*Full Length Research Paper*

# Impact of "Implementing the Third Mission of Universities in Africa (ITMUA) collaborative research project, 2010-2011"

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This article is informed by the Implementing the Third Mission of Universities in Africa (ITMUA) which was an 18 months Action Research collaborative regional research project incepted January 2010 to August 2011. It was a Support Project of the UK Department for International Development (DFID) in Africa, and the Association of African Universities (AAU), Accra under the Mobilizing Regional Capacity Initiative (MRCI). During the three staged Action Research Project, 10 work packages were completed. The four universities which were part of the ITMUA project provide testimony and point of contact that African universities can work together on collaborative projects that depict university service to communities in their regions. A conclusion drawn from the impact assessment journal prepared during the life of the project suggests that there are positive evidence based initiatives to write about selected African universities that have fruitfully brought the 18 months collaborative engagement research project to a fruitful completion.

**Key words:** Impact assessment, Implementing the Third Mission of Universities in Africa (ITMUA), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), community service.

## INTRODUCTION

The ITMUA project was an exploratory action research project which focused on the extent to which four universities across the African continent were implementing their community service mission in relation to the MDGs – particularly those goals related to poverty reduction, education and health. The end goal of the project was to produce policy frameworks and benchmarking tools to enable universities enhance their third mission activities.

The regional project was sponsored by the AAU/DIFD, and the host universities of Botswana, Malawi, Lesotho and Calabar. In Botswana, the University of Botswana (UB) Office of Research and Development provided matching funds for the unmet part of the ITMUA local budget. The author provides major research impacts of the ITMUA regional project to illuminate best practice in Afrocentric collaborative research.

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.

The overall theme of the project was 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

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Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The third mission of universities – community service – provided 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 linked with a global network [PASCAL] and its own third mission project, [PURE], 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. The ITMUA project built on and adapted that framework so it more effectively addressed the MDGs and African contexts.

The Botswana version of the project was aligned to the University of Botswana (UB) priority areas 3: intensifying research performance and 4: Strengthening engagement as outlined in the UB Strategy for Excellence. 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. Universities are often criticized for their ivory tower image with limited impact on the socio-economic environment, and employers have increasingly voiced their concerns about inadequate graduate skills for jobs.

### Brief background

The ITMUA project developed as a brainchild of a regional network which was formed after the end of the British Academy African Partnership (BAAP) initiative led by the University of Glasgow in 2006 to 2009. The BAAP study highlighted that NFE could take many forms but essentially shares some common features such as active engagement with communities, curricula devised in consultation with communities, and participatory methodologies for teaching and/or research.

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 access to primary education, reduction of child mortality and improvement of maternal health, reduction of deaths from AIDS, environmental sustainability and enhanced partnerships for development.

The ITMUA project consisted of an African partnership network of four universities-The National University of Lesotho, University of Botswana, Chancellor College of the University of Malawi, and Calabar in Nigeria. This project focused on MDG 1 – reduction of poverty, MDG 2 - Education and MDG 6 - HIV and AIDS. These MDGs

are interlinked with the other goals, particularly in relation to sustainable development, good governance and gender parity.

Findings from the ITMUA small scale case studies and information exchanges informed the development of policy briefings and a policy framework for African contexts in relation to the university's third mission and the MDGs. In September 2011, a book titled "Community service and engagement in four African Universities" on the case studies (two per country) was published by Lentswe la Lesedi in Botswana to illuminate ways in which the four universities were serving their respective communities (Preece et al., 2011).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of 'community service' or associated terms such as 'third mission' work, 'community engagement', or 'regional engagement' may range from work by an individual staff member to a whole university approach to teaching and research which includes assessed student involvement. Yet the academic literature on this topic often focuses on the benefits of volunteering or practical curricula for student development rather than the nature of consultation with, or the benefits for, communities or their development priorities. This particular study had a specific focus on how the university was contributing to national development priorities in relation to the MDGs, thus highlighting the need to take into account community needs as the main focus. The concept of community in this project was interpreted broadly to mean an organization, group of people, region or locality within a country that reflects national development priorities. The Third Mission of Universities refers to community service and engagement.

