Netherlands
Development Assistance
Research Council

North-South Research Partnerships: Issues and Challenges

Trivandrum Expert Meeting

Publication no. 22

RAWOO, the Netherlands Development Assistance Research Council, was established at the request of the Minister for Development Cooperation, also on behalf of the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, and the Minister of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries. Its mission is to advise the government on matters of policy related to research in the area of development problems, and to keep the government informed of developments in this area.

RAWOO is part of the system of Sector Councils for research. Their job is to attune research to the needs of society and to ensure an optimal match between supply and demand in the different fields of research for which they are responsible. In the case of RAWOO, the needs in question are those of societies in developing countries. Sector Councils function on the basis of tripartite discussion between the government, researchers and the users of research.

The Council has fifteen members including the chairman, plus one advisor from each of the three ministries. Six of the members come from developing countries. The members are appointed as individuals rather than as representatives.

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ISBN 90-71367-30-4

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September 2001

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Organized by RAWOO, in association with the Kerala Research Programme for Local Level Development, Centre for Development Studies (CDS), Trivandrum, October 1999

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Preface

Designing new modes of North-South research cooperation has been one of the more challenging activities RAWOO has undertaken in the last couple of years. With its own North-South composition, the Council has been in an excellent position to do so in an innovative way. Essential in its approach was that RAWOO's Southern partners have taken the lead in prioritizing content and shaping the process and organization. Through a process of joint 'learning by doing', views could be exchanged on issues that arise at the various stages of programme design.

It became apparent that North-South research cooperation is a very important component of international cooperation – not only in the public sector but increasingly in the private sector as well. The 2001 Human Development Report, 'Making new technologies work for human development', is also relevant in this context. The role that technology, scientific knowledge and rapidly changing information and communication technologies play in development processes can no longer be ignored, not in the North, and not in the South. Moreover, scientific research and communication are increasingly subject to internationalization.

As developing countries strive to meet concrete development goals, they do not want to be treated merely as consumers of whatever has been developed in the North. Instead, they wish to sustain and strengthen their own knowledge and research sectors so that they can develop their own policies on the basis of their own priorities and participation patterns, without the risk that at the end of the day, their development priorities have been replaced by the agendas of outsiders after all.

During our consultations with the various stakeholders in North and South, we learned that a balanced partnership between Northern and Southern researchers is not easy to achieve – not when the North is in control of funding and has all the necessary organizational capacity, access to information, etc., while the South is short on funds, capacity and access but nevertheless has its own priorities and – above all – possesses in-depth understanding of its own context.

Such a relationship cannot help but be out of balance from the start. We have noticed that researchers from the North find it only logical and normal that they bring to a joint programme what they consider to be the very latest insights and techniques. And it seems equally logical and normal for researchers from the South to adapt and not to rock the boat of cooperation by voicing their own wishes or asserting themselves too strongly. This means that on many fronts Northern partners are accustomed to taking the lead – for instance in setting priorities, determining the governance structure, and identifying end-users in the South. They even describe what the impact of cooperation will be on local and national research institutions, and they define what such concepts as 'participation', 'ownership', 'partnership', and 'quality' will mean in practice. Southern partners, on the other hand, believe they have no alternative but to accept the role that is being offered.

This pattern of interaction does not do justice to the fact that research in the South on Southern issues is basically the business of the South. True, science is an international affair and research transcends national borders. But as long as the major research capacity is in the North, Northern agenda's and priorities will prevail, even when Southern issues are at stake. This ignores the fact that thousands of Southern researchers, with PhDs from universities in North and South, are no less qualified than their Northern counterparts. The difference is not in skills, but in the institutional context in which those skills are applied. Many Southern researchers move to the North because the research climate is better. Those who decide to stay in the South and serve their own communities deserve the support of overseas colleagues within genuine partnerships that allow the Southern researchers also to make a substantial contribution to their own societies.

Many of these issues have been discussed before, with RAWOO playing an active role in the discussions. And many are still a cause for concern. They have been the focus of a number of conferences over the years: for instance the two conferences on research and development co-operation held in Groningen in 1989 and 1991; the Conference on North-South Research Partnerships, in Leiden, organized jointly by the EU and DGIS (1997); two conferences organized by the Swiss government on research partnerships and capacity building (1996 and 2000); and the symposium of the Dutch Royal Academy of Sciences (KNAW) on interactive North-South research, held in Amsterdam, December 1999.

Taking these discussions and the lack of empirical research in this field into account, RAWOO felt a need to find out how professionals from the South

have actually experienced North-South research cooperation in practice. To this end RAWOO asked the Kerala Research Programme on Local Level Development (KRPLLD/IDS), located at Trivandrum, India, to hold a workshop at which professionals from the South could share their experiences working with Northern research partners.

The present report presents the outcomes of this workshop. The participants found this type of analysis and dialogue to be a very important step towards achieving insight into the mechanisms driving North-South research cooperation. For this reason, RAWOO decided to keep the report as close as possible to the first-hand experiences that were shared. The report thus offers a close-up view from the perspective of researchers from the South. We hope that better understanding of the mechanisms driving research cooperation will help us all to build balanced partnerships despite the many differences that will probably persist in the years to come. As such, this report is part of an unfinished symphony. It has uplifting passages as well as a lot of dissonants. Our aim is to help achieve another scenario, one which researchers from the South and the North can speak of with pride and satisfaction. We hope that this endeavour will increase general understanding of the issues at stake and will inspire us all to produce solid analyses and to design sound policies.

Inspired by the workshop and by the responses to its programme-design activities, RAWOO intends to continue working on this subject. The Council will continue to identify key issues related to North-South research cooperation. This will be done through active partnerships for the purpose of articulating needs and designing research programmes, as well as through dialogue with the various stakeholders involved in both North and South. At the same time, RAWOO will actively foster empirical research on this subject. By doing so it hopes to contribute to a better understanding of the real demand in the South for North-South cooperation in research and technology, as well as to the design of more effective policies for enhancing research capacity in the South.

I would like to thank Professor Chandan Mukherjee, who took the lead in RAWOO's internal discussions on this subject. And I would like to express my gratitude to the management and staff of the KRPLLD/IDS for the expert way the workshop was organized and for their warm hospitality.

Gert van Maanen
Chair

Introduction

Discussions of North-South research partnerships in the context of development cooperation began to acquire real momentum in the 1990s. These partnerships gained in importance because of their relationship with one of the long-term aims of development policy, which is to help build research capacity in the South.[1]

In the Netherlands, several initiatives were undertaken to explore specific dimensions of North-South research partnerships. International conferences took place (for example, the conference held in Leiden in March 1997, which was sponsored by the EU and the Dutch government), studies were made and publications written, and new approaches were tried – all aimed at addressing the key issues and at developing policies and instruments in this area.

A conference held in the Netherlands in 1989,[2] attended by scientists and policy-makers from the Netherlands and by a number of scientists from the South, helped to shape the new policy for Dutch research which was laid down in a policy paper by the Minister for Development Cooperation.[3] The importance of the conference was that it saw strengthening domestic research capacity within developing countries as the first priority. In the papers they presented, scholars from both South and North concluded that this implies:

> *Long-term support of research on an institutional basis, with a focus on capacity-building based upon the priorities of local researchers and local authorities.*

The new policy expresses the view that development research has not been sufficiently directed towards the needs of the developing nations. 'Research questions have been formulated in our society from a Western perspective....in other words, we have been translating their demand into our questions.'[4] This implies a recognition of the asymmetry that results mainly because funds are in the hands of the North. Northern domination in the worlds of politics, economics, culture and science thus reproduces itself in the world of North-South research cooperation.

At the policy level, the new insights stem from an understanding that in the long run it is to the advantage of the North that the South develop its own independent research capacity. In adopting development policy that favours the interests of developing countries, the Dutch government has clearly made a strategic choice – a choice that is broadly supported in parliament. For Dutch projects of bilateral development cooperation, this means giving the final say to the developing countries. It also implies a serious attempt to incorporate 'listening to the voices from the developing countries' into all development-cooperation efforts. Poverty has been chosen as the central focus of all these efforts; self-reliance, sustainable development and gender issues are also central concerns. But these general objectives of Dutch development cooperation leave enough room for the setting of autonomous agendas in the South. They form the basis for development-cooperation policy as a whole as well as for activities in the field of research.

A review of the international literature which was commissioned by RAWOO[5] showed that during the 1990s, scientists and policy-makers the world over were becoming increasingly concerned about the role that science plays in development in general, and in North-South cooperation in particular. But the review observed that despite the growing number of publications on the subject of North-South research cooperation, few could be found that were based on what the review calls 'systematic empirical studies' or 'data analysis'. The material that was examined offers fairly good coverage of the topic as a whole, but the accounts are based mainly on secondary analysis, personal reflection and/or anecdotal evidence. The first-hand experiences that are revealed are valuable, and a first step has been taken towards formulating concepts that could play a role in the analysis, but the comprehensive analysis of relevant issues that is required has not yet been made.

But despite the lack of empirical data, the literature does persuade one to recognize that given the objectives of research cooperation, there are fundamental issues at stake. It is clearly not a question of merely modifying current practice. The issues involved call for deeper analysis.

The literature shows that a certain hierarchy prevails in the academic world, with fundamental and theoretical research carrying more prestige than what are termed 'applied' and 'empirical' research. Demand-oriented research, or, more specifically, needs-oriented research attempts to deal with real-life problems that are perceived as soluble with the help of research. Most of the research done within North-South partnerships was, or claims to have been, inspired at least to some

1. Already in 1979, the Vienna UN Conference on Science and Technology for Development adopted a programme that stressed, among other things, joint participation and control. It took a while for that programme to trickle down into national development policies, however.

2. There was a follow-up conference in 1992, again in Groningen, which reiterated the positions taken in the first conference and discussed the new policies put forward in the White Paper.

3. DGIS, Research and Development: Policy Document of the Dutch Government, June 1992.

4. Jan Pronk, in an interview in ZENO 1993/2, pp. 18-21.

5. Spaapen, Jack, North-South Research Partnerships: Possibilities and Pitfalls, 1999.

extent by a societal need. Such research covers a wide range of activities, from research which at least in its reporting refers to situations in the South, to research which begins with a painstaking effort to identify real potential users and their needs. Nevertheless, a true demand orientation is seldom the dominant feature of research done in North-South partnerships, partly because of the asymmetry in the way the research collaboration actually takes place.

The asymmetry in the process of producing research has two main sources:

- The advantages of the Northern researchers: they are citizens of the donor countries, they know how proposals must be formulated and presented to sponsors, and they have access to information about funding and sponsors.
- The traditional orientation of research to supply, and the international system of peer review. The logical outcome of these, and of the fact that the international academic system is dominated to such a great extent by the North, is that the problems and priorities as perceived in the North take precedence when research is co-produced.

In view of the main conclusions drawn from the literature review, RAWOO decided to initiate a consultative exercise in which a wider range of people with direct experience would take part. Researchers, policy-makers and practitioners from North and South were invited to an expert meeting in India in September 1999, which was organized by RAWOO in cooperation with the Kerala Research Programme on Local Level Development. The meeting took place at the Center for Development Studies in Trivandrum. (See Annex 1 for a list of participants.)

