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# Evaluation of the NUFU Programme

Norwegian Council of Universities' Programme  
for Development Research and Education



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# Evaluation of the NUFU Programme

Norwegian Council of Universities' Programme  
for Development Research and Education

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## List of abbreviations

Danida	Danish International Development Assistance
DGIS	Directorate General for International Cooperation, the Netherlands
ENRECA	Bilateral Programme for Enhancement of Research Capacity in Developing Countries (Danida funded)
fte	Full-time employee
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MERCA	Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs
MFA (UD)	Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MMRP	Multi-annual, Multidisciplinary Research Programmes (DGIS funded)
NCU (UR)	Norwegian Council of Universities
NIFU	Norwegian Institute for Studies in Research and Higher Education
NOK	Norwegian Kroner
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NSS	North-South-South (relations)
Nuffic	Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education
NUFU	Norwegian Council of Universities' Programme for Development Research and Education
RCN (NFR)	Research Council of Norway
SAREC	Department for Research Cooperation (Sida)
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SIU	Centre for International University Cooperation
S-S	South-South (relations)
UiDs	Universities in Developing Countries
UiNs	Universities in Norway
VC	Vice-Chancellor

## Facts and Figures

	<b>First Agreement 1991–1995</b>	<b>Second Agreement 1996–2000</b>
Fixed allocations	NOK 175 million	NOK 230 million
Extra allocation	NOK 9.9 million 1994: Sudan-Sahel-Ethiopia Programme	NOK 60.2 million 1996: South-South cooperation, 10 million 1997: Extra allocation, 5 mill. 1998: Extra allocation, 5 mill. 1998: Latin America, 24 mill. 1998: South Africa, 16.2 mill.
SIU staff situation	1991–93: 1.5 full-time employees 1993–95: 2.5 full-time employees	1996– : 4.25 full-time employees + 1 full time employee general office assistance
	<b>First Agreement 1991–1995</b>	<b>Reporting period 1996–1998</b>
Number of countries involved in NUFU projects	16	22
Number of institutions involved in the South (UiDs)	23	33
Number of Institutions involved in Norway (UiNs)	9	11
UiD researchers	228	526
UiN researchers	158	335
PhD training completed	55	26
PhD training ongoing	68	212
Master's training completed	140	165
Master's training ongoing	154	418
Other training completed	28	7
Other training ongoing	28	22
Research documents produced	705	690
Major areas of collaboration (% of allocations)		
<i>Framework agreements</i>	31.3%	1.4%
<i>Medical sciences</i>	21.1%	21.6%
<i>Natural sciences</i>	16.3%	10.3%
<i>Social sciences</i>	8.6%	18.4%
<i>Agricultural sciences</i>	7.9%	14.6%
Allocations by region		
<i>Africa</i>	87.7%	70.2%
<i>Africa networks</i>		7.1%
<i>Asia</i>	10.8%	11%
<i>Latin America</i>	1.6%	7.7%
<i>Near East</i>		4.1%
Compensation of UiNs (% of allocations)	28.8%	30.3%
Top 5 countries by % of allocations (excl. network funds)	Ethiopia - 25.4%	Ethiopia - 13.9%
	Tanzania - 14.4%	Zimbabwe - 10.7%
	Mali - 12.1%	South Africa - 10.4%
	Uganda - 10.1%	Uganda - 8.8%
	Sudan - 8.0%	Tanzania - 8.2%

## Executive summary

The NUFU programme aims to build up research and research competence in developing countries, through cooperation between university and research institutions in Norway and developing countries. The main guiding principles in the NUFU approach are equality in the cooperation, the partnership model, mutual benefit and the prevalence of Southern needs in identifying areas for cooperation. The programme operates through individual projects, and cooperation is usually initiated through a bottom-up process.

Under the first Agreement (1991–1995), NUFU sponsored 55 projects. In the second Agreement (1996–2000) this has increased to 99 projects, 23 of which are continuations of first Agreement projects. 77.5% of the total funds made available to the NUFU programme have been allocated to projects with African institutions. The major disciplines in which collaboration occurs are the medical sciences (21.4% of total allocations), social sciences (14.3%), natural sciences (12.8%) and agricultural sciences (11.8%).

Under the first Agreement, 228 researchers from UiDs participated in the NUFU programme. Under the second Agreement this number has increased to 526. On the Norwegian side, 158 researchers participated during the first Agreement and 335 are participating during the second.

In the South, the NUFU programme has made important contributions to the staffing situation at the partner institutions. This can be seen from the number of participants who have obtained higher degrees or who are in the process of obtaining them – 386 candidates have completed either a Master's or PhD degree and some 850 are in the process of following the programmes. Approximately 30% of the candidates are female.

In the opinions of the partners on both sides, research results are good. In the period 1991–98, close to 1,400 research documents

were produced, approximately 16% of which have been published in international journals.

The partnership approach is much appreciated by the partners, especially those in the South. It provides the Southern institutes with structural access to information, the latest technology, professional networks, and publication outlets within a framework of long-term and mutually beneficial relationships built on respect and shared interests. The partnership approach allows for broad participation in collaboration projects and a mutually beneficial exchange of staff and students.

In Norway, the NUFU programme has helped enormously to make universities aware of the importance of and opportunities for collaboration with institutions in the South. The programme has played an important role in encouraging the universities to internationalize their research and education programmes. At societal level, it has been successful in rallying political support and in portraying to society at large an ideal of helping developing countries which shows results both in the South and in Norway. The NUFU programme is now regarded as an important and strategic tool in supporting tertiary education and research in developing countries.

Overall, NUFU adheres to the principles of Norwegian development cooperation, in contributing to capacity-building and institutional strengthening in developing countries which have been given priority for bilateral support. In addition, the topics of NUFU collaboration – with an emphasis on medical, social, natural and agricultural sciences – largely fall within the priority theme areas of Norwegian development aid. The programme is not particularly strong on gender, in the sense that the projects do not specifically address gender issues.

The above observations have led us to the conclusion that NUFU can be regarded as a

successful programme. It has produced impressive results considering the modest levels of funding. Its achievements can be attributed to the personal commitment of the people involved and the decentralized and flexible way in which the programme is implemented. In our view, NUFU is in essence a programme for and of individual researchers, despite the claim that it is building relationships between institutions.

The decentralized management system of the NUFU programme is highly appreciated by all partners. It makes the programme flexible, the administration tailor-made, and project implementation adjustable to changing local circumstances. It also has a number of negative aspects, however. The many different modalities of project implementation and administration, and differences in the application of rules and regulations cause coordination problems and hamper the institutionalization of the programme.

The programme has no sanctions or other measures to deal with non-performers or under-performers. Everything is a matter of self-regulation. This may have implications for the optimal use of available funds. We therefore recommend that NUFU develops, introduces, and enforces a uniform system of guidelines and procedures for the administration, monitoring and evaluation of the programme and projects.

The decision-making process in the NUFU programme is not transparent and is largely controlled by the Norwegian institutions. The Southern partners have no insight or say in project selection or fund allocations. To improve on the programme's principles of ownership and equality, the Southern partners need to be given a substantive role in the final decision-making on project selection. This can be achieved by including Southern representatives in the NUFU Committee, by setting up a parallel committee in the South, or by locating the committee in the South with a number of Norwegian representatives. In addition, there should be regular meetings with the rectors of the major partner institutions (Norwegian and

Southern) to discuss programme direction and other matters.

In the NUFU programme, quality assurance is internal and decentralized. Although improvements have been made over the years, this aspect of the programme needs to be addressed further. Most project proposals are weak on defining clear objectives, targets and verifiable indicators to measure progress. Progress reports lack reflection on performance. The external evaluations have been useful, but should have been given better instructions and more time. In order to improve the transparency of project selection, it is advisable to create a network of referees to scrutinize NUFU applications on the basis of criteria such as quality, relevance, sustainability, commitment, feasibility, the qualifications of the researchers and coordinators, the potential for S-S partnerships, and the inclusion of gender topics.

Most institutions in the South lack the structure and capacity to formulate a research agenda and to prioritize their research activities accordingly. Decisions on the relevance of the topics for collaboration are therefore usually not taken on the basis of a careful analysis of societal or institutional needs. Nevertheless, the collaboration topics do seem to be relevant in one way or another, and it is gratifying to note that the Norwegian partners do take the needs of the Southern partners seriously in deciding on projects.

The institutionalization of the programme and its projects at the partner institutions is still weak. The ad hoc and bottom-up way in which projects have been identified and the decentralized system of project management, do not augur well for the institutionalization of project activities. At institutions with a bigger portfolio we have observed that NUFU coordinating committees and coordinators play a positive role in institutionalizing the programme.

The financial sustainability of project activities is problematic in many of the Southern partner

institutions due to tight and decreasing recurrent budgets. In the NUFU programme insufficient attention is devoted to sustainability in project applications, implementation or monitoring. Broader-based and multi-faceted projects appear to have a better chance of achieving academic sustainability. A post-graduate fellowship of 2 years would help the UiDs to retain young and promising staff.

Because of the funding principles of the programme, sustainability depends heavily on the commitment of the Norwegian institutions and the idealism of the Norwegian researchers. Although this is one of the programme's major strengths, it also makes it vulnerable. If the programme is to be sustainable, enough good Norwegian researchers must continue to participate in the projects. This means that the project overheads should be realistic, professional or financial compensation adequate and the continuity of researchers ensured.

We recommend differentiation of the aims of the NUFU programme – research collaboration, capacity building, pilot projects, networking – with adjusted implementation modalities and compensation levels for Norwegian staff inputs. This would clarify the cost-benefit analysis for the UiNs and make it much easier to establish a link with other support programmes (e.g. NORAD's Framework Agreements). NUFU, RCN, NORAD, the Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs and the MFA should work together in creating opportunities for UiN staff, young researchers and students to stay for longer research periods at UiDs. Norwegian institutions, for their part, should anchor involvement in the NUFU programme in their institutional policies, and operationalize their commitments in terms of adequate administrative support.

Networks of institutions in the South with Norwegian participation are much appreciated by the partners in the South. The existing networks function with varying degrees of success. The conceptual directions and operational requirements for successful networking were not in place when they were

first set up, but are being developed along the way. NUFU should give more support to networks in terms of funding as well as in providing a set of guidelines on how to establish, organize and manage network relations.

Through a process of "learning-by-doing" the NUFU programme has achieved a lot in terms of improvements in management and administration. NUFU has managed to gradually improve its mode of operations. It has introduced external evaluations and reviews, expanded and professionalized the secretariat's staff, improved its annual reporting and set up a database and website. The NUFU Secretariat (SIU) has performed very well with a small but highly qualified and motivated staff.

We think that if the SIU were to have a more independent position from the university system it could play a more objective role in terms of assessing internal rankings, project applications and allocations, and also in terms of the external monitoring and evaluation of project performance. We are also of the opinion that the SIU's tasks should be expanded by increasing its facilitating role in terms of giving workshops at UiDs in portfolio management (preferably using expertise from NUFU UiD partners), providing training in project planning and project cycle management, and in financial management.

By way of conclusion, we observe that NUFU is a successful programme in terms of results and satisfied participants, but the way in which the programme operates does not in many ways conform exactly to its objectives and guiding principles. We have identified four major weaknesses:

1. insufficient coherence between the aims, the principles and the strategy of the programme;
2. lack of transparency in decision-making at programme level and willingness to involve the Southern partners in this process;

3. weak institutionalization of the programme and the projects in the partner institutions;
4. poor collaboration with other (Norwegian) support schemes.

A fifth could be added, i.e. the decentralized system, but this is also one of the strengths of the programme.

Our overall recommendation is that the programme should continue, because it plays a valuable role in Norwegian development assistance strategy, not only in the South but also at home. The programme should retain its strengths (i.e. the flexibility of implementation and personal commitment as a basis for collaboration) and address its shortcomings (e.g. lack of transparency, inadequate procedures for quality assurance and accountability). Southern partners should get involved in the decision-making processes at programme level. A sustainable quality assurance mechanism should be incorporated into the model with the emphasis on the detection of shortcomings and instituting the necessary remedial measures.

The objectives of the programme and the implications of its underlying principles should be reviewed in view of present discrepancies in the system and of new and immanent challenges, threats and opportunities. The stakeholders (the Norwegian and Southern partners, the MFA, RCN, NCU, NORAD, and the Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs) should review the programme's

present and future mission and approach within the broader framework of Norwegian policies and programmes that support the strengthening of research and higher education in developing countries. Together they need to agree on the specific role that the NUFU programme could and should play within overall policy, taking into consideration the specific strengths which academic partnership can contribute. Once all parties are clear on the role of NUFU and of the other schemes, and their complementarity has been defined, the scope and focus of the schemes can be determined and fine-tuned.

So far the relationships between NUFU, NORAD and the Research Council of Norway have led to few tangible and structural collaborations between the programmes they represent. This can be explained by differences in the perceptions, mandates and cultures of the organizations. Now that NORAD has become the contractual partner of the University Council of Norway, and relations between NUFU and NORAD have taken a constructive turn, we believe that there are good opportunities for linking the NUFU programme with NORAD programmes to the benefit of both. NUFU and NORAD have to work out collaboration arrangements for those institutions where both run projects or programmes. In this scenario, the partner institutions in the South should be encouraged (and supported) to play a pro-active role in setting the research and external support agenda.

# 1 Introduction

The NUFU programme is based on an agreement between the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Norwegian Council of Universities (NCU). The agreement covers long-term collaboration in research and higher education between universities and research institutions in Norway and partner institutions in developing countries. Funds for the NUFU programme are made available through 5-year agreements between the MFA and NUFU.

The present – independent – evaluation of the NUFU programme is foreseen in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ “Strategy for strengthening research and higher education connected to Norway’s relations with developing countries” (January 1999), and was carried out at the end of the second Agreement (1996–2000). Since the programme has been in effective operation for some time now, the evaluation should be able to focus on a substantive assessment of policies, approaches, strategies and practices set up by the various parties both in Norway and in the partner countries, and on an assessment of how far these contribute to competence-building and increased South-South cooperation.

The evaluators wish to express their sincere thanks to all those in Norway and the countries

in which field visits were carried out who, without any hesitation, made their time available for open discussions with the team on the programme and the projects. We were impressed by the openness of everyone we talked to and have interpreted this as a sign of confidence in the programme and commitment to its underlying principles. We would like to thank the leadership of the institutions in Norway and in the South, the NUFU coordinators and international offices for their excellent cooperation in the organization of the visits to their institutions, and NORAD for making available its excellent conference facilities for the feedback seminar. A special word of thanks is addressed to Gunnvor Berge and Tor Gjerde, Advisers of the Policy and Planning Evaluation Staff and on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs responsible for the evaluation, for the stimulating interest shown in the progress of the evaluation. Finally, the staff of the SIU needs to be commended and thanked for providing the evaluation team with all the necessary documentation and for relentlessly answering many requests for additional information and data in a very efficient and competent manner. The cooperation of all mentioned above was exceptionally good and it made the evaluation exercise a very enjoyable assignment.

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## 2 The NUFU Agreement in brief

On 19 March 1991, the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA/UD) and the Norwegian Council of Universities (NCU/UR) signed an agreement which had as its main goal to contribute towards competence-building in developing countries through cooperation between universities, university colleges and research institutions in Norway, and corresponding institutions in developing countries, primarily in Sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia, Central America and the Middle East<sup>1</sup>. This Agreement, normally referred to as the NUFU programme, had a total budget of NOK 175 million for the period 1991–95, the average annual budget being about NOK 35 million. After an evaluation in 1994<sup>2</sup>, the Agreement was prolonged for another period (1996–2000) and the document was signed in October 1995. For the period 1996–2000 the MFA has provided a total of NOK 290 million to the programme<sup>3</sup>. In March 1999 NUFU had approved and allocated funds for 99 cooperation projects of two or more years' duration.

The Committee for Development and Research (NUFU Committee), a sub-committee of the NCU, is responsible for the NUFU programme. The Centre for International University Cooperation (SIU), which falls directly under the NCU, serves as programme secretariat and carries out the day-to-day administration of the programme. Responsibility for carrying out the projects lies with the cooperating institutions, and with the Norwegian partner as the overall coordinator of the project. The cooperation is based on general agreements of cooperation between the institutions.

Several types of cooperation are possible under the Agreement:

- Research cooperation
- Education and training of researchers (Master and PhD education)
- Support for the development of new Master's and PhD programmes
- Training of personnel (technicians, administrative personnel)
- Provision of equipment and improvement of facilities

Activities supported by the NUFU programme should primarily take place at the universities in the developing countries. The Agreement is based on the assumption that the Norwegian universities (UiNs) will cover their own salary costs, so that financial support is provided only for expenses connected to project implementation. In the second phase (1996–2000), a total of 33 institutions from 22 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America and 11 Norwegian institutions have been involved in the programme.

