed.

The research training partnership with Bolivia and Rwanda has started in recent years with the first five years period and might be prolonged, if support is given from Sida. Considering the need for a sustainable administrative system over the coming years it is necessary to discuss if the Swedish Council for Higher Education, SCHE can guarantee a sustainable development of the system or if there is a need to find a new platform and monitoring agency.

General comments on the development of the sandwich model

- The sandwich model can still be seen as a successful and flexible prototype adapted to conditions in various countries but also to variations in academic culture between different disciplines. The long term goal is to develop and support local Ph.D.-programmes and one idea would be to elaborate contents and structures of the sandwich model that promote the development of local Ph.D.-programmes; e.g. to include a course package on supervision to all doctoral students that have finalized their doctoral degree.

- Increasing attention to regional cooperation is recommended. One solution would be that Sida develops a triple helix sandwich programme, in which doctoral students during their doctoral training in addition to visits in Sweden and applied field work at their home university, also could have courses or encounters with doctoral students in the same field but at different universities in the region.

- A major problem concerns the academic repatriation at the home university because of the fact that employees with new Ph.Ds. are expected to take part in teaching or administration. The need to create good conditions for research, when the doctoral degree is finalized, raises the need for Post doc research exchange programmes by giving young Ph.Ds. opportunities to take part in international conferences and increase options to publicize in different high ranked journals (which is taking place in some contexts) or to continue to visit and collaborate with research environments abroad.

Suggestions for future initiatives in research capacity partnership building

A major challenge in supporting research training and capacity building is the role of local ownership, academic empowerment of universities with weak scientific traditions in order to build internationally recognized academic environments. Some of the persons being interviewed raised the need for a stronger regional collaboration and pointed at the risk of
academic colonialism as well as strong donor dependence. Some of the suggestions below illustrate these challenges.

- **Support for the development of strong research teams.** In a long term perspective, the RTP model could be developed in different ways, but one of the core functions should be support to strong research teams.
- **Guest research positions for developing capacity.** Another way to strengthen the capacity is to announce the two-year (or flexible) visiting research fellow, where Swedish researchers (or other countries’) may act in a certain environment and strengthen it.
- **Enhanced collaboration University to University.** The issue of contact and interaction - University to University, should also be addressed.
- **Industrial PhD and collaboration with industry.** Test idea with industrial graduate students to adapt to the Third Generation Universities, 3GU and STI strategies.
- **The search process, competitive pressure, and early selection.** In the application process for support for Swedish university centers of excellence, each university was given a quota and needed do deal with their own internal priorities. Incentives for stronger prior selection of ideas and applications could have impact on the assessment and selection process in Sweden.
- **Sustainability and flexibility.** An interesting challenge is the trade-off between sustainability and flexibility. On the one hand, research partnership collaboration is a process over a long period of time, but on the other hand, one has to adapt to changing conditions at targeted universities (new pattern of donors, changing national politics, impact and result etc.).
- **Evaluation and monitoring.** Forms for track record should be developed and performance measures of capacity development evolve. The issue of ongoing evaluation and on-going evaluation may be interesting to try.
- **Coordination between the various components** of the programme and of equal levels of the process is flawed. A major challenge is how coordination can be strengthened both at Sida and locally.

**Conceptual structure for renewing the RTP administration**

With respect to these goals, five models are discussed below. The first model is the *open, transparent and competitive call* which now is in operation in Bolivia and Rwanda and will continue to be applied in other countries, primarily in East Africa. This model comprises all three steps with concept note, letter of intent and full application; a process that might take between two or three years. An alternative to this model is a *Compressed and simplified model* by reducing the number of steps in research administration and quality assessment. The *Reclaim ownership model* can be managed by Sida giving quotas for the number of applications and ideas that might be tested in Sweden by the Scientific Evaluation Committee. The *level separated model* is binary mission focusing university to university collaboration on one hand and research teams and individual careers on the other. Finally, the *Honest broker model* is more concerned with talent matching and does not have to imply open calls.
### Overview of models of RTP-funding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Model/Indicator</th>
<th>Open, Transparent &amp; competitive call model</th>
<th>Compressed &amp; simplified model</th>
<th>Reclaim ownership model</th>
<th>Level separated model</th>
<th>Honest broker model</th>
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<td>Prior policy decision by</td>
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<td>University agreements and RTP partnership</td>
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<td>Two different calls – for university strategies and for RTP</td>
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<td>Policy focus selection</td>
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<td>SEC</td>
<td>Quotas for pre-selection/SEC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time span</td>
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<td>1-2 years</td>
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<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<td>Quality assurance</td>
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<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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One of the main tasks of the evaluation has been to analyze the model of research funding including policy formulation and concept notes, open calls and submitting applications (including Letters of Intent), the scientific selection and the internal screening and assessment from Sida policy point of views. An effort to describe and analyze various models is presented above.
Recommendation for Sida:

- The open, transparent and competitive model has many benefits, but also high administrative and social costs due to various steps of decision and various steps from ideas to financing and start of the research process. In order to simplify the model and shorten the process it is recommended to apply for a combination of the models above.

- Sida should explore if it is possible to simplify the process by cutting one or two of the applications steps. The concept notes could be kept as a strategy document and plays an important role for the learning process to become a university with a research profile. Letters of Intent seem to be a pre-application and its main function is to connect partners in Sweden and partner countries. Sida could test the possibility of replacing letters of intent with bilateral planning workshops in recipient countries.

- In the “old” talent matching and honest brokers’ model it was possible to control the number of partners and applicants. The new open and transparent model might lead to a significant expansion of research ideas and applications. To set some restrictions on numbers of projects being evaluated, Sida could introduce a quota system which will have impact that a first selection has to be done in the recipient country.

- The RTP administration process has an internal and an external part as seen from a Sida perspective. The internal part concerns decisions to open or start a programme in the beginning of the process and assessment, monitoring and evaluation when the programme is implemented. The purpose of the internal decisions within Sida has to do with the integration or research policies in a development context. Considerations are given both to policy dimensions as gender, climate and environment and democracy and human rights on the one hand and management, efficiency, legal aspects and measures against corruption on the other. The impact of all objectives is a very complex decision structure. Core issues balanced are risks and control towards ownership and trust. One policy challenge to be discussed is to what extent the RTP programme should be autonomous in relation to the development goals.

- Local ownership, trust and self-control are central dimensions of the different models. Sida should develop more tools to support local ownership to different groups and constituencies. Doctoral candidates could form a Sida Junior Faculty at the universities in consideration. Incentives for international publishing should be given to research teams. The ownership at university level can be facilitated by processes of strategic analysis and self-evaluation. A benchmarking model in collaboration with universities or parts of universities in the region could also be enhanced.
PART 1: EVALUATING RESEARCH CAPACITY BUILDING – A BACKGROUND

1. The shifting global character of higher education and research.

Research is often the weakest and most neglected component of higher education in Africa. Yet, networks of researchers have emerged as crucial vehicles for acquiring knowledge from global sources, enhancing understanding of global phenomena and developing solutions to local problems. Research is key if Africa is to make significant and recognized contributions to regional and global knowledge, and thus to attract students, researchers and resources. Developing a meaningful and comprehensive research capacity must therefore be a core element of any university’s globalization strategy.3

The challenges and barriers to building research capacity in LMC-countries is the focus of this report. On a more specific level, the purpose is to describe and evaluate the process of launching and monitoring the Sida Research Training and Capacity Building Partnership programme with special reference to Bolivia and Rwanda that started in 2010, but also to include observations and reflections on the development in Ethiopia, Tanzania, Mozambique and Uganda. Capacity building is a core policy concept for Sida and research capacity should be seen as an integrative aspect of the broader perspectives on development aid. The above quote from Higher Education and Globalization. Challenges, Threats and Opportunities (Teferra & Greijn, 2010) highlights central dimensions of this challenge.

Global investments in higher education and science, technology and innovations have become increasingly important in public policies over the last decades. Universities have traditionally played an important role for education and cultivation in society as well as for producing new knowledge through scientific investigations and research. Expansion of higher education towards universal access and an increasing share of university graduates on the labour market, have been perceived as tools for economic, social and cultural development. Scientific research is no more only seen as an independent and critical voice in society, but more and more as a motor of change and as a learning system promoting social and economic development. Higher education and research have shifted from being invisible colleges or hidden academic structures for an elite segment of society to more open, globally active and competitive institutions. Higher education and research have also been used as policy instruments for capacity building in development countries over the last decades. In a more political context the field of science diplomacy is becoming more commonly used in the international policy debate.

The traditional knowledge gap between North and South with regard to higher education and research has shifted over the years. Some countries have developed more advanced forms of higher education, science and technology, while others still are lagging behind. A few years ago, the constellation of the BRIC-countries, Brazil, Russia, India and China was seen as a new challenge to international science frontiers, and especially India and China playing in the same academic division in the global knowledge society as some traditional OECD-countries. In spite of a flourishing market of international organizations, regional networks and coalitions and donors’ collaborations on higher education and research in LMC-countries, there is still a long way to go to bridge the global knowledge divide. The promotion of research capacity development in LMC-countries has to build on the quality of the systems of basic and higher education. Investments in general education and higher education are necessary prerequisites for strengthening research capacity at universities and other institutions of higher education.

The views of how higher education and research contribute to social, economic and cultural development have shifted over the last decades. The traditional mode 1 approach where universities produce knowledge to be used in society is continuously challenged by mode 2 approach with more open crossroads between higher education, research and society as well as other patterns of social innovations. Policy concepts as triple helix or the knowledge triangle, where higher education interacts with research and technology on the one hand, and business and public sector on the other, are becoming increasingly common (quote below).4

_The concept of the knowledge triangle relates to the need for improving the impact of investments in the three forms of activity – education, research and innovation – by systemic and continuous interaction._

During recent years a new metaphor has been launched to describe the development of universities – 3GU – a third generation university. New institutional networks are built between universities and the enterprise sector (quote below).5

_Universities are changing in a fundamental way, moving from the model of the science-based university that emerged after the Napoleonic period into what we will call the Third Generation University or 3GU for short. Several forces propel this change. The first is that top universities that want to continue carrying out cutting-edge scientific research are seeking_

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alternative funding as the cost of such research has risen above the budgets that
governments can provide.

There are other driving forces behind this development such as enterprises out-sourcing
research capacity, the growing importance of globalization of worldwide student markets,
the strong policy push from governments to “see universities as incubators of new science
or technology based commercial activities, growing horizons for interdisciplinary
collaboration, new and more targeted programmes for the best and elitist students, and
finally, the increasing role of government financed research and policy institute”. The
dynamic transformation of the systems of higher education and research focusing on
research excellence and the top student on a global learning market, also have
fundamental repercussions on the capacity building and investments in higher education
and research in LMC-countries. The rapid development of the knowledge society has
major impact on social, economic and cultural development but it can also contribute to
increase the knowledge gap and the scientific divide between the front runners and the
countries lagging behind.

Bridging the knowledge divide – contexts for capacity building

There is no quick fix in building research capacity in developing countries. The new
highway to the global knowledge society is to create science parks and research institutes
connected with leading research environments in other countries. The investments in
separate research institutes or centers or science and technology parks have to be related
to the share of higher educated individuals in the country as well as the number of
holders of doctoral degrees. A crucial policy choice concerns national priorities of which
kind of system for higher education and research would be promoted. Is it a dual system
with strict borderlines between higher education and research in the form of separate
institutes? Or should the functions of research in the form of higher education, research
and public involvement, the so called third task, be integrated in a more comprehensive
model.

Is it still possible to design a national model for higher education and research in times
when we are moving from emerging national systems to global knowledge to markets
with a growing number of private universities and institutions of higher education?
Independent of what development is characterizing a specific country in the South, and
what forms of public private partnerships that are developed; a major mission is to give
place both for higher education at various levels but also promotion of basic research as
well as investment in science technology and society. Thus, there is no general and
perfect model for research capacity building. It has to be adapted to the national
conditions, economy and development, and systems of higher education and research.
The risks of academic colonialism discussed some decades ago are today more urgent to
deal with in the new discourse on post-colonial scientific patterns. The major challenge in
a new global knowledge deal is to guarantee and respect national or local ownership of
higher education and research and, at the same time, strive for capacity building, for
excellence and increasing international collaboration. The growing importance of regional networks and regional collaboration is discussed in Africa, in Asia as well as in Latin America. One such example is initiatives by Saura – Southern African Regional Universities Association – the report *Doctoral Education. Renewing the Academy*. Hlengiwe Mkhize, Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, South Africa gave these reflections on the increasing need for regional cooperation in the future.

SARUA'S revitalization of higher education in Southern Africa should receive various regional governments’ support, as the higher education sector, across the SADC region, should be in the forefront in promoting regional co-operation and partnerships between and amongst universities, with particular reference to the need for growth in quality doctoral education throughout the region. For us to dismantle colonial walls and to assist our citizens to be conscious of the need to decolonize their minds, to enlighten so to say, we should unreservedly make huge investments in developing the kind of intellectuals who will steer the agenda for change wherever they are.

The gaps between performance indicators for universities in the North and in the South could be quite significant, but one must also consider that there are major variations within regions and countries. If we take the simple indicator of published articles, the Unesco Science Report in 2010 shows striking differences between regions and countries, and a low level of scientific publications also reflects the existence of weak universities without capacity for research. The World Social Science Report, 2010, *Knowledge divides* was a good illustration of enormous differences between continents, regions and nations with regard to access to critical social science research. Almost every university wants to be world class, but it is extremely difficult to acquire and keep a good position at that scale if you start from a very weak position in the global academic society.

Thus capacity building is a grand challenge in itself like climate, energy, health or peace. If people are not capable of solving problems or if scientific institutions are not able to produce new, exploring and creative research, the possibilities to meet the grand challenges will be restricted or rejected.

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7 According to Unesco 2010 Science Report the number of scientific publications 2008 were for Bolivia 175, Ethiopia 364, Mozambique 76, Rwanda 23, Tanzania 376 and Uganda 354 in comparison with 272 879 for USA and 16068 for Sweden. In Latin America, only Brazil, Argentina and Mexico are reaching comparable figures and in Sub-Saharan countries only Nigeria 1 745 and South Africa 5 248 stands out with a relatively high publication score. The assessment is built on Web of Science and Thomson Reuters, which of course excludes a number of publications and reports in various languages and not available in these sources.
2. Sida support to development research in transition

As access to scientifically based development knowledge grows in importance, both the lack of sufficient resources for research in developing countries and the inadequate production of research of a high standard and of relevance to developing countries become increasingly serious problems. This policy, therefore, is based on an understanding that access to scientifically based knowledge is an important condition for poverty reducing development in the developing countries.9

Introductory comments on research capacity building in LMC-countries

The challenges and barriers to building research capacity in LMC-countries is the focus of this report. On a more specific level, the purpose is to describe and evaluate the process of launching and monitoring the Sida Research Training and Partnership Programme with special reference to Bolivia and Rwanda started in 2010. The evaluation comprises more than thirty interviews with staff at Sida and at Swedish Embassies, the external scientific evaluation committee, SEC, and the programme administrator at the Swedish Council for Higher Education, partners in Sweden, Bolivia and Rwanda as well as the chair of Sida Research Council and a few other persons of relevance for the evaluation. Sida documents and other policy relevant texts have been screened as well as examples of the international research and debate concerning research capacity building.

Traditionally, Sida’s support to research training and capacity building has been an ad hoc talent matching model between targeted universities and environments in Africa, Asia or Latin America and scholars mainly from Swedish universities.10 Sida has chosen to develop contacts with universities in LMC-countries, which could form platforms of international exchange through external doctoral training programmes or other forms of research collaboration. The ad hoc model has had advantages and disadvantages. It could contribute to closer relations between specific research environments in Sweden and in partner countries and the social and administrative costs could be limited. The ad hoc and talent matching model has, however, led to that several researchers or research environments were excluded from the collaboration and did not have access to information or calls. The major change is that the “new” model implies a more integrated form of open, transparent and competitive calls but it can also be seen as an elaboration of the previous talent matching model. Another

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major change is that Sida research officers, in most cases, are working from the Swedish Embassies and having a mixed function as coordinators, coaches and controllers.

The innovative part of the new model is that the targeted universities are stimulated to write concept notes taking the form of a strategic development plan for research areas of high local policy relevance at university or faculty level. The new system is also moving closer to the prevailing forms of research funding where the applications are submitted and assessed in open competition by a scientific peer review committee, the external Scientific Evaluation Committee, SEC. To some extent, there are similarities with the transformation of the Swedish Work Environment Fund to the Swedish Council for Working Life Research in Mid 90s. In the former system, the research administrators had a strong position together with the selected external experts to assess applications. In the latter system, the position of the research administrator shifted from being programme administrators to an administrative support for the Scientific Evaluation Committee. The analogy is not complete, however, but it touches upon that an external scientific evaluation team also implies changes in the work organization as such.

The “new” model is founded in Sida policy of both promoting open and competitive calls and local ownership of the research capacity process; two goals that might not be contradictory, but could create tensions in the applications and assessment process. This goal conflict did not exist in the old model, where Sida staff more functioned as brokers in a process of talent matching and collaborative academic work. Both models have to operate in a context of an asymmetric knowledge relation between Swedish partners and partners in recipient countries not having capacity for doctoral degrees at universities, which mainly were teaching universities with weak or fragmented research capacity.

It is not, however, a totally open model where any scholar or university could apply. Sida identifies usually one university in the recipient country that could be partner in a capacity building programme with a Swedish research department. The search for Swedish partners is supported by Sida in a two way process where Sida invites researchers from partner countries to visit Sweden and to meet Swedish researchers at different universities or supporting Swedish scholars to visit partner countries. The role of Swedish partners is to make a joint application (both Letter of Intent and, if supported, a full application) with researchers from receiving universities or university departments. The partnership model contains preparatory meetings in order to form a joint platform for research exchange and collaboration. It is the targeted university institutions in the receiving country that formally sends the application to Sida (via scientific assessment administered by the Swedish Council for Higher Education Council/SCHE).

The objective of this evaluation has been to analyze if the new model worked well and if there are needs of modifications and observations for further development. Today research policy, governance and financing are a research and evaluation field in its own right. As part of this broader field, special attention has been focused on models of assessing scientific quality and policy relevance through peer reviewing, public panels or bibliometric models.
Partly the discussion concerns simplifications with regard to a more coherent and integrated administrative regulation, cost calculation, models of control and evaluation; partly its focus is on how the process from call to contract could be shortened and simplified without losing the quality dimension (time for call to application, time for scientific and policy evaluation, time for final regulation, control and contracts etc.). The simplification challenge lies in a functional interplay between clear objectives, administrative facilitation, adequate methods of quality assessment and formal regulation. This is a challenge Sida is sharing with most other research funders both from research councils or sectorial agencies.