### Community service

The terminology "community service" is made up two important concepts, namely, "community" and "service". "Community" is 'a group with an organic-natural set of relationships who share commitment to a common purpose and to procedures for handling conflict in the group; where members share responsibility for actions of the group, members have an enduring and extensive personal contact with each other' (Newman and Oliver, 1967 as cited in Shitu, 1995, p. 27). Community is also 'a cluster of households or an entire region, as an organization ranging from a provincial government department to an NGO, as a school, clinic, hospital, church or mosque or as a part of the university itself …; communities are loosely defined as social organizations. However, community also functions as an adjective, as a qualifier that indicates work that is socially beneficial (Hall, 2010, p 23).

The concept "community" therefore carries three important notions, namely first, that of shared identifiable geographical/physical entity; secondly, the notion of relationship binding elements of community together and thirdly, the idea of social benefit accruable from belonging to the community. It is from the third notion of "community" that the concept "service" springs; in other words, "service" is implied in "community" as "service" is a social benefit derived from belonging to a community; the labour put in by each member of the community is a service to both the individual member and to the community. However, the community as a whole may benefit from service coming from outside its borders; here again, such an external service becomes social benefit to individual members by virtue of their belonging to the community while the community itself receives such externally directed service as communal social benefit.

Brought together, the concepts "community" and "service" combine to give birth to a unique construct known as "community service". Community service is therefore 'an extension of university expertise to the world outside the university, the community, in the service of improving the quality of life of the community and which is effected through a university model in which community service is integral to all aspects of the university: mission, structure and organization, hiring and promotion, curriculum and teaching, research and publications (Lulat, 2005, p. 262).

This definition portrays community service as an integral part of university work and life; it delineates three levels at which community service may be operationalised. First, it suggests that universities may design learning tasks that will bring students to participate in some community development projects as a partial requirement for their graduation. Secondly, it suggests that universities may include in their curricula, study programmes that may promote specifically, local, national and/or regional development agendas. Thirdly, it implies that individual university staff members may initiate a community project, mobilize community interest and lead the implementation of the project.

To guide this paper on the impacts of the ITMUA project, each participating university evaluated the project by administering 10 major focus group questions to communities in the cases studied. The questions below, informed the sections on the common impact of the ITMUA project in the four host countries.

## Why an impact assessment?

Research is at the core of all tertiary institutions. However, how research impacts on practice is often unclear to research financers and other beneficiaries. Impact assessment is a fairly mature and formal activity in most organizations including tertiary institutions the military in particular has deep experience in planning changes. Yet for some reason most research projects end up with conclusions and recommendations that are hardly taken into account in future project implementation. Impact assessment consists of emailing around an RFC and waiting for someone to comment about it, or worse, a lead tech working in isolation on "one little change." Another seemingly popular method for impact assessment is a meeting, usually the day or two before the change is to occur, where department heads talk about the work upcoming and how soon it must be embraced. PMS is a typical example of how employers count annual outputs to measure what employees are worth.

While effective and easily implemented, impact assessment is not a panacea and does not totally replace existing change procedures, instead, organisations should strive to improve their existing processes. The procedure for performing an impact assessment consists of the following five steps:

1) Define the extent of the change proposed.
2) Determine key differences in the changed state (proposed) from a point of reference or the original state.
3) Focus on the possible effects of the key differences from step #2.
4) Sort and prioritize the possible effects (#3) from the key differences (#2) based on risk and possibility.
5) Make a decision using the results. In this case, the main decisions have to be made about university engagement and how to rate it so that it is on the same level with teaching and research.