The NUFU programme has the following guiding principles:

- The needs and priorities of the institutions in developing countries (UiDs) are to form the basis for building up binding co-operative relationships between the parties.
- The development of competence is to take place primarily at institutions in the developing countries and shall be based on

1) Agreement between the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Norwegian Council of Universities concerning development of competence at universities and research institutions in developing countries.

2) Chr. Michelsen Institute, Evaluation of the NUFU Agreement, 1994.

3) NOK 230 million in fixed allocations, and NOK 60.2 million in extra allocations.

the principal of equality between the cooperating institutions.

- The programme is to be administered in accordance with ruling Norwegian policies governing aid to developing countries and is to be coordinated with Norwegian overseas development aid.
- The Norwegian Council of Universities will contribute towards a coordinated Norwegian research and higher education programme addressing developing countries, *inter alia* through contact with the Research Council of Norway.
- When implementing the various programmes and projects, use is to be made of internationally recognized competence in the Norwegian research and universities system.
- The programme includes long-term cooperation agreements between UiNs and UiDs for initiatives to expand UiD competence.
- Support for infrastructure initiatives in UiDs may be provided in connection with the long-term cooperation agreements.

In addition to these guiding principles, the NUFU programme is committed to a number of specific goals<sup>4</sup>:

- to concentrate activities geographically so as to achieve, among other things, the best possible results from and concerning the regions;
- to include a women's perspective in dialogues with cooperating partners in the South and compose Terms of Reference for

reviews and assessment aimed at gender integration;

- to use South-South cooperation as a means of building regional competence in developing countries;
- to achieve close cooperation and optimal coordination with authorities in Norway and to cooperate and exchange information with similar institutions in other countries and with relevant international organizations;
- to develop, pass on and increase knowledge about cooperating countries and the functioning of the NUFU cooperation programme among a broad spectrum of local, central, Northern and Southern stakeholders and players in the field of university research.

In the view of the stakeholders, the NUFU programme should not be seen as a development aid programme but as a programme for academic cooperation which strengthens research environments in Southern institutions. NUFU's comparative advantage over other instruments for supporting institutions in the South is that it is founded on professional collaboration and is run by the universities themselves. There is no political interference in the programme. According to the institutions and NUFU researchers in Norway the programme has a broader scope and reach than the NORAD capacity-building programme, and offers an ideal channel to identify new avenues and opportunities for institutional support outside the bilateral framework. Because of its specific character and mandate, the NUFU programme should be seen as a catalyst that can prepare the foundations for other types of support and activities.

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4) NUFU's Strategy 1996–2000 (Section: Principles of NUFU Programme).

### 3 Aims of the evaluation

According to the Terms of Reference<sup>5</sup>, the aim of the evaluation is to assess: 1) the programme's performance in relation to its stated objectives; 2) the major strengths and weaknesses of the programme; and 3) the comparative advantage of the NUFU programme. In particular, the evaluation is to focus on the extent to which the programme has been successful in developing capacity that is given institutional and national priority in developing countries, and in contributing to South-South cooperation. Throughout the evaluation, it is important to emphasize the interest of Southern stakeholders.

With regard to an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the programme, the evaluation is to pay particular attention to the programme's administration and organization (including institutional and financial arrangements), and the programme's results in terms of quality, relevance and sustainability. In addition, attention has to be given to the extent to which the programme conforms with the main priorities of Norwegian development cooperation, and to which the programme has followed up the recommendations of the evaluation of the NUFU agreement in 1994.

In line with the MFA's intention to continue to support the NUFU programme, the evaluation is expected to come up with recommendations that address the implications of the conclusions, and to propose adjustments and improvements, at the level of both programme design and implementation. The findings of the evaluation of the present phase of NUFU cooperation should enable NORAD and the NCU to draw up a new Agreement.

#### 3.1 Comments on the Terms of Reference

In assessing the impact of an international cooperation programme, the effects of the

programme must be sought at project level. The extent to which these effects correspond with the objectives and expected outputs of the programme will depend on the effectiveness of implementation, together with the opportunities provided by the context in which the project takes place. The design and operational mechanisms of the programme have a major influence on the way projects are identified and implemented, and for that reason constitute an important factor in the analysis of the success and impact of those projects. Experience with other capacity-building and cooperation programmes shows that there is often a gap between objectives at overall programme level and at the level of individual programmes/projects. This might lead to a situation in which: (1) the success of the programme as a whole is hampered by the fact that the implementing institutions are mainly focused on achieving project objectives and have less affinity with the overall programme objectives and concerns (such as competence-building, institutional ownership, gender issues and sustainability); and (2) the projects do not constitute a coherent programme to enhance competence-building at the institutions in developing countries.

For this reason, the evaluation has been designed to assess the performance of the programme in view of its overall aims and to analyse the extent to which the assumptions, design and operational mechanisms of the programme constitute positive or negative conditions for achieving the programme's major objectives. Results and activities at project level have been analysed to the extent that was necessary to highlight the influence of programmatic issues on project results.

The ToR also ask for a concise comparison of the design, mechanisms and results of the NUFU programme with similar research capacity-building programmes to enable lessons

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5) See Annex 1, Terms of Reference, Evaluation of the NUFU programme.

to be learnt. Three of these programmes have been included in the comparative study: the Danida funded ENRECA programme<sup>6</sup>, the Multi-annual, Multidisciplinary Research Programme (MMRP) supported by the Netherlands Directorate General for

International Cooperation (DGIS), and the Swedish Bilateral Research Cooperation Programme, funded by the Department for Research Cooperation (SAREC) of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

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6) ENRECA: Bilateral Programme for Enhancement of Research Capacity in Developing Countries

## 4 Methodology

The evaluation team collected the necessary data and information from three sources: relevant documents, the NUFU database and the stakeholders in the programme. The evaluation started with a study of available documents on the programme and its results, i.e., the text of the NUFU Agreement, the NUFU strategy paper, minutes of NUFU Committee meetings, project documents, external evaluation reports, internal notes and guidelines for programme implementation. In addition, MFA and NORAD policy documents on development aid strategies and research capacity-building in particular were consulted<sup>7</sup>.

The data on the individual projects that were incorporated in the NUFU database were checked and supplemented, to establish quantitative indicators for an assessment of the achievements of the NUFU programme during the 1st and 2nd Agreement periods. A synthesis was made of four external evaluations carried out since 1996, rating the 39 projects covered in these evaluations according to a number of performance indicators.

Stakeholders in Norway were interviewed during two rounds of interviews. In the first round the emphasis of the interviews was on policy issues, and interviews were held with representatives of the MFA, NORAD, the Research Council of Norway (RCN), the NCU, the Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs, the NUFU Committee, the NUFU Secretariat (SIU) and with leading figures at the Norwegian institutions involved in the NUFU programme. These included Rectors, Heads of International Offices, Directors of Research and Chairpersons of NUFU Committees.

In the second round of interviews in Norway, the emphasis was on project implementation and management issues. Interviews were held with coordinators and researchers of NUFU projects and members of project assessment boards at five major – in terms of NUFU participation – institutions in Norway<sup>8</sup>. During both interview rounds in Norway, about 110 persons were interviewed<sup>9</sup>.

On the basis of a set of criteria and consultations with MFA, SIU and NORAD, seven institutions in six countries were selected for a field visit<sup>10</sup>. The main selection criteria were the volume and composition of the project portfolios at the UiDs, the duration of participation in the NUFU programme, and the presence of NORAD support and/or other capacity-building programmes at the UiDs. Networks were added as a separate category to be assessed during the field visits. At the institutions, separate interviews were held with leaders and administrators, Heads of Faculties and Departments, coordinators and researchers of NUFU projects, beneficiaries of staff development schemes, and persons involved in other donor programmes. Outside the universities, meetings were held with the Ministries of (Higher) Education, Norwegian Embassies (if represented), and representatives of other donor agencies and research programmes. At the end of the field visits, debriefing meetings were held with the leaders of the institutions and the NUFU programme coordinator. In all, the country evaluation teams interviewed about 210 people.

After the country visits had been completed, the evaluation team organized a feedback seminar in Oslo with the aim of presenting a number of stakeholders from Norway and the South with

7) A list of references is attached.

8) University of Oslo, University of Bergen, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Agricultural University of Norway, University of Tromsø.

9) Annex 2 contains a list of all institutions visited by members of the evaluation team, in Norway and abroad.

10) University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, University of Zimbabwe, Makerere University in Uganda, Tribhuvan University in Nepal, Universidad Nacional Heredia in Costa Rica, University of the North and University of the Western Cape, both in South Africa.

the preliminary findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation, and to discuss with them major issues and concerns that the evaluation had brought out. All major institutions in Norway, the MFA, NORAD, RCN, the NUFU Committee and two partner institutions from the South were represented at the seminar. The meeting provided the evaluation team with valuable feedback, enriched the analysis and benefited the reporting process.

The evaluation team was able to rely on the excellent cooperation of the NUFU secretariat in gaining access to relevant programme and project documents and data. Very helpful instruments included the extremely informative NUFU website, the NUFU database, annual programme reports and the external evaluation reports. When using the database, the consistency and accurateness of some of the data proved to be not up to standard, necessitating some adjustment. The project files did not contain the sort of information needed to assess the success of the projects and the programme at large. This was due to the fact that, at the start of the programme and the projects, no criteria were formulated to enable their success to be measured, and that reporting is usually restricted to a description of activities and a listing of results rather than discussion of progress.

For the comparative study of NUFU with three other research capacity-building programmes,

documentation was obtained from the respective donor agencies and interviews were held with officers responsible for these programmes. The methodology for the study consisted of a desk study of policy documents, agreements, instructions, guidelines, procedures, evaluation and review reports and other relevant documents. Some questions and issues resulting from the desk study were included in the Terms of Reference for the field visits as part of the NUFU evaluation.

The time available for the study (15 days) limited the extent to which the programmes could be analysed and described. External evaluation and review reports, both at programme and country and/or project level, were scarce and evaluations at programme level had not been carried out in recent years. As a consequence, interesting observations could be made but no firm conclusions drawn regarding the comparative advantages of the programmes in terms of programme design and performance.

The evaluation commenced at the beginning of November 1999. The first interview round in Norway was carried out in November–December of that year, and the second in January–February 2000. The field visits, varying in length from eight to 15 days, were conducted in February and March. The feedback seminar took place on 23 March 2000, in Oslo.

## 5 Results

Under the first Agreement, the NUFU programme sponsored 55 projects, under the second Agreement 99 projects (23 being continuations of first Agreement projects). Of the combined total of 154 projects, a majority of 108 involved collaboration with institutions in Africa. 77.5% of the total funds made available to the NUFU programme have been allocated to projects with African institutions, which

complies with one of the principles of the programme. The programme sponsors five North-South-South (NSS) networks with partners in Africa. Major disciplines in which collaboration occurs are the medical sciences (21.4% of total allocations), social sciences (14.3%), natural sciences (12.8%), and agricultural sciences (11.8%)<sup>11</sup>.

**Table 1. Number of projects by region, 1st and 2nd Agreement**

	<b>1st</b>	<b>2nd</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Region</b>			
Africa	41	67	108
Asia	12	14	26
Latin America	2	8	10
Near East		5	5
Networks (Africa)		5	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>154</b>

While the original emphasis of the NUFU programme was very much on research collaboration between researchers in Norway and in the South, it was soon realized that this was not possible without building capacity at the partner institutions in the South, especially at the Master's and PhD levels. The NUFU programme has successfully adapted to this new reality and has made important contributions to the staffing situation at the partner institutions. This can be judged from the number of participants who have obtained higher degrees or who are in the process of obtaining them – 386 candidates have completed either a Master's or PhD degree and some 850 are in the process of obtaining them.

Of all Master's degree and PhD candidates in the NUFU programme, about 30% are female.

Few projects address directly or indirectly gender issues, either in research or teaching. In 1999, the NUFU programme organized a seminar on how to deal with gender issues in NUFU projects. The valuable recommendations that were made need to be followed up<sup>12</sup>.

The programme improved research facilities at the UiDs through the provision of equipment and consumables. In the opinions of the partners on both sides, research results are good. In the period 1991–98, close to 1,400 research documents were produced of which approximately 16% have been published in

11) All quantitative data on the NUFU projects have been obtained from the NUFU database, complemented with information from project files and financial reports.

12) NUFU Gender Seminar report. University of Tromsø, June 1999.

international journals. Others are under preparation, and more will emerge from current research.

The NUFU Secretariat has created platforms to discuss the research results of NUFU projects in Norway. The platforms are attended by the Norwegian institutions, NORAD, the MFA and the RCN. In 1998 the topic of the research seminar was Health and Nutrition, in 1999 Agriculture and Fisheries.

It was mentioned to the evaluation team that opportunities for research and staff development constitute an important instrument for the retention of staff in under-resourced institutions. It is an incentive for staff to stay on even though salaries and working conditions are felt to be unsatisfactory.

Under the first Agreement, 228 researchers from UiDs participated in the NUFU programme. In the second Agreement this number has increased to 526. On the Norwegian side, 158 researchers participated during the first Agreement and 335 are participating in the second. The files of the projects that began under the first Agreement and have continued under the second give us some indication of the continuity and renewal of researchers in the programme. In the 23 projects that have continued, 80 of the original 144 researchers that participated on both sides have stayed on. In the second phase 155 new researchers joined, bringing the total number of researchers to 235. Hence, in these projects more than half of the researchers under the first Agreement stayed on the programme while double that number of new researchers joined the projects.

**Table 2. Numbers of researchers, staff development, and research output, 1st and 2nd Agreement**

	<b>1st Agreement</b>	<b>2nd Agreement</b>
UiD researchers	228	526
UiN researchers	158	335
PhD training completed	55	26
PhD training ongoing	68	212
Master's training completed	140	165
Master's training ongoing	154	418
Other training completed	28	7
Other training ongoing	28	22
Research documents produced	705	690

In a number of projects, Norwegian students have participated in research and teaching activities. Their contributions are highly appreciated by the Southern institutions. The participation of Norwegian students broadens the base of the cooperation, spreads the benefits of the collaboration more equally between the partners, and creates interest in international cooperation (in research and education) among

a future generation of researchers and policy-makers.

In the principal partner institutions in Norway and in the South, involvement in the programme has led to the creation of capacity to handle externally funded cooperation programmes. Structures have been put in place to facilitate the administration and management of projects.

On the basis of this experience and capacity, the institutions have been able to attract other externally funded projects.

In Norway, the NUFU programme has helped enormously in making universities aware of the importance and opportunities of collaboration with institutions in the South. NUFU has played an important role stimulating the universities to internationalize their research and education programmes. All institutions find it important now to have partner institutions in the South. Academics have been introduced to new issues and perspectives, new areas of specialization have been developed, and development issues have been integrated in teaching programmes. Staff and students have been exposed to international academia, which has led to a more international attitude at the institutions.

The bigger institutions in Norway have established international degree programmes and international students come to Norway to study with fellowships provided by NORAD and the Quota system<sup>13</sup>. Some of the institutions have given international cooperation with universities in the South high priority in their institutional policies and have allocated a percentage of their budget to that purpose. Applications submitted to the RCN for grants to conduct development research have

dramatically increased. As a result of the increased interest, and the wish to facilitate partnership between Norwegian researchers and researchers from the South, the RCN has established a collaboration scheme called "Partners in the South".

Over the years, the NUFU Committee and partners in Norway have been successful in acquiring political support for the programme, and in portraying to society at large an ideal of helping developing countries which shows results both in the South and in Norway. The NUFU programme is now regarded as an important and strategic tool in supporting tertiary education and research in developing countries. The MFA's strategy paper for strengthening research and higher education<sup>14</sup> underlines the importance of institutions of higher learning and research in development processes, and the importance of supporting these institutions in the South to fulfil this role.

NUFU has also managed to gradually improve its mode of operations. It has shown a willingness to improve its administration, introduced external evaluations and reviews, increased and professionalized the secretariat's staff, improved its annual reporting and set up a database and website.

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13) The Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs makes 1,200 fellowships a year available to the institutions to enable foreign students to participate in Norwegian academic programmes.

14) Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Strategy for strengthening research and higher education connected to Norway's relations with developing countries, January 1999.

## 6 Compliance with Norwegian development aid policies

According to the 1995 Parliamentary report (white paper)<sup>15</sup> on Norwegian policy towards developing countries, the overriding objective is to contribute to the alleviation of poverty by supporting development efforts in the following areas:

- economic development, with special emphasis on agriculture and local productive activities,
- social development, with special emphasis on education and health, promotion of peace, human rights, democracy and good governance, sound management of the global environment and biological diversity;
- promotion of equal rights and opportunities for women and men in all areas of society;
- prevention and alleviation of distress arising from conflicts and natural disasters.

