



Observatory **PASCAL**

Place Management, Social Capital and Learning Regions



## *PURE Regional Visit Report (RVR2) GABORONE, BOTSWANA 28th February to 3rd March 2010*

**CDG Review Team: Professor Jarl Bengtsson, Professor Catherine Odora Hoppers, Dr Setoi Setoi and Dr Alan Foster**

### **A. Executive Summary**

The visit consisted of briefings from the RCG, meetings and workshops with stakeholders within the University of Botswana and from Gaborone City Council and of site visits.

The highlight of the visit was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the University of Botswana and the City of Gaborone.

The CDG team were impressed by the progress made since 2009 and by the innovative and imaginative way in which the RCG had tackled the difficulties faced: difficulties faced in all PURE regions.

Particular discussions and sessions centred on benchmarking, the Cluster Forums and on the forthcoming conference in Gaborone in December 2010.

#### **The CDG recommendations are:**

1. that the advances since 2009 should be supported by an amended Action Plan which specifies further engagement targets to be aimed at in collaboration with Gaborone City and assisted through the work within PURE
2. that further development of the benchmarking tool with regard to application in the areas of SMME and Cultural activities should be continued
3. that collaboration with Gaborone City should be extended to support the 2010 PURE Conference in Gaborone and that a steering committee, involving representatives from both UB and the City (and with PURE representation where possible) to shepherd the arrangements for the Conference should be convened as soon as possible.
4. that the RCG should consider collaborative discussions with colleagues in other Southern African institutions to bring forward the concept of an 'African perspective on engagement'
5. that the RCG should consider funding delegates to the PURE Conference in Ostersund, Sweden in June 2010 to inform PURE colleagues of their particular experience of and approach to implementing PURE objectives

### **B. Regional Characteristics**

Gaborone City is the capital of Botswana and is situated in the south and east of the country - not far from its southern border with South Africa.

The background description of the city, the University and the country was set out comprehensively in the RVR (RVR1) published after the first review visit in early 2009. The substantive points made then - of population migration towards the Gaborone area, of the resulting pressure on public services, of the increasing educational attainment but continuation of high levels of unemployment, of the impact of HIV/AIDS, of the debilitating impact of poverty - still apply. One additional factor - of illegal immigration from states, in the main, to the north and east - has become more significant and occupies a disproportionate amount of public and planning resources.

The Gaborone City Development Plan (1997-2021) - referred to in RVR1 - has now continued in implementation. The areas of engagement priority recognised in RVR1- Economic development and innovation SME Development Creative and Cultural Enterprises Environmental Sustainability

- have acted as a guide to the University's objectives and mirror the City's aims. The last three having been the themes chosen by the RCG for the focus of their work.

The strong and effective leadership evidenced in the University (and commented on in RVR1) and in the City is still in place and is the fundamental underpinning to the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the City and the University during the CDG visit.

The University is continuing the innovative development of its services to Botswana through the introduction of new courses and new sites in other parts of the country.

### **C. The Elements of the CDG Visit**

DAY ONE: The visit began with a briefing from the Chair of the RCG on the evening of Sunday, February 28<sup>th</sup>.

DAY TWO: At 8am the following day the CDG team met with members of the RCG to discuss the preparations for the December Conference, the PURE Benchmarking Tool and the PURE Cluster Forums.

Later that morning the group was joined by colleagues from the PURE 'Research Teams' within UB in order to discuss the application of the benchmarking tool to the chosen themes.

Unfortunately, due to the pressure of other engagements, representatives from the City Council were not able to take part nor was the Area MP able to meet the group in the afternoon.

The remainder of the day was taken up with a visit to the Pelagano Weavers' Co-operative – an SME initiative providing employment for the traditional skills of elderly women - 30 kms north of Gaborone. This was followed by further discussion on the subject of the December Conference. The meeting was attended by a private sector Conference Manager who had provided an estimate for the outsourcing of the conference organisation.

DAY THREE: At 8.30 am the CDG, the RCG, the UB Research Team and representatives of Gaborone City Council (including the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, the Deputy City Clerk and senior representatives of the individual departments) met at UB - chaired by the Depute Vice Chancellor of the University. After the opening reports the meeting divided into theme workshop groups composed, equally, of City representatives, UB staff and CDG members. Summary presentations from each workshop were given and an informal lunch allowed the discussion to continue.

