

# **COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE IMPACTS OF DONOR-INITIATED PROGRAMMES ON RESEARCH CAPACITY IN THE SOUTH**

## **INTERNATIONAL REPORT**

**Report to the Directorate-General for  
Development Cooperation (DGIS)  
Division for Research and Communication  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs,  
The Netherlands**

### **Executive Summary**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Foreword</b>	
	<i>Eveline Herfkens, Minister for Development Cooperation</i>	
	Error! Bookmark not defined.	
	<b>Introduction: Revising North–South Polarities</b>	
	<i>Emeritus Professor Orlando Fals Borda</i>	
	Error! Bookmark not defined.	
	<b>Research Teams</b>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
	<b>List of Acronyms</b>	v
	<b>Executive Summary</b>	7
<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.1	Background and Organization of the Report	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
1.2	The Development Context of North–South Research and the Conceptual Framework of the Study	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
1.3	Objectives and Research Questions	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
1.4	Research Process and Methodology	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
1.4.1	Programme selection	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
1.4.2	Data sources and validation of findings	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>CONTEXTS OF THE PROGRAMMES INVESTIGATED</b>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.1	AFRICA	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
2.1.1	Political economic contexts and development discourses	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
	Programme	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
2.1.2	Academic and research contexts	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
2.1.3	The programmes in context	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
2.2	ASIA	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
		<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
2.2.1	Political economic contexts and development discourses	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
2.2.2	Academic and research contexts	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
2.2.3	The programmes in context	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
2.3	LATIN AMERICA	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
2.3.1	Political economic contexts and development discourses	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
2.3.2	Academic and research contexts	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
2.3.3	The programmes in context	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>

<b>3</b>	<b>MODALITIES OF DONOR-INITIATED RESEARCH CAPACITY BUILDING IN THE SOUTH</b>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.1	Constructing Modalities: Preliminary Issues and Qualifications	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
3.2	Institutional Arrangements and Administrative Mechanisms: Autonomy, Accountability and Sustainability	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
3.3	Building Capacity for Development-Oriented Research:	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
	Relevance, Location Specificity and Multidisciplinarity	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
3.3.1	Discursive context	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
3.3.2	Relevance, location specificity and multidisciplinarity	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
3.4	Building Capacity for Development-Oriented Research:	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
	Outputs, Quality and Evaluation	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
3.4.1	The impacts of the programmes on individuals, institutions and state/national policies	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
3.4.2	Quality and evaluation	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
3.5	Linkages between Donor-Initiated Programmes	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>CONCLUDING REMARKS</b>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
	<b>References</b>	Error! Bookmark not defined.

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table 1.</b>	The programmes included in the study and their respective donors, by region and country	31
<b>Table 2.</b>	Selected socio-economic statistics for the countries included in the study	36
<b>Table 3.</b>	Selected comparisons for the statistics in Table 2.	37
<b>Table 4.</b>	Selected programmes by research areas, capacity goals and beneficiaries	69
<b>Table 5.</b>	Institutional arrangements of the programmes included in the study	72

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACBF	African Capacity Building Foundation (Uganda)
ADESO	Asociación para el Desarrollo Sostenible de las Segóvias (Nicaragua)
AERC	African Economic Research Consortium (Uganda)
APNLBP	Andhra Pradesh–Netherlands Biotechnology Programme (India)
BRAC	Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee
CDR	Centre for Development Research (Copenhagen, Denmark)
CDS	Centre for Development Studies (Trivandrum, Kerala, India)
CEBEM	Centro Boliviano de Estudios Multidisciplinarios (Bolivia)
CEDLA	Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo Laboral y Agrario (Bolivia)
CEMAR	Centre for Natural Resources Management (Bolivia)
CEPLAG	Centro de Planificación y Gestión (Bolivia)
CERES	Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Económica y Social (Cochabamba, Bolivia)
CESU	Centro de Estudios Superiores Universitarios, UMSS (Bolivia)
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency (Ottawa)
CIDCA	Atlantic Coast Centre for Research and Documentation (Nicaragua)
CIDOB	Consejo de los Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia (Council of the Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia)
CIGEO	Centro de Investigaciones en Geociencias (Nicaragua)
DAC	Development Assistance Council (OECD)
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DGIS	Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (The Netherlands)
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
EIB	Bilingual Intercultural Education (Bolivia)
ENRECA	Enhancing Research Capacity Programme (Tanzania)
EPRC	Economic Policy Research Centre (Uganda)
ERB	Economic Research Bureau (Tanzania)
EU	European Union
FAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
FSRP	Farming Systems Research Programme (Vietnam)
FTPP	Forest, Trees and People Programme (Bolivia)
GMC	Gender Management Committee (Tanzania)
GDP	gross domestic product
GNP	gross national product
GTZ	Deutsches Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for Technical Cooperation)
HDI	human development index
HIPC	highly indebted poor countries
HPI	human poverty index
IDRC	International Development Research Centre (Canada)
IDS/WSG	Institute of Development Studies, Women's Study Group (Tanzania)
IPE	Institute of Public Enterprises (Andhra Pradesh, India)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INIES	Nicaraguan Institute for Economic and Social Research
IPE	Institute of Public Enterprises (Andhra Pradesh, India)
IRA	Institute of Resource Assessment (Tanzania)
IRCT	Integrated Rural Technology Centre (Kerala, India)
KRPLLD	Kerala Research Programme on Local Level Development
KSSP	Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (Kerala Science Library Society, India)
MAP	Monitoring Adjustment of Poverty (Bangladesh)