Much emphasis is placed on the local ownership of development processes and on strengthening the capacity of owners or implementers. Providing support for institutional strengthening and capacity-building is a priority area in Norwegian development cooperation. In this respect, universities are seen as institutions that are crucial to society and to a development process based on knowledge and learning.

Priority regions for bilateral development cooperation are Southern and Eastern Africa, South Asia and Central America. In these regions a number of priority countries have been identified for long-term capacity-building and institutional development. The aim is to enter into special agreements with these countries. These priority countries are:

*Africa:* Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

*Asia:* Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

*Central America:* Nicaragua.

The NUFU programme allocations are more or less in accordance with the preferred countries for bilateral cooperation. Under the first Agreement, 67.1% of total NUFU funds were allocated to collaboration with institutions in priority countries. Under the second Agreement, this figure has declined to 60,8%, including funds allocated to networks in Africa. This proportional decline is due to extra allocations made available by the MFA in 1998 for collaboration with institutions in South Africa (NOK 16.2 million), and Central America (particularly Guatemala; NOK 24 million). These funds were provided to NUFU in the context of a decision by the Norwegian government to support the peace process in these countries.

The main disciplines in which collaboration occurs are the medical sciences, social sciences, natural sciences and agricultural sciences. The projects in these disciplines absorb about 65% of all allocated funds under the second Agreement. These disciplines contribute to improvements in the economic and social spheres, which complies with the priority areas of Norwegian development assistance.

Table 3 gives an indication of the female participation in the staff development and training component of the projects. Approximately 30% of all trainees are female. We are not in a position to rate this figure in a positive or negative sense because we could not obtain figures on percentages of female staff at the institutions in the South, or on participation rates of women in various disciplines of study.

15) Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Report No. 19 to the Storting (1995–96). A changing world. Main elements of Norwegian policy towards developing countries.

**Table 3. Participation in education and training by gender (1991–1998)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>PhD</b>	<b>Master's</b>	<b>Admin. and Technicians</b>	<b>Further training</b>
Female	22%	34%	38%	15%
Male	78%	66%	62%	85%

Overall, NUFU adheres to the principles of Norwegian development, in contributing to capacity building and institutional strengthening in developing countries which

have been given priority for bilateral support. In addition, the topics of NUFU collaboration largely fall within the priority theme areas of Norwegian development aid.

## 7 Synergy with other instruments

The MFA's strategy paper (draft, January 1999) on strengthening research and higher education in the South aims to define the main priorities for the various support provisions and for development research in Norway. An additional objective of the strategy is to facilitate better coordination between the various support schemes and their administrative organizations, i.e. the Research Council of Norway, the Norwegian Council of Universities, NORAD and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry hopes to realize this synergy by providing clear Terms of Reference for the administration of the programmes, regular discussions between the organizations in joint meetings and the exchange of information.

Norway has different channels for supporting universities and research institutions. One important channel is through the NUFU programme. But more funds are channelled directly from NORAD to universities in priority partner countries. The main difference between the NUFU and the NORAD "systems" is that NUFU funds are used to finance programmes that require Norwegian institutional partnership. NORAD, on the other hand, may provide support to a university even if that university does not intend to cooperate with a Norwegian partner.

Another important difference between the NUFU and NORAD channels is that the NUFU focuses on research capacity-building whereas NORAD's main objective is to support universities as a whole, according to the priorities of the university concerned and of the government<sup>16</sup>. The new NORAD strategy for 2000–2005<sup>17</sup> is built on the principles of recipient orientation and the sector-wide approach.

The role of universities in development is also important in the NORAD Fellowship

Programme. Today the main objective of the programme is to support capacity-building within key institutions in priority partner countries by providing a fellowship grant to attend a Master's or Diploma course in Norway. The course must be relevant for the capacity-building of the institution where the applicant is employed.

From the start of the NUFU programme there have been relations between NUFU, NORAD and the RCN. The two latter organizations have observer status in NUFU Committee meetings. However, these relations have thus far led to few tangible and structural collaborations between the programmes. This can be explained by differences in perceptions, mandates and cultures of the organizations.

The Research Council of Norway is mandated to fund research in Norway, while NUFU is concerned with research cooperation with developing countries. The RCN receives special funds for development research from the MFA, as well as some additional funding from the Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs. The NUFU fellowship scheme financing Norwegian PhD students connected to NUFU projects is worth special mention. However, little research on topics of development relevance is funded through RCN. There is now a dialogue concerning better integration and coordination between RCN and NUFU.

Until recently, NUFU and NORAD failed to achieve any form of cooperation, even at universities in the South where both were running programmes. Mistrust between the Norwegian universities and NORAD goes back a long time and needs to be overcome. In the past, the NORAD administration has been rather suspicious of the NUFU approach, because it was considered to pay little heed to the principle of recipient responsibility. For their

16) Ingrid Ofstad, Introduction to NORAD policy, presentation at the NUFU conference in Dar es Salaam, 1997.

17) NORAD invests in the future. NORAD's strategy for 2000–2005.

part, Norwegian universities were of the opinion that NORAD lacked the competence to plan or monitor research and linkage programmes, and saw NORAD as an aid organization which took a sectoral approach to development.

However, NORAD is acquiring a better understanding of the role of (academic) research in development. It has a dual view of university research and higher education as areas in themselves and parts of other sectors. A new Policy Section has been created that will concern itself with country strategies and research. Two staff members with a background in research have been transferred to the section. To give the section the necessary strength, it is hoped that the section will be enlarged to 3–4 persons.

Some of the Norwegian institutions clearly see an advantage in the transfer of responsibility for the NUFU programme from the MFA to NORAD. In their view, NORAD can have a positive influence on NUFU, and it can ensure that supported institutions in the South are better linked to society and make a well-informed choice about the collaboration topics and partners. The transfer also creates better opportunities for the coordination of efforts. Some interviewees testified from experience that synergy is possible (e.g. the programme in the Palestinian Areas where the Embassy, NORAD and NUFU work closely together on complementary programmes).

The money factor also makes the Norwegian universities more interested in collaborating with NORAD. Like elsewhere, university

budgets in Norway have been under pressure over the last decade, not as a result of budget cuts, but of increases in enrolments (by 70%) and in the costs of inputs, i.e. staff, equipment etc. The UiNs are eager to look for additional sources of funding and development programmes offer direct and indirect sources of income.

However, these interviewees were also of the opinion that the character of the NUFU programme should be safeguarded. The Southern partners share this view. It is generally felt that NUFU should retain its specific characteristics and not fall “victim” to what they call “NORAD bureaucracy”. Southern partners are also afraid that NUFU will have to follow political decisions that govern Norwegian development assistance, which may mean that university support may be withdrawn in countries which fall out of favour with the MFA.

In trying to generate synergy between the various research capacity-building schemes, the major challenge is of course how to retain NUFU’s character and strength while seeking complementarity with other programmes. This will be easier to achieve in priority countries where Framework Agreements have been concluded between NORAD and the local university than in countries with no NORAD representation. In Uganda, discussions are in progress on linking NUFU activities with the planned NORAD Framework Agreement with Makerere University. These talks are being conducted in a very cooperative spirit and will hopefully pave the way for fruitful collaboration in other countries and contexts.

## 8 Follow-up to the 1994 evaluation

In the course of 1993, the NUFU programme was evaluated by the Chr. Michelsen Institute<sup>18</sup>. The evaluators made a number of important observations:

- in the “decentralized model” the NUFU Committee has few responsibilities with respect to how the individual member institutions conduct their affairs and has seemingly no authority to instruct its membership in these matters;
- the structure of the agreements bolsters the position of UiNs with regard to control over deployment of resources and information flow; giving the UiNs principal responsibility for coordination and accounting further emphasizes the already unequal relationship;
- doubt exists regarding two assumptions: a) Norwegian institutions can take on the administration of research cooperation projects at a small additional cost, b) UiNs have spare capacity that can be mobilized for long-term and stable UiN-to-UiD cooperation;
- NUFU finds itself in an ambiguous situation, reflecting inherent differences in expectations. On the one hand, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is concerned to see foreign aid funds used effectively for the purpose of economic and social development in poor countries; on the other hand, the UiNs have a responsibility towards primary research and training.

The evaluators reached the conclusion that the academic culture in Norway is a major explanatory factor for the observed weaknesses of the NUFU administration. Although the MFA expressly demands a strong and competent administration, universities are extremely reluctant to set up structures with executive

power. According to the report, this illustrates the refusal of the universities to give up any of their own freedom of action.

The evaluation comes up with a number of recommendations:

- to encourage general agreements which establish structures for a long-term, overall cooperation relationship between the partner institutions, which will accumulate a flexible and evolutionary substantive programme portfolio;
- to consolidate the on-going relationship and encourage the evolution of a more equal relationship, which can give greater assurance of – and scope for – UiD priorities dominating the activities;
- to concentrate on fewer UiDs; the long-term competence-building which has been started should be continued so as to capitalize on already invested resources;
- to make funds available to help UiDs improve strategic development planning and to coordinate assistance from abroad;
- to conclude NUFU programme contracts in which the UiDs and UiNs in principle have equal rights and obligations towards NUFU;
- to strengthen the interaction between the NUFU Committee/Secretariat and the UiDs, in particular to improve the information flow between NUFU and UiD partners;
- to adopt the principle of gross costing for NUFU programmes and projects (i.e. make the contributions from the partner institutions visible);

As can be seen in the following chapters, the conclusions of the 1994 evaluation are to a great extent still valid today. Some of the recommendations have been followed up. The administration fee has been raised, and some UiDs have received extra support to strengthen their administration capacity. The NUFU Committee has strengthened the conceptual framework of the programme by formulating a strategy paper with guiding principles. External evaluations have been conducted to learn from

experience and introduce necessary improvements in management and implementation. The issues of giving UiDs greater responsibilities in decision-making processes, and of focusing NUFU interventions for greater institutional impact at UiDs have been discussed by the Committee and the NUFU partners at NUFU seminars, but plans or recommendations to this effect have not yet been implemented.

## 9 Organization and management

This chapter examines the way in which the NUFU programme is organized, managed and administered and is divided into 5 parts: the virtues and vices of the decentralized model; the decision-making process; administration and internal coordination; monitoring and evaluation; and the position and role of the SIU in the NUFU programme management.

### 9.1 Decentralized Model

The organization, administration and management of NUFU are characterized by a decentralized model. This means that the responsibility for the identification, design, management and administration of the projects lies with the implementing institutions. There are some general NUFU guidelines and criteria which projects are supposed to observe but in practice individual projects have quite a lot of room for manoeuvre. The programme does not have a system to enforce a (uniform) protocol for project implementation.

This decentralized model has certain significant advantages that contribute to the overall success of the NUFU programme. There is a high level of autonomy for the project coordinators, project administration can be performed in a way that is most appropriate for each individual project, and projects can be tailored to prevailing local circumstances. The decentralized model therefore encourages individual commitment and ownership as well as responsive management, and often leads to good collaborative relationships. These characteristics have a positive effect on the results of the projects and the programme as a whole.

But the model also has a number of negative aspects. It was found that it results in many different modalities of project management, often within the same institute (both in Norway and in the South) and sometimes deviating from or even bypassing central administrative

arrangements. Some projects have broad faculty-based management teams, in which extensive discussions take place and where decisions are made jointly, while others are run in total isolation by one person. In some UiDs, the two models may even be present in the same faculty. Such differences in administrative structures obviously cause coordination problems at the institutions and may hamper institutionalization and the sustainability of the projects.

The lack of protocol and uniformity in project implementation may lead to confusion and frustration among participating staff and students if they see rules being interpreted and applied differently for different NUFU projects. It is disturbing when, sometimes within the same faculty, there are differences between projects in access to equipment, in allowances, in the promptness with which funds are released, etc. Even though NUFU has designed certain guidelines and financial regulations, individual coordinators sometimes deviate from these and, due to a lack of information or for opportunistic reasons, exercise more freedom in, for instance, the reallocation of funds. There is little control or power to impose sanctions within the NUFU system to prevent this from happening.

In many projects, support for students is an important part of the funding. The level of support varies considerably, even between students involved in NUFU projects within the same units in the South. In some projects, only direct costs are covered, while others may provide a scholarship of some kind. This is a potential source of tension, which should be avoided. Equally there are no guidelines for staff visits.

### 9.2 Decision-making

The decision-making process within the NUFU system can be characterized as internal and to

some extent also decentralized. All critical decisions about the programme and the projects are made by the Norwegian stakeholders. The NUFU programme is initiated, administered and implemented by the Norwegian university system. The NUFU Committee and the SIU, the main actors in decision-making and the administration of the programme, are directly linked to the Norwegian universities, through the Norwegian Council of Universities.

The universities themselves rank their applications in order of priority. Some of the bigger universities, both in Norway and the South, have set up internal committees to screen applications and to monitor the progress of the projects. Although they seem to function quite well, there is some criticism of these committees. They often consist of people who are themselves involved in NUFU projects and some UiN researchers indicated that this makes the internal ranking sometimes rather biased. The institutional priority lists are not questioned or assessed by NUFU/SIU. Some UiDs indicated that they have no insight into the priority rankings of projects by the UiNs.

The NUFU Committee decides on project selection and the allocation of funds. The reasons for budget reductions, decided upon by the NUFU Committee, are often unknown to the partners. With budget reductions of 50% being quite common, this causes quite a lot of frustration.

The Committee consists mainly of UiN representatives, some of whom are also involved in projects. In the former Committee there were two representatives from each UiN. We have heard many complaints about the functioning of the former Committee. In project selection and the allocation of funds, institutional interests prevailed over programme interests and “cake sharing” over quality criteria. In a bid to improve on this situation, the University Council of Norway has installed a

new NUFU Committee with only 6 members representing all the institutions. It took office in January 2000. It is hoped that in a smaller Committee the institutional interests will play a less important role in project selection. However, with the present members also coming from institutions that participate in the NUFU programme and not all UiNs now being represented, there are fears that this will only worsen the situation. Since the new Committee has only recently been installed it is too early to comment on this.

The involvement of the South in decision-making is virtually non-existent, a point already raised in the 1994 evaluation report. Despite the fact that most interviewees agree that the South should play a more substantive role in the decision-making process, and despite the fact that the participants in the Cape Town seminar<sup>19</sup> recommended that UiD priorities should be put before the Committee to enable fair decision-making in project selection, to date no measures have been taken to implement this long-standing intention and recommendation.

Another important feature of NUFU’s decision-making process is that no external advisors are involved at any stage of the approval process. This gives the NUFU programme a rather inward-looking character with possibly negative consequences for quality control and accountability. We will return to this issue in the chapter on quality assurance.

The funding system whereby NUFU funds are allocated in application rounds once every 4–5 years comes with peak workloads for all stakeholders, which also discourages the introduction of a more thorough approval process, including the advice of external experts<sup>20</sup>.

19) The NUFU group seminar on NUFU cooperation, Cape Town, November 2–6, 1998.

20) In the period 1991–1998, 202 project proposals were submitted to NUFU. 152 were approved. 13 of these were existing projects/arrangements that were transferred from the MFA to NUFU at the start of the programme in 1991.

### 9.3 Administration and internal coordination

Since the signing of the first NUFU Agreement in 1991, the NUFU Committee and the SIU have continuously worked on improving the administration of the programme. We are of the opinion that this task has been performed with great enthusiasm and considerable success. Many improvements in administration and management have been achieved through a process of “learning-by-doing”.

The SIU has proven, with its limited but highly qualified and motivated staff, that it has the capacity and will to adjust the NUFU procedures in response to perceived bottlenecks and shortcomings<sup>21</sup>. This has, however, also caused some confusion among the partner institutions since not all changes and adjustments have been properly introduced. The partners have interpreted this as “moving the goalposts during the match”.

As observed in the 1994 evaluation, NUFU has always assumed that the administrative capacity of the university system in Norway and the South can handle the administration of the NUFU projects at a minimal cost. It is clear that the administrative capacity of the cooperating partners, in UiNs and in UiDs, has been overestimated. Because of the decentralized system the workload often lies with the project coordinators and researchers who are ill equipped to perform such tasks. We do not have any hard figures on the time spent on the administration of the NUFU projects but we are convinced that the present compensation scheme is not in line with the real costs incurred. The scheme should be reviewed and, if necessary, adjusted. We were informed that the low compensation fee acts as a deterrent to departments/researchers to take up NUFU projects<sup>22</sup>.

Some of the principal partner institutions in the South (e.g. the University of Zimbabwe and Makerere University in Uganda) have tried to streamline the administration of their NUFU projects and have received direct support from NUFU to enable the setting up of coordinating bodies. Experience with these units so far is promising but the challenge is to improve the coordination and administration of the projects without creating new structures and procedures alongside the existing university system.

