

# **International Partnership in Research in the Sudan Context**

**By Prof. Balghis Badri<sup>1</sup>**

## **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 and to recommend principles for future ideal research cooperation.<sup>2</sup>

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

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

---

<sup>1</sup> Professor of Social Anthropology/Gender, Director of the Institute of Women, Gender and Development Studies, Ahfad University for Women, Omdurman – Sudan.

<sup>2</sup> 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, NGO activities or political parties. A review of papers written on relevant topics also influenced the paper.

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

International research partnership can be classified as individually or institutionally based. It can 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 nationals, whether government, universities or NGOs.

Diverse experiences of doing research have been ongoing in Sudan since independence. Research was known and practiced during colonial times. Although in certain cases it 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 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 was crucial for policies and for setting the development agenda and implementing development programmes. The census of 1956 was the first great international research cooperation. Both the government, other nationals and the international community viewed the census as crucial, hence it was undertaken. Unfortunately, the military took over from the democratic government by a coup in 1958 and they were not believers in evidence-based policies.

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

From the time when democracy was re-installed in October 1964 until 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 held.

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

The period of the military regime witnessed great influence from socialist models, research priorities and international cooperation. Most international cooperation was with the Eastern Bloc. A National Research Council was established in 1970 with branches for many specializations, such as the National Medical Research Council (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 needed to be channeled through them for all government-related or national research. Individual or independent private institute research was not known. Yet international research cooperation at the 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 had changed its policy direction from socialist/Arabist to an Islamist orientation and Islamist legislation. However, at that time Islamic ideology had little impact on research agendas or international cooperation.

The regime gradually slackened from its centralized research orientation and supported international research cooperation that had yielded some good models in the past, such as the Blue Nile Research to combat Bilharzia between the Royal Medical Institute in Britain, the Gazira scheme and Khartoum University.

Another successful example was the Savannah Project initiated in 1975 between Bergen and the Socio-economic Research Council, followed in 1981 by a partnership between Bergen and the University of Khartoum on the Red Sea Area Programme, which continued until 1992. A collaboration between the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in Holland and the Development Studies and Research Centre (DSRC) at the University of Khartoum from 1981 until 1991 can be considered as another previous successful partnership model.

The Development Studies and Research Centre (DSRC) at the University of Khartoum and the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in the Hague will be taken as a model of international 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 programs relevant to development issues in the 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 attempt was 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 the 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 batch for the program. However, the political environment in the region militated against the continuity of this exemplary collaboration.*<sup>3</sup>

This is not a single case – the period from the seventies until the beginning of 1990 witnessed the flourishing of diverse types of international research cooperation characterized mainly by:

- 1- Being institutionally-based, led by individual relations and interests of researchers from countries of the North and South. It was mainly a product of relations of southern staff who studied in the North or staff from the North who taught in the South.
- 2- Alternatively, they were bilateral government-led initiatives related to addressing certain development issues. The second type was more intended to influence policy and was based on 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 played a proactive role by setting the research agenda and funding it. They were not involved as researchers but largely dictated the research protocols while the nationals were complaisant researchers.
- 4- Individually-based researchers could be classified into two categories. Some were doing research to be awarded a higher degree, and in most cases defined their own research topics but were funded by national or international institutions. In a majority of cases for those who study abroad the receiving universities give

---

<sup>3</sup> From Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed, “The Bologna Process: A View from the South”, unpublished paper presented to the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the EAIE, 15-18 September 2004, Torino, Italy, pp. 13-14.

consent to the research topic, through the supervisor's consent to the topic or as part of the northern university's research themes.

- 5- Other individually-based research consultants can be defined as passive or grey researchers who would do the research defined by the donor agency. This consultancy research type recently became commonly used 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.

From the 1990s until the beginning of the millennium, IRC has greatly slackened and dwindled in Sudan. The new military government of 1989 with an Islamic ideology and non-western orientation almost led to a halt of all North-based IRC with government bodies. The Arabization process in universities led to a deterioration of standards in universities, the fleeing of many professionals from universities that negatively impacted on universities, and a delinking from the northern international research community became evident.

