

Draft Paper for the workshop on ‘Human rights, incl. women’s rights’; Conference Knowledge on the Move, workshop 7

By Prof. Willem van Genugten, workshop convenor, and dr. Conny Rijken, resource person

1. Background/Set-up of the Paper

The issue of human rights being quite broad, the workshop convenor decided to ask three colleagues from the South, all from African countries (Ethiopia, Nigeria and Sudan), to prepare papers on the core themes of the conference: ‘International Research Partnerships’, ‘Research Practices: Embedding Research in Society’, and ‘Research Capacities: Capacity Building for Relevant Research’. His aim was to have working material, based upon three country situations, which could serve as building blocks for more generalized conclusions. Despite promises, however, at the end only one out three was able to fulfill her obligations in due time.

Having been confronted with that, the authors of the present paper decided to stick to a few general observations based on their own previously conducted research, followed by the text of the paper of the colleague who delivered: Prof. Balghis Badri, Prof. of Social Anthropology/Gender and Director of the Institute of Women, Gender and Development Studies – Ahfad University for Women – Omdurman – Sudan.

2. Introduction to the Topic

There is a huge amount of literature in the field of human rights.¹ This relates to academic discussions on such issues as the universality of human rights and the legal strength of existing human rights instruments, but also to grassroots or policy oriented aspects, and such issues as human rights and development, economic globalisation and negative as well as positive human rights effects of that, and so forth. And despite the often heard observation that this literature in many ways has a Western background, the truth is that in many developing countries there is also a great deal of academic as well as practically oriented human rights research.

There would also be ample information to make a paper upon positive as well as negative trends in human rights research, and linking them to economic developments, natural disasters, new leadership, and other relevant factors/issues. It can also be observed that many research activities do indeed effectively contribute to,

¹ See, out of many sources, Magdalena Sepulveda, Theo van Banning, Guðrún D. Guðmundsdóttir, Christine Chamoun and Willem van Genugten, *Human Rights Reference Handbook*, fully revised third edition, Costa Rica: University for Peace, 2004; and Willem van Genugten, Kees Homan, Nico Schrijver and Paul de Waart, *The United Nations of the Future; Globalization with a Human Face*, Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2006; Willem van Genugten, ‘Linking the Power of Economics to the Realization of Human Rights: the WTO as a Special Case’, in: C. Raj Kumar en D.K. Srivastava (eds), *Human Rights and Development*, Hong Kong: LexisNexis, 2006, p. 201-220; the reports of the *World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalisation* of the ILO, at <<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/wcsdg/commission/background.htm>> and the *Human Development Reports* of the UN Development Program (UNDP) (published annually by Oxford University Press); Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York/London, 2002, and various UNDP reports, including *Human Development Report 1999* and *Human Development Report 2003*, as well as *Globalization with a Human Face*, 1999, and *Globalization and Human Development*, 2001.

or can plausibly be assumed to contribute to, the creation of an environment which is prone to reduction of poverty and in which human rights can flourish. This is often related to strengthening participation rights and to empowerment of vulnerable groups and the like. In that respect it is also worth mentioning that much research, is explicitly working towards the empowerment of women as ways to fight for human rights and against poverty.² Many of these activities undertaken are also relevant for the creation of a sphere of more transparency regarding governmental policies in relation to the protection of human rights.

Sometimes, however, the expectations of human rights related research and of, for instance, international cooperation between research institutes, are simply too high, amongst other things because of understaffing and lack of funds. Further to this, it is our impression, based upon longstanding experience in the field of international cooperation that the lack of sustainability of such international cooperation is often caused by factors outside the sphere of influence of research institutes. One such factor is the brain drain many research institutes have fallen victim to. Quite often, researchers, once properly trained, leave for better paid jobs in the civil service or elsewhere.

Recently, the convenor of the workshop did lead a research team having the task to evaluate the work of four Netherlands based NGOs in, in short, the field of 'poverty and human rights'. The research did lead to a list of good practices and approaches, which in many ways are also applicable to the work of research institutes and research initiatives.³ They are grouped under nine headings (which are – unavoidably – partly overlapping):

Investing in human capital. Human rights and poverty reduction work depends, in the end, always upon human beings, who are aware of their rights, who have a clear insight in the legal, political, social and/or economic mechanisms needed to realise these rights in the country concerned, who have the moral views and courage to fight for human rights and against poverty, and who are trained in order to organise themselves and their organisations.

Capacity building. Capacity building, being "the process by which individuals, groups and organisations increase their potential through the growth of knowledge, experience and skills to formulate goals and achieve them, carry out their core tasks efficiently and effectively, solve their problems in a sustainable way" is basically what all the organisations under scrutiny are aiming for, in one way or another. It also is what they should aim for in the future: it is one of the most important contributions to structural and sustainable alleviation of poverty and the realisation of human rights.

Dissemination of human rights knowledge. Awareness of rights is not necessarily the same as a *thorough* knowledge of these rights. The latter, however, is needed, in order to be more effective in, for instance, local fights against the government, or in international lobbying. Tools/instruments/strategies available would relate to high level education, to establishing electronic libraries and listservs, to training the trainers and educators.

Empowering the grass root level. It is not enough that the knowledge is available in an abstract sense. One of the core issues is how to reach the grass roots levels. For that reason, access to and the helping hand of 'human rights vehicles' like

² See: Willem van Genugten and Camilo Perez-Bustillo (eds), *The Poverty of Rights; Human Rights and the Eradication of Poverty*, London/New York: Zed Books, 2001, several chapters.