The proposed teleconference with Glasgow had been cancelled so CDG members convened in the afternoon to frame their initial thoughts for the Review Report (RVR2)

At 1800 the CDG members were pleased to attend at the Library Auditorium for the official signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between UB and the City (Appendix 1). Professors Bengtsson and Hoppers addressed the guests and the memorandum was signed by the Vice Chancellor – on behalf of UB – and by the City Clerk – on behalf of the City of Gaborone. The official reception followed at 20.00.

Overall, the visit was extremely well planned and organised by the RCG. The CDG team was well accommodated and supported. All enquiries and questions posed by the Review team were answered with great courtesy and candour – to the satisfaction of the team.

## **D. Discussions, Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **1. PURE Conference, Gaborone, December 2010 (CDG and RCG Teams (Day 2))**

The CDG Team were very much impressed by the pre-planning which had taken place for the Conference proposed for later in the year. Dr O. M. Modise and Dr. F.M. Tladi-Sekgwama gave a presentation which covered all of the necessary arrangements for the venue (hall and break-outs), accommodation bookings (hotel and hostel), the visit programme for both delegates and partners, deadlines for abstracts and papers and for travel and information arrangements.

Professor Ntseane introduced a professional conference organiser, resident in Botswana, who had been invited to bid for the overall organisation of the Conference. There was a feeling that this was an expensive way to proceed but that discussion of available funds should wait until a telephone or online discussion could be set up with the Director and Academic Director of PURE to discuss these issues. In the meantime, the RCG would finalise timelines for costs, inputs and budgets for that discussion.

### **2. Cluster Forums (CDG and RCG Teams (Day 2))**

The RCG expressed some trepidation at the prospect of taking part in the online Cluster Forum discussions and sought guidance on what was expected.

The CDG sought to reassure the RCG that the Cluster Forums were initiated as a tool for assisting discussions of mutual benefit amongst 'the PURE family'.

The RCG noted that small-group sessions have taken place but felt that the complex language of the website was a barrier to involvement and suggested that a more gentle and assisted introductory process would have been helpful. The length of papers submitted to the site was cited as a barrier to 'novice' involvement and as a particular barrier for non-academic colleagues. It was felt that the Clusters appeared to be organised in node-based fashion and that colleagues in Southern Africa felt marginalised by this. A practice-based discussion is something that RCG colleagues would find useful, however.

The CDG team underlined the value of the Cluster Forums as an 'opportunity' and further noted that other RCGs had mentioned the self-same points raised by the Botswana RCG. In particular, it had been noted at the PURE meeting in Brussels in January that a more useful organisation of Cluster Forums would be in terms of region 'characteristics'. For example, cities discussing issues of mutual interest in engagement, or rural areas with distributed populations do likewise. The CDG team noted that, in their opinion, there was an 'African' dimension to engagement which might be worth exploring and which could provide valuable insight for the others in 'the PURE family'.

### **3. Benchmarking (CDG, RCG and Research Teams (Day 2); Workshops (Day 3))**

From the onset of discussions it was clear to the CDG that colleagues in the RCG and research teams were concerned about the extent to which their efforts in relation to Benchmarking 'met PURE requirements'.

The CDG team were at pains to point out that the PURE process afforded a platform for discussion and a means of dialogue and exchange. It was not an inspection and ranking process. On the contrary, the CDG team were impressed by the extent to which the RCG and the Research Teams had taken up the benchmarking materials, adapted them (by linking them directly to their chosen themes) and made them relevant to their own environment.

Discussion focussed on the internal validity of the Benchmarking Tool, its usefulness as a point of reference, its usefulness as an indicator of local engagement and the possibility of translation into an international context for tools whose application was locally defined. The CDG emphasised that the primary function of the tool was to provide a reference point of meaning for the local RCG. The team also underlined their positive response to the application of the tool in relation to the particular themes.

Thus, a process of consultation and collaboration had resulted in several University Departments being involved and with a focus on identifying the objectives and processes facilitating engagement with the offices and officers of the City of Gaborone.

### **Research Teams' Progress Reports**

Professor Ntseane (RCG Chair) indicated that all groups had been asked to provide summary assessments by the end of June 2010. These would then be incorporated into a strategic engagement plan and an implementation plan would be in place for the Gaborone Conference in December 2010.