It is only since 2000 with the start of serious peace negotiations that the government started to link again with the international research community, and links were boosted after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005.

The impact of being part of the NEPAD and CATNO agreements, the signing for commitment to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), other regional and international declarations and more pressure from UN organizations for evidence-based policy, have all impacted on government policy makers leading them to give some priority to research and data to inform them for policy purposes.

Yet, this is not a major ideological change and policy-making is still undertaken behind closed doors. Priorities are influenced by ideology and

the non-democratic context greatly influences the impact of research on development policy nationally and the extent of international cooperation for development-oriented research.

Non-governmental universities, Ahfad University for Women amongst them, NGOs, private consultancy houses and individual consultants started to fill the vacuum created by the boycott by government bodies (university, research institutes, ministries etc) of links 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. Research was needed to influence policy or development especially in economic, monetary, petrol and telecommunication areas to which the government gives priority; they directed their international cooperation to these countries rather than to the North. The North's sanctions on the Sudan government had meant that North collaboration could not be of a bilateral nature, but only through NGOs and/or other non-governmental bodies in Sudan such as non-governmental universities or consultancy houses or individuals. That context, which extended for more than a decade, had its negative impact on IRC in Sudan.

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

## **Section (II)**

### **Problems that Face International Research Partnerships**

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

- 1- international research cooperation (IRC); and
- 2- capacity building.

- 1- IRC: The national perspective sometimes considers that there are unbalanced power relations in IRC where the international partner guides the research agenda, controls funds and makes nationals work in the interest of the international partner (international-driven/controlled research).
- 2- The mandate of the international partner is sometimes limited and constrains nationals from including more research issues of interest to the nationals or of more relevance to community interests.
- 3- The provision of research funds and facilities is inadequate, or for a short period, or does not include components for community awareness, services, and development, which makes nationals feel as if they are defying their fellow citizens by making them passive informants who gain nothing from the research.
- 4- The processes of the proposal, funding and reporting are complicated, tedious and time-consuming, while rewards from research are minimal for the nationals, making them less interested to respond to international calls for research partnership, or when they engage in it, they feel marginalized or frustrated.
- 5- Sometimes the release of funds is slow or 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 participatory processes involving other stakeholders or consultations were not made, leading to duplication in research, not benefiting from what others had done and not soliciting their cooperation or engagement in the partnership. When some stakeholders were excluded it has a negative impact, as research does not build on others, or some stakeholders create a non-conducive context for the partnership to function.

### **Joint Problems from a National and International Perspective**

- 1- Lack of freedom for doing research in the country means that both national and international researchers face problems with the security authorities for doing research. In a few cases, research studies, especially community-based ones on issues of human rights, democracy or among displaced persons have their authorization withdrawn or are even confiscated after consent was initially given.
- 2- Research findings sometimes are not accepted by the government or not released if they counter the image the government wants to convey of its performance, such as on the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, FGM, school enrollment, costing and financing of social services etc.
- 3- The level and capacities are not equivalent – some northern partners feel the southern partners' capacities are low or weak and need to be strengthened, although no component has been integrated in the research project for capacity building. In other cases the national partners have more knowledge and local experience than some international partners, who send research teams with moderate capacities to work with high-level researchers from the South. The northern partners being in most cases donors feel they are on top while

the southern partners feel they are more competent. This creates more frustration, where the equalizing of capacities of both parties has not been integrated in the IRC protocol.

- 4- Clearance procedures, whether ethical or security, are complicated and hence hamper IRC from coming to 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 an NGO through the Humanitarian Association Council (HAC), as a cultural centre through the Ministry of Culture, as chapters of international organizations through the Ministry of External Affairs, as human rights centres through the Ministry of Justice, as higher educational centres through the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE), or as non-profit-making companies, where most consultancy offices register, at the Ministry of Trade.
- 6- There are a number of research institutes or centres that are part of universities, ministries, banks or private profit companies that do not have an independent entry from their main institutions. Some do not have substantial freedom at the institutional level.