The funding of NUFU projects is channelled through the UiNs. Although there are agreements between NUFU and the UiDs and between the UiNs and the UiDs, project contracts with financial consequences are signed between NUFU and the UiNs. There is no direct flow of funding from NUFU to the UiDs. As a consequence, the UiDs have little or no insight or control over the budget of the project, with negative implications for the principles of equality and ownership in the South.

The exchange of experiences in administration and management is handled in an informal but useful way. Meetings and seminars on these topics have been organized in the South and in Norway. Since 1991, NUFU has organized seven international seminars and conferences for the NUFU partners.

In Norway, regular meetings with the institutional coordinators have been organized to discuss NUFU’s concepts, guidelines, reporting procedures etc. These meetings provide the SIU with important feedback and give the coordinators an opportunity to learn from each other’s experiences. Since 1996, the SIU has also organized one-day seminars on particular themes for the project coordinators in Norway<sup>23</sup>.

21) 1992: NUFU Guidelines and Forms; 1995: Revised Guidelines; 1995: NUFU Håndbok; 1996: NUFU Guidelines – Annual Reporting – Multi Annual Cooperation, Institutional Assessment; 1997: idem for Southern institutions; 1999/2000: new revised guidelines under preparation.

22) It was suggested to us that the current overhead fee of 8% which the partners divide among themselves should be increased to 15% in order to attract the best researchers to the NUFU programme.

23) Themes: 1996, the African university in the nineties and beyond; 1997, North and South partnership models + the LogFrame model and method; 1998, Sustainability; 1999, Cooperation in networks.

At the working group meeting in Cape Town (1998) the partners discussed the accessibility and institutional memory of the knowledge and experience gained through NUFU collaboration, and stressed the need for cost-effective use of modern Information Communication Technology. Concern was expressed about the lack of possibilities for publishing good research in developing countries. Better use of the internet for this purpose was raised as a possible solution.

#### **9.4 Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)**

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are important aspects of the organization and management of any programme or project. Monitoring is a continuous function that aims primarily to provide programme and project management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing programme and project with early indicators of progress (or a lack of it) in the achievement of input and output objectives. Monitoring is not limited to the level of project implementation; it needs to be conducted by those responsible for implementation at every level of the management hierarchy as an integral component of good management practice.

Evaluation, although a different function, is closely connected to monitoring. It systematically assesses the relevance, performance and success/effectiveness of ongoing and completed programmes and projects with the main aim of providing lessons which are incorporated into the decision-making process of the programme and its stakeholders.

As a result of the decentralized model and the prevailing decision-making structure, the M&E of NUFU projects is mainly an internal affair which is conducted in a rather unsystematic way. There is no uniform system for internal/external M&E. We found that, although there are official guidelines, reporting takes many different forms. The progress reports of the projects vary considerably in size, content and quality. Reporting is often limited to

a listing of implemented activities and of reports published by students and staff. In general the reports provide little information and hardly discuss the achievement of objectives and lessons learned. Fortunately, there are positive exceptions.

In addition, the institutional assessments, which the institutions have been requested to submit on an annual basis since 1997, do not provide substantial and useful information for M&E purposes. Changes in projects are sometimes not properly documented or justified.

Reading through the institutional assessments, we did not get the impression that internal monitoring is seen by the institutions as an instrument that helps them to reflect on progress and analyse difficulties and the reasons for success or failure. Apparently, reporting is seen by some as a compulsory exercise to satisfy the NUFU Committee.

Due to constraints in time and staff, the SIU mainly monitors the financial progress of projects, and only to a very limited extent the achievement of objectives. Occasionally, SIU members of staff conduct field visits. The SIU does not have sufficient tools or possibilities to cross-check the reported data for accuracy and reliability. In general, the SIU provides the projects with little or no feedback on their reports, unless there are major problems. This does not encourage project coordinators to put a lot of effort into their reporting.

In addition, the programme does not have sanctions or measures to cope with non-performers or under-performers. It is a self-regulating system in which the partners and institutions decide on the fate and future of ongoing projects, unless calamities and obvious problems force the Committee to make a ruling.

Since 1996, several external project and portfolio evaluations have been implemented, which is a positive trend. However, the partners are not positive about the quality of some of the evaluations. We noted that the ToR of the evaluations varied, which does not allow for a

consistent comparison of results, and had very tight timeframes which has, in some cases, resulted in superficial analysis and badly founded observations. Nevertheless, we are of the opinion that this instrument, when properly administered, should be regarded as standard procedure in the management of the NUFU programme.

### **9.5 The position and role of the SIU**

The SIU does an excellent job managing the day-to-day activities of the NUFU programme. The partners in Norway are very appreciative of the SIU staff and their performance. The SIU's annual reports are well prepared and informative. Since 1997, the reports show a good balance between quantitative data and reflections. The SIU's role and responsibilities are, however, restricted by its limited resources. It mainly focuses on administrative tasks and less on facilitation and programme management. In the present set-up of the programme there are limited possibilities for the SIU to correct problems in reporting and financial programme management. The SIU's tasks and mandate are further limited by the fact that it is actually directly governed by the same Norwegian institutions that carry out the NUFU projects.

We believe that if the SIU were to have a more independent position from the Norwegian

university system it could play a more objective role in terms of assessing internal rankings, project applications and allocations, and also in terms of external monitoring and the evaluation of project performance.

It is clear that the SIU could play a substantive role in the training and coaching of NUFU partners in portfolio management (especially at UiDs, preferably using expertise from NUFU UiD partners), providing training in project planning and project cycle management, and in financial management. It could possibly also play a more important and unbiased role in the identification of new partners or projects and in mobilizing external advisors/assessors at all stages of the project cycle. Of course this would require an expansion of its present capacity and mandate.

The SIU has done a commendable job in setting up a database which houses all important information on the NUFU projects, and in designing an impressive website which makes relevant documentation on the NUFU programme accessible to stakeholders and interested outsiders. The external relations of NUFU are well developed. The evaluation has shown that the database needs further improvements for it to be accurate, complete and user friendly. The usefulness of the website for the NUFU partners can be increased by making some of its functions interactive.

## 10 Strengths and weaknesses of the partnership model

Interviewees in the South strongly support the partnership model used in the NUFU programme. A partnership model creates the possibility of establishing long-term and mutually beneficial relationships built on respect and shared interests. The “sandwich model”, whereby staff/students from the UiDs spend block periods of up to three months at the UiNs, is an excellent example of the benefits of a partnership approach. Through the sandwich model, trainees remain attached to their institution in the South, while the partnership relationship provides them with access to research opportunities. This combination proves to be an important instrument for the UiDs to retain their staff. A number of other donor programmes like the Fulbright, British Council, United States Information Service, etc, fund staff/students for study in their respective countries. This is not only more costly but often the staff/students do not return to their home country.

The partnership model also allows for broad participation in collaboration projects from both sides and a complementary mix of activities and support mechanisms. In a number of projects we have seen a well-orchestrated mix of staff and students from both sides making use of various funding sources and schemes. We already mentioned the beneficial participation of Norwegian students in the projects. And, very importantly, through the partnership, the researchers and institutions get access to (other) networks, data and publication outlets.

There are a few weaknesses to the partnership model as implemented in the NUFU programme. We have noted that, while the NUFU programme has been strong in the training of Master's and PhD candidates it has been somewhat weaker on staff exchange. It has been suggested that opportunities should be created for staff from UiDs to spend periods teaching and researching at UiNs. It is an enriching experience for staff and students on

both sides and promotes equity in the relationship.

It was also reported that longer stays were often requested for Norwegian partners in the South, but were limited by the fact that the NUFU agreement does not allow for the funding of replacements to take over their responsibilities at the home university. It would seem advisable to discuss compensation and other schemes that would enable UiN researchers to stay at UiDs longer. This would help to attract good researchers from UiNs. Sources of funds other than NUFU should also be considered for this purpose. Researchers from UiNs could also be encouraged to spend sabbaticals at UiDs.

For a true and lasting partnership, the benefits should be mutual, and the relationship should be based on the principle of equity and have an institutional backing. Some UiDs have voiced the criticism that the Norwegian institutions and personnel involved in NUFU programmes are only interested in collaboration if it is to their academic advantage. We do not find this surprising or alarming. Staff at UiNs need to think of their own career and institutional interests as well. Increased pressure on time and efficiency in the university sector means that academics must give priority to participation in projects which will produce results.

However, in most NUFU projects the benefits go to a large extent to the UiD, at least at the beginning of the collaboration. This is logical, when partners of unequal strength start to work together. Over time, when the capacities at the UiD are strengthened, the initial mentor relationship may develop into a fully equitable peer relationship for mutual development. This does not mean that the UiNs do not obtain any benefits before that stage has been reached. The UiN researchers benefit by being exposed to new problems and challenges in research, they publish with colleagues from the UiDs, get to know the challenges from the developing

world and travel to the South. In some cases it has direct benefits for their home institutions, e.g. in the Mathematics Education Programme at the University of Western Cape (UWC), staff from the University of Bergen have benefited from teaching and it has enriched their own programmes in Bergen; staff from UWC in turn have contributed by teaching at the University of Bergen.

Although the NUFU programme advocates equality in the collaboration between the partners, almost none of the NUFU projects or institutions have reached this stage. This is partly because of the administrative and organizational characteristics of the programme, as discussed in the previous chapters. Another contributing factor is the selection process of partners to collaborate with. Partly because of Norwegian aid policies, and partly because of the motives of the UiNs, the chosen partners in the South represent under-resourced institutions or underdeveloped disciplines. In project selection the strength of the Norwegian institution is the decisive factor, putting the Southern partner automatically in the position of beneficiary. In fact, the Norwegian partners tend to see the issue of equality between the partners as a long-term academic objective rather than a practical aim to be pursued at the operational level.

In this situation, the perception easily prevails that the Northern institutions are the senior partners, while the Southern institutions are the junior ones and have to defer certain decisions to the Northern institutions. In the context of advocating the partnership model and equality in the collaboration, it would also be worthwhile

to select projects on topics where the Southern partners have well-established expertise and where Norwegian institutions may start as the “junior” partner.

Adequate administrative capacities and access to relevant information are other decisive factors in achieving an equitable partnership. This is particularly relevant in the area of finances and submissions for new proposals or adjustments. The majority of partners in the South have no full understanding of the procedures, regulations and guidelines of the programme, are not kept informed about decisions that have been taken at programme level, and are not aware of the performance of the programme. As long as Northern institutions are closer to the source of funding and are more familiar with the procedures, rules and regulations, there will inevitably be some skew. In other words, the present organizational and management arrangements of the programme are not in keeping with the equal partnership principle.

Finally, partnerships between researchers are hard to sustain if they do not have the backing and support of their institutions. This implies more than a number of signatures on an agreement. It requires a long-term commitment by the institutional leadership to the partnership, backed up by provision of the necessary resources and based on a clear vision that defines what the partners may expect from the partnership and how they will work together to achieve these goals. This level of institutional commitment has not been reached at most participating institutions.

## 11 South-South and North-South-South relations

Collaborative partnerships have been an integral component of the NUFU programme since its inception. The North-South partnerships do not seem to have emerged as a consequence of a planned process, but to have been established by chance, contingent upon the interests of collaborating institutional researchers.

At the start of the second Agreement, the establishment of networks in the South was promoted and additional funds were made available for this purpose. There are no NUFU policy documents which explain the rationale behind this move or guidelines for establishing the networks. A paper presented at the Dar es Salaam conference gives an insight into the aims of North-South-South relations and the problems of networking based on experience with NUFU networks<sup>24</sup>. According to the authors, in North-South-South networks much greater weight can be placed on recipient responsibility and participation. With several UiD partners within a network, these partners will have a much greater influence on the choice of relevant research themes. In addition, the design and progress of the programme will be worked out and monitored with a greater UiD input. This should reduce the chances of UiDs feeling that the UiNs are too dominant in North-South programmes.

We have found that the five NUFU operating networks – all in Africa – function with varying degrees of success. One has broken down, while others lack an institutional foundation and are more a collection of individual researchers in different institutions meeting for occasional seminars than institutions forming more solid and long-lasting networks. It is too early to draw firm conclusions on the possible causes of these differences. The interest among Southern partners to form networks with the partners in the region is, however, considerable. In their

opinion, S-S networking needs to be strengthened because by building a strong research base across the Southern continents they could stem, or at least slow down, the brain drain. The wide disparity in the state of development of UiDs could be turned into an advantage by partnering well-resourced institutions with weaker institutions. The participation of a Norwegian institution in the network is felt to be important because it provides access to the latest information and technology, international networks and publication outlets.

The broader the disciplinary scope of the network, the greater the chances of success. Networks built on a few individuals that share an interest in a very specialized field are vulnerable, not least because they lack a proper institutional foundation. Broader-based networks can lead to specialization among the network partners and the establishment of centres of excellence. Examples are the emergence of the Institute of African Languages at the University of Zimbabwe (UZ) in Harare, which grew out of the joint Alex Language project with the University of Oslo. Another successful S-S project is the Mathematics Modelling Programme with its core at the UZ and involving students from 10 African countries. Lecturers from the universities of Oslo, Manchester in the UK, Botswana, Swaziland, South Africa and Zimbabwe participate in the programme. The establishment of centres of excellence as a spin-off of these cross-country collaborations has been a very positive development for the region.

Centres of excellence also serve a practical purpose, enabling participants to share each others' equipment, lab facilities, etc. Research at the international level is expensive and institution-building a slow process. It is impossible to fund each partner department

24) Judith A. Narvhus and Roger K. Abrahamsen, North-South-South Cooperation: Philosophy and Feasibility; paper presented at the African-Norwegian Universities' Conference, Dar es Salaam, 27–29 October 1997.

with every conceivable piece of equipment at the outset. It is also impossible to develop competence in all fields at once.

NSS programmes can be relatively large and complicated to administer in comparison with North-South programmes. The job of coordination is time-consuming and comprises both academic, administrative and, to a certain extent, social tasks. NUFU is aware of these problems and allows increased funding for programme management in NSS programmes.

The problems involved in establishing this type of network include the different levels of development of the universities, the failure to find common areas of interest among the partner institutions, different stipends for different costs of living in different countries, different cultures, accounting language, etc. A further constraint is insufficient funding, especially if the funds have to be divided among as many as five partners in some projects. One

of the problems that has arisen is the management of the network funding; the funds are often allocated to one institution in the South through which they are subsequently channelled to the other participating institutions. This has led to some suspicion as to whether this is fairly done and why one institution is given such a favoured status.

One further obstacle to networking and cooperation in developing countries is the lack of modern information technology. Effective means of communication, funds, administrative capacity and adequate research infrastructures at the partner institutions are obvious conditions for successful networking. Communication is not a problem confined to NSS programmes, it is also a real problem in North-South programmes. However, the complexity of the communication network in NSS programmes makes the need for fast communication even more pressing.

## 12 Relevance

The relevance of research projects to the institutions and countries concerned is central to the NUFU programme. There is, however, a tension between the desire of researchers to pursue theoretical research and the demands of communities, governments, industry and business for research that is relevant and has immediate applicability. This tension needs to be carefully negotiated so that the two demands are complementary and reinforcing.

Because of the decentralized nature of the NUFU programme it is open to question whether institutions' research priorities or, for that matter, the national research agenda are being fulfilled. This will depend on whether the institution or country has a well-determined research strategy and direction.

The research topics are selected largely on the basis of the mutual interests of researchers at partner institutions in Norway and the South. The primary goal of research seems to be academic publications and, to a lesser extent, dissemination and application of research for the benefit of society. Research results are rarely disseminated beyond academic circles or integrated into regular teaching programmes. Little effort seems to be made to bring researchers and research users together. However, it should be kept in mind that much of the research is linked to staff development and many research documents relate to PhD and Master's theses.

Despite this mutual interest in choosing areas for research, our examination of the various projects was strongly indicative of their relevance to the institutions and the developing countries, some being more significant or more practical than others. The UZ Alex project has produced Shona and Ndebele dictionaries which are in daily use. The Mathematics Education Programme at the UWC is making a strong contribution in upgrading teaching in science and mathematics education. The Dikgale field site which has been established by the University of the North will provide the basis for a spectrum of studies in the health field from epidemiological studies to HIV/AIDS prevention.

Interdisciplinary research has increasing relevance in the emerging globalized world. Many solutions to complex problems in the modern world require an interdisciplinary approach. From our interviews in the South, we got the impression that few NUFU projects involved interdisciplinary research. However, the information in the database presents a different picture, revealing that a lot of projects in the second Agreement are multidisciplinary. As can be seen from Table 4, in the first Agreement 43 out of 55 projects were unidisciplinary. In the second Agreement the balance has drastically changed, with 65 of the 99 projects involving more than one discipline. It would be worthwhile to look into this real or virtual discrepancy between facts and impressions in more detail.