The main purpose of the meeting was to reflect together on North-South cooperation and on the underlying factors and the ambiguities associated with it. This was done by sharing individual experiences. Research cooperation was broadly defined as cooperation that takes place between countries (or institutions) in North and South and that has a stated goal related to development. The central question posed at the meeting was:

Generally speaking, is the current practice of North-South cooperation satisfactory to all concerned, meaning that nothing more than the usual occasional modification is required? Or are there more fundamental shortcomings that have to be addressed in an equally fundamental way?

The expert meeting was designed to elicit open discussion based on what six participants told of their experiences cooperating with research partners from the North. The main part of this document consists of the presentations given by these six persons, which are reproduced here with the help of tape recordings and rapporteurs' notes.

Sharing experiences: the expert meeting[6]

6. The texts of the case studies presented here were verified by the speakers.

Presentation 1: The strategic research programme in Bolivia (PIEB)

Sonia Montaño Virreira

The experience of this programme, and why it developed the way it did, can be better understood if one has an idea of the situation in Bolivia when the programme began. There is a danger of using PIEB as a model for North-South cooperation without considering its context or the history of the political and social developments against the background of which the academic system evolved during and after the military regime.

Bolivia is emerging from many years of dictatorship, under which academic research at the universities was completely destroyed. What little social and academic research there is, is mainly taking place within NGOs and very much linked to social issues. Social researchers in Bolivia are basically people who gave themselves room to reflect and to do research in a context of social and political struggles and very often under threat of state violations of human rights. Infrastructure was not available, and it was not easy to have political and academic discussions. The programme began in the context of a very young democracy whose institutions were only just recovering. The very first dilemma that had to be faced concerned the institutional framework within which such a programme could take place.

Secondly, against this historical background, the possibility that social science could lead to policy-making was not the issue. Social science was meant mainly to provide the people who were fighting for their rights with good arguments. In this academic culture, you have to be anti-dictatorship, anti-capitalist, and anti-injustice. At the same time, there was a structurally weak relationship between the state and civil society.

Fortunately, the participatory approach is part of our tradition. We are proud of the very impressive way that participatory research methods have developed in Latin America. However, we had to deal with certain undesirable trends as these methods evolved in practice. Quite a lot of poor-quality work was done in the name of participatory research. Thus, our concern was how do we restore the best tradition of participation but at the same time deal with an element in the new context – that we have to be competitive in a globalized world. Another concern was what does it mean to the academic community, mainly to those in social science, to work within the framework of international cooperation? Since the universities had been destroyed, since no resources from the state were available, and since research was in a way privatized, the only source of financial and technological resources was international cooperation. So what we saw from the start was that the agenda would be determined by international cooperation. What the Bolivian academics were researching was influenced by the fact that resources were coming from countries which thought that poverty, or sustainable development, or gender, was relevant. In our team we began to wonder if we should link our research agenda to issues just because they look progressive. But the problem was who can be against gender equality, or sustainable development? These are good things in the world. Why would you not want to study something as relevant as universal human rights?

For us, it was a crucial phase. I remember the considerable amount of time we spent in discussions within the programme and with the Dutch government regarding the need for flexibility and the very wide range of issues that we wanted to research. We considered it fundamentally important not to have an agenda linked to a single issue even if we thought that the issue was very relevant. Of course the research issue always came down to poverty – the roots of poverty, the failure of poverty programmes, the amount of money that is thrown at projects without anything being done. On the table you could find all the arguments why we should concentrate on poverty and, of course, this would also be politically correct.

So, how do we build a programme in which we are not tied to an agenda? We realize that over the years we have come closer to the agenda that the Dutch wanted. But we were fighting it, and that is our right. We have a right to make our own choice, to be free to decide that at any given moment we can fund projects which may have nothing to do with poverty or underdevelopment. Is it not a pre-condition for capacity-building that you establish your own autonomy and the capacity to decide for yourself? So not to link the programme to certain issues was very important to us, and worth a struggle, also because we could see that very often the issues are accompanied by a specific methodology. One of the criteria we wanted for our programme was that funding not be linked to any particular methodology or approach. Sometimes we had proposals for research projects that perhaps

would not make much use of participatory methods but they certainly had potential for being politically and socially useful, and we thought that they were good projects to start with and wanted to support them. All the resistance we put up to fitting the research into this poverty issue or that methodology we saw as building what we considered the most important aspect of the programme, which is autonomy. Capacity-building is not possible without autonomy. We wanted to achieve our own process for defining methodology and priorities, for choosing issues, and for managing research.

This autonomy means that we are no longer in a position to blame the Dutch ministry for any failure, as we ourselves have taken on the responsibility of defining the trends and priorities which we think are important. We have assumed the power for taking decisions which normally resided in the North. It was transferred to us through a political decision. We therefore face the same dilemma that the ministry would otherwise face: how do we build trust, how do we build with a sense of autonomy, how do we build legitimacy?

One of the issues we had to deal with at the outset was choosing representative organizations to work with. We looked first at the NGOs that were the most representative and most important in the country. Somehow – I do not know exactly how – a decision was made to have the process initiated not by a group that was institutionally bound, but by a group known for civil engagement: a group made up of researchers, academics, policy-makers and members of civil society. We wanted symbolic representation but not an institutional representative. How do you decide who is going to start the project? How do you build legitimacy? A body acting on behalf of a constituency could give the project a complicated structure in which the issues of social relevance and quality could give way to considerations of political power, political prestige, personal prestige, or various forms of patronage. The only way we could think of to avoid this was by making a rule that people on the board could not apply for project funds. Unless we had sacrificed transparency, it would have cost us legitimacy to have a board member or his institution receive funding from the project. So who wants to be in such a club? How do you decide whom to include? We would have loved to have the best people on the board, but the best people are the people who want to do research. This was really a dilemma. Some people were disappointed in the beginning that they could not apply because they were on the board. But it was crucial for our programme that we projected an image that we were responsible enough to manage resources transparently and without any personal interest.

We were accountable to the donor, but as we became more fully aware of our responsibility for running the programme, we realized that this was not enough. We could not have a programme in which we were accountable only to the donor. We needed to be accountable to our own academic community, to the political community, to the local citizen, and to the press. We also realized that we had set a whole process in motion and we discovered that when you do this you have to invest time and resources in order to make this accountability happen.

The more we developed the programme, the more we discovered that there is no single model. We have been trying different kinds of approaches in different kinds of contexts, using different kinds of methodologies. And we are evaluating. Over the five years we have achieved relatively good results, but still we have to compete in a world where quality is the issue. It is not enough to be participatory, it is not enough to be open, it is not enough to be accountable or transparent. At the end of the day the outcome must also have social relevance and some academic quality. This requires a process that must begin with the North daring to trust people in the South.

This is the main message I want to get across today: that policy-makers in the North have to take the risk of making resources available to people in the South. They must take a long-term perspective and allow a process to develop in which many mistakes could be made. Accountability has to be accompanied by resources made available for purposes of advocacy, training and the acquisition of research infrastructure. You cannot say, ‘If you put money into it, you will get good research.’ We have to spend money on things that are complementary to research, such as infrastructure, advocacy and of course some kind of dissemination of the research results. This enables us to be competitive not only from a Southern perspective but also from a more pluralistic perspective. We are struggling to achieve an approach to research that meets both Western and traditional requirements.

Presentation 2: The case of environmental research in Kenya

Wilson K. Yabann

I will first tell you what kind of environmental research and related activities we have in Kenya. Then I will relate this to the four basic questions of this symposium by giving examples of some of our projects.

As in most other countries, in Kenya there are basically four categories of institutions that do environmental research. First we have the public research institutes, which are broadly subject-oriented. And then we have universities and other institutions offering tertiary education. Thirdly, we have the international organizations. UNEP is the most relevant one in the region. Fourth are the R&D departments in industry. Multinational companies do most of their work in the North. Only what has to be refined is brought to the South. To a lesser extent there are also the research activities of NGOs. This would be the fifth category but unfortunately, of the 200 NGOs operating in Kenya only 60 of them are concerned with the environment. Only a few of the extension-type NGOs do research.

Most of the research work is done by the universities. Moi University, where I come from, is one of them. Our School of Environmental Studies was set up as a multidisciplinary institution with eight different departments that work together in training activities. When it comes to research the collaboration becomes more complex, but as far as training is concerned, the School functions really well and, I believe, is gaining ground. It is becoming exemplary in the region as an institution of higher learning.

The research that we conduct is actor-oriented. It is done in collaboration with other scientists within the region, within the country, or from outside – mainly from the North. And quite a bit of research is done by students with funds provided by the university or by other institutions (usually in the North).

I will now give a general picture of the situation in Kenya and of how that situation affects the quality of research.

For the last two years we have had a national environmental action plan, sponsored by the World Bank. Prior to the plan they did a survey to determine the status of environmental research in Kenya. This showed that there is a decline in funding for research in the whole region, especially at the university level, which means that whatever proposal you may have, good or bad, the sponsorship is just not there.

Another factor that affects the quality of research and can be a source of conflict when establishing standards, is the availability of scientific journals. This obviously is a major problem. One scientist recently wrote an article on this subject and gave a picture of the differences between the South and the North as far as literature is concerned. He says that a science library in India has an average of 1500 series of periodicals, including those that are received free of charge or through exchanges. He compares this with a normal university library in Europe or the United States, where they have subscriptions to up to 250,000 different journals (50,000 titles on average in the US). In our documentation center at the School of Environmental Studies, we have 35 journal subscriptions. We still think we are doing very well in the region, and indeed, we get a lot of visitors because we have a large collection compared with other institutions.

This gives us a picture of the imbalance that affects the quality of research carried out in this region. There is also a big gap between researchers and scientists in the North and the South as far as electronic information is concerned.

In many institutions in the South, even e-mail is a problem because the infrastructure for it is simply not available. Telephone lines are not working most of the time. Most of the computers available to the people who are supposed to be carrying out research in these institutions do not even have CD-ROM drives. I already mentioned the lack of funding.

The next thing I would like to mention is remuneration. This is a factor in the sense that a lot of good scientists in the South leave in search of greener pastures. They call this brain drain. Those who do not leave the country in search of better pay go to industry. Others become politicians. As an example: in Kenya the salary of a member of parliament is about five times that of a senior lecturer at the university. Another issue is the lack of political support for research, which explains the lack of funding from government circles.

I think that when we talk about standards for the quality of research, we need to keep in mind that what is appropriate under the conditions in a particular region in Kenya, for example, may not necessarily be appropriate even for western Kenya, given differences in culture, population and priorities for earning a livelihood.

In spite of all these general problems, however, there are a number of activities going on. Let us consider the process of developing a project, examining it right from the identification of the problem, through the development of the proposal, all the way to project implementation and finally getting the results out. I will draw examples from three projects that we are running at the School of Environmental Studies of Moi University. There are many others, but I picked only three for this presentation. One of them is sponsored by IDRC (International Development Research Centre in Canada), one by NWO (National Research Council of the Netherlands)and one by the European Union.

These three examples may throw light on some of the questions we are talking about: e.g., who sets the agenda of the research going on at the moment, who implements it and for whose benefit, what kind of output is expected, and for whom?

