

Building Capacity for Development and Food Security in Malawi

Mid-Term Review of the Bunda College Capacity Building Programme (BCDP)

Ramji Nyirenda and Arne Tostensen

R 2009: 4

Building Capacity for Development and Food Security in Malawi

Mid-Term Review of the Bunda College Capacity Building Programme (BCDP)

Ramji Nyirenda and Arne Tostensen

R 2009: 4

CMI Reports

This series can be ordered from:

Chr. Michelsen Institute

P.O. Box 6033 Postterminalen,

N-5892 Bergen, Norway

Tel: + 47 55 57 40 00

Fax: + 47 55 57 41 66

E-mail: cmi@cmi.no

www.cmi.no

Price: NOK 50

Printed version: ISSN 0805-505X

Electronic version: ISSN 1890-503X

Printed version: ISBN 978-82-8062-328-7

Electronic version: ISBN 978-82-8062-329-4

This report is also available at:

www.cmi.no/publications

Indexing terms

Malawi

Food security

Capacity building

Research

Project number

28084

Project title

Mid-term review of Norwegian support to Bunda College of Agriculture, Malawi

Contents

Acronyms and abbreviations	iv
Preface	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Executive summary.....	vii
Preamble.....	1
Introduction.....	2
Findings	3
Sustainability	7
<i>Financial sustainability</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Institutional sustainability</i>	<i>9</i>
Conclusions.....	11
Recommendations.....	12
Annex 1: People Met.....	13
Annex 2: Terms of Reference.....	15

Acronyms and abbreviations

ADP	Agricultural Development Programme
ARDEP	Agricultural Research and Development Programme
BCA	Bunda College of Agriculture
BCDP	Bunda College Capacity Building Programme
CV	Curriculum Vitae
EU	European Union
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
LTC	Lilongwe Technical College
MA	Master of Arts
MALICO	Malawi Library and Information Consortium
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MIM	Malawi Institute of Management
MWK	Malawi Kwacha (currency)
MSc	Master of Science
NAPA	National Adaptation Programmes of Action
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NOK	Norwegian Krone (currency)
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation
Noragric	Dept. of Environmental and Development Studies (at UMB)
NRC	Natural Resource College
PAC	Project Advisory Committee
PCO	Programmes Coordination Office
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PRIMARO	Poverty Reduction in Malawi Using Agricultural Research and Outreach
RUFORUM	Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SWAp	Sector-wide Approach
ToR	Terms of Reference
UMB	Norwegian University of Life Sciences (formerly Norwegian Agricultural University)
Unima	University of Malawi
USD	United States Dollar

Preface

Bunda College of Agriculture, through the Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation (Norad) and the Norwegian Embassy in Lilongwe, engaged the services of one Norwegian and one Malawian consultant to conduct a mid-term review of two distinct yet interlinked programmes based at Bunda (see the appended Terms of Reference). The two programmes are: 1) The Agricultural Research and Development Programme (ARDEP); and 2) The Bunda Capacity-Building Programme (BCDP). This report presents the findings and recommendations of the review team as far as the BCDP is concerned. A separate companion report deals with ARDEP. The two reports can be read independently of each other but cross-references are made in both reports so as to emphasise their close inter-relationship.

This review follows an evaluation undertaken at the end of phase II three and a half years ago by the same team, which in our view has contributed to ensuring continuity. Even though the 2005 evaluation came rather late in the day when proposals for a new phase were already in an advanced stage of preparation, we have noted that many of our observations and recommendations have indeed been fed into the design of the two programmes now under review.

We would like to underscore that, by definition, a mid-term review offers an opportunity for making adjustments to the way in which activities are conducted with a view to enhancing effectiveness and achieving the objectives. As such it is essentially a learning device for improving performance in the remainder of the programmes' life time.

Lilongwe, November 2008
Ramji Nyirenda and Arne Tostensen

Acknowledgements

The production of this report would not have been possible without the assistance of a great number of people who in various ways contributed with inputs of a substantive or practical nature. At Bunda College of Agriculture we would like to single out Prof. James Banda, the programmes' co-ordinator. With the assistance of his staff, in particular Ms. Chimwemwe Chamdimba, Mr. Barrettie Kondowe and Ms. Alice Chalemba, he obtained necessary documentation and organised our extensive programme with a wide range of interviewees both at Bunda and in various government ministries, research institutions and NGOs.

Beyond the written material made available to us, much of the information underpinning the findings of the review stems from personal interviews (see the appended list of persons consulted). We are deeply grateful to all our informants for sharing generously their valuable time with us and for providing frank responses to our questions.

We would also like to extend our thanks to Norad and the Norwegian Embassy in Lilongwe for commissioning us for this interesting assignment, *in casu* Mr. Augustine Chikuni and Mr. Arild Skåra.

Executive summary

1. This report summarises the findings of the mid-term review of the Bunda College Capacity Building Programme (BCDP), phase III, covering the period 2005–2010. A separate companion report deals with the Agricultural Research and Development Programme (ARDEP).
2. The methodology included perusal of existing documents, meetings with the Project Advisory Committee and qualitative interviews with key Bunda staff.
3. The goal of the BCDP is to enhance the performance of Bunda College as a lead institution in relevant and efficient learning, teaching, research and outreach for the agricultural and natural resources sector of Malawi and to enable the College to play a significant role in the development of the country. The BCDP is essentially an institution-building programme designed to put the College on a solid footing which is sustainable in the long run without external assistance.
4. Institution-building comprises three main components: (a) the external environment; (b) the internal institutional framework; and (c) the financial foundation.
5. Institution-building has become increasingly important in development assistance. While most development activities require long time horizons to bear fruit on a sustainable basis, this is all the more true as far as academic institutions are concerned. A decade of support to Bunda College for institution-building purposes is not at all excessive. If support is abrogated prematurely it may jeopardise achievements already made.
6. The capacity-building efforts during phases I and II are now bearing fruit. Bunda College has matured as an institution and there is no doubt that it has acquired a new degree of self-confidence and become better prepared for the long sought-after outreach and application of technologies with a view to fulfilling its broader mandate.
7. An indicator of institutional stability and functionality is Bunda's low turnover of personnel. The very high retention rate (about 95 per cent) is a positive measure of institutional maturity and continuity.
8. Library and ICT services have progressed significantly, although there is still scope for improvement. Concerns persist, however, about sustainability in the absence of donor funding.
9. Major strides have been made in improving the infrastructure as far as buildings are concerned, partly with funding from the BCDP and partly from other sources such as the government and the Press Trust.
10. It is commendable that a new research and consultancy policy has been adopted by Unima. As a means of disseminating research findings consultancies afford an excellent opportunity to convey knowledge and technological skills. Consultancies are also a source of revenue for the College and its various units and thus contribute to financial sustainability, as well as provide supplementary income for academic staff, which serves as a retention mechanism.
11. Two new PhD programmes are being mounted in (a) agricultural and resource economics and (b) aquaculture and fisheries in collaboration with the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM). The selection of Bunda as the host for these PhD programmes is an indicator of confidence in its academic standing and quality of teaching. These two regional PhD programmes might develop into flagships for Bunda.
12. A major ambition of Bunda College to transform itself from a constituent college of the University of Malawi (Unima) to a fully-fledged university – Lilongwe University of Science and Technology – through a merger of three existing institutions of higher learning in the Lilongwe area has not materialised. The stumbling block appears to be the failure by Parliament to pass the new University of Malawi Bill.
13. Bunda College has also failed to establish an endowment fund. The idea has been put in abeyance for the time being but not rejected as such. It would be worthwhile to revisit this proposal and to make an assessment of its feasibility. A functioning endowment fund yielding

regular annual contributions to the College could form one of the pillars of financial sustainability.

