

## Norwegian Support to Bunda College of Agriculture - Phase II

### An Evaluation

Ramji Nyirenda and Arne Tostensen

**R 2005: 13**



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## Acronyms and abbreviations

AGEP	Association of Gender Promotion (student association)
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AIT	Asia Institute of Technology
ALDAP	Agriculture and Livestock Sector Development Strategy and Action Plan
APRU	Agriculture Policy Research Unit
AQFS	Aquaculture & Fisheries Science
ARDEF	Agricultural Research and Development Fund
BCA	Bunda College of Agriculture
CARD	Centre for Agricultural Research and Development
CD-ROM	Compact Disc Read-Only Memory
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FORUM	Forum on Agricultural Resources Husbandry (Rockefeller Foundation)
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German aid agency)
HEHN	Home Economics & Human Nutrition
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICEIDA	Icelandic International Development Agency
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
JICA	Japan International Co-operation Agency
JKUAT	Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture & Technology
LAN	Local Area Network
LCD	Liquid Crystal Display
LDC	Language & Development Communication
MASIP	Malawi Agricultural Sector Investment Programme
MPRSP	Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
MWK	Malawi Kwacha
MSc	Master of Science
NASFAM	National Smallholders' Association of Malawi
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NOK	Norwegian krone
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation
NRM	Natural Resource Management
PAC	Project Advisory Committee
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PIT	Programme Implementation Team
PRIMARO	Poverty Reduction in Malawi Using Agricultural Research and Outreach
SHRAP	Society for Human Rights Awareness and Promotion (student association)
SRYP	Students' Rural Youth in Development
ToR	Terms of Reference
UMB	Norwegian University of Life Sciences (formerly Norwegian Agricultural University)
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIMA	University of Malawi
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## Preface

Bunda College of Agriculture, through the Norwegian Embassy in Lilongwe, engaged the services of one Norwegian and one Malawian consultant to conduct a joint end-of-phase-II evaluation of NORAD's support to the College. This report presents the findings and recommendations of the evaluation team.

This evaluation was long overdue since phase II was completed at the end of June 2004. We have felt some unease about the timing of this evaluation exercise. It came rather late in the day when a project proposal for a new phase was already in an advanced stage of preparation. One would have expected the findings and recommendations from the evaluation of Phase II to be fed into the design of the new phase.

By the same token, we are not sure whether our recommendations at this late stage will be taken into account and incorporated into the new project document. We are also concerned that to the extent that our recommendations *are* heeded they might further slow down the approval process for the next phase. Be that as it may, we have nonetheless worked under the assumption that our findings and recommendations will be considered timely and still relevant, despite the peculiar sequence of events.

In that vein, we would like to underscore that we see the evaluation as essentially a learning device or a tool for improving performance in the future. However, it cannot be helped if some of the stakeholders may feel embarrassed at our pointing to shortfalls and reprehensible circumstances. Even so, it is in the spirit of constructive criticism that we have approached our task.

Lilongwe and Bergen, 28 April 2005,  
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. He went out of his way to obtain necessary documentation and to organise our extensive programme with a wide range of interviewees both at Bunda College and in various government ministries and NGOs. Similarly, Mr. Augustine Chikuni, agricultural advisor at the Norwegian Embassy in Lilongwe, went to great lengths to facilitate our work and assisted us in numerous practical ways.

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

## Executive summary

1. Bunda College of Agriculture has received funding from the Government of Norway since early 1999, essentially for institution-building purposes. The first phase of Norwegian support came to an end in 2000 and led to a follow-up phase, which started in 2001 and ended in June 2004. Pending the approval of a continuation phase, Phase II was given a three-month no-cost extension, in effect drawing on unspent monies as at the end of June 2004.
2. The main objective of the evaluation was threefold: (a) to provide an objective assessment of the project, its implementation and implementation arrangements in relation to the project goal, objectives and expected outputs; (b) to assess existing products of the project in relation to the target audience and their impact; and (c) to identify opportunities and recommendations for improving the performance of Bunda College in project implementation, teaching and research. The evaluation methodology required the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. We have perused many documents and interviewed nearly 60 respondents.
3. The initial time frame of Phase II was five years, with a total funding of about NOK 35 million for the period. It soon emerged, however, that part of the expected amount – NOK 15 million from Swedish Sida – was not forthcoming. It was later decided to compress the original five-year life span of the project into only three years at the same level of funding. It is noteworthy that neither the substantial cut in funding at an early stage from NOK 35 to 20 million nor the shortening of the duration of the project from five to three years led to a revision of the original project document.
4. The main purpose of an evaluation is to assess the results produced after a given time period has lapsed. Our point of departure is the project document for Phase II which grouped the expected results in five output areas: (a) organisational restructuring; (b) financial and administrative management; (c) revenue generation; (d) improved priority teaching facilities; and (e) improved teaching and research capacity.
5. Based on the assessment of achievements and shortfalls in terms of the project's own objectives the overall outcome is mixed. There are some impressive achievements but also some disappointing shortfalls. We would like to highlight the following notable **achievements**:
  - A draft strategic plan has been prepared for Bunda College for the period 2005–2010, although further elaboration is needed in terms of specifying resource needs, milestones and time schedules. Its implementation is the next challenge.
  - Bunda Farm has been 'commercialised', i.e. turned into a limited liability company, and is now breaking even. The main challenge ahead is to acquire working capital to make it a profitable enterprise that can contribute to the financial base of the College.
  - The erstwhile journal has been resuscitated and renamed: *Bunda Journal of Agriculture, Environmental Science and Technology*. The future challenge is to make it a sustainable publication.
  - The Programmes Co-ordinating Office has been reconstituted and is functioning well but its relationship with other units within the College needs to be defined more clearly.
  - A new software package has been installed for accounting purposes and staff have been trained in using it.
  - A local area network has been installed and enhanced connectivity within the College. Similarly, connectivity has been improved with the outside world through a new satellite link. However, a systems administrator needs to be recruited urgently to ensure continuous service.
  - A generator has been installed to counteract the disruptive effects on teaching and research of frequent electricity cuts.

