

Findings from the BSU Review Report by Chr. Michelsen Institute, March 2013

In connection with the review of the first phase of the programme Building Stronger Universities in Developing Countries (BSU) Universities Denmark and Danida have agreed to highlight the main findings and conclusions from the review in the joint note. The note will supplement the review conducted by CMI and can serve as an easy reference point.

- 1) The partners in the South were generally satisfied with BSU and valued the focus of BSU on institutional capacity building, including the sandwich model used for capacity building of the staff member, and they did not see BSU as a funding programme for research activities.
- 2) The platforms were generally aware of the other Danish and international support possibilities in terms of research funding. They also highly appreciated the additional grant for communication and dissemination.
- 3) The platforms were generally pleased with the current BSU structures in terms of management and communication although it had taken some time in the start-up phase to get all the practical things working smoothly.
- 4) Some platforms suggested that BSU also could further support more general capacity building at the various institutions, e.g. support infrastructure, IT, capacity building of non-academic staff members.
- 5) The thematic areas: 1) Environment and Climate; 2) Growth and Employment; 3) Human Health, and 4) Stability, Democracy and Rights – to some extent seem to be less relevant when it comes to implementation of the specific activities, however, they function as an organizing principle. In particular for “Stability, Democracy and Rights” the themes played an important role at the institutions, and the themes were seen as highly relevant in the context of three countries.
- 6) BSU-programme has in Denmark facilitated a stronger knowledge sharing and networking among the Danish development researchers
- 7) The four platforms have worked much more together and coordinated than originally planned/envisaged.
- 8) The BSU-model – support to institutional capacity building – seems to be even more relevant and higher valued at institutions outside the capitals – e.g. at Gulu, Maseno, Tribhuvan, Zanzibar, Sokoine, KNUST, Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Centre. The competition from other donors also seems to be less at those institutions than at institutions in Accra and Dar.

- 9) Donor coordination and more strategic approaches to institutional capacity building at the various institutions in the South were generally lacking.
- 10) In terms of phase two, the partners in the South were interested in more South-South and platform-platform interaction. They also were in favour of longer project periods than two years.
- 11) Most of the platforms mentioned challenges with their heavy workloads, limited incentives structures in BSU-programme and that the OH at 7% was too low for the partners in the South. The report states that "it will be difficult to protect the sustainability of the BSU program if issues of compensation and management of staff workloads are not adequately handled in the next phase."
- 12) The report has the following main recommendation, based on the finding that the institutional commitments have not been adequately reflected in the working conditions of the individual staff members: "It is recommended that the BSU program in Phase 2 raise the issue of staff workloads and arrangements for compensation. As long as the BSU program is about institutional cooperation there need to be institutional support for individuals involved in the implementation of the program".