To conclude, there are no independent research institutes and centres as legal entities and no clear law or procedures for their accreditation, quality control of their performance and regulation of their activities. This context has 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 in doubt; at certain stages it flourished, at others it was controlled. In most cases it had a marginal impact on development policy due to the political style that has a closed-door system of policy making and a non-

evidence-based policy orientation. Having stated that, there were positive dimensions of IRC which will be elaborated below.

### **The Positive Dimensions of IRC**

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

- 1- It makes researchers acquire first-hand information from citizens and interaction with them leads to awareness-raising among citizens on the analysis of the causes of their problems.
- 2- Research leads to awareness-raising among the researchers about various different sub-cultures, ethnic groups and diversity, and gives nationals the opportunity to carry out research in different parts of their country.
- 3- The experiences had by-products and unintentional impacts when national researchers later held influential decision-making positions in government, in their university or in their NGOs when formulating projects.
- 4- In certain cases it directly influenced strategy and policy interventions, particularly when it was so desired by the government or organization that initiated it.
- 5- Research findings whether in report form or publications can be used by many other users (other researchers, students, NGOs, government officials, UN and other international bodies). It leads as well to enhancing knowledge and information on 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 memorandums 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 are engaged as data collectors with senior researchers.
- 8- It has a dimension of institutional strengthening when it involves equipment donations, other infrastructure like buildings, books/journals, cars etc. There is also skills promotion for non-researchers engaged in IRC such as accountants, secretaries, laboratory technicians, librarians, and computer personnel working on information, data bases and websites.
- 9- In many cases the interests of researchers in the South match the interests of researchers in the North and vice versa, a matter that enhances engagement and commitment to doing the research despite some obstacles of limited funding, security/political constraints, logistical or even minimal official support.
- 10- In some cases findings are used for advocacy and awareness raising at NGO level, in the 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, food security components.

### **Capacity Building in International Partnership**

1- International partnerships that focus on capacity building of young researchers in the past, during the decades of the sixties to the eighties, emphasized scholarships given to young researchers mainly at

universities. The partnership was based on individual rather than institutional links. Though the consent of the institution was sought, or sometimes affiliation to an institution was a pre-requisite, the southern institutes were not part of the partnership, hence the individual-based system led to a great brain drain as the gap between the work environment in the North and South, the availability of relevant jobs or convenient incomes etc. made many southern students to stay on in the West/North. The individual-based cooperation of higher education policy in northern universities and non-institution-based partnerships did not lead to institutional capacity building even when researchers returned home. However, there were some advantages from the perspective of the student and the sending or receiving country. To quote Ahmed, who states these advantages as follows:

*From the sending country perspective, EHEA 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.*<sup>4</sup>

However, since the late nineties European universities engaged in a 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 North-South relationships.

The objectives of the Bologna Process led in Africa to the Association of African Universities (AAU) undertaking steps to harmonize higher education in the continent 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 and internationalization of higher education to bring mutual benefits to both partners. The emphasis was also on South-South collaboration and that higher education goals are to serve the interests, priorities and needs of the people of Africa and contribute to global creation. The major difference between EHEA and AAU is the emphasis of the former on the market orientation of higher education (HE), while AAU focuses on development, meeting the basic needs of the African people and contributing to nation building.

The challenges facing Africa in general and Sudan in particular are related to a decline in human development indicators, civil wars, HIV/AIDS pandemics, particularly in neighboring countries, a decline in the economy and non-oil products, prevalence of one party and military regimes; all these challenges face the country with threats to the promotion of higher education and making it relevant to address these challenges and at the same time be part of an internationalization process. Spreading higher education and encouraging privatization while keeping

---

<sup>4</sup> Ahmed (2004), *ibid*.

to principles of education as a public good faces Sudan with the trap of more private education institutes opening, but which are interested in offering market-oriented programmes. Low government spending to support quality education made public universities in a majority of cases less competitive and unable to link in partnerships with the international community. The private universities are liberalizing education without considering internationalization as a goal or being concerned with producing high quality competitive graduates of international standard. Policies for internationalization or international cooperation partnership are not embedded in the higher education system. This state of vulnerability of higher education deserves attention to how to strike a balance to serve the interests of both partners, encourage internationalization that emphasizes the common good, and address development issues as well as serve market demands. The two aspects of development and the market are two faces of the same coin, however the tools that make them complementary need to be worked out through open transparent dialogue to serve both interests. Further, another crucial issue that needs to be considered is how to address “defensive” policies in the North and South that 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, and curriculum development as indicated above (the ISS-DSRC partnership).