The IDRC project involves studies on the socio-cultural impact of tourism on the environment. Kenya is a tourist destination. We get close to a million tourists every year, mainly from Europe and the United States. This became an important issue and when the pre-proposal was put together by the staff of the School of Environmental Studies, IDRC was willing to fund it. But IDRC wanted to have a say in how the research team was to be composed. They wanted a multidisciplinary team with an economist, a sociologist, a biodiversity specialist, and a fourth one I do not quite remember now. That team drafted a proposal and a budget. The IDRC said, 'Give us a budget that covers your usual activities and of course you have honoraria and your SDS and so on and so forth. And there will be one or two supervisors from the IDRC office in Nairobi who once in a while will come to see what is going on.' Of course the supervisors worked at rates which were a great deal higher than ours.

But the autonomy we were given was important to us, because we were setting the agenda. Were the results finally expected to benefit the policy-makers, the country in general? Good research should address two things and represent a balance between them. The results should be sound enough for making relevant recommendations which help policy-makers to formulate policies that help to build the economy and develop the country. At the same time there should be a scientific component in it that could benefit the individual researcher. There should be a balance between the two. But often you find that the local team wants to produce results that are publishable. They want to write a book, regardless of whether it can be interpreted and used by the policy-makers who are trying to develop the country. It is selfish in a way.

We see similarities when we compare that project with the NWO and EU projects. These emerged from collaboration with institutions in the Netherlands. They knew that in Kenya there is a School of Environmental Studies with personnel that can do the job. They had access to potential sources of funding in the North, and what they did in both cases was to invite a few of us to their initial brainstorming workshops. We sat together, the way we are sitting now, and brainstormed for two or three days. The next thing we heard from them was to receive a project document that was already approved and funded.

In the NWO project in which I was involved, I did not play any role in determining the amount of money that would go to the Kenyan component of research. They said, 'We have Benin University, we have Cameroon, the Philippines and Kenya. The money is split proportionately and this is what you get. These are the amounts that remain for us in the Netherlands because we will assign six of our scientists and three post-docs to the project. At your end we require a coordinator and we propose Yabann for this post, but we will not give him a salary because he is already employed by Moi University. But we will let you assign one post-doc to the project, who can collect data. Do not worry, we have come up with a big model. After you have collected the data, we will come and analyze it and write it all up.'

I looked at them and said, 'In Kenya you cannot have anything like a post-doc; the position does not exist. Anybody who gets a PhD is employed as a lecturer at the university or as a research scientist at one of the institutes. Especially in the field of economics. There are a very few environmental economists in the country.' So they said, 'Fine, what do you need?' And I said, 'I am going to have PhD candidates do the job and at the same time

find a niche for themselves and finally earn their PhDs.'

So I found two students for the project. But in the last two years it became very difficult to identify a problem for them within the framework of that model they gave us. To fit into that model and at the same time write an independent PhD thesis of good quality is not easy. So yes, we participated because we sat in a workshop defining the agenda. But when it came down to the implementation of the project, it was a question of 'We found the money and these are the conditions and we have this much time.'

Obviously we needed to train some of our students so we can develop staff. And that is exactly what we are doing. But who sets the agenda, who benefits? We do benefit obviously. We will have two PhD graduates in the next two years. But is that really what we are looking for? Capacity-building in the South is so difficult because you have to fit into someone else's expectations.

The European Union is a much tougher sponsor. Once you have signed the papers that is it, you cannot play around with things. Again, who benefits here? A few people have employment for a few months as data collectors. The remuneration is not too bad because they are not on the payroll of the Kenyan government and therefore do not have to pay taxes. They get good money. Better than most of us at the university. But for a short period only. Would you call that capacity-building? I do not think so.

The motives of the scientists involved in these three projects can be seen here clearly. The motive in all three cases is to publish and make progress in their professional careers. And if in the process you can carry along one or two other beneficiaries, even better.

But there is some dishonesty here. They tell us, 'No, we really have given you autonomy. Go out there and identify what you think is relevant. But see it within this framework.' And none of us knew that there was actually seed money from NWO to develop a proposal. So we had to wait until the project was already sponsored before we could go out and try to identify all the problems that are there, and we had to do it within the framework of this overall model developed in Amsterdam with the seed money.

So in fact our motives are different. But we do all share the same good intentions as far as coming out with a good scientific paper is concerned.

In the NWO project we think we identified a problem that would be relevant and appropriate: developing the Machakos people. Our project is taking place among them. But to be honest, even at our level I think we have not met the expectations of these people because their expectations may not have been a priority as far the hierarchy of problems is concerned. So we still cannot say if what we are doing is demand-driven or supply-driven. But from our side we think we have identified two key areas that our students are now working on. And we think that in the long run we will be able to help policy-makers in the area to come up with ideas for soil conservation or environmental conservation.

I would like to say something on the question of multidisciplinary research. I talked earlier about the multidisciplinary composition of our school. It works well in our training activities. They are our core business, although we are supposed to do both training and research. The research component of the IDRC project was left entirely to us, apart from the requirement that we have to have a multidisciplinary team. The project is now delayed for about 18 months. Not because we do not have the funding – because we have everything – but because the team cannot agree on what the output should be. The sociologist and the economist will come with a nice document and most of it will be socio-economically oriented. Then the group that is dealing with the physical and biological component of the environment feels left out because the proposal revolves around sociology. But the other way around, the other group would feel left out. So to make them agree on a document to present to the donor has become the problem of the dean of the school. In other words, the multidisciplinary approach is a good idea but sometimes it can become a hindrance. Is that something peculiar to the South? I do not think so.

There is one more thing I would like to mention. Just one brief sketch of another project that we have that is not research-oriented. It is a project sponsored by Nuffic. This five-year project is renewable for five-year periods up to a maximum of 15 years. It is a long-term kind of thing which I mention for the sake of comparison.

The other projects I talked about have a duration of three years. These short-term projects have their own quick advantages at first sight, but they pass so fast that very many things that do not work out are not even noticed. Before you get to know one another, the project is over. In the Nuffic project we are given the autonomy that we need, and we are given time for discussion with our counterparts. We have to identify the collaborating institutions, in our case the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. I see a lot of positive activities developing because trust is being built up over time. Confidence, and indeed setting the agenda, is not a problem because the project is basically meant to empower institutions in the South to establish their own priorities. Our projects have been to construct laboratories and to build up capacity for research and training. As long as this remains justifiable they will give us the funds – as long as we can show that what we are doing is sustainable. I see this project continuing to run smoothly. I wish other projects would take the same approach.

Presentation 3: On the question of quality in development-related research

K. Narayanan Nair

I will focus on the question of quality which we face in this programme, but first I would like to briefly tell you something about the context in which we launched the programme, how it has unfolded over the past four years, and why we would like to look at the quality issue differently from the way in which it is conventionally looked at.

After a long exercise which began with a first mission in 1993, DGIS eventually decided that the Centre for Development Studies would be an appropriate institution to act as an intermediary for implementing a research programme in the state of Kerala in India. They could do this within the framework of their Multi-annual Multi-disciplinary Research Programmes (MMRPs).

Many of you will have heard about Kerala's situation. Per capita income is roughly 300 US dollars a year, but the indicators of social development in Kerala are very much comparable to those of the developed nations. For example, female life expectancy is 78 years, infant mortality is less than 10 per 1000, and there is universal literacy. These and other such indicators are signs of a highly developed society. But we have the problem of very slow growth in the productive sectors of the economy. Our agricultural production has been growing very slowly; the industrial sector is practically stagnant. We are therefore unable to sustain the gains we have made in the social sector. So, when we at the Centre were asked to set an agenda for an MMRP programme, we decided that the focus would be on local-level development.

In 1993, the government of India amended the constitution to give more power to the local bodies known as 'panchayats', the lowest administrative unit for planning purposes. The constitutional amendment in fact has given considerable power to the administrative bodies at grass-roots level. We thought that the programme would offer an important opportunity to explore how a much more decentralized development process within the state can be promoted. We started focusing on local-level development as the key issue of the programme, combining it with other related objectives, such as sustainability, protection of the environment, and so on. Now it so happened that the idea of using the lowest-level administrative unit as our main focus is something which is accepted in India by all political parties. Therefore it was easy for us to cut across the political spectrum and convince everyone concerned that much more research support was needed.

Who are the people we are targeting in the research programme? Basically we hope to achieve a much more decentralized research system within the state by enhancing the capacity of local institutions and researchers. We have one or two first-grade colleges in almost every 'taluk' (an administrative unit of a few villages). Then we have the village schools, a number of NGOs, and social activists who operate independently of these institutions and organizations. We also have a very broad-based organization called KSSP, which stands for People's Science Movement. Kerala has a long tradition of village libraries; almost everybody reads newspapers.

This is the environment in which we are trying to launch the programme. The programme is independent of the other activities of the CDS; it has its own executive and advisory bodies. We have a well defined agenda and we have completed the first phase of three years. We have succeeded in establishing a decentralized research process well spread over Kerala. A substantial number of the

researchers involved are people working at the grass-roots level. They are drawn from non-governmental organizations, but there are also teachers from both schools and colleges.

What is therefore distinctive about this programme is the fact that the researchers are significantly different from the conventional ones. Also, they are working on non-conventional problems which have immediate local relevance, such as resource mapping and analysis, local bio-diversity, waste disposal, domestic violence, and watershed management. This has naturally raised the question of quality. It is a question you cannot ignore when you have a non-conventional research programme and you are creating researchers out of non-researchers.

But how will you handle the question of quality? Obviously you cannot judge the researchers in terms of how many papers they have published in scientific journals. You have to use other indicators. It is important that when we judge quality we look at the context and at the problem's relevance to vital aspects of the development of the region. We also need to look at the extent to which the stakeholders are involved in the implementation of the research. We need to see whether this kind of programme has really enhanced their capabilities. Has a person who becomes involved in the programme travelled any intellectual distance? Moreover, to what extent has the programme generated enthusiasm within the local community for research as a problem-solving tool? To what extent has it contributed by releasing the developmental potential of the planning units at micro level? These are some of the dimensions which should be looked at when you judge quality. My reflection is – when you judge this kind of non-conventional research done by non-conventional researchers, the yardstick for judging quality also has to be placed in a broader framework.

Comments from the Chair of the session
Johan Bouma

Distinguishing between basic science and people's sciences requires making a differentiation. A paradigm shift can be observed to be taking place in both the North and the South. It is characterized by increased stakeholder participation in agenda-setting and the research process. This innovative research approach, in which the experiences of the persons involved – local farmers, for example – are being incorporated, should be communicated effectively. We have to show that it works.

The problems of the North and the South are not essentially different and have a universal significance. The flow of public funds for research is diminishing in the North as well as in the South. It is the challenge of the researchers and policy-makers present here to 'sell' this paradigm shift and to make it more effective. This is a problem common to researchers in both the South and the North.

Deriving basic research questions from a comprehensive and interactive analysis of the problem makes it possible to do both:

- to work in close consultation with stakeholders and incorporate research questions aimed at solving local problems into the research agenda and the research projects, and
- to publish about it in scientific journals.
- Therefore the message of the new paradigm's relevance for society and science must be sold in both the North and the South.

Partnership means more than having the Southern partner collect data. Partnership is more than a model. The question is how to achieve partnership. As researchers you need trust and time. But partnership is more than something between individuals; it is also between institutions and disciplines.

Presentation 4: From the perspective of international research programmes

Julio Cesar Centeno

Mr. Centeno widened the scope of analysis to embrace an international perspective, highlighting general characteristics of North-South cooperation, and the role of international negotiations and agreements.