³ See Willem van Genugten, Anna Meijknecht, Hans Moors and Wouter Vandenhoele, *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Development*, Tilburg: Tilburg University, March 2006.

churches, chiefs, paralegals, volunteers and local women's groups are indispensable. In addition, it is always good not to overestimate the strengths of legal procedures. They are one instrument, among many others, like forming trade unions or political lobbying.

Offering effective legal protection. Having and knowing one's rights is at least something. Having these rights effectively implemented, however, is something totally different. This is to some extent true for law in general, but the more so for human rights law, often because the entity needed for its realisation (the State) is part of the problem itself. Tools/instruments/strategies would have to aim, first of all, at strengthening local legal systems, including traditional ones if desired so, at fighting against corruption within the judiciary, at non-expensive legal representation, and the like. The support for training of paralegals and the fight for legal recognition of paralegals *e.g.* testify of the organisations' (and their Southern partners') awareness of the need for effective legal protection.

Strengthening international and regional legal and quasi-legal protection. On a level complementary to national legal systems, one should think of constantly strengthening of and improving access to international and regional supervisory procedures. Further strengthening of international and regional human rights protection has a twofold benefit: It might offer complementary protection if at the national level such protection fails, but it also often influences internal legal decision-making. And in addition to binding international law, one should not underestimate the force of soft law instruments as well as of the UN Special Rapporteurs appointed for a series of human rights. The soft law instruments can also be useful instruments within national legal and political struggles, while Rapporteurs can focus on situations which otherwise might escape attention.

Networking. Strengthening local organisations and their fights against human rights violations and for poverty reduction, directly or through working on a human rights friendly ('enabling') environment, can be done by bringing them into contact or facilitating contacts with other local organisations, and/or with organisations on the sub-regional, regional or international level. The level of networking depends on the objectives one aims for.

Showing solidarity. If our research has learned one thing, it is the importance of solidarity. It has become clear, time and again, that the organisations under scrutiny are often seen by their local partners not as merely 'contractors'/donors/contracting parties but also as partners/friends/allies. According to the researchers that role is often as important as the financial or facilitating roles. One can not overestimate issues like giving more legitimacy to local organisations by establishing international contacts, or by giving them moral support in their fights against structural poverty or involuntary disappearances.

The paradigm-shift should go on. The need to seek sustainable approaches/solutions leads to the need of fully accepting the notion that a paradigm shift has and is still taking place. In short, it is about accepting many (more) constituencies and stakeholders (than states only) in the global/African fight for human rights and against poverty, and about combining the strengths of separate actors, like states, their international organisations, NGOs and companies in that ongoing struggle ('partnerships'). The Dutch government is in a process of fully recognising that without civil society there is no chance of ongoing, sustainable success in these fields.

Having said this, we believe that it is important to work with an overriding concept in which human rights are integrated with other needs, and in which the focus is upon empowering local groups and the like. The concept of 'Human security' might be such a concept, or better: a tool for identifying the area's and subjects for enhanced International Research Cooperation.

Human security is a relatively new concept that was used for the first time in the *Human Development Report* of 1994. Although there is not an internationally accepted overall definition of 'human security' it can be stated that the two major components of the concept are the freedom from fear and the freedom from want. It shifts the focus from the security centred on states to security centred on peoples, which means that the individual and populations are at the heart of the concept of human security. In a broad interpretation of the concept, however, the freedom from fear is also interpreted as the freedom from threats of hunger and poverty, etc. and not limited to freedom from violent threats only (the narrow interpretation).⁴ From these considerations it is clear that the concept of human security aims at the protection and the empowerment of the individual as well as the society as a whole. The aspect of protection relates to the protection against violence, against threats from states or other actors, and other events which are beyond the control of peoples and communities. Empowerment of peoples and communities is aimed at creating an environment in which people can make decisions based on their specific needs and desires and which builds on the efforts and capabilities of those directly affected.

The relation between human security and human rights is twofold: on the one hand, human rights may help to identify the needs of persons and societies and on the other hand human rights may fill these needs as they are helping to identify states' obligations in a particular area. Human security cannot be ensured without respect for human rights.⁵

In relation to International Research Cooperation, the concepts of human security and human rights might fulfil the role of identifying the needs of persons and societies. It then might provide a useful guidance for prioritising within the area's issues for further research cooperation. As it takes the needs of persons and societies as the starting point the outcome of the research cooperation will be valuable for the people in need and the society as a whole. Further to this, the concept of human security can as well be taken a level higher and serve as an instrument for the development of evidence based policies.

Let's discuss this at the workshop of 27 February.

⁴ See on the definition of the concept of 'human security', *Human Security Report 2005*, Human Security Centre, The University of British Columbia, Canada, 2005, p. VIII; also see 'Human Security Now', Commission on Human Security, Protecting and empowering people, New York, 2003, p. 1-14, and S. Tadjbakhsh and A. Chenoy, *Human Security. Concepts and Implications*, Routledge, 2007, p. 39-71.

⁵ B. Ramcharan, 'Human rights and human security', *Strengthening disarmament and security*, 1/2004, p. 39-47.