14. Considerable progress has been made towards putting Bunda College on a more sustainable financial foundation. The government subvention has increased for investment and recurrent expenditure alike. New buildings have been constructed with cost-sharing between government and donors. Even so, the total government contribution to the entire College in this financial year is only MWK 46 million for recurrent expenditure, excluding salaries. For an institution of Bunda's size this is far from enough. Moreover, the government operates on a cash budget system which means that the transfers are erratic.
15. To redress this situation the College has taken some steps to become more self-reliant. One such step is the erection of costs centres at the departments with a view to generating revenue. The new consultancy policy has ensured that a proportion of the consultancy fees accrues to the College. There is probably considerable scope for expansion of this activity.
16. Bunda Farm was 'commercialised' in May 2005 and is now formally a limited liability company. The Farm which was previously a financial drain on the College appeared to have been on a recovery path but it seems to be in the red again. The Farm does not have title deed to the land, which is leased on a yearly basis from Unima as the formal custodian. Hence, the land cannot be put up as collateral and the government is unwilling to provide a guarantee. Therefore, credit institutions are reluctant to extend loans. This predicament hampers the farm's profitability and prospects of Bunda College to earn an income from its shares. It is urgent, therefore, that a solution be found to the under-capitalisation of Bunda Farm Ltd.
17. Progress has been made in the area of institutional sustainability in the sense of stable institutional functionality. Procedures and routines have been established, as has reporting practices. In the realm of financial management and control procedures for accounting, auditing and budget control are in place.
18. With regard to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) applicable to the college as a whole there are great improvements although there is still some scope for improvement.
19. In terms of gender the proportion of female students is about 36 per cent for the College as a whole. Female representation is stronger among the undergraduates. At the beginning of the Millennium, Bunda introduced 'career talks' in secondary schools with the intention of attracting more female students to the College. As a result, the gender balance changed dramatically in favour of women and appears to have stabilised at around 35 per cent.
20. In terms of institutional sustainability a major challenge remains regarding the maintenance of assets such as buildings, computers and vehicles. The government provisions have increased but are erratic and still inadequate. There appears to be no systematic maintenance plan; repairs and maintenance measures are taken largely on an *ad hoc* basis as and when money is available. The College is in dire need of a comprehensive maintenance plan for all assets, including the costing of its implementation.
21. In the interest of advance planning and preparation, we venture the recommendation that Norwegian support be continued beyond 2010. Specific areas of intervention where the needs are felt more strongly than others should be given priority: library support; information and communication technology (especially improved Internet access for students); and collaboration with sister institutions in the region and beyond.
22. It is strongly recommended that the commercial potential of Bunda Farm Ltd. be addressed with urgency. The first step would be to revise the outdated existing business plan. It is no use transforming the Farm into a limited liability company without equipping it with the collateral needed for access to credit, i.e. the transfer of land ownership. A profitable Farm could be a major source of revenue for the College and contribute immensely to its financial sustainability. The potential of the Farm is such that we would recommend that its profitability commensurate with its potential be made conditional on continued Norwegian support to Bunda.
23. The issue of maintenance is closely linked to sustainability. A comprehensive maintenance plan should be elaborated for all assets of the College, including buildings, vehicles and equipment.

Preamble

This review is taking place half way through phase III of the BCDP period. Its purpose, therefore, is to take stock thus far with a view to making adjustments to the activities and the course of action that have emerged. As such, it fits into the general monitoring and evaluation efforts of the programme, with the added trait of being independent. It is not an end-of-phase evaluation, however, which normally would pass a definitive judgement of achievements.

The March 2005 evaluation of Phase II of Norwegian support to Bunda College of Agriculture – undertaken by the same team as the present mid-term review – forms an important backdrop to and in many respects serves as a reference point for this review. Indeed, a number of our observations and recommendations from 2005 have been heeded in the formulation of ARDEP. Consequently, there is a measure of continuity of purpose.

The existing BCDP took its cue from the 2005 end-of-phase evaluation. The original draft project document at that time – Poverty Reduction in Malawi Using Agricultural Research and Outreach (PRIMARO) – had as its combined primary goal to improve the performance of Bunda College of Agriculture in learning, teaching, research and outreach to enable the College to play a significant role in the development of the country and to attract other sources of funding for its development programme. However, the original PRIMARO programme was split into two separate yet inter-related programmes: the Agricultural Research and Development Programme (ARDEP) and the Bunda College Capacity Building Programme (BCDP).

With regard to methodology and collection of information, the BCDP review team has adopted two main tools. First, a sizable number of documents was made available to us for perusal. They included programme proposals, overviews, progress reports, memoranda, reviews, etc. This documentation was an important source of information but needed to be complemented by other sources. Second, qualitative interviews with a range of stakeholders provided further information that could be used in corroborating evidence obtained from divergent quarters. In other words, given the time constraints which precluded more comprehensive surveys, we have applied a method of inter-subjective validation. There may be cases, however, where the evidence could not be validated in a definitive sense. In those cases, therefore, we have pointed out inconsistencies and paradoxes and raised questions for further discussion and investigation.

The ToR require us to assess the BCDP in terms of: (i) relevance; (ii) effectiveness; (iii) efficiency; (iv) impact; and (v) sustainability. These are standard dimensions routinely included in all ToR. However, some qualifications are justified. The dimensions of efficiency and impact present particular challenges in view of the time and resource constraints imposed upon us. We find it not feasible to give a thorough evidence-based quantitative assessment of efficiency, i.e. the appropriate ratio of resource use to outputs and outcomes. For that to have been feasible, we would have had to make deeper investigations into expenditure patterns and volumes in relations to budget allocations. The time constraints have not allowed for that. Furthermore, many features of institution-building defy quantification, e.g. the functionality of an institution is not easily captured by a set of quantitative indicators. The best we can do is to offer more or less plausible qualitative arguments to buttress our general assessment of efficiency. Similarly and *a fortiori*, it is infeasible at this stage to make a credible assessment of the long-term impact of the BCDP. To do so would have required a panel study or a longitudinal investigation of developments during a time span stretching from the completion of the programme (forming the baseline) to a subsequent point in time down the line to ascertain what lasting impacts can be observed. In the circumstances, we can do little more than advancing qualitative arguments about the prospects and likelihood of future impact, for example

by the number of graduates that Bunda has produced over the years. These graduates have taken up duty in different institutional contexts related to agricultural pursuits and are likely to make a lasting contribution to the agricultural development of the country. Moreover, we find it inappropriate to include long-term impact as part of a mid-term review. With these qualifications of a methodological nature the report below sets out to enumerate our findings.

Introduction

The goal of the BCDP – spanning a period from November 2005 until October 2010 – is to enhance the performance of Bunda College as a lead institution in relevant and efficient learning, teaching, research and outreach for the agricultural and natural resources sector of Malawi and to enable the College to play a significant role in the development of the country. The BCDP is thus essentially an institution-building programme, i.e. a set of interventions designed to put the College on a solid footing which is sustainable in the long run without external assistance. Sustainability is the watchword in institution-building.