**Culture Team** (Dr. T.T. Mogobe) It was noted that this group had not yet used the benchmarking tool but that the group was now meeting regularly and had focussed on the refining and piloting of an applicable abstract of the tool.

**Environmental Sustainability Team** (Professor T.D. Gwebu) The CDG welcomed the progress within this group and noted that the benchmarking tool versions for both the University and Public Body respondents had been administered. Again the team sought reassurance that it was possible for the tool to be amended to gain meaning in the local context. The CDG again underlined this as a positive.

a) **University Benchmarking**: five institutional nuclei capturing data relating to activities on departmental programmes were identified and surveyed. These were the Office of Research and Development, the Office of the Depute Vice-Chancellor - Academic Affairs, Office of the DVC – Student Affairs, the Office of Institutional Planning and the Office of Public Affairs. To date, four of the five had responded (the exception being the DVC – AA)

The Conclusions of this section were:

- the lack of consensus and apparent inconsistencies reflects the absence of coherent and consistent goals, policies and programmes likely to achieve sustainable development
- the lack of knowledge about the University's operational systems on environmental sustainability reflects lack of interest or awareness of the overall strategic goals of some of the key players in the University
- the fact that the Office of Research and Development (ORD) consistently recorded low ratings of the levels of engagement should be considered noteworthy – given that ORD is the only player that acts as the reception and clearing house of *all* research activities at UB

b) **SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)** for UB in terms of promoting environmental sustainability in the Gaborone region. The Conclusions of this section were:

- that UB has the departmental and student capability, in terms of research, to carry the environmental sustainability agenda forward
- that the main weakness is minimal flow of information within the various segments of the University and between the University and the community of Gaborone
- that opportunities exist in the readiness of recipient stakeholders for assistance pertaining to environmental sustainability and the availability of the relevant departments

-that threats exist from emerging institutions which might take the lead on environmental sustainability and deny UB the support of potential partners

c) **'Demand-Side' Benchmarking:** in order to assess the perceptions of external stakeholders as to the engagement activities of UB – in respect to environmental sustainability – a list of 35 relevant targets was drawn up. These represented environmental NGOs, central Government Departments, Gaborone City Council, parastatals and the private sector.

The Conclusion of this section was straightforward: the level of consultation and collaboration between UB and its external stakeholders is low.

d) **SWOT Analysis** of each category of external stakeholder in relation to b) above.

The Conclusions of this section were:

- UB has research resource capacity and a strategic location for the initiation of engagement in regard to environmental sustainability -the academic nature of UB programmes, poor internal information flow and insularity in regard to potential beneficiaries in the region are major weaknesses
- the major opportunities lie in the existence of a dynamic lead departmental (Environmental Science) and its potential links with Ministry Departments and international partners
- barriers to these opportunities, which need to be overcome, are the lack of response from UB as a result of isolation of potential beneficiaries and the perceptions within the private sector that engagement is time-consuming and insufficiently scoped in terms of outcome

**Town and Regional Planning Team** (Dr. C.O. Molebatsi) The CDG welcomed the development evidenced by the work of this research team and recognised that much time-consuming discussion and negotiation had taken place. The Research Team felt that PURE had provided a clear platform for focussed discussion on issues of mutual interest between Gaborone City Council and the Department of Architecture and Planning (DAP). The groundwork had already been done and the benchmarking tool would provide an avenue to discussions on formalisation of the coalition and to implementation of the policy recommendations which would emerge.

The Research Team had produced a paper which was the lead-in to benchmarking. The observations of this paper were as follows:

- there is minimal communication and information sharing between the City Council and the general public. DAP sees an opportunity here to advocate and to forward innovative strategies to the City Council which will assist information sharing
- the City Council has noted the dearth of reliable data on several urban development issues – despite the fact that DAP has conducted extensive research in some of these areas. An objective for the team has to be the development of mechanisms whereby DAP can inform practice within the City Council and the latter can influence the curriculum within DAP
- DAP offers courses which, at present, could provide a core for collaboration with the City Council. If collaboration mechanisms were developed then joint work could progress beyond identification of challenges to actual project implementation
- collaboration between staff members in DAP and GCC already exists at an individual level. A Memorandum of Understanding is being prepared between DAP and the Department of Town and Regional Planning (DTRP) through the persona of the HoD DAP and the Depute Director DTRP. A joint major national conference is planned for September 2010.

