

# UNIVERSITY OF BUEA - CAMEROON



## RESEARCH AND INNOVATION MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT FOR AFRICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (RIMI4AC) PROJECT

**REPORT ON THE CENTRAL AFRICA REGIONAL  
CONFERENCE OF THE RIMI4AC PROJECT AT  
THE UNIVERSITY OF BUEA; 17 TO 19 JUNE, 2010**

June 2010



**RIMI4AC**

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## PREAMBLE

The Conference was co-organised by Research and Innovation Services (RIMS) Belgium, the Association of Commonwealth Universities, the Pan-African Institute for University Governance, the Central Africa Office of the Association of Francophone Universities and the host, University of Buea, under the theme, '*Mobilization and the Training for the Improvement of Research and Innovation Management in the Central African Region*'. Its organization was part of RIMI4AC project activities and was intended to have synergy with activities to mark the official inauguration of the newly created Pan-African Institute for University Governance (PAIUG) in Yaoundé, Cameroon. Over 100 delegates, representing some African universities, research institutes, education ministries and international organizations involved in the promotion of higher education in Africa attended this first regional conference of the RIMI4AC project at the University of Buea.

RIMI4AC is a three-year project which aims at strengthening the capacity of research institutions in the African and Caribbean regions to sustainability and a more effective management of research and innovation activities, through the development of capacities and skills of institutional research and innovation managers, as well as, the improvement of communication between researchers, managers and policy makers. The project is also committed to building, strengthening and promoting partnerships, collaboration and networks in research in Africa and the Caribbean.

The conference was officially opened by the host Vice Chancellor, Prof. Vincent Titanji, who lauded the RIMI4AC project, reiterated the important place given to research in the Higher Education sector and pledged full participation of the University of Buea for the success of RIMI4AC activities. Conference activities comprised seminars, a panel discussion, training workshops and a cultural evening. The event featured a special session on Commonwealth Scholarships in Cameroon, which was jointly facilitated by the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, UK and the Cameroon Commonwealth Scholarship Agency. The conference was organized in two major parts as follows;

1. Seminar presentations and panel discussions: This was open to all participants.
2. Special Session on Commonwealth Scholarships
3. Training workshops: These were delivered over two sessions. The first session addressed strategic management skills, while the second workshop addressed operational management skills and the training of trainers

## Session Reports

### Part One: Seminar Presentations and Panel Discussion

#### Day 1: Thursday 17 June, 2010

##### A) Issues in Research Governance: An Overview by Dr. John Kirkland

This presentation was aimed at highlighting governance issues within the research process. The presentation commenced with the definition of governance and its need in research. This need reflects the global trend in research which among other factors is becoming more competitive, project-based, and dependent on external funding as well as being recognized by governments as important for growth. These different aspects impose a need for greater accountability in research. Research is no longer limited to the scientific process BUT also requires accountability to funding agencies. The research environment has become more complex as financial, contractual, legal/ethical and staffing issues also need to be addressed. In this regard the following questions were discussed:

- Who can instigate research?
- Who can commit the institution?
- Who owns the results of the research?
- Who benefits financially?
- Who reports to whom? and
- Who takes responsibility when things go wrong- i.e. financial, legal and reputation responsibility?

**The expected outcomes:** If all the above issues are addressed, it will lead to more accountability with regard to the management of research funds at a national, institutional, departmental and team levels.

##### B) The Cameroon Government's Vision on the Improvement of University Governance by Prof Nyasse Barthelemy (MINESUP)

This discourse started with a presentation of legal texts creating structures for the promotion of research in the Ministry of Higher education (Decree No. 2005/142 of 29 April 2005, Chapter 1V art. 45; Section II art 47).

The mission of the Ministry includes:-

- The mobilization of state resources; and
- The valorization of scientific and technical innovations

The expected outcome is to create support systems for the promotion of research. It is also aimed at creating a synergy between research institutions and researchers.

### C) Governance and Risk Management by Dr Frank Heemsker

The main objective was to share ways in which research results can be used for the benefit of the society. How research results could leave laboratories and be used to solve societal problems. One way out is to create innovation economies and not solely knowledge economies. There must be a link and interrelationship between the society, academia, industry and investors. The main roles of the university are education, research and governance, focusing on R&D. Several processes are involved and different models have been developed to manage knowledge transfer at different stages, namely during the pre-award and post-award stages. Inputs and outputs need to be identified taking into consideration the existence of management pitfalls that are associated with culture, organization and people. In this regard, research managers are KEY as they are expected to provide management and leadership skills for successful knowledge transfer. The expected outcome is to create an innovational and not just a research environment.