- A minibus has been purchased to improve transportation of staff between Bunda and the city of Lilongwe for those who do not live on campus.
  - A student and staff tracking system has been installed and promises to be useful in retrieval of information and time tabling once its teething problems are over.
  - The gender balance of the student population at Bunda has improved tremendously. The intake of female students has risen from about 10–12 per cent to about 40 per cent currently.
  - Under the supervision of the Programmes Co-ordinating Office – and partly resulting from a course conducted in the writing of applications – a fair number of applications for external funding is under consideration and may prove successful.
  - Several buildings have been rehabilitated and a new cafeteria has been constructed.
  - An array of equipment has been procured and put at the disposal of staff and students alike.
  - The library has benefited from funds for acquisition of books, journal subscriptions and bibliographic databases on CD-ROM, all of which have provided access to valuable information. It is a great challenge ahead to secure these improvements.
  - A large number of staff has been afforded scholarships to acquire degrees at MSc and PhD levels. This upgrading of formal qualifications has laid the basis for better and more teaching and research but additional inputs are needed to bring the potential to fruition.
6. Among the disappointing **shortfalls** we find it warranted to point out the following:
- The fundamental restructuring of Bunda College itself – i.e. its transformation into a fully-fledged university – has not materialised, owing partly to the legal framework not being in place as long as the new University of Malawi Act has not been passed by Parliament.
  - The proposed endowment fund has not yet seen the light of day, the absence of which is jeopardising the financial foundation of the College.
  - Bunda Farm Ltd. is still in dire need of working capital to turn it into a profitable enterprise. The main hurdle is lack of collateral.
  - Pending the formulation of a policy on consultancies this revenue source has not yet been tapped by the College.
  - The functional relationships between the Programmes Co-ordinating Office, CARD and the contemplated Consultancy Co-ordination Units has not been sorted out yet.
  - A number of other objectives remain unfulfilled, including (a) reviewing and restructuring the conditions of service for staff; (b) reviewing criteria for staff appraisal and promotion; (c) downsizing and retrenchment of support staff; (d) decentralising and/or privatising some non-core functions, such as the cafeteria, security and maintenance.
  - No monitoring and evaluation system has been put in place to ascertain the effectiveness of the newly installed systems and procedures.
  - The considerable work that has gone into the preparation of funding applications has not borne fruit yet, even though the chances of a reasonable success rate are good.
  - No uniform policy has yet been adopted for the entire College with regard to overheads charged on research projects and consultancies.
  - No plan has been prepared for the maintenance of infrastructure and replacement of equipment as normal ‘wear and tear’ take their toll.
  - The professional treatment of tenders leaves a lot to be desired and has probably been costly to the College.
  - Arguably, the greatest shortfall of the project is the limited research and outreach activities stemming from it. The publication frequency is correspondingly low.
  - Over all outputs during Phase II hovers the question of sustainability. This long-term preoccupation cannot be neglected in years to come.
7. Two mitigating circumstances should be pointed out to explain the shortfalls. First, the non-passage of the University of Malawi Act has thwarted all efforts towards major restructuring of

the College, let alone its transformation into a fully-fledged university. Second, changing of the project's goalposts *en route* – i.e. the reduction of funding by more than 40 per cent and the compression of the project's life span from five to three years – did not lead to a revision of the project documents. In turn, this upset the original activity plan and most probably led to the obfuscation of priorities.

