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Technical Advisory Services

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark

Danida

Desk appraisal

Building Stronger Universities (BSU) II

File No: 104.Dan.8.L.2600.

May 2013

Executive summary

Against the background of a) the importance of support to capacity building of institutional research capacity in the South, b) the innovative approach of the BSU and c) the fact that the initiative is still only two years old, the appraisal is positive.

However, the appraisal takes note of a range of concerns of varying consequences and implications. Concerns are raised in respect of the programme's:

1. Organizational complexity
2. Governance
3. Administrative costs
4. Platform structure (relevance and effectiveness)
5. Programme documentation and budgets (quality and transparency)
6. M&E framework (level of comprehensiveness and lack of indicators especially at the outcome level)
7. Risks and assumptions (comprehensiveness of analysis and adequacy of monitoring)
8. Quality, coverage and management of the review of BSU I undertaken in 2013.

Concerns and suggestions are structured as formal recommendations. These are underlined in the report and listed in a designated annex attached to this report. The annex follows the structure and intentions of the Danida Aid Management Guideline's (AMG) "Annex 8".

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Introduction

In May 2013, the Appraisal Team (AT) was commissioned to undertake a desk appraisal of the BSU II programme. The AT followed the “Guidelines for Programme Management”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, September 2011 (AMG). The AMG was followed to the extent possible given the envisaged support is not within the framework of a classical bilateral development programme in a Danida partner country with one or more designated South partners. Methodologically, the appraisal was challenged by the inherent features of the desk appraisal format and related resource allocation.

The AMG stipulates the purpose of an appraisal as follows: “provide quality assurance of the programme support document and ultimately to substantiate the granting authority’s funding decision”. The TOR of the AT is annexed.

The appraisal has been undertaken by staff in the Technical Advisory Services different from the staff responsible for the management of the support to the first phase of the programme.

This report contains the views of the Appraisal Team (AT). These do not necessarily correspond to the consolidated views of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Danida) or the views of stakeholders, interlocutors or partners of the Building Stronger Universities (BSU) programme. The AT thanks partners and colleagues for their assistance and support, which greatly facilitated the work of the AT.

Background

In 2011 MFA (Danida) supported BSU I with a two year grant of 60 million DKK. In 2012 this was supplemented with additional two grants of 19 million DKK for research communication etc. and 20 million DKK for fellowships. Both were given for a three year period. Grants were provided for the same budget holders and partners as for BSU.

BSU II is a continuation of BSU I. The indicated implementation period is August 2013-2015. Programme value according to the programme documentation tabled for appraisal is 90 million DKK. According to the TOR of the AT, “a new grant of 100 million DKK is planned to be allocated to BSU (phase II) covering 2 ½ years from August 2013 to January 2016”. This is mirrored in the cover letter to the application received by Danida from Universities Denmark (UD). UD is the BSU budget holder.

BSU I was reviewed in March 2013. A Concept Note (CN) for BSU II was tabled for the MFA Programme Committee (PC) on 18 April 2013. Prior to the PC meeting, the CN was subject to a public hearing on the Danida transparency website. No comments or questions were filed.

The AT appraised the documents listed below. For easy reference - and when relevant – documents are referred to with the numbers indicated in combination with page numbers (e.g. Doc.7, p.19 would refer to the Application’s page 19):

1. Agreement between MFA (Danida) and BSU/DU. December 2010
2. Minute: “Opgørelse af medfinansieringsforpligtelsen i BSU”, Danske Universiteter. 2.oktober 2012

3. Building stronger universities in developing countries – A program review report for Universities Denmark, Chr. Michelsen Institute. March 2013
4. Concept Note presented to the Programme Committee (Danida) on 18 April 2013
5. Summary conclusions from the meeting in the Programme Committee (Danida) on 18 April 2013
6. Cover letter: “Ansøgning om fase 2 af Building Stronger Universities in Developing Countries”, Universities Denmark, 24 April 2013
7. Application. Building Stronger Universities in Developing Countries (BSU). Phase II. Danske Universiteter. 23 April 2013. In addition four (4) platform descriptions were attached as an Annex C and as follows:
8. Growth & Employment Platform. Second Phase. 10th April 2013
9. Environment and Climate. Application for BSU EC Phase II. Submission to DANIDA 22th April 2013
10. Platform on Human Health (PHH). Phase II. April 11, 2013 as well as a document titled “PHH Phase II (2013-2015) ANNEXES”¹
11. Stability, Democracy and Rights. Building Stronger Universities. Phase II Application
12. Danida Evaluation of Support to Research in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management, 2006-2011. Power Point Presentation presented to the Stakeholder Meeting to discuss Emerging Issues. 8. May 2013. Dated 06/05/2013.

