

Project Outlines for Building Stronger Universities Phase II (BSUII)

Proposal from Kathmandu University, Nepal

1. Strategic choice of focus areas for BSUII partnerships:

- *Outline of not more than three thematic foci and their anchoring in not more than five institutes/departments for the cooperation with a Danish partner. The thematic foci are expected to build on the collaboration in Phase I and to provide substantive focus of the BSUII partnerships.*

Kathmandu University (KU) School of Arts has been collaborating with Aarhus University and University of Copenhagen on the project ‘Nepal on the Move: Conflict, Migration and Stability’) for the past few years. The School of Engineering at KU has also had collaborations with Aalborg University in Denmark in the recent years. Learning from these existing collaborations, and with the aim of using BSU II as a further opportunity to promote advanced level research methodology courses and interdisciplinary research in KU, it would like to focus on the following two thematic areas under the BSU II partnerships. These themes are chosen not only because they are of national interest for Nepal as the country is transforming socio-economically as well as politically, but also because KU wants to be a leader in these areas in conducting quality research and linking research with teaching and policy recommendations.

- I. **Governing Nepal’s Urban Futures:** Urban areas are already playing a major role in the economic transformation of the country. Not only are urban areas having an ever increasing share of the population but also they are important for employment generation, market linkages, financial institutions and availability of basic services. Lack of access to different urban services is an important aspect of increasing urban inequality. Sustainable urban development needs to address this inequality of access to urban services. This is an area of renewed interest in Nepal. The changing nature of rural urban linkages, the depopulation of rural areas and migration to urban areas, the role of sustainable financing of urban development, the emergence of peri-urban areas, effective urban governance, and urban health services are all important issues in Nepal’s future development of urban areas. Urban development becomes especially important and crucial in the view of the proposed federal restructuring of the country, and demands a thorough research from socio-economic, political, infrastructural and environmental perspectives.

In views of the time considerations for this phase it is proposed that the focus be mainly on access to urban health services. The focus will be on developing a realistic overview of basic health services, its access by different groups - income, ethnicity, gender, ecological belts and so on, the specific nature of health issues by different groups and the governance aspect of public health. It is expected that such a review will not only identify

the major gaps in services by different groups but also identify important issues for further research and analysis.

This is a good opportunity for the School of Arts and the School of Medicine of KU to engage with other stakeholders in urban health issues.

The Department of Development Studies at the **School of Arts** will be the focal department for this theme.

- II. **Renewable Energy/Hydropower and Sustainable Development** continues to be an important issue for Nepal's energy needs in the context of both the pressures of growing population and a lack of fossil fuel resources. By establishing renewable energy infrastructure for both urban and rural areas that can be readily accessed and maintained by local people, sustainable growth and delivery of social services can be greatly enhanced. With proper planning and integration many decentralized units can be part of a bigger national system that may be more responsive to the growing energy needs of the country rather than a few mega projects that have their own oves to show. Revisiting this debate may be critical to provide new openings for Nepal's sustainable energy futures that could unlock the stalemate of blackouts and load shedding that has gripped Nepal for the past decade.

Kathmandu University can play a leading role in this field. It has been increasingly realized that Nepal's development hinges on proper management of its immense water resources. Rational utilization of water resources will open up numerous opportunities for both skilled and unskilled labour forces, and domestic and foreign capital. Hydropower development is a vital way for utilizing water, human and financial resources. So far teaching and research on this theme at KU has focussed only on the engineering aspects. There is a need to integrate this very important theme with economic, financial, social, environmental and management disciplines. There are also many technical issues that need further research.

The School of Engineering and the School of Arts will work together in lead this research.

Some of the activities that would be included in both of these themes are:

- Formation on an interdisciplinary study team (from School of Arts, School of Medicine, School of Engineering and Northern Partner (s))
- Designing appropriate research methodology modules
- Developing research-based curriculum for PhD courses
- Developing joint research proposals
- Stakeholder consultations and policy dialogues

- *Outline how results and insights gained in the proposed thematic focus areas will be upscaled for the benefit of the entire University*

The results and insights gained from research in the proposed themes will be beneficial for the entire university in the following ways:

1. As all of the proposed themes are interdisciplinary in nature, research in these areas will enhance the intra-university coordination capacity among its different departments.
2. This would include activities and produce outputs that create an atmosphere within the university to address its ability to conduct high-level research (including PhD). In particular, KU would like to enhance its capacity in the following areas:
 - Designing advanced research methodology courses
 - Strengthening scientific writing through short-term workshops
 - Formulating joint research proposals with Danish Partners
 - Providing small research grants for young faculties
 - Strengthening/upgrading library and internet services for research – initially on the proposed thematic areas