8. The overall management of the project has been satisfactory but suffered to some degree from loss of continuity due to turnover in the position of co-ordinator as well as the failure to amend the project document the following budget cut and the compression of activities in time. Excessive flexibility has been exercised in shifting funds between budget items although within the global frame.
9. It is premature to judge the sustainability of the achievements made. It will depend on the degree to which the sustainability issues will inform all activities in the next phase. Financial sustainability hinges to a large extent on the establishment of an endowment fund and the future profitability of Bunda Farm Ltd.
10. The reorientation of the future phase towards research, outreach and extension is based on a consensus that the College must contribute to meeting the urgent challenges of poverty reduction and food security in the country. Yet, a component of the project must continue to build capacity at Bunda.
11. The management structure of the future project must be lean, simple and inclusive of stakeholders. Top-heavy, multi-layered arrangements should be avoided because they increase transaction costs and slow down decision-making. The Programmes Co-ordinating Office should retain its co-ordinating function, assisted by a Project Implementation Teams under the direction of a Steering Committee.
12. Considerable achievements have been made in a cost effective manner. It is unlikely that the achievements in the realms of scholarships and infrastructure could have been made much more cost effectively. The same probably applies to the investments made in ICT and most of the management systems. Overall, while allowing for some wastage, we consider the cost effectiveness of this project to be satisfactory. However, our judgment must be qualified with reference to the time factor and sustainability.
13. Although some circles have adopted a rather inward-looking perspective, the progressive forces at Bunda have taken the lead to show that the College is capable of changing with the times. First, Bunda has taken on board environmental issues and the broader perspectives of natural resource management. A new faculty has been established for that purpose. Second, the increased intake of female students augurs well for the future in terms of reorientation. Three, with regard to the transformation of Bunda into a fully-fledged university its leadership has been at the forefront. The new orientation of the next phase of NORAD-funded activities further attests to Bunda's ability to change and adapt to new circumstances.
14. A long list of **recommendations** spring from the evaluation, of which some warrant special attention:
  - There is need for a clearly defined implementation strategy for the BCA strategic plan 2005–2010, including costing of inputs, their sourcing, and the setting of milestones and time schedules along the way.
  - The creditworthiness of Bunda Farm Ltd. needs addressing, either by issuing a title deed to the land currently leased so as to allow it to be used as collateral when soliciting capital funds from commercial lending institutions, or by other suitable mechanisms. A long-term plan needs to be worked out on the future relationship of Bunda Farm Ltd. to the College.
  - The role of the Programmes Co-ordinating Office as an efficient and effective co-ordinator of externally funded projects needs to be clarified, especially with regard to how it fits within the general BCA structure and its relationships with CARD and the contemplated Consultancies Co-ordinating Unit.

- Efforts to acquire funding from diverse sources need to be a continuous activity, without which funds for research, teaching and other purposes would soon dry up.
- Mechanisms need to be put in place to mainstream consultancy work undertaken by staff into the College activity plan and structure towards a win-win situation whereby both the College and its staff benefit from such undertakings.
- A uniform policy needs to be formulated regarding the overheads the College may charge on consultancies and projects. In doing so, care must be taken to balance the interests of the College against those of the staff.
- Action is needed regarding the endowment fund. A first step might be a feasibility study of its establishment, its capitalisation, and details of its management once established.
- A plan needs to be developed for the maintenance of existing buildings and equipment, including the identification of alternative sources of funding for the construction of new buildings and procurement of new equipment.
- There is a need for establishing rules for balancing the effective participation of academic staff in teaching, research, and consultancy work so that participation in one does not jeopardise output in the others.
- The main challenge ahead is the long-term sustainability of the project in all its facets: institutional, professional and financial. The sustainability objective must inform all activities.
- In conjunction with Bunda College and other prospective donors NORAD should revisit the endowment fund proposal and be prepared to contribute to its capitalisation.
- NORAD should make a decade-long commitment to continued support for Bunda College and its research, outreach and extension activities, with the proviso that performance during the coming five years is satisfactory.
- The component of the future project explicitly addressing institution-building at Bunda should not be pruned further, but rather be reorientated in line with the new thrust towards outreach and extension.
- The entire Bunda staff should make efforts to cultivate relations with potential ‘bridges’ and intermediaries between the research community and the ultimate beneficiaries at farm level.
- A lean, simple and clear-cut management structure should be set up for the continuation of the project, i.e. moving away from a top-heavy, many-layered arrangement which only increases transaction costs and slows down decision-making.



# 1. Introduction

Bunda College of Agriculture (BCA) forms one of the five constituent colleges of the University of Malawi (UNIMA). The College of Agriculture was originally established in 1966. In 1967 it moved to its present location at Bunda, taking over some 2,000 hectares of good agricultural land formerly belonging to Bunda Estate. Currently, the College has three faculties: Agriculture; Environmental Sciences; and Rural Development. It offers degree programmes at Bachelor's, Master's and PhD levels. At present the student population at Bunda numbers about 700 in total. The academic staff to student ratio is fairly generous, which means that there is scope for increased intake of students without a corresponding increase in the number of academic staff. It also means that the academic staff have time available for research activity.

Over the years a number of external donors have provided support to the BCA: USAID, GTZ, FAO, JICA, ICEIDA, IFPRI, UNICEF, UNFPA, the World Bank, and NORAD, normally geared to specific programmes. Collaborative linkages in teaching and research have been entertained with the University of Wales at Aberystwyth in the UK and various American universities, in addition to those within Africa.

Bunda College of Agriculture – located some 35 km outside Lilongwe, Malawi's capital city – has received funding from the Government of Norway since early 1999, essentially for institution-building purposes. When diplomatic relations between Norway and Malawi were restored and an embassy established in 1995 an aid programme was about to be mounted. In order to determine the order of priority within the aid programme a needs assessment was made. Agriculture came out on top with Bunda College of Agriculture playing a key role, and the development of a professional relationship with the Norwegian University of Agriculture (NLH) was considered to be beneficial. Some time later a delegation from Bunda visited the NLH with a view to identifying areas of collaboration, resulting in a Memorandum of Understanding, one element of which was to elaborate a strategic plan for the development of Bunda.