The ultimate objective of North-South cooperation is to help achieve development in the South – in terms of democracy and social justice, and through sustainable patterns of interaction with the environment.

One of the characteristics of North-South research partnerships is that the partners have different interpretations of the values the partnership is

meant to serve. Research is often dominated by interests skewed to comply mainly with the perceived interests of the donor country. This happens because activities are strongly dependent on the financial resources made available by the North.

The Tropical Forest Action Plan (TFAP), for example, was conceived in the North, with final decisions dominated by a 'club of donors'. During the 1970s, the loss of the natural forests of the tropics reached dramatic levels. Nearly 11 million hectares were destroyed each year during that decade, equivalent to 20 hectares per minute, and the rate had a tendency to rise. To reverse or at least stop that tendency, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), FAO, and the World Resources Institute (WRI) designed a plan: the Tropical Forest Action Plan (TFAP). With a budget of eight billion dollars, the plan was aimed at stopping deforestation in the tropics within five years (1985-1990) with the cooperation of the countries where the resources are located. Guidelines were prepared, and tropical countries were asked each to prepare a National Action Plan in accordance with those guidelines. Donors coordinated North-South cooperation for the sector through these plans. A tropical country in search of assistance in forestry had little option but to comply with these guidelines.

The plan proved to be dramatically ineffective. By 1993, all parties involved had to accept that not only had deforestation in the tropics not been halted, it had instead been increasing by 50 per cent each year, reaching over 15 million hectares a year during the 1990s, which is 30 hectares a minute. Promoters blamed each other for the failure. In spite of attempts to revive the plan in the mid-1990s, it seems to have been effectively dropped. Its failure may have been due to unwillingness to address the roots of the problem for reasons of political sensitivity or inconvenience. Those roots include the alarming increase in poverty throughout the tropics, population growth, the inequalities in the international system of trade and economics, and profound imbalances in social systems throughout the tropics. The plan also failed to effectively address the roles and responsibilities of countries in the North as well as in the tropics, and to effectively involve local and indigenous populations, without which such a plan could not work.

The Convention on Biological Diversity, a consequence of the Rio Summit in 1992, shows these signs of skewdness in the notions of what is important. And the North occupied the dominant position in the decision-making process leading to its implementation. In this case, the agreement pursues two fundamental objectives: the protection of biodiversity, which is highly concentrated in the South, and equity in the distribution of the benefits that such biodiversity may generate. The North assigns higher priority to the first objective, the protection of biodiversity. It has therefore shown willingness to support activities directed towards this aim, providing resources for the creation of parks and other forms of protected areas, for example. Most of the activities that take place under this agreement are of this type.

But the second major goal is also of fundamental importance to the South: equity in the distribution of the benefits that can be derived from preserving biodiversity. This requires a transfer of knowledge from North to South, and a transfer of financial and technological resources in order to increase the South's capacity for making use of its biological wealth. But it also means that the North may share in the financial benefits that accrue from the use of the South's genetic resources.

So far, the North has proved significantly less interested in the pursuit of these aims than the signing of the agreement would indicate. Therefore very few resources have been made available for achieving them. At the same time, however, genetic research in the North has accelerated and the number of patents has grown significantly – patents that are often intrusively related to the genetic resources of the South. The North makes sure that such patents are protected by intellectual property rights, but shows little concern for compliance with one of the key objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity: sharing with the South the benefits that their wealth in biodiversity generates.

Instead of the flow of knowledge and information from the North to the South implied in the Convention, there is an effective net flow of knowledge and information from the South to the North. North-South research cooperation takes place almost exclusively in the South, and research topics are related to Southern resources – natural, biological or social, and to Southern markets and economics. But the input of knowledge and information from the North is often restricted to what is required for carrying out the intended research. How the results will be put to use to

improve the lives of the people in the South is a matter for separate negotiation.

Information and knowledge from multiple sources in the South converge in the donor country but all of this is not shared with the Southern partners. They must be satisfied with the information that was gathered in their country, much of which is then left lying.

Papers and publications are normally produced in a way that facilitates access to the Northern partners. Copies are formally sent to libraries and public offices in the South, but this is not enough to help the Southern partners reap the possible benefits of the research results. Research projects normally fail to provide for an effective exchange of information and knowledge within and between countries in the South.

In North-South research cooperation, the South operates in a fragmented way, while the North manages its interests coherently. For example, donors tend to coordinate their efforts among themselves, adopting complementary positions. This is reflected in the united front they usually present in international negotiations with the South. In the South, on the other hand, there is far less communication and coordination between the various parties that are involved in cooperation agreements with the North. There is a remarkable lack of cooperation between countries of the South, both within each region (Africa, Asia and Latin America) and between regions.

In international negotiations, the national positions taken by countries in the South are often improvised. They are therefore vulnerable to influences and more subject to change than are the positions taken by Northern countries.

The increasingly evident inequalities in North-South research partnerships undermine the trust between the parties. Communication and negotiations are affected by varying levels of mistrust. A Southern partner may be afraid of ending up in an agreement with a hidden agenda contrary to its national interests. A Northern partner may fear that the financial resources it provides will be misused or wasted as a result of the Southern partner's inefficiency or lack of experience.

In general, the factors at work tend to favour the persistence or reinforcement of the South's present dependence on the North – in terms of technology, information, scientific development, trade, and funding. In this respect there is little difference between North-South research cooperation and other forms of North-South cooperation. The results of this imbalance are:

- to limit the research's effectiveness with respect to the overall objective of improving the quality of life of the disadvantaged in the South;
- to increase poverty and the marginalization of the South;
- to accelerate the loss and degradation of resources in the South;
- to accentuate dependence.

The *Tropenbos* (Tropical Forest) Programme has generated valuable knowledge regarding forests in the tropics. By training people in the Southern partner countries, it has also helped to increase local capacity for conducting forest research. Nonetheless, this programme also displays the pattern of asymmetry described above. Research relationships in the programme all flow from a single centre or hub (the institutions in the Netherlands that work together as one) to the national units at the periphery, which are isolated from each other. Each peripheral unit in the South maintains a relationship of cooperation with the Netherlands, but has remarkably little contact with the other peripheral units in the countries of the South where *Tropenbos* operates. Highly valuable research results flow to the Netherlands. Unfortunately they do not find their way with the same efficiency to the other parties involved in the programme.

The research agenda is dominated by the perspective and interests of the donor, and is mainly skewed towards the academic interests of Dutch researchers. Disseminating the results in a form that makes them accessible to local counterparts and local populations seems to be of secondary importance. Research results are presented in dissertations or scientific papers. Although highly valuable to specialists in the area, these forms are less effective for reaching the Southern counterparts. The dissemination of results thus fails to make local populations aware of the importance of research. The potential effect which research can have for improving the quality of life of affected populations is never reached, nor is its potential for being translated into policies and practices aimed at a more sustainable use of forest resources in the tropical countries involved.

The strongly academic nature of research activities dominated by the perceptions of Northern researchers means that the value of the work done on site by local counterparts is not acknowledged. Most credit goes to the Northern researchers, and the activities become increasingly detached from the needs which local counterparts perceive as more urgent and immediate.

The center-to-periphery relationship has become institutionalized to the point that over the last five years the various partners in the South have not had a single opportunity to get together to present the results of their activities, openly share their experiences, freely discuss possible ways to improve the programme, or coordinate recommendations for presentation to the hub. In other words, there has not been a single occasion designed to strengthen South-South cooperation. Contacts between Southern counterparts are strikingly limited. Any South-South cooperation that does take place is mainly channeled through the 'hub'. This has increased feelings of uneasiness among the partners in the South. As the differences in perceptions and priorities become more and more marked, the partners in the South intensify their demand to take part in the decision-making process that takes place at the hub.

In the case of *Tropenbos*, there is a clear need to set up a system for disseminating results in a language and form that makes them accessible to the stakeholders in the South, which include local populations, government agencies, academic institutions and indigenous peoples. A mechanism must also be introduced to disseminate research results effectively among Southern counterparts in the other countries involved, both at research sites and in relevant organizations and institutions. Research programmes should include mechanisms aimed specifically at strengthening cooperation between Southern partners, and at facilitating more effective participation of Southern partners in the decision-making process at the hub.

Reaction of discussant
David Kaplan

In the case of *Tropenbos* it seems clear that in North and South there are different perceptions of the problems. The flow of information is from South to North. The interaction is such that, at the end of the day, while good research may have been done, the gap between North and South in terms of research capacities has actually increased.

The case of Ghana shows that there has been mistrust between Southern and Northern researchers. It is not sufficient for the South to identify the problems. The South also has to commit some of its own resources to research.

Doing good-quality research requires applying scarce talent to the conduct of research. Capacity-building requires researchers training others. While it is true that there may be some tension between the two, it is also true that you can only develop into a good researcher by doing research alongside more experienced researchers.

It was argued here that demand-driven research which serves the needs of the clients, whoever they may be, may be achieved best if the demanders commission and pay for the research themselves. In this case you do not need stakeholder boards and other cumbersome institutional mechanisms designed to ensure that the research is directed towards real needs. Where there is a democratic and smoothly running government activity – say a Ministry of Health in a democratic regime – and this Ministry of Health is the client for the research, it might be best to advance the funds for research to the demander (in this case the Ministry of Health) and not to the research institution. Presumably the ministry has advisory boards designed to make sure it functions so as to meet the needs of the stakeholders. This is a much more direct way of securing demand-driven research. It also allows the clients to shop around, it limits the formation of gatekeepers (single institutions that have a monopoly on particular types of research), and – presuming that the demanders have an interest in the continuance and sustainability of the research – it allows the demanders to develop ways of ensuring that research capacity is built up in a sustainable manner.

The other major problem with supporting one research institution (or even a few) is that it does not allow for the extensive networking and cross-disciplinarity which are both essential for 'Mode II research', since there is a tendency for the organization to do as much as it can in-house. If demanders have the resources, they can ensure that the networks or consortia of research institutions are formed which they see as most promising for meeting their needs. This does not necessarily fragment the research activity, as long as clients for research have an incentive to advance research capacity-building. In addition, donors usually set conditions for their support for research (and possibly also have their support depend on whether or not the demander or client also provides at least some funds for research). For example, the Ministry of Health is given a grant to spend on the research that it thinks will best

address its needs. But the ministry putting in some of its own funds as well will ensure that the development of research capacities will be more long-term and sustainable. Good research can benefit from competition between researchers and research institutions. Long-term grants to particular research institutions may dent the spur of competition.

Presentation 5: The case of health research in Ghana

John O. Gyapong

In my talk I will look at some historical aspects of health research in Ghana and tell you what we consider to be the issues and challenges within the health research environment in Ghana. And then I will talk briefly about the partnership that we have been fortunate to have with the Dutch government, and about what we think is the way forward.

The health service in Ghana was a part of the colonial system. Under that system one of the health service's own activities was to collect a lot of data. This was processed and decisions were made on the basis of it. The result was that we had quite a number of expatriate research projects where people from, say, the University of London came as a team to do some research on health in Ghana.

But then gradually there was a shift. People from within Ghana started getting involved. I suppose the reason why initially it was just expatriates coming in to do the work could be related to research capacity. Maybe at that time there was not the capacity in Ghana to do that kind of research. As time went by and there was some form of training, there was some kind of collaboration. And that has been the basic tendency of health research in the country, even today in most circles.