### D) Research Governance at the University of Yaoundé I (UYI) by Dr. Mbacham Wilfred

The University of Yaoundé I research landscape is comprised of about 100 (one hundred) laboratories. Research management objectives of the university are geared towards the following:-

- State-of-the-art inventory/records (Who, what, where and how) and
- Creation of poles of excellence.

UYI had earlier organized a research governance workshop, which addressed the following issues; information sharing, data base creation, funding, etc. and adopted 16 resolutions for its action plan. The UYI research governance strategy objectives included obtaining the following:

- Efficient and visible system;
- Human resource development;
- Research infrastructural investment; and
- Ways and Means

Dr Wilfred cited the *The Biotechnology Research Centre* that has successfully attracted FP7 funding for the PRD College and future investments.

With this set-up the project was able to achieve:

- External funding aggressiveness (obtained EU-FP6/FP7 for its projects)
- Establishing an Office for grant administration and professional profiling.

The expected outcome is to create an institution that provides an enabling research landscape by establishing mutual support efforts.

### E) Improving University Research Governance in West and Central African Universities by Dr Godfred Frempong

The objective, he said, was to increase and to improve:

- Human resource training;
- Knowledge production and;
- The extension of services

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The project was conceived because of the following reasons:

- Gaps in linking university research with development priorities;
- Weak linkages between knowledge producers and knowledge users;
- Lack of interest in university research by political systems; and
- Lack of capacity to provide effective direction, organization and management of university research

The following components were targeted:-

- Institutional and individual capacity building  
This area considers governance tools (i.e. basic texts, strategic resources and operational plan and resource mobilization), building capacities on science and technology and policy research and training modules; and training modules on research management and administration.
- Multi-stakeholder dialogue  
This may take several forms including annual forums, collaborative e-platform and field visits.
- Knowledge production  
Dr Frempong ended up by saying that the expected outcome of the project was to improve capacity-building in research governance in West and Central African universities.

#### **F) Research Management at the University of Botswana** by Prof. Isaac Mazonde

One of the advantages the University of Botswana has is being a member of SARIMA which is a much more advanced association when compared to similar neighbouring institutions. In the Southern African region the universities are well developed with advanced infrastructure and are able to undertake research initiatives which are more in line with the national research agenda. They therefore benefit more from Government support.

The University of Botswana has been able to improve and consolidate research due to the establishment of research management structures such as;

- Research risk committees
  - Office of research and development
  - Office of International Education and Partnership
  - School of Graduate Studies
- The Office of research and development has as its functions
- Identification of funding opportunities
  - Budget and research proposal preparation
  - Commercialization of outputs
  - Ethics/ IPR

He noted that the expected outcome was to contribute to University of Botswana becoming “a leading academic centre of excellence in Africa and the world”.

A question and answer session followed during which contributions focused on the need for capacity building and collaborative research initiatives. These keynote addresses were

followed by a cultural evening during which the participants were entertained with Cameroonian traditional dances and cultural activities.

## **Day 2: Friday 18 June, 2010**

### **Panel Discussion**

The panel discussion started at 9:45am and topics for discussion were based on the presentations of Day 1. The Chair and Moderator for the session were Prof. Jean Tabi Manga, Rector of the University of Yaounde II, Cameroon and Prof. François Jerome, special adviser to the Cameroon Minister of Higher Education, respectively. Other panel members for this session included Dr. Frank Heemskerck, Dr. John Kirkland, Dr. Frempong and Professor Mazonde.

### **During the discussion the following recommendations were made:**

- 1- That Research Institutes should cater for the needs of young researchers, ensuring monitoring and equipping them well enough before giving them autonomy only after they have become capable of writing projects well and attracting external funding.
- 2- That in order to end the isolation of researchers and administrators, there was a need to promote networking. In this regard, it was suggested that the creation of a network for research and innovation management in Central Africa (CARIMA) should be created to bring together universities, research centres and industries to share experience and collectively strengthen and enhance research.
- 3- That the quality of our research in the short term could be improved by the way we manage (governance) rather than expecting government structures to change abruptly.
- 4- For researchers to be encouraged to return and stay in their home countries, better working conditions should be provided and experienced (old) researchers should become more flexible and willing to coach younger ones.
- 5- That whatever research structure is established should be based on transparency (where every bit of money is used for its research purpose), rapidity (with bills paid in less time), and efficacy (where at least 80% of allocated funds go to enhance research).
- 6- That the administration should be done properly so as not to hinder, but rather support research. Research offices should be set up at each level of University, Faculty and Department.