The first phase of Norwegian support came to an end in 2000 and led to a follow-up phase. Specifically, phase II was designed to “improve the performance of the College in learning, teaching and research to enable it to play a significant role in the development of Malawi and attract other sources of funding for its programmes”. This second project phase started in 2001 and ended in June 2004. Support for Bunda College was extended within the context of Malawi's predominantly agriculture-based economy and the expected role of the College in contributing to revitalising the agricultural sector with a view to enhancing food security and reducing poverty. In this regard key policy documents such as the 1995 Agriculture and Livestock Sector Development Strategy and Action Plan (ALDSAP) and the Malawi Agricultural Sector Investment Programme (MASIP) formed the broader policy environment.

Pending the approval of a continuation phase, Phase II was given a three-month no-cost extension, in effect drawing on unspent monies as at the end of June 2004. These funds were soon exhausted and the project ran the risks of stalling. Some money has allegedly been provided by the College itself to maintain activities at a minimal level. However, the Norwegian embassy (NORAD) claims that the balance of available funds at the beginning of 2005 would be adequate to prevent a complete standstill. As at March 2005, bridging funding was expected for a six-month period to avoid activities grinding to a complete halt.

## 1.1 Terms of reference and methodology

The main objective of the evaluation was threefold: (a) to provide an objective assessment of the project, its implementation and implementation arrangements in relation to the project goal, objectives and expected outputs; (b) to assess existing products of the project in relation to the target audience and their impact; and (c) to identify opportunities and recommendations for improving the performance of Bunda College in project implementation, teaching and research (see the appended ToR).

The evaluation methodology required the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data to maximise the inputs by all stakeholders in the process. Information was gathered through the review of documents, group and individual interviews and discussions, including site visits (see appended list of persons consulted). The consultants managed to peruse over 35 documents, including (annual) project progress reports, minutes of relevant meetings and workshops; audit reports; research documents; project proposal for the impending new phase; previous review reports for both Phases I and II; the BCA Strategic and Research Master Plan; the College Farm Business Plan; the University of Malawi Act of 1998 and the proposed 1999 amended version; as well as other documents (confer the appended list of documents).

The consultants conducted group interviews with the Project Advisory Committee, the interim BCA Students' Union, and chairpersons of student social clubs such as the Students' Rural Youth in Development (SRYD), the Society for Human Rights Awareness and Promotion (SHRAP), the Association of Gender Promotion (AGEP), Bunda Environmental Conservation Association (Environ Conscious) and the Bunda Anti-corruption Society. Apart from the group sessions, over 55 individuals from various institutions and organisations were interviewed. At the BCA, the interviewees included administrative, accounting, and academic staff, such as the Principal, the Vice Principal, the Registrar, Deans, Heads of Department, and project beneficiaries through training at PhD and MSc levels, as well as the Farm Manager. Outside the College, the consultants were privileged to hold discussions with the University of Malawi Pro-Vice Chancellor, University of Malawi Internal Auditors, the Principal Secretaries and their Heads of Department in the Ministries of Agriculture; Education; Finance; and Mines, Natural Resources and Environment, as well as representatives of relevant NGOs such as the National Smallholders' Association of Malawi (NASFAM).

The entire exercise was scheduled to last about six weeks. The initial evaluation output included the presentation on 11 March 2005 of preliminary findings to the BCA and other stakeholders at the end of the two-week data collection period. The draft final evaluation report with appropriate appendices was submitted electronically to the relevant stakeholders at the end of March 2005, inviting feedback to be considered in its finalisation. In general, the evaluation proceeded smoothly in that there was genuine willingness on the part of those consulted to be interviewed at short notice and to provide information and data in a timely manner. Thus, the consultants were able to stick to the tight schedule without major hiccups. As a result, they were able to meet the deadlines.

The success of the evaluation process would perhaps have been further enhanced had the following shortcomings and constraints been addressed in advance: belated availability of key documents before embarking on data collection by way of interviews; unavailability during consultations of some key persons familiar with the project; unavailability in certain instances of up-to-date information from certain respondents; variable levels of understanding among the relevant stakeholders of the project and/or its goal and objectives; frequent programme changes which, at times, created problems during consultations; and inadequate time for the production of a full draft report to be presented to BCA staff and other stakeholders for discussion. Instead, the consultants



were only able to present their preliminary findings and highlights, even though this event generated useful feedback.

## 1.2 Some basics about Phase II

The initial time frame of Phase II was five years, with a total funding of about NOK 35 million for the period. It soon emerged, however, that part of the expected amount – NOK 15 million from Swedish Sida – was not forthcoming. It appears that the anticipated Sida money was based on an assumption that proved not to hold. Instead, Sida decided to prioritise governance, health and HIV/AIDS issues in its Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Malawi. Thus, the total funds were reduced by 43 per cent to NOK 20 million or about MWK 350 million at the current rate of exchange.<sup>1</sup>

Owing principally to the 2001/2002 food crisis resulting from severe drought, pressure was increasingly put on Bunda College to address the food security situation in the country. This pressure came from the Malawi government and the Norwegian aid agency alike. There appears to have been a convergence of view in this regard between the Malawi government and NORAD. Consequently, it was decided to compress the original five-year life span of the project into only three years. However, the level of funding remained the same, i.e. NOK 20 million over three years. The assessment of achievements and shortfalls must be seen in the context of these changing parameters of funding and time frame.