Institution-building comprises three main components:

- (a) *The external environment.* External actors and structures include the policies and structures of government (legislation and other regulations) and those of the donor community, as well as civil society and mass media coverage. In the case of Bunda its position as a constituent college under the umbrella of Unima is a key feature, which yields both benefits and imposes constraints. In total this external environment makes up the regulatory framework under which the College operates. The external environment is generally beyond the influence of a single institution and, hence, it must be taken more or less as a given, even though at times there may be some scope for affecting the external environment.
- (b) *The internal institutional framework.* This subsumes, first, in broad terms Bunda's mission and mandate in society; its internal management structures, procedures, rules and regulations, and its established practices. These aspects have to do with internal transparency and accountability, information flows, by means of ICT or otherwise, as well as planning and reporting. Second, it also comprises the human resources component. With regard to academic staff, their competence level is critical for satisfactory performance, as is that of the administrative and support staff. It is a continuous task to maintain a high competence level through training of newcomers and upgrading of skills for existing staff. A key element in staff development and maintenance is motivation which is stimulated by certain incentive structures through remuneration and moral support. Third, in order for an institution to know whether or not it is on the right track, a monitoring and evaluations system is indispensable to document activities and outcomes. Fourth, and not least, a crucial element in an institution's wellbeing and survival is the maintenance of assets such as buildings, vehicles and other equipment. The internal institutional framework may be summed up in one keyword: functionality or in other words, how well does the institution function with a view to fulfilling its mission and mandate?
- (c) *The financial foundation.* Although strictly speaking part of the above internal institutional framework, the financial underpinnings warrant special attention. Unless an institution rests on a solid financial foundation, it may easily collapse or, less dramatically, fall short of its potential towards meeting its objectives. The financial foundation includes not only income generation from multiple sources but also the economical management of that income. For this to be achieved appropriate systems must be in place for accounting and auditing in order to forestall diversion or misuse of funds. The ultimate goal for an institution is

financial self-sufficiency, even though this ambition is normally only reached to some extent.

Within the context of the agricultural sector a well-functioning College is a means to an end rather than an end in itself. The performance and societal legitimacy of Bunda College are ultimately judged in terms of its contribution to the implementation of the overriding policies of the country, in particular enunciated in the Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) which in the donor terminology constitutes a Sector-wide Approach (SWAp) to this sector, and the National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPA) under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The ultimate objective is poverty reduction for the smallholders and food security for the country as a whole, as espoused in the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy: From Poverty to prosperity 2006–2011 (MGDS).

The donor community is generally reluctant to commit itself to long-term involvement and funding, despite the fact that institution-building has become increasingly important in development assistance. While most development activities require long time horizons to bear fruit on a sustainable basis, this is all the more true as far as academic institutions are concerned. The long-term nature of academic institution-building has to do above all with the long duration of degree work at master and PhD levels. To raise the level of the formal competence of academic staff is indeed a long-term proposition. No shortcuts are possible. In addition, the improvement of the functionality of an institution normally requires change of mindsets and attitudes, which are notoriously slow in changing. Reforming set methods and procedures requires patience and extensive dialogue. The point that the review team would like to drive home is simply that a decade of support to Bunda College for institution-building purposes is not at all excessive. In fact, if support is abrogated prematurely it may jeopardise achievements already made.

Findings

The capacity-building efforts during phases I and II are now bearing fruit. While Bunda may have been inward-looking during the previous phases, which caused the College largely to fail to deliver its expected contribution to agricultural development in the country, it has matured as an institution as a result of the achievements under phases I and II. There is no doubt that this institution has acquired a new degree of self-confidence. This is reflected in the enhanced level of qualifications of its academic and support staff through a large number of scholarships; increased government subventions; improved image in society at large (partly a result of ARDEP); and its internal functionality. Based on this new-found self-confidence, Bunda has become better prepared for the long sought-after outreach and application of technologies with a view to fulfilling its broader mandate.

An important indicator of institutional stability and functionality is low turnover of personnel, despite claims that a high retention rate of academic staff may be indicative of the institution becoming stale and lacking potential for rejuvenation. With the substantial number of scholarships for upgrading of staff it is unreasonable to claim that Bunda has not received new professional impulses from the external environment, e.g. academic institutions in the African region and farther afield. The review team is rather of the view that the very high retention rate (about 95 per cent) is a positive measure of institutional maturity and continuity. This high retention rate is not due to satisfactory salary levels which continue to be low. Rather, interviewees have stated several other reasons of both pecuniary and other nature. The academic environment provides relative freedom to pursue professional interests and is conducive to creativity and innovation. This is manifested in the proliferation of project proposals coming out of the departments, many of which being successful in attracting external funding. Such funding has, in turn, trickled down to staff as supplement to their

salaries and to the departments for recurrent expenditure so as to improve the working environment. Taken together these factors have produced a measure of loyalty and commitment to the College. A negative factor might be that the academic profiles of Bunda staff are so specialised that they are not easily transferable elsewhere.

The library services have improved, partly due to additional funding in 2007 from the Norwegian Embassy in Lilongwe, over and above the BCDP budget. This resulted from collaboration with the library of the Dept. of International Environment and Development Studies (Noragric) at the UMB. Through the Malawi Library and Information Consortium (MALICO) the library has electronic access to 1,700 journals for all staff and students. They only receive hard copy journals as gifts nowadays. From the BCDP budget USD 3,000 is paid to MALICO for this service. The connectivity and downloading speed is reasonably good but has room for improvement. Students are charged a fee of MWK 50 per 30 minutes for online access unless they are searching and retrieving educational electronic information. However, staff are exempted from such payment.

The library has a USD 10,000 budget for book acquisition which is grossly inadequate. In some cases there are only three copies of key textbooks which lead to a scramble for these among students and long cues. With an intake of 200 new students the congestion of the library will be exacerbated. More computers are needed for student use in the library and the space is inadequate. The College budget includes a library item but it is sadly inadequate. It covers only salaries and fixed costs, not books and other variable costs. The staffing of the library is adequate at present. Two assistant librarians are currently on MA degree courses funded by the BCDP. Another two library assistants are at Mzuzu University – one pursuing a BSc degree and one on a diploma course. Mzuzu University is the only institution in Malawi offering courses and degrees in library science. The library appears to be surviving on funds from the BCDP but in the event of it being discontinued the library would suffer serious repercussions unless other corrective measures are taken.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for library and general use throughout the College has been improved considerably in the course of the first years of BCDP. But the digital divide persists and further improvement of ICT facilities would no doubt go a long way towards more effective access to relevant literature for academic staff and students alike. The learning environment for students still leaves a lot to be desired in terms of library services and Internet access. As a management tool improved ICT would contribute to greater efficiency at department and faculty levels and for the College at large.

Major strides have been made in improving the infrastructure as far as buildings are concerned, partly with funding from the BCDP and partly from other sources such as the government and the Press Trust. The government will fund the construction of a new administration building for the College with a price tag of MWK 200 million. This is an indication of the government's commitment to the College. The student cafeteria has been completed, partly with BCDP funding. Similarly, the Natural Resources Faculty building has been completed, 60 per cent of the cost of which coming from the BCDP budget. The new building for the Programmes Coordination Office was largely provided by the BCBP.

It is commendable that a new research and consultancy policy has been adopted by Unima, applicable to all constituent colleges, including Bunda. The increased attention to consultancy work is significant in two respects. First, by engaging in consultancy work the academic staff of Bunda are afforded an excellent opportunity to convey their knowledge and technological skills emanating from research and training, which they have accumulated over many years. Consultancies are a means of disseminating research findings that complements other channels. Consultancies are, in effect, a form of outreach activity to a select group of recipients who are willing and able to pay for

such services. In that sense, the reach is perhaps limited. On the other hand, it should be recalled that the institutions and companies that commission consultancies will use the advice provided in their general activities. Thus, the ripple effects may be considerable, although perhaps not reaching the poor in the first instance. Second, consultancies are a source of revenue for the College and its various units and thus contribute to financial sustainability. They also provide supplementary income for academic staff, which, in turn, is a motivation factor that serves to retain staff who might otherwise have sought greener pastures elsewhere. An overhead of 10 per cent is charged and allocated to the College. Of the professional fees 30 per cent will accrue to the hosting department(s) or unit(s) and the balance of 70 per cent will go directly to the implementing staff. Previously, the entire amount accrued to the individuals undertaking a consultancy, even when using College infrastructure and services. There was some grumbling about the new formula for the distribution of revenue but it is comparatively more generous than, for example, that of the Malawi Institute of Management (MIM).