**Research funding institutions – top down, bottom up and principal agent models**

The models and tools of research funding vary significantly both in Sweden and abroad. One divide goes between pure research councils (Swedish Research Council, European Research Council etc.) that apply the genuine form of open blue sky research with high quality applications to be assessed in competition with other applicants and sectorial research funders. The sectorial research agencies’ purposes are to promote research and knowledge development in a particular sectorial field and support the development of a particular societal sector or political domain. Thus, the portfolios of research funding instruments among Swedish funders are characterized by a substantial variation. Support for research can be described as a staircase from projects, programmes, research teams over centers to strategic investments. Looking back, Swedish research policies have moved from graduate schools (forskarskolor) 2000/01, centers of excellence 2004/05, strategic investments 2008/09 and finally, a strong policy focus on individual scholars and top scientist 2012/13.

Grants for individual scholars in the form of post doc missions or career support for top scientists are also common. Another substantial investment during the last decade, both in Sweden and in the EU, is the powerful expansion of support to research infrastructures. A central challenge for all research funders, independent of the position between pure research councils and sectorial agencies, is the choice of an adequate portfolio of grant support forms as well as adequate, transparent, efficient and quality oriented forms of selecting the best projects. There are various theoretical models to describe research funding organizations. Concepts as social innovations, intervention studies or implementation processes are frequently used. A theoretical model used in this context is the principal agent model, which belongs to the rational choice and transaction cost paradigm.\(^\text{11}\)

On the basis of a study of research funding, the Stellenbosch team identified six typical configurations (even “models”) of science granting agencies in SSA.\(^\text{12}\) They labelled them:

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The paradigm principal-agent model  
The sector-differentiated principal-agent model  
The multiple principal-agent model  
The embedded principal-agent model  
The sector-differentiated embedded principal agent model  
The hybrid embedded principal agent model (the embedded case together with the green part of the multiple-principal agent model)

The differences between these models are discussed in detail in the main report. In summary, these differences can be traced to the following factors: (1) the different histories of science and colonial legacies in the countries; (2) the differential impact of sector-based funding agencies – especially in agriculture and health in some countries; but ultimately, (3) different approaches to the governance of science and innovation in the different countries. In a principal agent perspective it is the Swedish Government and the Parliament who form the principal, while Sida is an agent to implement government policies. It is not a genuine principal agent model, but a combined system where the Swedish Higher Education Council functions as an intermediating institution. Major actors in the model are also universities, research environments and researchers in Sweden and in partnership countries.

**Sida development research as capacity support**

The overall objective of the research support is *to strengthen and improve research of relevance to the fight against poverty in developing countries.*

To achieve the overall objective, Sweden’s development research policy channeled by Sida focusses on three specific areas:

- Research capacity building in developing countries and regions
- Research of relevance to developing countries
- Swedish research of relevance to developing countries

Sida’s strong and committed involvement in research capacity building in developing countries has been going on for almost four decades, initially through SAREC and from 1995 by Sida when SAREC was integrated in the agency. The institutional patterns of research support have varied over the years. Research capacity building has been supported by various bilateral collaborations with different countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

One idea tested has been to support the development, operations and financing of national research councils. This model has been explored by Sida over the years with various results in different countries. Another way is to give support to specific universities with enough

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13 What is meant by a developing country is characterized by an increasing vagueness in definition, but also in content as the socio-economic transformation leads to that many countries no more can be seen as developing countries. This transformation has resulted in a reorientation of Sida support over the years.
research and management capacity to start the long march towards being a competitive regional actor in the research market. Within a university context, it is also common to support capacity building in certain fields of research or selected departments. Finally, support and grants can be given to individual scholars to promote their academic career by getting a doctoral degree. Many of these initiatives are combined with partnership with universities and institutions of higher education in Sweden. With regard to bilateral research capacity building, Sida has moved from supporting individual doctoral programmes to capacity building on institutional level.

Support to research of relevance to developing countries is usually transferred through international organizations or to targeted contributions to international research initiatives at regional institutes or research centers. With respect to Swedish research of relevance for developing countries collaboration has recently been started between Sida and the Swedish Research Council. Another challenge lies in the creation and support of a Swedish research community on “development studies” unifying scholars from various scientific fields and disciplines. During recent years the Sida research and capacity building portfolio also comprises efforts to build bridges between research and innovations. The triple helix metaphor and new clusters between research, public agencies and business and enterprises are more commonly used.

Capacity building is a core policy concept for Sida and it contains various fields as infrastructure, public administration, health promotion, measures towards discrimination and inequalities in society, human rights and gender issues, water supply etc. Capacity building in research is surrounded by another context than capacity for transport, roads and communication. Research capacity building is a process that has to operate over a longer period of time and where the indicators of result and impact could be more difficult to identify and assess. Research capacity building is an ongoing process at various scientific levels in most universities and institutions of higher education. Various indicators – hard or soft – show that nations, regions and universities and higher education institutions have acquired relative positions if one uses internationally comparative indicators.

**From connecting research partners to open, transparent and competitive calls**

Prior to 2010 the Swedish government’s policy on development research was channeled through the agency’s instruction and the appropriation letters. From 2010 and onwards the steering through instruction and appropriation letters has been strengthened by a new research strategy for 2010 – 2014. A new strategy is anticipated in the Government office.15

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14 This major component of Sida research strategy has been recently evaluated, mainly the period before the reorganization. See Felleson, Måns & Hårsmar, Mats (2013) Review of Sida’s Programme for Development Research. Final Report, 2013:46, Sida Decentralised Evaluation.

A central priority in supporting research and capacity building in developing countries has been the Bilateral Research Training Partnership Programme, which is designed as an integral part of institutional research capacity strengthening. Various models have been explored over the years to start to build research capacity in countries with high levels of poverty and inequalities in society as well as low general education and public health conditions. The strategy has been to focus on one or a couple of universities in the country that could be seen as a building platform for development of research capacity. As many universities in developing countries mainly had a teaching function, the research capacity was in many cases very low.

Thus, during the first years of the bilateral research capacity support, the model chosen was to give candidates from universities in some developing countries (e.g. Ethiopia, Tanzania, Mozambique, countries in Central America) the possibility to get a doctoral degree in Sweden. After some years the sandwich model was launched as the standard solution, by combining field work in the home country with academic training in Sweden. The sandwich model has over the years been quite successful with regard to volume of Ph.D. candidates and doctoral degrees, but it has also been subject to problems and new challenges.16

As research funder Sida has used various models of financing. Swedish research of relevance for developing countries has been supported in a model of open call and competition and being peer-reviewed and assessed by using internationally well renowned scholars. The bilateral research support has been channeled through a brokerage or negotiation model, where Sida as a research funder decides which universities and research environments in the developing countries could build partnerships with research environments at Swedish universities. This grant allocation process can be characterized as a form of negotiation within certain economic frames, regulations and agreements. In 2009 and 2010, a policy discussion started within Sida in order to apply the idea of an open, transparent and competitive model in the programme for research training partnership. The new model for Research Training Partnership with Bolivia and Rwanda was decided in 2010 and fully implemented in 2012. The adjustment of the research training partnership programme to standard models of research funding was supported by the Government’s new research strategy for Sida 2010 to 2014. The core idea of the new system is reflected in this quote from the research strategy.17

Calls for funding for research and admission to postgraduate studies are both to be advertised competitively and to be subject to quality control in accordance with prevailing academic principles.

The new strategy comprised a shifting paradigm in Sida support to bilateral research capacity building in some developing countries. Traditionally, research capacity building has been of

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an ad hoc model of matching research environments in Africa, Asia or Latin America with scholars from Sweden. Sida has developed contacts with universities in developing countries, which have some embryos to research environments that could form a platform of international exchange through external doctoral training programmes or other forms of collaboration. The ad hoc model has had advantages and disadvantages. Closer relations can be developed between specific research environments in Sweden and partner countries and the administrative costs could be limited. The talent matching model, on the other hand, leads to that other researchers can be excluded or not having access to information or participation in the research collaboration.

The “new” model is founded in Sida values of promoting local ownership of the research capacity process, which calls for a knowledge dialogue rather than one-sided scientific domination. In this respect there is no difference between the “old” and the “new” model. In both cases Sida will identify a university in a LMC country that could be partner in a capacity building programme with a Swedish research department. It is the targeted university institutions in the receiving country that formally send the application to Sida (SCHE) and Sweden. Researchers from both countries can travel with or without support from Sida.

There are also grants available for visits in both ways. Sida could also invite researchers from partner countries to visit Sweden and to meet Swedish researchers at different universities. In other cases Swedish researchers visit partnership universities on their own cost. The role of Swedish partners is to make a joint application with researchers from receiving departments. It is not formally a procurement model, but more a negotiated commission or task. Another difference between the “new” and “old” model is the use of concept notes as a strategic model from the university to make a long term oriented plan. The agreement between Swedish researchers and researchers in partner countries is shown and realized in a Letter of Intent that will be assessed by the Scientific Evaluation Committee. The model has also a decentralized research administrative function as the research advisors, at least in Africa, work at the Swedish Embassy.
3. Simplification and transaction costs in bilateral research support

The process of research administration is complicated in international collaboration in development research. The challenges and problems are not only found in organizational and administrative cultures but also to what extent a modern ICT-based system of research administration is used. Another challenge lies in the ambition to develop a coherent and integrated system that can be used for various research funders. One such example is Prisma, which will be launched from the Swedish Research Council, Forte and Formas, from the beginning of 2015.\(^\text{18}\)

*Prisma is Fortes, Formas and the Swedish Research Council application and case management systems. Here you as researchers apply for grants and manage your granted funds. If you participate in the review process, you will find all information about your review panel here. As applicants and reviewers, you create a personal account in which your information is stored. The goal of Prisma is to simplify for applicants, reviewers and administrating organisations (the organisation that manages the granted funds for a project) to perform the tasks related to applications to the three research councils.*

In 2010, the Swedish Research Council, VR commissioned a comparative study of 25 research funding agencies in 16 countries.\(^\text{19}\) All funders apply peer review to assess scientific quality, but have developed different methods for the reviewing process. VR has chosen to highlight the approaches and elements that we believe might be of interest to consider when re-engineering the reviewing process of the Swedish Research Council. The reflections of the report are also to some extent valid in the discussion of development research and bilateral cooperation. The report identified a number of factors central to the efficiency of a reviewing process:

1. The internal organization for the proposal reviewing process
2. Consider measures to reduce the number of proposals
   i. Review the rules and conditions for proposals concerning project funding and positions
   ii. Introduce longer funding terms and larger project grants
   iii. Review the guidelines for re-application when a project proposal is rejected
3. Open calls (submit at any time) reduce the number of proposals and time of decision but also help to balance the work load of the administration, the reviewers and the applicants
4. A review model, with fewer and wider panels or priority groups linked to groups of contracted reviewers (peer review college)
5. A pre-screening process that reduces the work load on reviewers and panels
6. An efficient IT-system with integrated functions to support management, reviewers and applicants, and the use of techniques such as video and telephone conferences in the review

\(^{18}\) See https://prisma.research.se/
http://vr.se/download/18.5dac704126af4b4be2800017024/Rapport
process
7 Clear instructions and rules for researchers and reviewers

Improvements in the dialogue with applicants during the reviewing process can also be:
8 Allow applicants to comment on reviewers’ comments before decision on funding or rejection
9 Detailed feedback to applicants on the outcome of the review

These dimensions are also in various contexts valid for the Sida RTP programme, but the Sida research capacity partnership programme is more complex and need to coordinate more interests and quality dimensions. The internal organization of the review process has been covered in this evaluation. The question of reducing the number of applications has been touched upon in the suggestion to use quota systems and stronger pre-selection on the national level in partnership countries. The time of grants are also of importance – longer grants reduce the administrative cost but do not include various forms of flexibility and adaptation to new circumstances.

Open and continuous calls might be more applicable in a national context, while the strengths of the Sida RTP programme are its enduring and long term orientation. Another tool to be used is pre-screening in various forms. The use of a modern ICT-system, which has been mentioned before, is a crucial component for efficient research administration as well as the clarity of instructions for reviewers and researchers. It is also important to decide to what extent applicants can comment on the reviewer’s comments and what kind of feedback is possible as part of the decision process.

A major challenge in all systems of research administration is covered under the heading of simplification. The Royal Academy of Science, KVA in Sweden did a study of the time researchers spent on writing applications. The Academy screened 3500 applications during 2008 to the Swedish Research Council and found that the effort comprised at least 80 working years and that not one out of four received a grant. KVA argued that it was 60 years in vain and that one has to simplify the process without losing quality and objectivity in the assessment process.

The European Commission has initiated a study of simplification measures in its seventh framework programme.

Since the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) was launched, the Commission has been

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working on simplifying its administrative and financial rules, in order to make participation in the Framework Programme easier. 15 simplification measures were initially designed and implemented in this context, and to underline the importance which it attributes to the issue, the Commission has continued to review and act on simplification initiatives on an ongoing basis.

The Commission points at the risk that researchers in FP7 projects spend too much time, and budget on administering these projects, while this time and money could have been better spent on research activities. Furthermore, it states that researchers can be discouraged from taking part in the programme because of the complexity and administrative burden linked to participation in FP7. The administrative burden and the complexity of the process also concern the Sida RTP programme.

Following the study results, the most time-consuming project life cycle step for participants is project management, followed by application/selection, negotiation and audit in terms of administrative obligations (the time spent on scientific tasks is not included). Project coordinators spend almost as much time writing the application as they do managing the project.

It has not been possible within the Sida RTP evaluation to make in depth time accounting, but it is an issue to be discussed; what is a reasonable balance between management time and costs and time for research and capacity building. The Commission focused on the following indicators for simplification measures:

- time to grant;
- time to pay;
- time to reply;
- time to find the right information (calls, guidance documents, specific rules applying to these documents); and
- time spent by administrative officers (project/legal/financial) as well as coordinators and project partners in managing each step of the project life-cycle.

The administrative steps have been correlated with four phases in the project life cycle:

- Application (beneficiaries)/selection of proposals (Commission);
- Negotiation of contracts;
- Project management;
- Ex-post audits.

These four steps also reflect research administration related to the RTP programme. Finally, the simplification in Horizon 2020 has three overarching goals.22

• reduce the administrative burden and related costs of participants;
• speed up all processes of proposal and grant management and
• reduce the financial error rate.

Reducing transaction costs as a challenge in development research

Transaction costs is a common metaphor used in most policy fields or economic exchange models, and is also applicable to development research in general and the Sida RTP programme in particular. Lawson (2009) is discussing the definitions and challenges in an overview. 23

Table 2: Principal categories of Transaction Costs as applied to Aid processes

| Search Costs                      | ❖ The costs necessary for recipient governments/potential donors to identify appropriate development partners.  
|                                 | ❖ The costs (for donors) of identifying appropriate projects or programmes to fund and (for governments) of ‘selling’ project concepts to appropriate funders. |
| Bargaining & Decision Costs      | ❖ The costs of negotiating and agreeing financing agreements for projects and other operations.  
|                                 | ❖ The costs of defining and agreeing policy or outcome conditions for Development Policy Lending or Budget Support. |
| Policing & Enforcement Costs     | ❖ The costs to recipient governments of fulfilling requirements for project execution and monitoring using systems other than country systems.  
|                                 | ❖ The costs to recipient governments of monitoring donor commitments to predictable disbursements and other aspects of mutual accountability.  
|                                 | ❖ The costs to donor agencies of supervising adherence to project and programme conditions and of undertaking corrective actions where necessary. |

It emphasizes that the notion of ‘transaction costs’ is best considered as a metaphor, rather than as a precise measureable concept. Although transaction costs represent a real concept of demonstrable importance to the structuring of markets and organizations and to the efficiency of aid operations, this is not a concept which lends itself to easy measurement. This is in large part because investments in ‘transaction activities’ may generate benefits as well as costs.

Lawson quotes Coates et.al. in which transaction costs are defined as ‘the costs which allow an economic transaction to take place but which add nothing to the value of the transaction’. They are distinguished from the “production costs” which in the Sida RTP case concern costs for the partnership programme as such. Transaction costs can in this definition be broken down into “search costs”, “bargaining and decision costs” and “policing and enforcement costs”. According to Lawson “Transaction cost concepts can be applied fairly readily to the area of aid transactions (see Table above)”: 

The transaction costs are often an integrated part of the aid process as such and can be difficult to distinguish from the activities being supported, e.g. the research and capacity building process as such. It is, however, a major challenge in bilateral research training and capacity building partnership to reduce transaction costs both with regard to the costs of the research administration process as such but also the time costs and costs of uncertainties, goal conflicts, inefficient management processes or inadequate ICT systems. Transaction costs do also have to do with levels of regulation, trust and good collaborative climate both at policy level and in the research training partnership as such.

Transaction costs for development support in general and also development research also comprise a risk analysis. For Sida it relates both to thematic priorities as gender, environment and climate as well as democracy and human rights. Furthermore the risk analysis contains difficult issues management and control, legal regulations and mandates for contracts and decisions, risk of corruption and abuse of the support. Another aspect that makes the decision process more complex is that Sida can delegate to the Swedish Embassy in the recipient country to take necessary decisions for the final decision. A major challenge for Sida is too what extent the internal process can be shortened and be administrated in a more efficient way.
4. Situating the new Sida Research Training Partnership Programme

The general idea of the new “Research Training Partnership Programme as an integral part of Institutional Research Capacity Strengthening” is described below.24

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

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

Summary of approach
Depending on the situation at the target country university in question, postgraduate research training may aim directly at i) local PhD training, or ii) start/continue with masters training programmes for the recruitment of competent candidates or iii) continue sandwich training at Swedish universities coupled with establishment of local courses until the number of researchers allows the initiation of local research training. Comprehensive partnerships between individual universities or a consortium of universities and research institutions which contribute to the development of human resources and the research capacity of higher education institutions in target countries are encouraged to apply. Partnerships should aim for scaling up of the number of high quality research graduates in prioritised areas. Twinning of PhD students from target country and Swedish institutions is possible.

Funding of research supporting components that strengthen the conditions for carrying out research and research training, within the target country university (such as research management, library services including electronic scientific journals, Information Communication Technology etc.) are also encouraged.