The long-term technical assistance programmes whereby northern researchers/staff were engaged in curricula development and capacity building of young students/or civil servants were 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 resulted in a deterioration in standards for the majority of university or government institutions in Sudan.

This long-term IRC was substituted with short-term projects of a consultancy nature, or not targeting higher calibre nor well rewarded for serious North-based personnel to be motivated to come to the South for a short period.

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

### **New Trends of Successful Models**

Recent trends since Bologna have led to a change in international partnerships whereby the Southern institutions are involved in selecting candidates for studies, research themes as a priority of the university or institution or country are indicated, supervisors from South and North are appointed, institution strengthening is integrated for provision of books, website and journals prescription, equipment acquisition etc.

Such partnership from the Southern perspective is beneficial, however, university regulations in the North do not take into account such engagement by 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 creates resistance to engaging in such partnerships.

Regulations in both countries of the North and South need to be changed so that the capacity-building components at universities are southern-based, with sandwich components linking to the North and both partners benefiting and being engaged in their formulation. This would be the best means to create a sustained long term IRC.

Another new model can be 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 programme started in 1998, when Humboldt University of Berlin institutionalized a relationship with the Ahfad University for Women in Omdurman, Sudan by signing the Ahfad-Humboldt Link Programme. The link agreed on the following objectives:

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

The four components of the link programme were:

1. Female Students’ Exchange Programme.
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, then more formal meetings/dialogue were held over one year before the proposal was

submitted to DAAD for funding. More negotiations then followed, and finally the IRC materialized.

**Evaluation criteria 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 fundraising for the summer schools, acknowledgement, implementation and continuity.
8. Partnership dimension within the link programme concept.
9. Staff promotion and capacity building.

***Summary of the Partnership Dimension: The Summer School Component<sup>5</sup>***

*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*

---

<sup>5</sup> Reproduced from Balghis Badri and Parto Teherani-Kronner, unpublished paper, “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”.

*more involved with the logistics and preparation work beforehand. The experience was fruitful and this part of the link programme deserves to be replicated. The personal commitment of the partners was vital in making each summer school a success story in terms of the programme, 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 programme 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, Babiker 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.*

*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 were 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. 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-Universität zu 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 programme 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 programme 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.*

***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 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 of the 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 advise policy directives of the other partner in the South.
- 4- To influence change in legislation.
- 5- To help the community or certain target groups achieve development.
- 6- To impact on behavioural change.
- 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.

IRC can be initiated by the UN or INGOs or bilateral agreement between governments inside the country of the South; or driven by

internationals outside Sudan such as universities, research institutions or INGOs or UN agencies' headquarters. In other situations they can be driven by a demand from the nationals whether government, 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, references to some have been elaborated above.

Moreover, it has become evident that international research partnership 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 non-embeddedness of policy dialogue and communication/diffusion components in the research protocol render it less effective. The dimension of its irrelevance to the development agenda and societies' needs is not central in reference to the Sudanese experience. The problem is rather that policy-makers usually do not 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 embeddedness as well as leading to capacity building, policy change and promotion of quality of life of people, the following are considered basic principles.

### **Principles of International Research Partnership**

- 1- The ethical dimension in the partnership whereby the researched community's awareness of the relevance of the research to them,

and the impact and importance of findings need to be stressed and integrated in the research protocol.