It is noteworthy that neither the substantial cut in funding at an early stage from NOK 35 to 20 million nor the shortening of the duration of the project from five to three years led to a revision of the original project document. This failure to revise the project document is attributable partly to inaction on the part of the Norwegian embassy in Lilongwe but principally to neglect by Bunda College. It would have been logical to revise the document after the fundamental changes of its parameters and most unfortunate that it was not done, despite the fact that the 2003 mid-term review pointed out the need for revision. It is very likely that these acts of omission by both parties led to loss of precision in the established priorities, which, in turn, may have encouraged, by default, a 'free for all' attitude among the stakeholders within the College itself to take advantage of the resultant ambiguities in order to secure as large a 'share of the cake' as possible when the five-year operational programme had been upset. The attempts at adjustment made at the annual meetings between the governments of Malawi and Norway appear not to have been clear enough to act as new guidelines or reordered priorities.

It also warrants mention that the leadership of the Programmes Co-ordination Office (previously, and even today, often referred to as the NORAD office) changed rather frequently. This turnover probably led to the loss of continuity and the inability to forestall erratic allocation of funds, reflecting a tendency towards blurring priorities.

An institutional problem identification and needs assessment of the BCA was undertaken in the preparation of the project document for Phase II. The list of needs was long and comprehensive:

- The government subventions have been persistently inadequate and decreasing in real terms due to inflation. Also, the parliamentary approved subventions have been routinely cut by the

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of the evaluation in March 2005 the exchange rate was roughly Malawi Kwacha (MWK) 17.5 to the Norwegian krone (NOK). However, the Malawi Kwacha has been depreciating against most foreign currencies over the project period. Nevertheless, the nominal windfall in local currency stemming from exchange rate changes has to some degree been eaten up by inflation.

Treasury, owing to the vagaries of a cash budget. Furthermore, the release of money has not been timely. These factors make planning and management difficult.

- Inadequate number of well-trained staff, yet, of the five constituent colleges of the University of Malawi, Bunda has the largest proportion of PhDs among its academic staff.
- Inadequate and deteriorating teaching and research facilities. The library holdings were largely outdated and journal subscriptions were hard to maintain. Computer facilities were grossly inadequate for staff and students alike. Laboratories were in a deplorable state and lacked equipment. Basic infrastructure such as classrooms and staff offices was overcrowded. Accommodation for undergraduate and graduate students was less than adequate.
- Bunda College has no administration building proper. The administration is housed in unsuitable premises which are congested.
- Facilities for transporting Bunda staff between the campus and their residences in Lilongwe were poor, causing disruption of teaching and other duties.
- In terms of expansion, several challenges were identified in meeting the needs for teaching and research in (a) agri-business management; (b) food processing technology; (c) natural resources management; and (d) biotechnology.
- Finally, the overall management of the College needed to be improved in a host of areas.

The above identified needs were taken as the points of departure for the design of Phase II.

### 1.3 Structure of the report

Strictly speaking, the ToR as appended applied to Phase II only. However, history is always with us, inexorably impinging on the present and the future. In that acknowledgement, we have to some extent chosen to take a retrospective view of past developments. Furthermore, in view of the new project proposal on the table, we have inevitably been pushed into a future perspective, even though it was never our task to appraise the draft project document for the next phase. Many stakeholders, particularly outside Bunda College itself, were more preoccupied with the future orientation of project activities than dwelling on the past. This preoccupation no doubt reflects the urgency of finding solutions to the food insecurity problem and Bunda's key role in that endeavour.

The focus of this evaluation is institution building at Bunda, i.e. a somewhat inward-looking perspective because that is essentially the purpose of both Phases I and II of the project. The main section of the report contains a systematic review of achievements and shortfalls in terms of the five output areas stipulated in the project document: (i) organisational restructuring; (ii) financial and administrative management; (iii) revenue generation; (iv) improved priority teaching facilities; and (v) enhanced teaching and research capacity. We will enumerate these output areas one by one and offer our comments as to the causes of relative success or failure, as the case may be.

Since the thrust of Phases I and II of the project has been institution building, a major section will deal with sustainability issues with a focus on human resources development; infrastructure and equipment; systems and procedures; and diversification of funding sources.

The reorientation of the future phase of the project towards research, outreach and agricultural extension, while retaining some elements of institution building at Bunda, will be at the centre of attention in the penultimate section.

The final section will draw some conclusions and advance some recommendations with regard to the future.

Five appendices with additional details complete the report.

## 2. Project performance: achievements and shortfalls

The main purpose of an evaluation is to assess the results produced after a given time period has lapsed. These results are products of particular activities by the actors involved who have specified resource inputs at their disposal. We will endeavour to do precisely that. We take as our point of departure the project document for Phase II of NORAD's support for Bunda College of Agriculture which grouped the expected results in five output areas:

1. Organisational restructuring
2. Financial and administrative management
3. Revenue generation
4. Improved priority teaching facilities
5. Improved teaching and research capacity

In the sections below we will present the achievements and shortfalls within each of these output areas consecutively and suggest plausible reasons why some objectives have been met while others have not. The gist of the narratives in the sections below is also found in matrix format in Appendix 4. We recommend, however, that the full text be read in order to get a deeper appreciation of the issues.