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

The process
The starting point is the submission of a concept note from the target country University. The applications emanating from the priorities in the concept notes will go through a two stage process; 1. A letter of intent 2. Full proposals for approved letters of intent.

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The innovative approach is not only the open and transparent application in a competitive context, but also the introduction of the concept notes. By the use of the concept notes, the targeted university has to broaden its involvement and look into capacity development issues in a wider context. One of the main objectives is to respect local ownership of transparent processes for development of concept note. In order to address the needs of target countries, Sida has invited target country universities to submit concept notes that describe 10 year plans, aimed at implementing their institutional research strategic plans. The concept note should identify and define areas where needs for Masters and PhD trained people lie, as well as areas that need to be supported to provide the conditions for doing research. These areas should in turn address needs and priorities within national strategies on research and higher education.

Letters inviting selected target country universities to submit concept notes based on clear terms of reference. Recognizing the presence of diverse voices within a university, Sida requires target country universities to develop their concept note in a transparent and participatory way, which allows input from a broad base of stakeholders. Consequently, the target country universities are to describe the process used to develop the 10 year plan presented in the concept note. The concept notes should also outline timelines and provide a 5 year perspective of the plan. In addition, the concept note is expected to outline proposed strategies for diversification of funding for their 10 year plan, through other competitive grants, and local funding from their Governments.

Both old and new partnerships were welcomed in the two steps call of proposals. The idea was to open up for new research environments and support new partnerships. Letters of Intent and the Full application have been assessed by the Sida Research Training and Capacity Development Evaluation Committee comprised by leading scholars in Sweden and abroad as well as participants from research funders and international organizations. The partnerships should represent mutual benefit for both sides. The added value, both in the short and the long term, should be articulated.

Co-funding of target country universities’ concept note by other donors/funders of research capacity strengthening was welcomed and donors/funders could align with priorities of countries in which they work. If possible, their actions and procedures could harmonize in order to facilitate complementarity among funders and to reduce administrative overload for recipients of funding. Sida continues to aim to work closely with other donors/funders to improve the impact of investments in institutions and people. To this end, the concept notes are to be based on institutional research strategy/national strategy for development and be written in such a way that it may be presented to all potential funders.
5. The evaluation of scientific quality and capacity development

The evaluation of scientific excellence and social impact of research has been a growing industry during the last decades. Assessment of scientific quality is in operation during different phases of the research process. The first step is usually the identification of ideas and problems of scientific or policy-related relevance. The market of university strategies, visions for the future or other forms of policy documents is constantly growing. The modern form of academic drift is now being expressed through world class aspirations. There are today a number of systems of assessing the ranking of academic institutions on a scale of being internationally competitive.25

Scientific quality is difficult to define in a coherent manner and the operational definitions tend to be more common. Scientific quality is an intellectual process or academic products that have been ranked or assessed as excellent among leading scientists in the form of peer-reviewing. Scientific quality can also be assessed by various forms of metrics by counting the number of publications in reference journals, or even better, being quoted in these journals. The most common sources of evaluation of scientific excellence are to look for applications and publications. More important is to evaluate research teams, research environments, faculties or universities as a whole. The evaluation of a research environment has to consider issues of leadership, academic management or research administration as well as the openness of the academic culture, the critical discussion, the forms of good supervision of doctoral students as well as post doc options for younger researchers embarking on their academic career, gender equity as well as the dynamic interplay between research, research training and undergraduate teaching.

A major challenge is how to identify and assess different steps in capacity development in a university setting in LMC-countries mainly adapted to undergraduate teaching and moving into a process of institutional transformation to give more place and space for research. The Sida enduring support to research training partnership has shifted character over the years from focusing on individual research careers to institutional development and creation of strong and developing research environments. The focus on institutional capacity building also has to consider the research team as an axis in the research unit or research department. The funding of strong research teams should be a core priority in capacity developing models.

Sida’s support to research also has a strong policy goal to counteract poverty, promote a sustainable society, gender equity and social and technological innovation. A crucial aspect in this context is how one could define a policy relevant form of scientific excellence. The major challenge for universities and research institutions in LMC-countries is not just to adapt to the global competence and scientific publications race, but, and maybe with a stronger commitment, develop knowledge and knowledge systems that are useful and relevant for social and economic missions of their societies, academic environments and stakeholders and users of various kinds.

During recent decades new metaphors have been developed such as The Audit Society or the Evaluation Society and lately significant interests have been focused on the impact of New Public management and the role of measurement and indicator. Sida is part of this development and support the idea of RBM – result based management. Over the years, there has been an extensive number of evaluation of Sida policies, programmes and activities. A number of evaluations have also been commissioned with regard to the research and capacity building. Sida and SAREC support to Swedish development research was evaluated 2006.26 Eduards point at in his summary study that the operative goals were not measurable neither in quantitative or qualitative and they were not adequately followed up or related to Sweden’s Global Development policy. He also recommend Sida to intensify an experience- and result based policy development. Furthermore he stresses the role of concentration on investments and programmes in research training and capacity building. Eduards’ comments are interesting but also raises the question of to what extent research policies can be genuinely result based as it is not always possible to predict the outcome of a research programme what new knowledge is concerned. It can, of course, be result based if you focus on the production of a number of Ph.Ds within certain social or scientific fields.

The evaluation of the system for promoting research training partnership and capacity development calls for other approaches than evaluation of scientific quality. More generally, such an evaluation has to focus on the objectives, procedures, legal rules and agreements in the process and the managing of efficiency, equity and conflicts of interest in the process. It is also a question of the balance between control and trust in the context of strengthening ownership in the process.

6. Methodology and contextual constraints

The methodological approach of this review has been guided by the general terms of reference for the assignment (appendix). The review builds on primary and secondary data sources. Three main data collecting methods have been used: i) review of documentation, ii) review of statistics and iii) interviews.

Review of documentation: A number of relevant documents have been reviewed. In addition to government policy statements (appropriation letters and instructions, policies, strategies, bills and annual reports), annual reports for Sida and the research collaboration, attention has also been given to guidelines for concept notes, letters of intent and full application, decisions and documentation from the Sida Research Training and Capacity Development Evaluation Committee, Sida Research Council, result reports from researchers (projects, networks and planning grants), and documentation from other research councils and funders in Sweden and some abroad. Previously conducted evaluations have also been an important source and reference.

Review of statistics: Accessible statistics covering the period 2006 – 2012 operation of the programme have been reviewed and processed. Main statistical sources have been annual compilations of applicants and granted applications.

Interviews: Semi-structured interviews have been an important source of information for this review. Around thirty interviews have been conducted with key persons, identified on the basis of their role and function in relation to the Research Training Partnership Programme. Categories of key persons have been staff members at Sida, programme coordinators at the Swedish Council for Higher Education as well as members of the Evaluation Committee, and, finally research partners in Sweden, Bolivia and Rwanda (applicants and recipients of grants). The selection has been based on recommendations from staff at Sida Research unit in order to get a sample of various perspectives and views of the programme. The interviews have mainly been conducted by phone, Skype or over e-mail, and have been based on a set of semi-designed interview guides (see appendix). Follow ups by e-mail have been frequently used.

Limitations: It is important to underline that the evaluation does not focus on the impact of the Sida RTP Programme, but the process of launching, reviewing and monitoring the programme. Some of the questions raised in the ToR are difficult to answer, partly due to lack of documentation, partly that the major effect will appear after some years. Furthermore, the process is still in operation with Bolivia and Rwanda as starting point and continuing missions in Tanzania and Uganda. Another problem or challenge is to define the baseline in assessing the development. The new programme was initiated from 2010 and onwards and started 2012. For various reasons, 2006 has been chosen as the year of comparison. Finally it is a rather complex process involving a number of different constituencies, scientific evaluations and policy decision points including the final signing of agreements at local level in the concerned countries. There is no reason to apply for any bibliometric citation analysis in assessing the quality of the research as the output in the number of articles still is very small and/or have been reported by the targeted universities.
PART 2: REVIEWING THE RESEARCH TRAINING CAPACITY BUILDING PROCESS

7. General observations from Bolivia and Rwanda

According to the ToR, the evaluation task will summarize the results, and the experience is from the two pilots in terms of what has worked well, as well as less well, and which issues Sida must take into consideration (in the short and long term) to design a method that is transparent, efficient and guarantees the quality of the programme, which it supports.

Research Training Partnership in Bolivia – short background

Since 2000 the Sida department for research cooperation has supported research in Bolivia both centrally, through the Vice Ministry for Education, Science and Technology and locally, through two universities, Universidad Mayor de San Andrés in La Paz (UMSA) and Universidad Mayor de San Simón in Cochabamba (UMSS). Within each of the two universities, the support has been provided through a research fund and a grant for development of research management for each university, and through specific support for a number of individual research projects. These projects are supported through graduate training, laboratory upgrading, and provision of other research needs.

This first collaboration was evaluated in 2006. The evaluation team concluded "that a radical cultural change is urgently needed at Bolivian universities if they shall be able to effectively support the development of Bolivia this way. Especially the priority and incentives given to quality research and research-based education must be increased relative to the present dominant emphasis on traditional teaching."30

The current research training partnership with Bolivia has the aims to i) enhance the quality of education and research; ii) strengthen the skills in research management and research funds; iii) create an innovation platform; iv) building up the ICT network; v) improve library information systems; vi) strengthen institutional capacity at university and faculty level through PhD training of staff; and vii) build up analytical capacity in a broad composition of scientific areas from health science, natural science as well as social science and humanities.

In the Strategic Report for Bolivia 2010 Sida comments the development in a positive manner. The research capacity of the Sida-supported universities UMSS and UMSA has developed at a good pace as well as the research support infrastructure, such as ICT, access to electronic journals and acquisition of laboratory equipment. The latter, however, suffered some delays due to complicated regulatory framework for procurement. The management has improved the research departments and they have begun to manage all external research

30 The introduction of this section is built on the evaluation report as the quote; Sida Evaluation 06/12. Building Research Capacity in Bolivian Universities. Erik W. Thulstrup, Manuel Ramiro Muñoz and Jean-Jacques Decoster.
funding. The research results are communicated and used increasingly in the community in collaboration with other organizations / institutions. There are still needs for better systems of administration and university management. The reorganization of the government structure at university level also causes mobility of researchers as well as challenges of the administration and regulation.

The objectives of the Swedish research cooperation with Bolivia are to strengthen national knowledge and innovation and research within relevant areas of development. The partnership aims to increase the use of domestically generated analytical capacity and knowledge, and increased collaboration between the research community and the public sector, business and Civil Society. The research collaboration will focus on science, technology, medicine and social sciences, and the promotion of innovation and practical use of research findings. Women and men must be given equal opportunities in research collaboration.

Research Training Partnership in Rwanda – short background

Sweden supports the development and strengthening of national research capacity through institutional support to NUR since 2002. Funds for this are channeled directly to the University and Sweden is the most important external contributor to NUR. In addition, the Embassy has agreements with five Swedish academic institutions, facilitating PhD and Masters training through collaboration between researchers in Rwanda and Sweden. The share of publications in international journals is still modest but on rapid rise. Improved library services and ICT infrastructure supported by Sweden has been pivotal for the achievements.31

The decision of support to Research Training Partnership and capacity building in Rwanda is a prolongation of the agreement in force, which is a programme on higher education and research within the framework of Sweden’s bilateral collaboration with Rwanda. The new programme origins from a long term support to develop research capacity in Rwanda, which started in 2003. It runs from July 1st, 2013 to June 30th, 2018. During the first year of the programme, there has been a major merge of seven universities in Rwanda to the University of Rwanda, which gave quite a new context for the research capacity collaboration. The new RTP programme comprises thirteen sub-programmes between various departments at the University of Rwanda, UR and consortia of Swedish universities and higher education institutions. The sandwich model is used in many contexts.

In total, 18 doctoral students have finalized their studies from 2003 and 31 doctoral students continue from the first period. During the first programme year (2013/14) 28 new doctoral students were registered at Swedish universities and 49 new doctoral students will be enrolled in the same way during 2014/15. Research training at doctoral level is provided in many different fields as agriculture, health, mathematics and statistics, peace and conflict,

geographical information systems, ICT, environment, library and information science as well as research management.

Out of 15 PhD students who graduated so far through Swedish support, three presented their theses last year. The increasing number of PhD trained lecturers contributes to the quality of higher degree training and NUR 2010 has been accredited by the cabinet to graduate students in Master Programs (MSc) in Peace and Conflict; ICT and Applied Mathematics. To allow the Rwandan PhD graduates to pursue research when they return to NUR, Sweden has contributed to the establishment of a research fund managed by NUR. Fifty-two research grants have been awarded during the years 2007-2010. The number of finalized Ph.D.-candidates as of October 2014 is 23 of which eight finalized their doctoral studies during the academic year 2013/2014. During the same period there were 23 ongoing doctoral candidates and 32 new doctoral candidates were accepted. During 2013/2014, 26 research grants and 13 post doc grants were awarded from the central research fund.

The previous Sida support to the National University of Rwanda (NUR) was recently evaluated. The evaluation team found that NUR had made significant progress over the last few years, especially if one considers the low starting point after the genocide in 1994. There is also a strong commitment and focus in research strategy. The evaluators also report a significant increase in peer reviewed publications but not as strong impact on research utilization. In September 2013, the higher education system in Rwanda was subject to a major reorganization and all universities were integrated under the umbrella of the University of Rwanda, UR. From then and onwards UR is Sida’s primary partner for bilateral research training and capacity building.

The presentation and analysis of the evaluation task follow the questions in the Terms of reference.

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8. General impact of the new research training partnership

- Do employees at Sida and among coordinators and researchers, who previously participated in the programme, experience that the new method has helped to increase the scientific quality of applications and programmes?

This question is for various reasons, very difficult to predict. Firstly, it is not easy to compare the previous programme and the new venture. Secondly, not everyone who works at Sida's research unit followed the two stages, and if they did, it may be in different countries and under different conditions. Thirdly, the scientific assessment procedure has been developed with the support of the external scientific evaluation team. Another question is to what extent scientific quality is assessed or if other quality goals are focused. Letters of intent can be understood as broader programme applications, where research areas and not scientific issues are highlighted. The scientific production is primarily connected with support of doctoral training with the long term aim of raising the general level of knowledge in each country. The outcome in terms of scientific quality is part of the overall assessment of the thesis. Another problem has to do with whether the previous research initiatives have been documented. Usually, it's about the number of completed and ongoing doctoral degrees. From a quantitative point of view, the quality is increasing with the number of doctoral candidates and finalized Ph.Ds.

The external scientific evaluation committee is scrutinizing the new programme and finds it difficult to make comparisons with the previous model. Generally speaking, however, one could assume that the scientific quality has increased in the sense that one can take a greater hold over various issues and the need for knowledge in the form of a more concerted action. Another factor that may contribute to an increasing scientific quality is the selection process from the Letters of Intent and Full Applications. It is reasonable to assume that a tougher selection leads to increased quality. From the institutionally oriented measures of scientific quality, it is likely to believe that the operation as such has influenced the development of capacities in the recipient countries. It is not just about individual progress but institutional change in a broader perspective.

Quality impact is also, as mentioned in the interviews with the Swedish partners, the balance between core and fragmentation. The doctoral training programmes cover many fields of knowledge with high policy relevance for Bolivia and Rwanda, which might lead to conflicting goals. If the main idea is to train a forthcoming generation of scientists, a more focused approach would be to prefer. On the other hand, if one wants to cover areas of relevance that are related to national priorities, it might lead to the research training environments being spread out over various environments, which might not be so strong as a more coherent investment. So, how does one balance the goals of training and examine good researchers on one hand and cover relevant fields of knowledge on the other? The issue of a stronger and coherent focus or a more fragmented approach was touched upon by scholars in the field of public health.
A more positive evaluation is given by Professor Verdiana Grace Masanja, Research Director, Coordination Office of Research and Post Graduate Studies, at UR in the interview, where she focusses on the capacity building and quality development in a broader perspective.

Verdiana Grace Masanja: In the programme I am responsible for the scientific part of research management. The cooperation has trained staff to PhD level; built research skills, awarded research grants and post-doc grants, supported organization of conferences and sending staff to conferences, gender equity programmes and publishing the university scientific journal. The former National University of Rwanda (NUR) moved from an Institution where the word research had no meaning; to a University recognised by many as a research provider. More than 300 staff has had training in research methodology and other related skills. The number of staff attending and presenting research results in International Conference abroad has risen from 11 in 2007 to nearly 117 in 2012. The International Research conferences organised by NUR annually involved also policy makers, implementers and grassroots people (e.g. farmers), they involved sharing of results and problems that needed research to solve them. Since 2007, NUR was consistently ranked among the Top 100 Universities on the Webometrics. Sida support is among the most contributors and catalyst to NUR research improvement.

Similar positive experiences are also found in Bolivia where Guillermo Bazoberry underlines the value of institutional learning and Celeste Rodrigues, UMSS mentions the importance of stimulating young researchers.

Guillermo Bazoberry: The major benefit of the Swedish support in comparison with other donors is that Sida has taught us how to function as a university – to apply for grants in open competition, to increase reflection and to improve our academic levels that we had before. The RTP programme is a joint learning experience that has been very useful in the transformation of our university structure and research capacity. Another experience is how scholars meet the challenges of the CN and new grants. In general, researchers were very positive and had many ideas, but it was a heavy work to focus on more coherent issues/themes and that could of course stimulate discussion and criticism.

Celeste Rodrigues: The main benefit is the formation of young professionals engaged in research on major health problems in Bolivia. Regarding what can be improved, mainly greater fluency of communication between partners and that defined research activities are respected or changed upon previous agreement between partners.

There is a lack of research officers to support and improve management systems. Similarly, there is a deficit of computer professionals to optimize the use of ICTs. The UMSA needs a program that centralizes information and is compatible for all Faculties and Careers, allowing to obtain global information accessible to any authorized user. Additionally, it is essential to complement the programme System Information of Science and Technology (SICYT), currently under development in the DIPGIS in order to display the existing capacities in the UMSA.