And when this kind of collaboration started, it was mainly at the universities – at the country's two medical schools. You would find that maybe a medical college in the North would come and establish collaboration with one of the two medical colleges, and they would do very good and interesting work. A lot of research has been done on malaria and other diseases. So the focus was mainly disease. That was good but it got to the point that some of the topics being studied in relation to the diseases became rather far-fetched. In general it is very difficult for service providers to see the relevance of some of research that is being done. For instance, as part of a malaria control programme, somebody could be doing a thesis comparing mosquitoes throughout the country in terms of the acidity of their saliva. This is interesting to do, but as a service provider you ask yourself what has the acidity of saliva got to do with service provision? This a reasonable question to ask, although you do have to bear in mind that this kind of fundamental research can lead to very interesting findings which can affect policy formulation.

The Minister of Health felt that the universities and their collaborators from outside were not addressing the issues that were worrying him, which were: How do you improve access to health care in the country? How do you improve the quality of care? How do you determine whether the scarce resources that are available in the health sector are being used efficiently? How do you measure this? These are the kind of issues that concern the minister, but unfortunately the medical schools and the scientific community did not find these problems scientific enough to pursue.

So then the ministry decided we would set up our own health research to address some of these issues. That was the origin of our health research. Because of the kind of questions that the ministry was interested in, we found it more useful and more beneficial to work with the university's Department of Sociology rather than with the medical school, because the Department of Sociology would be more interested in looking at these issues. So that is the kind of thing that has been going on. But I must say that as time went on, there has been a lot of talking with each other and there have been compromises here and there that have been improving the research environment. Most of the work is now done in a context that is beneficial to both parties. So basically what I am saying is that we agree now that there is a need for us to do some fundamental research as well. But of course very urgent issues that address the needs of the population also have to be looked at.

We tried to look at some of the issues and challenges that we thought were relevant here. We found that about 90 per cent of the resources were being spent on 10 per cent of our problems, and the other way around. This was primarily because the kind of things that sounded interesting required

very expensive laboratories and very expensive instruments. There is an issue of equity here and a need for balance. And often the collaborators from the North wanted with their money to do research on a particular disease. They came and identified the people that they wanted to work with. And the agenda was brought in without further discussion.

The kind of collaboration that went on in the past paid very little attention to capacity-building in the South. And the few instances where capacity was built, you could question both the way it was done and its relevance. Sometimes the money for this purpose was tied to a particular plan and country. For instance, the British government funded a project that had a slot for an MSc or PhD. There was no way you could negotiate having someone do their MSc or PhD in the Netherlands. It was British money so the study had to be done in Britain.

There are many examples that I could go on and on talking about. For instance, if you were doing a project with the British government and you needed to buy vehicles for the work to be done, you could not use the money to buy a Toyota because it is from Japan. The money had to be spent on Landrovers, which are very expensive.

But those are some of the situations we found ourselves in and it was very difficult to cope with them. Like Wilson Yabban said yesterday, it is impossible to say whether we could have said no. In most instances we just accepted the terms because it was an opportunity to develop some capacity. So whether it was good or not, we said 'yes'.

But, if you consider some of the specific collaborations and how much time and resources we invested in them, our government hardly ever committed funds to these kinds of things. The resources always came from the North. If somebody brings resources in order to collaborate with you, he has the upper hand. You cannot have balanced collaboration in such a situation.

In terms of our investment of time, sometimes it was the other way around. It depended on the kind of study you were doing together. The expatriates or donor persons came, spent two months or two weeks with you, and then went and came back again after six weeks or two months. But you spent almost all the time collecting all that data. And at the end of the day the data was just collected and sent to London. I talk about London a lot because Ghana used to be a British colony so that is where most of our collaboration has been. The data were sent to London and processed and the next thing you knew it was in the Lancet and you were the last author. Or maybe, if you were less lucky, you were acknowledged somewhere in small print. So, that was the kind of thing that had been going on that needed to be addressed.

And almost always the South was the subject of the study. We have never had a collaboration where the North was the subject. This is something that we still need to look at. Health is health and there are various health issues that are very urgent now. Let us talk about HIV-Aids. It is not only a Southern problem, but almost. It is also in the North. Almost all the studies that we are collaborating in take place in the South. Data and blood samples are collected and the blood samples are shipped away. We are trying to do something about it. I must say it is not as bad as it was, let us say, 20 years ago. I am just saying what the issues have been.

Talking about the dissemination of results, this is one of the key areas that we find a problem, in the first place because of our own notions about it. When I have some very interesting material, I do some work and write a paper and I want to publish it. The first journal I think of is maybe the American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene because it is a top American journal. So it is not just the people in the North who are publishing our material in Northern journals, but we in the South as well. We are boycotting our own Southern journals and publishing in the Northern journals because we get more credit for it. If you are at the University of Ghana and you publish in a Ghanaian medical journal, maybe you get one star. If you publish in the Lancet, you get maybe three or four stars. And that affects your promotion and your chances of becoming a professor. These are issues that are very practical. We live with the situation and seem to have accepted it.

One thing which is very important from the perspective of the ministry is the dissemination of information in order to influence policy. We are not saying do not publish your information in peer-reviewed journals. That is fine. But beyond that there is a need for policy-makers to know how to use scientific findings to improve health delivery. The problem, I think, is that most scientists do not know much about this either. This is a capacity that we need to build: how to make information

available in such a way that it is understood by policy-makers.

A lot has been said about the information highway, the Internet and all that. It is now becoming available to us but it is very expensive. Only very few people can have access to it.

Technical assistance is another issue that has been a problem and is still a problem. To put it very bluntly, more often than not we get technical expertise from the North that is not up to standards. I agree that we all go through a learning process and people need exposure and experience to become experts. But if I say I need an expert from the Netherlands, I mean I need an expert, not somebody who is a student. Often the people they send to us become a drain on you because you have to spend your time teaching them everything. This is okay for some kinds of collaboration. But when I say I need an expert, please send me an expert. The remuneration issue I have mentioned already. The person who is sent from the North for me to teach gets about ten times my salary. That is unacceptable.

An issue that has been talked about a lot is the issue of mistrust. This issue comes up all the time. It is expressed in two ways. The first is that you are believed to be incapable. Some people from the North who come to the South have the attitude, 'These people are not capable so we have come to teach them.' Some of us get a bit rebellious when we come up against this mentality.

The other way mistrust is expressed is related to the terms 'transparency' and 'accountability'. This is a very big issue. There is always that notion of a hidden agenda. Almost everybody thinks that somebody is hiding something. You think this, for instance, if you do not know what the full budget is. I am not sure, but I think we need to talk more about these issues, open ourselves up to discussion and put all the cards on the table. The issue of accountability is a very big thing. We have had problems in cases where money is given to certain colleagues in the South to do research. The work is not done properly, or it is done only partially, and the money is not accounted for properly. Then there is a problem. We need to be frank with each other: these things do happen. And when somebody gives money, he expects that the money will be accounted for properly.

I will talk now about what we have been doing with the Dutch in recent times. But first I must give a brief history. As part of our reform at the Ministry of Health, we decided to draft what we call a medium-term strategy. The ministry's health research unit came up with some guidelines regarding the research that could help us devise this health strategy. Medium-term strategy means a 20-year programme. But within that we have five-year plans, which include policy guidelines for the research needed to support the strategy. So we have a framework. It means that now, if somebody approaches us to do research, we can say, 'This is what we think would be relevant for us over the medium term – what we think would help us to develop strategies to improve health.' As far as we are concerned, this is our priority. It was through such negotiations that we started talking with the Dutch government. And they decided to help us to achieve these goals. So basically what we are doing is we are setting our own agenda through a consultative process involving the relevant stakeholders.

But I think I must say here that it is not as easy as it sounds. Who are the stakeholders in research? And not just research, but health research? It is very easy to come up with buzzwords and jargon: 'stakeholders', 'a consultative process'.

As part of the agreement, we decided to have a programming phase. Initially it was one year but it turned into one-and-a-half years. We hope it will not go beyond that. It has not been easy to set up a roundtable conference in such a way that nobody complains that they were left out. And sometimes you are at loss as to the level to which you must go. That is an area where we are still struggling. In the Ghanaian health services we have the national, the provincial and the district levels. And beyond that we now also have a subdistrict level. We took a decision. We thought going down to the district level for the 'consultative process' was good enough. We have 110 districts, after all. We said to all those people, 'So we know what the health programme will be for the next five years. What are the issues that you think we need to look at? And what research should we do to address those issues and to get a good programme underway?'

And you think you have done enough by going to the district level and then you get complaints from the subdistricts. Each district has an average of four subdistricts, so we are talking about some 440 subdistricts. And it is so complicated and everybody complains. Then the universities

complain that we did not involve them. So you have to bring them to the table again. At first we thought it was best to put the university people together. And later on we said, 'No, no, no, we want to meet with the people from the district.' Because we now want to know what the people in the district wish so that we also can address their needs. It is all so complicated.

In this collaboration with the Netherlands, we have acknowledged that there is some capacity that we might not have. And in such cases we ask the Dutch government to provide us with that capacity. For now, the coordination activities have been done through RAWOO. There are mechanisms for establishing an institutional framework for the collaboration.

After the programming phase is over, we will look at all the information that has been collected and then identify what is needed on the basis of which information we have and which information is missing. Then we can go ahead and carry out some of the research activities. We will also do some human resource development. 'Capacity-building' we call it. There is a plan for 'institution-building' as well, and 'infrastructure development'.

For now we have set up a joint programme committee, a 'JPC', which is made up of six people: three from the Dutch side and three from the Ghanaian side. They meet regularly. Initially it was each quarter, but now we say it should be every six months because all the travel up and down is quite substantial when you compare its cost with the total amount available for implementation. That is what people are quite worried about. You should not spend all your money on meetings, and then do very little.

The people from both sides have an equal say in decision-making and resource allocation and all that. We think that for collaboration to be useful, the agenda must be set by the South. And we must develop capacity for conducting research. I think it is not enough to say that the research capacity does not exist so we are bringing in capacity to make the programme work. We must develop capacity at the level where it is needed.

Technical assistance must be demand-driven. If we say we need an expert, please give us an expert. As regards financial control, I am quite intrigued by how it is done in the MMRPs.[7] But in order for there to be peace at all levels, there should be accountability. If we say we are using this money for A, let us use it for A. Our books will be open for people to examine and see that the money has been spent appropriately. It is not easy for the North to loosen its control, but the North must begin to do it.

If we say the North must loosen its control, somebody there may ask, "But what are we gaining from this whole partnership?' I think the people from the North should take part in the decision-making and policy-making process. It is too easy to say, 'Just bring your money and then go home and sleep.' Let us discuss. I think that is a key thing. We have developed a sector-wide approach to health. In the health sector in general, not only in health research, we operate with what is called 'a common basket'. Our health donors – who do not want to be called donors anymore, we call them 'health partners' – put money into the pot. And then the health sector decides how to spend that money. But decisions are taken in collaboration with those who have put something into the pot.

Finally, I think the South must see the importance of research. And I think this is a very key point. Even if our total budget is limited, let us decide that ten per cent of that budget is for research. Hopefully we can have a win-win situation. I understand that nobody wants to simply relax their control. But if I relinquish some of my control over the finances but participate in the discussions on how the agenda is set and how the money is spent, I can be happy.