International Partnership in Research in the Sudan Context

Paper by Prof. Balghis Badri (slightly edited by the convenor and the resource person)

Introduction

This paper draws from a workshop held specifically to discuss the characteristics of experiences in international research cooperation of different actors in Sudan. The author invited experts representing government research bodies, networks, NGOs, UN agencies, universities and INGOs.

The workshop objectives were to reflect on experiences of different types of research cooperation's and to recommend principles of future ideal research cooperation.⁶

The focus of the paper will be in reference to the three main issues to be tackled at the conference on the theme: Research for Development in a Globalizing World. These are: International Research Partnerships; Embedding Research for Society and Capacity Building for Researches. The reference will be Sudan as a case study from which lessons could be drawn for developing pathways for future best practice of cooperation between countries of South and North.

The paper will have three sections. Section one is an overview of the evolution of research cooperation in Sudan and its characteristics. The second section highlights the problems/challenges of IRC and section three is pathways for ideal IRC models.

Section (I): The Evolution of Research Cooperation in Sudan

International research cooperation could be classified as individually or institutionally based. It could also be classified as driven by a demand from donors, who are represented in the country, such as UN agencies or INGOs, or demand from the nationals, whether government, universities or NGOs.

Diverse experiences of doing research had been on going in Sudan since independence. Research during colonial times was known and practiced. Though in certain cases involved nationals and northern colonizers and the main research subjects were nationals or their country etc, at that time it was not given the title international research cooperation. Individual Western researchers, mainly social anthropologists and government officials, wrote books and reports about Sudan to influence the British policy. After independence was declared in December 1955 policy makers considered that data is crucial for policies and for setting the development agenda and implementing development programs. It gave an impulse to the international research cooperation. Both the government, nationals and the international community viewed the census of 1956 as crucial, hence it was undertaken. Unfortunately, the military took over from the democratic government by a coupe in 1958 and they were not believers in evidence based policies.

⁶ The author draws greatly from her own experiences in international research cooperation of diverse types (development oriented, community based), for academic knowledge promotion, institutionally or individually based, as part of universities, independent research institutions, NGOs activities or political parties.

The military culture needed a research of different style than development oriented research for different purposes. The international community, mainly the USAID that supported the development agenda of the military regime at that time, directed the path of development and its priority. A top down approach of the modernization model and agenda prevailed. The national researchers mainly at universities were de-linked from policy decisions.

At the time when democracy was re-installed in October 1964 till May 1969 researchers were actively engaged in policy oriented research and dialogue. A number of conferences to debate developmental issues, policy directives and priorities as well as peace, law and constitutional reform were prevalent.

The international research community had marginally influenced the research agenda for development. Their engagement was greatly geared towards capacity building for young staff at the only one national university at the time (University of Khartoum). The democratic time was short and another military coup took over from May 1969 to April 1985.

The time of the military regime witnessed great influence of the socialist models, research priorities and international cooperation. Most of international cooperation was with the Eastern block. A national Research Council (RC) was established in 1970 with branches for many specializations such as National Medical RC, the Socio-economic RC, the Traditional Medicine RC, Science and Technological RC, National Data Bank, Agricultural RC etc. Research had to be contracted and organized by these Councils. International cooperation in research to be channeled through them for all government related or national researches.

Individual or independent private institutions for research were not known. Yet international research cooperation at university level started to flourish in the seventies mainly at the University of Khartoum as well as the newly established universities of Juba, Gazira and Ahfad University College for Women. By the early eighties, the regime changed its policy directives from a socialist/Arabist to an Islamist orientation and Islamist legislation.

However, at that time Islamic ideology had little impact on the research agenda or international cooperation. The regime gradually slackened from its centralized research orientation and support to international RCs that yielded in the past some good models such as the Blue Nile Research to combat Bilharzias between the Royal Medical Institution in Britain, Gazira scheme and Khartoum University. Another success example was the Savannah Project initiated in 1975 between Bergen and the Socio-economic Research Council, in 1981 starting with the University of Khartoum the Red Sea Area Program (till 1992). The collaboration with the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Netherlands and DSRC University of Khartoum started 1981 (till 1991) could be considered as one of the old successful partnership models.

The Development Studies and Research Center (DSRC) of the University of Khartoum and the ISS in The Hague will be taken as a model of International research cooperation for elaboration:

“The collaboration of the ISS in building capacity in training and Research in the DSRC to respond to the need and provide training relevant to development issue addressed at the national level and establish a center of excellence that serves the East African region. The staff of the two institutes participated in developing the curricular for the courses to be taught and designed the research programs to be undertaken. Long periods of stay of Sudanese staff with their colleagues in The Hague provided the opportunity to participate in the ISS activities,

acquaint themselves with the running of such courses in the ISS and utilize the wealth of literature available in the ISS library.

A diploma and a master degree program relevant to development issues in Sudan in particular and the East African region at large were drawn by the staff from the two institutions. Staff exchange was institutionalized and conscious attempts were made to ensure that courses offered in the DSRC similar to the level of those offered at the ISS in The Hague.

The policy relevance of the teaching program and the research undertaken by the staff in both institutions has kept this understanding in mind during the whole period of the program that extended over ten years before the DSRC was able to sustain the activity though be it only for Sudan. Most of the evidence-based knowledge collected found its way to the classrooms in both institution and informed policy makers in the two countries in their bilateral agreement with reference to development aid and private sector involvement.