To sum up:

- It is, for various reasons difficult to develop criteria and indicators showing to what extent the scientific quality has increased, depending on problems of comparability between the different cohorts of doctoral students and final Ph.Ds.
It is likely, however, that a more open, transparent and competitive model in the long run will produce “more quality” than the traditional matching model. On the other hand, there have been obvious time constraints that could have repercussions on the quality of applications. Quality is also related to the balance between a more coherent and focused approach and a more fragmented research design. It is quite common in scientific evaluation teams (Peer-Review-Team) that they are able to comment on changes over time, but it is often based on the development of a common assessment culture and facilitated by the use of some form of scoring where "rating trend" over time can be illuminated. ICT problems and shortages of good administrative systems as well as management models have to be discussed. If you recognize the views from recipient universities, it is evident, however, that there has been a quality development in a broader context regarding research capacity. The new venture has strengthened and expanded capacity development from a quantitative point of view and with respect to capacity quality in a more general sense. It is difficult to assess to what degree the scientific quality increased in the single projects, which are doctoral training projects designed to cover certain relevant policy fields.

Compared with the previous assessment processes, how labour intensive and time consuming has the process been experienced, and can this be justified by the possibility of an increased quality and transparency?

The new process is much more labour intensive for all parties. It is emphasized greatly from the beneficiary countries, from Swedish partners and even employees at Sida. Team leaders and researchers at the Sida’s targeted universities are spending a lot more time in the different stages of the application process. The demands on Swedish partners are increasing and despite a quite lengthy preparation process for the programme as such, the Swedish scholars sometimes get a very short time to complete their part of the final application and especially if Sida suggests a revision of plans. Overall, it is a significant increase in workload, which also has to do with you launching a new reform that is also characterized by a certain ambiguity, time pressure and frustrations but also of institutional and individual learning. A more critical interpretation could be that Sida for budget allocation reasons had decided to implement the whole programme without a more in-depth analysis of how the different steps should be connected with each other on the more practical level. As seen from the Swedish partners, time constraints might have a negative impact on the quality of plans and applications. The requirement for increased transparency also leads to increased work in the different parts of the process.

The research advisors at Sida also make some complaints about the difficulties to get time enough to manage and monitoring the process of research administration from concept notes to final decisions and agreement with the concerned universities. Furthermore, there are obvious difficulties to work with strict time regulations and the need for time flexibility.
is obvious. There have also been remarks that the RTP-process in itself is too long. On a more general level, it is likely that a more open, transparent and selective model with increased incentives to write good applications will have positive effects in the long run. In a more short time perspective, time constraints might have had a somewhat negative impact on quality.

Comments from partners in Bolivia and Rwanda:

The selection process in order to find counterparts was too long. In one case, I felt pressure in order to favour a certain university; this fact suggested a hard competition between the Swedish universities. A response to the question of how to make the process shorter and more efficient without losing scientific quality and academic progression, the response was: “Knowing the rules and begin the process in advance; I trust that this new process seeks to solve pending or new issues from the previous phase. In our opinion, the increase in the length of time is due to the search for counterparts in Sweden and can be seen as a possibility to shorten periods. It would be appropriate to make an assessment of this process, perhaps this is the purpose of your work.”

To sum up:

- Overall, the new RTP model is much more labour intensive and time consuming than the previous research partner matching model.
- Swedish partners, the targeted universities as well as Sida staff are focusing on the increasing work load and Swedish partners complain due to a very short time for writing Letters of intent or full applications, and especially when Sida is suggesting revisions of plans and ideas.
- The time for partner search in Sweden could also be time demanding for partners from beneficiary countries and universities.
- The new model is more time demanding and in spite of elaborated instructions, there has been some uncertainty in the process and a number of hidden day to day decisions, need for coordination and feedback from different levels. The main question is if it would have been possible to test and develop the design more on beforehand and when some uncertainties have been solved.
9. The role of the external Scientific Evaluation Committee (SEC)

- How has the external evaluation committee experienced the process (it was carried out an evaluation)?

The external Scientific Evaluation Committee, SEC (administred by the Swedish Council for Higher Education Council/SCHE) plays a very important role in the process. The composition of the review team comprises a highly qualified group of scholars and leaders in the research funding and institutes. As for the Swedish members of the evaluation panel, the majority is senior researchers or senior administrators. The Committee appreciates the assignment but wants clearer instructions about their tasks.

The approach follows a common model in the review of research applications in the sense that the committee meets (and is divided into three subgroups) and goes through the applications, making selections and writing assessments and recommendations to Sida. The SEC is divided into three teams related to scientific fields; social science, natural science and health, natural resources and environments and a specific group on Research support. The subgroups make their evaluations and recommendations to Sida, and there is no comparative and integrated assessment of the three fields.

SEC members criticize the lack of structure in this approach, the lack of application forms, questions of legal certainty and publicity but also the role they have in relation to Sida's own administration and the Sida Research Council (SRC). The committee also questions that some projects could go forward in the process despite the fact that they were not recommended by the Scientific Evaluation Committee. The formal procedures and outcome of the Committee's work were also mentioned; i.e. the lack of protocols where it is clear which projects were recommended and/or rejected. It is necessary to have a strict definition of what is working documents and final decision documents being openly accessible through Swedish law. It also calls for a clearer feedback from Sida on what has happened in the further preparation.

One SEC member pointed at the lack of administrative support from UHR in comparison with regular working forms in other peer review contexts for Swedish research funders. Lack of administrative support and directions increased the work load for the SEC members.

Despite some uncertainty of the function of SEC and lack of some formal structures, the scientific evaluation committee has an important quality assurance function in the selection process of projects with high scientific quality and policy relevance. Another problem raised of SEC members is that the written assessments and recommendations of SEC are used in the Sida decision process without being contextualized by Sida, which could lead to misunderstandings on who is taking the decision (the research administrator at the Swedish Council for Higher Education/UHR, SEC or Sida?)

Comments from members of the scientific evaluation committee:
Swedish committee member: The first thing that I miss in the process itself is a more fundamental review of the two countries' current position, universities and higher education in respective country. This is to make it easier to understand the strategic issues involved. The other side of things is well to get a better picture of where Sida is looking for their support. Is it primarily to help develop the country in the medium or long term, or is it just to do something in the short term. The latter is well keyed up to date."

Foreign committee member: I have a lot of concerns about this process, to be honest, because I feel that it is using experts in an inefficient way. Many of the decisions that could be made about investment should be made by the institution proposing projects, for instance where a single university is proposing several projects it could prioritize these before submitting just one. Secondly, it is very difficult for external reviewers like myself to evaluate the relationship between different Swedish universities and universities in target countries, and it is not clear whether my time is usefully spent trying to make judgments about which Swedish university is a good partner, given my poor knowledge of this and the better knowledge of Swedish experts. The instructions should set very strict page lengths to keep applications very short and it should be stressed that unless all questions are answered the application will not be considered. I think that it is important that questions be very clear about what is required - it was evident that applicants misunderstood questions e.g. about the strategic importance of work or precisely how work would be carried out.

Foreign committee member: The cover sheet with summary information is especially important in the letter of intent when evaluators are just becoming familiar with the universities and proposals—and we need it again with the full proposals (for introduction and quick memory of which is which). It would have been helpful to ask applicants—and to learn the previous history of support and/or external (to the university, country) collaboration as it does not seem ‘fair’ to evaluate a programme that is just starting to join the international realm with one that has been collaborating with researchers—and funding for some years. I found myself trying to figure this out—who had what support prior to the applications we reviewed—in order to ‘level the playing field’ in some way—while also evaluating the program independent of such considerations.

To sum up:
• There is an extensive critique of the objectives, function and forms of the work by the scientific evaluation committee.
• SEC members highlight shortages on the formal regulation, administrative support and issues related to publicity and privacy, records and documentation, lack of forms and structures of LoI and full applications (as lengths of application, CV etc.).
• Some SEC members also mention the high work load and need to print out extensive texts (1500 pages), for long resume, lack of track record on various previous efforts. Furthermore SEC members point at the unclear relation to Sida and Sida Research Council and the fact that some project not being recommended by SEC still proceeded in the Sida internal priorities and got support, forms for feedback to Sida and to Sida Research Council.
10. **Challenging parts of the process – illuminating pros and cons**

- What are the steps in the process that have been perceived as the most challenging, and how?

The launch of the tool Concepts notes (CN) has been a challenge in a positive sense, and both brought together researchers and building research communities between Sweden and among targeted universities. CN also interacted with ongoing organizational changes with regard to university organization, research policy and higher education objectives in the recipient countries. In Bolivia, the ongoing reforms in the university and campus interaction with the development of concept notes. For Bolivia's part Sida's cooperation was timely as some other contributors was about to finish their assignments.

For Rwanda the process of concept notes started back in 2009 and was then directed to a wider range of contributors. Since there was an adaptation and development toward areas that have high relevance in collaboration with Sida. The overall impression is that the CN have been a functioning social innovation in the university environments in Bolivia and Rwanda, which largely have been "teaching universities" and has not had a strong tradition in research. From Bolivia one has stressed that CN has stimulated a new approach to research as a long process and that it is important to develop a common vision and cooperation in various fields.

*Celeste Rodrigues, UMSS: The Department of Research, Postgraduate and Social Interaction (DIPGIS) centralized the entire process, from the identification and invitation to researchers, meetings with researchers and definition of areas of research and finally associations according to related research topics. This program has been socialized in the University Academic Council for its diffusion in the thirteen faculties of the UMSA and to make possible the signature of the Rector.*

Subsequently, a presentation was made to the Deputy Ministry of Science and Technology, obtaining the endorsement that the program fitted into national policies. At the end of the process, the program was presented to the Swedish Embassy for subsequent delivery to Sweden. The program was developed in consensus with all institutes and research units of the UMSA, whose researchers participated actively in all stages, except for the faculties of Social Sciences, Economic Sciences and Political Sciences, which did not qualify for this call.”

**To sum up:**
- Concept note has acted as a stimulus and catalyst for institutional learning and the value of capacity development and being more visible on the academic arena outside the department or the university.
- CN has also functioned as a bridge for building partnership by stimulating contacts and scientific encounters with committed research departments in Sweden.
Various comments on Letters of Intent, LoI and full applications were made from partners in Bolivia, Rwanda and Sweden.

The other two steps with LoI and Full Application have functioned in different ways in the stages of research administration, and the process includes many decision steps. The process moves both slow and fast. Work on the CN could take two to three years to complete, but the Swedish partners sometimes get very short time at Christmas and New Year’s weekend or during the summer to submit documentation for LoI or full application. The time factor is consistently a critical aspect. To keep up with the anchoring processes and various steps at the local level will also be very stressful. Perhaps the biggest problem is the coordination between the various stages of a learning arena that as yet has not found its structure.

A more general problem concerns the instructions for applications and criteria to be used by SEC, and Sida Research units as well as SRC. In comparison with regular peer review assessment of research programmes, the RTP evaluation model is very complex, detailed and not structured in a way that would facilitate the evaluation process. The instructions for assessment for SEC comprise almost forty sub criteria that could be clustered in a more efficient way. It seems that the number of criteria and some specification are related to Sida internal needs and could be handled by Sida internally. The scientific evaluation ought to be designed in a more general way and oriented towards issues that are possible to answer for SEC. Suggestions on possible changes will be presented in the third part of this evaluation report.

Another challenge is to implement the programme in practice; selecting students, to adopt them according to formal regulations and make up an individual doctoral student plan. This challenge also reflected the asymmetric conditions in access to ICT, lab methods, libraries and other forms of infrastructure. In some cases, the individual plan was postponed from six months up to two years dependent on the skills needed to be completed or that the infrastructure, lab and technology did not exist in recipient universities and delayed the dissertation work to start.

Furthermore, it is difficult to guarantee the need for supervisor support and time for research at home university, where there are many competing tasks as teaching, administration and other duties for the department. Monitoring and track record for graduate students should not be forgotten.

Another implementation challenge is the series of decisions, modification of texts and negotiations at the local level – formal negotiations state to state and continuous dialogue at university level. Research officers at Embassy level underlined the importance to follow the process on almost a day to day basis, but they also pointed at a very high workload and time pressure and difficulties to manage the work load with high quality.
Comments from SEC members:
I would recommend a short LoI, max three pages, with limitation in the characters per section to be used. It has to be something to the point, specific, clear, needing to be further elaborated in detail. The previous letters were so long and detailed that they were difficult to distinguish from a full proposal. Other recommendations would be to limit the size of the CVs to one page, with a specific format, so that the information is consistent. At the letter stage, it is only relevant to see the 5 most pertinent publications.

To sum up:
- The persons being interviewed gave various comments on the role of LoI and full application. One SEC member pointed at the fact that LoI and full application should not be too similar, and that the LoI could be shortened.
- Others stressed the value of LoI as it functioned as an integration platform between the partners in Sweden and the recipient countries, which is important when you want to match research interests.
- The criteria used for the assessment process are too complex and detailed and could be organized in some form of clusters or more general categories.
- Taking part in different cultures, academic environments, and commitment to change and capacity development also provides positive feedback in the job.
11. How cost efficient is the process and can it be shortened?

- Can the process be deemed cost-efficient?

The transition to an open and transparent system where you apply for funding in competition is a major change compared to the previous model. It is also an important prerequisite to develop research capacity and to be involved in writing applications to various funding agencies. There is a pervasive organizational and cultural change and a learning process that takes time. The cost of the formal processing at UHR and the Scientific Evaluation Committee seems reasonable (a measure might be the proportion of funds distributed and that it should not exceed 4-5%). The cost and expenditure for SEC seems, however, to be a minor part of administrative cost as the process is continuing within Sida and followed by local negotiations state to state and with targeted universities.

Thus, administration costs for Sida internally and at the relevant embassy are difficult to assess but seem comprehensive where any proposed intervention will be tested against different requirements and performance criteria. It is about cost of administering development cooperation. Here, the costs are related to the performance and effectiveness. A lower input is likely to compromise the quality of the investment programmes and cater to long term success. A major cost is also the time that researchers at Swedish universities and recipient countries devote to writing applications. Greater transparency leads to more applicants and likely to a result of competitive pressure with more rejections. There is also an important incentive function - on what basis to participate in the research. What is action and what do you get out of it. As a positively frustrated team leader said, "It gives more energy than you bet yourself ..."

However, there are certain parts of the process that one could cut and make cost savings. It also emphasizes that the research officers stationed at Swedish embassies need to be in place to get a quality and value enhancement in the activity. It is also possible to work in a team with the ambassador, senior aid development officer and the research secretary. This model is of course much more costly than a remote development model with intermittent country visits. The delocalization of the research secretary to the Embassy facilitates the process, but to a higher cost level than a centrally organized research administration. In the beginning of the programme, this support might be justified for reasons of quality, but in the long run and with a more efficient research system, other models could be developed. In comparison with standard research support granted by the Research Council and other research funders applying the blue sky open competition model, the Sida decentralized RTP model has a significant part of negotiation, coaching and implementation of the initiative.

To sum up:
- On a more general level, it is hard to keep costs down without sacrificing quality. The introduction of an open, transparent and competitive process is a form of institutional learning, with higher introduction costs but more reasonable costs when the model is implemented.
• The lack of an integrated and digital model for introduction of calls, project applications, assessment process and recommendations will increase the administrative costs and make the system less efficient, especially if there are a growing number of applications.
• A more developed system of application with integrated ICT-support would certainly facilitate the process and also, in the long run cut costs.
• The cost for SEC and the research administration at UHR seems reasonable and the high cost lies in the internal administration within Sida and the negotiation and monitoring processes that follow at the local level.

Arguments for shortening and simplification of the process

• Is it possible to simplify and shorten the process while maintaining quality (research and capacity strengthening programmes)?

There are views that it takes too long, but also that it is a high time pressure among researchers and research administrators. One way to shorten the process is to keep the assessment in two stages but refrain from Letters of Intent. Another may be to make the Letters of Intent much shorter or that one could arrange search conferences in recipient countries where information was given about the conditions and different ideas were tried. Since the application could be submitted and assessed in two stages - an initial screening where about X% (depending on budget) goes to the in-depth assessment. With shorter LoI the relevancy assessment of Sida and the Research Council could be made before the scientific expert group’s assessment. Today it feels like Sida Research Council is re-examining the SEC’s proposal. Capacity development is done in two steps. Partly by the doctoral students own education. Partly through infrastructure support. Because it can take between five and seven years before the doctoral students will finalize their Ph.D. degree, one should consider strategic initiatives to strengthen the capacity locally.

Comments from Rwanda: From Rwanda, one believed at strategic level that at least 50% of the process that begins after the scientific evaluation panel has submitted its recommendations could be shortened. Too many steps in the process also create ambiguity and misguided expectations of the different partners.

Three efforts could, however, shorten the process. Firstly, Sida Research Council and Sida too could assess the policy relevance and compulsory requirements for LoI and full applications before moving on to the Scientific Evaluation Committee. This would be having two processes in parallel, thus earning time for the scientific evaluation panel for its review, selection and recommendation to Sida. Secondly, one may question the need of a Letter of Intent and prioritize the complete application (which in itself can be assessed in two steps). Thirdly, one could tighten up Sida’s internal research administration and implementation process and perhaps reduce the time loops substantially. A way to deal
with these issues is to set up a time frame: for example, that the time between the announcement and submitting the application must fulfill certain time frames.

Comments from Bolivia: The selection process in order to find counterparts was too long. In one case, I felt pressure in order to favour a certain university; this fact suggested a hard competition between the Swedish partners. Knowing the rules and begin the process in advance; I trust that this new process seeks to solve pending or new issues from the previous phase. In our opinion, the increase in the length of time is due to the search for counterparts in Sweden and can be seen as a possibility to shorten periods.

To sum up:
- There are various ways to shorten the process, but it is also important to consider what would be the impact of the changes of procedures and administrative routines.
- Firstly, Sida Research Council and Sida too could assess the policy relevance and compulsory requirements for the LoI and full applications before moving on to the scientific evaluation committee. This would be having two processes in parallel, thus saving time for the Scientific Evaluation Panel for its review, selection and recommendation to Sida.
- Secondly, one may question the need of a Letter of Intent and prioritize the complete application (which in itself can be assessed in two steps).
- Thirdly, one could tighten up Sida’s internal research administration and implementation process and perhaps reduce the time loops substantially. A way to deal with these issues is to set up a time frame: for example, that the time between the announcement and submitting the application must fulfill certain time frames.