## METHODOLOGY

### Data collection

This paper employs three data collection phases:

1) Self assessment of existing community service activities.
2) Stakeholder needs analysis/discussion of how universities are and should be responding to national development priorities in relation to the MDGs.
3) Pilot case studies (two per university, and usually entailing a local needs analysis) with an in-depth qualitative study of what works, where and how, with a view to exploring how the case studies could inform university policies for developing their community service mission.

### *Phase one of action research cycle*

1) Involvement of relevant senior people in university (such as deans of faculties) and external stakeholders (for example Ministry, employers, Civil Society) and postgraduate students who already have work links.
2) Self assessment/mapping of what is already being done in each institution and assessment of PASCAL benchmarking framework for African contexts: – January 2010.
3) Needs analysis – focus group discussions with community stakeholders – by April 2010.

*Phase two of action research cycle*

1) Action planning for enhancing the university third mission in relation to the MDGs – (review of courses/departmental activities to link community service mission to university curricula, partnerships with community groups etc) – May 2010.
2) Case study implementation and evaluation – by September 2010.
3) National stakeholder workshops and sharing of experiences/progress at conference in Botswana in December 2010.

*Phase three of action research cycle*

1) Revised action plans and policy briefings with revised benchmarking framework – January – March 2011.

All the above stages were articulated in the project document of 2009 (Challenge Fund proposal, by Preece et al., 2009).

**Case study research questions posed during site visits**

1) How does the university engage with the project?
a) In terms of negotiations, consultations, decision making, educational input.
2) How is the project gaining from the university's involvement?:
a) In terms of poverty reduction; health and self sustainability; new skills knowledge and understanding.
3) How are university staff and students gaining from the involvement?:
a) In terms of personal growth; new skills, knowledge and understanding.
b) In terms of enhanced understanding of their university curriculum.
c) In terms of enhanced understanding of real world issues.
4) How could the university develop this involvement?:
a) In terms of contributing to community development needs/MDG focus.
b) In terms of integrating this activity into the university research and teaching missions.
5) How is the wider community benefiting from this project? What have been the major impacts?

The emphasis was thus on local communities' ability to initiate, implement and assess programs and initiatives that serve their own needs and thereby reinforce their self-drive mindsets in sustaining the case studies that were selected mainly on the basis of meeting the definition of community service. A lot of information was gathered during the case studies but for purposes of this paper, the author focused only on the impacts of the collaborative research.

**Stakeholder participation**

Stakeholder participation in this stage of the study reflected both the level of institutional support for the idea of community engagement and a range of perspectives on what the university's 'third mission' might mean. Senior university participation ranged from the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Director of Research and Academic Linkages and even a Council member from the University of Calabar, to the Principal of Chancellor College in Malawi to the Director of Public Affairs and Head of the Office of Research and Development in Botswana, to the Marketing Officer in Lesotho. Most academic departments were represented by senior staff.

*The sample*

The target number of stakeholders was ten senior academic staff, ten representatives from civil society or employer organizations, five postgraduate students and representatives from five government ministries in each partner country, making a total of 30 participants. Whilst each partner achieved representation across these four cohorts, the precise number of participants varied. Calabar acquired participation from three government ministries, five postgraduates, eight civil society organizations and 14 university staff across four departments. Lesotho managed to recruit five external stakeholders from government ministries and civil society and 18 part-time postgraduate students, who also represented a further eight civil societies and government departments. A total of 18 academic staff were represented across nine departments. Malawi recruited two external stakeholders, five part time masters students – each of whom represented an external organization, and eleven senior staff covering ten academic departments. Botswana engaged 42 stakeholders of which 11 were NGO stakeholders, three (3) representatives from neighbouring universities, four from three government ministries, six masters students and with representation across five academic departments.

Steering groups were formed in each partner university to oversee and comment on progress.

**Evaluation methods used**

The methods used were adapted from Kirkpatrick's model of evaluation (1959, 1975, 1994). Although subjected to a variety of critics, the model is useful in terms of the key variables that the researchers studies in the selected cases.

