

Millions set to benefit from collaboration between universities

Two new related international networks formed between universities in the global north and south have the potential to impact society in such a way that the lives of millions of people across the world are improved.

Hope@Africa, a collaboration between seven leading African universities, and **Hope International**, a collaboration between Stellenbosch University (SU) and four Swedish universities, will be launched in Stellenbosch, South Africa, on **Thursday 20 March**. The partners of the two networks have come together to jointly promote human development and tackle major societal challenges – in Africa and in the rest of the world.

- *The media is invited to attend the official launch of the networks at 12:00 at the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (STIAS) in Marais Street in Stellenbosch (South Africa) on Thursday 20 March. **The event will also be streamed over the internet – at <https://www.youtube.com/user/USTelematics>***

Hope@Africa springs from a high-level summit held in Stellenbosch in October last year to discuss increasing collaboration between higher-education partners on the continent. This culminated in a Letter of Intent signed by the University of Botswana, the University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Makerere University (Uganda), the University of Nairobi (Kenya), the University of Namibia, and Stellenbosch University (South Africa). The University of Malawi is also part of the initiative.

The founding members committed themselves to making a difference to society by tackling developmental challenges. Significant among these is the fact that according to UNESCO Africa requires **2 million new teachers by 2015**. There is also an urgent need to provide training for millions of current teachers who are either under or unqualified. The Hope@Africa partner universities are set to reach out to teachers using the strength of their combined telematic platforms.

“Universities can play a key role in improving the training and on-going professional development of teachers. But conventional brick-and-mortar approaches are not good enough anymore. We need to make innovative use of technology to extend the reach and richness of learning opportunities beyond the physical classroom,” Prof Russel Botman, Rector and Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University and Vice-President of the Association of African Universities, said.

Prof Barnabas Nawangwe, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Finance and Administration at Makerere University in Uganda said that Hope@Africa and Hope International “realise the need for harnessing synergies of the north and the south in addressing global development goals for the common good of humanity”.

Collaborating via a network model in contrast with a hub-and-spokes model, the Hope@Africa partners intend using 21st century Internet and Communication Technology (ICT) to build African expertise, facilitate sustainable networks and promote life-long learning.

Likewise, **Hope International** developed out of the notion that institutions of higher education should promote human development and tackle societal challenges through academic and research excellence.

The founding members are Stellenbosch University in South Africa, and Dalarna University, Gothenburg University, Linnaeus University and Malmö University in Sweden.

The overall objective of the Hope International network is to further collaboration within higher education towards an increase in knowledge and awareness of the major challenges facing the global community. The Hope International network will bring together higher-education institutions to collaborate on ways to contribute to the long-term achievement of global development goals.

Dalarna Vice-Chancellor Prof Marita Hilliges said the partners of both networks “are universities in different contexts, but we share the philosophy that higher education has an important role in creating the future we need. Education should not only convey facts, but also help people navigate this complex city called the world.”

Botman agrees: “We are exploring synergies to see how universities can make sense together of the big challenges facing us in this day and age. Higher education is not only well-placed due to its role in the production, transfer and application of reliable knowledge, but also has a duty to focus on relevance by following a science-for-society approach. We owe it to the next generation.”

Prof Steven Hwang, Vice-Chancellor of Linnaeus University said: “This is a wonderful initiative – universities from different parts of the world working together for social change. All of us – and therefore the communities we serve – will benefit.”

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