The AT consulted with staff of DU, one of the platforms and Danida.

Status and progress of BSU I

The findings of the review of the first phase of BSU were reported in March 2013. The reviewer reported: a) appreciation of the support from South partners, b) developing programme modality including coordination had taken time but now on track, c) the 1 to 1 co-funding modality between UD and Danida was a challenge to all North partners apart from one where – at the University level – direct funds have been made available, and d) limited interest from some researchers in the North due to alleged limited merit in institutional research capacity building as opposed to involvement in academic research projects (Doc.3).

Although mentioned and required in the TOR of the review, the review did not comprehensively look into a) programme management, financial management and procurement procedures and b) administrative structures and procedures. In terms of c) governance structures, the review notes that “the overall structure does in fact look complex as it contains six levels”. However, it goes on to indicate that communication works and that the structure appears to work – although it has taken some time (Doc.3, p.16).

The findings of the review are somewhat countered by the preliminary findings of the on-going evaluation of Danida support to research. These findings were presented at a stakeholder meeting in May 2013. In respect of BSU I, empirical findings were limited to two of the four platforms and to one country (Tanzania). Based on this, the evaluation found a) the design approach to be innovative with political support at highest level in Denmark, b) but reflecting a top-down down approach based on Danish priorities, c) needs and conditions in South not reflected in the design, d) a lack of outcome indicators and baseline for support intervention, e) lack of assessment of Danish university

¹ The annex contains a set of annexes of both narrative, budgetary and LFA nature. Undated. 26 pages.

skill base in Denmark, f) administratively costly (30-35% of budget) due to heavy, complex, slow and unresponsive organisational structure prompting value for money concerns, g) the 1 to 1 co-funding between DU and the Danida grant creating challenges at the level of university departments in the North, and h) little interaction and coordination between platforms in the South (based on the case of Tanzania) (Doc.12, pp.8).

However, the evaluation also found that a) PhD training is appreciated by South and b) joint research proposals and collaboration is appreciated by South (Doc.12, pp.8).

This leads the evaluation team to conclude as follows in respect of BSU I: a) conceptually sound but operationally flawed, b) limited southern ownership, c) initiatives not effectively institutionalised and d) coordination and administrative set-up not appropriate (Doc.12, pp.8).

The Programme Committee (Danida) discussed BSU on its meeting on 18 April 2013 and found “it premature to assess the specific impact of the first phase of the support” (Doc.5, p.1).

As already mentioned, the review report did not cover pertinent issues in respect of financial management including a financial status against approved budget lines leaving the AT with little information on this. However, from discussions with Danida staff, the AT understands that a) little more than half of the funds allocated for BSU I have been utilized, b) as per an agreement between UD and Danida remaining funds from BSU I will be utilized during and in parallel with the BSU II phase to fund the direct production of PhD candidates and c) a Danida Project Completion Report (CPR) is not available in respect of BSU I since the phase is open and - consequently - the accounts remain open.

Justification for support

With a focus on a) capacity building of institutional research capacity and b) the potential contribution of research capacity to development countries’ development, the programme appears relevant and justifiable.

This is echoed both by the review and by the preliminary findings of the related evaluation highlighting that the programme builds on an “Innovative approach” (Doc.12, p.7).

Equally, the Programme Committee (Danida) found “the programme structures – to some extent, still under construction – to look sensible and worthy of continued support” (Doc.5, p.1).

Danida strategies and priorities

The programme is aligned with relevant Danida strategies and priorities. The programme’s intention to include South partners in the decision making process is noted. Over time (from BSU I to BSU II) more resources are being allocated for dedicated South activities.

