

Establishment of LMD-Aligned Master programme in post-conflicts countries of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa

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Abstract

Food insecurity and poor health are recognized as key drivers of emergence of conflicts in low income countries. Sustainable peace building strategy should therefore consider investing in increased access to food and nutrition while simultaneously tackling the crucial political and security issues that sometimes receive a greater degree of attention (and resources). In this regard strengthening academic and administration capacities of Agricultural Higher Education institutions (HEIs) in such countries becomes key to jump-start the economic recovery through revitalizing agricultural sector and economic development. This paper shares the experiences in establishing LMD-aligned post-graduate programmes in Burundi, Madagascar and Democratic Republic of Congo. This is a significant contribution to these countries mainly because they have limited human-resource capacity largely due to challenges associated with post conflict and protracted crises. The University of Burundi is through this effort engaged and working towards establishing three postgraduate programs (Masters of Rural Development and Agro-business, Plant breeding and bio-technology, and Post-harvest technology and quality management system); University of Antananarivo in Madagascar is in the process of establishing QHSE (Qualité, Hygiène, Sécurité, Environnement) and one in Climate change Science and politics degree programmes; while the Catholic University of Bukavu with three PhD holders in Agronomy is preparing to establish an MSc. in Crop Science. The curriculum design for all these programmes is being done regionally with technical backstopping of the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), a Network of 41 Member Universities in Eastern central and Southern Africa. Makerere University, the University of Ghent and AGREENIUM are involved as key partners in the process. This is an EU funded project under the EDULINK II Programme - ACP-EU EDULINK II Project FED/2013/320-203 'Establishing and Piloting Postgraduate Programmes for Supporting Agricultural Development in Post-conflict countries of Central and Eastern Africa'. The project has provided a unique opportunity for strengthening HEIs

bringing together universities and networks of higher learning institutions to share experience and co-design academic programmes that will be utilized in posterity to training and build human-resource capacity where it is needed most.

Key words: LMD-alignment, post-conflict, post graduate, protracted crisis

Résumé

L'insécurité alimentaire et la mauvaise santé sont reconnues comme étant les principaux moteurs de l'émergence des conflits dans les pays à faible revenu. La stratégie durable de la consolidation de la paix devrait donc envisager d'investir dans un meilleur accès à la nourriture et à la nutrition, tout en abordant simultanément les questions politiques et sécuritaires essentielles qui reçoivent parfois une plus grande attention (et les ressources). A cet égard, le renforcement des capacités académiques et administratives des établissements d'enseignement supérieur agricole (EES) dans ces pays devient la clé pour relancer la reprise économique grâce à la revitalisation du secteur agricole et le développement économique. Ce document partage les expériences dans l'établissement de programmes d'études supérieures qui s'aligne sur la LMD au Burundi, au Madagascar et en République Démocratique du Congo. Il s'agit d'une contribution importante à ces pays, principalement parce qu'ils ont une capacité limitée des ressources humaines due en grande partie aux défis associés à la période de post-conflit et aux crises prolongées. A travers cet effort, l'Université du Burundi est engagée de travailler à l'établissement de trois programmes d'études universitaires de troisième cycle (la Maîtrise du Développement rural et de la Technologie Agro-business, la Reproduction Végétale et Biotechnologique, et la technologie de post-récolte et le système de gestion de la qualité). L'Université d'Antananarivo à Madagascar est en train d'établir le QHSE (Qualité, Hygiène, Sécurité, Environnement) et un autre dans les programmes de diplômé en science de changement climatique et en politique; tandis que l'Université catholique de Bukavu, avec trois titulaires d'un doctorat en agronomie, se prépare à établir un MSc. en science des cultures. La conception des curriculums d'études de tous ces programmes se fait au niveau régional avec l'appui technique du Forum des Universités Régionales pour le Renforcement des Capacités dans l'Agriculture (RUFORUM), un réseau de 41 universités membres en Afrique centrale, australe et orientale. L'Université de Makerere, l'Université de Gand et EDULINK sont impliqués en tant que partenaires clés dans le processus. Il s'agit d'un projet financé par l'UE dans le cadre du Programme EDULINK II – Le Projet ACP-UE EDULINK II FED/2013/320-203 «en établissement et en pilotant des programmes universitaires de troisième cycle pour l'appui au développement agricole dans les pays post-conflit en Afrique centrale et orientale ». Le projet a fourni une occasion unique de renforcer les établissements d'enseignement supérieur en mettant ensemble les universités et les réseaux d'institutions d'enseignement supérieur à partager l'expérience et de concevoir ensemble des programmes académiques qui seront utilisés dans la postérité à la formation et au renforcement des capacités des ressources humaines où ils en ont plus besoin.

