

STATUS REPORT ON CHE FUNDED RESEARCH PROJECTS

1.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Pursuant to the mandate of the Commission for Higher Education to mobilize financial resources for higher education and research (Universities Act, 1985, Cap 210B), the Ministry of Education allocated **Kshs 136 million** for the purpose. The money was spread over two financial years as follows: **Kshs 65 million** in 2005/2006 and **Kshs 71 million** in 2006/2007.

The Commission's Policy Analysis and Research Committee identified **Food Security** as the theme for the 2005/2006 research funds and **Water as an Avenue to Food Security** for the 2006/2007 research funds. The choice of themes underscores the Government's commitment towards reversing poverty trends and its impact among the poor as expressed in: Millenium Development Goal Number One (MDG 1), National Poverty Eradication Plan (NPEP), Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation (ERS). It is also in line with Sessional Paper No.1 of 2005 on aligning research to national development.

The Commission established Administration and Management Modalities (2006) for the Research Fund. The modalities encompassed disbursement and accounting procedures, proposal guidelines and criteria for selection and award. Mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation were also put in place.

2.0 RESEARCH PROPOSALS

The Commission advertised for Research Interests and the response was overwhelming. Successful Research Interests were development into full proposals. The Commission received and processed a total of 88 proposals for the 2005/2006 research funds and 120 proposals for the 2006/2007 research funds. The proposals covered various thematic areas that ranged from the social sciences to pure and applied sciences.

3.0 THE SELECTION COMMITTEE

The Commission requested various universities, research institutions and relevant Ministries to nominate three researchers with impeccable credentials to be considered as evaluators of the proposals. Consequently, a data bank of 66 experts was established. The data bank provides resource persons for evaluation of proposals on the basis of the individuals' research experiences and areas of specialization in relation to thematic areas covered by the proposals. An expert is also appointed to coordinate the process. The team works under specified Terms of Reference. Some of the experts were also utilised as peer reviewers for the papers that were presented at the dissemination workshop.