- 2- The relevance of the international research agenda to the country's strategic plans and development priorities should be negotiated and the research protocol should clearly relate research objectives to both national plans and global agenda. Many issues are currently both national and global, such as achieving MDGs, including researching how best to accomplish them, indicating trends, bottlenecks, pathways etc.
- 3- Inclusion of other stakeholders, partners and media in the initial research idea and process so as to guarantee dissemination and engagement of all stakeholders in the research.
- 4- Decision-making personnel at the top level should be engaged in research dialogue, sign protocols, indicate commitment and willingness to provide sustained resources both human, logistic and financial to the international cooperation to make it efficient, effective and sustained.
- 5- The partnership should 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/service components as part of the IRC. Direct benefits to the community need to be integrated.
- 6- Integrating in the research protocol means of dissemination through workshops, conferences, media, group discussions with community and publication in both academic journals and books, or simple forms of publications, as well as using electronic communication. This is to guarantee that the research findings reach all the relevant stakeholders and potential future users and beneficiaries.

- 7- Delineate the control over products of the research and the rights of each partner over the research findings/product/use and follow up in a way that would benefit researchers from South and North themselves.
- 8- Debate clearly how the research will impact on policies, whether it will not impact on policies or possibly not be accepted by authorities, security services, the community or others (risks of being stopped, confiscated after initial acceptance).
- 9- The research partnership must have full authorization and be independent as well as receiving the consent and approval of the officials/authorities.

These are some basic principles that, when addressed, can make international research partnership 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 interests of partners, individuals and institutions. 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 egalitarian. It is not envisaged that the partner in the South will pool in the same financial resources, but other resources should be financially assessed and valued.
- 3- Dialogue in formulating the research team must be transparent, and nationals from the South and partners from the North must be represented in a ratio that will lead to equal engagement, especially in the design of the research proposal, analysis and report writing.

- 4- An inter-disciplinary research team with the involvement of women, if not having equal/balanced gender representation, is a pre-requisite for successful partnership.
- 5- Dialogue with other stakeholders who can help in data collection and dissemination or to influence policy could be a responsibility of national researchers, and plans for this could be clearly indicated in the partnership protocol.
- 6- Clear divisions of labour and responsibilities and plans of action should be discussed at an early stage, so that the partners' research capacities, time resources, individual financial status and commitments can be taken into account when defining terms of reference and plans of actions.
- 7- Including capacity building for junior staff, researchers and personnel in the IRC protocol is crucial to guarantee a long-term impact.
- 8- Co-authorship of publications, the production of all types of outputs from international cooperation for research, capacity building, partnerships that are community-based or of an integrated nature involving diverse components all lead to better partnership, enhance capacity of all team members, open up international publication/dissemination channels to nationals and raise the awareness of northern parties to southern possibilities for dissemination that they can use and enhance.

All these dimensions create long-term equal partnerships and even friendships.

## **The Experience of International Partnerships for Research and Capacity Building in Reference to Human Rights and Women's Rights in Sudan**

### **Introduction: A Profile of the Current Actors**

The type of partnership undertaken in this area is largely institutional-based, with civil society organizations or government institutions in partnership with international organizations mainly based in Sudan.

There are several human rights centres in Sudan engaging in advocacy, research, awareness-raising and training programs on human rights issues, lobbying for conventions ratification (CEDAW), reporting on human rights violations to international-based centres for lobby and advocacy, research on legal reform issues, seminars for law reform, and capacity-building workshops on how to undertake legal reform.

Government institutions working in the field of human rights and women's rights include:

- The National Commission on Human Rights
- Women's Centre for Human Rights (governmental)
- Women's Centre for Peace and Development
- Ministry of Welfare and Social Development
- Department of Human and Women's Rights (Ministry of Justice)
- Presidential Advisor on Legal Issues
- Violence against Women Unit (Ministry of Justice)
- Advisory Council on Human Rights

There are also many civil society groups working on human rights and women's rights issues:

- The Khartoum Center for Human Rights
- The Khartoum Human Rights and Development Centre
- The Sudan Human Rights Centre
- The Civil Forum