To administer the consultancies conducted by College staff, a Training and Consultancy Unit was set up in July 2006. The salaries of the unit staff are provided by government subventions but the operational costs are covered by the proceeds of activities (training in addition to consultancies). The unit has compiled a roster of experts with their CVs in order to be prepared when approached for consultancies although it has not yet been pro-active in marketing Bunda's expertise. The unit responds when approached and submits bids. All consultancies undertaken by Bunda staff have to be registered with the unit to ensure that the proceeds are allocated according to the laid down policy. It is not known whether some staff have bypassed the unit to avoid that part of the proceeds goes to the College rather than directly to them. No disciplinary action has been brought against staff for acting in breach of the policy. No study has been made of the total volume of consultancies before and after the policy change. But a survey is being planned towards that end. The annual consultancy turnover is so far in the order of MWK 10–15 million but there is potential for expansion.

Organising training courses is also a significant source of income with potential. For instance, a regional course on Sustainable Wetlands Management for the Southern African Development Community (SADC) with EU funding, yielded a gross income of MWK 50 million. There is also scope for expansion of a range of training courses for domestic target groups.

Special mention should be made of two new PhD programmes being mounted in (a) agricultural and resource economics and (b) aquaculture and fisheries, with a planned start-up in January 2009. The student intake is 15 per programme. In a consortium comprising 12 universities in sub-Saharan Africa under the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) umbrella Bunda has been selected as the host institutions for this programme, partly on account of its comparatively high number of agricultural economists and aquaculture specialists, and partly because student accommodation and other facilities are in place. The teaching will draw on Bunda staff, supplemented with staff from the other universities within the consortium. The fact that Bunda has been selected as the host for these PhD programmes is a clear indicator of confidence in its academic standing and quality of teaching as it has evolved over the past decade to the effect that it can now compete successfully with other universities. These two regional PhD programmes might develop into flagships for Bunda in the future.

However, there are still some shortfalls which were noted by the 2005 evaluation of phase II. In revisiting them in this review it appears that adequate action has not been taken yet in this phase III to rectify the situation.

A major ambition of Bunda College has been to transform it from a constituent college of the University of Malawi (Unima) to a fully-fledged university in its own right. The objective has been

to merge three existing institutions of higher learning in the Lilongwe area into one new institution: Lilongwe University of Science and Technology. The two other institutions are the Natural Resources College (NRC) and Lilongwe Technical College (LTC). This objective has still not been achieved. In the view of Bunda's leadership and staff, all the ingredients required for establishing a new university are now in place. We have had occasion to witness that the physical infrastructure at Bunda has improved and further improvement is in progress. Furthermore, the formal competence level of academic and administrative staff has been raised, not least by means of scholarships. Since 2000 altogether 20 scholarships at master and PhD levels have been awarded under the three phases of the capacity-building programme. Moreover, the number of students has increased steadily. Finally, the fact that new PhD programmes are being established catering for the wider region beyond Malawi attests to the maturity of the institutions as perceived from abroad. The near decade-long support from Norway has contributed considerably to building that foundation.

The stumbling block appears to be the failure by Parliament to pass the new University of Malawi Bill. The reasons for this non-passage of the Bill remain unknown to the review team. The delays are probably attributable in part to the political turbulence that Malawi has experienced in recent years. In particular, the protracted tug-of-war between the executive and the legislature has led to a backlog of pending legislation. Furthermore, there may also be reluctance on the part of Unima at the central level to relinquish control over one of its five constituent colleges.

A second shortfall noted in the 2005 evaluation was the failure to establish an endowment fund. The review team learned that it has been put in abeyance for the time being owing to the complexity and difficulty of setting it up – and the time-consuming process involved. But the idea has not been rejected as such. A functioning endowment fund yielding regular annual contributions to the College could form one of the pillars of financial sustainability. The review team would find it worthwhile to revisit this proposal and to make an assessment of its feasibility, possibly with the assistance of a consultant conversant with such arrangements. Apparently, an endowment fund has been set up at Sokoine University in Tanzania. Similarly, closer to home there is an endowment fund linked to the Mulanje Mountains Conservation Trust. It would be useful to draw on their experiences in this regard.

The BCDP programme document lists five components:

1. Improvement of human resource capacity;
2. Improvement of infrastructure and teaching/research facilities;
3. Institutional collaboration/cooperation and linkages;
4. Organisational restructuring/reforms;
5. Programme administration and management.

With reference to the above description of achievements and shortfalls, it may be said that the BCDP has made substantial progress in all of the five components, albeit unevenly so. First, it is probably safe to say that in terms of human resources – academic and otherwise – the College is now on a solid footing, in great measure on account of support through the BCDP. Second and similarly, the infrastructure has improved, especially with regard to buildings. This must be qualified, however, because there are still inadequacies with respect to laboratories, library service and ICT. In this context it should also be mentioned that steps have been taken to improve teaching in a direction that the future employers of Bunda graduates prefer. In the past, complaints were heard that the graduates possessed only theoretical knowledge. A review of curricula was made, therefore, to give them a more practical orientation. Students are now given farm-level experience through placements and field trips, as well as being taught entrepreneurship. Third, Bunda College has further developed its links with other universities in the region and beyond. It has done so from a more self-confident position resulting from the upgrading of academic competence and skills.

Fourth, some progress has been made with regard to restructuring and reform. But under this rubric considerable challenges remain, especially the role of Bunda Farm Ltd. in the wider institutional set-up and the elevation of Bunda to a fully-fledged university. Finally, the Programmes Coordination Office (PCO) appears to be functioning well. The recent addition of an M&E specialist is a major improvement which promises to go a long way in documenting activities and outputs and in reporting on progress. At present about 90 per cent of the capacity of the PCO is geared towards ARDEP and the BCDP. It also manages some small projects of short duration. Being funded principally from ARDEP and BCDP budgets, serious considerations must be made about its future beyond the lifetime of these two major projects. In this regards, its relationship to the various departments that manage projects must be borne in mind.

Sustainability

Notwithstanding the significant achievements of the BCDP to date and the challenges facing the College in the future, the major concern of the review team is sustainability. We do not wish to discount the significant efforts and achievements already made but serious challenges remain. Recalling the remarks in the introduction above, we would like to split the sustainability issues into two inter-related categories: (a) financial and (b) institutional.

Financial sustainability

Considerable progress has been made in recent years towards putting Bunda College on a more sustainable foundation. First, the government subvention has increased for investment and recurrent expenditure alike. New buildings have been constructed with cost-sharing between government and donors. This is a clear indication of the government's commitment. In the future, the success of ARDEP and its potential for scaling up and thus making a contribution to agricultural development in the country will probably improve Bunda's image and reinforce the government's commitment. Even so, the total government contribution to the entire College in this financial year is only MWK 46 million for recurrent expenditure, excluding salaries. For an institution of Bunda's size this is far from enough. Moreover, the government operates on a cash budget system which means that the transfers are erratic.

To redress this situation the College has taken some steps to become more self-reliant. One such step is the erection of costs centres at the departments with a view to generating revenue. A good example is the Animal Science Dept. which has several cost centres. Animals are no longer used for teaching purposes only but also for generating income. Taken together these cost centres provide about 70 per cent of the department's recurrent expenditure (furniture, filing cabinets, stationary, etc.), excluding salaries. This is an astoundingly high figure.

As mentioned above, the new consultancy policy has ensured that certain percentages of the consultancy fees accrue to the College instead of ending up in individual pockets. In terms of financial sustainability there is probably considerable scope for expansion of this activity. A more pro-active posture by the Training and Consultancy Unit would go some way towards tapping into the consultancy market.