MISR	Makerere Institute of Social Research (Uganda)
MMRP	Multi-annual, Multidisciplinary Research Programme
MOSTE	Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (Vietnam)
NGO	non-governmental organization
NISTPASS	National Institute for Science and Technology Policy and Strategic Studies (Vietnam)
NITLAPÁN	Instituto de Investigación y Desarrollo, Universidad Centroamericana (UCA), NITLAPÁN - Tiempo de Sembrar (Nicaragua)
NURRU	Network of Ugandan Researchers and Research Users
OCS	open competitive system
ODA	official development assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAC	programme advisory committee
PAR	participatory action research; alternatively PRA
PER	public expenditure review
PIEB	Programa de Investigación Estratégica en Bolivia
PIRN	Proyecto de Investigaciones en Recursos Naturales (Bolivia)
PRA	participatory research approach
PROEIB	Programa de Educación Intercultural de Bolivia
PRPA	Programme for Research on Poverty Alleviation (Bangladesh)
RED-BRAC	Research and Evaluation Division, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (Bangladesh)
REPOA	Research for Poverty Alleviation (Tanzania)
SAREC	Swedish Assistance for Research and Cooperation
SC	steering committee
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SUDESCA	Consortium of three research institutions in Costa Rica's National University, the University of El Salvador, the Universidad Nacional Autonoma (Nicaragua) and the University of Aalborg (Denmark)
TANU	Tanganyika African National Union
TAS	Tanzania Assistance Strategy
TASAF	Tanzania Social Action Fund
UCA	Universidad Centroamericana (Nicaragua)
UDSM	University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania)
UMSA	Universidad Mayor de San Andrés (La Paz, Bolivia)
UMSS	Universidad Mayor de San Simón (Cochabamba, Bolivia)
UNA	Universidad Nacional Agraria (Nicaragua)
UNAN	Universidad Nacional Autonoma (Nicaragua)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNI	Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería (Nicaragua)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VISED	Vietnam Sustainable Economic Development
VNRP	Vietnam–Netherlands Research Programme (Vietnam)
WRDP	Women's Research and Documentation Project (Tanzania)

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## *Background*

The plan for a comparative study of donor-initiated capacity building in the South emerged from the 1997 Leusden Workshop organized by the Research and Developing Countries Division of the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (DGIS). The workshop organizers hoped to conceptualize a study that would enable them to obtain feedback on the implementation of the new DGIS policy regarding North–South collaboration in the area of science and technology. Initiated in 1992 by the then Minister for Development Cooperation, Jan Pronk, the main goal of the policy was to link research more closely to the needs and interests of the developing world, particularly the poor. The designers of the policy attributed the insufficient orientation of Southern research toward local societal problems to the prevailing asymmetric character of North–South research collaboration. They therefore sought to minimize the possibility of Northern researchers dominating collaboration efforts with Southern partners by calling for a shift in the key responsibilities – for agenda and priority setting, the conduct of the research and financial accounting – from the North to the South.

The policy that emerged marked a radical departure from traditional practice, and resulted in the creation of the Multi-annual, Multidisciplinary Research Programmes (MMRPs) in Africa, Asia and Latin America. For each MMRP, addressing the needs of the society concerned entails focusing on research problems that will have consequences for development throughout the South. The choice and conduct of development-oriented research demands an understanding of a problem from the perspectives of many stakeholders, often with conflicting interests. Such a nuanced grasp of issues and problems, in turn, requires inputs from researchers in various disciplines and branches of knowledge. More important, it requires interactions with users – those who will utilize the findings to formulate development-oriented policies or actions, as well as those who stand to benefit from or suffer their consequences. In summary, each MMRP as designed is a research capacity-building programme that is managed autonomously by the Southern partner, and which provides long-term support for demand-driven, location-specific, multidisciplinary research for sustainable development.

Reflecting on the features of the MMRPs, the participants of the 1997 Leusden workshop noted that various other donors are funding research capacity building programmes with similar characteristics. Although they may not grant long-term support or full autonomy to their Southern partners, many like-minded donors also support demand-driven, location-specific and multidisciplinary research for sustainable development. The common thrust of the MMRPs is rooted in the changes in development perspectives over the last 50 years. By the 1990s, a number of factors had provided an impetus for stakeholders in the South to define their own development agendas, and to analyse and address concrete issues appropriately. Among these factors were the democratization of many Southern countries, the increasing range of issues requiring location-specific interventions (e.g. environmental concerns), neo-liberal advocacy for linking free markets to democracy, the demand for participatory governance and the rise of civil society groups. Through appropriate funding mechanisms, donors supported these emerging views on development and capacity building. They helped mainstream alternative development perspectives and participatory research paradigms in

universities and research institutes by encouraging academic researchers to forge links with external agencies, including grassroots organizations.

### *Objectives and methodology*

In the light of converging perspectives among donors, the aim of the research conceptualized at the Leusden workshop was to compare the MMRPs with other capacity building programmes in the seven countries where these programmes are operating. From the outset, the purpose of study was to gain insight into the programmes, to understand their genesis and to determine how they have changed in the appropriate contexts of time, geography, political economies and cultures, including the prevailing research and academic cultures. The researchers were aware that their task was not to evaluate the programmes or to render judgements on whether one mode of research collaboration was superior to another, but to examine the similarities and differences between the donor-initiated programmes and their expression at the level of implementation. Within this rather broad objective the study attempted to answer the following questions:

- ? Are the asymmetries reflected in the “conventional” programmes of research cooperation also present in the cases under study?
- ? From the perspective of the recipient countries, is the Netherlands policy for development cooperation, as contained in the MMRPs, any different from the “conventional” forms of North-South cooperation, or from the policies recently adopted by similar agencies? What are the differences and similarities between these policies, specifically in terms of the characteristics or attributes of the programmes: their autonomy in decision making (control over policy, management and budget), their duration, and their focus on demand-driven, multidisciplinary, location-specific research and participatory practices?
- ? Are the programmes implemented by the different donors producing the desired results? Here, the focus is on the various types of **research capacity building** (institutional and individual; conducting and managing research; research appreciation and use); the production of results of **quality and relevance** for achieving development objectives; and the establishment of scientific relationships with other countries (**international research collaboration**), etc.
- ? Is the Netherlands policy applicable only to some types of research, particularly those involving specific regional needs, or could it be adopted in a more general way in other forms of North-South research cooperation?