At the end of the panel discussion Prof. Tabi Manga thanked the different partners for the successful programme in Yaounde and now Buea. He praised the authorities of the University of Buea for the adequate resources put at the disposal of the conference participants. He summarised the activities and concluded that everything has been geared towards looking for ways that our Universities can be more performant and be at the service of development; that is, how the results of our research can be effectively used at society level for development. He revisited the issue of accountability and recommended transparency in managing research money. The session ended at 11:30am. It was followed by the special session (closed) on Commonwealth scholarships.

Closing remarks for the seminar and workshop sessions were made during lunch. The visiting rectors and other senior management of higher education, through a spokesperson thanked the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Buea for the welcome they had received. They expressed the hope that all concerned would continue to work to improve the governance of higher education in Africa. In his concluding remarks, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Buea appreciated the efforts that the RIMI4AC team and other members of the University of Buea community had put into the organization of the conference. He moved for a resolution to be taken to create a network for research and innovation management in Central Africa and this was approved unanimously. The lunch marked the official closing ceremony for the series of seminars organised to mark the official inauguration of IPAGU and the organisation of the first regional conference of the RIMI4AC project in Central Africa. Most of the senior managers from Central Africa (including some rectors and vice-rectors), however, stayed to participate in the training workshops. It is worth noting that both senior and junior managers were present for the strategic and operational management training sessions.

## **2). Special Session on Commonwealth Scholarships**

This special session was co-chaired by the Dr John Kirkland (Deputy Secretary General, Development and Executive Secretary of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, UK) and Madame Eno Lafon (Director of the Department of Student Assistance to Students and Orientation). The session brought together some former Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows, as well as, potential applicants for Commonwealth and other scholarship schemes. Participants came from four universities in Cameroon-Universities of Dschang, Douala, Yaounde 1 and Buea. These participants were lecturers and some also held administrative positions in their universities.

The session provided an opportunity for Dr Kirkland to give an update of the situation of Commonwealth scholarships and presented an evaluation of the performance of Cameroonian applicants over the years. It was noted that the number of Cameroonian applicants who win the scholarship has steadily decreased over the years. Participants were called upon to look at the possible reasons for this trend and make proposals for improving the success rate of Cameroonians in this highly competitive scholarship and fellowship scheme. Madame Lafon gave an overview of the functioning of the Cameroon Commonwealth Scholarship Agency, which is housed in and coordinated by the Ministry of Higher Education, Cameroon. She insisted that the recommendations of the Agency to the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission (CSC) were based strictly on the basis of merit, after an evaluation of applications received at the Agency. The discussions led to two major recommendations;

- The publicity on the availability of the scholarships should be improved.
- The National Agency should be more rigorous and recommend only candidates who can compete with other applicants from the rest of the Commonwealth (A more global evaluation framework).

This meeting also gave the Alumni the chance to sign the Directory of Former Scholars and Fellows and to reaffirm the values that they share.

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## Workshop Reports

### Part 2: Training Workshops

#### **STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP:** Frank Heemskerk

This workshop that started at 3pm was a follow-up of the Thursday presentation on strategic research management. Dr. Heemskerk began by addressing some strategic research issues.

- 1- What do you want to do? Consider especially how you would contribute to innovate output, feed pipeline with new/improved products, enter new markets and enhance your visibility.
- 2- What do you want to avoid? Be aware and careful not to lose key knowledge (documentation, archives, etc) experts and leaders. Renew infrastructure and avoid working in isolation.
- 3- Where is the value in joint projects? Enhances innovation of products and processes, new/improved products, diversification of portfolio, etc.
- 4- Why collaborate? Gives access to new knowledge, valuable materials, information, databases, achieves critical mass (works faster, disseminates widely, increases visibility and opens up to new experts including future staff).

There would be international challenges and enormous adjustments to make, but all worthwhile.

Essentially because science is a global activity, competition also becoming more and more globalised and challenges and problems common, there is need for international cooperation.

He further discussed the main challenges in partnering and free help resources.

- 1- IDEA: emphasis laid on novelty/change, scope/final objective all developed in a final summary.
- 2- FINDing partners to form a consortium while considering complementarity, division of roles, filling in gaps, and cooperation model.
- 3- DEVELOPing proposal structure by fine-tuning objectives, designing work plan and work packages.
- 4- Writing the proposal
- 5- Executing and closing the project.