Bunda Farm was 'commercialised' in May 2005 and is now formally a limited liability company, administratively delinked from, yet fully owned by, the College. Hiving off Bunda Farm and reconstituting it as a limited company under new management was a major step forward. The bureaucracy has been reduced and debts have been renegotiated. The farm was previously a financial drain on the College. But recently it appears to have been on a recovery path. In 2005/06

the Farm made a profit of MWK 6.9 million and it seemed that the College has been relieved of a long-standing burden. But the not yet audited accounts for 2006/07 show that it is again in the red.

As a legal personality Bunda Farm Ltd. can now, in principle, incur and service debts. However, the creditworthiness of Bunda Farm Ltd. is still in question because it has no title deed to the land, which is leased on a yearly basis from Unima as the formal custodian. Hence, the land cannot be put up as collateral and the government is unwilling to provide a guarantee. Furthermore, the track records of the College and Bunda Farm in servicing loans are not impressive. Therefore, credit institutions are reluctant to extend loans. This predicament hampers the farm's profitability and prospects of Bunda College to earn an income from its shares. It is urgent, therefore, that a solution be found to the under-capitalisation of Bunda Farm Ltd. It has 360 hectares of good agricultural land at its disposal. In principle, there is no reason why it should not make a considerable annual profit on a sustainable basis. The main constraints are outdated equipment and lack of working capital.

Provided Bunda Farm Ltd. overcomes its capital shortage and becomes profitable the College may benefit not only from dividends on its shares in the company but also potentially from selling a percentage of the shares to prospective private investors, without necessarily relinquishing control. The proceeds of such a sale could either contribute to the general budget of the College or preferably be put into an endowment fund.

The failure to date to make Bunda Farm Ltd. into a profitable enterprise of some magnitude amounts to a huge missed opportunity. It is paradoxical that the College which is teaching entrepreneurship and agri-business is apparently incapable of turning an asset such as Bunda Farm Ltd. into a booming enterprise. It is indeed an embarrassment. With an injection of capital for procurement of new equipment and as working capital, the prospects for making substantial profits are very good. According to the farm manager, there is a need for capital in the order of MWK 30 million for new equipment and an additional MWK 35 million for working capital. The Farm would then be set for a bright future as a profitable and self-sustaining enterprise which, in turn, could contribute in large measure to the financial sustainability of the College.

The review team is not competent to judge in greater detail the business prospects of the Farm. But the latest business plan is by now four years old and overtaken by events. A new revised and updated business plan is urgently needed to make a detailed assessment of the Farm's prospects. It seems to us that the 'commercialisation' of Bunda Farm Ltd. in 2005 was incomplete. In retrospect it was not realistic that new capital could be obtained without land as collateral. It seems mandatory that this now be corrected and that the bulk of the land, if not all, be transferred to Bunda Farm Ltd. to serve as collateral. Apparently, the University Council is reluctant to relinquish control over the land as its custodian, which, in effect, hampers the potential prosperity of the Farm. Thus, most of the blame for the failure to resuscitate Bunda Farm Ltd. and turning it into a profitable enterprise lies outside the College. However, in retrospect it must be mentioned, that it was an unnecessarily impolitic move by the College to 'commercialise' the farm without prior consultation with the University Council. Notwithstanding the history of actions, the apparent apprehension by the University Council that Bunda Farm Ltd. might default on its debt servicing obligations and thus lose the land is unfounded. It reflects an excessively cautious attitude on the part of academics with little experience in business. The proposed revised business plan must, of course, take into account that Bunda Farm Ltd. is also used in teaching such as attachments and practicals for students. An arrangement could no doubt be worked out to ensure that the current role of the Farm in teaching is retained.

Finally, the failure so far to set up an endowment fund was mentioned above. Evidently it has been placed in abeyance for the time being. The review team feels that this proposal is still worth

considering and should be revisited. We would like to reiterate, therefore, our basic reasoning from 2005. Setting up an endowment fund could serve as a basis for long-term core financing. It is not for us to determine the volume of the anticipated endowment but it would have to be of some magnitude to make a difference. To show its own seriousness about an endowment, Bunda College should make a first contribution to its capitalisation. One option would be to put part of the profits of Bunda Farm Ltd. into the endowment. Alternatively or additionally, the proceeds of the sale of shares in the Farm to private investors once it is on a sound commercial footing yielding profit. The balance could be acquired from donors, perhaps even from government. A third contributory source might be a proportion of the consultancy income. If well managed such an endowment might yield a handsome sum to sustain core functions not directly related to the management of research and teaching.

The funds generated from an endowment could contribute not only to defraying the cost of basic facilities (office premises, library acquisitions, computers, secretarial assistance, accounting and auditing, etc.) and support functions for existing programmes, but also to making possible the generation of new programmes and facilitating long-term planning, and to enabling staff development. A part of such monies could also be set aside for researchers to prepare manuscripts for publication in international refereed journals, as part of the dissemination and outreach efforts of Bunda College. Similarly, one of its purposes could be to bridge research and outreach in the same vein as ARDEP. The uses of the yield of an endowment fund are legion.

An endowment fund is arguably an important vehicle for Bunda College to become financially sustainable. It would undoubtedly enhance the College's autonomy to set its own research agenda and provide considerable stability and predictability of operations.

However, there are very important *caveats* to be observed. An endowment fund needs to be well managed in order for it to yield the expected dividends. Such management requires a degree of sophistication and professionalism in business which university organisations rarely possess. Once set up, great care must be taken that its design and management rules are worked out in great detail. Its management should be independent of the day-to-day operations of the institutions it is meant to buttress. It is particularly important to ensure that risk be spread so as to avoid adverse effects of volatile financial markets as witnessed these days.

Institutional sustainability

Progress has been greater in the area of institutional sustainability in the sense of stable institutional functionality. Procedures and routines have been established, as has reporting practices. In the realm of financial management and control procedures for accounting, auditing and budget control are in place, even though there may be glitches from time to time. That is basically an enforcement challenge.

With regard to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) applicable to the college as a whole there are great improvements although there is still some scope for improvement. With regard to teaching as a core activity the new promotion criteria draw on student evaluations of the teaching staff, supplemented by assessments by deans and heads of department. In terms of research, the main evaluative criterion is publication in refereed journals. More attention needs to be given to publication activities because the publication frequency is still below the level expected at a university institution. The responsibility for monitoring and evaluation of projects is shared between the departments and the PCO. Six months ago, the staff compliment of the latter was strengthened with an M&E specialist. It might be feasible to use her in assisting the departments to get a firmer grip on their M&E procedures as far as projects are concerned.

The efficiency of the institutional arrangements is very difficult to assess through a necessarily superficial review given the time constraint. However, if the achievements of tangible goals are anything to go by, the efficiency seems satisfactory.

The student population at Bunda currently stands at 790, of whom 740 are undergraduates while 50 are graduate students. The aim is to increase the total number to 1000 by 2010. Student hostels for male and female students are being constructed to accommodate this increase.

While it is generally known that Bunda graduates find jobs in both public and private sectors, including in NGOs, no comprehensive tracer study has been undertaken since 2001 to ascertain more specifically the careers patterns of graduates. Funds permitting, it would be useful to conduct a new comprehensive tracer study as soon as possible.

In terms of gender the proportion of women is 36 per cent for the College as a whole. Female representation is stronger among the undergraduates. But the catchment area for female graduates is limited. At the beginning of the Millennium, Bunda introduced 'career talks' in secondary schools with the intention of attracting more female students to the College. As a result, the gender balance changed dramatically in favour of women (see Table 1 below). In the academic year 2000/2001 the proportion of women in the student intake was only 15.3 per cent. Two years later it had jumped to 40.5 per cent. Subsequently the female proportion of student intake appears to have stabilised at around 35 per cent.

