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Cecilia Stålsby Lundborg for Round table November 5, Göteborg

Title: Development research at Swedish Research Council (VR) and sandwich research training in Global Health at Karolinska Institutet

This presentation contains two parts (a) Development research at Swedish Research Council and (b) Sandwich research training in Global Health at Karolinska Institutet. I will present them separately.

Development research at Swedish Research Council (VR)

The committee for Development Research at Swedish Research Council (VR) was established in 2013. The tasks of the committee are (i) To shape strategies, (ii) To develop the process for evaluation of scientific quality in the research area as well as relevance to the overall goals of Swedish development cooperation, and (iii) To integrate Development research more closely within the Swedish Research Council's activities.

At present the budget is 165 MSEK per year. So far there have been two types of grants, Project grants and Swedish Research Links. Development research at VR is governed by the Government strategy 'Strategy for research cooperation and research in development cooperation 2015 – 2021'.

The English version can be found at

<http://www.government.se/contentassets/f929d648751e40859c7eb39812dacb01/strategi-for-forskningsamarbete-pdf-for-webb-eng-2.pdf>

VR's activities within the framework of the strategy are expected to contribute to:

'Strengthened research of high quality and of relevance to poverty reduction and sustainable development', *Focusing on Swedish research of relevance to poverty reduction and sustainable development in low-income countries*

Strengthened high-quality research in Sweden that is of relevance to poverty reduction and sustainable development in low-income countries.

Strengthened knowledge exchange and collaboration between researchers in Sweden and researchers in low-income and lower middle-income countries, with a focus on research that is of high quality and of relevance to poverty reduction and sustainable development.

The goal for the project grant is to strengthen Swedish Research with particular relevance to low-income countries. Support is given to high quality research, in all scientific areas, that is relevant to the overall goals of Swedish international aid, and to the goals for global development policy. The research can focus on knowledge that is immediately or potentially useful in fulfilling the goals of this call and comprise basic through to applied research.

The purpose of Swedish Research Links is to strengthen the knowledge exchange and collaboration between researchers in Sweden and researchers in low-income or lower-middle income countries. Further, the aim is to promote long-term collaboration in research of high scientific quality. The collaboration shall be based on the principle of mutual benefit, equality and commonly set objectives. Project grants have been evaluated at VR since 2013 and Research Links since 2002. The evaluation includes Quality and Relevance. This is an important and sometimes very difficult task. Several reviewers, (preferably five) read every application. The evaluation is done by researchers divided into several panels, this year it was 5 panels with a total of 45 reviewers. In addition external evaluations are asked for in cases of difficult to evaluate applications e.g. due to multidisciplinary or too many conflicts of interest in the panels.

The approval rate the three years has been as follows (the 2015 figures will be available at the presentation). Approved project grants, 2013, 41, approval rate 11%, 2014, 45, approval rate 17%, 2015 data will be available for the presentation. Approved Swedish Research Link grants, 2013, 47, approval rate 34%, 2014, 47, approval rate 48%. 2015 data will be available for the presentation.

Besides the grant evaluation we have worked with research overviews where we in 2014 attempted to map and describe Development research in Sweden as background for the VR input to the research bill. The description is available in English at <https://publikationer.vr.se/produkt/overview-2014-development-research-2/>

Result are also presented e.g. in seminars since 2014, next one November 30. Next year there will be a Development research conference hosted by Stockholm University and financed jointly by VR, Sida and SU.

There will most likely be news in the calls next year, so check the VR website.

Sandwich research training in Global health at Karolinska Institutet

Global health or as the name at that time was International Health Care Research was initiated as a multidisciplinary unit at Karolinska Institutet in 1984 by professor Göran Sterky. Before that he had done extraordinary work in relation to important health issues like breast milk substitution in low income countries and in relation to primary care. He was among the initiators of the first Peoples Health Assembly that was held in Bangladesh.

Since then many researchers from masters to post-doc level from low- and middle income countries have been trained in the unit. Larger and more long-term collaborations have been with e.g. Uganda (see also below) and earlier Vietnam. Sida has been very important in funding the capacity building e.g. in Vietnam Health Systems research project and Common Disease project. PhDs from Vietnam have defended their PhD at KI. Many of them are now in high positions.

Besides these Sida funded programs, also EU funded programs e.g. with India has been important and also other Swedish funding e.g. from VR, Forte has been important. Some examples of my former PhD students from Vietnam and India, mainly in relation to a global health threat, antibiotic resistance will be presented.

The Uganda collaboration is still ongoing and a new phase with four projects in the health field funded until 2020 is now starting. In this new phase training from master to post.doc level is included. The four projects are:

- Innovations for accelerating reduction in maternal, newborn and child mortality in post conflict Uganda.
- Quality improvement of Makerere University's population-based health and demographic surveillance site: maximizing the potential of the research platform for capacity development and generation of valid population data to inform policy formulation.
- Innovating health systems and healthcare delivery in rural Uganda: towards building critical capacity to tackle the rising Type 2 Diabetes challenge.
- Innovations in the health system: Interventions for improved treatment of infectious disease in children in rural Uganda.

In March 2015 a paper regarding the so far successful institutional partnership between Makerere University and Karolinska Institutet was published.

Selected references

'Strategy for research cooperation and research in development cooperation 2015 – 2021'.

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