**Table 4. Multidisciplinarity of projects, 1st and 2nd Agreement**

<b>Number of disciplines in project</b>	<b>1st</b>	<b>2nd</b>	<b>1st and 2nd combined</b>
1	43	34	77
2	6	18	24
3	3	13	16
4	1	25	26
5		5	5
6		2	2
7	1	1	2
9			1
12	1		1
<b>Total number of projects</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>154</b>

Most institutions in the South lack the structure and capacity to formulate a research agenda, prioritize their research activities, and formulate a strategy to implement them. The NUFU programme creates research opportunities but does not support the strengthening of research management at university level. We would like to reiterate one of the recommendations of the 1994 evaluation that NUFU, especially in principal partner institutions in the South, provides support with the formulation of institutional research strategies and strengthens research management. If this is felt to be outside the scope of the NUFU

programme, a signal should be sent to the UiDs in this regard. It is important for both UiN and UiD researchers to locate their respective research interests within such a research plan. It gives the projects a better chance of achieving an institutional and national impact. It is gratifying to note that some UiDs are in the process of establishing a research policy and strategy. In the absence of strategic plans the institutions in the South could assess proposals on the basis of a fixed set of criteria. An outline for criteria could be: a) national priorities; b) institutional priorities; c) research priorities; and d) other priorities.

## 13 Quality assurance

We examined quality assurance in three areas: programme and project administration, inputs and outputs. Quite a few aspects of programme and project administration that have a bearing on quality assurance have already been discussed in the chapter on Organization and Management, such as project identification and selection, monitoring and evaluation, external assessments. We concluded that quality assurance and control throughout the whole project cycle need to be improved.

We may further add that the application of quality control to NUFU projects is difficult because of the absence of clearly defined objectives or verifiable performance indicators. Many projects lack a longer-term vision when they start. Some blossom into impressive and successful projects, others continue without great ambitions and results. In the absence of clearly defined criteria to measure the success of the programme and integral cost calculations of all project inputs, a good measure of the programme's efficiency cannot be established. We have learned that the Norwegian institutions want to avoid spending a lot of time in writing elaborate proposals if it is not certain that the project will be approved and funded. This one of the reasons why the average project proposal submitted to NUFU is modest in size and content. The vicious circle of reasoning behind this practice could be broken by instituting a two-step selection process: a conditional approval of an initial project proposal, followed by a definite approval if the partners can submit a fully fledged and detailed proposal.

Although the Norwegian partners claim that the NUFU programme is good and cost-effective, the institutions cannot provide hard evidence to support this claim. This issue was raised in the 1994 evaluation and as yet the institutions have not been capable and/or willing to calculate the costs of their own inputs. For the "outside world" it would serve the institutions well if they could demonstrate their considerable inputs in

the NUFU programme. Internally, it could produce problems if participation in the NUFU programme is not founded on a clear institutional policy and commitment towards international cooperation with institutions in the South. In our view, strong institutional commitment towards international cooperation and willingness to adopt gross budgeting for project activities go hand in hand.

The lack of clear objectives and targets also hampers sound decision-making in the selection of projects. Partly because of this, the comments of the SIU on the applications are limited, usually of a technical nature and often restricted to the budget. Few comments deal with relevance, effectiveness or other substantive matters. Nevertheless, many partners in Norway expressed the opinion that the SIU has too much influence on the decisions of the Committee, mainly because Committee members do not get enough time to study proposals properly and therefore rely on the brief assessments prepared by the SIU.

Practically all respondents interviewed are in favour of improving quality assurance in the programme, but opinions on how this should be done differ and many fear that increased quality control will mean additional work for the coordinators. In Norway, opinions on introducing forms of external assessment of project proposal are mixed. The proponents would welcome such a system because it would make the decision-making process more transparent and might have positive effects on the quality of the project proposals. The opponents argue that proposals should not be judged on content alone, but also on other criteria such as relevance, feasibility, and proven capacity of those who submit a proposal. To judge these factors one has to know the institutions, the topics and the local context. We are of the opinion that, for the sake of transparency and quality control, a system of external assessment is recommendable. In addition, UiNs should also be encouraged to

include external assessors in their internal ranking process. The respondents indicated some problems with their internal ranking mechanisms: because people are too close and know each other too well, priority ranking is a very sensitive issue. The same holds for priority ranking at UiDs. Some (very few) would be in favour of abolishing the internal ranking system.

Since 1997, the institutions in Norway and the South have been asked to prepare an annual institutional assessment report in which the institutions report and discuss the progress of their portfolio of projects. A serious dilemma with this type of quality assurance is whether the different project participants are “honest” when drafting their self-assessments. Some of them could be “tactical” if they fear they could lose financial resources as a consequence of “poor” project quality. Institutional assessments of portfolios may also mean that the research administration needs to be strengthened in a number of UiDs.

Quality assurance is also important in the first stage of the collaboration, i.e. the identification and selection of new partners in the South. The NUFU Committee has used institutional assessment visits to prospective partner institutions to gauge the commitment of the institution and the feasibility of collaboration. This instrument is combined with closer monitoring of the performance of the collaboration in the first few years. However, time-constraints prevent the conduct of a proper institutional assessment process. This was the case with, for example, the NUFU programme in Guatemala which originated haphazardly when the MFA decided to give NUFU NOK 24 million for university collaboration to support the peace process in that country.

In terms of inputs, the Southern partners commend the quality and commitment of the Norwegian partners, despite the claim from Norwegian interviewees that the best Norwegian researchers do not participate in the NUFU projects. To our best judgement there is no great problem in the supervision of Master’s

and PhD Programmes, at least none that were brought to our attention. The joint supervision by researchers from UiNs and UiDs enriches the students’ work. The time taken to complete the PhDs is usually much longer in UiDs than in UiNs because of students’ heavier teaching loads. In some cases, the period is very long if we may draw conclusions from information in the database. According to 1999 figures, quite a number of candidates (68 PhD candidates and 154 Master’s degree candidates) who commenced their studies during the first Agreement had still not completed them. One wonders how their studies are being funded if they are not participating in a project that is a continuation of previous Agreement. In any case, it seems clear that some limit should be set for completion, say 5–6 years, and that probably a budget should be provided for teaching substitutes.

The quality of the research outputs is subject to peer review at institutional level and international referees, in the case of international publications. Only a limited number of papers have been published in reputable peer reviewed journals. Our general impression is that these are of an acceptable if not high quality. We are less certain of the quality of a host of other publications that have appeared in institutional journals, the lay press etc. In NUFU’s Cape Town seminar it was observed that in some cases, although findings from collaborative research projects have sufficient scientific information, they are not accepted for publication in the conventional journals because they are considered too country specific, and the NUFU is called upon to assist in their dissemination. It was also recommended that UiDs and UiNs should be made to sign memoranda of understanding on intellectual property rights and patent ownership resulting from NUFU research collaboration.

Student exchange must be regarded as one of the strongest aspects of the NUFU programme. The merits of the sandwich model have already been pointed out. There is little doubt that judging by the number of staff and students that

have obtained postgraduate degrees or are in the process of obtaining them, the NUFU programme has been a great success. The participation of experienced Norwegian academics in this training as well as visits by

staff and students from UiDs to UiNs have been enriching in addition to providing the necessary supervision and resources to complete their studies for Master's or PhD degrees.

## 14 Institutionalization

The concept of institutionalization can be defined in several ways. It can be seen as NUFU activities being integrated in the collaborating institutions – both in Norway and the South. A more ambitious definition is that the collaboration should have an impact on institutional capacity-building and development in a broad sense. During the field visits, institutionalization was investigated mainly in terms of the first definition, but the second was implied in the attention given to the sustainability of the project activities. Another important distinction to be made is between academic and administrative institutionalization. The two are strongly interrelated, and problems of administrative institutionalization will often also affect academic institutionalization.

The importance of improved institutionalization was one of the major concerns raised by the evaluation of the NUFU programme in 1994. It should be noticed that the problems were equally visible within UiNs and UiDs. Since then, the NUFU administration and partners have made efforts to implement the recommendations of the evaluation, and some progress has been made. Administrative coordination and support within the Norwegian institutions has improved, NUFU guidelines have been elaborated with this aim in mind, and institutionalization has gained a stronger position in the signing of the contracts. Efforts have also been made within the UiDs, but the possibility of influencing this from within NUFU is of course much more limited. It should be added that many NUFU projects originally started in the first phase of the programme (or were even based on collaboration established long before the first NUFU period), before the concern for institutionalization was raised. It is, of course, easier to impose this policy on new projects.

Nevertheless, all field study reports observe that institutionalization is a weak aspect of the

NUFU programme. The fact that it was also a topic of discussion at the Cape Town seminar indicates that the partners are aware of it themselves. The participants expressed serious concerns about the present status of institutional commitment by UiNs and UiDs, which they characterized as weak with regards to core functions and administrative support structures, institutional responsibility for programmes, and the integration of NUFU programmes in the overall plans and core activities of the relevant institutional units. The working group dealing with sustainability recommended that these concerns be addressed so that NUFU collaboration programmes have built-in guarantees of institutional involvement and gradually increasing institutional proficiency and capacity<sup>25</sup>.

This observed weakness in achieving the institutionalization of the programme and its projects is, of course, closely related to NUFU's main characteristic: the decentralized model of collaboration. This is also a typical characteristic of universities as a whole. In research on higher education, especially that based on organizational theory, universities tend to be bottom-up institutions, loosely linked bureaucracies, where authority is mainly based on academic merit rather than formal structures. Academic staff have a greater loyalty to their respective disciplines than to their institution. These characteristics are seen as necessary for a university to fulfil its research and teaching functions, and are linked to the ideals of academic autonomy. For this reason, university managements have to strike a balance between these decentralized characteristics and the need for coordination and steering, between the academic activities and the administration. This also implies that policies aiming to introduce major changes within a university should adopt strategies that play the academic strings and adopt a bottom-up

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25) The working group seminar on NUFU cooperation, Cape Town, November 1998.

perspective rather than operating only through the central level of the university.

The NUFU programme is based on these same principles, and this coherence with the main characteristics of universities is without doubt one of the reasons for its popularity and the success. NUFU collaboration is based on a strategy of working with the basic units at universities rather than starting with agreements at the top level. Furthermore, the researchers engaged in the programme are working within a framework familiar to them, and they feel comfortable with it. There appears to be a general feeling that this basic principle of the programme should remain intact. The aim of increasing institutionalization should not lead the programme towards more central and bureaucratic steering. Institutionalization should be realistic and feasible, and in tune with the specific character of both the programme and the institutions involved.

This is not to say that we believe that the present status of institutionalization within the NUFU programme is optimal, or that the aim of improved institutionalization should be abandoned. On the contrary, the impact of NUFU projects could generally be enhanced by a stronger degree of institutionalization, and attention and support for the programme at central level could be improved.

In this respect, it is important to make a distinction between NUFU support for research and teaching activities. At universities, there is little interference in the research conducted by the staff, while the education component is much more centrally steered. Partner institutions in the South do have systems for institutionalizing teaching programmes, but usually lack adequate systems for the institutionalization of research activities or the administration of externally funded projects. It is our impression that the programme does not give sufficient attention to this distinction.

The institutionalization of project activities in the academic system of the institution is closely linked to the extent to which the project relates

to the priorities and needs of the recipient institutions. Although NUFU projects have been created on the basis of individual interests, and in most cases at the initiative of the Norwegian partner, our main impression is that the Norwegian partners have shown responsiveness to the needs of the recipient institution (and country). The same applies to the decision-making by the NUFU Committee, even though the South is not involved in the decision-making process.

When it comes to administrative institutionalization, the picture is far more problematic. In some UiDs, NUFU coordinators, local NUFU Committees and even NUFU units are established, to a greater or lesser extent, outside the universities. It would be better for these arrangements to operate within the framework of the university, serving all NUFU projects at the institution. A proposal from one of the field study reports which deserves consideration was that a committee would have a stronger position than a single coordinator. The problem is that a number of administrative arrangements within the NUFU programme do not fulfil the criteria mentioned above. There are examples of arrangements totally outside the UiN, and also serving only a few projects. From the partners' perspective, there can be many good reasons for not running projects within the confines of the university. In many UiDs, slow decision-making processes, conflicting interests between researchers, and inadequate administrative capacities hamper efficient project management. This situation makes it sometimes necessary and acceptable to find interim solutions outside the formal structures. But if these become permanent, they will present an obstacle to the institutionalization of the project and reduce the impact of the collaboration on administrative capacity-building.

Most field study reports reported that the flow of information between the projects and the universities, especially in the South, is weak or even non-existent. There are cases where the central administration and even the unit for international relations do not know about the

NUFU agreement or what NUFU projects are under way. This may negatively affect attitudes towards the NUFU programme at central level, and may reduce the chances of support from this level. Even more problematic is the fact that the low level of information sharing and coordination seriously affects the possibilities for generating synergies between the different NUFU projects and with other donor activities. We have seen examples of such synergies, but they were mainly the result of partners with an entrepreneurial attitude.

From our observations and discussions, we get the impression that the best project arrangements, with the greatest potential for academic and administrative institutionalization, are probably the broader based, multi-faceted teaching and research projects. We have seen examples of such projects at some UiDs, well integrated in the academic and administrative structures of the institution. They are of a considerable size in terms of participating researchers, involve more departments, and include different components such as research, training of students and staff development.

## 15 Sustainability

Sustainability is closely linked to institutionalization. Improvements in institutionalization will also increase sustainability. The term has many different meanings; a project may, for example, be considered sustainable if it is given continued funding. The definition we adopt is not so much related to the project and the specific partnership itself, but rather inked to the results of the collaboration. In this respect, by sustainability, we mean that the project activities should be able to continue after the project itself has been terminated. This is of course not to say that it is not important that the partnership continues, but that, from the perspective of NUFU, the partnership is a tool rather than an aim in itself.

Another issue is at what level sustainability should be considered: at the level of the institution or of the recipient country. If a project has helped to educate graduates who are beneficial to the society concerned, it is sustainable in a certain sense even if there are no signs of it left within the university. Both aspects should be considered, but since the main aim of NUFU is not development aid in itself, but to support universities in the South, we have regarded effects at the institutional level as the main assessment criteria.

The overall impression of the evaluation team is that there are many good examples of sustainable outputs of the NUFU programme, but at the same time there is considerable variation between projects. The most visible result is staff development, leading to a core of well-trained staff capable of both continuing research and teaching. Other positive examples are support given to laboratories or other research facilities and the establishment or development of curricula. The best prospects for sustainability are observed in the broader based projects, rather than in smaller projects involving only a few researchers.

Sustainability is something that has to be planned for. In the NUFU programme, sustainability is not an important criteria when it comes to project applications, implementation of monitoring. Researchers do not see it as their responsibility. Mechanisms for sustainability are not built into the projects at the design stage. Our observations have shown that, although there is potential for generating income during and even after completion of some projects, in many cases the partners do not see the commercial opportunities and the institutions lack a proper policy framework for income generation. There is a definite need to assist Southern partners in their efforts to look for and handle additional funds.

The poor financial situation in most of the countries in the South, especially in Africa, is of course a major threat to the sustainability of the projects. This is a problem that lies outside NUFU's sphere of influence. These financial constraints have a direct effect on the capacity of institutions to retain staff, due to low salaries and poor working conditions. Programmes like NUFU are important to institutions in the South because they create and support an environment of research and training opportunities that will retain capable staff even though salaries may not be up to standard. This situation makes the NUFU programme co-responsible for the sustainability of the activities which it helps to develop, and implies longer-term support if investments are not put to waste.

We have already mentioned that problems of sustainability are limited only to institutions in the South. Because of both the funding principles of NUFU and the fact that many projects have a strong training and capacity-building component, the collaboration is not always seen as necessarily rewarding in economic and academic terms for the Norwegian institutions. NUFU gives limited financial support to the Norwegian partners, which can create a heavy burden especially on units involved in many NUFU projects. In

addition, a general trend towards less room for manoeuvre in the budgets of the institutions reduces their economic freedom, and may lead to less institutional support for NUFU collaboration. In addition, the research benefits for the Norwegian partners are often quite limited. A high level of commitment and idealism is needed, a quality that is one of NUFU's major strengths but which, at the same time, makes the collaboration vulnerable. It may also reduce the possibilities for recruiting the best Norwegian researchers to the programme, since collaboration with colleagues in leading American or European institutions may be

considered more rewarding. It is important to be aware of this but, so far, it does not seem to have affected interest in establishing new NUFU projects. The number of project applications has been increasing, and NUFU reports that many more applications qualify for support than can be approved. This is an indicator of the increased attention for North-South collaboration within Norwegian universities, a factor very much a result of the NUFU agreement. So, at programme level at least, the sustainability of NUFU itself is not under threat at this moment.