Research in the three continents commenced with regional conceptualization workshops, immediately followed by fieldwork in each of the seven countries. The preliminary phase of the field research focused on identifying and selecting programmes that at least shared the broad objectives of the MMRPs and some of their attributes. To that end, the research support situations in the MMRP countries had to be “mapped” from the local rather than the donors’ perspective. The mapping exercise revealed that most external agencies fund research and research institutions directly, according to the agencies’ own priorities. Some of them fund government research institutions or universities, whereas others support short-term action research conducted by NGOs. In view of this, the country research teams, in the light of the locally available options, applied a set of criteria that varied slightly from one country study



to another. Some of the obvious variations in the choices of comparators were due to the attributes emphasized, which reflect the political economic and academic contexts of the countries and the character of the MMRPs.

The programmes selected focus explicitly on research capacity building. Most of them entail a long-term commitment on the part of the donor agency. They enjoy varying degrees of autonomy, ranging from minimal with respect to decisions on what research questions will be addressed and how the research will be conducted, to full autonomy with respect to the use and allocation of funds. The programmes aim to enhance capacity either for policy studies or applied field-based research that is oriented towards specific development issues. They vary in research orientation along two scales: one a continuum from academic/fundamental to applied/action research, and the other a continuum from a macro-policy orientation to a focus on purely local issues, among other differences. Nevertheless, all the selected programmes support and advocate the need for research to produce concrete applications that will benefit specific end users, although the intended users vary from one programme to another.

### *Country contexts and programmes*

Although programmes funded by the same donors across countries had common features, their implementation nevertheless varied according to the political economic contexts and state of science and technology in the respective countries. On the other hand, similarities in the operationalization and implementation of particular programmes across continents can be traced to features that are common to those countries (e.g. the significance of Marxist-inspired activist discourses and practices in Asia and Latin America).

All of the seven countries covered by the research – Tanzania and Uganda in Africa, Bangladesh, India and Vietnam in Asia, and Bolivia and Nicaragua in Latin America – are post-colonial societies. The political histories of most of these countries since 1945 have been characterized by political turmoil and instability in the form of a war of reunification in Vietnam, revolution and counterrevolution in Nicaragua, and military coups in Bolivia, Bangladesh and Uganda. India and Tanzania have enjoyed greater political stability compared with the other five countries, although a socialist ideology gained ground in Tanzania and in parts of India, where the Communist Party won government seats through the ballot. A culture of activism, influenced by Marxist-inspired Leftist struggles in India and to some extent in Bangladesh, also thrives in Bolivia and Nicaragua.

Interestingly, these last four countries have witnessed the proliferation of NGOs and grassroots organizations in the last three decades on a scale that is certainly more significant than in Vietnam or the African countries of Uganda and Tanzania. The rapid growth of activist NGOs in the Latin American and the other Asian countries accounts for the salience of participatory frameworks and grassroots involvement in development programmes. This also partly explains the more widespread acceptance of participatory research approaches in Bangladesh, India, Tanzania and Uganda, and the infusion of participatory principles even in academically oriented research capacity building programmes.

In Vietnam and Tanzania, NGO networks and Left-inspired activism in the tradition of South Asia or Latin America have not prospered, despite the socialist ideology of the dominant political groups in both countries. In Vietnam, the militaristic organization of society due to the exigencies of the war of reunification and the subsequent reconstruction, and in Tanzania, the absence of any impetus to further develop a Left-leaning grassroots movement, given the

control of the state by a socialist-oriented leadership immediately after independence, explain the relatively lacklustre development of NGOs during the 1970s and 1980s in these two countries.

At different points in their post-World War II history, all the countries included in the study have experienced serious economic crises. As a consequence, all of them have undergone structural adjustments that required the adoption of neo-liberal, private sector driven economic policies, albeit with varying levels of success in terms of implementation. Economically, the countries studied are among the world's poorest nations. In 1997, their GNP per capita was below the average for developing societies as a whole. With the exception of Bolivia, the per capita incomes of the countries range from US\$ 260 (the per capita GNP of the least developed countries) to US\$ 410. Although Bolivia has fared better than the others in terms of its per capita GNP, it is still among the poorest countries in Latin America.

As expected, the levels of poverty are significant in all seven countries. Thus, poverty alleviation is high on the agendas of all the governments concerned, and remains a dominant discourse within the development community. In addition to poverty alleviation, the rhetoric of neo-liberal democratization has been juxtaposed, albeit uneasily for most countries, with the revolutionary or nationalist discourses of the post-World War II period. Apart from poverty alleviation, democratization and local development, the other discourses that have shaped the research thrusts and interests of the programmes in the seven countries reflect their salient problems, e.g. indigenous peoples in Bolivia and the transition to a market-oriented economy in Vietnam.

Despite differences in the academic contexts and cultures of the countries included in the study, they share many common problems. Low enrolment rates at the pre-collegiate, especially at the secondary level, problems of infrastructure, and the lack of good elementary and high school teachers plague most of the countries, although the sub-Saharan African nations and Nicaragua suffer the most in this respect. Problems in the quality of secondary education are reflected in the declining standards of reputable universities in most of the countries, which focus primarily on teaching. Currently, even though the universities in the seven countries engage in very little research, they all have groups of highly trained researchers. In Asia, these researchers are found in specialized research institutions, with a few based in the universities. In Latin America and Africa, they work in research centres, NGOs and universities. Comparing research communities with a capacity to develop different thrusts, those in the Asian and to some extent in the Latin American countries are bigger than in Tanzania and Uganda. With the exception of Nicaragua, it would seem that the countries in the other continents are more likely to possess a critical mass of researchers and a better developed research culture than the sub-Saharan African countries included this report, although there are differences in academic traditions and research orientations.