Rational issues to consider would be communication differences in management culture, different timelines, different expectations, international differences given that financial, cultural and legal frameworks differ.

He provided the following useful websites; <http://www.ipr-helpdesk.org>, [www.finance-helpdesk.org](http://www.finance-helpdesk.org), and [www.responsible-partnering.org](http://www.responsible-partnering.org).

### **ROLE OF Research Management Office (RMO)**

Furthermore Dr Heemskerk discussed the role of the Research Management Office (RMO). He insisted that successful research management and innovation depend on the right idea, the right people, and the right resources.

- 1- The RMO can help scientists to focus on research and the entrepreneur on the business.
- 2- The RMO should be in charge of coordinating research project partners, research management and administration, external financing and administration as well as liaison between departments and divisions

Therefore the RMO is in charge of Procedures – organization, negotiation, overviews, reports

- 3- The RMO is the link between various players, well placed to overview, detect changes, supply facts and figures and deliver best practices from their international partners.

### **Role of the Knowledge Transfer Office (KTO)**

Next Dr Heemskerk outlined the role of the knowledge transfer office (KTO)

- 1- Not an office to make money nor elevate credentials of academic staff
- 2- Exists to retain talents, protect knowledge, ensure knowledge use, organise the transfer process, and attract new sources of money to invest in people and research.
- 3- Assists in funding potential partners, provide training facilities for faculty staff, give advice on exploitation and dissemination, and assist in commercialization.
- 4- Finally, it can also help scientists to focus on research and the entrepreneur on the business.

### **Some recommendations from the strategic leadership workshop**

The discussion was concluded with the following recommendations:

- To monitor young scientists for at least 2 years before allowing them the autonomy to act independently- this is the norm all over the world
- Setting up projects is like building a house which requires many good experts. It is therefore a key to success to collaborate in research.

This session ended at 6:20pm.

## **Day 3: Saturday 19 June, 2010**

### **Training of trainers Workshop**

The session commenced at 9.30am. The presentation by Dr Frank Heemskerk was to be done in two parts. Main focus was on practical skills, training and research grant skills. This session offered advice, tips and information on resource mobilisation, writing and submitting winning proposals, starting and maintaining successful collaboration in research.

To convince partners/funding agency, the researcher has as duty to illustrate that his research will have value. Participants were introduced to a myriad of European Union **funding schemes**, but cautioned to form research teams before looking for funding sources that fit the research context. Some funding could be obtained through national bodies and even non-EU sources.

The necessity to understand cultural and language values/differences is important for greater competitiveness as well as for international cooperation/knowledge sharing. There is a need to maintain a good relationship with the coordinator for large projects that are complex in management.

Some funding objectives were given such as “glueing enabler”, goal-oriented, project-based and open because European funded programmes are geared towards using research for innovation and education.

The various **areas of research funding** e.g. in health, food/agriculture, information technology, etc; were presented. Schemes that can enable exchange of people between Europe and Africa are amongst others Marie Curie Networks, International Cooperation Scheme and Reintegration Grants.

Funding instruments such as People Programmes and SICA measures were presented as well as websites for all necessary calls for funding such as <http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7>

Dr Heemskerk explained that programmes should give a detailed idea of the problem to the funding body, its amount and impact. The example of a food programme called FP7-KBBE-2010-5 of 58 pages was used as an example. He advised researchers to exploit calls for funding with other colleagues in different disciplines to be able to have a multi-disciplinary appraisal of the expectations of the grantor.

A **methodology of project proposal** was presented which has to accommodate the idea, finding partners, developing proposed structure, writing the proposal and executing as well as ending the project. Technical support could be obtained from websites such as Eurostat and OECD to justify statements. Websites for databases exist for consultation. The proposal/project needs to address some vital issues such as safety, ethics and gender. The project has to be linked to EU project objectives and there should be a conclusion on the scientific evaluation such as quality, implementation/management and impact. Quality has to do with the scientific and/ or technological excellence.

The presentation was also based on what researchers can **manage**. This entails a consideration of what is very relevant. Partners have to agree on the objectives so as to unite ideas and save time/cost. Risks have to be considered (internal/external), need to communicate with stakeholders and roles assigned according to qualities/personalities, etc. Some roles may not necessarily be performed by the researchers.

The second part of the workshop focused on **financing and legal issues**.

There is the necessity to budget in research and this must be closely related to the project.

Cost categories can be identified in two parts:

- Costs directly related to the research (work packages).
- Costs related to management activities such as conferences, communication with consortium, reports to commission, etc.