## 16 Aims, principles and strategy

In 1991, the idea was to create a research collaboration programme, in which the Southern institutions would define the priorities and one of the main aims would be South-South cooperation. The intention of the programme was to create research competence through cooperation, with the goal of achieving professional equality between the partners. However, the programme did not start with a clean slate and this compromised its idealistic ideas from the start. Projects already being undertaken by the Norwegian universities and other projects that received funding from the MFA (13 projects) had to be taken on board. Many of these projects focused on education rather than on research. Under the second Agreement, too, the programme has not succeeded in “cleaning up” this hotchpotch of different projects. The MFA provided extra funds to initiate new collaboration with institutions in South Africa and Central America, as part of Norwegian support for the peace process in those countries. This meant that partners and projects had to be identified in a way that went beyond the normal procedures. These factors, combined with the not very specific aims of the programme, have led to differences of opinion in the NUFU membership about the main tasks and objectives of the programme. Some think the programme is meant to solve problems in developing countries, others see institution-building as the main task.

In the previous chapters various aspects of the NUFU programme have been examined, referring to the extent to which the programme has been able to live up to its principles and to which its strategy and procedures have helped to achieve the programme’s aims and objectives. The following discrepancies, frictions and dilemmas have been observed:

- The focus of project activities is on research and staff development for research (collaboration). A broader-focused and integrated approach aimed at strengthening

academic as well as administrative and management aspects of the institutions is not actively pursued by the programme. In its present form, NUFU only contributes to some aspects of the broad range of activities that are needed to strengthen an institute’s research capacity.

- In most projects education and staff development take priority over research cooperation. This is explained by the weak starting position of most Southern partners and by the conviction of most partners that excellent research can only prosper in combination with the education of students. Hence, they see a combination of research and research training (education) as the backbone of cooperation in NUFU. Of all NUFU projects, 18% are pure research projects without education and training activities. 22% of the projects involve PhD studies, 24% Master’s Degree studies, and 36% both categories.
- The partnership model is well appreciated by the partners. It builds the necessary understanding, respect and trust for successful collaboration. However, it needs time to develop and grow. Initially the relationships between the partners are very unequal. The Southern partners benefit most from the projects, especially in the case of teaching activities. The benefits for the UiNs are more indirect and come after a longer period of collaboration. This is not just a reflection of existing disparities but also a consequence of the selection process.
- The ownership of the programme lies with the Norwegian partners. At project level, the situation is more balanced.
- The usual pattern of origin of projects, i.e. individuals initiating a collaboration, easily leads to “islands” of research activities without proper anchoring in the institution’s academic and administrative structures.

- The decentralized system of programme management and administration create ownership at the level of the project participants, but has major drawbacks regarding the control and accountability of the programme.
- NUFU contributes to overall Norwegian development cooperation objectives, without strictly adhering to specific thematic or regional priorities.

The table below lists the major discrepancies as we have observed them. It is interesting to note that, although NUFU is a successful programme with good results and satisfied participants, it does not in many ways comply with its own objectives and guiding principles. This observation immediately leads to a number of questions: Does this matter? Should the discrepancies be addressed, and if so, in what way? We will discuss this further in the chapter on future directions.

**Table 5. Discrepancies and dilemmas**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Aim</b></p> <p>Research collaboration (original) Strengthen institutions</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Practice</b></p> <p>Staff development and education prevail Topical projects</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Principles</b></p> <p>Mutual benefits Equity Southern needs should prevail Partnership model Relevance of research</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Practice</b></p> <p>Unequal strengths and gains Seen as long-term objective Norwegian institutions decide UiN dominance in decision-making Individuals interests prevail</p>
<p>Financial commitment of UiN Personal commitment</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Threat</b></p> <p>UiN budgets under pressure “Publish or perish” pressure for academic survival</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strategy</b></p> <p>Long-term perspective Institutional responsibility</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Practice</b></p> <p>Short-term funding (4 years) Collaboration between individuals</p>
<p>Decentralized system</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Shortfalls</b></p> <p>Quality assurance (process, inputs and products) Harmonization of procedures Accountability Coordination of activities Interfacing with other support programmes Sharing of experiences</p>

## 17 NUFU compared

### 17.1 Introduction

The following paragraphs present the main findings of a concise comparative study, comparing the principles, approach and results of the NUFU programme with those of three other programmes, namely:

- the Bilateral Programme for Enhancement of Research Capacity in developing countries (ENRECA), funded by Danish International Development Assistance (Danida);
- the Bilateral Research Cooperation Programme, funded by the Department for Research Cooperation, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (hereafter referred to as Sida/SAREC);
- the Multi-annual, Multidisciplinary Research Programmes (MMRPs), funded by the Dutch Directorate General for International Cooperation (DGIS).

Although a comparison between programmes with similar aims but varying modalities is a daunting effort, it nevertheless provides interesting perspectives on a number of key issues which may be prove useful in discussions on the further development and improvement of the NUFU programme.

### 17.2 Aims and guiding principles

A comparison of aims and objectives shows that the NUFU, ENRECA and Sida/SAREC programmes aim at strengthening research capacity in developing countries in a broad sense. Common guiding principles of these programmes are a long-term commitment to development support, equality in the cooperation, and the principle that ownership and the local needs of the developing countries should be the central focus in the process of defining priorities. The MMRPs have a somewhat different objective: to support

demand-oriented research into local long-term processes of change, designed to improve the policy actions of government, NGOs and grassroots movements in the countries concerned. The programmes aim to offer alternatives to mainstream (asymmetrical) research.

The NUFU, ENRECA and Sida/SAREC programmes operate through long-term cooperative projects in the form of partnerships (“twinning arrangements”) between institutions in the South and in the Scandinavian countries concerned. In the MMRPs, no partnerships with the North are involved. The programme is founded on the view that the development and use of research capacity is often hampered by the asymmetric relations between the North and the South, and that in many countries, research does not find its way into local, regional and national policy. NUFU, ENRECA and Sida/SAREC projects include the exchange of staff, postgraduate training, the provision of research equipment, acquisition of literature and academic journals, improvement of research infrastructure and means of communication, and dissemination and publication of research findings. In all three programmes the sandwich model is a powerful means of building local research capacity. MMRP projects support research-related training and supervision (in general not as part of formal degree programmes), the acquisition of literature and journals, and dissemination and publication activities (for example, the production of newsletters, and the organization of workshops and training for policy-makers).

### 17.3 Approaches and strategies

The four programmes differ in their approach and strategy of support for research capacity-building. Both NUFU and ENRECA focus on research capacity-building in institutions through individual projects, implemented in a relatively large number of countries, compared to the financial resources available. The NUFU

programme collaborates with institutions in 22 countries, ENRECA with institutions in 26 countries. Both programmes follow a decentralized approach to programme implementation, in which the institutions are primarily responsible for the academic content of the programme, as well as for the reporting, supervision, implementation and initiation processes. It explains the diversity in topics and countries of cooperation and the difficulties in addressing wider, institutional capacity-building issues. In the ENRECA programme, the actual contribution to wider capacity issues is currently the subject of external evaluation.

The Sida/SAREC programme and the MMRPs follow a more institutional (and, to a certain extent, national) approach in building research capacity, and have concentrated their support in a selected number of countries. Both programmes are involved in nine countries. Sida/SAREC provides comprehensive support to the main universities in these countries, and in some cases also to national research councils and ministries. An increasing share of the total allocations is being used to strengthen the conditions for research at the universities, including support for reforms, research management, libraries and laboratories. A successful component of the support is the contribution to faculty funds for research, intended to encourage systems for peer review and decision-making. The institutional approach has already shown promising results in terms of institutional impact at departmental and faculty levels, but requires a long-term perspective, and seems to generate the best effects in institutions and countries which have already reached a certain level of competence in managing the research process.

The MMRPs display a radically different strategy. The nine research programmes themselves are fully responsible for designing, implementing and managing their own research, with the donor acting mainly as a facilitator. Results are also promising: (internal) joint reviews showed that each of the MMRPs has succeeded in creating its own identity within a relatively short time (2–4 years), and in

setting up relevant, and user-oriented research programmes based on local needs and priorities.

#### **17.4 Programme management and administration**

In the NUFU and ENRECA programmes, mainly due to the decentralized management system, the whole process of identification, management and administration, and decision-making at all levels is still largely Northern dominated. Both programmes therefore seem limited regarding the extent to which overall university priorities in the South can be pursued. Furthermore, in the NUFU programme there is no uniformity in project management and administration. The decentralized system also hampers the proper monitoring of the programme's performance and the establishment of mechanisms for quality control, feedback and information sharing mechanisms at central level. ENRECA encounters, due to limited staff capacity, difficulties in monitoring and feedback of projects and research results.

Both the Sida/SAREC programme and the MMRPs have transferred responsibilities for management and administration to the South. Agreements for cooperation are signed directly with the Southern partners. The Sida/SAREC programme pays considerable attention to institution-wide strategic planning, and systematically involves the partners in the identification and selection of research themes and priorities. This model requires considerable coordinating and planning capacities at central levels in the South, flexible programme management and a strong facilitating role for Sida/SAREC. In the case of the MMRPs, the Southern partners have control over and are responsible for their policy, programmes and budgets. Each individual MMRP has established its own procedures and manuals for identification, selection, monitoring and evaluation of research projects. A Steering Committee, composed of representatives of universities, the public sector and NGOs, is responsible for the overall management and

quality of the programme. Internal joint reviews indicate that these organizations vary significantly in their level of effectiveness and that improvements could be made with respect to operational mechanisms. At programme level, DGIS is responsible for monitoring and evaluation of the programme as a whole, but intervention has been kept to a minimum. Both models for programme management are highly appreciated in the South, and have created ownership, commitment and equality in the cooperation.

### **17.5 Institutionalization and sustainability**

Due to lack of information, it is not clear what kind of overall approach is followed by the ENRECA and Sida/SAREC programmes to enhance the institutionalization and sustainability of projects. External evaluations stress the importance of assuring institutional involvement and commitment at the highest possible levels. The Sida/SAREC and MMRP models address this issue by transferring responsibility for the management and administration of the programme to the country level. The most important threat to the sustainability of research projects seems to be the weakness of research environments in many institutions and countries. They lack financial resources and are unable to provide a suitable "home" for graduating projects. In the case of the MMRPs, there are some concerns about the institutionalization and sustainability of the research because MMRPs are not institution but network based. On the other hand, the relevance of the research and the local ownership are strong conditions for success in these areas. Each MMRP has developed and implemented specific strategies to enhance the credibility of the network and its results, so far with mixed results.

### **17.6 Achievements and results**

As reported in previous chapters, NUFU has yielded good results. Evaluation and reviews of the ENRECA and Sida/SAREC programmes show positive contributions to research

capacity-building in the South. Especially the coordination between the different kind of inputs, such as research training, physical facilities, provision of consumables and literature, travel etc. contributed positively to the effectiveness of the projects. In the NUFU, ENRECA and Sida/SAREC programmes, the sandwich model is an effective instrument in research training at PhD and Master's level. The MMRPs have succeeded in drafting their own research agenda and getting it implemented. Each MMRP has carved out its niche in the larger research arena of the country concerned, and all are now attracting the attention of national research and policy-making bodies.

NUFU in its present form can only contribute to some aspects of the broad range of activities that are needed to strengthen an institute's research capacity. The Sida/SAREC programme and the MMRPs have developed a more broadly focused and more integrated approach to strengthening the academic, as well as the administrative and management, aspects of research institutions and networks.

According to the reports, the quality of the graduates and the publications seems to be good in all three partnership programmes. In the NUFU programme the quality of outputs is primarily looked at from an academic and scientific perspective: societal relevance is not assessed or measured. ENRECA and Sida/SAREC pay considerable attention to relevance in the assessment (making use of external referees), monitoring and evaluation/review procedures. The MMRPs acknowledge the importance of striking a balance between the social relevance and the academic quality of research. The individual MMRPs have reached different stages in developing a systematic approach to managing the quality of the research process. Given the nature of the programmes, however, they are facing criticism both from the academic world and from within development circles.

### 17.7 Concluding remarks

On the basis of the available documentation, no firm conclusions can be drawn regarding the comparative advantages of the programmes in terms of programme design and performance.

The above paragraphs make clear that NUFU shares a lot of its characteristics with the ENRECA programme. We mentioned the decentralized model, the flexible way of programme implementation and the strong influence of the Northern partners in the decision-making process and the management of the projects. However, the Northern partners are very committed and the results of the collaborations tend to be good. For the Sida/SAREC programme and the MMRPs the needs and priorities of the Southern institutions are the point of departure. Much more so than is the case with NUFU and ENRECA, these programmes are built on commitment in the South.

In terms of achieving local ownership, institutional capacity-building and the strengthening of overall conditions for research, the NUFU programme is less well equipped than the Sida/SAREC programme and the MMRPs. These programmes place much more emphasis on Southern ownership, institutional capacity-building and the relevance of research activities, and have designed their implementation strategies and procedures accordingly. This does not mean that these two programmes will produce more or better outputs than NUFU or ENRECA. But no doubt they will score better when it comes to the strengthening of institutional capacities in research management. Whereas in NUFU and ENRECA the implementation strategy seems to take preference over aims and principles, in the Sida/SAREC programme and the MMRPs, the strategy follows on quite logically from the aims and principles.

## 18 Future directions

NUFU is a niche programme, it does not aim to address the general problems of universities that stem from low and unreliable levels of core funding and rapidly increased student enrolments. The programme has only one mission, which is to contribute to research and research competence in the institutions. We have concluded that the programme has achieved much in terms of education and training, in producing research documents, in establishing excellent collaborations, and maintaining good relations with the MFA and policy-makers.

We are of the opinion that despite its success, the NUFU programme needs to make a few strategic choices in order to maintain and further improve its good performance and to successfully cope with present and future challenges. The transfer of the programme's responsibility from the MFA to NORAD, the need for greater synergy between Norwegian support schemes, changes in university financing and management, and changing demands on development cooperation programmes may force the programme to review and adjust its aims, principles and strategy.

As pointed out in the preceding chapters, even without these challenges, there is a need for the NUFU programme to address a number of weaknesses in its set-up, operationalization and administration. In our opinion, NUFU faces the following immediate challenges:

- to achieve coherence in the objectives, strategy and underlying principles of the programme;
- to balance flexibility and control in management and administration;
- to improve quality assurance without becoming bureaucratic;

- to make the decision-making process transparent;
- to strive for the institutionalization and sustainability of project activities;
- to strengthen collaboration with other programmes without compromising NUFU's specific character;
- to strengthen the North-South-South network component.

The call for coherence is based on our observation of a number of tensions between the aims and principles of the programme on the one hand and the its implementation in practice on the other. In addition, the drawbacks of the programme's decentralized strategy affect some of its aspirations as expressed in its aims and principles. The strategy of the programme seems to take precedence, making it difficult for it to achieve its aims and adhere to the principles it advocates. Choices need to be made to remedy this incoherence if the programme wishes to proceed with a credible mission and realistic horizons. Linked to this is a need to demarcate the ambitions of the programme in terms of institutional impact, geographical coverage and the scope of disciplines involved. If funds for the programme remain at the present level and the programme would like to have more impact at the UiDs, it will have to concentrate resources in fewer institutions and perhaps also reduce the number of disciplines it can support.

There is a top-down/bottom-up tension between NUFU's aim of strengthening UiDs according to its institutional priorities and the fact that projects are all initiated and implemented by individual interests and through person-to-person contacts. It is very difficult to serve "top-down" institutional goals by "bottom-up" projects. If the ambition of the programme shifts towards institutional strengthening, projects will need to be based on UiDs' strategic

development plans, and UiN partners should possibly, but not necessarily, also be selected by UiDs.

We have observed that the involvement of Southern partners in the decision-making process is a contentious issue. Although there is no dispute about the need for such involvement, the Norwegian institutions are very reluctant to take action to this effect, hiding behind the argument that there are too many practical problems involved. We believe this attitude negatively affects the credibility of the NUFU programme, and that the partners should no longer postpone or avoid taking steps to address this weakness.

Another major challenge will be to improve the accountability of the programme without bureaucratizing the system. On the positive side, interviewees across the board see a need for improvements in the administration and management of the programme and welcome the harmonization of rules and procedures for all matters pertaining to project implementation and administration. In our opinion, the institutions and coordinators themselves should be encouraged to submit reports which contain not only facts and figures necessary for monitoring the progress of activities, but also analytical sections which compare progress with the original objectives and targets, analyse bottlenecks and suggest ways of solving problems. This will place a heavier burden on the institutional coordinating bodies and the SIU because they have to spend more time not only on the analysis and compilation of data but also on providing the project coordinators with feedback that will help them to address observed gaps and problems. Feedback is an important instrument in motivating people to produce good reports and give them the impression that reporting serves a purpose.