*Evaluating effectiveness*

Evaluation measures, based on the questions posed, focused on effectiveness of the projects in relation to the desired goals. The goal was to determine what worked or did not work in the cases studied. Methods for measuring the results include measuring the change in productivity, profit margins and the return on investment for the organization.

*Evaluating learning*

This level of evaluation measures the knowledge, skills, information or procedures the participants and other stakeholders gained from the ITMUA project experiences. The methods of evaluating learning ranged from administering written or oral testimonies to hands-on demonstrations of skills and procedures.

*Evaluating behavior change*

The case studied were followed to find out if there was any change in the trainee's behavior after completing the projects and beyond the help the beneficiaries gained from interacting with universities. Five methodological steps were followed during the evaluation to obtain results and returns on investment.

**Step 1 - Define the extent of the change proposed:** Research on the Third Mission of Universities in Africa was meant to find out what the four universities were actually doing to engage with communities. It was noticed that community service programmes and activities ranged along the continuum from casual to prolonged

engagement. What is most desirable is that universities must truly engage with communities so that they are not ivory towers but give back to communities that have paid the price for their existence.

**Step 2 - Determine key differences:** The basis of the impact assessment is to compare the proposed state of the four universities with the state before the change. With no proper records nor something new there was no existing baseline, in which case it was difficult to make comparisons. The goal is to identify all of the differences, large and small, between the pre and post - change states. Common differences include:

1) Level of staff engagement.
2) Individual or collective efforts of staff and all personnel expected to engage with communities.
3) Process, procedures, organization, schedules, time of day, number of programmes, workshops and consultancies.

This step was made ideal for use with community groups that had benefitted from university engagement. It was very important to uncover positive, negative, and neutral trends. This means checking for successful changes as well as the bad experiences.

**Step 3 - Focus on effects:** Study each of the differences listed in the table created in the last step. Ask if this difference has the potential to cause unexpected side effects. Consider the reference materials;— has there been a history of fault or failure because of this difference? Has this difference not had any impact? Be sure to imagine positive, negative and neutral affects. This step is also ideal for a group. Cases that the research teams studied illuminated the desire to engage more, based on what they had gained from the university community. Others however, had simply thought universities were there to "help" them and not in a mandatory fashion. Some of the effects included training in specific skills communities lacked. Examples include book keeping, accounting, financial management and others.

**Step 4 - Sort and prioritize:** Communities were engaged to make an overall assessment of the engagement projects with the four universities. They made list of recommendations, with pros and cons, to submit to the research teams. Community work was self-justifying in terms of past experience, formal planning, and what had gone on between university staff and communities. Project leaders were keen to make decisions and prepared to work further with universities.

**Step 5 - Make a decision for the way forward:** Based on the results of the 18 months collaborative research work, it was recommended that universities must continue to engage with communities in which they exist. This would offset the major project costs to communities. The projects would become effective and efficient through university support.

A formalized approach to change impact assessment is inexpensive and can produce high quality decisions. It requires following a process, and having the time to follow a process. The steps above were actually infused in the evaluation research questions administered before the end of the eight case studies (two cases per country) of the ITMUA research project.

The ITMUA project was a three staged Action Research project which entailed a self and needs assessment, data collection from primary sources included cases studied, and dissemination of all information from various data sets.

The project specifically aimed 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).

Participants in the action research process included, in each location, a purposive sample of:

1) Senior academic staff (Deans of Faculties, Heads of Departments, and delegated academics with relevant experience).
2) Key civil society and/or employer stakeholders (related to health, poverty reduction, social inclusion).
3) Senior Ministry staff (for example: Education, Agriculture, Rural Development, Health).
4) Relevant postgraduate students with work experience of national development priorities.
5) An institutional steering group (with representation from each of the above cohorts).