Presentation 6: On the question of scientific versus social relevance

Ange Wieberdink

In connection with the questions posed at this expert meeting, I would like to share with you my experience with a development-oriented research collaboration project involving scientists from the South and the North.

From 1982-1990 I conducted participatory research on the development, implementation and execution of an environmental programme linked to the contaminated Lake Managua in Nicaragua. By participating in the project, I was able to analyse the research process, the translation of the social problem into a research programme and the steering influence of the different actors involved.

7. MMRP = Multi-annual Multi-disciplinary Research Programme, funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

I would like to highlight a few conclusions relevant to our discussions.

Before I continue I would, however, like to tell you that I decided to continue this work thanks to the positive reactions of experts from the South to the first results of my research, which I presented at a seminar in Brazil in 1985. My colleagues at the University of Amsterdam were not really interested in this kind of research. They found it too much action-oriented and theoretically not related to the main interests of the department. In that sense I felt myself like a representative of the South in the North. I have realised that, of the six speakers presenting their own experiences, I am the only one from the North. I almost feel at home and I am very grateful for that.

First, a remark about South-North cooperation. Social and scientific criteria play a part in the translation of social problems into research programmes. In this particular project much tension was caused by the differences in the way the problem was translated into research questions. It would not have been a real problem if there had been an open discussion between equal partners. But that was not the case. It is always easier to analyse discussions and arguments afterwards. At the moment itself it was not always that clear that a crucial moment has passed. During the execution of the programme the Nicaraguan and Dutch ecologists did not agree because they placed a different value on these social and scientific criteria. Because of the existing hierarchy in this particular project, the Dutch ecologists were in the position to steer the discussions according to their interpretation instead of that of the Nicaraguans.

In this project the scientific context of the scientists involved and Dutch science policy played a significant role in steering the analysis of the problem, in particular in the second part of the programme. It was an institutional cooperation project between two universities, one in Nicaragua and one in the Netherlands. But the project really started at an individual level when two limnologists, one from the South and one from the North, became interested in cooperating. There was a kind of consensus about the initial direction of the research at an individual level. But in the course of time the management of the department concerned at the Dutch university changed, as did the person responsible for the project within the department. The new head of the department felt more responsible for the programme and started steering it in another direction. So despite the initial consensus at an individual level, in the course of the process the scientific interest of the Dutch institution, which was doing research on clean lakes instead of contaminated lakes in the tropics, became an obstacle. We had not realised at the beginning that that might become a problem. This eventually led to the cooperation project being discontinued.

Translation of the social problem into a research programme is a delicate process which continues throughout the whole research period. It is a process which should not involve only researchers. Analysing this project, we see that there are so many moments that the social problem is translated: in the research questions, in the methodology, the selection of the staff, the selection of the equipment, the rephrasing of the questions.

Originally the Lake Managua programme started with a socially relevant question. It was linked to a national plan to save the contaminated lake, and many institutions had been involved in the development of the research programme and were interested in the outcomes. The research was initially based on the assumption that there was a direct link between the ecology of the lake and the health problems of the people living on its shores. On paper, these people were the target group to profit from the outcome. However, in the first year of the research programme, this assumption turned out to be wrong and the research had to be adjusted. The adjustment was made by the ecologists without involving or informing any other stakeholders. They adapted the programme within their discipline but this meant that the original social problem was lost from sight. I believe that the participation of other stakeholders in the translation process could have prevented this dramatic change in the programme. As a consequence of these changes, but also of other events in the context of the national plan, the research programme gradually lost its public support. Eventually, nobody outside the research community was waiting for the results and the programme became more and more socially isolated. No new client relationships have been established. Personally I have the impression that the involvement of stakeholders in the research process of more technically oriented projects is even more problematic than in socio-political programmes.

This relationship with the social context, I personally found the most problematic part of the programme because in the course of time the scientists – including the Nicaraguans – closed the door to what happened outside. Attempts to establish new contacts did not succeed because this was not included in the original programme and not budgeted for. Only at the end was extra money allocated for making videos about the results to disseminate the information on the local television. However this was only with the approval by the scientists, once it was clear that it would not influence their own budget for research.

Finally, in this project there seems to be a tension between building research capacity and doing development-related research at the same time. This particular programme turned out to be very successful in training ecologists in aquatic ecology. Nicaragua has more trained ecologists now than was originally planned. The results of the programme have been published in an international journal. In that sense, the capacity building has been very successful. If the social goal had been the leading thread, probably this would not have been as successful because the coherence of the training programme would have been disrupted.

Reaction from the Philippines' Biodiversity Programme[8]

Gil Saguiguit Jr.

The preparation process is meant to set the conditions for an equal partnership during all phases and in all aspects of management: from planning to implementation as well as in the joint monitoring and evaluation of the programme. Some may argue that this is not possible because it is the North that provides the funds. But 'counterparting', for example, can give considerable weight to the Southern partner's role in the collaboration. 'Counterparting' or 'counterpart support' is the input from the Southern side: i.e., staff time, logistical support, etc. This can be quantified and qualified as essential and substantial. 'Counterparting' may guarantee, or at least lay the foundation for, institutional sustainability. If both partners are willing to invest in the programme, it can be surmised that there is no one side that is pushing for it much more than the other, and that in fact, both sides are convinced of the logic and worthiness of the endeavour.

Both the North and the South must make an extra effort to deal with cross-cultural sensitivities. Problems can arise as a result of different perspectives and basic differences in culture and background. Partners in a collaboration must be sensitive to cross-cultural issues and should try to communicate with each other about them.

Our experience in the Philippines with the Biodiversity Programme shows that the North should refrain from pushing its own agenda. The agenda should be developed in the South. North-South research collaboration has to be interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary , since such collaboration has a developmental purpose and requires a holistic and integrated approach that is beyond the reach of one or two isolated disciplines. This means that researchers from the technical sciences need to be involved, and this requires much more time for a reorientation of skills. Again, there is a strong need for intensive professional communication.

There is a strong need for a participatory approach. Agenda-setting at the local level implies a need for other activities in support of the research effort. It is essential that the learning process not be one-way. This, again, requires communication, preferably – taking the observations about culture and disciplinary reorientation into account – through face-to-face communication. In fact, at the local stakeholder level, face-to-face communication is the only option since ICT does not extend this far.

Lastly, North-South collaboration calls for transparency and accountability on both sides. Experience in the Biodiversity Research Project where these are key elements, shows that other factors still present problems, however, such as physical distance, individual and group biases, time pressure, etc. It turns out that communication lines must be open at all times and they must be in perfect working order. This is the only way to avoid misunderstandings and to achieve programme-wide coherence in terms of issues and operating procedures.

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8. This presentation was in response to a request from the participants during the course of the meeting.

Summary of presentations and discussions

This section briefly summarizes the presentations given at the expert meeting and the discussions that followed them. The intention has been to stay as close as possible to the exchange of experiences as it took place at the Trivandrum meeting.

Partnership as a meeting of actors

Various actors play a role throughout the course of a partnership. Those who initiate the partnership may have other ideas than the people who implement the research agenda, for instance regarding the scientific versus the social value of the research to be undertaken.

The reasons for undertaking research can differ even among the individual Northern researchers taking part in the partnership. Interest in the culture of the country or region can be a motivating factor, as can a particular research interest. Motives can also be political or social, but most likely the Northern researcher has several reasons for undertaking the research. The specific blend of motives determines how an individual Northern researcher approaches research cooperation with Southern partners. It also determines their expectations as regards research goals and the dissemination of results.

Participants in the expert meeting had experienced research cooperation as a long and arduous process, and they think that sustainable South-North research cooperation requires strong motivation based on mutual interest, and that this has to be well defined and communicated well between the collaborating institutions. They also had come to the conclusion that partnerships work only if they are prepared in a systematic way through an intensive consultative process along structured lines in which all stakeholders jointly reach a consensus about the research agenda. A clear management structure ensures that the programme is carried out as planned. Changes are acceptable only if they are made in consultation with all stakeholders.

Without trust between the partners, partnerships do not work. Northern partners tend to worry about resources being used improperly, Southern partners about entering into agreements which turn out to be against their own or their country's interests. Everyone present at the expert meeting was well aware that in an asymmetrical world, to strive for equal partnership requires a continuous effort to neutralize the effects of this asymmetry.

Trust among the partners has to be built up in a long-lasting partnership that gives plenty of time for discussion, overcoming cultural differences, personality clashes, etc.

Partnership as co-production

The following phases of a research partnership were distinguished at the expert meeting:

- needs assessment
- problem definition
- translation into research questions
- implementation of research
- monitoring
- evaluation and dissemination of results

Many participants in the expert meeting pointed out the problem of asymmetry that characterizes research cooperation between South and North. The North usually has the funds, displays a greater degree of coherence, and presents a more united front. The Southern side is often fragmented and may rely on improvisation in the negotiations. As a consequence Southern partners are often not sufficiently involved in the design and planning phases of the research programmes. Even in cases where aspects of the research project, such as the needs assessment, are left to the South, a number of decisions have usually already been made in the North.

It is institutional capacity and not just money that gives the Northern partners their strength. They have the corporate power to place the conditions on the table.

There are still many research cooperation projects where the role of the South is limited to collecting data on phenomena in the South. Usually data flows from various points in the South to a Northern 'hub'. There it converges, acquiring considerable added value in scientific terms. Not much data flows from North to South, however, or between research institutes in the South. The Northern partners interpret the data that was collected, produce the theories, disseminate the results, design the policies and draw the lessons, and package the research results for the policy-makers, stakeholders and scholars. Very rarely does a project involve gathering data on phenomena in the North. There was consensus at the expert meeting that a genuine willingness to exchange knowledge on an equal basis is indispensable for a good partnership.

If solving development problems is one of the main

reasons for the partnership, the Southern partner absolutely must play an autonomous role in shaping the partnership. The participants at the meeting thought that this may have to include the Southern partner being free to choose its research partners from the North, and perhaps even being free to decide whether or not to cooperate with Northern researchers. The Southern partner's autonomy definitely has to include the right to decide which type of expertise it wants from the Northern partner, in which quantity, and at which level: junior or senior. Research to be conducted in the North on topics relevant to the subject of the research programme should not be excluded.

The North needs to release control and accept considerable autonomy of the southern partner.

The participants were aware that in addition to asymmetry between North and South, there is also asymmetry between stakeholders in the South, for example between institutions at national and regional levels.

They were also aware that the question has to be addressed, 'If the South is given full autonomy, what is in it for the North?' Southern partners at least to some degree have to take into account the demands which the Northern partners are required by their own institutions to meet. If these are ignored, the Northern partners will lose interest in the partnership.

The multifaceted problems of developing countries generally require multidisciplinary research. But in practice, successful multidisciplinary cooperation is difficult to achieve. Many failed attempts can be cited, in both the South and the North. The donor is often in favour of a multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary approach without fully appreciating its intricacies. Multidisciplinary research requires an appropriate reward system, one that acknowledges the value of this type of research in the form of funding, the application of results, and citations in journals. Research of this type clearly has a greater chance of succeeding if a programme is long-term. On the other hand, participants pointed out that there are many examples of good development research conducted on a monodisciplinary basis.