The review and the evaluation differ in their assessment of a) the extent the platforms are based (only) on Danish priorities and b) the force of the southern voice(s) in the design of the platforms. The review states that the process of preparation of BSU I included extensive meetings with partners in the South and that these were provided a thorough voice. However, the preliminary findings of the evaluation flags a concern and suggests that the programme was “Designed without

thorough assessment of specific needs and conditions in the South” and that the “Platform approach (itself is) based on Danish priorities” (Doc.12, pp.7).

If the findings of the evaluation of BSU are reliable, they appear to belie Danida’s strong intention to move in a more South driven direction in respect of both a) research funding and b) modalities for support to institutional research capacity.

BSU’s programme documentation, progress reporting and activity planning indicate there is a risk the programme drifts towards support towards higher education (individuals) rather than support to capacity building of institutional research capacity (institutions). Danida’s strategies are clearly in favour of the latter. Danida does not presently support tertiary education per se.

Recommendation 1: Programme to maintain focus on a) the needs and priorities of partners in the South in light of the competences of Danish partners and b) institutional research capacity building.

Programme documentation

It appears BSU was originally perceived as a two-phased programme with a first phase – BSU I (2011-2013) – which is coming to a closure now but to be succeeded by a new phase – BSU II (2013-2015). The advantage of two-phased programmes is not apparent to the AT.

A full four year programme could have given a smoother implementation, clarity for partners in the South and in the North and a leaner administration for UD and Danida. Programmes of two years also seem to run counter to Danida’s overall policy on longer programme phases of – if possible – up to five years.

In 2012 two additional programmes (19 million DKK for research communication etc. and 20 million for fellowships) were granted for the same budget holders adding to the administrative and managerial complexity in respect of partners and Danida.

The AT notes with concern the additional administrative burden for the budget holder, the beneficiaries and Danida related to short grants and parallel relatively minor grants. Similarly, the Programme Committee (Danida) “discussed the addition to the programme in 2012 of a component on capacity building in research communication and a fellowship initiative and agreed that it had complicated implementation considerably” (Doc.5, p.1).

Recommendation 2: Danida in possible subsequent support to the programme to a) integrate smaller grants into full programme grants and b) to utilize longer programme phases than two years.

The narrative of the programme document (Application) is limited to 14 pages of which a considerable number of pages are generic and/or non-specific for the application. Such a short document gives limited space for clarification on crucial issues such as intervention logic, justification, design, governance issues and risks and assumptions. A range of these issues are dealt with haphazardly and without thorough explanation and analysis. The brunt of documentation is available in platform descriptions attached to the main application. These platform descriptions cover the four (4) platforms and each are between 25 and 89 pages long with some additional 229 pages of documents made available online on <http://bsuge.org/documents/>

Dividing the document in an overall framework document with attached platform documents appears to have provided a) a lack of harmonization between platform documents and b) a lack of overall approach at the programme level.

This approach to programme documentation and the plethora of document sources makes it difficult for the appraiser - and assumable consequently also the appropriation authority - to fully comprehend the documentation.

The AT understands that Danida has impressed upon UD that the present level of quality of the programme documentation is not at the level of quality usually expected from a Danida programme document. Subsequent applications from UD (e.g. a BSU III) would need to be preceded with adequate and effective deliberations between Danida and the entity under UD which has the mandate to decide on design and quality issues and impress these on all partners of the BSU structure.

The AT stresses that the intention of Danida's support to BSU is not to provide funding for individual research projects. Such projects are potentially supported under the Consultative Research Committee on Development Research (FFU) and are thus subject to scrutiny and peer review under that funding window.

The support to BSU is solely to enhance the capacity of research institutions in the South. Maintaining stringent screening of budgets and activity plans under BSU remains imperative in order to ensure only institutional capacity building is supported – and not individual research projects. The BSU Secretariat has a key role to play in this. The AT assumes Danida holds the Rectors' Conference, the UD and the BSU Secretariat accountable for ensuring that resources made available under the BSU grant are not diverted into support of individual research.

Recommendation 3: Subsequent applications from BSU (e.g. a BSU III) to be in line with Danida quality standards for programme documentation. This includes stronger clarity on the hierarchy between sub-documents (platform descriptions) and harmonization in terms of conceptual content as well as appearance.