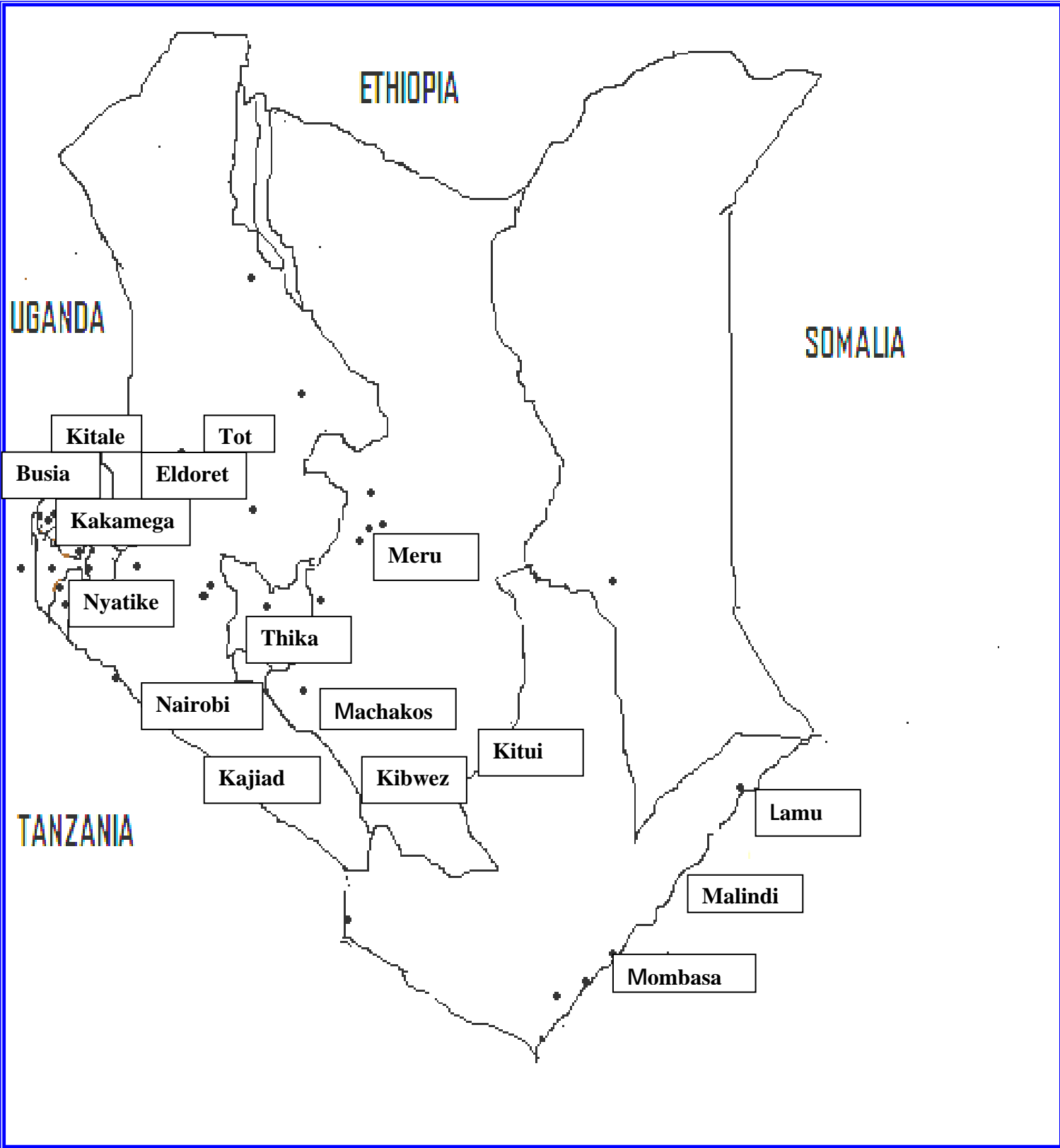
4.0 THE EVALUATION PROCESS

Proposals were evaluated in accordance to the Guidelines for the Assessment of Research Proposals developed by the Commission for Higher Education. Successful proposals are expected to meet the following five criteria: **Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Impact** and **Sustainability**. The criteria are drawn from the government emphasis on research that is relevant to national development, the need to maximize returns at minimum cost and to yield immediate but long lasting benefits to the target group. While merit remains the overriding factor in award of research grants, thematic diversity, institutional and regional balance, and gender are also considered.

5.0 DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESEARCH PROJECTS

To date (2009), the Commission has funded a total of 44 research projects through out the country (Appendix 1). The projects are undertaken by both public and private universities with emphasis on institutional collaboration and multi-disciplinary research. The budgetary limits for the research were KShs 3 million for a discipline specific research and KShs 6 million for multidisciplinary research.

MAP OF KENYA SHOWING THE DISTRIBUTION OF RESEARCH PROJECTS ON WATER AS AN AVENUE FOR FOOD SECURITY



6.0 DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS TO RESEARCH PROJECTS

So far, the Commission has disbursed **KShs 51,463,124** of the **Kshs 65,000,000** to 21 research projects on **Food Security** and **Kshs 44,426,933** of the **Kshs 71,000,000** to 23 research projects on **Water as an Avenue to Food Security**. The funds were disbursed on a quarterly basis upon receipt of progress reports and duly certified statements of accounts.

7.0 STATUS OF THE 2005/2006 RESEARCH PROJECTS

The status of the 21 projects on **Food Security** can be summarized in three categories as follows:

1. Completed projects
2. On-going Projects
3. Stalled Projects

Completed Projects

Annual reports indicate that 13 of the 21 projects have been completed. The project results have generated new knowledge as well as expanding existent knowledge on various aspects that impact upon food security. In addition, simple cost effective technologies and remedies have been developed and adopted to improve livelihoods. Mechanisms of upscaling the new technology have also been initiated.

On-going Projects

The research projects were faced with many challenges that forced some to lag behind their implementation schedules. Consequently, 3 of the 21 research projects are still in the experimental stages. Some of the initial challenges included: erratic rainfall, delay in procurement of project materials and equipment, lack of team work and insecurity at the project sites. These problems were exacerbated by the effects of the Post Election Violence that held up project

activities for a period of up to five months. It is also noteworthy that monitoring and evaluation recommendations required the projects to undergo modification in order to meet the needs of the target communities more effectively. Nevertheless, the projects are on course and are expected to wind up by July, 2009.