- Khatim Aladlan Centre for Human Rights
- Gender Center for Training and Research
- Amel Center for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture
- ACHR Advisory Council on Human Rights Sudan (SUDO)
- Sudan Organization Against Torture (SOAT)
- African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse (ANPPCAN)
- Peace Building Network
- Sudan National Committee on Harmful Traditional Practices
- Babiker Badri Scientific Association for Women Studies (BBSAWS)
- The Institute of Women, Gender and Development Studies (IWGDS)
- New Sudanese Indigenous NGOs Network (NESI)

Examples of partnership projects in this area include: training seminars for national NGOs, police and security officers as well as officials on reporting obligations (The Netherlands Institute of Human Rights); a project to improve the capacity of national NGOs working on human rights – the UNDP’s Rule of Law Department is working with national government institutions and NGOs such as the Sudan National AIDS Programme, the technical department of the Government; a project to support the capacity building and empowerment of Sudanese civil society actors in the area of human rights (UNMIS Human Rights Office is working with both civil society groups and the Ministry of Justice); UNFPA is implementing a number of projects in partnership with women’s organizations for law reform in the areas of criminal law (rape), constitution making and combating violence against women, especially in Darfur; Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Sudan supported expert workshops on constitution development and promoting peace, democracy and human rights, and also conducted many studies on women’s political rights with universities and NGOs. It has research links with the Institute of African and Asian Studies, University of Khartoum, Khartoum Development and Research Centre, Ahfad University for Women, The Institute of Women, Gender and Development Studies, and The Gender Centre for Training and Research. The Babiker Badri Scientific Association for Women’s Studies and the Sudan National Committee on Tradition Practices affecting the Health of Women and Children are leading NGOs undertaking research in FGM, Child

Marriage and Violence against Women. The Gender Centre for Training and Research undertakes research in the area of violence against women in partnership with CORDAID Netherlands.

The Institute of Women, Gender and Development Studies (IWGDS) has carried out many research studies in the field of women's rights, for example Adolescents' and Women's Rights in Sudan (a comprehensive review and critique of existing national laws in partnership with UNFPA headquarters); and The Perception and Awareness of Women towards their Constitutional Rights, research on Sudanese family law, its gaps and amendments. The Institute also conducts many conferences and training courses, e.g. a Human Rights Education Conference in November 2003, Violence against Women in December 2006, and Law Reform in the Sudan with a collection of workshop papers in cooperation with USIP in 2007.

The Institute also conducts many training courses and awareness-raising programmes on Women's Constitutional Rights, Civic Education, Political Participation, and Election Law.

The Human Rights and Development Centres have international cooperation with a London-based international organization, SOAT. Due to the political context, most human rights organizations are not engaged in assessing human rights situation/violations publicly but rather concentrate on human rights education.

Universities are also engaged in research, law reform, and advocacy awareness raising and training programmes in law and human rights. These include: Ahfad University for Women, Khartoum University, Nilein University, Omdurman Islamic University, Juba University, the Peace Centre and the Development Studies and Research Institute at the University of Khartoum.

### **Recommendations for Research Themes**

One of the findings of the workshop was that the intellectual diaspora must be encouraged to conduct research in Sudan in order to come back home and join local universities. The workshop suggested certain priorities for areas of research on women's and human rights:

- Women's access to justice
- Women's access to natural resources and land
- The impact of customary law on women's rights
- The impact of women holding decision-making positions on state legislation and policies
- The impact of globalization on Sudanese women
- Diverse aspects of violence against women in Sudan
- Research on legal reform in the area of criminal laws related to rape, FGM and HIV/AIDS
- Impact, correlation studies to convince men that women's empowerment and gender equality are useful to society, such as the impact of education on the use of family planning methods and the consequences on raising life expectancy

**References:**

- 1- Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed, “The Bologna Process: A View from the South”, unpublished paper presented to the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the EAIE, 15-18 September 2004, Torino, Italy, pp. 13-14.
- 2- Balghis Badri, 2004, “The Role of Universities in the New Millennium”
- 3- Balghis Badri and Sidiga Washi, 2007, “Internationalization to Ensure Quality in Higher Education: Experiences and way forward at Ahfad University for Women, Sudan”.
- 4- Balghis Badri and Parto Teherani-Kronner, 2007, “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.