Partnership and socially relevant research

International treaties (such as Rio, Cairo, Beijing, and Istanbul) and the commitments made under them should be scrutinized in order to identify topics which would be valuable for the research agenda.

The prevailing North-South asymmetry in research partnerships is a factor that influences the social relevance of the research undertaken. The reward system of the international scientific community (called the 'culture of the science system' by some participants) plays a counterproductive role here. Northern partners are under considerable pressure to conform to the norms of this system. Consequently, they may value scientific issues higher than societal or ecological issues. This is because they get no credit for development research, for publications in popular but not highly ranked journals, or for other forms of communication that increase the use made of research. The training of scientists does not include sensitizing them to development issues. Southern scientists participating in the partnership may have an interest in conforming to the norms of the science system as well, and this can cause tension among the various Southern stakeholders and institutions involved in the partnership.

The feeling expressed at the expert meeting was that the only remedy to this problem is for the scientific community to make more allowance for socially relevant research by offering forums (workshops/symposia/conferences, journals) specifically designed for this purpose. Such forums would help to ensure the quality of socially relevant research. Such forums exist for social science focused on development problems, but they are almost totally absent in the natural sciences.

The participants observed that different stakeholders have different ways of approaching the process of translating social problems into research questions. It depends on their position. In the case of scientists, it even depends on their scientific discipline. In general, the process of assessing needs in the South is often complicated by conflicts that have a political, social or cultural background. The consensus at the meeting was that these decisions cannot be made only by researchers. Legitimate negotiators representing other stakeholders have to be involved. The

participants stressed that while a research programme is being carried out, flexibility must be maintained so that the programme can be adjusted to changing external circumstances and to new scientific insights.

Not only does the programming of research have to take social relevance into account, but evaluation has to meet additional requirements as well. The usual forms will not suffice. New forms of evaluation also have to include issues of agenda-setting and they must be user-oriented.

Partnership and 'capacity-strengthening'

The expert meeting discussed the semantics of the usual term 'capacity-building'. The conclusion was that 'capacity-strengthening' or 'capacity development' is better than 'capacity-building'. When the latter is used in a programme document it seems to imply that there was no capacity in the South at the start of the programme. 'Capacity enhancement', and 'institutional development' are other options.

Participants expressed the need for a common set of terms for defining the concepts and issues involved in capacity-strengthening. The variety of societal contexts, meanings, definitions, levels and/or frames of analysis easily results in misunderstanding and confusion that can have a serious impact on the choice of policies.

Capacity-strengthening should be named as a specific aim of the partnership, and the work plan should describe the concrete activities for this purpose. Efforts should be based as much as possible on what is already there. One of the objectives should be to preserve the existing capacity (students, institutes, etc.), for example through anti-brain-drain measures. Local and national co-funding should be sought in order to make the efforts more sustainable. The general view was that partnerships must have institutional backing if they are to serve their intended purpose. Partnerships between individuals are more vulnerable to a skewed distribution of benefits. In fact, capacity-strengthening needs to be addressed at three levels: at the level of the individual researchers, at the level of the institutions, and at the level of the national science system and the government.

Capacity for conducting socially relevant research cannot be developed without a full understanding of the national and local knowledge systems in their societal context. The relationships must be understood between the scientific institutions and the policy-making bodies, democratic institutions and end-users. The institutional arrangements that exist and that need to be developed must also be understood. The donors' role is to help supplement these at a local, regional and/or national level, and to do so in terms of a transparently defined and negotiated objective. The point of departure for capacity-strengthening should be that each country needs its own, autonomous, diversified science system.

There was a detailed discussion to decide which institutional form or arrangement works best when cooperative programmes are being set up. The issues related to the asymmetry that exists within a developing country came sharply to the fore in this context. It was acknowledged that concentrating on the grassroots or lower organizational level can result in a fragmentation of efforts. On the other hand, focusing efforts on an institution at the intermediate level runs the risk of creating a 'North within the South'. There was a general feeling that a multi-level, plural approach is needed for dealing flexibly with a variety of specific situations. What was particularly emphasized was that the Northern partner must be concerned with the question of sustainability – the sustainability not so much of a specific institutional form or research programme, but rather of the process of capacity-strengthening that the cooperation sets in motion. Long-term support is essential for developing the 'critical mass' needed before a process will continue under its own power.

There is a difference between strengthening research capacity in general and strengthening capacity for conducting research for development. The latter also includes the capacity to identify problems. In general, strengthening capacity in this area means also addressing the possibilities for doing research, the management of the research institution, the relationship between researcher and society, and the relationship between the research institution and society. This means giving attention to such issues as funding, training, policy dialogue and advocacy. Activities undertaken by Southern partners to ensure recognition in their own society should be supported.

Capacity is not just the ability to publish. It also refers to such elements as institutional capacity, training, agenda-setting ability, problem recognition and formulation, policy dialogue, and advocacy.

To embed research capacity in society, institutes conducting development research need to create opportunities for contact between researchers and non-researchers. Studies in innovation processes and university-industry collaboration can provide lessons in how to approach and involve users from the very beginning. Overall, the participants in the expert meeting found that not enough information on this subject is exchanged between programmes – neither North-South nor South-South.

The capacity-strengthening aspect of partnerships is also affected by South-North asymmetry. In many partnerships there is tension between research for publication and research for capacity-strengthening. The capacity development in the South that is part of a research programme often comes down to nothing more than the training of a few PhD students or the purchase of some equipment.

A final point concerning capacity-strengthening that was made during the workshop by one of the Northern participants is that the North has an interest in strengthening or at least maintaining its own capacity for development research: that is, its knowledge and insights pertaining to the South, as well as its attitudes and sensitivity with respect to development problems. This capacity will enable it to continue mobilizing public interest in development cooperation.

Paradigm shift

While reviewing their experiences with partnerships, participants in the expert meeting noted that the contours of a new paradigm are emerging in North and South. There is growing awareness that a societal problem can be better understood through comprehensive, interactive analysis, which at the same time improves problem-solving capabilities.

There was general consensus that a total paradigm shift is needed to promote development research that is multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary in character. On the basis of their own experience, many participants asserted that a grassroots approach can result in cutting-edge research. Such a paradigm shift would at the same time counter the current orientation to supply, the current tradition of working within disciplines, and the current international culture of science in general.

In other words, a paradigm shift would give everyone a new way of looking at research in terms of a system that produces knowledge in interaction with a social context. This would open up new opportunities for collaboration between South and North which would considerably narrow the gap between North and South.

Participants in the meeting pointed out that new impetus is sorely needed now that development studies and the so-called ‘people sciences’ are suffering from a diminishing flow of public funds in both the North and the South. It is the job of researchers and policy-makers not only to promote this paradigm shift, but to make it more effective.

Conclusions

What emerges from the presentations and discussions at the expert meeting is a picture of the manifold complexity of the terrain and the many pitfalls that have to be avoided in order to achieve a fruitful partnership. It seems legitimate to conclude from the meeting that such a partnership – one that benefits all sides – is possible but it requires a willingness not to be naïve about it, and a corresponding effort on both sides to realize the goal. Striving for equal partnership in an asymmetrical world requires constant effort since the effects of asymmetry have to be neutralized. Donors and the other outside organizations involved should be willing to facilitate this effort. The clarification of conceptual issues requires another major effort. At present, different interpretations of the factors affecting partnerships tend to frustrate the discussion.

The meeting concluded that the following basic principles underlie a fruitful partnership.

1. Strengthening the capacity for conducting socially relevant research should be a specific aim of the partnership.

The fundamental point of departure for capacity-strengthening should be that each country needs its own, autonomous, diversified science system. Capacity-strengthening should be based as much as possible on the scientific institutions already there, taking into account not only the institutions themselves but also their institutional arrangements with policy-making bodies, democratic institutions and end-users.

Capacity-strengthening needs to be addressed at three levels: at the level of the individual researchers, at the level of the institutions, and at the level of the national science system and the government. Concentrating only on the grassroots or lower level of institutions can result in a fragmentation of effort. On the other hand, focusing efforts only on an institution at the intermediate level runs the risk of creating a 'North within the South'. A multi-level, plural approach is needed for dealing flexibly with a variety of specific situations. The donors' role is to help supplement these at a local, regional and/or national level, and to do so in terms of a transparently defined and negotiated objective. The sustainability of the process of capacity-strengthening requires long-term support, essential for developing the 'critical mass' needed before a process will continue under its own power.

One of the objectives should be to preserve the existing capacity (students, institutes, etc.), for example through anti-brain-drain measures. Local and national co-funding should be sought in order to make the efforts more sustainable.

Strengthening capacity means addressing the management of the research institution, the relationship between researcher and society, and the relationship between the research institution and society. The work plan should describe the concrete activities undertaken for this purpose, such as financial support, training, policy dialogue and advocacy, as well as activities undertaken by Southern partners to ensure recognition in their own society. Training a few PhD students or purchasing some equipment is not sufficient.

2. The Northern partner should be prepared to relinquish control and to accept considerable autonomy on the part of the Southern partner.

For a fruitful partnership, it is essential that the Southern partner is involved from the very beginning in the design and planning phases of the research programme, and not only in one or two aspects of the research project, such as the needs assessment. Ideally, the Southern partner plays an autonomous role in shaping the partnership. It chooses its research partners from the North and decides which elements of the programme will require cooperation with Northern researchers. It also decides which type of expertise it wants from the Northern partner, on which scale, and at which level: junior or senior. At the same time, Southern partners have to take into account the demands which the Northern partners are required by their own institutions to meet.

Data flows should be from North to South and between research institutes in the South as well as from South to North. A genuine willingness to exchange knowledge on an equal basis is indispensable in a good partnership.

Any asymmetry that exists between stakeholders in the South, for example between institutions at national and regional levels, also needs to be addressed as a partnership is being prepared.

3. A broadly based consultative process, however painstaking and time-consuming it may be, should precede any programme.

Discussions at the expert meeting made it clear that partnership programmes cannot be established without very careful preparation. There must be an intensive consultative process, along structured lines, which results in all stakeholders reaching consensus on the research agenda. This process should ensure that the motives for establishing the partnership are clear to all stakeholders and that the objectives of the partnership are well defined and clearly communicated between the collaborating institutions. This paves the way to the development of mutual trust. The general view was that partnerships must have institutional backing if they are to serve their intended purpose. Partnerships between individuals are more vulnerable to a skewed distribution of benefits.

There was consensus at the meeting that decisions regarding a partnership cannot be made only by researchers. Legitimate negotiators representing other stakeholders have to be involved. Studies of innovation processes and university-industry collaboration could provide lessons on how to approach and involve users from the very beginning.

A clear management structure must be established so that a programme can be carried out as planned, with regular consultation among all stakeholders. The participants at the meeting stressed that while a research programme is in progress, flexibility must be maintained so that the programme can be adjusted to changing external circumstances and to new scientific insights without compromising the objectives.

New paradigm

The expert meeting observed a growing awareness that research has to be seen as a system that produces knowledge in interaction with a social context. This reveals the contours of a new paradigm that is emerging in North and South. However, the reward system of the international scientific community (called the ‘culture of the science system’ by some participants) definitely does not yet acknowledge the value of this type of research – not in the form of funding, not in the application of results, and not through citations in journals. The reward system should be adapted to support development research in general. More particularly, it should support:

- multidisciplinary research which is needed to deal with the multifaceted problems of developing countries;
- publication not only in scientific journals but in more widely circulated publications or by means of other forms of communication, in order to increase the use made of research;
- activities aimed at strengthening the capacity of the Southern partner for conducting research – especially research that is socially relevant.