The programmes included in the study are as follows:

#### **AFRICA**

<b>Tanzania</b>	<b>REPOA</b>	Research for Poverty Alleviation, the local MMRP
	<b>ENRECA</b>	Enhancing Research Capacity
	<b>WRDP</b>	Women's Research and Documentation Project
	<b>IDS/WSG</b>	Institute of Development Studies, Women's Study Group
<b>Uganda</b>	<b>NURRU</b>	Network of Ugandan Researchers and Research Users, the local

	<b>EPRC</b>	MMRP
	<b>MISR</b>	Economic Policy Research Centre Makerere Institute of Social Research
<b>ASIA</b>		
<b>Bangladesh</b>	<b>PRPA</b>	Programme for Research on Poverty Alleviation, the local MMRP
	<b>RED-BRAC</b>	Research and Evaluation Division of the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
	<b>MAP</b>	Monitoring Adjustment of Poverty
<b>India</b>	<b>KRPLLD</b>	Kerala Research Programme on Local Level Development, the local MMRP
	<b>APNLBP</b>	Andhra Pradesh–Netherlands Biotechnology Programme
	<b>UNDP</b>	Strategies and Financing for Human Development
<b>Vietnam</b>	<b>VNRP</b>	Vietnam–Netherlands Research Programme, the local MMRP
	<b>SIDA/SAREC</b>	
	<b>FSRP</b>	Farming Systems Research Programme
	<b>VISED</b>	Vietnam Sustainable Economic Development
<b>LATIN AMERICA</b>		
<b>Bolivia</b>	<b>PIEB</b>	Programa de Investigación Estratégica en Bolivia, the local MMRP
	<b>FTPP</b>	Forest, Trees and People Programme
	<b>PIRN</b>	Proyecto de Investigaciones en Recursos Naturales
	<b>SIDA/SAREC</b>	Programmes in two Universities and two research centres
	<b>PROEIB</b>	Programa de Educación Intercultural de Bolivia
	<b>CEPLAG</b>	Centro de Planificación y Gestión
<b>Nicaragua</b>	<b>ADESO</b>	Asociación para el Desarrollo Sostenible de las Segóvías, the local MMRP
	<b>IDRC</b>	support to four NGOs
	<b>SIDA/SAREC</b>	Programmes in four local universities
	<b>SUDESCA</b>	a programme funded by DANIDA, the Danish cooperation agency
	<b>NITLAPÁN</b>	a local research institute

With the exception of the MMRPs and the EPRC in Uganda, all the programmes in Africa are university-based. The research programmes selected for Latin America, on the other hand, consist of six university-based (SIDA/SAREC-Bolivia, PROEIB, CEPLAG in Bolivia, and NITLAPÁN, SIDA/SAREC-Nicaragua and DANIDA-SUDESCA in Nicaragua) and five NGO-based programmes (PIEB, FTTP, PIRN in Bolivia, and ADESO and IDRC in Nicaragua). Furthermore, with the exception of SIDA/SAREC-Nicaragua, which is building research capacities in the natural sciences and engineering, the programmes are mostly social science based. In Asia, only one programme is university-based (SIDA/SAREC's FSRP). The rest are located within research institutes/centres or in independent organizations.

The study reveals a wide range of research directions. Donor agencies began to support participatory and applied research models in the 1980s. Programmes based on these models have been better received in countries where development NGOs and an activist culture thrive (e.g. KRPLLD and APNLBP in India; PRPA and RED-BRAC in Bangladesh; VNRP in Vietnam; ADESO, IDRC and NITLAPÁN in Nicaragua; and PIRN and FTTP in Bolivia),

than in Uganda and Tanzania. Nevertheless, in Africa, NURRU and WRDP/IDS/WSG have concentrated on capacity building for Ugandan and Tanzanian researchers, respectively. In all countries, most of the programmes that emphasize academic concerns, i.e. the conceptual and methodological bases of research, are also aware of and sensitive to the needs of end users. Examples include SIDA/SAREC's FSRP and the VNRP in Vietnam; PIEB, PROIEB, CEPLAG and SIDA/SAREC in Bolivia; ENRECA and REPOA in Tanzania; and SIDA/SAREC and SUDESCA in Nicaragua. Apart from pursuing participatory research and academic research with inputs from end users on the ground, the other programmes are oriented toward policy (VISED in Vietnam, the UNDP programme in India; MAP in Bangladesh; REPOA in Tanzania; and MISR and EPRC in Uganda).

For comparative purposes, four of the programmes studied were eventually dropped, although the lessons from them have been incorporated into this report. The programmes that do not figure directly in the discussion are RED-BRAC (Bangladesh), NITLAPÁN (Nicaragua), EPRC (Uganda) and MISR (Uganda). These are research units with multiple donors rather than programmes, and involve a distinct set of research and capacity building activities that would not exist without donor support.

### *Asymmetry, autonomy from donors, institutional autonomy and sustainability*

In terms of institutional arrangements for capacity building, the programmes can be classified into two modes. Mode I programmes are linked to and are administered by existing academic institutions, i.e. universities or independent research centres, and Mode II programmes are independent. Except for WRDP in Tanzania, all the programmes funded by SIDA/SAREC, DANIDA, GTZ and Belgium fall under Mode I. In these cases, donor-supported activities are clearly distinguishable from the other activities carried out by the universities or research institutes, and the local coordinators are based in the institutions involved. In contrast with these university-based programmes, all the DGIS-funded programmes (the seven MMRPs and APNLBP) and a few other programmes (the IDRC-supported VISED and MAP programmes, FTPP and PIRN) have bypassed established institutional structures and formed their own institutional arrangements, although many of them are hosted by existing research centres. In principle, they are independent of their host institutions. Although some MMRPs have sought independence, this has not been achieved completely in Bangladesh, Kerala and Vietnam. In quite a few cases, the programme organizers found it difficult to find a host institution that would allow complete independence, possibly out of concern for their own reputations. Operating independently requires programmes to acquire a range of management, organizational and training/capacity building skills, and to establish their own systems of rules and procedures.