With regard to improvements in establishing North-South-South relations, this has to be addressed both at the conceptual and operational levels. A set of objectives has to be developed as to what is expected from such collaboration, which countries are most

appropriate for the partnerships, what role should the UiNs play, how are projects to be financed (especially how funds are to be apportioned between the respective partners), and what are the priority areas of research for such partnerships. Guidelines need to be developed for the assessment of N-S-S programmes because they are more complicated and may have different and broader objectives than the regular N-S projects. Apart from the common “outputs”, such as trainees and research documents, success in establishing fruitful collaborations and the establishment of centres of excellence needs to be assessed.

Positive attitudes, good intentions and constructive dialogues will be needed to create synergetic relations between NUFU projects, NORAD-funded programmes and RCN schemes. We believe that, if properly prepared and arranged, the model of linking NUFU to a NORAD Framework Agreement offers good opportunities to make the programmes mutually beneficial. NUFU and NORAD will have to work out collaboration arrangements for institutions where both run projects or programmes. This could be in the form of bilateral (NUFU-NORAD), or trilateral (NUFU-NORAD-institution) agreements. It is important that the institution, NORAD and NUFU agree from the start on the “rules of the game” regarding the identification of complementary support and on mechanisms to make sure that the support will be provided in a coordinated manner. The partner institutions should be encouraged to play a pro-active role in setting the research and external support agenda. In UiDs with a large NUFU portfolio but as yet no NORAD Framework Agreement, it would make sense to have NORAD support to improve institutional conditions, from which the NUFU projects would also benefit.

The suggestions made above imply a heavier burden on the shoulders of the project coordinators, the coordinating units and the SIU. The coordinators and units will need to be compensated for the extra time they spend on additional tasks. The SIU, as suggested in the

chapter on Organization and Management, has to be strengthened in terms of staff, resources and mandate to be able to perform a proper monitoring and facilitating function. Extra funds will be needed for training, quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation. If NUFU's budget is not increased, the implementation of these suggestions will mean a reduction in funds directly available for project implementation. There may be a risk that if too much money is going in to what may be considered non-productive and cumbersome activities, scientists may just as well follow mainstream national priorities, forfeit NUFU and seek funding elsewhere.

Improvements in the research bureaucracy for improved quality control, better management, etc., may also mean that power in the decentralized system is gravitating more to the "centre". This will curtail the freedom of individual researchers – one of the attractions of joining the NUFU programme – which may be another reason why they lose interest. Whether it is worth the risk of losing the enthusiastic support of researchers in an attempt to increase the quality assurance of the programme is a difficult question for us to answer. Much will depend on finding a right balance between flexibility and control, and on the process that will be used to bring the message to the stakeholders. In recent years, changes in administration and quality assurance have been introduced in the programme, not by decree but by discussions between the SIU and the partners. Once convinced of the purpose and usefulness of these practices, partners have adopted the suggestions and integrated them in the programme management. Dialogue, discussions and constant feedback may be time-consuming but they would seem to be the most effective way to achieve sustainable results in a decentralized system. The secret is to achieve change without losing support.

### **18.1 Strategic choices**

The stakeholders need to discuss these options and make strategic choices. The central issue is what should have priority in the NUFU

programme: goal-related results, principles or strategy? If the strategy dominates the programme, which is the case now, its ambitions and guiding principles need adjustment. If, however, the aims and/or principles of the programme are given priority, this will have implications for the decentralized model and general administration of the programme.

In reviewing these issues the NUFU stakeholders should consider the programme's present and future mission and approach within the broader framework of Norwegian policies and programmes that support the strengthening of research and higher education in developing countries. The stakeholders (the Norwegian and Southern partners, the MFA, RCN, NCU, NORAD, and the Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs) need to agree on the specific role that the NUFU programme could and should play within overall policy, taking into consideration the specific strengths which academic partnership can contribute. Once all parties are clear on the role of NUFU and of the other schemes, and their complementarity has been defined, the scope and focus of the schemes can be determined and finely tuned. We would like to stress the importance of making use of field experiences during the discussions. Good practices of synergy and cooperation between schemes can be observed at project and institution level, and these experiences will benefit the discussions.

What also needs to be discussed is whether the two aims of the programme, research collaboration and capacity-building, can be served by one implementation strategy and administration model. This becomes more critical with the prospect of NUFU collaborating with other programmes. In the chapter on Aims, Principles and Strategy, it was observed that the capacity-building activities of NUFU (degree training and education courses) can be regarded as development aid although the Norwegian partners do not like to refer to it as such. Research collaboration and capacity-building require different inputs from, and offer different rewards to, the partners involved. In

research the mutual benefits of collaboration are much clearer and it makes sense not to compensate the time put in by the Norwegian staff. In capacity-building projects, most of the benefits go to the Southern partner. The UiNs are helping their partners to reach a certain level of education and research. The benefits for the UiNs are limited during the building up stage of capacity in the South and it would not be unreasonable for them to receive compensation for their efforts. Higher compensation fees would probably represent a move towards a development aid mode of operation.

If this differentiation in implementation modalities on the basis of varying aims and activities is acceptable, then one option would be to set up sub-programmes within NUFU, or a small number of specialized programmes under NUFU. We have been told that NUFU is contemplating setting up a “window” system, with one window for focused interventions in the principal partner institutions, one window to support networks, and one for new initiatives. We support this idea of having separate “windows” or sub-programmes for new initiatives and network projects. With regard to new initiatives we suggest allowing new partners to carry out pilot projects lasting one or two years, in which they develop a vision and strategy for their collaboration, draft a proper plan of operation for the first phase of cooperation, and explore possibilities for linking up with other support schemes. In this pilot phase, the partners may decide to opt for either a research trajectory or a capacity-building trajectory. The administrative requirements for the pilot phase projects could be less strict than for established research and capacity building projects.

Another division<sup>26</sup> could be made on the basis of progressive strengths in research capacity at the UiDs. NUFU projects are very different and at various stages of development. This reflects different needs. NUFU funding could perhaps be divided into (for example) three types of

projects with increasing thresholds and financial contributions from the Norwegian partners:

- 1) Initial: capacity-building projects.
- 2) Consolidating: competence/capacity building projects.
- 3) Sustainable: research, competence/capacity (if necessary) building projects.

It goes without saying that a differentiated system of funding and implementation modalities would be more difficult to manage and more demanding on all parties involved. Nevertheless it is an option worth considering. We believe that this differentiated system of sub-programmes would make it easier to link distinct activities with other support programmes and funding sources. Another big advantage, if modalities are linked to different compensation schemes, is that it will become easier for the UiNs to commit themselves to collaborations because the benefits in terms of returns in research outputs or financial rewards will be quite clear.

In Figures 1 and 2 we try to visualize the differences for a UiD comparing the present situation and mode of operation with a possible future one based on a differentiated NUFU programme and synergy between support schemes.

Changes of this kind and magnitude cannot be expected to take place overnight. It requires a careful and well thought out process to agree on the best role, appropriate mandate and feasible implementation strategy for the NUFU programme within the overall strategy for strengthening research capacity in the South.

We suggest that in the short term the NUFU administration and partners improve on the weaknesses in the programme pointed out above, since these improvements are necessary regardless of possible changes in direction. It is

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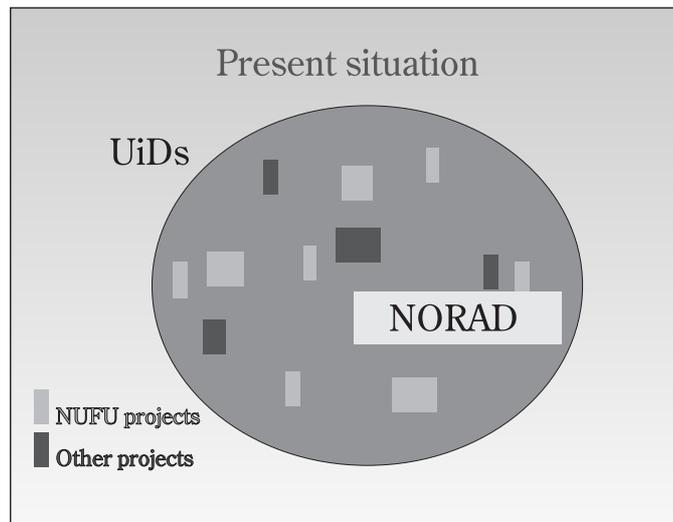
26) Suggested by Andreas Steigen, personal correspondence, 20 March 2000.

recommended that the suggested improvements are developed and introduced before the projects start with a new agreement cycle.

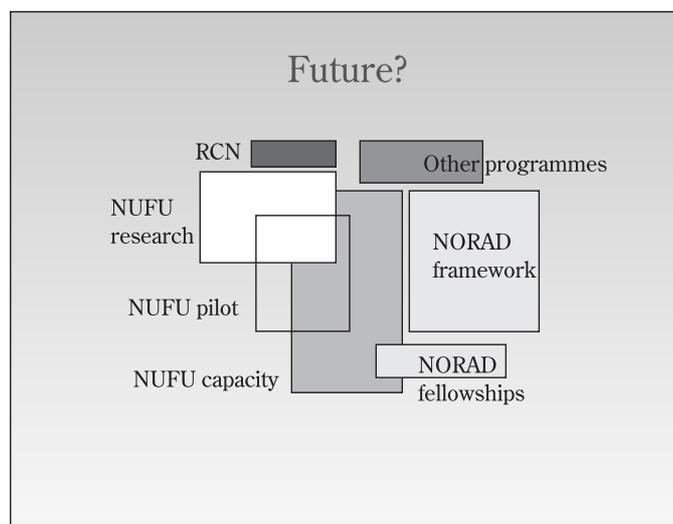
More time is needed for the preparation and implementation of strategic choices. We suggest that the stakeholders use the period of the third Agreement to discuss and agree on these important issues, so that the decisions can come into full effect at the start of the fourth Agreement.

This may seem a long transition period but changes of this nature take time because they require the backing of the stakeholders (if one believes in democracy and dialogue as means to convince people) and it would be very disturbing for the partners if the “goalposts” were to be moved halfway through the third Agreement.

**Figure 1. Present situation at UiDs, no coordination and synergy between programmes and projects**



**Figure 2. Future situation? Coordination and synergy between support programmes and projects**



## 19 Conclusions

1. We regard NUFU as a successful programme on the basis of its impressive results in combination with the modest levels of external funding. Its achievements can be attributed to the personal commitment of the people involved and the decentralized and flexible way in which the programme is implemented. These latter characteristics coincide with the culture traditionally found at academic institutions which allows individual members of staff considerable academic freedom and autonomy.

2. NUFU has played an important role in stimulating the Norwegian universities to internationalize their research and education programmes. It has developed close relations with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has secured political support, and has portrayed to the society at large an ideal of helping developing countries which shows results both in the South and in Norway. NUFU is now regarded as an important and strategic tool in supporting tertiary education and research in developing countries.

3. The partnership approach is much appreciated by the partners, especially those in the South. It creates the possibility of establishing long-term and mutually beneficial relationships built on respect and shared interests. The partnership approach builds up international relations, and allows for broad participation in collaboration projects and a mutually beneficial exchange of staff and students.

4. The exchange of staff and students is at the core of the partnership approach. The participation of Norwegian students is an important element as it broadens the base of the cooperation, spreads the benefits of the collaboration more equally between the partners, and creates interest in international cooperation (in research and education) among a future generation of researchers and policy-makers.

5. Overall, NUFU adheres to the principles of Norwegian development cooperation, in contributing to capacity-building and institutional strengthening in developing countries which have been given priority for bilateral support. In addition, the topics of NUFU collaboration largely fall within the priority theme areas of Norwegian development aid. The programme is not particularly strong on gender, in the sense that the projects do not specifically address gender issues.

6. In our opinion, the NUFU programme has four major weaknesses:

- insufficient coherence between the aims, the principles and the strategy of the programme;
- lack of transparency in decision-making at programme level and willingness to involve the Southern partners in this process;
- weak institutionalization of the programme and the projects in the partner institutions;
- poor collaboration with other (Norwegian) support schemes.

A fifth could be added, i.e. the decentralized system, but this is also one of the strengths of the programme. Most of the conclusions that follow are linked to these weaknesses.

7. At programme level, there have been relations between NUFU, NORAD and the Research Council of Norway from the start of the NUFU programme. However, these relations thus far have led to few tangible and structural collaborations between the programmes which they represent. This can be explained by differences in the perceptions, mandates and cultures of the organizations.

8. The decentralized model of the NUFU programme is an important factor in the success of NUFU and is highly appreciated by all stakeholders. It makes the programme flexible, the administration tailor-made, and project implementation adjustable to changing local circumstances. It furthermore encourages individual commitment and collaborative relationships. It also has a number of negative aspects, however. The many modalities of project implementation and administration, and differences in the application of rules and regulations cause coordination problems and hamper the institutionalization and sustainability of project activities.

9. Although the NUFU programme advocates equality in the collaboration between the partners, almost none of the NUFU projects or institutions have reached this stage. In the selection process of partners and projects, the strength of the Norwegian institution is the decisive factor, putting the Southern partner automatically in the position of beneficiary and junior partner. The Norwegian institutions see equality between the partners as a long-term objective rather than in terms of practice at the operational level.

10. Decisions about project selection and fund allocations are largely taken by the Norwegian stakeholders. The decision-making process in respect of project selection and fund allocation has not been transparent. Institutional interests have influenced the process to some extent. No representatives from the South are involved in this process, which is rather contradictory to the NUFU principles of ownership and equality.

11. Quality assurance has improved over the years, but is still rather weak. It is internal and decentralized. The selection of projects is not transparent and does not involve external assessment. Most project proposals are weak on defining clear objectives, targets and verifiable indicators to measure progress. Progress reports lack reflection on performance. The external evaluations have been useful, but should have been given better instructions and more time. There is a general feeling among the

partners that periodic internal as well as external quality assurance processes should be introduced.

12. The relevance of research projects to the institutions and countries concerned is central to the NUFU programme. There is, however, a tension between the academic interests of researchers and the demands of communities, governments, industry and business for research that is relevant and has immediate applicability. Most institutions in the South lack the structure and capacity to formulate a research agenda and to prioritize their research activities accordingly. However, the Norwegian partners are sensitive to the needs of the Southern institutions and give them serious consideration.

13. Networks between institutions in the South with Norwegian participation are much appreciated by the partners in the South. The existing networks function with varying degrees of success. Many difficulties – funding and its administration, different levels of development, the lack of appropriate information technology, different languages and cultures – have to be overcome or negotiated in establishing cross-country collaborations. The conceptual directions and operational requirements for successful networking were not in place when they were first set up, but are being developed along the way.

14. The institutionalization of the programme and its projects at the partner institutions is still weak. The ad hoc and bottom-up way in which projects have been identified and the decentralized system of project management, do not augur well for the institutionalization of project activities. The coordinating committees and NUFU coordinators which some of the institutions have introduced play a positive role in institutionalizing the programme.

15. In the NUFU programme sustainability is not an important criteria when it comes to project applications, implementation and monitoring. Researchers do not see it as their responsibility and the programme does not

encourage the partners to seriously look at the sustainability of project activities. Because of the funding principles of the programme, sustainability depends heavily on the commitment of the Norwegian institutions and the idealism of the Norwegian researchers. Although this is one of the major strengths of the programme, it also makes the programme vulnerable.

16. Since the beginning of the first Agreement, the NUFU Committee and the Secretariat (SIU) have continuously worked on improving the administration of the programme. This task has been performed with great enthusiasm and with considerable success. The SIU has put a lot of effort into reviewing procedures and guidelines, and this has been done with commendable success. The SIU's mandate is limited and it is not equipped to play a substantive role in policy development, monitoring and quality assurance.

17. Many of the conclusions of the 1994 evaluation are still valid today. Although the

recommendations relating to administration have been followed up, some of the more contentious issues regarding equality, institutional impact in the South and accountability remain unresolved.

18. By way of conclusion, we observe that NUFU is a successful programme in terms of results and satisfied participants, but the way in which the programme operates does not in many ways conform to its objectives and guiding principles. NUFU needs to make a few strategic choices in order to maintain and further improve its good performance and to successfully cope with present and future challenges, i.e. the transfer of the programme's responsibility to NORAD, the need for greater synergy between Norwegian support schemes, changes in university financing and management, and changing demands on development cooperation programmes. Even without these challenges, there is a need for NUFU to address a number of weaknesses in its set-up, operationalization and administration.

## 20 Recommendations

1. Our main recommendation is that the programme should continue, because it plays a valuable role in Norwegian development assistance strategy, not only in the South but also at home. The programme should retain its strengths (i.e. the flexibility of implementation and personal commitment as a basis for collaboration) and address its shortcomings (e.g. inadequate procedures for quality assurance and accountability). The objectives of the programme and the implications of its underlying principles should be reviewed in view of present discrepancies in the system and of new and immanent challenges, threats and opportunities. Southern partners should get involved in the decision-making processes at programme level. A sustainable quality assurance mechanism should be incorporated into the model with the emphasis on the detection of shortcomings and instituting the necessary remedial measures.