Justifying the budget is imperative especially for unusual items of expenditure. There is a need to understand that there exists a maximum funding rate for certain activities of a project (between 50% and 100%).

The differences between direct and indirect costs were explained as well as sub-contracting costs. Institutional challenges may influence funding such as requirements for co-funding from agency, indirect costing, VAT issues, etc. This last category is not

eligible for the EC. A helpdesk for financing was equally illustrated [www.finance-helpdesk.org](http://www.finance-helpdesk.org)

It was also explained that it is the University that signs the legal contract, owns the Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) and not the Principal Investigator. He further explained the hidden and intricate nature of IPRs by emphasising the differences between **Background** (knowledge or contribution brought into the project prior to access to the grant agreement) and **Foreground** (knowledge that is jointly developed or generated under the project (Copyrights, Patent rights)).

Case studies of SME projects such as in academic and industrial domains were illustrated followed by a **question and answer session**. The question on how to protect publications (IPRs), regarded as a major problem faced by young researchers was discussed. The question on the low level of funding for the humanities was raised. The response demonstrated that contemporary research cuts across disciplines and so there is an increasing need for cooperation. The question on a partner opting out of a consortium was also addressed. In this case, the funding partner has to judge from the scale of the problem and decide whether to replace the partner or re-direct the project to some other group. In case of an institution, replacement can be by an individual or otherwise subcontracted to a third party.

The question relating to partners not being transparent (revealing grant details) to one another was raised. It was emphasized that partners need to be briefed on the objectives and impact of the project in which they are to be members.

The workshop ended at 2 pm with closing remarks from the Vice Chancellor of the University of Buea, who appreciated the huge attendance and the role played by the resource persons throughout the conference.

### **Key Learning Points**

At the end of the conference, the different universities, organizations and stakeholders present had the following take-home messages:

- The need for accountability in the management of research funds both at the individual, national, international as well as research team levels;
- The need to create support systems for the promotion of research and the imperativeness of a synergy between research institutes, higher education institutions and researchers;
- The importance of identifying institutional strengths and ensuring visibility;
- The importance of the national policy framework for the effective organization, dissemination and valorization of research and research results;
- The need to create fora that provide enabling environments for mutual support efforts, both for the researchers and managers;
- The need to better manage the motivation for research purely for academic ends (such as scientific productivity and promotion of academics) and research for impact (in society);
- The special challenges that higher education institutions operating in economies with a weak industrial base face, as they seek to provide impact through the establishment of linkages with the industrial sector;

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- The need to cooperate carry out interdisciplinary team research in order to improve access to resources and impact;
- The need to ensure that the results of research are used by the ‘industries/consumers’ to innovate the society.

### **Concluding Remarks and the Way Forward**

The major recommendations and resolution of the Buea conference point to a need for greater mobilisation, capacity building and the adoption of measures and strategies to promote greater collaboration and eliminate the isolation of researchers and administrators. In view of the identified gaps, the lack of a systematic approach to networking researchers and research administrators in this region, as well as, the objectives of the RIMI4AC project, a logical progression from the first regional conference would be consultations on effective strategies for networking and improving the visibility of research, as well as the identification of training needs for the region. We envisage that such a consultative meeting could take place at the end of October or the beginning of November 2010. Such a meeting would bring together representatives of the institutions that were represented during the July 2010 conference for more indepth discussions and identify focal points in these institutions.

### **Acknowledgements**

The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Buea acknowledges, with gratitude, the contributions of all our partners, the co-organisers, facilitators, resource persons, the local organising committee and sponsors of these event.

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## **APPENDIX**

### ***Research Funding links: EU funding 2010 calls***

In line with the RIMI4AC objectives, which are to strengthen research and innovation, the following websites are important links to funding and other information necessary for those interested in research, cooperation, funding, dissemination and exploitation.

These have been compiled courtesy of Dr. Frank Heemskerk – Research and Innovation Management Services – bvba, Bollestraat 753090 Overijse, Belgium.

- European Commission/ Euraxess/ Researchers in motion:

<http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/>

- European Commission CORDIS Seventh Framework Programme (FP7):

[http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home\\_en.html](http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html)

- Marie Curie Actions :

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions>

- European Commission Research:

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/index.cfm?pg=enquiries>  
[www.finance-helpdesk.org](http://www.finance-helpdesk.org)

- Joint Research Center

[www.jrc.cec.eu.int](http://www.jrc.cec.eu.int)