Budgets and administrative costs

The budgets are annexed to the programme document (the Application). The budgets in respect of the four individual platforms do not appear to be harmonized or presented in the same way across all platforms. This makes it difficult for the AT to analyse the budgets. For instance in respect of one platform, costs towards “Governance, management, coordination and administration” is listed as a work package (WP) budget line in the main budget. In another platform budget, the same cost item is listed as “Secretariat – Governance, coordination, communication” and the cost is listed under an individual budget line outside the framework of work packages (WP). (Doc.7, p.15&17).

The Application's general budget line for the services of the Danida Fellowship Centre (DFC) – and in each of the platforms budgets – makes it difficult to ascertain how much of this line go to activities (actual fellowships) and how much to DFC's overhead and administration. It could be interesting to have the latter figure in order to be able to ascertain the overall administrative cost related to the BSU II budget.

The preliminary findings of the evaluation found the BSU to be administrative costly with findings of 30-35 % of budget for administration. Consequently, the evaluation team raised value for money concerns (Doc.12, p.8).

In respect of the BSU II programme document (Application), the AT's rapid budget analysis suggests administrative costs (i.e. costs for overhead, communication, administration, secretariat, governance and similar line items) against activities and suggested outputs to be 25-30%.

While the AT appreciates that considerable administrative costs could be necessary in the first phase of the programme, the AT is less certain this remains necessary in the second and possible later phases.

It could be discussed what cost level is fair and reasonable in respect of this cost item. The way budgets in BSU II are designed presently makes it difficult to precisely ascertain the full range of administrative costs.

In respect of directly budgeted overhead, the Programme Committee (Danida) "acknowledged the importance of not pushing the ratios too low and accepted the proposed 20% and 12% respectively while stressing that this is the upper limit. Specifically, it was requested that concerted effort go into reducing the administrative expenses, not least to the secretariat and that, in the longer term, it is the responsibility of Universities Denmark to bear all costs associated with coordination among the Danish institutions" (Doc.5, p.2).

Recommendation 4: Applicant to revise budgets so they a) are harmonized between platforms and b) provide a clear indication of administrative costs at both platform and overall programme level.

Review (BSU I) and inception review (BSU II)

The review undertaken in 2013 concluded South institutions in general have appreciated the programme. Within the limitations of this desk appraisal, it has not been possible to corroborate this.

The AT expresses concern in respect of the quality and scope of the review. The review is silent in respect of both programme governance and programme financial management issues - even though both issues constituted part of the TOR for the review. The AT notes that Danida's (TAS') role in the review was limited to input in respect of the design of the TOR and participation in an observation/resource person role.

The AT understands that it was agreed from the outset that the review of BSU I was to be managed by UD. The AT is concerned that a development partner (UD) was put in charge of in effect managing its own review. It appears such a modality could compromise both due diligence and good practices for governance of Danida programmes as outlined in AMG.

The AT finds that if funds are appropriated to BSU II, an early inception review in late 2013 or early 2014 under Danida's (TAS') full management and control would be imperative. The AT understands and acknowledges that it has already been agreed between UD and Danida that Danida will be responsible for undertaking future reviews. Consequently, it should appear clearly in the budget attached to the Application that the budget line for the inception review is not allocated to

UD but remains with Danida (TAS). Possibly up to DKK 500.000 should be allocated in order to ensure an adequately thorough and comprehensive inception review involving field visits to as many South partners as possible (Doc.7, p.19 refers).

This is reflected in the minutes from the meeting of the Danida Programme Committee in that it “took note of the limitations of the 2013 review and expressed satisfaction that TAS is planning to undertake its own supplementary review” (Doc.5, p.1).

The AT appraised the agreement between UD and Danida (Doc.1) and the UD minute outlining the modality for measuring UD’s 1 to 1 contribution to the Danida grant (Doc.2). The early inception review should include an assessment of the modality and whether the 1 to 1 contribution is indeed attained.

Recommendation 5: Undertake Danida (TAS) managed early inception review ensuring both governance and financial management issues are thoroughly reviewed. Review to assess the 1 to 1 contribution from UD to the Danida grant. Allocate necessary funding for the review (up to DKK 500.000).