## **Annex (1)**

### **Summary of the Dialogue Proceedings**

The Institute of Women, Gender and Development Studies organized and held a one-day workshop on International Partnership in Research and Capacity Building on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February 2008. The workshop invited different segments of Sudanese society with wide experience in international partnerships for research and capacity building, whether as individuals or representing institutions (national and international NGOs, universities, government ministries and research institutions).

The actual number of invitees was 70, but only 26 people attended. The dialogue covered three topics: experiences of international partnership for research of individuals and organizations, institutes and ministries; research practices embedded in society; research capacities and capacity building for relevant research.

#### **The main objectives of the dialogue were:**

- To provoke thought, highlight and raise awareness of all stakeholders on issues of international partnership for research and capacity building.
- To develop effective and transformative approaches for improving international partnership on research and capacity building.
- To identify and prioritize areas of research.
- To gather information for writing a paper on international partnership in research in the Sudanese context.

A questionnaire was designed by the organizer to be filled by participants before attending the workshop. The questionnaire was intended to provoke discussion, enrich the dialogue and generate information.

The workshop started at 9.30am. The opening session was welcomed by Prof. Balghis Badri (organizer of the workshop and director of the Institute of Women, Gender and Development Studies). Then the session laid the foundation of the main themes and objectives of the dialogue.

The first session was intended to allow participants to discuss the constraints and challenges facing international partnership for research and capacity building, to explore successful experiences and other relevant issues stemming from the questionnaire and guidelines, and their recommendations for an ideal, equal, effective and sustained partnership. Session three was devoted to a summary and recommendations of the workshop by Prof. Balghis Badri and the way forward.

The questionnaire and workshop findings and recommendations were used by Prof. Badri to finalize the paper on international partnership for research in the Sudanese context.

*Coordinator*

Sonia Malik

*Assistant coordinator*

Bkri Alkheir

**Annex (2)**

*The Institute of Women Gender and Development Studies, Ahfad  
University for Women*

**Dialogue Questionnaire on “International Partnership on  
Research and Capacity Building”**

The information collected from the following questionnaire will enrich the dialogue with information about its central topics. We thank you in advance for taking the time to fill in the following questions. After completing the form, you can bring it with you to the dialogue, fax it to +24987579111 or hand it back to our office in AUW at your earliest.

**I. Experiences on International Partnership for Research: of individuals or /  
and organizations, institutes and ministries.**

Q. The type of partnership individual based or institutional or both?

A. ....  
.....

Q. The duration of the partnership? (*Date started/ ended/ ongoing*)

A. ....

Q. Name of partner(s) (*donors, researchers, etc*)

A. Donors:.....  
    Researches:.....

Q. Name of research

A. ....  
.....

Q. Suggest the ideal characteristics for an equal effective sustained  
partnership.

A. ....

**II. Research practices imbedded in society:**

Q. What kind of research that has been done with members of society to have a direct impact to address their needs and interests.

A. Name of Research Partners:

Donors: .....

Researchers: .....

When: .....

Where: .....

Q. Impact on Society:

A. Name: .....

Location: .....

Q. Type of Impact: .....

A. Services: ..... Type:.....

Capacity building:..... Type:.....

Institutional strengthening:..... Type:.....

Awareness raising:..... Type:.....

Change of laws:..... Type:.....

Change of Behaviour/attitudes:.....

Others:.....

Q. How partnership involving society was done? Describer the process of involving members of society in the research or in implementing its outcome.

A.....

Q. Is it a success story? Explain.

A.....

Q. Recommendations for any modifications or additions.

A.....

**III. Research capacities: capacity building for relevant research:**

Q. What research and capacity building needed in:

- A: Women's right research:.....
- Human's rights research:.....
- Other Development researches:.....
- Researches related to the MDGs:.....

Q. What type of best partnership to be undertaken with whom (NGOs, Universities, Ministries, Consultancy Groups, UN, Int'l Governments, Regional or Western Universities) to develop the above researchers

A.....  
.....