Do Northern partners continue to wield as much control over programmes as they did when the first conventional programmes were established in the 1960s and 1970s? The answer is a qualified no. For the programmes analyzed, donor control and, conversely, autonomy, is manifested at different levels. Common to all programmes, including the MMRPs, is donor control over decisions regarding specific regions or countries to locate the programmes in and the broad field of knowledge or area of activity to be supported. Particular to the MMRPs, the establishment of steering committees composed of researchers and representatives of government and grassroots organizations was an absolute DGIS requirement in order to ensure their autonomy.

Beyond these areas of control, the autonomy of local partners with respect to the choice of research themes and topics within a broad research field varies across programmes. A number of programmes (FTPP, PIRN and PROEIB in Bolivia; MAP in Bangladesh; VISED in Vietnam; APNLBP in India; and the Women's Studies programmes in Tanzania) are "thematic", meaning that donors had made earlier decisions regarding the "themes" to be pursued. Despite this, the programmes have the freedom to decide on specific research problems and have autonomy at the implementation and management levels, although they are subject to monitoring mechanisms established by the donors. The more academically oriented programmes are granted autonomy from donors to identify and select specific research topics and, in some instances, themes and priorities. They do have to meet certain institutional criteria and practices, however, so that their autonomy in designating and managing programme funds is circumscribed.

There is general agreement among the country teams that the MMRPs, the UNDP programme in India and the APNLBP have a greater degree of autonomy from their donors than the comparator programmes. Interestingly, it is only in the DGIS-supported programmes (MMRP and APNLBP) that the donors are not represented in the governing bodies, an observation that is consistent with the DGIS policy of granting full autonomy to Southern partners in the determination of research directions and in allocating funds. In contrast, a foreign programme adviser and a representative of the funding agency sit on the boards of the two IDRC programmes in Asia, VISED and MAP. The Bolivian Country Report observes that in some cases the donors participate in administrative and executive committees or in some aspects of the management of FTPP and PIRN.

The full autonomy of the MMRPs and the APBLNP from DGIS is assured by the existence of multi-stakeholder steering committees (SCs) and complementary bodies such as programme advisory committees (PACs). Multi-stakeholder representation in the policymaking and advisory bodies is deemed crucial for achieving an autonomous process of direction setting that is attuned to the conditions in developing societies. But ensuring representation in the highest decision-making bodies has been easier to achieve in some programmes than in others. Compared with the APNLBP, which has worked well with a biotechnology committee of scientists and representatives of relevant government agencies and NGOs, the MMRPs have had varying levels of success in this area.

Comparing the university-based programmes with those that are either independent or autonomous of but lodged in host institutions, the latter enjoy greater autonomy. Programmes based in universities tend to be encumbered by university regulations and constraints, and are more vulnerable to academic politics. Among most of the programmes outside universities, there is no evidence of any significant difference in the level of autonomy enjoyed by those that operate independently from any established institution and those that are lodged in institutions. Systems of governance involving highly respected members of the societies concerned, the specificity of programme frameworks, a programme's participation in international networks, or the novelty of its research agenda have prevented host institutions from overturning major decisions of the programmes they host. MAP is a case in point. The paradigmatic nature of the underlying theoretical framework of the programme's efforts to monitor poverty in Bangladesh, the specificity of its methodology, and the fact that it is a part of an IDRC-funded cross-country programme allow it to enjoy autonomy.

Regarding the most suitable arrangements for purposes of institutional autonomy, there is a trade-off between being an independent programme and one that is lodged in a host

institution. For all the non-university-based research programmes, the credibility of their host institutions has contributed to their acceptance by the wider development community. For instance, PRPA's association with the Grameen Trust has helped the programme establish its reputation in circles working on poverty alleviation in Bangladesh. Ironically, PRPA also demonstrates the need to balance the gains from being hosted by a reputable institution and autonomy from it. Informants in Bangladesh expressed their concerns about some aspects of the relationship between the Grameen Trust and PRPA, and its influence on the long-term development of the programme (e.g. the NGO had applied its own administrative procedures and salary scales to programme operations, and appointed members of the PRPA steering committee, chair and programme director). On the other hand, programmes that are not lodged in an institution do not have to weigh the costs (to autonomy) and benefits of institutional affiliation. Independence, however, may lead to problems of accountability if the programme has not developed a significant community – which could be a host institution, a research community, concrete local communities, or the imagined community of development workers in a particular region or country. This was the case with NURRU in Uganda, when it suffered serious management problems in an early phase of its development.

The issue of institutional autonomy is linked to the question of sustainability. From one point of view, programmes based in universities, research centres, government agencies or NGOs have greater promise of sustainability because both the networks of the researchers they have produced and the institutions they are part of could be expected to work for their survival and continuation. From another perspective, however, programmes that are not bogged down by the baggage of organizational and academic responsibilities have more opportunities to establish a research track record that will ensure their attractiveness to funding agencies (e.g. REPOA).

When discussing the issue of sustainability, however, the question that arises – which this report cannot adequately address – is what exactly is being sustained? Is it the programme as an organization? Is it the model of research management the programme operationalizes, and the underlying philosophical framework of development and knowledge production? Is it the policy of facilitating the creation of a critical mass of development researchers who can shift gear as they produce knowledge to improve the conditions of the poor because of their autonomy to move resources and researchers, especially on the ground? In the case of the MMRPs, which were conceived to be more than a model of research management, but proponents of a philosophy of development and a particular mode of knowledge production, the choice is between developing a research movement or an organization.

### ***Demand-driven, location-specific and multidisciplinary research***

The recent incorporation of participatory frameworks into international discourses has tempered the conventional mode of development intervention, in which technically superior and resource-rich external agencies provide inputs for specific projects in the developing world implemented by groups working on behalf of the recipients of development assistance. The participation of the intended beneficiaries in the search for “bottom-up” solutions has now come to be accepted as vital to the dominant development paradigm.