Two other aspects of this collaboration have to be highlighted. Firstly, the ISS/DSRC collaboration went beyond the academic field. Through a generous grant from the Netherlands government, initiated by the ISS, the DSRC was supported in building a physical infrastructure to house the program as well as being provided by the necessary equipment to help it run its teaching activities. Secondly both institutions thought of their model of collaboration as going beyond Sudan and initiated the process of turning the DSRC into a center of excellence that serves the East African region. To have this materialize, in 1982, senior staff from the ISS and the DSRC toured the region explaining the ideas of the center and the contexts of its programs to members of academic institutions and planning government departments in the East African region. This effort resulted in recruitment of students from Ethiopia and Tanzania as a first patch to the program. However, the political environment in the region militated against the continuity of this exemplary collaboration".⁷

This is not a single case but the period of the seventies till the beginning of the 1990s witnessed a flourished diverse type of international research cooperation characterized mainly by

- 1- Institutionally based led by individual relations and interests of researchers from country of the North and South. It was mainly a product of relations of Southern staff who studied in the North or staff of the North who taught in the South.
- 2- Or it is of a bilateral government led initiative related to address certain development issues. The second type is more related to influence policy and it was based on the government priorities. It was, however, also influenced by individual researchers from the South who set their priorities and interests. In the latter situation Northern parties were mainly donors (relatively passive partners).
- 3- In other cases Northern partners play a proactive role by setting the research agenda and fund it, but were not involved as researchers but greatly dictated the research protocol, while the nationals were complaisant researchers.
- 4- The individually based researchers could be classified into those who were doing research to be awarded a higher degree, in most cases they define their research topics but funded by national or international institutions. In the majority of cases for those who study abroad the receiving universities give consent to the research topic, through the supervisors consent on the topic or to be part of the Northern university research themes.
- 5- Or other individually based research of consultants who can be defined as almost passive or grey researchers who would do the research defined by the donor agency. This consultancy research type became recently common by UN agencies who want information to help them direct their own policy or influence the policy of government by producing evidence or to influence global policy.

⁷ Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed, 'The Bologna Process: A View from the South', unpublished paper presented to the 16th Annual Conference of the EAIE, 15-18 September 2004, Torino, Italy, p. 13-14.

In the 1990s till the beginning of the millennium International Research Cooperation (IRC) has greatly slackened and dwindled in Sudan. The new military government of 1989 with an Islamic ideology and orientation as non-Western led to almost a halt of all North based IRC with government bodies. The Arabization process in universities led to deterioration of standards in universities, flee of many professionals from universities that negatively impacted on universities and delink with Northern partners. It is only since 2000 with the start of serious peaceful negotiations, the government started to link again with the international research community and links boosted after the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) of 2005.

The impact of being part of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), CATNO agreements, the signing for commitment to achieve the MDGs, other regional and international declarations and more pressure from UN organizations for evidence based policy, have all impacted on the government policy makers to do research and provide data and inform them for policy purposes a priority. Yet, that is not a main ideological change and policy making is still undertaken behind closed doors. Priorities are influenced by ideology and a non-democratic context influences greatly the impact of research on development policy nationally and the extent of international cooperation for development oriented research.

Non governmental universities, the Ahfad University for Women amongst them, NGOs, private consultancy houses, individual consultants started to fill the vacuum created by the boycott of the government bodies (university, research institutes, ministries, etc.) to link with the North. The government tried to find links with other new industrial countries of the South such as Malaysia, China, and Turkey when technical assistance was needed. Researches needed to influence policy or development especially in economic, monetary, petrol and telecommunication areas were given priority by the government. They directed their international cooperation to these countries rather than to the North. As a consequence of the Northern sanctions to the Sudan government the North collaboration which had a bilateral nature ended. Only through NGOs and/or to other non-governmental bodies in Sudan such as non-government universities or consultancy houses or individuals the cooperation took place. That context, which lasted for more than a decade, had its negative impact on IRC in Sudan.

Having stated this overview it is crucial to list the main challenges/problems that characterized international research cooperation before dwelling on pathways to the ideal models of IRC.

Section (II): Problems that face International Research Partnership

These will be tackled from the perspective of the international partner and from the perspective of the two types of international partnership:

- 1- International Research Cooperation.
- 2- Capacity building.

II.1 International Research Cooperation (IRC)

- 1- The national perspective sometimes consider that there are unbalanced power relation in the IRC, that the international partner guides the research agenda, control funds and makes national work in the interest of the international partner (international driven/controlled research).
- 2- Sometimes, the mandates of the international partner are limited. It constrains nationals to include more research issues of interest to the nationals or of more relevance to the community interests.
- 3- The availability of research funds, facilities are inadequate or for a short period, or does not include components for community awareness, services, and development, which make nationals feel as defying their citizens by making them passive informants gaining nothing from the research.
- 4- The process of making the proposal, and organize funding and reporting is complicated, tedious, time consuming, while reward from research is minimal for the nationals that make them less interested to respond to the international call for research partnership or, when they engage in it, they feel marginalized or frustrated.
- 5- Sometimes the release of funds is slow and delayed, which has a negative impact on the research schedule.
- 6- There are incidents of mistrust in national partners that lead to uneasy/unequal relations.
- 7- In most cases a participatory process or consultation with other stakeholders was not made, which led to duplication in research, not benefiting from what others did and not soliciting their cooperation or engagement in the partnership. When some stockholders were excluded this had a negative impact, either because the research did not build on others or because some stakeholders then created a non-conducive context for the partnership to function.