Table 1: Intake of students at Bunda College by gender, 2000/2001–2007/2008

Academic year	Total	Male	Female	Percentage male	Percentage female
2000/2001				84.6	15.3
2002/2003	163	97	66	59.5	40.5
2003/2004	133	87	46	65.4	34.6
2004/2005	176	113	63	64.2	35.8
2005/2006	212	146	66	68.9	31.1
2006/2007	156	101	55	64.7	35.3
2007/2008	172	111	61	64.5	35.5

The gender balance in favour of men is more pronounced among the academic staff, particularly at the professorial level. But gendered data on staffing were not made available to the review team.

The staff retention rate at Bunda is remarkably high. For the time being, 13 professors who have reached the mandatory retirement age of 60 are nevertheless retained on contract because replacements are not available. However, the current age structure among academic staff suggests that out of a total academic staff compliment of 134 (excluding those on contract), altogether 14 will reach the mandatory retirement age by 2015 or about 10 per cent. It should also be recalled that not all academic staff have PhD degrees. This has implications for continued upgrading of newcomers and existing staff alike.

In terms of institutional sustainability a major challenge remains regarding the maintenance of assets such as buildings, computers and vehicles. The government provided MWK 33 million in 2006/2007; MWK 22 million in 2007/2008; and MWK 88 million in 2008/2009 for maintenance purposes, mainly for buildings and less for vehicles. Notwithstanding the recent increase, this is not adequate. Through various revenue-generating schemes the College has gone some way towards adding to that amount. But the money devoted to maintenance is still not enough. In addition to the

lack of funds for maintenance, there appears to be no systematic maintenance plan; repairs and maintenance measures are taken largely on an *ad hoc* basis as and when money is available. This is highly unsatisfactory. It cannot be overstated that poor maintenance is bad economics. It is more expensive to rehabilitate a dilapidated building than to maintain it continuously and thus ensure a long lifetime. Similarly, it is certainly cheaper to maintain vehicles regularly than to buy new ones at more frequent intervals. The College is in dire need of a comprehensive maintenance plan for all assets, including the costing of its implementation.

Conclusions

In the course of the successive phases of capacity-building programmes, Bunda College has made long strides towards becoming the Malawian lead institution in the agricultural sector to which it aspires. Through its internal capacity-building efforts enumerated above, the College has managed to improve its reputation in Malawian society as an institution capable of and willing to contribute to development and food security. Not least has ARDEP made a significant contribution in that respect. The collaborative relations with other institutions active in the agricultural sector – public and private – are now cordial and productive. It is particularly commendable that the relationship with the government has improved significantly, which, in turn, is reflected in higher government commitment and subventions.

Apart from Bunda's role in developing new agricultural technologies through research and bringing them out to the farmers for application, a core function is also teaching and the production of graduates who take up positions in the private and public sector. This contribution to raising the competence level of agricultural workers has ripple effects throughout the economy and should not be underestimated.

As stated above, institution-building is a long-term undertaking. When phase III of Norwegian support is coming to an end in 2010 a decade has elapsed and a considerable sum has been invested in Bunda's capacity to fulfil its critical role in an agrarian economy. A decade is by no means excessive and several previous reviews and evaluations have shown that, by and large, the money made available has been spent effectively and efficiently. That said, there are still unfulfilled needs at the College that continued assistance could help to meet.

The main challenge facing Bunda College towards securing the achievements already made and to solidify the institutional foundation, is sustainability. The review team does not in any way want to belittle the progress made with respect to sustainability, including increased government subventions and internal revenue generation. Still, we feel unease about the sustainability of the College from the day Norwegian support must inevitable come to an end.

However, we see a great potential for boosting the sustainability of the College through the rejuvenation of Bunda Farm Ltd. To date the failure to make the Farm into a profitable enterprise of some magnitude represents a huge missed opportunity. As soon as possible the College *must* seize upon this opportunity with urgency. The first step would be to revise the current outdated business plan that has long since been overtaken by events. A profitable Farm could provide sizable inputs into the College and greatly contribute to its sustainability.

An integral part of the sustainability challenge is the maintenance of assets. It needs to be reiterated that a comprehensive maintenance plan is overdue for all assets of the College.

Recommendations

1. Pending the evaluation at the end of the current phase it may be premature for a mid-term review team to suggest that there is a case for continued capacity-building support to Bunda. However, in the interest of advance planning and preparation, we venture the recommendation that Norwegian support be continued beyond 2010. In view of the achievements to date, however, it will probably be advisable to target future support to specific areas of intervention where the needs are felt more strongly than in others. These include library support; information and communication technology (especially improved Internet access for students); and collaboration with sister institutions in the region and beyond.
2. It is strongly recommended that the commercial potential of Bunda Farm Ltd. be addressed with urgency. The first step would be to revise the outdated existing business plan. It is no use transforming the Farm into a limited liability company without equipping it with the collateral needed for access to credit, i.e. the transfer of land ownership. A profitable Farm could be a major source of revenue for the College and contribute immensely to its financial sustainability. The potential of the Farm is such that we would recommend that its profitability commensurate with its potential be made conditional on continued Norwegian support to Bunda. It is high time Bunda responds to this challenge and thus takes responsibility for its own financial sustainability instead of remaining donor-dependent.
3. The issue of maintenance is closely linked to sustainability. We recommend, therefore, that a comprehensive maintenance plan be elaborated for all assets of the College, including buildings, vehicles and equipment.

Annex 1: People Met

Banda, James (Prof.), Program Coordinator, Programmes Coordinating Office, Bunda College of Agriculture, Lilongwe. Email: jwbanda@bunda.unima.mw

Chalemba, Alice (Ms), Programme Secretary, Programmes Coordinating Office, Bunda College of Agriculture, Lilongwe. Email: pco@bunda.unima.mw

Chamdimba, Chimwemwe, M&E Specialist, Programmes Coordinating Office, Bunda College of Agriculture, Lilongwe. Email: cchamdimba@bunda.unima.mw

Chikuni, Augustine, Programme Officer, Norwegian Embassy, Lilongwe. Cell: + 265 (0) 9806868, Email: auc@mfa.no

Daudi, A.T., Principal Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Lilongwe. Email: adaudi@malawi.net

Foley, F., Farm Manager, Bunda Farm Ltd., Lilongwe. Email: fofl1963@yahoo.com

Gausi, Emma (Ms), Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, IDEAA, Lilongwe. Email: egausi@ideaamis.com

Gondwe, T.N., Head, KSD, Bunda College of Agriculture, Lilongwe. Email: tgondwe@bunda.unima.mw

Kafere, Deusdedit, Peter, Training and Consultancy Coordinator, Bunda College of Agriculture, Lilongwe. Email: tec@bunda.unima.mw

Kamwanja, Leonard, A., (Prof.), Pro Vice Chancellor, University of Malawi, Zomba. Email: provc@unima.mw

Kang'ombe, Jeremiah (Dr.), Aqua-Feed Specialist, Bunda College of Agriculture, Lilongwe. Email: jkang'ombe@bunda.unima.mw

Kanyama-Phiri, G.Y. (Prof), Principal, Bunda College of Agriculture, Lilongwe. Email: gykphiri@bunda.unima.mw

Kondowe, Barrettie, Programme Accountant, Programmes Coordinating Office, Bunda College of Agriculture, Lilongwe. Email: barrettiekondowe@yahoo.com

Kaunda, Emmanuel, Vice Principal, Bunda College of Agriculture, Lilongwe. Email: ekaunda@bunda.unima.mw

Kwapata, Moses (Prof.), Dean, FES, Bunda College of Agriculture, Lilongwe. Email: mbkwapata@yahoo.com or mbkwapata@malawi.net

Malemba, C.S., Finance Officer, Bunda College of Agriculture, Lilongwe. Email: cmalemba@bunda.unima.mw

Maliro, M.F.A., Acting Head, Crop Science Department, Bunda College of Agriculture, Lilongwe. Email: mmaliro@hotmail.com

Maluwa, A.O., Department of Science and Technology, Lilongwe. Email: aomaluwa@mist.mw.org

Masangano, Charles, Dean, Faculty of Development Studies, Bunda College of Agriculture, Lilongwe. Email: cmmasangano@malawi.net

Mbeza, H.F., Department of Science and Technology, Lilongwe: hmbeza@yahoo.co.uk

Mphaso, Joseph, Assistant Registrar, Bunda College of Agriculture, Lilongwe. Email: jmphaso@bunda.unima.mw

Msosa, E. Assistant Farm Manager, Bunda Farm Ltd., Lilongwe.