Stalled Projects

In the course of project implementation, 3 of the 5 stalled projects were found to be lagging seriously behind without adequate justification. These projects were stopped and investigations into utilization of the funds already disbursed initiated. One of the projects is still awaiting broadcasting frequency from the Communications Commission while another project was held up in the final quarter pending investigations into revelations of double-funding. Upon completion of the investigations, any funds that may have been utilized without tangible outputs will be recovered from the researchers.

7.1 SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROJECTS

The projects incorporated measures that will ensure their sustainability. The training component of the projects prepared members of the community for adoption of the new technologies. Besides, agricultural extension officers were involved to promote the knowledge and technology generated from the projects beyond the life of the project. In addition, project technical reports will also be availed in manuals for use by the stakeholders. There are also possibilities for up-scaling of the research projects by relevant development authorities. Sustainability and replication will ensure that there is a lasting impact on the communities. A proposal to facilitate sustainability of the 10 most promising projects was forwarded to the Permanent Secretary, Office of the President. The same proposal was also forwarded to the Chief Executive of the National Council for Science and Technology.

7.2 IMPACT ON TARGET COMMUNITY

A majority of the projects have recently been completed and therefore their impact is yet to be established. However, the potential for a positive impact is very promising. Already, a press report on one of the research projects shows that it is gaining popularity in the target community (**The Standard, Wednesday, July 23, 2008 p3**). There is no doubt that the envisaged increased food production from the expanded knowledge and technology will not only enhance availability of food for consumption but also for sale. Commercialization of project activities is also expected to increase employment opportunities in micro-enterprises. Farmers who attended the dissemination workshop reported that they had gained knowledge and skills from the projects and requested that more funding be provided for sustainability and replication.

7.3 DISSEMINATION WORKSHOP

The Commission organized a workshop in Mombasa from 26th to 30th August, 2008 to disseminate the research findings on **Food Security**. Workshop participants were drawn from a cross section of stakeholders including: Members of Parliament, researchers, farmers, scholars, relevant Ministries, Non-Governmental Organizations, Development Authorities and members of the Commission. The workshop provided impetus for replication and upscaling of the research projects. Further, the workshop report will facilitate dissemination of research findings to a wider audience and enhance adoption of the research findings.

8.0 STATUS OF THE 2006/2007 RESEARCH PROJECTS

The Commission is also coordinating 23 research projects on the theme of **Water as an Avenue to Food Security**. Although the projects were set to commence in April 2008, the post election violence caused serious delays. Consequently, the

preliminary project implementation plans were poorly synchronized with the weather. However, the projects have recovered from these exigencies of project implementation and are poised for success.

Site inspections of each project to verify the progress on the ground were undertaken from the 14th of April to the 1st of May 2009. During the site visits, meetings were arranged with the research team and stakeholders. Relevant documents which included research proposals, progress reports, financial records and completed monitoring and evaluation questionnaires were scrutinized. The research team and key stakeholders were interviewed and experiments observed.

8.1 PROJECT PERFORMANCE

The above processes culminated in reports on the progress of the various projects. The research projects were assessed against implementation of planned activities and achievement of defined targets. The results indicate that a majority of the projects have been very successful (details of individual projects are annexed in Tables). Specifically, the results were as follows:

- (i) **3** projects were assessed as **Excellent**
- (ii) **10** projects were assessed as **Good**
- (iii) **4** projects were assessed as **Fair**
- (iv) **5** projects were assessed as **Poor**

Projects Assessed as Excellent

These projects have generated new knowledge, expanded existent knowledge and developed effective technologies that impact upon food security and improved livelihoods. The projects have surpassed their anticipated levels of achievement, inspired heightened community interest and replication in other communities is already evident. Their success was partly attributed to appropriate project planning and coordination, and, strong team work.