Joint Problems from National and International Perspective

- 1- Lack of freedom for doing research in the country makes both national and international researchers face problems with the security authorities for doing research. In few cases researches, especially community based ones, on issues of human rights, democracy or among displaced persons, received non-authorization or even consification after consent was initially given.
- 2- Research findings sometimes are not accepted by the government or not released if they counter with the image the government wants to convey for its performance such as on prevalence of HIV/AIDS, Female Genital Mutilation, school enrollment, costing and financing of social services, etc.
- 3- The level and capacities are not equivalent, whereby some Northern partners feel the Southern partner capacities are low or weak and need to be strengthened, though no component was integrated in the research project for capacity building. In other cases, the national capacities have more knowledge and local experience than some international partners who send research teams of moderate capacities working with high level researchers of the south. The Northern partners being in most cases donors feel they are at the top while the Southern partner feel they are more competent. This creates another frustration, where no equalizing of capacities from both ends are integrated in the IRC protocol.
- 4- Clearance procedures, whether ethical or security, are complicated and hence hamper IRC in Sudan.

- 5- There are no independent research institutes or independent international research foundations registered in Sudan, as the legal context has diverse channels of registration, *i.e.*, as NGO at the Humanitarian Association Council (HAC), as cultural centers in the Ministry of Culture, as ‘chapters’ of international organizations in the Ministry of External Affairs, as human rights centers in the Ministry of Justice, as Higher Educational Centers in the Ministry of Higher Education, and as non profit making companies, while most consultancy offices register at the Ministry of Trade.
- 6- There are a number of research institutes or centers part of universities, ministries, banks or private profit companies.

To conclude, there are no independent research institutes and centers as legal entities and no clear law or procedures for their accreditation, quality control of their performance and regulations for their activities. This context led to the non-promotion of systematic and institutionalized IRC and partnership. The space is open for different styles, levels, groups and individuals, but it is a controlled political space. Freedom of research is doubted; at certain stages it flourished at others it is controlled. In most cases it is marginalized to impact on development policy due to the political systems that have closed doors systems of policy making and non-evidence based policy orientation. Having stated that, there were yet positive dimensions of IRC, which will be elaborated below.

The Positive Dimension of IRC

Participants identified the following as positive impact of IRC whether it is top-down, individual or institutional, or of an equal partnership. These are:

- 1- It makes researchers acquire first hand information from citizens and the interaction with them leads to awareness-raising of the citizens to the analysis of the causes of their problems.
- 2- Research leads to awareness-raising of the researchers about various/different sub-cultures, ethnic groups, and diversities, and gives nationals the opportunity to research in different parts of their country.
- 3- The experiences had by-products and non-intentional impact when the national researchers later hold influential decisionmaking positions in government, in their university or in their NGOs when formulating projects.
- 4- In certain cases it directly influences strategy and policy interventions, particularly when it is so desired by the government or the organization that initiated it.
- 5- Research findings whether in report form or publications, would be used by many other users (other researchers, students, NGOs, government officials, UN and other international bodies). It leads as well to enhance knowledge and information in a certain theme and for a certain country.
- 6- It has a dimension of furthering capacities of senior researchers and linking them with international research institutes, universities or even UN agencies. It leads to exchanging experience and mutual skills promotion in interdisciplinary research techniques, in report writing, in developing proposals, elaborate memoranda of understanding and research protocols design, in single or co-authored publications or acting as joint supervisors with partners from the North.
- 7- Direct capacity building for junior researchers who acquire degrees MScs, PhDs or post doctoral scholarships or engage as data collectors with senior researchers.

- 8- It has a dimension of institutional strengthening when it involves equipments, donations, other infrastructures like buildings, books/journals, cars etc., and other skills promotion for non researchers engaged in IRC, such as accountants, secretaries, laboratory technicians, librarians, IT-personnel working on information, data bases and websites.
- 9- In many cases the interest of researchers in the South meets the same interest of researchers in the North and vice versa, a matter that enhanced engagement and commitment for doing the research, despite some obstacles of limited funding, security/political constraints, and logistical or even minimal official support.
- 10- In some cases findings are used for advocacy and awareness raising at NGOs level, in media, at workshops, etc.
- 11- In cases of community based IRC, communities receive direct benefits such as services of water, health, education, small scale development schemes, and food security components.

II.2: Capacity Building in International Partnership

- 1- The international partnership that focuses on capacity building of young researchers had in the past – during the decades of the 1960s till the 1980s –been emphasizing giving scholarships to young researchers mainly at universities. The partnerships had been based on individual rather than institutional links. Though the consent of the institution is sought or sometimes the affiliation to an institution is a pre-requisite, the Southern institutes are not part of the partnership. Hence the individual based system led to great brain drain as the gap in work environment in the North and South, the availability of relevant jobs or convenient income etc. made many Southern students to stay in the in the West/North. The individual based cooperation of High Education policy with Northern Universities and non-institution based partnership did not lead to institution capacity building even when researchers return home. However, there were some advantages from the perspective of the student and sending or receiving country. To quote Ahmed, indicating these advantages as:

“From the sending country perspective, EHEA [European High Education Area] enables students and teachers to come back with diverse education and new outlooks, having established new contacts and obtained a multi-cultural experience. For individuals from countries with low quality higher education, the contributions or the value added to their national higher education will be significant. Students could be trained on new professions for which they are not exposed in their home countries.

