

Executive Summary

The tracer study on doctorates trained at Makerere University for the period 2000-2012 was conducted to determine their productivity, employability and mobility. This information was deemed necessary in assessing the impact of the intervention of research support programmes with specific focus on Sida support, which resonates through the doctoral voices, included in this report.

The OECD questionnaire developed for conducting surveys on Careers and Productivity of Holders of Doctorates (CDH) was adapted for this study. Additional information was obtained through one on one discussions with key informants that had been supported by the Sida program. Academic Records at Makerere University were the main source of names of respondents. The data was analyzed with standard tools.

The capacity to train and graduate students at doctoral level at Makerere University had greatly improved over the period 2000-2012. More than 300 doctorates had been awarded in the same period. Most of this capacity was ambient in the science disciplines. The demographic characteristics of the respondents revealed that the proportion of female doctorates was 23%. Almost all (97%) of the respondents were employed in fields related to their training. There is a major challenge in retaining the doctorates trained at Makerere University. A large proportion (92%) of the respondents indicated they would leave the country once an opportunity arose. Low salaries and benefits were the major demotivating factors.

The high cost of doctoral training has hampered effective demand for this training even though the demand for doctorates in the country is far from being satisfied. Most of the training was externally funded as a consequence. For instance according to the Makerere University Directorate of Research and Graduate Training, the collaboration with Sida had produced over 106 PhDs by end of 2013. External funding being a stopgap measure, presents the challenge to the University and Uganda to mobilize internal resources for sustainable growth in doctoral training. Funding is required for infrastructure, equipment, recruitment and retention of qualified staff.

The annual doctoral production rate for Uganda needs to be multiplied by 10 to reach the South African current rate. This could be scaled for a period of 10 years to reach 1000 doctorates per year by 2025. It is critical that the employers of these doctorates strive to pay emoluments that are fairly comparable to those paid to their colleagues within the region. There is need for funding that specifically targets female applicants for doctorate training. The University needs to mobilize external resources for training to supplement the internal resources in the medium term (next 10 years). The doctorate training costs cannot be fully raised nationally considering the low household incomes.

The supply for doctorates needs to be increased to meet the increasing demand for doctorates; emanating from the expanding higher education sector, increasing research institutions & statutory bodies and the emerging system of innovations. The country needs to systematically increase its annual doctorate production rate. Makerere University has latent potential (in terms of supervision) to produce over 200 doctorates per year; however, the track to graduation needs to be smoothened to improve the throughput.

The gender imbalance in the training should continue being addressed as to promote equitable participation of both men and women.

The tendency for doctorate holders to move to better economic zones may create despondency at the work place and lower productivity. This needs to be stymied to minimize brain drain.