Although donors that support research capacity building programmes may subscribe to this perspective at a high level of abstraction, and espouse a participatory framework in one form or the other, they diverge on substantial theoretical and operational issues because of differences in interests, missions, visions and thrusts. They differ, for instance, in their views

of the type of research capacity that is required for participatory development goals. Some agencies focus on building basic and non-participatory natural or social science research capacities that are adapted to the conditions in the developing world, convinced that science can make long-term contributions to understanding development issues and promoting people empowerment. Other agencies confine themselves to building capacities for scientific research but enhance other capabilities as well (e.g. networking) to ensure the influence of science on policy and action. Still others directly support and encourage participatory action research, pointing to the limits of conventional scientific research in informing development work, and believing that knowledge production processes that involve the beneficiaries will best serve participatory goals. Thus, research capacity building in developing societies, as inferred from the programmes studied, refers to support for a wide range of activities that are expected to make a meaningful contribution to the societies concerned.

The programmes included in this study are all promoting development-oriented and demand-driven research. There are nevertheless interesting similarities and differences among them in terms of how they relate to or incorporate the interests of the potential users of the research, since most of development cooperation frameworks consider the explicit impacts of research on development processes as a criterion for support. The university-based programmes respond to the demand from local universities and society at large for academically qualified researchers and teachers in the social sciences, natural sciences or in multidisciplinary fields (e.g. the environment). The research areas covered by these programmes reflect the themes that permeate the new discourses (poverty alleviation, gender and the environment), as well as the salient problems of the countries concerned (e.g. democratization issues in Bolivia, technical underdevelopment in Nicaragua, rural poverty in Vietnam). Moreover, many of the programmes (e.g. the natural science SIDA/SAREC programmes in Vietnam and Nicaragua, DANIDA-SUDESCA, ENRECA, GTZ-PROIEB, CEPLAG) have developed mechanisms to consult or to link up with the intended research beneficiaries outside academia.

In the university-based academic programmes the institutionalization of links with end users has been generally constrained by the heavy demands of graduate training programmes and the prevalent view of the relationship between knowledge production and utilization among academics. This view assumes that research on specific development issues along disciplinary lines will enlighten policy options as long as it is done according to established norms of scientific practice. Interestingly, some of the programmes studied (e.g. SIDA/SAREC's FSRP), have modified this view by incorporating the needs of the users into the definition of research problems, but they are not as concerned with the issue of utilization. The policy-oriented programmes outside academia (e.g. MAP, VISED, UNDP) share the assumed relationship between research and utilization in conventional academic practice. For them, the knowledge they produce in line with the theoretical frameworks and prescribed methodologies of relevant disciplines ought to be utilized by policymakers because of its scientific validity.

Concerned with improving the conditions in the specific areas that they serve, most programmes outside academia (e.g. the MMRPs, APNBLP, FTTP and PIRN) subscribe, albeit to different degrees, to an unarticulated mode of knowledge production that differs from the traditional academic mode. This mode consists of cognitive and social practices carried out in the context of application to a concrete problem. The practices transcend the theoretical and methodological positions of collaborating research partners from different branches of knowledge and disciplines, are organizationally less hierarchical and tend to be more transient. In the course of understanding a problem, researchers go back and forth between the

“fundamental and the applied, the theoretical and the practical ... the curiosity-oriented and mission-oriented research”. Being locally driven and constituted, the alternative mode of knowledge production is sensitive to local contexts, and is committed to ensuring user involvement not only in the dissemination of findings but also in defining problems and setting research priorities. It recognizes the existence of multiple knowledge sites and views the scientific practices lodged in universities as one of many sites that are brought together in the search for solutions to particular problems. Finally, quality is assessed not only in terms of technical merit, but also in terms of the usefulness or relevance of the knowledge produced. As a consequence, the emergent research practices are socially more accountable and responsive.

Such an ideal typical depiction of an alternative mode of knowledge production enlightened the design of the MMRPs, although articulated in a slightly different way and in a less codified manner at the time the programmes were established. Of all the MMRPs, however, the KRPLLD is the most aware of an inchoate alternative approach to knowledge production, and is the only one that has begun to codify its experiences in terms of knowledge systems.

Building a demand-oriented, location-specific research capacity requires a multidisciplinary perspective. Of the programmes included in the study, the MMRPs are the most multidisciplinary, although in practice they are still far from achieving the level of multidisciplinary that is needed. In Vietnam, where research teams are required to involve representatives from different disciplines, the level of interactions and exchanges among them still leaves much to be desired. The Indian country team noted that slightly more than half of the KRPLLD projects involve interactions with social scientists, natural scientists, engineers and government technicians, but that there is a problem in achieving multidisciplinary. It attributes the problem to the weakness of the social science community and the narrow disciplinary functioning of most universities and research institutes in India, an observation that applies to the other MMRPs as well. Although the problem is surmountable in the long term, the lack of multidisciplinary in programmes such as the MMRPs is a serious drawback given their implicit agenda of synthesizing a wider range of development and research experiences that could contribute to new and grounded knowledge.

### ***Capacity building: output, quality, evaluation and linkages***

The university-based research programmes under Mode I are building research capacity by strengthening the institutional conditions for research, supporting formal training for researchers (Masters and PhDs) and consolidating local postgraduate programmes. Their long-term goal is to focus on the more academic type of research capacity building. Within this framework, the programmes studied have had considerable institutional and individual impacts. As a case in point, SIDA/SAREC has supported about 55 Masters and PhD students in Nicaragua, 25 of whom have graduated in the last 10 years. In the process, the programme has developed faculties and laboratories for engineering, plant sciences and environmental sciences in universities whose missions are to specialize in building development-oriented disciplines in particular branches of knowledge. This report provides detailed evidence of the impressive achievements of most of the other university-based programmes.

Programmes located in government institutions (VISED in Vietnam; MAP in Bangladesh) were set up with very clear goals: to produce personnel qualified to conduct research that will address policy needs. The evidence from this study is that both programmes have had considerable impact, despite their relatively short-term duration. In Bangladesh, for



instance, MAP aims to provide policymakers with institutional arrangements and technical capabilities to monitor poverty on a regular basis and to analyze the impacts of macroeconomic and adjustment policies at the micro level. MAP is reported to have accomplished a rare type of capacity in government departments, namely, expertise in monitoring poverty and obtaining systematic data for policymaking on poverty alleviation.