The above work packages were completed and disseminated to all the relevant stakeholders through workshops and steering group meetings which included representatives of the partner universities. The work packages, (especially the needs and self-assessment studies) and the 10 chapter E book published in 2011, if used by the African universities, will guide the partner universities on how best they can elevate community service to the same or better level in relation to the teaching and research components of staff assessment.

Each country had two case studies and data from the cases studied informed the impact part of the collaborative research.

## FINDINGS

Beneficiaries in all the four participating universities enjoyed the following:

1) New business management skills.
2) Exposure to new entrepreneurship ideas, poverty reduction, HIV management and control, and overall increase in quality of life of the intended beneficiaries.
3) Linkage with Government of Botswana, Lesotho, Nigeria and Malawi ministries so that they can access services offered by the same.
4) Change of behaviour through exchange of ideas with successful entrepreneurs and professional trainers from the universities.

The remainder of this paper summarises the core themes arising from stakeholder responses to three questions, with a special focus on impacts of the research project.

### Comparisons on Millennium Development Goals and influence on the University's third mission

Responses across three of the stakeholder reports were remarkably similar. The University of Calabar identified community service contributions from Faculties of Agriculture, Clinical Sciences, Education and Science in the areas of poverty alleviation, health, education and environmental protection, but the general consensus was that the MDGs do not significantly influence the university's third mission work. With regard to the other three universities there was a general feeling that the

MDGs contributed in a piecemeal way to curriculum content and third mission work but more could be done. For instance in Lesotho there was collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Education for food security survival skills and monitoring of free primary provision respectively. There was also collaboration with civil society on cross cutting issues such as HIV/AIDS and food production by way of awareness raising, small business development and pastoral counseling, including the university health centre which serves the local community. Malawi cited examples of MDG issues of gender mainstreaming, HIV/AIDS and environmental management which have guided the university curricula across some programmes such as Education, Social Science, and Environmental Sciences. Most research work was cited as being donor controlled, which was usually MDG focused. Both Lesotho and Malawi cited outreach activities which included theatre for development/education and involvement of Law students in practical legal issues.

Similarly, Botswana was seen as contributing to some extent through its curricula in Adult Education and Social work, and student internships; however NGO collaboration was sporadic and recent efforts aimed to re-brand the university and reduced a sense of community identification with the institution. However, it was felt that the MDGs serve as a benchmark and tool for a number of cross-cutting issues that are addressed in the university curricula such as community development, environmental awareness, global warming and climate change, HIV and AIDS and research activities also address contemporary issues on the MDGs. A recent restructuring initiative has meant that the university recently reviewed its programmes to ensure national relevance. Also a recent conference on population issues involved local communities. Both Botswana and Lesotho also offer distance education programmes to remote communities.

**Are national and regional policies on poverty reduction having an impact on university regional activities in relation to teaching and research to community service?**

Whilst the University of Calabar felt that national and regional policies on poverty reduction were having no impact on the university's work, the other three universities identified ways in which poverty reduction policies were having some impact on their activities. For instance, Malawi cited a climate change programme in the Geography Department that is experimenting directly with farmers on the variety of crops that should be grown in drought vulnerable areas of the country; similarly student practical courses such as 'Early childhood education' and 'Theatre for development' entail practice with real communities where both parties acquire skills. However impact assessment was rarely carried out.

HIV/AIDS peer education programmes operated in all three universities.

Lesotho also cited business management courses, community development and counseling which linked closely to poverty reduction policies. One institute at the university has organized an inter-varsity symposium in relation to the MDGs. The national Vision 2020 document was cited as influencing community education, entrepreneurship and environmental campaigns by students. Finally Botswana felt that although progress had been made in making the university more relevant to local needs, there was a need to improve community service and elevate it to the same level as teaching and research; to work more closely with communities for mutual benefit. Examples of policy impact on the university included HIV/AIDS, business and legal clinics run by students and lecturers that work hand in hand with government programmes and environmental research. Government ministries involve the university in policy development reviews and research done by the university is fed into government policy making.