In order to achieve this, it may be necessary to create forums (workshops/symposia/conferences, journals) specifically designed for this purpose. The training of scientists would have to sensitize them to issues of agenda-setting and user-oriented research. Evaluation norms should also be modified.

The participants in the meeting felt that research along these lines would open up new opportunities for collaboration between South and North and considerably narrow the gap between them. Such new impetus is sorely needed as the development studies and the so-called ‘people sciences’ are suffering from a diminishing flow of public funds in both the North and the South.

Further development of the new paradigm would benefit from closer examination of what actually happens in ongoing South-North research partnerships. It is clear that a major effort is required to collect the empirical data on ongoing research partnerships that will make this examination possible.

Another major effort should go into clarifying the concepts used in this field. Different interpretations of the factors involved need to be brought to light and the differences need to be resolved.

List of Participants of the Expert Meeting on North-South Research Partnerships: Issues and Challenges, Trivandrum, India, September 29-October 2, 1999

Annex 1

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A note on the background and purpose of the Expert Meeting

Annex 2

9. Comment of John Howell, director of the Overseas Development Institute in London.

10. Jan Pronk, in an interview in ZENO, 1993/2, pp. 18-21.

11. Comment of a researcher working for the Cooperation Benino-Allemand, interviewed during a RAWOO identification mission for the Programming Study Health Research for Development.

12. Communication from the European Commission to the Council and Parliament, [Com(97)174], Brussels, 1997, Scientific and technological research - a Strategic Part of the European Union's Development Cooperation with Developing Countries.

13. Already in 1979, the Vienna UN Conference on Science and Technology for Development adopted a programme that stressed, among other things, joint participation and control. It took a while for that programme to trickle down into national development policies, however.

'Research partnership is a cloak for research direction from the North' (John Howell)[9]

'…studies conducted by my own ministry reveal this linking problem. I conclude that [research] questions are formulated in our own society, from a Western perspective, or that we translate their demand into our questions. But we are not African, we are not Indian, that's what it is all about, to give them self-reliance, autonomy' (Jan Pronk)[10]

'The situation is bad; most researchers are living in the clouds; they ought to put their face in the ground; they are too urban oriented, and merely produce a lot of papers in stead of aiming at improving the health situation' (A researcher)[11]

'Despite some excellent work, the lack of an appropriate political framework, an unequal partnership disadvantaging the South, the absence of specific mechanisms for valorising results and the limited number of research areas have muted its impact on development' (EU).[12]

Introduction

Discussions on North-South research partnerships came to the fore in the 1990s. In particular, they gained importance as part of one of the longer standing aims of development policies, which is to help build research capacity in the South.[13] Several initiatives have been undertaken on specific dimensions of North-South Research Partnership, including international conferences (such as the EU/Government of the Netherlands conference in Leiden, March 1997), studies, publications and new approaches, aimed to address the key issues at stake and to develop appropriate policies and instruments.

Also, outside the framework of development co-operation, there is considerable North-South research collaboration, ranging from rather accidental individual and ad hoc co-operation to structured and specifically financed research co-operation projects and programmes (e.g. the programmes formulated by DG XII of the European Commission; INCO/DC). While such activities may not be systematically aimed at strengthening research capacity in the South and may find their rationale in the specific contributions which Southern researchers had to offer (in knowing intimately situations and problems in the South), questions are sometimes raised whether these activities live up to the expectations or potentialities of the partners involved.

The emerging literature on the subject of research co-operation between North and South does not present a systematic analysis of the complexity of the issues involved and their interrelationships. For a large part, it consists of narrative accounts and ad hoc observations. However, it persuades one to recognize that there are fundamental issues at stake given the objectives of such co-operations. The quotations above represent a concern that it is not a question of mere modifications in the current practice. The issues involved need deeper analysis.

Expert meeting

In September 1999, the RAWOO, in co-operation with the Kerala Research Programme on Local Level Development at the Centre for Development Studies (KRPLLD/CDS), Trivandrum, India, is planning to organize an expert meeting in India on North-South Research Partnerships, bringing together senior professionals and scientists from the South and the North who have experience with research co-operation for development.

The main goal of the meeting is to flesh out the principal issues of North-South research partnerships, the underlying factors and ambiguities that need to be addressed, and the challenges that are perceived by the participants in achieving the goals of these partnerships. The meeting will aim at formulating recommendations for follow up and will constitute the basis for an advisory document to the Government of the Netherlands.

Specifically, the expert meeting aims at *three* main goals:

- *Intellectually*, to advance knowledge about the underlying dynamics of North-South partnerships through questions like: what are the main characteristics of North-South research partnerships; in what respect do they differ from North-North and South-South co-operation; to advance insight in the main issues, including possibly hidden but fundamental ambiguities, influencing the course of events and impacts of North-South research co-operation, taking into account the different perspectives of the various stakeholders;
- *Instrumentally*, to focus on a conceptual framework for North-South research partnerships, relevant for both the research

community entering into the partnerships and for policy action on the part of the developing countries and the donors;
- *From a policy point of view*, to suggest key actions for follow-up.

Analytical framework

In its search for an analytical framework, discussions within the RAWOO have revolved around the following questions:

1. Are there patterns of imbalance in North-South research co-operation? If so, how do we observe these? Are these patterns associated with academic disciplines, regions or any other factor? What is the impact of this imbalance on the outcome in respect of relevance for the South, quality, access to research results etc.? Are there instruments to redress the imbalance?
2. What are the motivations to engage in North-South research co-operation outside a framework of development co-operation, with the Southern researcher, the Northern researcher and with the organizations from both sides facilitating such co-operation? What is known about the degree to which such co-operation is commensurate with those motivations or the related expectations? Do North-South imbalances have an impact on the answers to these questions and who would be concerned about it and why? Does it make a difference for the researcher whether the co-operation takes place within or outside a development co-operation framework?
3. If it is accepted in principle, that research partnership in the context of development co-operation must be oriented to needs (as perceived by the South), how do the current practices in co-operation facilitate such an orientation? Should research problems be primarily left to the researchers or does the development concern require inputs from other stakeholders to ensure relevance and usage? Given the 'research culture' in which the former is the dominant mode, how to enhance access to and usage of research results?
4. If research is to address real life problems in developing countries, it will often require co-operation among disciplines. Given the mono-disciplinary organization of research, what are the incentives and reward systems necessary to promote multi-disciplinary research? If domestic research capacity building is one of the main objectives of research co-operations then who should be responsible for capacity that deals with research which is relevant in the context of development co-operation? What should be the appropriate institutional arrangements to facilitate all the various necessary aspects of research co-operation given its goals?
5. Finally, what should be the methodology for programming to promote research co-operations which address the issues raised above within an appropriate institutional framework?

RAWOO has identified a number of themes broadly in line with the above sets of questions. These themes do not represent an exclusive categorization of the issues, in fact they overlap to a great extent. The purpose is mainly to facilitate an organized discussion. A separate note elaborating these themes, along with a first assessment of the available literature on North-South research collaboration prepared by Sci-Quest at the request of RAWOO, are available as background material.

Tentative Programme

Wednesday 29 September 1999

Afternoon
- Opening and key note address
  Professor Chandan Mukherjee, Director Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum, India
- Introducing participants
- Discussion analytical framework

Thursday 30 September 1999

Morning Chair: Professor Johan Bouma
- Dr John O. Gyapong, Deputy Director Health Research Unit, Ministry of Health, Ghana
  The case of Health Research in Ghana
- Ms Sonia Montaño Virreira (Former Chair of PIEB)

The case of PIEB, Bolivia
- Reactions and Discussion

Afternoon
- Working sessions
  Identifying key issues and key questions (written contributions, group discussion)

Friday 1 October 1999

Morning Chair: Professor George Waardenburg
- Professor Wilson K. Yabann, Dean of Environmental Studies, Moi University, Kenya
  The case of Environmental Studies in Kenya
- Professor Julio Cesar Centeno, Vice President of 'Tropenbos'
  The case of Rain Forest Research
- Reactions and discussion

Afternoon
- Working sessions
  Identifying key issues and key questions
- Working visit to Kerala State Planning Commission

Saturday 2 October 1999

Morning Chair: Professor Chandan Mukherjee
- Plenary working session
- Closing

RAWOO publications

Utilization of Research for Development Cooperation. Linking Knowledge Production to Development Policy and Practice. Publication no. 21. May 2001.

The Need for Research Concerning the Local Response to Globalization in Developing Countries. Publication no. 20. September 2000.

Mobilizing Knowledge for Post-Conflict Management and Development at the Local Level. Publication no. 19. May 2000.

Building bridges in research for development. Review of 1997 and 1998. May 1999.

Information & Communication Technology and Development. RAWOO lectures and seminar. Publication no. 18. August 1998.

Framework for a Philippine-Dutch Programme of Biodiversity Research for Development. Publication no. 17. March 1998.

Developing a Ghanaian-Dutch programme of health research for development. Results of a questionnaire to identify relevant expertise in the Netherlands and willingness to cooperate with Ghana. Publication no. 16. February 1998.

Framework for a Ghanaian-Dutch Programme of Health Research for Development. Publication no. 15. March 1998.

Internal conflicts, security and development. RAWOO lectures and seminar. Edited by Bas de Gaay Fortman and Marijke Veldhuis. Publication no. 14. May 1997.

Towards a European Science and Technology policy for development. Publication no. 13. November 1996.

Agenda 21. RAWOO/RMNO lectures on sustainable development. Edited by Frans Duijnhouwer and Marijke Veldhuis. Publication no. 12. July 1996.

Research capacity for sustainable development. Report of a field study in Ghana, Kenya and Kerala (India) conducted for RAWOO by Wesley Monroe Shrum, Jr. Publication no. 11. April 1996.

Supporting capacity building for research in the South. Recommendations for Dutch policy. Publication no. 10. December 1995.

Building up and strengthening research capacity in Southern countries. A study prepared for the RAWOO by Frits Wils. Publication no. 9. August 1995.

Good Governance. Rawoo Lunchlezingen 1993. Redactie: Oda van Cranenburgh en Marijke Veldhuis. Publication no. 8. September 1995. *(in Dutch).*

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Criteria for assessing proposals for research in and for developing countries. Publication no. 2. August 1991.

Advies over de registratie van ontwikkelingsgericht onderzoek. Publication no. 1. January 1991. *(in Dutch).*

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Industrialisation in Developing Countries, priorities and conditions for research. General Recommendations 5. February 1989.

Sustainable Land Use in Developing Countries; perspectives on an integrated approach. Working paper 2. November 1988.

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Food Security in Developing Countries, research needs and conditions. General Recommendations 4. January 1986.

International Dimensions of Development Problems. Seminar reports. Edited by H.J. Mastebroek. 1984.

Legal Aspects of International Dimensions of Development Problems; research needs and priorities. General Recommendations 3a. June 1984.

International Dimensions of Development Problems; research needs and priorities. General Recommendations 3. October 1983.

Energy for Survival. General Recommendations 2. January 1984 *(abridged English version)*.

Health and Illness in Developing Countries. General Recommendations 1. January 1984 *(abridged English version)*.