2. In view of the above we see the following tasks for the NCU, MFA, NORAD, RCN and the Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs :

Task for NCU-MFA-NORAD-RCN-MERCA  
(short-medium term):

- To agree on the specific role and contribution of academic partnerships to capacity-building and institutional strengthening within the framework of Norwegian development cooperation policies and strategies.
- To agree on a trajectory to arrive at effective coordination between various support programmes at policy and implementation level.

Task for the NUFU administration and partners  
(short term):

- To agree on clear operational definitions of concepts (capacity-building, equity, ownership, etc.)
- To define areas of comparative advantage for academic partnerships over other forms of support in capacity-building at Southern institutions.
- To develop a coherent framework of compatible objectives, principles and strategies.
- To decide on the scope of the programme in terms of regional and thematic focus for optimal effectiveness.
- To define verifiable criteria to measure the programme's success.
- To implement and manage the programme according to the agreed framework.
- To design a practical monitoring and evaluation system.
- To install mechanisms to steer and correct the programme and its projects as necessary.
- To analyse experiences and internalize lessons learned.

3. The stakeholders need to discuss options and make strategic choices. The central issue is what should have priority in the NUFU programme: goal-related results, principles or strategy? If the strategy is the dominating factor, which is the case now with the decentralized model, the ambitions and guiding principles of the programme need adjustment. If, however, the aims and principles of the programme are given priority, this will have implications for the

decentralized model and general administration of the programme.

More specifically, we would like to make the following recommendations:

4. The NUFU programme needs to develop, introduce and enforce a uniform system of guidelines and procedures for the administration, monitoring and evaluation of the programme and projects. In a system that values external monitoring and quality control, it is further recommended that a system be introduced in which the level of funding for a project is directly related to the performance of the project in the preceding year and the quality of the statement of expenses of the current year.
5. The SIU and the partners need to design and introduce an appropriate quality assurance system for the projects, ensuring at the same time that the procedures are not overly bureaucratic, laborious and time-consuming. Each project proposal should define clear targets, verifiable indicators and milestones for its activities. Similarly, measurable success criteria should be defined for the programme as a whole. Criteria and instruments need to be developed to measure the “relevance” and “wider application” of project activities and the quality of the training.
6. In order to improve the transparency of project selection, a network of referees should be created to scrutinize NUFU applications on the basis of criteria such as quality, relevance, sustainability, commitment, feasibility, the qualifications of the researchers and coordinators, the potential for S-S partnerships and the inclusion of gender topics.
7. The UiDs need to be given a substantive role in the project selection process. We can think of three options to increase the influence of the South in the decision-making process: a) the inclusion of experts from the South in the present NUFU Committee; b) the setting up of a parallel committee in the South; or c) the setting up of a committee in the South with two or three Norwegian representatives. In addition, it would be worthwhile to have annual (regional) meetings with the rectors of the UiDs to discuss programme matters. All options come with certain practical problems and a price tag. The feasibility and effectiveness of these and other options should be analysed by NUFU and the partners.
8. To further increase the ownership of the UiDs and equality between the partners we recommend that NUFU considers the introduction of framework agreements for UiDs with a large project portfolio, with a rough indication of the total budget available for the portfolio. This should preferably be combined with the introduction of tripartite project contracts, to be signed by NUFU, the UiN and the UiD and based on one jointly formulated project document. The budget, however, is divided into two lines and funding flows, one NUFU UiN and the other NUFU UiD. This involves more administrative work for the UiD and means that in some cases the capacity for monitoring, implementation and accountability at the UiD will need to be improved.
9. The external evaluations should be continued, possibly in various forms: a) broadly set-up evaluations with standard ToRs allowing the results of different evaluation visits to be compared and synthesized and b) “inspection type” evaluations, closely linked to a well-functioning monitoring system. In the latter case, observations, queries and problems identified through the monitoring system should define the specific ToR of the evaluation visits. The external evaluations should also increasingly focus on output and the achievement of objectives and not be restricted to an assessment of project activities. The partners should be encouraged and given the time to do a thorough self-assessment prior to the evaluation.
10. The relevance of projects should be located in the institutions’ research plan which in turn should be coherent with the country’s research agenda. It gives the projects a better chance of achieving an institutional and national impact. Especially in the principal partner institutions in

the South, the NUFU partners could facilitate and maybe assist in the formulation of institutional research strategies and research management.

11. It is important that NUFU gives more attention to the institutionalization of project activities accompanied by long-term strategies for achieving sustainability. Mechanisms for sustainability need to be built into the project at the design stage. Partners should be made aware of the importance of these issues, procedures and incentives developed to pursue institutionalization and sustainability, relevant training and coaching provided, and monitoring on progress carried out. The programme should encourage broader-based and multi-faceted projects since they have a better chance of achieving academic sustainability. A postgraduate fellowship of two years would help the UiDs to retain young and promising staff.

12. The NUFU secretariat should play a more active role in assisting the project coordinators and the institutions of the South on administrative arrangements, especially in institutions having a substantial project portfolio.

13. The sustainability of the programme requires that enough good Norwegian researchers continue to participate in the projects. This means that the project overheads should be realistic, professional or financial compensation adequate, and the continuity of researchers ensured. We recommend differentiation of the aims of the NUFU programme – research collaboration, capacity building, pilot projects, networking – with adjusted implementation modalities and compensation levels for Norwegian staff inputs. This would clarify the cost-benefit analysis for the UiNs and make it much easier to establish a link with other support programmes (e.g. NORAD's Framework Agreements).

Norwegian institutions, for their part, should anchor involvement in the NUFU programme in their institutional policies, and operationalize their commitments in terms of adequate administrative support.

14. NUFU, RCN, NORAD, the Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs and the MFA should work together in creating opportunities for UiN staff, young researchers and students to stay for longer research periods at UiDs. In this way good researchers from the UiNs can be attracted to participate in the programme. Researchers from UiNs could also be encouraged to spend sabbaticals at UiD.

15. The NUFU programme should give more support to networks in terms of funding as well as in providing a set of guidelines on how to establish, organize and manage network relations. Special criteria for the assessment of networks need to be developed and introduced. Special efforts should be made to encourage the setting up of sustainable centres of excellence which could become a focus for South-South cooperation and enable institutions to support one another from a position of strength.

16. The position and role of the SIU should be thoroughly discussed. The NUFU administrative system and its external quality might be improved if the SIU were more independent of the Norwegian university system and if it were to play a more facilitating role.

17. Most of the above suggestions will have financial implications, i.e. funds will be required to implement them. To ensure that this will not affect the volume of activities in the South, our final recommendation is a request to MFA/NORAD to provide more funds for the NUFU programme. It would be money well spent.

## Annex 1 Terms of Reference

### *Evaluation of the NUFU programme Concerning the Development of Competence at Universities and Research Institutions in Developing Countries*

#### Background

In 1991, the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Norwegian Council of Universities (NCU) signed a cooperation agreement which is generally referred to as the NUFU agreement. The main objective of the agreement is to contribute to competence-building in developing countries through cooperation between universities and research institutions in Norway and corresponding institutions in developing countries. The agreement's second major objective is to contribute towards increased South-South cooperation.

After an evaluation in 1994 the programme developed to implement the agreement was prolonged for another period (1996–2000). A NUFU strategy, adopted by the NCU and the MFA, was drawn up for the programme in 1997.

The NUFU is a committee under the Norwegian Council of Universities. The Centre for International University Cooperation (SIU) serves as the NUFU secretariat and is responsible for ensuring that the funds made available to NUFU are allocated in line with agreements and used for preparing annual reports and accounts of NUFU's activities.

For the period 1996–2000 the MFA has provided a total of NOK 269 million to the programme. In March 1999 NUFU had approved and allocated funds for 99 cooperation projects of two or more years' duration.

The main activity supported through the NUFU programme is research collaboration with an emphasis on research projects and the training of researchers. Of the 99 projects, 28 were in the field of medicine, 23 in agriculture, 21 in the social sciences, 14 in technological fields and the natural sciences, and 9 in the humanities. A

total of 34 institutions from 20 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America and 9 Norwegian institutions are engaged in these activities. However, most of these funds are concentrated within projects involving cooperation between a small number of Southern and Norwegian institutions.

Prior to the present evaluation a political decision was made to prolong the NUFU programme. The MFA had decided to transfer administrative responsibility for the agreement to NORAD. According to the Ministry's "Strategy for the use of higher education and research in Norway's relations with developing countries", a broad and independent evaluation of the activities of the NUFU programme will be carried out at the end of the agreement's second phase. The evaluation will be useful in preparing a new agreement designed to promote capacity-building through collaboration.

#### Major objectives of the evaluation

The main objective of the evaluation is to analyse and assess the impact of the NUFU programme in relation to the objectives set out in the agreement and later specified in the NUFU strategy:

- capacity-building that is given institutional and national priority in developing countries
- contribution towards increased South-South cooperation

The interest of Southern stakeholders should be emphasized throughout. In order to evaluate the programme's impact, its administration, institutional and financial arrangements, results, quality, relevance and sustainability should all be assessed.

The evaluation should assess the extent to which NUFU has implemented the main recommendations of the 1995 evaluation, and conforms with the main priorities of Norwegian development cooperation.

### **Issues to be covered**

The evaluation should focus on the central characteristics of the NUFU collaboration, and emphasize the attributes that are intended to give effect to the stated objectives and the degree to which these attributes are implemented, perform and have an impact as intended.

#### **1) Decision-making processes and transparency**

Decision-making processes, including an assessment of the influence of different stakeholders in Norway (NUFU, NCU, MFA and collaborating institutions) and in the South (collaborating institutions). The question of legal competence raised by the fact that the NUFU Committee that allocates funds consists exclusively of the Norwegian universities that at the same time apply for funds. The selection criteria (e.g. background, gender, ethnic, affiliation, partnership, institution, topics, disciplines, countries, regions) for assessing applications. The extent to which current emphases made in selection are mutually reinforcing or competing.

#### **2) Organization**

The organization of the programme, and the distribution of responsibilities between the different stakeholders

#### **3) Implementation:**

##### **research-researchers partnership**

The NUFU programme seeks to build capacity through collaboration between researchers employed at research institutions. Strengths and weaknesses of emphasizing the partnership approach to achieving capacity-building. The level of capacity-building (personal, discipline/theme, institutional) achieved by emphasizing research partnerships

#### **4) South-South and South-North collaboration**

The organization, outcome and impact of the triangle model and the established networks of collaboration financed through NUFU.

#### **5) Quality assurance**

The routine established during implementation to guarantee the quality assurance of academic results and good administrative practices, both in relation to process and products, and to research collaboration and training. The quality achieved should be assessed through a selection of research projects/results.

#### **6) Relevance and learning**

Procedures established to ensure relevance at the institutional and national level (in Norway but particularly in the South) concerning the choice of research topics. The ways and means used to communicate results.

#### **7) Sustainability**

Factors influencing the motivation for researcher participation both in Norway and in Southern institutions, and the benefits and costs of collaboration at the institutional levels concerning both research and higher education. The priorities of the NUFU programme compared with Norwegian development cooperation priorities.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

The conclusions should indicate the impact of the NUFU programme, the major strengths and weaknesses of the design and implementation of the programme, and highlight its comparative advantage. The recommendations should extract the implications of the evaluation's conclusions and suggest adjustments/improvements in design and implementation of the programme. The recommendations should address research/higher education and administrative procedures separately at both the agreement and implementation levels. They should be feasible and realistic, and should identify responsibilities for follow-up.

## Methodology

The evaluation should include a desk study and field studies. There is already a considerable amount of documentation (project reports, reviews, seminar papers, evaluations). The consultant should seek to complement rather than duplicate existing studies when conducting field visits and case studies in Norway and at collaborating partners in developing countries.

Institutions in Norway and five collaborating institutions in developing countries should be chosen for in-depth studies. For each study a brief report (10 pages) should be prepared. A debriefing should be held with the main stakeholders before leaving the country and in Norway.

A selection of research projects/themes should be selected for an assessment of the quality of the academic work.

To gain a better understanding of the NUFU programme's comparative advantage, dynamism, capacity for coordination and impact at the institutional level, it should be compared with alternative models for competence-building in research. Efforts should be made to highlight the chosen models' advantages. The Danish ENRECA programme is currently being evaluated, and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs is financing a comparative study of the impacts of donor-initiated programmes on research capacity in the South. If feasible, the possibilities of a mutually beneficial exchange with these studies (for example by coordinating field visits) should be explored.

## Evaluation team

The team should include three senior researchers, at least one of whom should be able to read Norwegian. The team should represent expertise in the following areas:

- capacity-building

- research and research collaboration
- evaluation of research and higher education
- university organization and administration
- gender

## Outcome of the evaluation

The team should produce a synthesis report. The synthesis report should be based on limited reports on specified subjects. The tender should include information on how the consultant proposes to present the results of the evaluation, including the synthesis report. The written reports shall be drawn up in English. The report shall contain a summary of conclusions and recommendations not exceeding four pages. A two-page summary for independent distribution is to be elaborated.

## Timetable

The draft final report should be submitted to the MFA no later than 28 February. The final report should be finalized within two weeks of receiving comments, and no later than 15 April 2000.

## Framework for evaluation

The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the MFA's Instruction for the Policy Planning and Evaluation Staff's Work on Evaluation and Reviews, and the contract signed between the MFA and the institution awarded the contract.

## Peer group

A reference group including MFA and NORAD staff will assist the team.

## **Annex 2 Institutions visited**

### **Norway:**

Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA/UD)  
Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD)  
Norwegian Council of Universities (NCU/UR)  
Research Council of Norway (RCN)  
Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs (MERCA)  
Centre for International University Cooperation (SIU)  
Agricultural University of Norway  
Chr. Michelsens Institute  
Norwegian School of Veterinary Science  
Norwegian University of Science and Technology  
University of Bergen  
University of Oslo  
University of Tromsø

### **Sweden:**

Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)

### **Denmark:**

Danish International Development Assistance (Danida)

### **The Netherlands:**

Directorate General for International Cooperation (DGIS)

### **Costa Rica:**

Universidad Nacional Heredia

### **Nepal:**

Tribhuvan University  
Ministry of Education  
Royal Norwegian Embassy

### **South Africa:**

University of Western Cape  
University of the North  
Royal Norwegian Embassy

### **Tanzania:**

University of Dar es Salaam  
NORAD  
Sida  
Ministry of Finance, Treasury  
Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education

### **Uganda:**

Makerere University  
Ministry of Education  
Royal Norwegian Embassy  
Institute for Teacher Education  
Royal Netherlands Embassy

### **Zimbabwe:**

University of Zimbabwe  
Ministry of Higher Education and Technology  
National Council for Higher Education  
Royal Norwegian Embassy  
Royal Netherlands Embassy

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1.87	The Water Supply Programme in Western Province, Zambia	1.97	Evaluation of Norwegian Assistance to Prevent and Control HIV/AIDS
2.87	Sosio-kulturelle forhold i bistanden	2.97	«Kultursjokk og Korrektiv» – Evaluering av UD/NORADs Studiereiser for Lærere
3.87	Summary Findings of 23 Evaluation Reports	3.97	Evaluation of Decentralisation and Development
4.87	NORAD's Provisions for Investment Support	4.97	Evaluation of Norwegian Assistance to Peace, Reconciliation and Rehabilitation in Mozambique
5.87	Multiateral bistand gjennom FN-systemet	5.97	Aid to Basic Education in Africa – Opportunities and Constraints
6.87	Promoting Imports from Developing Countries	6.97	Norwegian Church Aid's Humanitarian and Peace-Making Work in Mali
1.88	UNIFEM - United Nations Development Fund for Women	7.97	Aid as a Tool for Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy: What can Norway do?
2.88	The Norwegian Multi-Bilateral Programme under UNFPA	8.97	Evaluation of the Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala
3.88	Rural Roads Maintenance, Mbeya and Tanga Regions, Tanzania	9.97	Evaluation of Norwegian Assistance to Worldview International Foundation
4.88	Import Support, Tanzania	10.97	Review of Norwegian Assistance to IPS
5.88	Nordic Technical Assistance Personnel to Eastern Africa	11.97	Evaluation of Norwegian Humanitarian Assistance to the Sudan
6.88	Good Aid for Women?	12.97	Cooperation for Health Development WHO's Support to Programmes at Country Level
7.88	Soil Science Fellowship Course in Norway	1.98	“Twinning for Development”. Institutional Cooperation between Public Institutions in Norway and the South
1.89	Parallel Financing and Mixed Credits	2.98	Institutional Cooperation between Sokoine and Norwegian Agricultural Universities
2.89	The Women's Grant. Desk Study Review	3.98	Development through Institutions? Institutional Development Promoted by Norwegian Private Companies and Consulting Firms
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