### 2.1 Output 1: Organisational restructuring

Early on, the need for restructuring the BCA was acknowledged as a priority. The efficient utilisation of resources – from whatever source – was expected to be enhanced by the internal restructuring of the College as well as by changing its external position vis-à-vis the organisational umbrella of the University of Malawi (UNIMA), and the Ministry of Education. As far as the former was concerned, it was considered paramount that the College shed itself of non-core functions such as maintenance, catering and the management of Bunda Farm. Privatising or commercialising these functions would give greater opportunity for the College to concentrate on teaching and research as the two principal tasks of a university college. With regard to the latter – external repositioning – increased autonomy and enhanced ability to become self-sustainable were seen as key factors.

#### 2.1.1 Achievements

A draft strategic plan has been prepared for Bunda College for the period 2005–2010. It states the vision for the BCA to become an independent, fully-fledged university of world class quality in stipulated fields, based in the Central Region of Malawi. It is particularly noteworthy that the amalgamation with other teaching institutions features high on the agenda, such as the Natural Resources College, the Malawi College of Forestry and Wildlife, the Magomero Community Development College, and the Mpwapwe Fisheries College (even though the last two colleges are located in the Southern Region). The strategic plan outlines five pillars of strategic importance: (i) teaching and learning; (ii) research, consultancy and outreach; (iii) capacity building; (iv) funding and finance; and (v) governance. It contains long lists of objectives, measures to be taken and policies to be formulated. This plan is no doubt useful in providing a vision and a direction. As such it is an achievement.

However, in its present state the main shortcoming of the draft strategic plan is the complete lack of reference to the tangible resources needed to make it a reality and the means to acquire those

resources. We have been informed that various departments are working on defining the nature and magnitude of the required resource inputs. The results are expected to be incorporated into the draft plan within a few months. At the end of the day, however, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. What remains now is the implementation of the strategic plan with its costing and time schedules. We have been told repeatedly by Malawians themselves that they are very good at making plans and formulating policies, but sadly deficient in implementing them. Time will show how scrupulously the plan will be implemented.

Bunda Farm has been ‘commercialised’ and is now a limited company, yet fully owned by the College. As such, it is a legal personality who can incur and service debts. The farm was previously a financial drain on the College. From zero in its bank account in late 2003, the deposit now stands at MWK 3 million. The recovery can be explained by two factors: (a) the wage bill has been reduced by 40 per cent due to redundancies; (b) income is generated from the production of tobacco and maize seeds on a contract basis for commercial companies. Of a total of 506 hectares about 145 are currently under cultivation. The hectareage under cultivation could easily be doubled but the constraints are outdated equipment and lack of working capital. However, in order to extend loans the credit institutions insist on collateral or a government guarantee. The land is leased from the College and cannot be put up as collateral and the government is unwilling to provide a guarantee.

Hiving off Bunda Farm and reconstituting it as a limited company under new management is a major achievement. Now that it is breaking even as an enterprise and presumably making a profit in the future, the College has been relieved of a long-standing burden. However, the creditworthiness of Bunda Farm Ltd. is still in question because it has no title deed to the land and because the government is unwilling to provide a bank guarantee. This predicament hampers the farm’s profitability and Bunda’s prospects of earning an income from its shares. It is urgent, therefore, that a solution be found to the under-capitalisation of Bunda Farm Ltd. A loan from the African Development Bank through the Ministry of Agriculture might be one avenue to pursue.

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. 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 Research and Publication Committee of Bunda College has been revitalised and is now responsible for publishing *Bunda Journal of Agriculture, Environmental Science and Technology* twice a year as a fully refereed journal. The previous *Bunda College Journal of Agricultural Research* had run out of funds and gone into dormancy. With its resuscitation it was renamed to reflect better the broader range of scientific activity at Bunda. The inaugural issue of the ‘new’ journal was published in April 2003. Although bringing the journal back to life is a considerable achievement, publishing a quality journal on a timely basis is a major challenge. African universities are replete with journals whose periodicity is erratic, to say the least. Others go into hibernation for a period only to resurface when funds are made available again. Bunda’s experience with the predecessor to the ‘new’ journal is but one example.

Originally, what is today referred to as the Programmes Co-ordination Office used to be called the NORAD Office. Many still call it that. However, not only has its name taken on a more general ring but its functions have also been broadened to include co-ordination – though not execution – of all externally funded projects. So far, few projects apart from the one under evaluation have been channelled through this office. But it has been instrumental in preparing a number of applications that promise to bear fruit. The smooth functioning of the Programmes Co-ordination Office is a great achievement and will no doubt help in streamlining the management of incoming funding for various projects in the future.

## 2.1.2 Shortfalls

The shortfalls in terms of organisational restructuring must be seen in the context of an important mitigating circumstance: the delays in amending the existing University of Malawi Act which bears decisively on activities in the realm of organisational restructuring. For example, the ambition to upgrade Bunda from a constituent college of UNIMA to a fully-fledged university has effectively been put on hold, including the amalgamation with the related institutions of higher learning mentioned above. It is also not clear how the ongoing review for the development of a technological university with its location in the Central Region will relate to the BCA and its currently proposed restructuring.

Although in place on paper, the Centre for Agricultural Research and Development (CARD) cannot be said to be fully operational as envisaged. Many positions remain vacant. In 1994 the Agriculture Policy Research Unit (APRU) was established under CARD, with a view to enhancing the performance of the agricultural sector through policy-orientated and collaborative research. At present, a number of ambiguities surround the functional relationships between CARD, the Programmes Co-ordinating Office, and the contemplated Consultancies Co-ordinating Unit. As evaluators we have heard contradictory statements about the roles of these units, which to us mean that the respective functions are not clearly defined or not fully understood at the College. These matters need to be clarified but it is beyond our terms of reference to suggest precisely how. Generally, however, we would warn against establishing a plethora of small units that tend to become institutional islands unto themselves. Such a situation will only lead to high transaction costs and rivalry between units over funds and other resources.