Mots clés: Alignement au LMD, post-conflit, diplôme de troisième cycle, crise prolongée

Background

Countries emerging from conflicts (CEC) are usually not able to provide basic services to their citizens, particularly the poor (ODI, 2007). They are generally characterized by low agricultural productivity and limited value addition and hence rampant poverty and food and nutrition insecurity (DFID, 2005). According to the World Bank, Low Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS) have weak economies, rampant food and nutritional insecurity and poor natural environment management (World Bank, 2005). However, with political stability, they offer opportunity for designing demand-driven services, such as market led training programmes to provide labour market needed skills, a priority area in several post conflict countries (ODI, 2007). The three focus countries in this action, namely, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo) and Madagascar fall in this category and are in dire need to revitalize their agricultural sector so as to ensure food and nutrition security, improve livelihoods of their people and ensure economic growth, as elucidated in the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP). For this purpose, Makerere University in partnership with AGREENIUM, University of Ghent, RUFORUM, University of Burundi, University of Antananarivo and the Catholic University of Bukavu, are implementing an Edulink II project focusing on strengthening Agricultural training capacity of the three aforementioned universities in post-conflict countries, and assist them develop higher education of quality that is relevant to the needs of the market. Currently, universities in the three countries are running the Licence (5 years undergraduate training) Master (3 years) Doctorate (4-6 years) system which needs to be aligned to the new LMD system of 3-2-3 years to meet the international standards and facilitate integration of the trained professional at regional (Eastern and Southern Africa) and international levels, especially Europe which has adapted the 3-2-3 LMD system..

Approaches used in the implementation of this action. Progressive series of participatory design, action implementation, reflections or learning events, allowing skills and competency building have been used during the implementation of this action. In-built in the process was the inter-disciplinarity, and mutual support building. For confidence building mutual support mechanism was in built in the different processes. This includes the engagement of regional and European partners to support the 3 universities in CEC. This also allowed for learning and adjustments. In addition, regular monitoring and feedback allow for corrective measures.

Achievements and challenges in implementation of the project. A number of achievements have been realized in the implementation of the action. These include establishment of strong partnership between CEC targeted Universities and European partners; Demand-driven master programme identified; Course content identified, two cross-cutting course modules developed; regional sharing event organized. **Strong partnership established:** In addition to the existing partnerships between the CEC targeted Universities and other Universities in the RUFORUM-network, the local area based partnership with NGO, National Agricultural Research System (NARS) and private sector; strong partnerships have been established between each University in the CEC with one University in Europe. Bilateral linkages have been established between University of Bordeaux and University of

Antananarivo, University of Ghent with University of Burundi and Catholic University of Bukavu with Montpellier-SupAgro. ***Demand-driven master programme identified:*** A total of six master programmes have been identified in the three Universities targeted by this action. These include three at University of Burundi, one for Catholic University of Bukavu and two at University of Antananarivo. At University of Burundi the identified programmes are Rural Development and Agro-business, Plant breeding and bio-technology, and Post-harvest technology and quality management system. At University of Bukavu, a MSc in Crop Science has been identified; while at University of Antananarivo; two MSc have been identified including the one in QHSE (Qualite, Hygiene, Securite, Environnement) and one in Climate change Science and politics. These programmes have been identified through a series of consultations, scoping studies and stakeholders meetings. ***Course content identified:*** The content of each of the six Master programme. These programme contents have been presented to during the stakeholders meeting and review by identified by team of experts identified by the project. ***Two course modules developed:*** Two cross-cutting modules namely research methods and applied statistics and Development issues and human welfare have been developed by the partners. The two courses have been shared with all the partners for feedback. ***Regional sharing event co-organised:*** A regional sharing and planning events is organized on 19th to 25th July 2014 in Maputo. The regional sharing event is co-organised with RUFORUM and will take place on 22nd July 2014. It will bring on board scientists from Europe (AGREENIUM, CTA) and Africa (FARA, ASARECA, CEC-targeted University, and other scientists of the RUFORUM network).

Challenges in implementing the action. Although a number of deliverables have been successfully achieved during the one year implementation of the project, several challenges were faced. These included:

- (i) *The CEC targeted Universities are keen to engage and derive maximum benefit from this effort:* The number of master programmes to be established is double of what the project promised to deliver. Unfortunately, the project can only support only one programme at each targeted University. This call for mobilization of resources both human and financial. Thanks to RUFORUM Secretariat and Makerere University (staff) for accepting to support the process of accompanying the University of Burundi in establishment of the two other MSc programmes. Thanks also to the Madagascar Team for putting in place an internal resource mobilization mechanism to support the second master programme.
- (ii) *Poor communication in the CEC targeted Universities:* If the organisational structure of a partnership is the glue that holds it together, then communication is the grease which allows it to operate smoothly. Because of poor network sometimes partners take long time to respond, therefore creating delay in the execution of some activities.

Recommendations

There is need for mobilizing more resources to establish the extra three MSc programmes and for students' research. Communication need to be improved through regular e-mail checking and use of ICTs.

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