The 3 projects are:

1. Conquering Hunger in Kenya: Developing Drought tolerant Maize for Semi-arid and Arid Agro-Ecological Zones
2. Surface Rainwater harvesting for Irrigation and Livestock Utilization and Purification for Domestic use in the Smallholder Farms in the Lake Victoria Region
3. Improving Food Security Among Small-Scale Farmers in Kakamega District Through Integrated Horticulture – Aquaculture

Projects Assessed as Good

A majority of the projects were assessed as good. There has been timely implementation of project activities and impressive preliminary outputs have been achieved. The outputs include: baseline information, community mobilization and sensitization, planted experimental plots with African Leafy Vegetables (ALV), onions, kales and tomatoes, fruits, fresh water supplies to school children and families, crabs that were harvested and sold, 2 models for rainfall forecasting, cost effective fish smoking ovens and Farmer Field Schools. The mechanisms for technology transfer and project sustainability have been laid out for subsequent implementation. The researchers have worked closely with the communities in many ways including: awareness creation, project planning, establishment of project sites, participation in on farm/ site trials, and, collection of data. The target communities have been fully involved hence their appreciation and enthusiasm about the benefits accruing from the projects.

Projects Assessed as Fair

The 4 projects in this category have completed all the project set up activities and initiated the main project work but there are critical gaps in project implementation. Consequently, the projects have lost focus and achieved very little. Insufficient technical input has led to misplaced emphasis on non-core activities while important data has not been collected.

Projects Assessed as Poor

Work in the 5 projects assessed as poor has remained preliminary with insignificant progress towards actual problem solving. Structures of project implementation were laid down but have not gone beyond community mobilization and sensitization. While there are solid reasons for the lag in project implementation, it is clear that the projects were overwhelmed by confounding factors due to poor follow up and planning. As a result, there is little or no activity on the ground.

9.0 CONSTRAINTS FACED BY THE RESEARCH PROJECTS

The researchers have voiced concern over the release of funds after the rainy season. However, this was a result of the poor synchrony of the Commission's processes and research work. Further, the researchers have identified the following factors as constraining the smooth progression of the research projects:

- lengthy procurement procedures (however, a number of institutions have improved in this process during the 2008/2009 financial year);
- delay by researchers to account for disbursed funds leading delays in further disbursements;
- non conducive weather conditions, and;
- post election violence

10.0 PROBLEMS IN SOME RESEARCH PROJECTS

Despite the foregoing constraints, the monitoring and evaluation team identified specific problems that had adversely affected the progress of the projects. These problems include:

1. Poor planning leading to non adherence of initial work plans.
2. Poor management/utilization of funds leading to work that is not commensurate with the funds expended.

3. Lack of involvement of key stakeholders has led to poor implementation of technical aspects of the projects.
4. Inadequate teamwork has led to suspicion and disagreements among the research team.

11.0 CHE'S CHARACTER AS AN AGENT FOR GOVERNMENT FUNDED RESEARCH

In the co-ordination and management of research funds for universities, the Commission has demonstrated the following strengths:

- Established accountable and transparent mechanisms for proposal evaluation, award of grants and, monitoring and evaluation which provide a level playing ground among researchers and, between public and private universities.
- Works closely with resource persons of impeccable credentials to ensure best practices.
- Enhanced quality research output by the institutions through the competitive grants.
- Increased institutional linkages and partnerships through the emphasis placed on multi-disciplinary research and institutional collaboration.
- Promoted relevant research with a measurable social impact by zeroing on one theme that is of great strategic importance for national development and poverty alleviation.
- Increased ownership and adoption of research results by insisting on the involvement of the beneficiaries in the project right from the planning stage.
- Strengthened the relationship between the target communities and universities by encouraging university researchers to work closely with the communities.

- Established networks with the Inter-University Council of East Africa, UNESCO and DAAD with strong possibilities for funding. DAAD provided additional funds for the research dissemination workshop.

12.0 CONCLUSION

Overall, the Commission for Higher Education funded research projects have been successful, with 76% of the projects proving to be viable. This success is attributable to: support from the Policy Analysis and Research Committee, CHE management and a participatory monitoring and evaluation process. Lessons learnt from co-ordination of the projects at inception of the Research Fund will propel subsequent research projects to higher levels of success.