From the student and receiving country perspectives, international mobility widens the view of the world through exposure to new languages, different cultures, the experience of a different way of life, and in many cases a better education. The disadvantage here relates to problems of adjusting to new environments, especially having to come across issues of intolerance and discrimination.”⁸

Since the late 1990s, the European universities were engaged into dialogue to create a European alliance constructing the European High Education Area (EHEA). The process led to what is known as the Bologna process of 2001. The Bologna process impacted on the North-South relationships.

The objectives of the Bologna Process made the Association of African Universities (AAU) undertake steps to harmonize higher education in the continent,

⁸ *Ibidem*.

and steps to protect it could follow suit. The most significant step was the ACCRA Declaration of 2004. The main objectives were related to bring international cooperation, internationalization of higher education bringing mutual benefits to both co-partners. The emphasis was also on South/South collaboration, while it was underlined that higher education goals are to serve the interests, priorities and needs of the people of Africa. The major difference between EHEA and AAU is the emphasize of the former on the market orientation of Higher Education (HE) while AAU focus on development and meeting basic needs of the African people and contribute to nation-building.

The challenges facing Africa in general and Sudan in particular are related to decline in human development indicators, civil wars, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, particular in neighboring countries, the decline of economy and non oil products, and the prevalence of one party/military regimes. All these challenges face the country with threats on how to promote higher education and make it relevant to address these challenges and at the same time be part of an internationalization process. Spreading higher education, encouraging privatization while keeping to principles of education as a public good, faced Sudan with the trap of more private education institutes opened but interested to offer market oriented programs. The government low spending to support quality education made public universities in a majority of cases less competitive and unable to link in partnership with the international community. The private universities are, liberalizing education without considering internationalization as a goal, nor are they concerned with producing high quality competitive graduates at international standards. Policies for internationalization or international cooperation partnership are not embedded in the higher educational systems. This state of vulnerability of higher education deserves attention on how to strike a balance to serve the interests of both partners, encourage internationalization that emphasize the common good, address development issues as well as serves the market demands. The two aspects of development and market are two faces of the same coins, however the tools that make them complimentary need to be worked out within an open transparent dialogue to serve both interests.

Another crucial issue to be considered is how to address 'defensive' policies in the North and South that would hamper successful IRC for capacity building especially at universities. There are some old modality models that have integrated components of research, scholarships for students, publication, training, curriculum development as has been indicated above (for example the ISS – DSRC Partnership).

The long-term technical assistance programs whereby Northern researchers/staff were engaged in curricula development, capacity building of young students or civil servants was stopped by the Europeans, due to several international and internal factors. The stopping of the old model led to dwindling cooperation between institutions of North and South and consequently impacted on deterioration in standards for the majority of university or government institutions in Sudan. This long-term IRC was substituted with short term research of a consultancy nature or other short-term research, not targeting higher caliber nor well rewarded for serious North based personnel to be motivated to come to the South for a short period.

Due to the stated development of the late 1990s in higher education policies in Europe and Africa, recent international links started to have different characteristics.

New Trends and Successful Models for capacity building in IRC

Recent trends since Bologna have led to a change of international partnership, whereby the Southern institutions are involved in selecting candidates for studies, whereby research themes as a priority of the university or institution or country are indicated, and whereby supervisors from South and North are appointed and institution strengthening is integrated in the provision of books, website and journals prescription, equipments acquisition etc. Such partnership is beneficial from the Southern perspective, while, however, university regulations in the North would not count such engagement of the Northern partner. It is not counted as points for promotion nor hours of work for staff; in short: the Northern partner researchers as individuals do not get any benefit from such international cooperation which create resistance to engage in such partnerships.

Regulations in both countries of the North and South need to be changed so that the capacity building components at universities to be Southern based, with sandwich components of linking to North and both partners to benefit and be engaged in its formulation. This would be the best means to create a sustained long term IRC. Another *example* of a new model is given, to highlight this process.

The Ahfad-Humboldt-Link Programme was run under the heading of “Women in Development” and received support from the DAAD from 1998 until 2007. In addition, it received special funds from the DAAD’s alumni programme for the summer school activities each year.

The official cooperation program started in 1998, when the Humboldt University of Berlin institutionalized relationship with the Ahfad University for Women in Omdurman, Sudan by signing the Ahfad-Humboldt-Link Programme. The link agreed on the following objectives:

1. To build a cultural To foster understanding between the two cultures and their mutual / appreciation as well as raising tolerance in experiencing differences.
2. To further develop institutes of higher education (i.e. of scientific enlightenment of the knowledge bridge between people in Sudan and Germany.
3. system).
4. To support the diffusion of knowledge generated under rather different environmental and socio-economic conditions.
5. To improve university staff development by exposing staff members to foreign teaching and research spheres.
6. To stress the importance of gender relations in development.

The four components of the link program were:

1. Female Students’ Exchange Program.
2. Integrated Research Projects.
3. Summer Schools.
4. Curriculum Development and Staff and Lecture Exchange.

The components were developed to reach and integrate many actors and to make the achievement of the objectives possible. The process of developing the Link protocol started informally in 1997, followed by more formal meetings/dialogue that took one year before the proposal was submitted to DAAD for funding. More negotiations then followed and finally the IRC materialized.