Role of Sida’s internal administration and delegation to Embassies

Sida has a central role in the management and control of the RTP and capacity building programme. The research unit Team Research forms part of the Division for Partnerships and Innovation and Partnerships. Decision of Sida support are taken in conjunction with other divisions in Sida as the Division of organizational development and the Division of Africa with respect to investments in East Africa and coordination is also, e.g. in the case of Rwanda, the Swedish Embassy in Kigali. Furthermore, the Division of International organizations and policy support is involved in the decision process. For more general policy concerns on development research, the Sida Research Council has an important advisory function. Legal aspects as well as the feasibility with Sida objectives as gender equity, environment and climate as well as democracy and human rights are dimensions being assessed in the approval process. All together, this is an extremely complex process where different objectives and policy ideals should be assessed and where research policies are integrated in development policies. One way to simplify the process would be to make the research programme more autonomous in relation to the Sida general development strategy.
12. Broadening of the programme and unexpected results

- Have the basic objectives of the change met, i.e. have new Swedish university / research groups to enter into the programme and feel that the ownership of the programme in Bolivia and Rwanda will be increased?

It is clear that efforts have increased and that new environments have entered into the programme. The ownership has also been strengthened in various ways, for example by the decision to cancel the interaction that is not consistent with its own policy direction. It is important that Swedish scientists are sensitive to the problems and challenges facing the recipient and that the meeting between the two research systems takes place in a responsive, open and critical way to ultimately support capacity and local ownership. Annual meetings and review meetings in different shapes are also building up a working community.

The number of Swedish partners has increased and there are also signs of more collaboration between partners in Sweden in some cases. It is no longer only the traditional universities that take part in the collaboration but also regional university colleges. For the recipient countries, the situation varies. Not all researchers at NUR and from UMSA and UMSS did join the process to contribute to concept notes or Letters of intent. Some of them started too late and did not manage to find partners or complete a Letter of intent.

Work on the concept notes has strengthened local ownership and the subsequent process. A major challenge is that the recipient also broadens ownership in various ways. Other expressions of strong ownership can be exemplified when, for example, UMSS, Bolivia decided not to pursue cooperation with KI for the reason that one does not own the problem formulations and orientation of letters of intent. The mark of ownership and the need to control the development are also mentioned in the interviews.

Comments from Bolivia: The main benefit is the formation of young professionals engaged in research on major health problems in Bolivia. Regarding what can be improved, mainly greater fluency of communication between partners and that defined research activities are respected or changed upon previous agreement between the partners.

Comments from Rwanda: First, NUR wrote a big Concept Note on what NUR saw as areas of Research and PhD training in the future (2012 – 2022). The NUR Director of Research and Coordinator of the Ph.D. training introduced this concept note idea already in September 2009 for the NUR Research and Research training to align with Rwanda’s third generation of Poverty Reduction Strategies (EDPRS 2), and this had nothing to do with donor support, but rather with the NUR Direction. The concept note was about enrolling 1,500 Ph.D. students in Rwanda in 10 years (having the necessary facilities, equipment, and other quality indicators in place), to start Ph.D. programmes, and Masters programmes to train 4,500 masters students, and to train staff at NUR to PhD level to reach a proportion of 60% PhD holders among the staff, to train 300 Supervisors of PhD
To support the research environment by awarding research and post-doc grants, to establish a Research and Graduate School that will coordinate and supervise these activities and to support women focused projects by setting up a women academy etc. Both from Bolivia and Rwanda, leading responsible administrators for the Sida collaboration have stated that the local ownerships have been strongly supported in the new model.

**To sum up:**

- The initiative has been successful to include more environments in Sweden, Bolivia and Rwanda, but there were also comments from Rwanda that sometimes they noticed that it were basically the same people, who received support in Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania. One must also consider the extent of the potential pool of Swedish researchers who want to work abroad.
- There is clear evidence that the ownership and commitment for the research training programme has increased substantially in the recipient countries.
- It is also obvious that there have been integrative mechanisms and organizational changes that have led to the fact that Sida’s support is reinforcing an ongoing process of research capacity building both in Bolivia and Rwanda.

### Examples of other unexpected results

- Have there been other, unexpected results or effects achieved?

**Investment in Research Training and Capacity Development** has a number of spin-off effects. The support of individual doctoral programmes, capacity development for libraries, ICT, management and research administration have promoted a process of institutional learning and development. Collaboration and synergy with the development of governmental policies and institutional changes at colleges and universities in Bolivia and Rwanda are also interesting examples.

Other spin-off effects are that the cooperation between the partners can be extended in various forms. For example, it is easier for SLU to send students with the help of minor field studies to the partners they work with in Rwanda. Team leaders in various fields, e.g. mathematics or public health have broadened their partners’ profile by collaborating with more than one single country.

The collaboration gives rise to new questions that can be deepened in the contact between North and South; one such example is Chalmers’ efforts in water and sanitation. There is a spin-off collaboration with NASA in projects laundering clothes. In Rwanda, the focus on research on Conflict and Peace had a very strong impact in a reconciliation process with a series of activities towards different professions or to civil society. In the more learning-oriented context, the academic and critical seminar culture has been developed in some departments. Traditionally, one should not criticize a colleague in one’s own department. To solve that problem, partners from the department of education, University of Linköping started to use the concept of “critical friends” and after that it was accepted that you could comment and criticize a text, but not a person.
To sum up:

- There are various spin-off effects both with regard to teaching and learning for doctoral students, new forms of collaboration between research teams in Sweden, Bolivia and Rwanda and finally, the synergy impact between the Sida programme and current changes at higher education and research level or new governmental policies.
- Other spin-off effect could be that the arena of and interest for bilateral capacity building projects have increased.

Support for capacity development, such as libraries and ICT handled in forms other than graduate education through sandwich courses.

Impact on infrastructure:

The most important challenges - and obstacles - in terms of capacity development in the library - access to scientific journals - open access publications, survey, access to journals

The challenges here are similar enough to the challenges in other parts relating to information management and organizational challenges within the university. In addition to this, there are few librarians with a master's degree - the last number said seven. In addition to the librarian programme, there is the additional challenge of librarians not being highly valued, which means that they (often) is met with disbelief when they undertake such tasks as modern librarians do. So for the library programme it is not only important to help build the capacity of the librarians, but also to find ways to build up their self-esteem. Moreover, it is not only working against the librarians, but also their users (researchers, teaching staff, and other persons) who need to be included in some of the approaches.

There have been a large number of e-resources available for some years. However, these have not been used in the way that they could have been. Here is a gap. It is not enough to have the resources, they must also be used and this is a challenge, which we also take on in the collaboration. It is not knowledge, but it is knowledge not used. The university is today also a library that does not have connectivity, which does not have any directory without excel files.

There are many questions about e-resources and databases that are not included in the packages. There is also a large awareness of this in research and among the new leadership. Therefore, packages are still being reviewed, but the question is whether any financial resources will follow. The same applies to more journals and so on.

I do not know how much it is possible to speak about this reorganization, but the library programme has gone from being a programme for 12,000 students, and increasing to 30,000 students as well as a large increase in staff. This means that although the budget has been increased for the coming years, it will be a challenge to cope with all the parts. We hope for a reorganization, which in place would be able to facilitate this and other good processes in the future. ???
Final reflections on the development of the sandwich model

In general, there is strong support for the sandwich model, but one also points out the need for flexibility, for example, when it comes to increasing the proportion of female students. From the recipient countries, one sees it as a heavy share of the costs, but also realizes that as long as one has no local Ph.Ds. one should continue on this path. Some of the interviewed persons have raised the issue of academic colonialism (now post colonialism) and stressed the importance of accelerating the development of local Ph.D.-programmes or enhanced cooperation in the region. In the long perspective, local Ph.D.-programmes are a relevant orientation, but it is obvious that it could take time in countries as Bolivia, where the academic tradition is not very strong and the contribution from the government, so far, has been rather low.

The issue of double degree is under discussion (according to a study from Stint it increases sharply) and is desired by many of the students as it gives them a stronger portfolio of qualifications. A fundamental question is an assessment of capacity development and when the time is right to organize their own local Ph.D.-programmes. Here, assumptions vary greatly between countries, depending on social, economic and cultural factors as well as the traditions and institutions of higher education and research. Maybe we need a tool to make such judgments.

Another question is how Sida should relate to development in Ethiopia, where one does not want the sandwich model and where you look forward to a strong expansion in the number of graduate students? And who will assess the efforts in this area? To make such an assessment an international group of experts - peer review model - would usually be required, which may combine site visit with analysis of publications and bibliometrics. Primarily, it is perhaps not a subcontract for the SEC, but it probably requires a separate group.

In addition to the lack of strong research environments, low levels and incentives for supervisory capacity at the university level in the targeted universities are major problems. From Rwanda one noted that the incentives to work as a supervisor or tutor were very low. Support for supervisor training is needed in most academic contexts. The issue of the supervisor and assistant supervisor for the doctoral student is handled in different ways.

Support for post doc students are available in various forms, as the return to their own institution is often linked to demands for teaching and other duties. One Swedish partner suggested the concept of the sandwich post docs to give them the opportunity to continue their research careers.

Although RTP has a baseline in its approach, it is important to relate to local conditions. One such issue concerns gender equity, which perhaps may seek more flexible combinations with parts of Sweden, in the region and in the institution at their own university.
To sum up:

- The sandwich model can still be used as a flexible prototype adapted to the conditions in various countries but also to variations in academic culture between different disciplines.
- The need to create good conditions for research, when the doctoral degree is finalized, has brought to the fore the concept of Post doc sandwich courses, by giving young Ph.Ds. the opportunity to take part in international conferences and increased options to publish in different highly ranked journals.
- Increased attention to regional cooperation is recommended. One solution would be that Sida is developing a *triple helix sandwich programme* where doctoral students during their doctoral training in addition to visits in Sweden and applied field work at their home university could also attend courses or encounters with doctoral students in the same field but at different universities in the region.
13. Role of Sida, research advisors and Research Council in the process

- How, where and when in the process should Sida come in, and how should the individual research advisors be best supported, when the recommendations are clear and decisions on action should be taken - especially if the final choice between different applications is to be made by Sida.

The evaluation has shown that there is a lack of communication and dialogue between the external Scientific Evaluation Committee and Sida, the research advisors and the Sida Research Council. If the function of SEC is to assess scientific and other qualities of Letters of Intent or full application, it is important that Sida follows the recommendations of SEC. In order to avoid situations where the recommendations of SEC are conflicting with Sida’s priorities, the agency could make a relevant selection of projects and programmes (that are in conjunction with Sida’s policies for fights against poverty, gender equity or sustainable development) before they are presented to SEC. The purpose with this pre-selection is to diminish situations where the recommendations of SEC are not fully considered by Sida in the continuing internal administration and quality assurance process.

Another solution, which would have negative impact on the status and position of SEC is that Sida gives credit to the scientific assessment and selection of SEC, but states that Sida, in the final run, always has the option of deciding which projects are most policy relevant and at an acceptable level of scientific quality and progression. Such a choice would not meet the prevailing forms of research application systems characterized by open, transparent and competitive applications.

The out-sourcing of the research administration to the Swedish Higher Education Council, UHR has both advantages and problems. The positive aspect is that Sida and the research administrators can concentrate on the implementation of the approved programmes. The negative side is that the coordination is separated from Sida and that it is difficult for Sida staff to follow the work of SEC on a continuous basis. Still there is a heavy work load for research secretaries both working at Sida or in the recipient countries. One possibility would be that Sida could tie a research trainee to the embassies in order to give the research advisors some relief and job sharing. The research advisors have a heavy work burden and report that assignments for various stakeholders takes time away from strategic issues and research administration.

There are obvious challenges of coordination of the Research Training Partnership Programme both centrally at Sida and at the local level in the respective countries and in collaboration with the targeted universities. Sida should consider how the central coordination could be reinforced and also how the research advisors could form a collaborative team to develop a common understanding of various problems and find
efficient and constructive solutions. One suggestion would be that research administrators in East Africa could build a small hub for internal meetings, coordination and sharing of good practices.

From partners in Bolivia and Rwanda, one has suggested that the process after the recommendations from SEC could be significantly shortened. Another model would be that SEC’s scientific assessment process and the Sida internal policy adaptation process could be operating in parallel loops instead of a series of decisions. Finally, it is important that the local negotiation process – state to state – and in collaboration between partners in Sweden and recipient countries – will be made as short as possible.

The internal administration within Sida is a complex process. ###

To sum up:

- One suggestion would be that Sida is making a first policy relevance selection/grading of projects, before they will be assessed by SEC.
- Another option is to analyze the options of making parallel loops of the scientific quality assessment and the internal Sida administration and monitoring them before a final decision.
- Sida should enter the process at an earlier stage and make clear the relevance of selection of projects, whose scientific quality should be tested by the scientific assessors. As regards the research advisors they should be coordinated within Sida and locally enhanced (see above).

• When should Sida’s Research Council get involved and what should be its role in relation to the external scientific evaluation committee, SEC?

Sida’s research should focus on strategic issues and develop thinking about different models aimed at building research capacity. The division of work between SEC and SRC is very important to develop. It is not cost efficient if SRC is re-examining the outcome of the SEC recommendations. There are complaints from SEC that the feedback from Sida and the SRC is very limited. It should be an open dialogue and conversation in order to clarify roles, functions and assessment criteria.

Sida’s Research Council might have a guiding function with respect to the definition of criteria to be used in the assessment of Letters of intent or full application, but SRC should not take decisions on programmes recommended by SEC. Another important role for Sida’s Research Council is to develop discussions and ideas about different forms of evaluation and quality of capacity development. In order to close the gap between SEC and SRC, there should be at least one joint meeting each semester to better find a way to exchange information and to support each other.

The SRC has an important function in guiding Sida with respect to the development of new models of research training support or capacity development, and also forward ideas and test models of how the RTP programme should be evaluated more generally and what kind of documentation and statistics are necessary and which indicators of result and impact
that are relevant in this context. Thus, the recommendations from SEC should not be a decision demand for SRC, but more an orientation and general information.

**To sum up:**
- It is important that the division of work between SEC and SRC is clarified, functional and tested in practice.
- The research council should have a policy formation function, while the external scientific evaluation committee has the role of assessing projects and programmes and making recommendation to Sida from a scientific quality point of view.
14. **Recommendations to Sida on the future RTP evaluation process**

- Should Sida apply the same method for all bilateral programmes, or should it be possible to adapt it to the conditions that apply to a specific partner? How should this be done in a better way?

*Towards an open, efficient and transparent form of research administration*

There is a strong need to reorganize the process of applications to the Sida RTP programme. Policy relevant issues could be dealt with before applications are forwarded to SEC in order to avoid uncertainty regarding the mandate for SEC as a tool for quality assurance and not policy relevance or internal Sida policy regulations. When projects or programmes are assessed by SEC and recommended to Sida there is a need for formal clarification. SCHE should submit a protocol showing the final recommendations by SEC, but not referring to the internal SEC discussion. The reviewed texts that are written for each application should formally be signed by the committee chair on behalf of the committee as such. Sida should then integrate the recommendations and reviews in a formal Sida document, and make a Sida statement for the further processing of the proposals in order to avoid that the applicants believe that it is SEC who makes the decisions. The final decision from Sida should be communicated to SEC with specification in which cases and why Sida has made another decision. Budget issues do also have to be clarified both for applicants and for the Swedish partners. The role of the decentralized Sida research administrators is central in the system and it is necessary to look at their work load in order to avoid stress and unhealthy development. It is not only the work load as such that is demanding but also the uncertainty in the model and the need to make a quick fix in order not to lose time in the implementation process. In conclusion, Sida should have a look at the need for both central and local coordination of the work by the research advisors. Finally, SEC as well as the Swedish partners need to get better information on budget issues.

*When should Sida's Research Council get involved and their role in relation to SEC?*

It seems more logical that Sida makes the first policy relevance selection/grading of projects, before the projects will be assessed by SEC with regard to their scientific quality. Another option is to make parallel loops of the scientific quality assessment and the internal Sida administration as well as the often lengthy monitoring of the road to the final decision. Thus, Sida should enter earlier in the process and make clear the relevance of the selection of projects whose scientific quality will be tested by SEC. It is important that the division of work between SEC and SRC is clarified, functional and tested in practice. The Sida Research Council should have a policy formation function, while the external Scientific Evaluation Committee has the role of assessing the scientific quality of projects and programmes as well as making recommendations to Sida.
Continued out-sourcing, in-sourcing or a new platform for RTP administration?

Sida has a contract with the Swedish Council for Higher Education to monitor the selection of programmes and projects. The model used today has both advantages and many problems and uncertainties that need to be subject of significant changes for the forthcoming work. As have been pointed at, there is a strong need to develop feedback from Sida and dialogue between SEC, Sida research unit and Sida Research Council, to develop a more functional division of work between the parties. The research training partnership will proceed in two periods until 2018 and then, if support is given from Sida, onto 2023. Considering this the need for a sustainable system over the coming decade is necessary to renegotiate with the Swedish Council for Higher Education, SCHE for a sustainable development of the system or find a new platform and monitoring agency (if Sida is not in-sourcing the SEC administration in the agency).

It is probably not easy to change the administrative platform, but in the long run it seems to be much better, more efficient to collaborate with a research funder having a system that could be adapted. The research training partnership and capacity building programme have a double identity. The general objective is to support capacity building and local Ph.D.-programmes in the long run. One of the tools for this development is that Sida has developed a specific model of a flexible and decentralized graduate school for doctoral training ("forskarskola"). A possible division of labour is that Sida continues to support the building of research capacity in a broader sense, but starts to negotiate for a new platform for calls, scientific assessment, documentation and processing of the RTP-programmes (STINT, Formas, Forte or the Swedish Research Council, who already coordinate Research Links and Development Research).

It is evident, (independent of functional outcome and the work by the programme administrator) that research administration and support to doctoral programmes are not a main task for the SCHE. The development of new administrative routines and data bases at SCHE will not be designed to meet the needs of the Sida RTP programme. The lack of an efficient digital application system and a database will make it quite difficult to follow the development over the years to come and especially in a context where the number of applications are increasing. Thus, in the long run, the SCHE collaboration might be vulnerable and create a lot of manual administration instead of using a modern digital system.

From honest broker to open transparent competition – on models of bilateral partnership building

Sida’s longstanding experience of bilateral research capacity building can be seen as a process of continuous improvement and with various institutional models. In principle, it comprises two different processes that to some extent run parallel. The first process is connected with systems of policy decisions, opening of calls, selection of projects and research administration and the division of power, control and ownership between Sida including the Swedish partners and the foreign partners at the targeted universities and the
governments concerned. The second dimension relates to the research and capacity building process as such. A central dimension is to what respect these two processes take place in Sweden or in the partner countries or at the targeted universities. This matrix provides a simplified model for looking at the division of labour in both dimensions.

