



## *IMPLEMENTING the THIRD MISSION of UNIVERSITIES in AFRICA*

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ITMUA is a partnership project between four universities in Africa – University of Calabar (Nigeria), University of Botswana, University of Malawi and National University of Lesotho (the lead partner). The project started in March 2010 and will be completed in August 2011. It is funded by the Department for International Development (DfID) through the Association of African Universities (AAU).

### **(ii) Background information**

The overall **theme** of the project is the link between the third mission of universities (community service) and regional development needs – with specific reference to poverty reduction as the underlying issue for all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Traditionally universities have supported three strands to their mission: research, teaching and community service. It can be argued that the third mission is the potential bridge between the university as an ivory tower and the communities whose development needs it should be prioritizing.

However, universities have also been traditionally elitist – the average population percentage of student enrolment in tertiary education is less than 5 per cent in many African countries – the lowest in the world - and compares with 50% and above for those in North America and European countries. Women are still under-represented (Okebukola 2004, UIS Fact Sheet 2009). Universities are often criticized for their ivory tower image with limited impact on the socio-economic environment (Lulat 2005) and employers have increasingly voiced their concerns about inadequate graduate skills for jobs

A key **challenge** for African universities is how to match global demands for higher education as a commodity for knowledge production whilst preserving indigenous qualities of pedagogy, identity and relevance to regional and local development needs. This challenge must overcome **two issues**: the historical experience of colonialism and its impact on university curricula; and the implications of international curriculum and research transfer from those highly industrialized countries that are now engaging, through their tertiary institutions, with economically poor countries in the process of knowledge commodification.

The third mission of universities – community service – provides the space to address such a challenge in a way that can refocus its research and teaching missions to transform and revitalize the relationship between higher education and national development needs. However, the third mission is usually underdeveloped in universities. To revitalize this mission the project will link with a global network

[PASCAL] and its own third mission project, [PURE<sup>1</sup>], which has devised a benchmarking framework against which higher education institutions can begin to measure themselves at an international level in relation to implementing their third mission. This project will build on and adapt that framework so it more effectively addresses the MDGs and African contexts.

The ITMUA project consists of an African partnership network of four universities. The network was recently funded by the British Academy African Partnerships (BAAP) programme. The network conducted small scale case studies, in association with the University of Glasgow, into the effectiveness of non-formal education (NFE) for poverty reduction<sup>2</sup>. This project builds on those findings to explore the potential role of NFE (as a key aspect of community service) in higher education on a wider scale.

## Goals

This project specifically aims to address the university third mission as a key strategy towards linking higher education to African development needs with a focus on the MDGs, particularly 1, 2 and 6 (Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, Achieve universal primary education, Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases).

The project will explore how higher education can support regional and sustainable development in relation to the MDGs – through:

- Auditing and benchmarking its community service practices – using PASCAL Benchmarking framework as a starting point.
- Needs analysis with community stakeholders and assessment of how current university activities could address the development needs of their constituencies.
- Action planning for community engagement and curriculum development of selected programmes, drawing on non-formal education expertise in each institution.
- Increased level of involvement in community service – particularly through civic engagement.
- Small scale case study analysis of what works, where, how and why.
- Education exchanges – South-South partnerships and interaction with universities in the North (primarily through a conference in Botswana in December 2010, and through development of a website using the PASCAL International Observatory).

The ITMUA project will address four questions:

1. How is the university's third mission being developed and implemented?
2. What role do the Millennium Development Goals play in influencing the university's third mission?

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<sup>1</sup> PURE stands for PASCAL, Universities and Regional Engagement. The PASCAL Observatory is a global network that is developing the PURE project with universities across the world. Currently only two universities from Africa are involved in an unfunded capacity. Those universities are both members of the proposed ITMUA project.

<sup>2</sup> The four universities are Calabar in Nigeria, and the government funded universities of Botswana, Lesotho and Malawi. For further information about the BAAP project see website <http://www.gla.ac.uk/centres/cradall/BAAPwebsite/BAAPhome.htm>

3. To what extent and in what ways are national and regional policies on poverty reduction having an impact on university regional activities to relate teaching and research to community service?
4. To what extent and in what ways can universities enhance and integrate their existing activities (research and teaching linked to community service) to accommodate MDG priorities in their region?

The project will share information and good practice across relevant networks in Africa and through the wider, global, PASCAL network in relation to its PURE project. Work packages addressing regional needs analyses and action planning for change will lead to policy briefs that highlight new ways in which universities can contribute to national and regional development needs through an integrated approach to teaching, policy oriented research and community service. Resulting policy frameworks for addressing key schemes related to the MDGs will include the Africanisation of the curriculum, widening participation initiatives through open and distance learning, engagement with civil society organizations in poverty reduction and related health improvements through non-formal education strategies to facilitate greater community dialogue. The particular contributions to national and regional developments will be specific to each institution and its region, but the overall focus will be on non-formal education and poverty reduction linking to related issues of health, civil society engagement, and social inclusion (MDGs 1, 2 and 6, but also addressing MDGs 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8).

Network information sharing will be ongoing through electronic exchanges but will include national dissemination workshops and an international conference in Botswana in December 2010.

## Purpose

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), ratified in 2000 and signed up to by all country members of the United Nations have provided an added impetus to refocus and re-align university work with national development needs around the MDG targets for poverty reduction, gender equity, universal primary education, reduction of child mortality and improvement of maternal health, reduction of deaths from AIDS, environmental sustainability and enhanced partnerships for development.

This project proposal will focus on MDG 1 – reduction of poverty, linking to MDG 2 – Education, and MDG 6 - HIV and AIDS. But these MDGs are interlinked with the other goals, particularly in relation to sustainable development, good governance and gender parity.

It will link to PASCAL International Observatory which is conducting a world wide (mostly OECD countries) peer review study of how issues relating to HE and their regional engagement are addressed. Only two African universities (University of Botswana and National University of Lesotho) were originally associated with PASCAL. This project will widen and strengthen that link in Sub Saharan Africa.

## **Expected outcomes**

1. Self assessment/audits of current community service activities in each institution and a summary of their respective policy contexts
2. Summary of stakeholder responses to the research questions across each partner
3. Case study action plans for two pilot studies per partner
4. Evaluations of case studies embedded in relevant literature reviews for community engagement in Africa
5. Policy briefing papers for community service/community engagement in African contexts