The endowment fund envisaged to form part of the financial base of Bunda has not yet seen the light of day. This undertaking is ambitious and the main challenge is its capitalisation, let alone its management once established. We return to this matter in more detail below when discussing financial sustainability.

A number of other objectives within this output area remain unfulfilled. They include: (a) reviewing and restructuring the conditions of service for staff; (b) reviewing criteria for staff appraisal and promotion; (c) downsizing and retrenchment of support staff; (d) decentralising and/or privatising some non-core functions, such as the cafeteria, security and maintenance. In mitigation, it must be said that the production of some of these outputs has been delayed due to inertia at the university level and the lack of an appropriate legal framework pending the passage of the new university act.

## 2.2 Output 2: Financial and administrative management

At the start of Phase II the financial and administrative system of the BCA did not fulfil the needs of its management. The system was cumbersome and ill equipped to retrieve the required information in a timely fashion. Hence, there was a need for streamlining financial and administrative procedures and provide transparency of information flows.

### 2.2.1 Achievements

The SAGE software package and accompanying hardware have been installed for accounting purposes. This will promote uniform accounting formats not only within Bunda but also with the rest of UNIMA, thus enhancing efficiency. Towards that end, staff members of various categories have been trained in the use of this software and in financial management. A reasonable running-in period is needed before the system works smoothly. Even so, account holders are able to access their daily balance for most projects but not all. Similarly, timely financial reports are produced.

Down the road, care should be taken to ensure that short-term refresher courses are held in the use of the SAGE package and computer handling generally.

The introduction has commenced, but is not yet complete, of a new financial management system with vouchers and accounts auditing, based on decentralised accounting at the departmental level with in-built checks and controls of accountability.

A considerable number of administrative staff have undergone upgrading and training on a short-term or long-term basis to improve their skills in providing administrative services.

Connectivity within the College has improved greatly with the installation of a Local Area Network (LAN) or an Intranet, even though some teething problems have been encountered. Similarly, Internet access has improved considerably in terms of speed and reliability, especially since the recent installation of a satellite link after persistent problems had been experienced with the local Internet service provider. This has benefited the entire College – staff and students alike. A systems administrator with a B.Sc. was recruited but he has since left and the position is currently vacant. Meanwhile the librarian is handling that function.

A generator has been installed to counteract the erratic power supply. Frequent electricity cuts not only affect productivity adversely but could also lead to serious attrition on computers and potential loss of invaluable data of academic or administrative nature.

A student and staff tracking system has been installed and proved helpful despite teething problems. It has simplified record keeping, retrieval and time tabling, thus contributing to the improvement of management generally.

The gender balance of the student population has improved tremendously over the lifetime of the project. Through a pro-active promotion campaign in secondary schools, using successful female Bunda graduates as role models to be emulated, the College has managed to increase the intake of female students from 10–12 per cent in the mid-1990s to about 40 per cent. That is an impressive achievement in itself. Additionally, it augurs well for the next phase of the project because a sizeable proportion of the female students are interested in agricultural extension work.

A minibus has been purchased to improve transport between Bunda and the city of Lilongwe for staff who do not live on campus. This measure has contributed to reducing tardiness and improved the safety of moving people between the campus and town. Security on campus has improved after the introduction of night patrols.

### 2.2.2 Shortfalls

Notwithstanding notable improvements in financial and administrative management further streamlining is needed, particularly the installation of monitoring and evaluation systems with a view to ascertaining the actual effects of the systems and procedures adopted.

A major challenge beyond putting in place systems and procedures is ensuring that they are actually enforced and implemented by means of controls and inculcation of ethical standards in staff behaviour. Internalisation of such standards is needed to forestall the evasion of the systems in place. A first step would be to communicate in unequivocal terms to all staff what the systems and procedures really are so that misunderstandings are avoided. Of critical importance is also the disciplining of staff who are in breach of the systems and procedures, even to the point of instituting criminal charges if need be. Failure to take disciplinary action will only lead to laxity and the long-term undermining of the management systems.

At about the same time as the present evaluation was undertaken, the Internal Audit Office of UNIMA carried out a review of the financial management systems, procedures and practices at Bunda. Unfortunately, we have not had access to the internal auditors' report. We have reason to believe, however, that its contents may provide the College with guidelines for improving its financial management in the future.

It has also been observed that the government subvention to the College has most of the time been inconsistent and erratic.

## 2.3 Output 3: Revenue generation

Public universities generally depend heavily on government subventions for their operations. These subventions have been less than satisfactory. Budget proposals prepared by the College have been cut routinely by the Treasury – sometimes halved – before submission to Parliament for approval. Once approved, the budget lines have tended to be cut a second time owing to the cash budget system and uncertain revenue estimates. In such a situation planning is made difficult. However, it has become a deliberate policy of the part of the Ministry of Finance to induce universities to generate more income on their own and not to rely entirely on government subventions. During the three first years of the 21st century the BCA managed to raise 12–16 per cent of its total annual revenue. The project document for Phase II acknowledged the need for increased revenue generation and gave it high priority by making Bunda attractive to additional donors.