The following evaluation criteria were developed by both parties to assess the Link:

1. National and international relevance of the research and summer school topics.
2. Experiencing diversity, inter- and transdisciplinarity.
3. Knowledge production, information exchange, and publications.
4. Joint curriculum development.
5. Networking for both universities.
6. Improvements in the profile of both universities and their political involvement.
7. Impact of fund-raising for the summer schools, acknowledgement, implementation and continuity.
8. Partnership dimension within the link program concept.
9. Staff promotion and capacity building.

Parts of the evaluation, in relation to amongst other things the summer school, run as follows:

“The summer school concept was based on the idea of an equal partnership that would lead to a win-win situation. Starting from the choice of themes and the decision to hold the summer school alternately in Omdurman/Sudan and Berlin/Germany, this equal partnership was put into practice. The organizational work of publicizing the summer schools, the selection of participants, key presentations of papers etc. was undertaken jointly. We both benefited from each other, although the hosting university was more involved with the logistics and preparation work beforehand. The experience was fruitful and this part of the Link program deserves to be replicated. The personal commitment of the partners was vital in making each summer school a success story in terms of the program, the level of participants, their interdisciplinarity and diverse affiliations as well as academic standards. Moreover, most papers presented were of a high academic standard and the exchange of knowledge and experience was achieved to a large extent, even if not all the papers fulfilled the standard of official publications in reference journals. However, the main focus of our summer school program was oriented towards the exchange of knowledge and the development of skills. It is this equal partnership in organizing that has led to our great achievements.

The partnership was not between the North and the South only, but within institutions in the South. This provided a new chance to cooperate and communicate with members from the scientific communities and NGOs from countries of the South.

From the Sudanese side, other partner institutions such as the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the DED, the German Embassy, Khartoum University, Umma political party, the Gender Centre, the Sudanese Women’s Union, Babakir Badri Scientific Association, Care International and Oxfam Britain are among those who participated effectively in many of the summer schools. Ahfad University arranged to meet these participants in their respective organizations to discuss further cooperation.”⁹

Further to this,

“For Ahfad University, staff skills were enhanced by involvement in organizing international events such as the summer school, which included visa applications, arranging accommodation, planning and running summer school events, looking after foreign participants, and announcing and reporting the event. Staff was able to gain invaluable work experience. Those who organized the summer schools were able to apply their experience in other areas and became Ahfad University resource persons for organizing other international events.

Those who were participants at the summer schools learnt from each other and new knowledge was created. Moreover, contacts established at the events led to other links between Ahfad University staff and other Sudanese universities - a total of seven universities, fifteen national NGOs and three international NGOs were among the summer schools participants who received training or delivered papers and hence, staff skills were improved.

⁹ Reproduced from Balghis Badri and Parto Teherani-Kronner, ‘Women’s and Gender Studies at the Faculty of Agriculture and Horticulture and the Ahfad-Humboldt-Link Programme. Gender Studies and Research – Interpretations and Debate’, unpublished paper.

Teaching German students in the summer school of the year 2000 was a new experience. When it was replicated in Sudan, it developed staff skills, especially in the methodologies of teaching.

For the Humboldt University in Berlin, especially the Faculty of Agriculture and Horticulture, the summer schools were occasions of scientific exchange with national and international colleagues. They strengthened our abilities in the organization of conferences and gave a number of staff a chance to gain experience and practical knowledge. This includes the preparation work as well as the logistics. It was a challenging training program for many students, most of whom worked on a voluntary basis.

We were successful in gaining recognition of our summer schools from other universities, research institutions, NGOs, journalists and politicians.

The summer school component as part of the Link program has been a success story for our universities. We both profited in different ways and it helped us to strengthen our international profile, which brought us greater acceptance within our universities, within the scientific community as well as further a field in our respective countries and abroad. The summer schools helped us to learn about each other's culture and way of scientific argumentation and also improved our understanding of each other. They have paved a new way for us to establish our curricula and to step into a new era of e-learning. We are looking forward to developing and using joint curricula at our universities. Furthermore, summer schools could be a starting point for new interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary courses."¹⁰

The partners identified the following topics as relevant for future Summer Schools:

- Conflict Resolution
- Identity
- Achievement of the Millennium Goals
- Displacement
- Migration and Re-Migration
- Engendering Good Governance
- Environment and Natural Resources
- Religion and Development
- Food, Food Habits and Food Security

It was decided that the Link program should be opened up to other faculties in order to involve "hard topics" such as economics, and "that more people who are not within the gender discourse should be invited". Learning from the above and similar experiences, one can indicate pathways for new International Research Cooperation.

Section (III): Pathways for a New IRC: What are the Purposes of International Research Cooperation/Partnership (IRC/P)?

There are diverse aims for research and types of international cooperation in research. A short list could be included as aims of IRC/P:

- 1- To generate knowledge so as to develop the Northern partner's own policies and have evidence based policy in relation to Northern policies in the South.
- 2- To produce evidence to influence regional or global policy.
- 3- To produce knowledge to advice for policy directives of the other partner in the South.
- 4- To influence change in legislations.
- 5- To help the community or certain target groups achieve development.
- 6- To impact on behavioral change.

¹⁰ *Ibidem.*

- 7- To impact on achieving socio-economic/cultural/political transformation.
- 8- To help in protecting/promoting human beings, environments etc.
- 9- To generate more research ideas and knowledge.
- 10- To develop capacities of researchers and institutes (structures).

If these are the broad aims of IRC, we need to delineate the main principles that would make it successful.