Governance

The governance structure of BSU appears complicated. The exact roles and responsibilities between the various levels of governance within the BSU are not clearly defined in the programme documentation and they are not clear to the AT. Whether e.g. there is a right to instruction and authority from the Rectors’ Conference (i.e. the budget holder) to the Secretariat of BSU at UD to individual platforms and institutions - are not clear to the AT. The right to instruction appears important both in respect of a) programme efficiency and b) the commitment made by the Rectors’ Conference and UD to co-finance Danida’s contribution 1 to 1.

A lack of clear line of instruction could be the reason behind the fact that the co-funding appears to have been difficult to achieve at the level of all departments of all Universities in the North. However in respect of one of the partner institutions in the North (University of Aarhus), direct funding was made available in respect of the 1 to 1 commitment. The review makes due reference to this.

Likewise the BSU Secretariat at UD seems to have little say vis-à-vis programming at the level of the platforms and individual university departments. In that sense the BSU programme appears to be little more than a cluster of projects (platforms) with relatively weak overall management at the level of programme (the BSU Secretariat at UD).

There has been a good dialogue between Danida and the Rectors’ Conference. But it is the impression of the AT that the cooperation between Danida and the BSU Secretariat has been less effective. This could be due to lack of a clear and concise mandate of the BSU Secretariat vis-à-vis BSU partners in relation to instruction and direction.

Each of the four platforms in the North are coordinated by fully funded platform coordinators. The Secretariats of these are placed at the university department chairing the platform in the North. This obviously increases communication between the platform chairs and the platform Secretariats. But it does not necessarily ensure platform coordination across platforms independent of the interests of

individual departments and Universities. To enhance coordination between platforms and strengthen BSU, it could be considered placing the Secretariats of the four platforms in the same physical locality. This could also potentially provide South partners a clearer line of communication with partners in the North.

Recommendation 6: Strengthen and clarify the role of the Rectors' Conference vis-à-vis BSU.

Programme complexity and number of partners

With a relatively limited programme budget, concern should be mentioned in respect of the high number of involved partners and the related transaction and opportunity costs. In this respect, the BSU design appears complicated involving a considerable number of countries, partners, institutions in the North and in the South as well as platforms. This adds to the overall administrative costs (administration, coordination, overhead and communication) with the risk of depleting funds available for actual activities benefitting partners in the South.

BSU is involved in a) 5 countries in the South, b) 4 thematic platforms, c) with 11 partner institutions/Universities in the South and d) involving 8 Universities in the North. This set-up produces a total of 17 platform interfaces between any of the given platforms and institutions in the South.

A considerable number of Danish partners and/or platforms are active at the same institutions in South prompting concerns about both overall administrative costs, absorption capacity in the South, and communication and coordination. In two cases a total of 3 platforms have interfaces with one and the same institution in the South (University of Ghana and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Ghana).

The AT finds it imperative to reduce the complexity of the programme through a reduction of the number of involved countries, partners and institutions. It is beyond the scope of this appraisal to determine how these changes should look like. But the following principles could constitute a starting point on how to decide on this in order to gain a less complex and potentially more effective programme:

1. Partnerships to be South driven
2. Concentration on the smallest and weakest South partners
3. Engage where other donors do not

Recommendation 7: Reduce programme complexity by decreasing the number of platforms and partners. Concentrate on those that a) are South driven, b) have the smallest and weakest partners in the South and c) do not attract interest from other donors.

The budget holder should be challenged on this issue and it should latest be resolved at the initiation of a possible BSU III. The topic of programme complexity and number of partners should be included in the TOR for the inception review for BSU II and thus resolved and decided on not later than last Quarter of 2013 or first Quarter of 2014. The possibilities indicated above could inform the inception review and lead it in the direction of scaling down the number of partners with a view to prepare an orderly phasing out of related engagements prior to a possible BSU III.

The review suggests that the platform model remains valid: “As such, the platform model seems to be a flexible and adaptive model which builds on capacities in Denmark for excellence on the one side, and active domestic and international networking on the other” (Doc.3, p.3). This is countered by the evaluation which states that the “Coordination and administrative set-up is not appropriate for the aims of BSU” (Doc.12, p.8).