Mtimuni, B., Head, HEHW, Bunda College of Agriculture, Lilongwe. Email: beatricemtimuni@yahoo.com

Mumba, P., Head, BSD, Bunda College of Agriculture, Lilongwe. Email: mumbap01@yahoo.com or pmumba@bunda.unima.mw

Mwase, Weston, Head, Forestry and Horticulture, Bunda College of Agriculture, Lilongwe. Email: wmwase@bunda.unima.mw

NyaManda, M., D.O.S., Bunda College of Agriculture, Lilongwe. Email: mnyamanda@bunda.unima.mw

Phiri, Sebastian, Head, Agribusiness Management Department, Bunda College of Agriculture, Lilongwe. Email: sebastianphiri@yahoo.com

Saka, Vincent, W., Dean, Postgraduate Studies and Research, Bunda College of Agriculture, Bunda College of Agriculture, Lilongwe. vwsaka@yahoo.com

Salanje, Geoffrey, F., Librarian, Bunda College of Agriculture, Lilongwe. Email: gsalanje@bunda.unima.mw

Sikawa, David, Head, Agriculture and Fisheries Sciences, Bunda College of Agriculture, Lilongwe. Email: dsikawa@yahoo.com

Sitima, James, G., Head, LDCD, Bunda College of Agriculture, Lilongwe. Email: sitimajames@yahoo.com

Skåra, Arild, First Secretary, Norwegian Embassy, Lilongwe. Cell: + 265 (0) 9964878, Email: arild.skara@mfa.no

Wasiri, Mary, College Registrar, Bunda College of Agriculture, Lilongwe. Email: registrar@bunda.unima.mw

Annex 2: Terms of Reference

Mid-Term Review of Bunda College of Agriculture Capacity Building and Agriculture Research and Development Programmes (Malawi)

1.0 Short description of the programmes to be reviewed

Norway's partnership with Bunda College of Agriculture started in 1998 when Norway provided support to the college to improve its performance in technical and institutional planning and in research, education, training and outreach. Through this support Bunda College in 2000 developed a five-year operational plan to guide its future development programme. Pursuant to this strategic plan, Bunda College developed and submitted to Norway a programme document titled Malawi Agricultural Research and Outreach Programme which was later renamed Poverty Reduction in Malawi using agricultural research and outreach (PRIMARO). The primary goal of the programme was to *improve the performance of BCA in learning, teaching, research and outreach to enable the College to play a significant role in the development of the country and to attract other sources of funding for its development programme.*

Core activities of the PRIMARO programme were grouped into three broad components: on-farm/on-station research; outreach; and capacity building. It was envisaged that the programme would strengthen linkages between farmers, and the research and extension services in Malawi. By playing a leading role in changing the ways in which researchers and other national agricultural support services reach their beneficiaries, it was envisaged that Bunda College would be contributing substantially to bridging the gap between researchers and farmers. An evaluation of the programme by Norad recommended, however, that the programme be split into two separate components: Bunda College Capacity Building Programme and Agricultural Research and Development Programme.

a) Bunda College Capacity Building Programme

BC Capacity Building Programme aims to enhance the performance of BC as a lead institution in relevant and efficient learning, teaching, research and outreach for the agricultural and natural resources sector of Malawi and to enable the College play a significant role in the development of the country. The programme is currently being implemented with the following specific objectives:

- To strengthen a relevant and comprehensive human resources development and training programme for the nation by increasing the number of research scientists with postgraduate training at the level of PhD and MSc with substantial and practical research methodology appropriate to farmer-oriented and demand-driven action research;
- To improve teaching, learning, as well as administrative and financial management;
- To improve priority teaching and research facilities and provide additional enhancement of the facilities at the College required for supporting this necessary and

desirable ambition so that the College can effectively contribute to the research and outreach system;

- To strengthen collaboration/cooperation and linkages with partner institutions;
- To support the organisational restructuring/reform process of BC;
- To support the Programmes Coordinating Office (PCO) for efficient and smooth implementation of programme activities.

b) Agricultural Research and Development Programme (ARDEP)

ARDEP was designed to help the nation to move swiftly and effectively into a new research and outreach paradigm. ARDEP puts emphasis on demand-driven research and outreach, and that any research findings generated from this programme must be brought out to the ultimate beneficiaries: the farmers. The overall goal of ARDEP is to reduce poverty and vulnerability amongst the poorest groups and improve the quality of life and social well-being of Malawians through a powerful, effective, and efficient national research and outreach system for the agricultural sector of Malawi.

The immediate objectives (purposes) of ARDEP are as follows:

- To promote food security and income generation of small-scale farmers;
- To facilitate more women participation in the economic, agricultural and natural resources development of the country;
- To contribute to mitigation of the impacts of HIV/AIDS; and,
- To broaden the sources of funding for its development programme.

ARDEP is being implemented through two major components:

i) Developing and implementing a farmer-focused Agricultural Research and Outreach Funding Mechanism

A competitive research and outreach (development) fund open to applicants has been established. The fund, while managed in financial terms by Bunda College, is administered by an independent committee. The Programme attempts to merge a competitive academic model with an applied research model that involves participatory project formulation. The applied objective is linked to the outreach component and both address the Programme's main objective of poverty reduction.

ii) Facilitating and promoting uptake of ready demand-driven technologies and implementing outreach activities.

The aim of the component is to identify and disseminate existing technologies with the ultimate goal of reducing poverty in the selected sites in particular and in the whole country in general. In addition, this component also aims at encouraging various extension service institutions to provide extension services on a competitive basis in accordance with the new national policy in agricultural extension in Malawi.

1.2 Team composition and leadership

The review will be undertaken by a team of two consultants comprising a Norwegian and a Malawian. The Norwegian consultant will be hired by Norad whilst the Embassy in Lilongwe will be responsible for the local consultant. The Norwegian consultant shall act as the team leader.

2.0 Purpose, context and intended use

The purpose of this assessment is to provide an objective review of both ARDEP and BCBP, their implementation and implementation arrangements in relation to the programme goal, objectives and expected outputs. Additionally, based on the results and existing strategies and programmes, the review shall provide the Norwegian Embassy with important information, guidance and analyses focusing on challenges and opportunities for ARDEP to contribute to the implementing the Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) and climate change issues in Malawi. Overall, the review team shall:

- provide an impartial and independent assessment of the performance of the programmes in relation to the stated goal, objectives and outputs;
- assess the achieved results of the programmes and their relevance in the context of improving food security and climate change in Malawi;
- assess and recommend possible opportunities for improving the implementation of ARDEP and the BC Capacity Building programme.

3.0 Scope of work

In the assessment of the overall performance of the programme in relation to the goal, objectives and expected outputs, the Team should review the role of the different stakeholders.