In addition, Malawi made a pledge to work more closely with its immediate surrounding community and conduct a needs analysis; Botswana made a commitment to be more pro-active in interacting with the wider community and Lesotho agreed to initiate discussions about possible ways to work more closely with government departments. Calabar undertook to organise a sub committee to examine the relevance and appropriateness for African contexts of the draft benchmarking tools which has been provided by the global PURE (Pascal Universities and Regional Engagement) project.

Human and financial resources were cited as an overriding constraint that impacted on the extent to which universities could engage with their communities. Calabar also reported an additional issue in West Africa where communities may already have more knowledge than their universities, for example in terms of mechanization of farms. This could, therefore be an opportunity for universities to learn from their communities in negotiated partnership.

## SUMMARISED IMPACTS OF THE ITMUA PROJECT

The research grant generated was an average amount of about P295,000 (US$ 50,000) per country for 2010 and 2012 while the project lasted for the 18 months. With this amount each of the four participating countries conducted two case studies that fitted the criteria of best practice in community service and engagement. There was a set criteria that all cases needed to meet to qualify to be part of the regional study. Findings indicated short term and long term impacts. The completed work packages indicated and demonstrated that the perceived long term impacts and effectiveness depended on long term funding and multi-sectoral sustainable partnerships.

## Illumination of what counts as community service

Review of previous research and literature, and gap filling took place while the ITMUA project lasted. This culminated in the redefinition of key concepts such as community service and poverty, to inform policy briefs. Community service is described by Lulat (2005, p. 262) as: Extension of university expertise to the world outside the university, the community, in the service of improving the quality of life of the community and which is effected through a university model in which community service is integral to all aspects of the university: mission, structure and organization, hiring and promotion, curriculum and teaching, research and publications etc.

This interpretation implies that community service is an integral and integrating feature of all university life, reflecting participatory dialogue and involvement in all its activities.

The concept of poverty was interpreted in this study as multidimensional within the perspective of 'unfreedoms' (Sen, 1999), so that poverty included psychosocial poverty (Raditloaneng, 2010) and the lack of freedom to live the life that people wanted to live (Sen, 1999).

Positive outcomes in redefining these concepts ranged from increasing individual and community confidence resulting in enhanced participation in public decision making, motivation to learn, income generation activities and improved attention to health issues.

## Physical impacts

The physical presence of universities through expertise and networking within and outside communities that were the focus of the study revitalized local and global networking.

### Revitalised networking, local and global partnerships

To revitalize this mission the project linked with a global network [PASCAL] and its own third mission project [PURE], which had, before the ITMUA inception, 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 built on and adapted that framework so it more effectively addresses the MDGs and African contexts. It was linked to the PASCAL International Observatory which is conducting a worldwide (mostly OECD countries) peer review study of how issues relating to Higher Education and their regional engagement and dialogues are addressed.

Where such regional networks and dialogues exist, the outcomes can have a noticeable impact on community development, as was demonstrated by the findings from the BAAP partnership study (Preece 2009). Some examples from that study include the role that non-formal,

complementary basic education can play in enhancing MDG 2 for universal primary education in Malawi (Nampota, 2009, 2009a) and the potential contribution to MDG 1 for poverty reduction if literacy programmes include vocational skills training in their curricula in Botswana, Lesotho and Malawi. Outcomes could contribute to directly addressing MDG 1 in relation to poverty reduction, MDG 2 in relation to achieving universal primary education, improving literacy rates and reducing gender disparities in educational participation. On December 1st to 3rd, 2010, a global conference on community engagement was held and attracted presentations from both PASCAL, PURE and ITMUA partners to UB Library Auditorium.

A website was established for publishing research findings and this is a step in the right direction towards sustained local, regional and global partnerships.