2. Envisaged output areas

The primary focus during BSU II will be twofold: to develop a Research Grant Management Centre at the University to oversee and monitor the overall grants at the University, but starting with the two thematic areas proposed here; and to develop PhD level courses and research proposals starting with the proposed themes in collaboration with the Danish partners. With the aim of using the BSU II platform as a testing ground for initiating a process towards building KU's research capacity with the help of collaboration with the Danish partners, the following outputs are envisaged for BSU II:

Output 1.1:	<p>Development of a Research Grant Management Centre for strengthening/reviewing the university's focus, practices and capacities related to grant management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This unit will work as the central research policy implementation, monitoring and grant management unit. It will regularly review research activities and invite peer reviews of the research being undertaken in the university. It will facilitate and administer research grants in the University, both internal and external. It will also focus on improving the university research grant management and related procurement and financial systems.. <p>The unit will be housed in the Central Office of the University and will be headed by a senior faculty.</p>
Output 1.2	<p>Development of research-based curriculum/module in PhD courses, where the initial key fields are (i) sustainable urban development in Nepal (ii) renewable energy/hydropower and sustainable development</p>
Output 1.3:	<p>Designing of research methodology and scientific writing courses and developing joint research proposals with Danish partners.</p>
Output 1.4:	<p>Development of new linkages with stakeholders for consultations, disseminations and policy dialogues. Institutionalising the lessons learned in policies, good practices notes, and training courses for faculty and postgraduate students (this is a long term goal, based on the lessons learned from this phase).</p>

- *Output areas in relation to services and facilities supporting research with the support of the BSUII, whether as part of the partnerships with Danish partners or in separate work streams*

This would include improving the administrative and financial management systems required for good research – essentially grants management. For a young University like KU, managing various research projects under its different schools sometimes gets quite overwhelming. Better monitoring, reporting and quality assurance capacities can alleviate pressures on the researchers to spend quality time on tasks such as designing, writing and presenting research grant proposals that would make the university more competitive for future research grants. The following would be the key some of the activities for meeting the above objectives:

- Development of grant management procedures.
- Strengthening financial management systems and procedures, including accounting and audit for grants.
- Upgrading its on-line resources for better research.
- Work towards developing capacities of different units through the Research Grant Management Center for maintaining research quality and performance monitoring

3. Management structure and institutional anchoring for the partnership, including key staff

The School of Arts will take the overall lead in coordinating and implementing BSU II at Kathmandu University.

A BSU II Supervisory Committee for KU, including members from all the relevant Schools and key units/divisions will be created.

A BSU Coordinator, who will coordinate the overall project, will be appointed. One finance and communication officer, to work as the assistant to the Coordinator, will be recruited.

- *Key staff to be involved, including overall BSUII coordination and key staff at institute-department-faculty-Chancellor level (i.e. the level that is relevant for your outline)*

There will be a supervisory BSU II team at KU that will consist of the following members:

Dr. Bholu Thapa: Registrar
 Dr. Mahesh Banskota: Dean, School of Arts
 Dr. Rajendra Kaju, Associate Dean, School of Medicine
 Dr. Bim Shrestha: Associate Dean, School of Engineering
 Dr. Sagar Raj Sharma: Associate Dean, School of Arts (Coordinator)

This team will report all the academic matters to the Academic Council of the University, which is chaired by its Vice Chancellor, Dr. Ram Kantha Makaju Shrestha.

4. Key expectation to partners, other concerns and risks

- *Key expectations to prospective Danish University partners (relationships, staff and knowledge resources, approach, etc.)*

- The partner institutions would facilitate in strengthening the existing research environment and research process at KU.
- They would help in designing and implementing interdisciplinary research methodology courses.
- They would create opportunities for capacity building of young staff from different units/departments of KU through small research grants.
- They would help in creating opportunities for KU personnel for short term training opportunities at partner institutions.
- BSU II would provide a platform and opportunities for mutual learning for KU and its partners.

- *Concerns and possible risks envisaged, and possible mitigating measures*

Some of the possible risks in effectively implementing BSU II at KU could be:

- Due to other ongoing projects and resource constraints, KU may not be able to give a complete focus on BSU II
- Expectations of KU and its Danish partner(s) may not match
- Danish partners may not be able to provide sufficient support to KU's needs

Possible mitigating measures:

- Key personnel to work for BSU identified and given adequate incentives and support to work full-time for BSU II
- BSU coordinator at KU will act as the liaison between DANIDA, Danish partner institutes and KU management to ensure that there is a synergy in their expectations and priorities
- Detailed and frequent communication between the partner institutions and KU

5. Process Action Plan for a three-month inception phase

- *Outline key activities and milestones in a process action plan for the first three months of activities after a Danish partner has been chosen. The inception phase will lead to the formalisation of a Development Engagement Agreement that will detail outputs, activities and indicators for the project period ending November 2016.*

Process action plan for the first 3 months of activities after a Danish partner has been chosen.