**IV. What model of partnership in the future you would like to promote and think of as the most appropriate and has the best impact on policy, society, capacity building of individual researchers and or institutions – lead to engagement of civil society?**

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Q. What has been wrong practice in previous partnerships of research on capacity building?

- a. It led to brain drain [ ]
- b. It has not influenced policy [ ]
- c. It has no practical implications at the grass roots [ ]
- d. It is elites oriented [ ]
- e. It serves the interest of the Northern institutions / researches [ ]
- f. It has not led to publications or dissemination [ ]
- g. It is individual oriented with no commitment to the institution or the researched society / group [ ]
- h. Others.....

For a soft copy of this questionnaire please send an email to [iwgds@yahoo.com](mailto:iwgds@yahoo.com).

**Annex (3)**  
**List of Participants**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
1	Dr. Sumaia Elsayed	Sudanese Environmental Society
2	Dr. Sumaia M. Zein	MPA School of Management
3	Dr. Asia Makawai	Hafeed Library
4	Dr. Mahasin A. Abass	BBSAS
5	Dr. Amna A. Rahman	Women Empowerment for Peace (SWIP)
6	Dr. Ruth Kebeti	UNIFEM
7	Dr. Nafisa M. Badri	UNVs on FGM
8	Dr. Moatasim Yousif	Central Bank of Sudan
9	Dr. Sumaia Elfadil	WHO
10	Dr. Amna Mohamed A. Kareem	English Language Unit (AUW)
11	Dr. Awad Alla M. Saeed	AUW
12	Dr. Hala Al Ahmadi	UNIMIS – Gender Unit
13	Uz. Ikhlas Nuh Osman	IWGDS – Ahfad
14	Uz. Sara Gabriel	IWGDS – Ahfad
15	Uz. Soad Mohammed	AUW
16	Dr. Nafisa M. Badri	UN
17	Dr. Ashraf Babiker	School of Medicine (AUW)
18	Dr. Babiker Ahmed Babiker	School of REED (AUW)
19	Uz. Nafisa Elsadig Ahmed	School of REED (AUW)
20	Dr. Moatamad Amin	Head of Research Unit (AUW)
21	Prof. Balghis Badri	IWGDS (AUW)
22	Uz. Sonia Aziz Malik	IWGDS (AUW)
23	Dr. Mai Ezz Eldin	IWGDS (AUW)
24	Uz. Bkri Alkheir	IWGDS (AUW)
25	Dr. Shahira Osama	School of Management (AUW)

**Annex (4)**  
**Ahfad University for Women**  
**The Institute of Women Gender and Development Studies**  
**Dialogue on "International Partnership on Research and Capacity Building"**

**Guidelines for Working Groups**

**Group (1):**

**Experiences on International Partnership for Research: of individuals and/or organizations, institutes and ministries.**

- 1- What are the main constraints / loopholes in current partnerships?
- 2- Suggest the ideal characteristics for an equal effective sustained partnership.

**Group (2):**

**Research practices embedded in society:**

- 1- What are the gaps in current partnerships targeting society?
- 2- Recommend any modifications or additions to make a better model of partnership involving the community?

**Group (3):**

- 1- What has been wrong practice in previous partnerships for research or human capacity building (HCB)?
- 2- What model of partnership in the future you would like to see promoted and think of as the most appropriate and has the best impact on policy, society, capacity building of individual researchers and or institutions and leads to engagement of civil society?

**Ahfad University for Women**  
**The Institute of Women Gender and**  
**Development Studies**

*Dialogue on "International Partnership on Research and Capacity Building"*

*The Dialogue Programme*

**9:30-10:30** Opening session: Welcome speech and brainstorming on the main themes of the dialogue and working groups' guidelines, by Prof. Balghis Badri.

**10:30-11:00** Breakfast

**11:00-12:30** Group working

**12:30-12:45** Tea break

**12:45-1:30** Presentation of the working groups

**1:30-2:00** Closing session: Recommendations for the way forward