The Team also tabled their own Data Collection Tool – a 'Needs Assessment for Collaboration between UB and the City of Gaborone' – with regard to the Urban and Regional Planning Sector. Clearly, the use of both tools in tandem would provide a strong base of evidence for progress.

The CDG Team were very appreciative of the Research Team's efforts and felt that the issue of City and Regional Planning was a real opportunity for collaboration between UB and Gaborone City - given the points which had been made during the first review visit and given the advances which had been made since then.

#### **SMME Team (Mr. E.D.M. Odirile)**

The CDG team welcomed the opportunity to take part in the workshop discussion with both UB and GCC representatives. Having members of the CDG team present allowed the GCC representatives to engage in direct discussion on the format and presentation of the benchmarking tool. They welcomed the tool as an opportunity for shaping and formalising discussions which had been, in other circumstances, initiated in *ad hoc* fashion. The following points were made:

- that an overall covering letter, from PASCAL PURE, would be a useful way of indicating the importance of the international significance of the initiative
- it would be useful if such a covering letter could indicate basic guidance, such as: what constituted a 'representative' of GCC? whether the tool would be completed by a group or individual at their convenience or whether the process would be 'assisted' by a representative of UB clarity on such terms as 'region' and 'regional' clarity on the intention of certain items (where, for example, answers could be framed in terms of objective terms (such as 'frequency') or in subjective terms (such as 'quality') clarity on the respondent categories (the point was made that, while it would certainly be useful to follow the reflexive approach favoured by the instrument, it might also be useful for each agency to complete the instrument on behalf of the other – thus providing an external view to match the internal one)

On being asked by the CDG whether 'straightforward' answers to particular items would be possible if this appeared to show GCC departments in a poor light, the answer from GCC colleagues was both refreshing and illuminating. This would not be an issue; the CDG was informed, because the initiative was supported 'at the highest level' and would only be beneficial if approached in candid fashion.

The SMME team felt that there were several improvements which could be made to the instrument and the process involved in utilising it but that it was better to use the opportunity and move forward rather than debating the finer points.

#### **Summary Discussion**

In overall discussion of the benchmarking tool and process, following the individual feedback from each Research Team, many of the points noted above were repeated. The ambiguity of some items was a familiar point made, as was the lack of an 'open' section to allow more general comments. One or two colleagues felt that the concentration upon the University and 'Region' (a much criticised term!) versions neglected the central presence of 'Civil Society Organisations' in the 'mix' of stakeholder organisations.

Particular, and repeated, mention was made by policy colleagues of the ambiguity of such terms as 'socio-technical diffusion of new technologies'. Not a term, understandably, which echoed round the corridors of city administration! In closing, the CDG Team congratulated the RCG on its efforts and emphasised, again, that Botswana PURE had taken forward approaches and initiatives which would be of relevance and benefit to colleagues in PASCAL PURE as a whole.

#### **4. Closing Remarks**

At the subsequent official reception and signing of the MOU between UB and GCC, those members of the CDG Team who were privileged to address the gathering again emphasised the groundbreaking work represented by the signing. While recognising that the MOU was a much wider initiative than that encompassed by PURE, the CDG members encouraged the participants to see the PURE work as a willing and able partner in support of their aspirations. PASCAL PURE, as a whole, had acquired valuable lessons from the work of colleagues in Gaborone.

The CDG members emphasised the usefulness of PURE in assisting the formulation of action plans and implementation plans in specific areas. The CDG report would recommend that this further shaping of action be taken forward. It was to be hoped that this would further contribute to the progress of engagement following the signing of the MOU between UB and GCC.

Lastly, the CDG members referred to the opportunity for collaboration in the facilitation and resourcing for the PASCAL PURE International Conference to be held in Gaborone in December 2010. This would be a prestigious event as it was the plenary conference for the first stage of the PURE project. It would not only signal the importance of Botswana's contribution to the project, it would also indicate the value of a Southern African context for PASCAL's work.

## Appendix 1: Individuals consulted and met by the CDG Team

### The RCG Research Committee:

Prof. P.G. Ntseane <a href="mailto:ntseanepg@mopipi.ub.bw">ntseanepg@mopipi.ub.bw</a> (Chairperson)	Dept. of Adult Education	University of Botswana
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