The Danida Programme Committee in its meeting 18 April 2013 found that “the thematic platforms are maintained in the current phase as a tool to engage and rally the Danish institutions although the 2013 review found them to be of little relevance and usage to partners in the South. However, the Committee also made it clear that an alternative would need to be developed for the 3rd phase of the programme” (Doc.5, p.2).

Along the same lines, the AT does not see the benefit of many different platforms. Concern should be raised over the fact that in some cases the same South partner is exposed to up to three different platforms in parallel. Over time it will be necessary to merge platforms and potentially develop an alternative to platform based programme delivery.

Recommendation 8: Analyse and determine programme complexity through the inception review of BSU II. At the earliest develop a better and more integrated concept and modality than platforms.

Development Objective, M&E and indicators

Programme documentation (the Application) states the development objective of BSU as follows: “In a partnership between universities in the global South and Denmark capacity of BSU South partners enhanced by strengthening an enabling institutional environment for research, research-based education, and knowledge management and dissemination to promote sustainable economic, social and political development” (Doc.7, p.8).

This overall development objective is elaborated with references to a) contribution to development in general, b) nodes of innovation and knowledge production, c) provision of solutions to local and global challenges and d) production of graduates that can contribute to development of their societies.

The review found that BSU adds value in respect of contributing to the capacity building which is necessary to implement national (South) research policies (Doc.3, p.10). This is indeed a positive and interesting outcome. The AT finds that BSU should measure such important developments within a comprehensive M&E framework and against formal indicators.

The review found it to be “necessary to develop a more comprehensive monitoring framework that will capture results and impacts at a scale that extends beyond the individual platforms” (Doc.3, p.27).

The evaluation found “No Outcome indicators (only product) – no baseline.” (Doc.12, p.7). This is mirrored by the programme documentation (Application) for BSU II which states that “In phase 1, indicators have mainly been at the output level. For phase II efforts will be made to establish indicators at outcome level” (Doc.7, p.13).

The AT is in agreement with that finding of the evaluation. It notes with concern that the lack of outcome indicators make it difficult to keep track of the development of the programme. The AT notes the applicant's intention to produce these during the course of BSU II. But the AT finds no references in the programme document as to issues of when, by whom and how the indicators will be produced.

A lack of outcome indicators will make it equally difficult for an end-evaluation to conclude on the actual outcome of the investment of the combined Danida and UD resource input.

It is relevant to challenge the programme to develop indicators and monitoring systems in respect of whether a) institutions indeed are strengthened generically, b) how this impacts on development in the South, c) if capacitated institutions indeed produce innovation and knowledge, d) if capacitated institutions contribute to solutions and e) if graduates contribute to society.

The programme Monitoring and Evaluation framework does include some indicators and baseline issues. But these are limited to the level of individual institutions and very rarely at the level of platform and certainly not at the programme level i.e. the level of development objective.

A range of immediate objectives are outlined in the programme documentation. These are at the level of individual platforms. The AT is not convinced that placing immediate objectives at the level of platforms is the best interpretation and utilization of immediate objectives. There is a risk platforms will work in very different directions. This risk is exuberated by the fact that several platforms work at the same institutions in the South. It could create confusion as to the objective of the programme's support through platforms when institutions might be exposed to different immediate objectives from different platforms.

Recommendation 9: Improve programme documentation with a comprehensive M&E framework including indicators at all levels of the programme in line with Danida quality standards.

Risks and assumptions

Risks and assumptions are under-developed in the programme documentation for BSU II (Doc. 7, p.13). The review takes a similar stance in respect of BSU I stating that "There is no formal risk analysis... a risk analysis would need to disaggregate risks into the various elements...and assign...probability value to each element – this has not been done" and "There are no formal risk analysis in any of the 4 proposals". (Doc.3, p.23&28). The assessment of the review remains valid also in respect of the programme documentation (Application) for BSU II.

Recommendation 10: Programme documentation to be improved with a formal risk analysis in line with Danida quality standards.