When SAREC existed more than three decades ago, it was common that doctoral students from partner countries did the whole part of their doctoral training in a foreign country, e.g. Sweden. The next step in the development was the launching of the sandwich model where you explored various forms of division of doctoral training in Sweden and in the partner countries, usually theoretical work and courses in Sweden and field work and empirical observations in the home country. Still many central policy decisions and selection of projects/programmes are taking place in Sweden (or through Swedish agencies as Embassies or negotiating decision contexts), including scientific evaluation and assessment.

The next step in the development is building a strong academic decision capacity and leadership in the partner country, thereby decreasing part of the administrative burdens in Sweden, which also will increase local ownership and academic involvement. Finally, we have a capacity development context where both decisions (as much as possible) and doctoral training take place in the partnership programme and resources could be redirected to post doc programmes and career planning initiatives. The long-term objective of the bilateral research training and capacity building partnership must be that the targeted universities and countries will be able to produce their own graduate programmes and doctoral training including final assessment and approval of doctoral degrees and extended forms of academic career planning.

A model of quality assurance in the support of a bilateral research training and capacity building programme has to meet various objectives, which sometimes can be contradictory. Some of the major objectives are the following:

- To promote open and competitive calls, thereby broadening the pool of research environments and researchers in Sweden and in the partner countries.
- To meet high quality goals with respect to scientific quality and public relevance for countries concerned.
- To meet the needs of Sida’s objectives on gender equity, reduction of poverty and anti-corruption and efficient management systems with risk-reducing mechanisms.
- To promote and strive for simplification, shortened processes and decreasing overload of administration and control.
- To promote local ownership, influence and control of the RTP management process.

With respect to these goals, five models are discussed below. The first model is the open, transparent and competitive call which now is in operation in Bolivia and Rwanda and will continue to be applied in other countries, primarily in East Africa. This model comprises all three steps with concept note, letter of intent and full application; a process that might take
between two or three years. This model has many benefits but it does also produce an administrative burden and certain time constraints.

An alternative to this model is a *Compressed and simplified model* by reducing the number of steps in research administration and quality assessment. The reduction of the time span and administration can be done by reducing the three steps with concept notes, letters of intent and full application to two or one step. The idea of concept notes in the form of strategic development programmes for the targeted universities does not necessarily have to be connected to the application of grants for RTP exchange. It can be viewed as a major future strategy to stimulate the general orientation of the research programme. Letters of intent have been a useful instrument to connect partners in Sweden with researchers at the targeted universities, but this might also be operated through local research planning workshops at the targeted universities.

The *Reclaim ownership model* can be managed by Sida giving quotas for the number of applications and ideas that might be tested in Sweden by the Scientific Evaluation Committee. By setting quotas, the targeted universities need to make stronger local priorities by setting up their own peer review panels. This model will have the same time horizons as the compressed and simplified model, but its major impact is the reduction of applications being tested in Sweden by Sida and by the Scientific Evaluation Committee.

*The level separated model* is just a further development of what has been described in the compressed and simplified model. Its main focus is the division of Sida’s support at two levels by, on the one hand, the focus of university to university exchange with regard to policies, management and exchange initiatives. And, on the other hand, focussing on graduate programmes and research training at the departmental level. This mission could also strengthen the regional cooperation between different universities.

Finally, the *Honest broker model* is more concerned with talent matching and does not have to imply open calls. It can be used and have been used in contexts where there is limited capacity for research training and for promoting open calls. The honest broker model might lead to ad hoc support to more visible research departments and does not meet the goals of broadening the pool of applications from Sweden and the partner countries.
## Overview of models of RTP-funding

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<th>Reclaim ownership model</th>
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<td>Prior policy decision by</td>
<td>Sida</td>
<td>Sida</td>
<td>Sida and recipients</td>
<td>University agreements and RTP partnership</td>
<td>Sida and partners</td>
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<tr>
<td>Form of calls</td>
<td>Open calls</td>
<td>Open calls</td>
<td>Open calls</td>
<td>Two different calls – for university strategies and for RTP</td>
<td>No open calls – talent matching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application process</td>
<td>Three steps</td>
<td>One or two steps</td>
<td>Two bilateral steps</td>
<td>Two separate processes</td>
<td>Negotiations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy focus selection</td>
<td>Sida and SRC</td>
<td>Sida and SRC</td>
<td>Recipient country</td>
<td>Recipient country/Sida</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scientific selection</td>
<td>SEC</td>
<td>SEC</td>
<td>Quotas for pre-selection/SEC</td>
<td>Two different assessment committees</td>
<td>Scientific advisers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internal Sida assessment</td>
<td>Sida units</td>
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<td>Sida units</td>
<td>Sida units</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time span</td>
<td>2-3 years</td>
<td>1½ year</td>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>1-2 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost indicators</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality assurance</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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</table>
Recommendations for Sida:

- The open, transparent and competitive model has many benefits, but also high administrative and social costs due to various steps of decision and the various steps from ideas to financing and start of the research process. In order to simplify the model and shorten the process it is recommended to apply a combination of the models above.

- Sida should explore if it is possible to simplify the process by cutting one or two of the application steps. The concept notes could be kept as a strategy document and play an important role for the learning process to become a university with a research profile. Letters of intent seem to be a pre-application and its main function is to connect partners in Sweden and in partner countries. Sida could test the possibility of replacing letters of intent with bilateral planning workshops in recipient countries.

- In the “old” talent matching and honest brokers’ model it was possible to control the number of partners and applicants. The new open and transparent model might lead to a significant expansion of research ideas and applications. To set some restrictions on the number of projects being evaluated, Sida could introduce a quota system which will have impact on the fact that the first selection has to be done in the recipient country.

- A crucial part of the RTP administration process which has Sida internal and Sida external functions. An important policy consideration is to what extent the RTP should be integrated or assessed from general development goals and consideration (gender, climate, democracy and human rights as well as management ideas, control and legal protection) or if research investments should be a more autonomous activity where final decisions are taken within the division of partnership and innovations.
15. Research capacity development – lessons from other funders

- Compare this process with other donors’ / funders’ call-based processes for capacity development (such as the Wellcome Trust, NIH, EU Erasmus Mundus II). Which is a good and interesting example that Sida could take into account?

Most efforts internationally, however, concern support to individuals and only a few have Sida’s model for capacity development. The UK and U.S. models are often based on working together in the larger "fly in-projects" in which researchers in the partner country are participating in the surveys under good conditions, but where capacity development in the long run will be limited. Mega Investment in International Exchange is the EU Erasmus, in the United States and China with 100,000 students per programme. There are also long-term partnerships that take place in different areas, Public Health (Saftra project) where work is comparative within designated areas and where there are often integrated graduates. Today, a third of the enrollment at the graduate programme in Sweden comes from other countries, where Asia is a large group and the groups from Africa and Latin America are significantly smaller. The question is what happens after this kind of informal brain migration and which collaborations are developed. The Swedish Riksdag decided a few years ago to have tighter restrictions on foreign students, which have eroded the recruitment base for future development towards a limitless college.

Over the years, the number of master students and doctoral candidates has increased in Sweden, however, with a decline last year due to a reduced number of student places and new regulations for foreign students. The number of doctoral students in Sweden was around 19,100 in 2013 and 40% of the new entrants had a foreign background, which was double as many as a decade ago. Around 30% of the graduate students finalizing their Ph.Ds. during 2013 had a foreign background. The flow of incoming doctoral students to Sweden is quite uneven. During 2013, the candidates from Asia were 480 and from Europe 460, while only 70 doctoral students came from Africa and even less from Latin America, 40 persons.33 If we should argue for more fairness treatment of global knowledge migrants, students from Africa and Latin America could be a priority group.

The task to compare the Sida RTP model with other donors is an interesting challenge. The global market of master programmes and doctoral and post doc programmes has expanded significantly over the last decades. Very few programmes, however, apply the same model as Sida with bilateral research training and capacity building in collaborating with targeted

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33 SCB (2014) Universitet och högskolor. Doktorander och examina på forskarnivå 2013. Doctoral students and degrees at third cycle studies 2013. Statistiska Meddelanden, UF 21 SM 1401. Due to measurement restrictions, only doctoral student of five or more has been counted. It does not change the general pattern, but is probably an underestimation of doctoral students from Africa and Latin America.
universities. Most programmes of international exchange focus on excellence and recruitment of the most talented candidates who apply in hard competition. Lessons to be learned for Sida are to a high extent depending on the character of the programme. Many donors’ initiatives are characterized by focus areas such as health research, water and hygiene research, or research on agriculture or forestry. An overview of these missions might comprise the following categories:

- Models of bilateral research training and capacity building
- Models of support to local master and Ph.D programmes
- Models of excellence and application in competition

The role of regional collaboration in Africa, Asia or Latin America is another dimension to be recognized in this context. There are a number of regional network in Africa and Latin America and a relevant question – and challenge – is to what extent Sida could promote regional collaboration within the RTP and capacity building programme. The views in this section, however, concern primarily different funders’ models for calls, reviewing and selection. The text covers both the capacity dimension and the system of calls, reviewing and selection. Examples are mainly taken from VLIR-PUS in the Erasmus Mundus, EU, IDRC, Canada, Netherlands, NIH and Wellcome Trust, UK.

**Models of bilateral research training and capacity building**

VLIR-OUS in Belgium support research training and capacity building in the South. This programme has many similarities with the Sida RTP programme.

“VLIR-UOS supports partnerships between universities and university colleges, in Flanders and in the South, looking for innovative responses to global and local challenges. VLIR-UOS funds cooperation projects between professors, researchers and teachers. VLIR-UOS also awards scholarships to students and professionals in Flanders and the South. Lastly, VLIR-UOS helps to strengthen higher education in the South and the globalisation of higher education in Flanders.

With the ICP PhD programme VLIR-UOS grants every year ten PhD scholarships to excellent Master graduates from Africa, Asia and Latin America who have studied in a VLIR-UOS funded international master course (ICP) in Flanders and wish to make a PhD at a Flemish university. The research should be carried out on a development oriented subject, in a so-called sandwich programme. The research and doctoral programme are geographically spread over two locations, namely the academic home institution and a Flemish university. In this way both local

and Flemish expertise are combined to offer the applicant and both research groups a win-win effect. The selection committee assesses and ranks all proposals according to academic quality and relevance for local and global development.”

VLIR-UOS selection model has many similarities with Sida RTP-model. The country strategy represents the strategic niche for future VLIR-UOS cooperation in a specific country. A strategy should be multi-disciplinary and include an optimal balance between the different programme types and levels of intervention of VLIR-UOS. A country strategy reflects the opportunities for university cooperation for development between the country in question and Belgium/Flanders. A country strategy serves as a reference framework for programming, leading to strategy based calls for proposals. This is the same ideas as concept notes being used also by other donors.

A country programme aims at integrating activities / building blocks at different levels (national, institutional, departmental, individual etc) and of different types (scholarship, project, programme)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL OF RESULTS AND INTERVENTIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF COUNTRY STRATEGY</th>
<th>LEVEL/NEED/OBJECTIVE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Network</td>
<td>More direct contribution to country-level priorities and capacity building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Cooperation, Research platforms and other national-level projects</td>
<td>Institutional strengthening and capacity building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional University Cooperation (IUC)</td>
<td>Strengthening and capacity building at departmental or faculty level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEAM and South Initiatives</td>
<td>Scholars</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scholars</td>
<td>Re-enforcing the individual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The interesting comparative aspect of the VLIR-UOS selection model is that it works parallel on four levels – support to individual scholars, research teams, university cooperation and regional networks. A similar programme initiatives is discussed with regard to social science in Bolivia in collaboration with the Netherlands, former Institute of technology, INTECH at the United Nations University.35

The selection model and quality criteria used by VLIR-UOS are described in appendices.

Models of bilateral research training and capacity building

Sida is recommended to:

- Consider the experiences from the VLIR-UOS model by dividing the support into two tracks.
- One more policy oriented and focused on regional networks and university capacities and another more focused on capacity building at department levels, research teams and individual scholars.
- Analyse the structure of VLIR-OUS set of criteria and decide to what extent this structure is more useful than the current used model
- Discuss to pros and cons of replacing the Scientific evaluation committee with external reviewers and a new integrated Sida committee for policy decisions and selection of programmes or projects.

Models of support to local master and Ph.D. programmes

The role of inclusive ownership is central in this context36:

The emphasis on inclusive ownership focuses attention on the need for engaging with actors across society, not just government representatives and agencies. Relevant stakeholders include a variety of non-state actors seeking to participate in shaping and benefiting from a development goal or agenda at the national or local level.

There are a vast number of programmes supporting local development and ownership and the report will just comment on a few of them. IDRC, International Development Research Centre, Canada in a world leading institution to support local development, ownership and quality in research and capacity building.37

37 http://www.idrc.ca/EN/AboutUs/WhatWeDo/Pages/default.aspx
Supporting ideas, fostering innovation

IDRC believes that research and innovation hold the keys to progress in developing countries.

"To make knowledge a tool for addressing pressing challenges,

- we provide researchers in developing countries with the financial resources, advice, and training that will help them find solutions to the local problems they identify
- we encourage sharing knowledge with policymakers, other researchers, and communities around the world
- we foster new talent by offering fellowships and awards
- we disseminate research findings and strive to get new knowledge into the hands of those who can use it.

In doing so, we make an important contribution to Canada’s foreign policy, complementing the work of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, and other government departments and agencies. This helps promote Canadian values such as political and intellectual pluralism and intellectual diversity, evidence-based policy-making, and democratic dialogue."

IDRC has recently analyzed the role of excellence in a development perspective.38

IDRC has launched a strategic evaluation to answer the question “What is research excellence in the context of research for development?” IDRC funds research intended to generate learning and change. It supports Southern organizations in delivering high-quality ideas, understandings, and solutions to advance development through new knowledge. The scope of development problems requiring research is immense, spanning geographies and thematic areas and involving a variety of stakeholders. But what does excellence in international development research look like and how do different perspectives inform it?

The paper comprises a number of concepts and indicators for evaluating excellence in a development perspective.

IDRC also provides international fellowships

Support for locally trained researchers

Solving local development issues requires local solutions. But developing countries face a number of challenges (insufficient resources, inadequate research environments) in their efforts to build a body of homegrown experts to address pressing social, economic and other problems.

IDRC’s International Fellowships Program seeks to address these challenges by funding awards programs managed by developing country institutions that support the research training of graduate and post-graduate students and researchers within local institutions. The program also seeks to build the capacity of these institutions to manage competitive grant processes and to foster their sustainability. Fellowships are currently offered in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Research areas complement IDRC’s thematic priorities.

These grants cover the costs for doctoral field research, full study master’s and PhDs, post-doctoral research, internships and visiting fellowships. Students participate in training workshops to enhance their research, writing, and communication skills. The program also provides support for mentorship, encourages researchers to publish in peer-reviewed journals, and it provides funding to support the timely review and examination of dissertations. In a few cases, funding is provided for semesters abroad and visiting fellowships in Canada.

Another grant that also is used by Sida is support for concept notes.

Call for concept notes: Canadian Partnerships Small Grants

IDRC’s Canadian Partnerships Program invites organizations incorporated and headquartered in Canada to submit applications for its 2014-2015 Small Grants for Innovative Research and Knowledge Sharing. Only organizations can apply for this programme. Local, regional, national, and international organizations incorporated and headquartered in Canada that produce or share knowledge for development. The organization applying must have one Canadian partner organization and may have other partners, from Canada and/or from one or more developing countries. Funding for research projects up to $60,000 or dissemination projects up to $15,000.

Call for Concept Notes: Open Science Network

The Open and Collaborative Science in Development Network (OCSDNet) recently launched of the public Call For Concept Notes for case studies that explore the linkages between open science and development.39

OCSDNet aims to support researchers and practitioners from developing countries to carry out research or projects to better understand whether and how the conditions under which open knowledge production processes could lead to development outcomes, such as economic and educational opportunities, improved health and food security, and policy reform. OCSDNet is jointly coordinated by the Centre for Critical Development Studies (CCDS) at the University of Toronto Scarborough, and iHub, a technology incubator in Nairobi, Kenya, with funding from IDRC’s Information and Networks program and the UK Department for

39 http://www.idrc.ca/EN/Misc/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?NewsID=668
International Development.

Through this call, OCSDNet aims to investigate a broad range of questions, including:

- How do researchers in various institutional contexts practice “openness”? How can open science approaches benefit researchers in the Global South?
- Will open and collaborative science lead to innovative insights and solutions to persisting development problems?
- Can greater participation of citizens in the planning and conduct of scientific research increase its application in addressing local development goals?
- How can the sharing of knowledge as a public good be weighed against the protection of intellectual property rights?

OCSDNet will provide funding for up to 15 case studies. OCSDNet is particularly interested in case studies that employ innovative and transformative open processes to address a range of development challenges in developing countries.

Comments on evaluating excellence in development context

IDRC is currently reviewing the role of research excellence in a development perspective. The review concludes that it is not an easy task to define excellence and that the two methods – peer review and metric, both have advantages and problems.

“These debates highlight two larger issues in research evaluation. First, there is no agreement on what is meant by excellence in research. Disciplines have discussed this at length in the past, with questions around methods and discipline-specific criteria and even criteria according to the type of research that is conducted. The debate about research impact is a more recent addition to the wider attempt to define excellence. Second, the debates on peer review and metrics emphasize another broader question in research evaluation: how do we measure research excellence? Defining research excellence is necessary before measurements are defined. However, in something as broad and diverse as research it is worth asking whether a definition and a type of measurement are even possible or worth pursuing.”

Models of support to local master and Ph.D. programmes

Sida is recommended to:

- Consider too what extent increasing collaboration could be developed with IDRC with respect to the objective of promoting local ownership and broader civic participation in the programmes.

40 http://www.idrc.ca/EN/Documents/Brief-Final-English.pdf
Models of excellence and application in quality competition

NORDFORSK has recently commissioned an overview of ongoing exchange programmes with Nordic institutions of higher education. Programmes primarily funded by EU are not included in this overview. A non-comprehensive list of programmes in the Nordic countries that fund research mobility across sectors or internationally has been recently been presented in a Nordforsk Evaluation Report. It was compiled largely by Technopolis with input from NIFU for NordForsk. Note that many of the programmes listed are not exclusively designed to promote research mobility. Note also that funding for research mobility can also be included in ordinary research projects, which for example is the case for projects funded by the Research Council of Norway.