Activity	Output	Indicator	Tentative date
Organize the first round of joint workshop to plan and design implementation details for each objective	Draft of an implementation plan for BSU II is developed	Both KU and Danish partners have a clear outline and timetable of the activities and outputs for BSU II	June 2014
Assessment of relevant units within KU by Danish partners for capacity building	Danish partners have a good assessment of the status of the units within KU that need to be strengthened for improving overall research management within the university	Procedure/steps for developing grant management center identified	June/July 2014
Design short term training courses/programmes for KU's staff and faculty for capacity building	Training modules and research focus are discussed across relevant departments and Schools of KU	KU and Danish partners start working on designing specific training modules/courses for KU staff/faculty	June-July 2014
Hold the first round of research methodology workshop for PhD students and faculty of KU	PhD students and KU faculties are given training in advanced research methodology	Development of an interdisciplinary research methodology training module from PhD research initiated	August 2014
Workshop for discussing long-term collaboration for the identified research (thematic) areas	Joint proposals developed for long-term research collaboration in interdisciplinary thematic areas		August 2014
Development of joint development engagement agreement	Final development engagement agreement developed and inception report prepared	Detailed plans for activities and implementation for both KU and Danish partner developed	August 2014

6. Indicative budget

- *Provide an indicative budget by objectives and main outputs, which specifies 2-4 main cost items per output to be financed by the 60% allocated to the Southern Partner, and the total expected costs per output from the 40% allocated to the Danish partners. The budget is indicative and serves to enable prospective partners understand where main efforts are expected to take place. A detailed operational budget will be prepared during the inception phase.*

In DKK (Total grant: **DKK 5,300,000**)

The figures given below are only indicative at this stage and are subject to change after detailed consultations with Danish partners.

		KU	Danish Partner
1	Development of a research grant management centre	600000	266667
2	Development of a new curriculum/modules in PhD courses	500000	300000
3	Designing of research methodology and scientific writing courses and developing joint research proposals	500000	500000
4	Development and institutionalization of new linkages with stakeholders for consultations, disseminations and policy dialogues	500000	200000
5	Workshops/seminars and international travelling	550000	500000
6	Overhead (12% + Coordination Cost (8%) for KU, 20% for Danish Partner)	530,000	353,333
7	Total	3,180,000	2,120,000

7. Annex: Overview of the University

- *Description of the University and its capacity statement (staff, financial turnover, faculties, key external cooperation partners, key links to other stakeholders in the country, links to national research development strategies or policies (if existing and relevant) etc.).*

Overview

Kathmandu University is an autonomous, not-for-profit, non - government institution dedicated to maintain high standards of academic excellence. It is committed to develop leaders in professional areas through quality education.

The central campus of KU is located in a mountainous landscape in Dhulikhel Municipality about 30 kilometers east of Kathmandu having round-the-year pleasant climate and panoramic Himalayan Views.

KU had a very modest start from a rented building in Kathmandu in 1990. In the last two decades, it has been able to create a built up space of 46,846 square meters. Within this period, KU has built not only reasonable infrastructure, but also established a track record of academic excellence. At present, the University offers various undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate programs in science, engineering, medicine, management, education, arts, pharmacy, environment, music, human & natural resources, information technology and biotechnology, through School of Science, School of Management, School of Engineering, School of Medical Sciences, School of Education and School of Arts. The most recent addition has been the School of Law, which was launched in 2013. In addition to 3695 students studying in its constituent campuses 7500 students are in its affiliated colleges.

The academic programs of the University are based on credit-semester system with continuous internal evaluations. The University has adopted 1 to 10 teacher–student ratio. However, KU is very cautious in recruitment of every single faculty or non-teaching staff. The staff strength at KU is 458 for teaching and 725 for nonteaching (including paramedical staff). The academic calendar of minimum 230 days is strictly adhered to; admission of students is based on merit, based on their score in the previous examination and written and oral entrance tests.

In addition, KU has been successfully collaborating with more than fifty universities and institutions of international repute for faculty and students exchange programs, credit transfer and joint research work and exchange information. This has helped KU to establish itself well in the global community.

All of this and other relevant information can be found in the website of Kathmandu University at www.ku.edu.np

The details of the programs of the School of Arts can be found at www.ku.edu.np/arts

Please see the attached A Pdf file of Kathmandu University's Facts and Figures 2013 for further details.