List of recommendations (Annex 8 from AMG)

Title of programme	Building Stronger Universities (BSU) II
File number	104.Dan.8.L.2600.
Appraisal report date	18 May 2013
Board meeting date	12 June 2013
Summary of possible recommendations <u>not</u> followed (to be filled in by TAS)	
<p>Overall conclusion of the appraisal</p> <p>Against the background of a) the importance of support to capacity building of institutional research capacity in the South, b) the innovative approach of the BSU and c) the fact that the initiative is still only two years old, <u>the appraisal is positive.</u></p> <p>However, the appraisal takes note of a range of concerns of varying consequences and implications. Concerns are raised in respect of the programme's:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organizational complexity 2. Governance 3. Administrative costs 4. Platform structure (relevance and effectiveness) 5. Programme documentation and budgets (quality and transparency) 6. M&E framework (level of comprehensiveness and lack of indicators especially at the outcome level) 7. Risks and assumptions (comprehensiveness of analysis and adequacy of monitoring) 8. Quality, coverage and management of the review of BSU I undertaken in 2013. 	
Recommendations by the desk appraisal	Follow-up by the Technical Advisory Services (TAS)
Justification for support, Danida strategies and priorities	
<u>Recommendation 1:</u> Programme to maintain focus on a) the needs and priorities of partners in the South in light of the competences of Danish partners and b) institutional research capacity building.	
Programme documentation	
<u>Recommendation 2:</u> Danida in possible subsequent support to the programme to a) integrate smaller grants into full programme grants and b) to utilize longer programme phases than two years.	

<u>Recommendation 3:</u> Subsequent applications from BSU (e.g. a BSU III) to be in line with Danida quality standards for programme documentation. This includes stronger clarity on the hierarchy between sub-documents (platform descriptions) and harmonization in terms of conceptual content as well as appearance.	
Budget and administrative costs	
<u>Recommendation 4:</u> Applicant to revise budgets so they a) are harmonized between platforms and b) provide a clear indication of administrative costs at both platform and overall programme level.	
Review (BSU I) and inception review (BSU II)	
<u>Recommendation 5:</u> Undertake Danida (TAS) managed early inception review ensuring both governance and financial management issues are thoroughly reviewed. Review to assess the 1 to 1 contribution from UD to the Danida grant. Allocate necessary funding for the review (up to DKK 500.000).	
Governance	
<u>Recommendation 6:</u> Strengthen and clarify the role of the Rectors' Conference vis-à-vis BSU.	
Programme complexity and number of partners	
<u>Recommendation 7:</u> Reduce programme complexity by decreasing the number of platforms and partners. Concentrate on those that a) are South driven, b) have the smallest and weakest partners in the South and c) do not attract interest from other donors.	
<u>Recommendation 8:</u> Analyse and determine programme complexity through the inception review of BSU II. At the earliest develop a better and more integrated concept and modality than platforms.	
Development Objective, M&E and indicators	
<u>Recommendation 9:</u> Improve programme documentation with a comprehensive M&E framework including indicators at all levels of the programme in line with Danida quality standards.	

Risks and assumptions	
<u>Recommendation 10:</u> Programme documentation to be improved with a formal risk analysis in line with Danida quality standards.	

I hereby confirm that the above-mentioned issues have been addressed properly as part of the appraisal and that the appraisal has provided the recommendations stated above.

Signed in Copenhagen on 18 May 2013 by Henrik Vistisen, AT team leader

I hereby confirm that TAS has undertaken the follow-up activities stated above. In cases where recommendations have not been accepted, reasons for this are given either in the table or in the notes enclosed.

Signed in _____ on the _____ by _____
 (Head of Department, Technical Advisory Services (TAS), Danida

Terms of Reference (TOR)

Terms of Reference Appraisal of "Building Stronger Universities in Developing Countries" Phase two

1. Background

"Building Stronger Universities in Developing Countries" (BSU) under Universities Denmark (UD) is a partnership between research and higher education institutions in developing countries and in Denmark. BSU is organised in four thematic platforms based on needs in partner countries and an assessment by UD of the Danish competencies and the priorities in the Danish development cooperation:

- Environment and Climate
- Growth and Employment
- Human Health
- Stability, Democracy and Rights

The themes are inter-linked and collaboration and interaction between platforms are strongly encouraged. BSU comprises cooperation involving the seven universities in Denmark and selected universities/research institutions in Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Nepal. Focus is on institutional capacity building, including:

1. strengthening the capacity and quality of PhD, Bachelor and Master education,
2. strengthening the capacity to undertake research and,
3. disseminating research knowledge to stakeholders and supporting PhDs.