The Erasmus Mundus Programme

The Erasmus Mundus Programme was launched in 2004 with the purpose of supporting academic cooperation and mobility between the European Union and its partner countries. The Programme has three actions:

**Action 1 – Erasmus Mundus Joint Programmes (Masters Courses and Joint Doctorates)**

Joint Programmes are operated by consortia of higher education institutions from the EU and elsewhere in the world. They provide an integrated course and joint or multiple diplomas following study or research at two or more HEIs. Each year, students worldwide can apply for Erasmus Mundus scholarships to Master and Doctorate studies. There are 138 Masters and 42 Doctorates offering EU-grants for studies starting during the academic year 2014/2015.

**Action 2 – Erasmus Mundus Partnerships**

Erasmus Mundus Partnerships bring together higher education institutions from Europe on the one hand and from a particular region in the world on the other hand. The partnerships manage student and staff exchanges between the two regions with EU-funded scholarships at undergraduate, master, doctorate and post-doctorate levels.

**Action 3: Promotion projects**

The purpose of promotion projects is to enhance the attractiveness of European higher education worldwide. Projects can aim to promote higher education or improve accessibility and quality assurance. They may also serve to improve the recognition of credits and qualifications, to develop curricula or to improve mobility opportunities. In total Erasmus Mundus comprises more than 1200 collaborations with countries outside EU.

The Erasmus+ programme and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions will allow for top-quality mobility of African and European students, scholars, researchers and staff through a balanced mix of actions centred on individuals, institutions and higher education systems. The Nyerere

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mobility programme will provide scholarships to around 500 students to undertake postgraduate studies and will allow for the mobility of 70 academic and administrative staff within Africa by 2017. This will promote student retention whilst increasing the competitiveness and attractiveness of the institutions themselves.

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Co-funding of regional, national and international programmes (COFUND)

Objective
The COFUND scheme aims at stimulating regional, national or international programmes to foster excellence in researchers’ training, mobility and career development, spreading the best practices of Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions.

This will be achieved by co-funding new or existing regional, national, and international programmes to open up to, and provide for, international, intersectoral and interdisciplinary research training, as well as transnational and cross-sectoral mobility of researchers at all stages of their career.

Each proposal funded under the COFUND scheme shall have a sole participant that will be responsible for the availability of the necessary matching funds to execute the proposal.

Participants submit multi-annual proposals for new or existing doctoral programmes or fellowship programmes that may be run at regional, national or international level. The evaluation is organised in two different panels: A) Doctoral programmes and B) Fellowship programmes. Support cannot be awarded to researchers who are already permanently employed at the host organisation.

The COFUND scheme will on a voluntary basis exploit synergies between European Union actions and those at regional and national level, as well as with other actions at international level. The scheme will have a leverage effect on regional, national or international funding programmes for early-stage researchers and experienced researchers. This impact is expected to extend to:

1. enabling the relevant regional, national and international actors to contribute significantly to the development within their own setting of high quality human resources, by introducing and/or further developing the trans-national dimension of their offers;

2. increasing the numerical and/or qualitative impact, in terms of supported researchers or working/employment conditions;

3. combating fragmentation in terms of objectives, evaluation methods and working conditions of regional, national or international offers in this area.
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION: The NIH Office of Intramural Training & Education (OITE) hosts the Graduate Partnerships Program (GPP), which is designed to bring PhD graduate students to the NIH Intramural Research Program for dissertation research. Participants enjoy the academic environment of a university, the extensive research resources of the NIH, and the breadth and depth of the research programs of both the host university and the NIH Intramural Research Program (IRP). The goal is to create a different kind of graduate experience, one that focuses on training the next generation of scientific leaders by emphasizing communication and collaboration skills, integration of information, and interdisciplinary investigation.

At the NIH, graduate students work in a highly collaborative research environment with leading scientists and clinicians. They share the NIH campus with the largest translational research hospital in the nation. They explore areas such as bioinformatics, biophysics, epidemiology, immunology, cell and molecular biology, neuroscience, health sciences, structural biology, sensory and communication neuroscience, molecular pathology, biobehavioral research, and developmental biology.

All graduate students at the NIH are part of the GPP and can take advantage of the graduate student community as well as career and professional development services supported by the Office of Intramural Training & Education (OITE). Graduate students come to the NIH in one of two ways:

*Institutional partnership for new Ph.D.-candidates*

The NIH has established several formal partnerships with universities, domestic and international, that allow students to perform dissertation research within the NIH Intramural Research Program. Matriculants are considered both full-time students at the home university and NIH pre-doctoral trainees from the beginning of graduate school. Students fulfill their academic requirements at the university while performing part or all of their dissertation research in a research group within the NIH Intramural Research Program (IRP).

Prospective students wishing to enroll must meet the eligibility requirements of the NIH-University Institutional Partnership and complete all required applications by the specified deadlines. There are two application forms for students wishing for admission through the Institutional Partnerships: GPP Application Required for Full Admission Consideration and GPP Application Required After the Applicant is Selected for Matriculation. Visit the links below for additional details about these options, required applications, deadlines, and interviews dates. Contact either the OITE or the NIH-University Partnership Directors (PDs) with any questions or concerns.

The OITE has developed a number of workshops, seminars and courses to enhance your experience at NIH. These events are designed to help transition you from student to colleague.

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43 See [https://www.training.nih.gov/programs/gpp](https://www.training.nih.gov/programs/gpp)
and give you the necessary tools and skills to take that next career step; whether it is in academia, industry, administration, science policy or any of the various paths that an advanced degree in the biomedical sciences can take you. Review the Events section to learn more about these opportunities. Matriculants should register for an Orientation for Postdoctoral Fellows and Graduate Students upon arrival.

**GPP Application Required for Full Admission Consideration** - used by students wishing to enroll in a PhD graduate program; Institutional Partnership Long-Form for Prospective PhD Students.

**Individual partnership for already enrolled graduate students**

Graduate students currently enrolled in a PhD training program come to NIH laboratories to enhance their dissertation research by developing an Individual Partnership. Many of the Individual Partnership students come to the NIH because they learned about the various opportunities through existing collaborations between their university mentor and an NIH faculty member. Other students discover the NIH independently of their university mentor because of the availability of research resources at the NIH. Currently, graduate students in partnerships are representative of more than 100 national and international universities.

**Wellcome Trust programmes for international exchange**

Wellcome Trust’s funding philosophy centers on supporting and developing the very best researchers, and giving them the resources that they need to undertake research of highest quality. The trust finances research in UK and in low- and middle income countries. The main focus is on excellence and not primarily on capacity development, but general ideas could be valuable for the Sida RTP programme. Wellcome Trust has an extensive model of selecting candidates. The Peer Review College comprises of more than 200 scholars from UK or abroad. A special Interview panel meets the candidates nominated by the relevant expert review group.

**Reviewing Wellcome Trust’s Postdoctoral Fellowship**

*The Sir Henry Wellcome Postdoctoral Fellowship (SHWPF) scheme was launched in 2006 with initial funding for a period of five years.* The four-year Fellowships are designed to help launch the independent research careers of a select few of the very best newly qualified scientists with no more than one year of postdoctoral research experience.

As the five-year funding term for this initiative is nearing its end, the Strategic Planning and Policy Unit – in collaboration with Science Funding and Grants Management – has conducted a review. The review draws on information derived from a number of sources, including analysis of application and award data, analysis of progress reports, and consultation with Fellows and stakeholders (members of the Interview Committee, Funding Committee chairs, sponsors and mentors).

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45 [http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/Funding/Biomedical-science/Application-information/Committees/WTX062815.htm](http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/Funding/Biomedical-science/Application-information/Committees/WTX062815.htm)
Although relatively early to assess the ‘success’ of the scheme and the impact it has on the Fellows’ careers, it is both timely and important to take stock of progress to date, to ensure the funding scheme is meeting its objectives and explore whether any adjustments are required at this stage.

An important component in this post doc schemes was the mentorship model, which was very appreciated among all post docs.

Fellows were also asked to give feedback on the support and mentorship that they had received from their sponsor, their research sponsor, their mentor and the Wellcome Trust. Overall, this support was rated very highly. The flexibility and independence of the award means that Fellows have a very flexible relationship with their supervisors and mentors, interacting with them to varying degrees. Although most were very positive about this, a small number of comments were made about a perceived lack of support and/or a need for greater clarity around what to expect from a supervisor or mentor.

Wellcome Trust’s Career Tracker

Wellcome Trust has developed a model to follow the career development of individual grants receivers, which might be of interest for Sida.

Investment in individuals is integral to the Wellcome Trust’s funding strategy, to support current research leaders and create future ones. A priority for the Evaluation Team at the Trust is therefore to monitor and track the career progression and choices of key cohorts of those the Trust has invested in – to ensure that we support the careers of researchers in the best and most helpful ways and thereby help to establish future research leaders.

Career tracking is a core component of post-award evaluation. In 2009 the Basic Science Career Tracker (BSCT) was established, a longitudinal cohort study that allows us to follow the careers of key cohorts of Trust-funded researchers. Now in its fifth year, the BSCT is providing insights and trend data that are valuable evidence to support strategy setting and understanding of the impact of Trust funding schemes. For example, Tracker data on the sex differential in the exit from academic science underpin our renewed impetus to support and retain women in academic science. The demand for more rigorous and systematic data on career path progression among researchers has also increased the interest and reach of the Tracker work, and particularly from our peer organisations.

Wellcome Trust - Flexible research careers

We believe that breakthroughs emerge when the most talented researchers are given the resources and freedom they need to pursue their goals. Success in this demands diversity - of

47 Wellcome Trust (2013) Basic Science Career Tracker. Results of wave 5.
people, ideas and approaches. We recognise that different people choose different career paths, so we strive to provide flexibility in the range of scientific career opportunities we offer. 48

For example, it has traditionally been challenging - particularly for female researchers - to manage a research career with other responsibilities such as family commitments. It can also be difficult for anyone who has taken a substantial career break to return to research. We therefore provide flexible support for women and men at all career stages to ensure that those wanting to continue or return to a scientific career have the best possible opportunity to do so.

**STINT – Swedish support to international post docs**

The aim of the Postdoctoral Transition Grants for Internationalisation is to support young researchers directly after their postdoc period abroad to maintain and further develop their international network.

Projects may last for up to three years. The funds are to be used for mobility, stays abroad or foreign researcher’s stays in Sweden. Applicants should be employed at a university in Sweden and have obtained their PhD. At the planned start of the project a maximum of two years should have passed since the applicant completed a postdoc period (of at least one year) outside of Sweden. Applicants must have research funding, either from the university or externally. The same rules regarding research funding applies to the partner. The main partner must be outside the U/EFTA.

Applications will be assessed by experts, focusing on how the proposed international partnership fulfils the following three criteria: 1) contribution to the educational establishments’ internationalisation, 2) scientific quality and novelty, and 3) planning and support.

**Grants for Double Degree Programmes**

The aim of the programme is to internationalise and renew higher education at Swedish higher education institutions on Bachelor, Master’s or PhD level. Grants for Double Degree Programmes targets the development of new educational collaborations between Swedish and foreign higher education institutions.

Applicants must be dean or equivalent with a responsibility for decisions regarding new education programmes at a university or college in Sweden. Projects may last for up to three years. Funds applied for in a project may not exceed SEK 750,000. The application should clearly state how the project will be co-funded by the university (and any other partners) in a sum at least as great as that being applied for. The main partner should be outside EU/EFTA.

Applications will be assessed by experts, focusing on how the proposed international partnership fulfils the following four criteria: A) contribution to higher education on all levels (qualitatively and quantitatively), B) sustainability and growth potential, C) level of renewal

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48 [http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/Our-vision/Flexible-research-careers/index.htm](http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/Our-vision/Flexible-research-careers/index.htm)
in regard to internationalisation, and D) the quality of the proposals planning and project setup.

**International development on joint and dual/double degree programmes**

The fourth IAU study showed that all degree levels, there is a higher percentage of respondents whose institutions offer dual/double degree programs with foreign partners than joint degree programs. Over the past three years, the largest growth of both types of programs has taken place in professional areas, such as medicine, engineering, business or education. Off Shore provision, distance, on-line and e-learning 50% of the respondents do offer academic courses abroad and these courses are offered almost equally at the undergraduate and Master’s level. The majority of respondents report not being involved in other type of off-shore provision. This is the case for all other categories of activity (offering full academic programs abroad, branch campuses or joint ventures and franchises). Of those that offer off-shore courses, for 52% of them the majority of the students enrolled in these courses are local students from the host country; for 25% of these respondents, they are from the country of the institution offering the course and in 19% of the respondents, the information about where students come from is unknown. Just over 50% of the respondents confirm offering distance, online or e-learning course. Of those that do, the offer is available almost equally at the undergraduate/1st cycle level as at the MA/ 2nd cycle level. The geographic location of the majority of international students enrolled in distance, online, e-learning is highly varied but the largest source region is Asia and Pacific followed by Europe.

**Models of excellence and application in quality competition**

**Sida is recommended to:**

- To better use ideas of mentoring, supervising and support for individuals and institutions and may be in the form of a Sida Handbook of Mentoring and Supervision for the RTP programme
- Have a look at Wellcome Trust Career Tracker Model in order to have a better overview of individual career development in the RTP programme
- To consider the options of creating joint programmes and double degrees in collaboration with Swedish universities and partner countries

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16. Future development of the Sida RTP programme

This section is giving some suggestions for future development of research training partnership and capacity building.

Towards a flexible model of research training partnership

On a more general level, the evaluation raises the need for a more flexible model of research training partnership. There is a strong support for the sandwich model as such and also the positive side of getting experiences of doctoral training outside the own department or university. The sandwich model functions as a bridge between the two learning environments. There is already a substantial flexibility with regard to the different graduate training culture in so-called dry or wet subjects or subjects where you need a lot of infrastructure, labs and equipment in relation to subjects where you are your own scientific tools. There is also flexibility for gender reasons, mainly promoting doctoral training for women.

The flexibility could also be developed in the region by using a third academic route in addition to home institutions and the Swedish partners by connecting with strong universities in the region or in other countries where Sida supports research training. A more general critic of the sandwich model lies in the so-called post-colonial discourse and that the ultimate objective would be to support the options of the local Ph.D.-programmes at the targeted universities. This is a long-term goal which cannot be implemented on a short notice. Within this flexibility, it is also necessary to look deeper into how strong research teams, team leaders and research networks could be supported.

Grants for guest scholars at targeted universities are another way to support capacity building. A crucial point is also to develop support models and find time for local supervisors, which is a fragile part of the system. Another part of a more flexible research training partnership could be post doc sandwich courses, industrial doctoral students and also increasing the exchange between team leaders and scholars in Sweden and in the partner countries. On a broader university level there might be space and place for University to University exchange with regard to management, libraries, infrastructure and joint agreements of collaborations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support for the development of strong research teams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In a long term perspective, the RTP model could be developed in different ways. Sida has clearly taken the step from supporting individuals to developing institutions and institutional learning through concept notes and support of infrastructure. The core of the research capacity is often a strong research team sometimes working at a center. The current programme also comprises the important role of research teams and team leaders, but Sida is recommended to look further into how research teams and research leaders can be strengthened.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Special grants could be made available to support research environments that demonstrate a strong research profile including research teams, and team leaders which have both junior researchers, post-docs and some senior researchers.

**Guest research positions for developed capacity**
Another way to strengthen the capacity is to announce the two-year (or flexible) visiting research fellow, where Swedish researchers (or researchers from other countries) may act in a certain environment and strengthen it.

**Enhanced collaboration University to University**
The issue of contact and interaction - University to University, should also be addressed. Today there are a number of organizations and networks, e.g. SANORD building with such contacts between universities in Scandinavia and in South Africa. When it comes to strategic planning, university administration, leadership, etc., one could examine the same model as was done in the EU ERA-Nets, perhaps EARA-net (likely with the support from the EU). SUHF - university and college union has taken an initiative to probe the universities' contacts and collaboration with universities in Africa. Here there may be a potential for further development.

**Industrial PhD and collaboration with industry**
Another possibility might be to test the idea with industrial graduate students. Today, Sida started collaboration and a network of sustainable development with Swedish companies operating globally. You should examine the options available to stimulate the economy to finance industrial doctoral students in developing countries, which can be an element of capacity development, innovation and economic growth. For that idea to be realized it requires a strong ownership and interest from their own country and even companies operating today. In the long run, it is about building bridges between corporate social responsibilities and research and development capacity in the recipient countries.

**The search process, competitive pressure, and early selection**
In the application process for support for Swedish university centers of excellence, each university was given a quota and they needed to deal with their own internal priorities. Due to the fact that the number of applications is likely to grow strongly, there is a need to develop an efficient selection system within the university. It should be at the university level to develop such a mechanism. As an alternative to letters of intent, one could organize search workshops or conferences of each recipient country, where the conditions for the aid given and where policy oriented research ideas could be tried. After such a pre-selection process, only the best full application could be submitted and assessed in two stages by SEC. This reduces the workload in Sweden and the process is not as labour intensive.

**Sustainability and flexibility**
An interesting challenge is the trade-off between sustainability and flexibility. You tie up for a 5 + 5 year model and plans laid for ten years, plans that often seem unrealistic (such
as 1500 graduate students in Rwanda in 2023). One question is how to achieve flexibility in a long-term model if new circumstances arise?

**Evaluation and monitoring**

Forms for track records should be developed and performance measures of capacity development evolve. The issue of ongoing evaluation and on-going evaluation may be interesting to try.

Coordination between the various components of the programme and of equal levels of the process is flawed. A major challenge is how the coordination can be strengthened both at Sida and locally. The RTP process developed positively but is packed full of time and information overload in various stages, which gradually need to take a stand on issues that are not yet regulated or where you have to loosen the control conditions because of pressing demands on the decision and to proceed to the next step. Coordination locally is also anxious. One should develop a hub in East Africa and a stronger collaborative network between the research advisors, embassies and a Counsellor for Development Cooperation. The extension of such a cooperation and coordination could also strengthen the inter-organizational learning between investments in Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and other future recipients.