Despite the differences among the programmes that formed their own institutional set-up outside a university, the MMRPs, the APNLBP in India, and the FTPP and PIRN in Bolivia are very similar in terms of the type of capacity they are aiming to build. These programmes hope to substantiate the concept of demand-driven research, to popularize a participatory approach to research, and to institutionalize the process of learning from the masses. All of these programmes reject the concept of knowledge for its own sake. They also emphasize the importance of disseminating information to end users, be they policymakers at the national level as in the case of the MMRPs in Bolivia, Tanzania and Vietnam, or local communities, officials and political leaders, as in the other programmes. Among these programmes, the MMRPs have supported the largest number of researcher-initiated projects on a wide range of topics, the results of some of which have been used as inputs for policy formulation or for crafting viable solutions to concrete problems.

Unlike university-based graduate degree programmes or focused capacity building programmes like MAP, most of the MMRPs deal with inexperienced researchers, whose studies do not usually culminate in measurable outputs like a Masters or a PhD. Moreover, for many of the programmes, the processes of conducting participatory research are equally, if not more important than the outputs. Given these features, it is difficult to assess capacity building outcomes primarily on the basis of the number of individuals who obtain project funding or go through training. In the absence of systematic qualitative data on individual capacities, it is worth noting the country teams' observations regarding the palpable effects of the MMRPs on individual researchers in view of their low levels of baseline expertise. The Indian country team, for instance, commended the KRPLLD for building the capacity of a new breed of "barefoot researchers" who have begun to develop a research culture through their involvement in the programme. These researchers have incorporated their new learning in "spin-off" institutions like the Centre for Environment and Development, Sreyas (Prosperity) and Maithri (Friendship), which have arisen from projects funded by the KRPLLD.

Like the MMRPs, the APNLBP has enhanced the capacity of individual researchers, research institutions, NGOs and the grassroots sector, i.e. farmers. The principal investigators in the APNLBP research projects included a number of junior researchers. Apart from developing the capacity of young researchers in biotechnology research, the programme has also helped established research institutions and NGOs to diversify their activities to include non-traditional areas like micropropagation through tissue culture, vermiculture composting, production of bio-fertilizers and pesticides, integrated pest management systems, etc. Furthermore, the programme has exposed biotechnology scientists to the new methodology of participatory technology development.

On the other hand, the FTPP in Bolivia aims to develop and disseminate participatory methodologies for local communities in planning sustainable forest management systems, utilizing the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples. The programme has assisted an

unspecified number of university researchers' to conduct action-oriented research, requiring immersion in indigenous communities and understanding grassroots organization. Moreover, the FTPP has provided training for members of indigenous communities to become "barefoot researchers", some of whom have the potential to pursue careers in participatory research and planning. Institutionally, the FTPP has established national and regional networks of focal points for community forestry in its efforts to decentralize action. Finally, PIRN aims to contribute to the local development of indigenous peoples by training them to recover and reintroduce their lost technologies. It supports researchers who are accountable to the indigenous population, which decides on the extent and follow-up of projects, even though project proposals and outputs are subjected to peer review.

The direct impact of university-based graduate training programmes on the concrete development needs of the countries concerned is difficult to pinpoint, apart from their obvious contribution to the development of higher education institutions. Nevertheless, the local researchers interviewed in Bolivia, Nicaragua and Tanzania stressed that their programmes' research agendas and the topics selected for study are relevant to local needs. The Vietnam country team also highlighted the wider application of a number of techniques developed with SIDA/SAREC support. On the question of whether the programmes outside a university address development needs in greater measure than those in the university, the Vietnam country team argued convincingly that the need for various skills in developing societies is so great that all the programmes have special niches. Having experienced training under other academic capacity building programmes, like the SIDA/SAREC-funded FSRP, the members of the Vietnam country team claim that they have become more appreciative of the MMRP-type of participatory and development-oriented research. But while academic training can give researchers confidence and potentially can open their minds to participatory research, it is not a prerequisite for the development of participatory research capacities, as the KRPLLD experience shows. Nevertheless, it is imperative for the barefoot researchers to learn how to conceptualize and contextualize research problems even as they broaden their skills.

Notwithstanding their achievements and the visibility they have attained within a short time, the MMRPs have criticized themselves for the uneven quality of their research outputs. This problem does not bother the university-based graduate research programmes as much because academic standards and systems of quality assurance are in place. The issue of quality is also less problematic for the policy-oriented research programmes of MAP, VISED and the UNDP. International academic standards for the quantitative social science disciplines constitute the yardstick of these programmes. Moreover, since the stature and competence of researchers are believed to be important in ensuring that policymakers heed the implications of their policy studies, most of the researchers in the three programmes are well established and knowledgeable in the analytical tools of the relevant disciplines. The issue of quality is important but not as salient to the programmes closest in orientation to the MMRPs – APNLBP, PIRN and FTPP. The utility of the studies conducted under these programmes to concrete action is the gauge of their value. In the case of the APNLBP, technical quality is assured by the academically rooted but evolving standards in the field of biotechnology.

Quality assurance, however, seems to be more prominent for the MMRPs because of one distinguishable feature. With the exception of REPOA, which simultaneously undertakes substantive research and manages studies initiated by individuals and institutions outside the programme, the MMRPs serve as research facilitators rather than convenors of multidisciplinary teams of expert researchers. The research facilitated by the programmes through a competitive selection process ranges from academic studies to action research,

albeit within the framework of participatory development. From one viewpoint, the wide range augurs well for the MMRPs. The Indian Country Report, which likens the MMRP to the biblical sower of many seeds, admiringly remarked on the diversity of the issues selected by the researchers in Kerala, which the usual top-down research agenda approach could never have hoped to capture.