## Socio-economic impacts

Communities and universities can work together and serve one another in various capacities, thus the use of skilled labor, free professional expertise help reduce the costs of service through the input of the university. Communities became aware that they could fall on the university as and when the need arose.

### Sensitization on understanding and response to the call to serve communities (CS)

A lot of sensitization on CS as mandatory for African Universities, rather than a favour, was illuminated through ITMUA. On the other hand, the importance of higher education institutions to work with communities in which they exist specifically for Africa was also highlighted with a special focus on MDGs. The MDGS priorities are all relevant to the university's third mission of community service. Furthermore, the increasing emphasis that is given to lifelong learning means that universities are no longer the end product of a linear progression route for higher qualifications.

Key concerns for African higher education that have been articulated in the above mentioned world and regional conferences were held to disseminate findings from the four partner universities. Higher education is there to enhance understanding of the issues and ability of universities to respond to them. In this respect academic work should be interdisciplinary, promote critical thinking and active citizenship, service to the communities, human rights promotion, social justice and ethics. The findings restated issues of relevance, responsiveness to societal and national needs, increasing demand, capacity building for research team leadership and management. The project addressed the relationship between African universities, their communities and their development needs with a particular focus on

the university's third mission of community service.

## Psychological impacts

Overall the ITMUA research broadened understanding and practice of teamwork, leadership, management and the linkage of MDGS and sustainable development.

### Team building, leadership and management

All the partner universities were able to complete the work-packages on time, and learned from each other by making use of limited human and non-human resources. Through teaching graduate students, research and service, the project illuminated that higher education institutions need to be part of lifelong learning and educate their students to respond to a rapidly changing world. The ITMUA research team, AAU/DIFD, UB Office of Research and Development (ORD), Government of Botswana Ministries, organizations of the civil society, senior academicians from UB, Ba-Isago, Limkokwin, ABM universities and postgraduate students were able to work together and this generated new knowledge, skills, positive attitudes towards the CS as a recognized and important mandate of African universities.

### Illuminated role of the Millennium Development Goals in influencing the university's third mission

While the 18 months projects lasted, the team took advantage of the training that took place November 2010 and September 2011 under the auspices of the University of Botswana Office of Research and Development (ORD) to inform the linkage between MDGS and Community Service.

In the context of these challenges that the ITMUA project specifically addressed the university third mission as a key strategy towards revitalizing higher education and its development needs in African contexts, with a focus on the MDGs, particularly 1, 2 and 6. 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. Universities have also been traditional elitist and this is a trend the ITMUA project teams intended to help reverse through a dialogic process based on the findings of the study.

### Formulation of national and regional policies on poverty reduction, universal access to primary education, and sustainable development

Recommendations and policy briefs on carving the way forward in regard to the above have been drafted and what is needed is to contextualize them to ensure that community service is coordinated and enforced as engagement rather than a onetime event. The project resulted in recommendations on integration and enhancement of existing activities (research and teaching|) linked to community service) to accommodate MDG priorities in the regions where the participating universities are located.

### Impact on regional and sustainable development

This project explored how higher education can support regional and sustainable development in relation to the MDGs – through:

1) Benchmarking its community service practices – using PASCAL Benchmarking framework as a starting point.
2) Needs analysis with community stakeholders and assessment of how current university activities could address the development needs of their constituencies.
3) Action planning for community engagement and curriculum development of selected programmes, drawing on non-formal education expertise in each institution.
4) Increased level of involvement in community service – particularly through civic engagement.
5) Small scale case study analysis of what works, where, how and why.
6) 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).

## ITMUA outcomes

Besides the completion of the 10 work packages, the specific major outcomes of the ITMUA project as articulated in the project document were achieved. These were as follows:-

1) Summary of stakeholder responses to the research questions across each partner.
2) Case study action plans for two pilot studies per partner.
3) Evaluations of case studies embedded in relevant literature reviews for community engagement in Africa.
4) Policy briefing papers for community service/community engagement in African contexts.
5) A book on community service in four African universities was published by Lentswe la Lesedi with two of the case studies for each participating university in September 2011 (Preece, 2001).

