NORHED - Norwegian Programme for Capacity Building in Higher Education and Research for Development

Norad

Higher education and research is an important area in Norwegian development policy. The underpinning argument for investing in higher education and research mainly in low and middle income countries (LMICs) is that a strong academic sector is a prerequisite for any country to be able to develop its own intellectual resources, produce a competent workforce and visionary leaders, and foster innovation and knowledge needed to inform policies, address challenges and underpin growth.

NORHED – a new programme

The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) is in the process of developing a new Norwegian programme for higher education and research cooperation aiming at strengthening capacity in higher education and research in LMICs. NORHED builds on and will replace Norway's current NUFU (the Norwegian Programme for Development, Research and Education) and NOMA (Norad's Programme for Master Studies), which are now being phased out.

NORHED draws on findings and recommendations from the external evaluation of NUFU and NOMA, as well as experiences from other donor funded programmes in higher education and research. Consultations with international experts, higher education institutions in Norway and in partner countries and selected embassies have also been conducted.

Programme Goal

The goal of NORHED is to build higher education and research capacities in mainly LMICs as a means to enhance sustainable conditions conducive to societal development and poverty reduction.

NORHED is a programme with potential to contribute to expanded higher education opportunities and improved research in LMICs both within and after its lifetime. Its main focus is a sustainable strengthening of the capacity and performance of higher education and research institutions in partner countries. Capacity-building beyond individual students and researchers to address the broader institutional environment will be emphasised.

NORHED will also have important benefits for Norwegian higher education and research institutions, both at institutional and individual levels. By supporting and contributing to capacity-building in South-based institutions, Norwegian partner institutions access international networks and expertise, expand their own education and research activities, enhance their own global and developmental perspectives, and provide institutional, personal and career development opportunities.

Capacity building through partnerships

An asymmetric relationship between LMICs and high income countries (HICs) has developed over time and the future approach should be a demand-driven model. The reliance on donor funds, the pre-dominance of North – South partnerships, and the need for greater intra-regional exchanges and South-South cooperation all underline the need to focus on South-South North synergies.

Proven concepts such as the focus on capacity building in higher education and research institutions in LMICs through equal and mutually rewarding partnerships between Norwegian and LMIC-based institutions will be retained in the new programme. Partnering arrangements involving regional cooperation will be encouraged.

Demand-driven

The key underpinning argument is that a strong academic sector is a prerequisite for all countries to be able to develop the countries' own intellectual resources and build a knowledge base for poverty eradication. The tasks that face higher education in LMICs are daunting: modernization of infrastructure; a better balance between the human social sciences and science and technology; addressing gender and class equity/access imperatives are but a few of the most important. Higher education planning within ministries, systems development and sound governance at national and institutional levels are all critical for quality and efficiency purposes.

The new programme is designed to be demand-driven, thus responding to the priorities of the partner countries, more flexible and with a longer-term perspective. It will encompass support to in-country Bachelor's and Master's degree programs, joint research projects including PhD studies, systems for

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improved knowledge management and information dissemination, as well as institutions and systems strengthening.

Whilst HICs are competing for potential talent wherever they can identify it globally, LMICs are struggling to keep apace in reproducing and retaining the vital academic workforce to sustain future generations of graduates and researchers. Without strong higher education systems as a foundation, partnerships between the LMICs and the HICs will remain unsustainable, partial, and gap-filling rather than strategic.

Thematic and/or geographic focus
NORHED will be organised in sub-programmes with specific thematic and/or geographic focus in areas critical for human, social and economic development, and where Norway has a strong comparative advantage and/or can make a special contribution in collaboration with partners. Sub-programme areas will be prioritised and reviewed periodically. It is a clear intention in the short- to medium-term to achieve synergy with other in-country, international and Norwegian-funded programmes similar in scope and objectives.

Eligibility requirements for prospective partners
In low and middle income countries: higher education institutions accredited/recognised by in-country national authorities. Countries must be listed in OECD DAC's register of official development assistance recipients, or listed in the specific call for proposals.

In Norway: Higher education institutions accredited by NOKUT that offer accredited degree programmes at relevant academic levels and cooperate in accordance with Guidelines for Quality provision in Cross-Border Higher Education (UNESCO/OECD 2005).

Project selection and grants procedures
There will be open calls for proposals for *seed money* as well as *main calls* for each sub-programme. The frames for support for each round of calls will be periodically reviewed and adjusted to ensure best match possible with relevance and prevailing priorities, situations and opportunities at any given time.

Selection of projects for funding will be done

transparently via open calls for proposals, pre-identified selection criteria and criteria weighting. All proposals will be reviewed by independent experts with expertise in higher education, research and institutional development and inputs provided by the Norwegian Embassy in the partner country/countries when possible.

NORHED in short

- **Flexible and a long term perspective**
- **Equal and mutual partnerships**
- **Demand-driven**
- **Institutional commitment and involvement**
- **Thematic and/or geographic focus**
- **Bachelor - Master – PhD**
- **Joint research**
- **Replacing NOMA and NUFU**
- **SIU is the secretariat**
- **www.norad.no**
- **www.siu.no**

Tentative timeline

- **Spring 2012: Seed money – First call for proposals**
- **Fall 2012: First main call for proposals**

Regular quality assurance and monitoring, reporting and evaluation are built in as integral elements of NORHED to help ensure successful achievement in a cost-effective manner of intended results that are sustainable.

Full transparency of income and expenditure accounts throughout the project cycle is a prerequisite. The Norwegian Government has a policy of zero tolerance for corruption.

Programme administration and procedures
The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is responsible for the overall policy of NORHED. Norad, at the MFA's instructions, is responsible for implementation, quality-assurance and evaluation of NORHED and other programmes delegated by MFA. Administration of NORHED will be contracted to and administered by the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education (SIU). Information will be posted on the Norad and SIU websites.