**To sum up:**

- **Support for the development of strong research teams.** In a long term perspective, the RTP model could be developed in different ways.
- **Guest research positions for developed capacity.** Another way to strengthen the capacity is to announce the two-year (or flexible) visiting research fellow, where Swedish researchers (or other countries) may act in a certain environment and strengthen it.
- **Enhanced Collaboration University to University.** The issue of contact and interaction - University to University, should also be addressed.
- **Industrial PhD and collaboration with industry.** Another possibility might be to test the idea with industrial graduate students.
- **The search process, competitive pressure, and early selection.** In the application process for support for Swedish university centers of excellence, each university was given a quota and they needed to deal with their own internal priorities.
- **Sustainability and flexibility.** An interesting challenge is the trade-off between sustainability and flexibility.
- **Evaluation and monitoring.** Forms for track records should be developed and performance measures of capacity development evolve. The issue of ongoing evaluation and on-going evaluation may be interesting to try.
- **Coordination between the various components of the programme and of equal levels of the process is flawed.** A major challenge is how coordination can be strengthened both at Sida and locally.
References:

Erasmus. Facts, Figures & Trends. The European Union support for student and staff exchanges and university cooperation in 2012-2013. For further information, please visit the Erasmus+ website: ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus.


International Association of Universities (IAU) (2010), The Changing Nature of Doctoral Studies and Doctoral Study Programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa. IAU.


Wissema, J.G. (2010) Towards the Third Generation University. Internetsource:


_Sida/RTP-related documents of relevance_


Rwanda 2020 Vision (Government of Rwanda, 2002).


PART 4: APPENDICES

A. List of interviewees – Sida RTP process study (mainly August 10 to September 12)\textsuperscript{50}

Leif Abrahamsson, ISP (phone)
Karin Afli, FORSK, Sida (face)
Hannah Akuffo, FORSK, Sida (face)
Sven Andersson, University of Linköping (phone)
Lars Anell, Sida Research Council (phone)
Guillermo Bazoberry, UMSS, La Paz, Bolivia (SKYPE)
Göran Blomqvist, Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, SEC (phone)
Göran Bondjers, Sahlgrenska Academy, SEC (phone)
Jean Bosco Gahutu, NUR, Rwanda (mail)
Magali Boutonnet, KTH (mail)
Pernilla Rafiqui, Swedish Embassy, Kigali, Rwanda (link+mail)
Elisabeth Ilskog, KTH, formerly Swedish Embassy Maputo (mail)
Lena Ingelstam, Partner, Sida
Thomas Kjellqvist, BTH (face)
Claes Kjellström, Sida (face+mail)
Johan Leidi, UHR (face+mail)
Inger Lundgren, Swedish Embassy, Dar es Salam (link+mail)
Veronica Grace Masanja, UR, Kigala, Rwanda (SKYPE+mail)
Raymond Ndikumana, NUR/UR, Kigali, Rwanda
Lars-Åke Persson, Global health, UU
Katri Pohjolainen Yap, Swedish Embassy Kampala, Uganda (mail)
Sebastien Rausch, Chalmers (phone+mail)
Celeste Rodriques, UMSA, La Paz, Bolivia (SKYPE+mail)
Inger Sandström, Swedish Embassy Maputo (mail)
Teresa Soop, FORSK, Sida (face)
Agneta Stark, Stockholm, SEC, (phone)
Stefan Swartling Peterson, Uppsala university (phone)
Veronica Trepgny, Swedish Library University College (mail)
Bengt-Ove Turesson, University of Linköping (phone+mail)
Ewa Wredle, SLU (phone+mail)
Per-Olof Östergren, Sida Research Council (phone)

\textsuperscript{50} Introductory interviews with part of Sida staff in Mid June were followed up after the summer.
B. Terms of reference: The evaluation task

The evaluation will summarize the results, and the experience is from the two pilots, in terms of what has worked well and less well, and which issues Sida must take into consideration (in the short and long term) to design a method that is transparent, efficient and guarantees the quality of the programme, which it supports.

Questions to consider and on which basis to make recommendations are included, but are not limited to the following:

Experiences from Rwanda and Bolivia:

• Did employees at Sida and other coordinators and researchers, who previously participated in the programme, experience that the new method has helped to increase the scientific quality of applications and programmes? Compared with the previous assessment processes, how labour intensive and time-consuming was this experienced, and could it be justified by the possibility of an increased quality and transparency?

• How has the external evaluation committee experienced the process (an evaluation was carried out)?

• Which are the steps in the process that have been perceived as the most challenging, and how?

• Can the process be deemed cost-effective?

• Is it possible to simplify and shorten the process while maintaining quality (research and capacity strengthening programmes)?

• Have the basic objectives of the change been met, i.e. have more new Swedish university / research groups entered into the programme and felt that the ownership of the programme in Bolivia and Rwanda has increased?

• Have there been other, unexpected results or effects achieved?

Recommendations

• Should Sida apply the same method for all bilateral programmes, or should it be possible to adapt it to the conditions that apply in specific partner countries? How should this be done better?

• How, where and when in the process should Sida come in, and how should the individual research advisors be best supported when the recommendations are clear and decisions on action should be taken - especially if the final choice between different applications is to be made by Sida?

• When should Sida’s Research Council get involved and what should be its role in relation to the external Scientific Evaluation Committee, SEC?
• Compare this process with other donors / funders call based processes for capacity development (such as the Wellcome Trust, NIH, EU Erasmus Mundus II). What is the good and interesting example Sida takes into account?

Method

The contractor may propose method but must take into account:

- Go through all the documentation (including the Guidelines on the method; concept notes; instructions to partners; examples of applications, assessment committee reports and Sida’s response to the applicant);

- Take note of the evaluation conducted by UHR, interviews with responsible officers and possibly 2-3 people from the Committee for discussion and additions;

- Interviews with responsible research officers who participated in the work in Bolivia and Rwanda;

- Interviews with other relevant research officers;

- Interview with the method responsible person for RESEARCH

- Interview with main programme coordinators at the partner universities in Rwanda and Bolivia

- Interviews with 4-5 project and programme coordinators in partner countries and in Sweden

Time estimates:

Time required is estimated to about 20h/week for eight weeks.

Reporting:

The assignment shall be summarized in a report of max 40 pages, where findings from the pilot countries and recommendations for cost-effective processes, while maintaining quality, are evident. A draft final report will be presented to the Profo Group by 5th September 2014 for comments. The contractor has, after comments have been delivered, ten days to deliver the report in its final form.
C. Appendices – Call and Selection models

Peer Review model for VLIR – OUS selection of candidates:

General Information on peer review
For most project proposals following the regional calls the selection by an independent selection commission is combined with an advisory role for peer reviewers, given the limited composition of the selection commissions.
In principle, VLIR-UOS requests 2 peer reviews per proposal. It is the applicant who is responsible to contact potential reviewers for his or her proposal. VLIR-UOS will provide a template for the peer review. Peer reviewers should submit their report directly to the VLIR-UOS secretariat and not via the applicant or the ICOS (institutional coordinators for development cooperation, i.e. the VLIR-UOS focal points at the Flemish universities and university colleges). The deadline for submission of the peer review is the same as the deadline for the submission of the proposal by the former local IUC coordinator to VLIR-UOS.
Peer reviewers provide academic advice to the selection commission. However, the latter is independent in its decision-making.

Selection criteria
All proposals following regional and North calls will be selected on the basis of the same set of 6 selection criteria. These six criteria are further defined, and translated into a list of sub-indicators, if applicable, in order to objectify the interpretation of the criteria.51

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>SCIENTIFIC QUALITY</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The extent to which a proposal has a ground-breaking nature and ambition (excellence).</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The proposal is original, creative, innovative (excellence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The proposal addresses strategic research/education needs and opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The proposal is consistent with research/education strategies of partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The proposal uses an appropriate methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The partner(s) has(ve) sufficient technical expertise and experience (knowledge of the issues to be addressed) to successfully deliver all aspects of the project</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>RELEVANCE</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The extent to which the objectives of a proposal are consistent with beneficiaries’ requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners’ and donors’ policies.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal is based on a genuine and adequate needs analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal meets the objectives of the call for proposals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal meets the needs of (direct and indirect) beneficiaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal contributes to the developing countries' priorities, as articulated in national strategies and policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal contributes to the local partners' priorities, as articulated in strategic plans and other policy documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal contributes to the VLIR-UOS country strategy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

51 Based on the ERC (European Research Council) and OECD-DAC (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development-Development Assistance Committee) definitions.
Proposal has clear added value with regard to other initiatives already carried out  
Proposal has potential to deliver applicable results  
Proposal demonstrates local ownership  

**EFFECTIVENESS**  
*The extent to which the proposals’ objectives are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.*

- Clear description of key project elements (inputs, activities, results, objectives)  
- Realistic objectives that address the identified needs  
- Appropriate activities to achieve the objectives  
- Feasible project activities  
- Objectively verifiable indicators  
- Monitoring of activities is foreseen  

**EFFICIENCY**  
*A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc) are converted to results.*

- The partner(s) has(ve) sufficient financial management capacity and experience (ability to handle the budget) to successfully deliver all aspects of the project  
- The partner(s) has(ve) experience with managing similar projects  
- The partners have a strong partnership based on previous cooperation and/or relevant synergy/complementarity  
- There is a clear definition and distribution of the roles and tasks for all involved partners  
- There are efficient mechanisms for coordination and communication between the involved partners  
- There are no (better, cheaper) alternatives to realize the proposed objectives  
- The project costs are reasonable and justified  

**IMPACT**  
*Potential positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by the proposal, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.*

- The proposal shows a potential tangible impact on (direct and indirect) beneficiaries  
- The proposal is sensitive to transversal aspects such as gender, culture, sustainability, human rights, ... that can accelerate or hinder the potential impact of the project  
- The proposal has a clear dissemination/valorization strategy  
- The proposal is likely to realize a clear institutional embeddedness (within the partner organization; with relevant local, national, international networks and stakeholders)  
- The proposal is likely to have multiplier effects  

**SUSTAINABILITY**  
*The continuation of benefits after the activities have been completed.*

- The proposal foresees a clear follow-up strategy to finance activities after the funding ends (financial sustainability)  
- The proposal foresees working with institutional structures allowing the activities to continue after the funding (institutional sustainability)  
- If applicable, the proposal takes into account its positive/negative impact on the policy level (political sustainability)  
- If applicable, the proposal takes into account its negative/positive environmental impact (environmental sustainability)
Peer reviewers provide academic advice to the selection commission. However, the latter is independent in its decision-making. Peer review focuses on assessing criterion 1 (Scientific Quality) and scores only this criterion. The peer reviewer can, however, provide his / her assessment on the other criteria also.

Selection process & results for Erasmus Mundus

The JoinEUsee selection process consists of 4 STEPS.

STEP 1: Eligibility check

During step 1, the Local Management Team (LMT) at the home university checks the eligibility of the applications submitted by its students and staff belonging to target group 1. In particular, it checks the completeness and authenticity of uploaded documents and whether the eligibility requirements are met. For applications in target groups 2 and 3, this check is carried out by the Quality Assurance Team.

If applications are found to be incomplete and/or ineligible (= formally not OK), the reviewers need to clearly indicate the reason for rejecting an application. Rejected applicants will receive an official notification of rejection via email. This notification will include the reason/s for rejection and provide the applicants with the opportunity to appeal against the decision by a given deadline.

The LMTs at the home university (for target group 1) as well as the Quality Assurance Team (for target groups 2 and 3) guarantee an absence of any conflict of interest as well as transparency and equal treatment for all applicants.

STEP 2: Quality Assessment

Applications which pass step 1 are reviewed and rated by the LMT at the host university. The LMT will review the applications, check if the admission and language requirements are fulfilled and evaluate the applications in terms of their quality.

The rating takes into consideration a number of criteria which will be rated from 1 (excellent) to 5 (rejected) by the host university. In the calculation of the overall ranking, the criteria are given different weight (in %):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking criteria</th>
<th>% of the total ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Mobility Activity Plan</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation statement</td>
<td>15%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Academic performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic performance</th>
<th>40%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language skills</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CV and additional activities</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the rating of the individual criteria, an average value, i.e. the rating result, is calculated taking into consideration the different weight of the criteria.

In case an application is rejected, the reviewers need to clearly indicate the reason for rejection. Rejected applicants will receive an official notification of rejection via email. This notification will include the reason/s for rejection and provide the applicants with the opportunity to appeal against the decision by a given deadline.

The LMTs at the host universities guarantee an absence of any conflict of interest as well as transparency and equal treatment for all applicants.

### STEP 3: Allocation of scholarships

Following the rating of applications in step 2, the allocation of the scholarships is carried out on the basis of the following criteria:

- distribution of scholarships per country, type of mobility, duration and target group according to the budget approved by the EACEA
- target group 3 applications will be favoured
- applicants in a disadvantaged situation will be favoured
- applicants who have received an EMA2/EMECW scholarship within a different type of mobility in the past will not be favoured
- ranking result
- fair distribution of host universities
- balance of fields of study
- gender balance
- commitment to contribute to the network of the consortium and to prevent brain drain (for post-doctorates and staff)

### STEP 4: Announcement of selection results

The Erasmus Mundus JoinEUsee > PENTA consortium will notify applicants of the selection results of the second call for applications by the **end of May 2015** at the latest. Selected candidates receive a nomination letter providing the details of the scholarship they have been awarded and general information concerning their mobility, including their rights and obligations as Erasmus Mundus JoinEUsee > PENTA grantees. Together with the nomination letter, selected candidates will receive the link to an online acceptance letter. By confirming online that they accept their nomination for a scholarship, the selected candidates
also confirm their acceptance of the scholarship guidelines and pledge to take all the necessary measures to start and complete the mobility successfully and in accordance with all the stipulated administrative and academic requirements.

Rejected applicants (at any of the phases of the selection procedure) will receive an official notification via email. This notification will include the reason/s for rejection and provide the applicants with the opportunity to appeal against the decision by a given deadline. Reserve list candidates receive an e-mail notifying them of the status of their application. Vacant positions due to drop-outs or cancelations will be replaced by candidates on the reserve list with similar characteristics (same type of mobility, same home and host universities, same target group, ...)

Wellcome Trust – Peer Review College and forms of quality assessment

Peer Review College
Our Peer Review College members provide external written peer review for shortlisted Investigator Award and senior level fellowship candidates. These reviews are key to aiding the final funding decision made by our Interview Panel. College membership currently comprises over 200 UK and international researchers.

Interview Panel
The Interview Panel is responsible for interviewing all Investigator Award and senior level fellowship candidates shortlisted by the Expert Review Groups and for making the final award recommendations.

The interview consists of a short presentation by the candidate, questions from the Panel, then a closed Panel discussion session.

A Panel, consisting of a co-Chair and core members from the list below, will conduct the interview. Panel members are selected as generalists with broad scientific expertise and skills in interviewing. Additional experts may be invited, as appropriate, to join the Panel for each round, but a bespoke Panel of specialists is not assembled for each interview. Candidates should, therefore, prepare their presentations and their approach to answering the questions so the information is easily understood by non-specialists, as well as those who are more expert.

Reports from Expert Review Group members, as well as external peer reviewers, are provided to the Panel. The lines of questioning at interview will be informed by these reports, although the Panel members will also ask questions about issues not raised by the reviewers.

The outcome of applications is dependent on the interview and competition for funding at that particular round.
Expert Review Group scientific remits

There are nine Expert Review Groups which together constitute a body of internationally renowned researchers with high level expertise and experience across the disciplines relevant to the Trust’s biomedical remit. These Groups are responsible collectively for assessing and shortlisting Investigator Award and senior level fellowship applications.

Selection procedure for NIH GPP mission

Students wishing to create an Individual Partnership should follow these steps for admission into the GPP.

STEP ONE - Your first step in arranging an individual partnership is to discuss the possibility of performing PhD dissertation research within the NIH Intramural Research Program with your university mentor and department. You must obtain permission from your department to perform dissertation research at the NIH.

STEP TWO - Your second step is to identify an NIH Investigator willing to host you in his/her group for dissertation research, visit the Finding a Mentor section for assistance. In your discussions with your university mentor and your prospective NIH mentor, ensure that all parties have a clear understanding of to the financial and administrative aspects of the agreement, as well as the length of time that you will be performing your research at NIH. Before you proceed to the final step you must obtain written communication between you and the NIH investigator for dissertation research that indicates an offer of admission has been extended. The GPP will contact all investigators listed within your registration to confirm the offer.

STEP THREE - Your third step, once items one and two have been completed, is to complete the required documentation to finalize the creation of the Individual Partnership.

- Complete required elements as identified by your department or program chairperson
- Complete the appropriate GPP Application
- Complete the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). An MOU must be completed for each PhD graduate student performing dissertation research within the NIH IRP for six-months or greater. The MOU must be completed and filed in the GPP office prior to arrival. The MOU must be signed by the student, NIH mentor, Institute-Center Scientific Director, appropriate representatives of the student’s university, and the GPP Director. Upon submission of the GPP Application, a copy of the MOU template will be sent to the NIH investigator for dissertation research; confirming an offer to train has been extended.
- Obtain appropriate Visa or permission from International Office (if required)

The OITE has developed a number of workshops, seminars and courses to enhance your experience at NIH. These events are designed to help transition you from student to colleague and give you the necessary tools and skills to take that next career step; whether it is in academia, industry, administration, science policy or any of the various paths that an advanced degree in the biomedical sciences can take you. Review the Events section to learn more about these opportunities. Matriculants should register for an Orientation for Postdoctoral Fellows and Graduate Students upon arrival.
Welcome to the NIH/OITE Graduate Partnerships Program (GPP) Application Center. The GPP Application Center is the entry point for the three online forms used to bring PhD graduate students to the NIH Intramural Research Program for dissertation research.

- Application for an Individual Partnership – used by PhD graduate students that are creating an agreement between the NIH and their PhD graduate program; registration for the Individual Partnership pathway of admission
- Application for an Institutional Partnership – used by PhD graduate students that have recently matriculated into an NIH-University Institutional Partnership that did not require the GPP application for admission consideration; registration form for matriculants
- Application for Institutional Partnerships – used by students wishing to enroll in a PhD graduate program; application form requires three letters of recommendation

Through this entry point you may create, modify, and view your GPP application. To begin, create your MyGPP account by completing and submitting the Contact Information form reached via the [Create MyGPP Account] button. If you already have an account, use your login name and password to access your MyGPP Account.

NIH has published a *Guide to Training and Mentoring in the Intramural Research Program at NIH* that could be useful also in a Sida context.\(^{52}\)

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\(^{52}\) [http://sourcebook.od.nih.gov/ethic-conduct/Training-Mentoring-10-08.pdf](http://sourcebook.od.nih.gov/ethic-conduct/Training-Mentoring-10-08.pdf)