Phase two of BSU will primarily be a consolidation phase where the partnerships will be consolidated and further strengthened. Focus will continue to be on institutional capacity building.

In 2011, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) provided a two-year grant of 60 million DKK to Universities Denmark/BSU (phase one), and in addition, in 2012 a three-year grant of 19 million DKK was allocated for capacity building within research communication, dissemination, and networking for the same partners. Finally, in 2012 a new fellowship programme - the BSU Scholarship Programme – was approved with a total budget of 20 million DKK for a two-year period.

In mid-2013 a new two year grant of 100 million DKK is planned to be allocated to BSU (Phase two) covering 2 ½ years from August 2013 to January 2016.

The general agreement on BSU between UD and MFA/Danida, incl. overhead, cost-sharing between Denmark and partner countries, co-financing etc. will also apply for phase two.

In the beginning of 2013, a review of the current support was undertaken by Universities Denmark. The review report and a joint MFA/UD note on the key findings and conclusions refer.

2. Objective

The overall objective of the appraisal is to provide quality assurance of phase two in terms of design and documentation and ultimately to substantiate and qualify the information available to the granting authority in its decision to appropriate funds or not.

The specific objectives of the appraisal are to assess the *added value* by BSU and the *management/governance structures* of BSU.

The recommendations should be targeted adjustments with emphasis on ensuring a well-functioning and efficient phase two of BSU.

3. Outputs and timing/reporting

An appraisal report will be prepared with the key questions and proposed focus, not exceeding 10 pages excluding annexes, with the main findings, conclusion and recommendations. Annex 8, Template for summary of recommendations of the appraisal report must also be prepared.

The appraisal will start ultimo April and the draft appraisal report will be forwarded to TAS no later than May 17.

4. Scope of Work

The scope of work will include, but not be limited to, the following assessments:

- ***The value added by BSU:***
 - The relevance and effectiveness of having *four thematic platforms, the number of countries and institutions involved*;
 - *The possible synergy* between activities of the BSU programme and other (Danish) research programmes and relevant Danida strategies;
 - The quality and relevance of the *partnerships* between actors in Denmark and in partner countries, including the possibilities of South-South collaboration;
 - The *balance, relationship and relevance* between support to general capacity building of the partner institutions (e.g. in financial management/administration) and more targeted capacity building within research (e.g. in accreditation, PhD-supervision, within academic areas of each platform);
 - The *complementarity* of the second phase of BSU vis-à-vis the two other BSU grants (communication and fellowship);

- **The management and governance structures of BSU:**

- the *governance and communication structures*, e.g. on the overall, platform and institutional levels;
- The adequacy of the *monitoring and supporting systems*;
- The *assumptions and risks* and the possible consequences for the activities of BSU;
- The *programme management*, including the roles and mandates of the various actors involved (Steering Committees/Boards etc.) at platform levels and at UD levels, including the UD secretariat;
- The *proposed BSU budget*, including budget allocations between the four platforms and the UD secretariat;
- Assessment of the pertinence of *the recommendations* of the MFA Programme Committee against the findings of the appraisal.

Based on the findings and conclusions, the appraisal team will make recommendations as required.

5. Method of Work.

The team will review documentation and consult with key stakeholders in Denmark.

The appraisal team forwards the appraisal report to UD the week beginning on Monday 20 May with a view to obtain comments not later than the week beginning Monday 27 May.

6. Team

The team will consist of:

Mr Henrik Vistisen, (team leader).

The team will be supported by resource persons from MFA/Danida: Tove Degnbol and Darriann Riber.

7. Documentation

- Application for BSU second phase, April 2013
- Concept note for the second phase, March 2013
- Review report, March 2013 + joint MFA/DU note on the key findings and recommendations.
- Agreement between MFA and BSU/DU (December 2010)
- Outline of a strategic framework for Danish support for development research, 2013-2018
- Minutes from the Programme Committee meeting 18 April 2013 (to be forwarded by TAS when available)