The review shall also assess the institutional arrangements put in place for planning, management and implementation of the programme. The review team shall especially focus on the efficiency and capacity of the institution designated to co-ordinate the implementation of the Norwegian contribution, especially focusing on:

- the effectiveness of the BCA in the implementation of the programme and the linkages with its partners and collaboration with other institutions;
- the assessment of constraints faced and measures taken to address these constraints during the implementation of the programme;
- the success of the efforts to restructure the management of BCA by delegating responsibility to department heads, and for the efficient management of non-academic functions;
- the performance and management of programme support, including reporting and financial management;
- the assessment of the level of commitment and participation of both the internal management team and collaborating partners in implementation process, including planning and monitoring of programme activities;
- the assessment of the level of programme dissemination.

In relation to the major components of both ARDEP and BCDP, the Team is required to assess the level at which the outputs were achieved (using the indicators as the basis for the evaluation). In relation to the ADP and the Climate Change Framework, the Team shall also

assess the relevance of the ongoing programme activities and propose possible amendments in the course of action to align the programme to the priorities described in the ADP and Climate Change Framework.

The assessment of the two programmes shall be guided by some of the following review criteria and proposed questions:

Relevance – assess the extent to which the intervention conforms to Malawi's existing policies, strategies and programmes.

- a) Is the intervention consistent with food security and climate change strategies, policies and programmes?
- b) Is the intervention well in tune with the development policy, especially the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy 2006–2011?
- c) Do the innovations and intervention have potential for replication nationwide?

Effectiveness – Using the established set of indicators the review team shall assess the extent to which the programme has achieved its goals and objectives.

- a) Assess to what extent the programme has contributed to improved food security and capacity in Malawi,
- b) To what extent are the identified outcomes the result of the programmes rather than external factors?
- c) What are the reasons for the achievement or non-achievement of outputs or outcomes?
- d) Was the established monitoring and evaluation system effective in directing implementation of the programme components?
- e) What could be done to make the programmes more effective?

Efficiency – The review team shall provide an objective assessment of the efficiency of output delivery, including assessment of expenditures in relation to activities carried out.

- a) Has the programme been managed with reasonable regard for efficiency?
- b) What measures have been taken during the planning and implementation phase to ensure that resources are efficiently used?
- c) To what extent have the programme activities delivered as agreed?

Impact – The evaluation team shall assess the different types of impact of the programme, positive and negative, intended and unintended.

- a) Has the programme motivated or improved community and gender participation in agricultural research in Malawi?
- b) What do the beneficiaries and other stakeholders perceive to be the impact of the programme?
- c) To what extent does the programme contribute to capacity development and the strengthening of participating institutions?

Sustainability – The team shall assess the effectiveness of sustainability measures established during the programme implementation.

- a) To what extent has measures been taken to address the sustainability of the programme activities?
- b) Is there local ownership of the activities at all levels, institutional and local?
- c) Is the approach used for grant management and capacity development appropriate for Malawi?

Assessment of risks management – Effective implementation depends on how well Bunda College manages risks and how well programme sustainability is integrated into the design. In this regard, the study shall revise the proposed sustainability and risk elements especially those associated with the following: policy and framework conditions (incl. corruption); socio-cultural and gender issues (incl. HIV/aids); economic and financial matters; institutional and organisational factors, and the environment.

4.0 Implementation of the review

4.1 Sources of information and methodology to be employed

The consultant will review background information available at Bunda College of Agriculture, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Norad, and the Royal Norwegian Embassy, Lilongwe and other relevant institutions. Available background information includes programme documents, previous review reports, agricultural policies and strategies, minutes of annual meetings and annual progress reports, and guidelines for research.

Implementation of the proposed mid-term review will be a collaborative effort. The consultants will therefore seek the opinion and views of the widest possible spectrum of key stakeholders, some of which include: the of Principal of BC, programme coordinators and staff of Bunda College, Principal Secretaries, Directors, Heads of Departments of relevant government departments and organisations, international NGOs, beneficiaries of ARDEP research grants, etc.

4.2 Timetable for the preparation, field work and finalisation of report

The review will be undertaken from 27 October to 14 November 2008. The review shall be conducted within a period of 20 working days (approximately 2 days planning, 12 days field work, 2 days for travel and 4 days report writing) for each of the consultants. During this period a field visit to Malawi will be undertaken for consultations with key stakeholders.

4.3 Input and budget

Norad will cover consultancy expenses related to the Norwegian consultant whilst the Embassy will cover all costs in connection with the Malawian consultant.

5.0 Reporting

The Team shall submit a first draft of the report not later than one week after completion of the field work (i.e. medio November 2008) and a draft final report three weeks after the study (i.e. 5 December 2008). Additionally, the team will be required to make a PowerPoint presentation of the preliminary findings and recommendations for all relevant stakeholders at the end of the field work (i.e. on 7 or 8 November 2008) with a view to soliciting feedback. The team leader will be responsible for the finalisation of the report, which will be submitted to Norad by end December 2008. The report will be prepared using the following tentative structure:

- Executive Summary: Summary of the evaluation, with particular emphasis on main findings, conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations;
- Introduction: Presentation of the evaluation purpose, questions and methods used to gather required information;
- Findings: Factual evidence, data and observations relevant to the specific questions;
- Lessons learned: Discussion of issues that are likely to have a potential for wider application and use;
- Recommendations and conclusions: Assessment of the interventions and its results against given review criteria and proposed questions, including actionable proposals to the evaluation users.

SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of a mid-term review Phase III of the Bunda College Capacity Building Programme (BCDP) in Malawi. The efforts during the previous phases are bearing fruit. Bunda College of Agriculture has matured as an institution and acquired a new degree of self-confidence. While institutional stability and functionality have improved concerns persist about sustainability in the absence of donor funding. Major strides have been made in improving the infrastructure. A new research and consultancy policy has been adopted. Through consultancies knowledge and technological skills are conveyed to a wider constituency. Consultancies are also a source of revenue for the College and provide supplementary income for academic staff, which serves as a retention mechanism. The ambition of Bunda College to transform itself from a constituent college of University of Malawi to a fully-fledged university through a merger of three existing institutions of higher learning in the Lilongwe area has not materialised. The College has also failed to establish an endowment fund which is worth revisiting. Bunda Farm was 'commercialised' in May 2005 as a limited liability company. It was previously a financial drain on the College and appeared to be on a recovery path. The Farm does not have title deed to the land, which is leased on a yearly basis from Unima as the formal custodian. Hence, land cannot be used as collateral and the government is unwilling to provide a guarantee, and credit institutions are, therefore, reluctant to extend loans. This predicament hampers the farm's profitability and the prospects of Bunda College earning a sizable income. It is urgent that a solution be found to the under-capitalisation of Bunda Farm Ltd. Bunda has no systematic maintenance plan; repairs and maintenance measures are taken largely on an ad hoc basis as and when money is available. A comprehensive maintenance plan for all assets is urgently needed. Future priorities otherwise include library support; information and communication technology (especially improved Internet access for students); and collaboration with sister institutions in the region and beyond.

Printed version: ISSN 0805-505X

Electronic version: ISSN 1890-503X

Printed version: ISBN 978-82-8062-328-7

Electronic version: ISBN 978-82-8062-329-4

Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI) is an independent, non-profit research institution and a major international centre in policy-oriented and applied development research. Focus is on development and human rights issues and on international conditions that affect such issues. The geographical focus is Sub-Saharan Africa, Southern and Central Asia, the Middle East, the Balkans and South America.

CMI combines applied and theoretical research. CMI research intends to assist policy formulation, improve the basis for decision-making and promote public debate on international development issues.