## Conclusions

It can be argued that the ITMUA project is a significant

research for rethinking the current place of community service and how this can be revisited to promote best practices in serving communities through teaching, research and service to reduce human poverty, strategize on promoting universal access to primary education, and giving back to communities that have paid the price for higher education opportunities.

There a strong and solid marriage between the Third Mission of Universities in Africa and efforts to meet the MDGS. National and regional policies and their implementation must be in place to ensure that CS is accorded some importance not only as a hit of the moment but as prolonged engagement to change the lives of populations in which universities are located.

Community service practice landscape will have to change in relation to the load and rating of teaching and research capacity and outputs to reflect and promote best practice and enhanced employability of the desired African university graduate. As more opportunities that require a regionally/globally established network arise, the ITMUA team members can get together again for postgraduate seminars and collaborative teachings through partner visits, research and Community Service (CS) in the same way as the team did after the end of the BAAP in 2009. These have demystified that knowledge essentially comes from the north. The south has expertise and a lot to offer, based on the BAAP and ITMUA project experiences. However, the long term impacts depend on the conceptual, direct and persuasive use value that the partner universities senior management make of the ground breaking research findings of the Implementing the Third Mission of Universities in Africa (ITMUA).

The ITMUA project consisted of an African Partnership network that was recently funded by the British Academy (BAAP) and which conducted small scale case studies, in association with the University of Glasgow, into the effectiveness of non-formal education (NFE) for poverty reduction. This proposal builds on those findings to explore the potential role of NFE in higher education on a wider scale. The ITMUA project will address four questions.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for improvement included the following across all the four universities stakeholder groups:

### More consultation

1) Review of curriculum relevance, in relation to the MDGs and national development priorities, and curriculum planning in consultation with stakeholders.
2) Closer collaboration with stakeholders and representation across relevant decision making bodies in the university.

3) More networking with stakeholders; consultations regarding employment needs, collaborative evaluations with ministries.
4) More integration of teaching, research and community service in consultation with stakeholders.
5) More needs analyses with public organizations before developing programmes and research.
6) More employer/employee related programmes aimed at increased productivity.

### Better marketing and promotion of university work

1) More focused promotion, awareness raising, marketing and dissemination of university research, teaching and community service work.
2) Wider dissemination and availability of research findings and exploration of how findings can inform policy and practices – through press conferences, news bulletins, radio stations, open days etc.
3) More positive support activities such as law and advocacy clinics for the public – to enable the communities to see the university as a resource for them.

### Better coordination

1) Establishment of a coordinated university structure and policy for community engagement, including ring-fenced funding to support third mission and MDG work.
2) A university research policy that prioritises MDG issues, perhaps adopting certain themes for set periods of time.

### New initiatives or development of existing initiatives for student engagement

1) Introduction – or development of internship programmes in the form of service learning programmes, particularly during long vacation periods.
2) More use of regional centres where students could be based as extension workers.
3) More guidance of students to undertake research related to national development priorities.

### New initiatives or development of existing initiatives for staff engagement

1) Involvement of university researchers to investigate good practice in communities.
2) More collaborative research with communities and reviews of impact of community engagement for all parties, not just the student or researcher.
3) More community outreach and awareness raising campaigns by universities on matters such as free primary education, HIV/AIDS, climate change, parent

education, support and counseling for communities in distress.

4) More frequent use by stakeholders of university researchers rather than external consultants.

5) More inter-university collaboration and exchange programmes in relation to teaching and research and progression opportunities.

African universities must all join the bandwagon and strategize to truly strike a balance to teach, dialogue, research and serve communities who paid the price for their existence as Higher Education institutions! Community service (CS) and engagement is not an option, but an overdue obligation and mandate of African universities.

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