IRP can be initiated by the UN or another INGO or by bilateral agreements between governments of countries of the South; or they can be driven by international actors outside Sudan such as universities, research institutions or INGOs or UN agencies head quarters. In other situations they can be driven by a demand from the nationals whether governments, universities, individual researchers, NGOs or networks of NGOs or unions or political parties.

It could be directed to serve development, policy formulation, knowledge or for capacity building. In the Sudanese context experiences included all these diverse types, reference to some have been elaborated above. Moreover, it became evident that international research cooperation in most cases has a developmental and social dimension. The problematic concern is rather that it may have limited impact on policy and weakness in its dissemination component. The lack of embedding of policy dialogue and communication and diffusion components in the research protocol, render it less effective. The dimension of its non relevance to the development agenda and societies' needs, is not focal in reference to Sudanese experience. The problem is rather that policy makers usually don't use research findings or base policy on evidence of data.

Further, the weak participatory process in preparing the final research protocol in IRC makes it more of a top-down relation than an equal partnership. To make international research cooperation effective, relevant and efficient, combining both academic excellence and social embedding as well as leading to capacity building, policy change and promotion of quality of life of people, are important. The following are viewed as *Principles of International Research Cooperation/Partnership*:

- 1- The ethical dimension in the partnership, whereby the researched community awareness of the relevance of the research to them, impact and importance of findings need to be stressed and integrated in the research protocol.
- 2- The relevance of the international research agenda to a country strategic plan. The development priorities must be negotiated and the research protocol must be clearly related to the research objectives to both the national plans and the global agenda. Many issues are currently both national and global such as achieving MGDs. Research needs to be on how best to achieve, researched and accomplished these, and trends, bottlenecks, and pathways etc. need to be indicated.
- 3- Inclusion of other stakeholders, partners, media in the initial research idea and process so as to guarantee dissemination and engagement of all stakeholders in the research.
- 4- Decision-taking personnel at top level to be engaged in the research dialogue, in signing the protocol, in indicating commitment and willingness to avail sustained resources both human, logistics, financial to the international cooperation to make it efficient, effective and sustained.

- 5- The partnership must be of a participatory long-term nature and include sufficient financial components to make results operational and beneficial to the community. Clarity in the research protocol objectives including community/survive components as part of the IRC. Direct benefits to community need to be integrated.
- 6- Integrating in the research protocol; means of dissemination result of the research for instance through workshops, conferences, media, group discussions with the community. Publication in both academic journals and books or other forms of publications as well as using electronic communication for disseminating results. This is to guarantee that the research findings reach all the relevant stakeholders and potential future users and beneficiaries.
- 7- Delineate the control over the results of the research, the rights of each partner over the research findings/product/use and follow up in a way that would benefit both researchers of South and North.
- 8- Debate clearly how the research will impact on policies, whether it will not impact on policies or possibly being not accepted by authorities, security, community or others (risks of being stopped, confiscated after initial acceptance).
- 9- The research partnership must be with full authorization and the consent and approval of the officials/authorities, and must be independent.

These are some basic principles that, when addressed, can make international Research Cooperation/Partnerships be successful. However, other issues to make it a balanced partnership not of a top-down or hegemonic nature need to be highlighted. These are the following:

- 1- Defining the interest of partners, individuals and institutions. Identified common interests or balanced interests are crucial to be openly discussed.
- 2- Balanced finance and non dependency is pivotal to make a partnership more successful and equalitarian. It is not envisaged that the partner in the South will pool in same financial resources, but other resources should be financially assessed and valued.
- 3- The dialogue in formulating the research team to be transparent where nationals from the South and from the North be represented in ratio and equality that would lead to equal engagement especially at design of research proposal, analysis and report writing level.
- 4- An Inter-discipline research team with involvement of women if not of equal/balanced gender representations is a prerequisite for successful partnership.
- 5- Stages of dialogue with other stakeholders who can help in data collection and dissemination or to influence policy could be a responsibility of national researcher's engagement and plans for that must be clearly indicated in the partnership protocol.
- 6- Clear division of labor and responsibilities and plan of action to be discussed at early stages whereby the partners research capacities, time resources, individual financial status and commitments are to be taken into account when defining terms of reference and plans of actions.
- 7- Including capacity building for young staff, researchers, personnel in the IRC protocol is crucial to guarantee long term impact.
- 8- Co-authorship of publications, productions of other types, of outputs of international cooperation for research or capacity building or community based partnership or of an integrated nature involving all components, lead to better

partnership, enhanced capacity of all team members and open up international publication/dissemination channels to nationals. It raises the awareness of the Northern parties to Southern possibilities of dissemination channels they can use and enhance.

All these dimensions create long term equal partnership and even friendship.

Annex

Some relevant websites:

<http://www.unrisd.org/>

Siyanda is an important website related to gender and development and developed by International Development Studies (IDS)

<http://www.siyanda.org/>

Other websites related to the subject:

<http://www.drc-citizenship.org/>

<http://www.pathwaysofempowerment.org/>

<http://www.unrisd.org/>

Websites of Women organizations that conduct important research are:

<http://www.awid.org/>

<http://www.whrnet.org/>

<http://www.whrnet.org/fundamentalisms/>

<http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/>

Website on women's rights in Africa: <http://www.fahamu.org/pzbook.php>

Website on women human rights defenders: <http://www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org/>