

Doctoral Training for Development in Africa

Summary of Programme

Through collaborative delivery, with African partners, of doctoral training, this programme, will help strengthen higher education in and for Africa. Structured learning from this experience will lay the foundations for further expansion of collaborative research and advanced training to additional disciplines and especially to involve more partners, Irish and African. The programme is co-funded by Irish Aid under the Programme for Strategic Cooperation between Irish Aid and Higher Education and Research Institutes 2007-11. Resources are being applied to fostering these partnerships, and to energizing and facilitating a further shift of research and education activity towards addressing Irish Aid's priorities.

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Through collaborative delivery with African partners of doctoral training (notably in healthcare but involving all faculties), this programme will help strengthen higher education in and for Africa. Structured learning from this experience will lay the foundations for further expansion of collaborative research and advanced training to additional disciplines and especially to involve more partners, Irish and African. Resources are being applied to fostering these partnerships, and to energizing and facilitating a further shift of research and education activity towards addressing Irish Aid's priorities.

Trinity College Dublin is investing in an institutional platform from which it will expand its already considerable engagement with research and education issues related to Irish Aid's policy objectives, and this programme will greatly consolidate that effort.

As the first major initiative of the new platform, this programme focuses on doctoral level training, reflecting the lead institution's strength in this area and drawing on the experience of consultations with African partner institutions. These consultations confirm a growing awareness of the importance of fourth level education in strengthening African economic and social prospects, and the fact that, despite some exemplary projects, too little is known about what makes for a successful North-South collaboration in strengthening doctoral-level research capacity in Africa.

The planned activities will employ three different partnership models to deliver doctoral training mainly to African students and mainly in Africa in three contrasting disciplines. The process of delivery will not only train researchers and future research supervisors, but also directly strengthen the capacity of the participating institutions through learning-by-doing. In addition, reflection on and analysis of the process, informed by a detailed review of parallel experiences elsewhere, will help refine methods and provide the foundation for expansion to additional partners and disciplines.

Finally, Ireland-based doctoral students will be encouraged and helped to shift their attention to Irish Aid relevant research topics. A new postgraduate module will train

researchers in methodological challenges of research in developing country environments.

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The largest element of the programme establishes Irish-African partnerships to provide doctoral training for Africa-based students in disciplines highly relevant to Irish Aid, spanning health, natural, and social sciences. The goal is to help build an invigorating and supportive research environment in Africa, directed towards issues of central importance to Africa.

Of the four disciplines represented in these partnerships, Global Health will account for the lion's share of the budget, through the launch of the International Doctorate in Global Health (*Indigo*). The goals of this Irish-led multi-institutional partnership speak directly to Irish Aid's thematic priority on Health, with its focus on the determinants of ill-health and on systems and strategies to improve health, with a special emphasis on Africa. *Indigo* addresses all nine of the priority areas set out in Irish Aid's Health Policy paper.

Environmental Science and HIV Medicine are two other disciplines in an expanded bilateral partnership with Uganda's Makerere University. These fall squarely within the thematic priorities of Irish Aid, and deal specifically with two of the cross-cutting issues.

Economics is represented through participation in the African Economic Research Consortium's (AERC) multi-institutional Africa-led collaborative doctoral programme, which equips students with the skills and tools for addressing a wide range of research and policy challenges centrally relevant to several Irish Aid thematic priorities, including the design of economic policy to ensure the achievement of growth and its maximum favourable impact on the poor, the economic aspects of poverty and disadvantage, livelihood security and the political economy of ensuring better governance.

Built into the design of this training are features intended to maximize the willingness and ability of doctoral graduates to stay on to build their careers in Africa, contributing to research, policy-making and training of future generations. In this way, the proposed activities will contribute significantly to the emergence of a self-sustaining and self-renewing cadre of intellectual leaders in Africa.

The proposal's second, smaller element, which integrates development into training offered to Ireland-based students, will raise awareness about development issues and Irish Aid among mainstream doctoral students at Irish universities. A multi-disciplinary module will address research challenges and application within developing countries, and strengthen the skills of Ireland-based students to conduct research on topics relevant to Irish Aid, particularly regarding Africa.

An important feature of this proposal is its plan to learn from practical experience in employing three distinct approaches to building doctoral training capacity in Africa – multilateral, bilateral and Africa-led. All have strengths and weaknesses, and

combine experience and innovation. Analysis and reflective practice of these contrasting approaches across different disciplines will provide a valuable basis for learning about what works, and help design future expansion to other partnerships in Ireland and Africa and to additional topics. This will be combined with a much wider analysis and evaluation of collaborative North-South doctoral education.

The Trinity International Development Initiative (TIDI) is the new institutional platform which will manage the multi-disciplinary programme, and ensure it is connected to other research and education initiatives on Irish Aid priorities, at TCD and at Irish and African partner institutions. The doctoral programme is just the first major initiative of TIDI, whose overall role in promoting and facilitating research and education engagement with development issues by Trinity and its partners is much broader. It aims at a substantial increase in the quality and quantity of research on international development, and in the number and enthusiasm of students at all levels and from both (the global) North and South, learning and undertaking research in this area. TIDI-associated academics work on human rights, gender, renewable energy, disability, ICT, development education, infectious disease, refugee law, microfinance, to name a few issues central to Irish Aid's priorities. TIDI will also deepen and increase the number of teaching and research partnerships. It will help increase understanding by the public, government and other stakeholders of the existing state of knowledge in this field, including through the exchange visits, conference, seminars and workshops proposed here.

Project runs 2008-2011.

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