But precisely because they cast wider nets in societies with uneven research capacities, the MMRPs are more vulnerable to problems of research quality. To improve technical quality, the MMRPs have devised closer monitoring and mentoring schemes. These schemes include networks of senior researchers in agricultural institutes and the creation of two positions for senior research scientists in Vietnam; study circles of researchers in India and Bangladesh; academic advisers for projects in Bolivia; and tutorships for junior researchers by senior researchers in Nicaragua.

A major challenge facing the MMRPs and similar programmes that are aiming to build capacity for demand-driven research, and ultimately to produce useful knowledge that transcends disciplinary boundaries, is how to measure in qualitative and quantitative terms the output of process-oriented research with multiple outcomes. For programmes that are not premised on the traditional mode of knowledge production, technical quality is only one dimension of quality. Social relevance is another. Existing standards of science and scholarship are used to assess technical quality. But apprehending the nature of a specific development process that is largely invisible requires more than the usual research techniques. In addition to the traditional skills that the research community has absorbed, a nuanced reading of development that is iterative and gradual also entails “listening skills, the ability to combine an open and non-judgmental approach with enough understanding to make sense of and draw insight out of what one is observing”, and a capacity to reflect upon and intuit underlying movements. Clearly, the conventional indicators of quality in academic research, such as peer review, publications and citations in professional journals are not very relevant to a demand-driven, participatory research.

Developing meaningful indicators would require sifting through conventional measures, unpacking the dimensions of development research, and identifying possible qualitative indicators and measures of processes that do not lend themselves easily to formalization. Some potential indicators include the following:

- ? changes in attitudes to research (on the part of the general population as well as policymakers);
- ? the sensitivity and receptivity of researchers to local knowledge;
- ? the awareness of the importance of self-governance and the exercise of autonomy to decide on a research agenda that meets local interests;
- ? the popularization of the participatory approach to research and the process of learning from the masses;
- ? the commitment to the production of research results of quality and of relevance; the capacity to negotiate, design, implement and manage research programmes; and
- ? the determination to be accountable both to the local community and to the donor.

Regarding linkages, the links among the programmes within universities (CEPLAG, SIDA/SAREC in Tanzania, ENRECA) or among the universities covered by a particular programme in different countries (SIDA-SAREC in Nicaragua, Bolivia and Vietnam) are well established. In Latin America, the inter-university and inter-institution networks of

SUDESCA/DANIDA and PROIEB cut across countries. Moreover, innovative ways of linking Southern countries with donor assistance have been developed. For example, the new phase of the SIDA/SAREC programme in Bolivia will support the training of researchers in the social sciences. However, instead of going to a university in Sweden for disciplinary training (sandwich Masters and PhD courses), they will be able to pursue graduate degrees in reputable Latin American universities.

On the other hand, for programmes lodged outside the halls of academia, links with university-based researchers have taken different forms: academics have been directly involved in research projects as researchers (the MMRPs, MAP), consultants or trainers (the MMRPs, FTTP, PIRN). As for international networks, linkages with researchers in other parts of the world are evident in the programmes. Some researchers funded by university-based programmes have been able to present papers at conferences and to establish informal links with other researchers working in the same field. Some of the programmes also maintain linkages with research networks. For instance, the EPRC in Uganda has had extensive connections with the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC). A number of programmes (MAP in Bangladesh, the APNLBP in India, and the MMRPs) are part of umbrella programmes with related or similar projects in other countries. In the case of the MMRPs, funds have been set aside and used for joint workshops and exchanges among representatives and researchers of the programmes in other countries. It is notable, however, that while the MMRPs have the funding flexibility to allow them to interact and to exchange researchers, initiatives in this direction have not been as significant as one would expect.

### ***On the general application of the MMRP mode of research collaboration***

The mode of North-South cooperation operationalized in the MMRPs is most appropriate for research involving regional or local needs that are as close as possible to the ground, although it is important to stress the need for links to critical national and regional policymaking bodies. This mode of cooperation does not seem to be suitable for academic discipline-based capacity building programmes in the natural sciences such as those funded by SIDA/SAREC or DANIDA. The MMRP mode may be an appropriate model for university-based, problem-oriented capacity building programmes in the social sciences, and in multidisciplinary applied scientific fields such as plant breeding, biotechnology and environmental studies.

The researchers are cautious in generalizing the MMRP mode of North-South cooperation, with autonomy as its leitmotif, and applying it to other forms of research cooperation. For one, potential partners in the developing world represent conflicting or contradictory ideological priorities and power positions. To circumvent the dilemmas that might arise from linking up with groups that hold divergent views of development, the choice of partners who will work closely with groups whose interests ought be served (e.g. the poor) is critical. In bilateral cooperation involving governments, however, it would be a breach of protocol and an exercise of asymmetry for a donor to specify and insist on its chosen partner from among government agencies or local institutions.

### ***Concluding notes***

Having engaged in enlightening discussions with representatives of the donor agencies and the programmes, the country teams can only wish for more sharing among the resource persons interviewed for this study. It is in this light that this report concludes with a recommendation to create a forum for international scientific cooperation programmes in the

countries involved. Such a forum would not only reveal to the funding agencies and local programme managers their similarities and differences. It may also lead to an agenda-setting process whereby the research needs of the country are assessed by the relevant communities in the concrete contexts of geography, politics, economics and culture. It is hoped that the establishment of such a forum will enhance convergence on very basic assumptions and approaches to development and capacity building in the South and respect for divergent positions.

The proposed forum is only one of many possible strategies for bringing together donors and the research communities to reflect upon and discuss the modalities of capacity building they have chosen to support or participate in, in the light of their evolving philosophies of development and knowledge production. In this process they may reflect on the effectiveness and appropriateness of the modalities they are operationalizing within the prevailing political economic and social contexts. In assessing the corresponding achievements in harnessing science and technology for development, donors and recipients may reaffirm or revise the research modalities they have painstakingly developed over the years. In so doing, they may cover significantly more distance than they already have in pushing the current limits of capacity building for development-oriented and empowering research in the South.