### 2.3.1 Achievements

The mundane matter of writing good project proposals should not be dismissed as easy. Such technical skills are important as funding agencies give great attention to well-formulated applications. Hence, the efforts made so far in organising a course designed to impart such skills are commendable and likely to produce results in terms of research grants and contribute to diversifying the funding base of Bunda. The Programmes Co-ordinating Office has overseen the preparation of several applications, which promise to yield results in the near future. These include 15 research applications to the Forum on Agricultural Resources Husbandry (FORUM) of the Rockefeller Foundation, one to the Press Trust for infrastructure and one to the HIV/AIDS Commission for ameliorating the effects on bereaved households by means of labour-saving agricultural technologies.

Similarly, the launching of parallel teaching programmes has become a new source of revenue. There is no doubt scope for more revenue generation from these programmes. However, the high failure rate among parallel programme students is a source of concern.

There is also a certain potential for generating revenue from miscellaneous fees. For instance, the library may charge for photocopies, printing, ID card production, scanning, laptop and LCD projector hire, and Internet services. These sources have not been fully exploited yet but the generated volume of revenue is unlikely to be considerable due to the students' inability to pay.

It must also be mentioned that the commercialisation of Bunda Farm Ltd. has made a positive contribution in that it is no longer a financial drain on the College. The potential future revenue from the farm is considerable if the required working capital can be raised.

### 2.3.2 Shortfalls

A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. Submitted applications are not the same as money granted because not all applications will be successful. Furthermore, the amounts applied for may be cut and, above all, there may be delays in the release of granted funds.

The major hurdle for Bunda Farm Ltd. is working capital. As mentioned above, commercial credit institutions insist on either collateral or a government guarantee. Since Bunda Farm's land is under leasehold, it cannot be used as collateral. The government is not inclined to provide a guarantee.

Since the contemplated endowment fund is still not operational, one cannot expect any yields from it in the near future. It may be a tall order to muster the needed capital to establish it (see more below under financial sustainability).

Consultancies have the potential of becoming a major source of funding for the College. Thus far, however, most consultancies escape the attention of the College management and the income tends to end up in the pockets of individual staff members. Appropriate guidelines should be formulated and procedures put in place to tap this source. Establishing the contemplated consultancy co-ordination unit could be a useful mechanism towards that end. Some preparatory work has already been done in this regard, e.g. through two consultancies, and we would like to underscore the need for speeding up the process. However, the trade-off between consultancy revenue for the College and for staff members as part of their remuneration must be considered carefully.

No uniform policy has yet been adopted for the entire College with regard to overheads charged on research projects and consultancies. Such overhead charges could generate appreciable amounts to the College. But this is a complex matter involving many considerations. First, it is clear that the College provides facilities and infrastructure for all activities conducted on campus. It is not unreasonable, therefore, that a certain percentage (the precise figure being subject to discussion and negotiation) be paid to the College as an institution in recognition of its provision of services. Second, we have heard claims that the College is oblivious of many projects and consultancies being conducted. This practice, particularly when it comes to consultancies, is condoned because the leadership of the College acknowledges that income from consultancy work supplements the regular salaries which are low. It is, in effect, an informal element in the policy of the College to retain staff because consultancy income adds to the total remuneration package, thus making it more competitive. Third, there is a certain danger that the incentives to undertake consultancies become so strong that staff members chase lucrative consultancies at the expense of the core tasks of the College, i.e. teaching and research. Fourth, consultancy work is a legitimate means of outreach to policy-makers – a bridge between the research community and the policy-making circles, not only a remunerative mechanism. Fifth, consultancies often open doors to information and data that would normally be closed to researchers. Even though there might be restrictions put on the use of such data – for commercial or other reasons – they inevitably feed into one's pool of insights and could subsequently be used for research purposes. All of the above considerations need to be factored into a coherent policy on externally funded projects and consultancies. One must beware of the trade-offs between them and seek to strike an appropriate balance. A first step might be to commission a study of this cluster of issues with a view to finding that balance and then test it out.

## 2.4 Output 4: Improved priority teaching facilities

Over the years classrooms and laboratories had fallen into disrepair owing to neglect of maintenance and much equipment had become outdated or not replaced when defective. Classrooms were poorly lit and desks and chairs were often broken. As a result, improving the physical quality



of classrooms with furniture and fittings was given high priority. So was the improvement of library services, which together with laboratories are the main tools of quality teaching and research.

#### 2.4.1 Achievements

Several buildings have been rehabilitated and a new cafeteria has been constructed. A generator has been procured and installed to counteract the frequent electricity cuts which affect both teaching and research. Networking and Internet equipment (PCs and server) has been put in place, which adds an important supplement to classroom teaching. The Internet is a goldmine of information and undoubtedly provides critical inputs to the students' thesis work. A computer lab (though without Internet access) for students with some 20 PCs has been installed and is much in demand nearly around the clock.

Books, journals and bibliographic databases in CD-ROM format have been procured for the library and are accessible for students and staff alike. The library is doing an admirable job with limited resources, benefiting students and staff alike. There is a strong case for expanding library facilities further, not least getting access to online bibliographic databases, even though this may appear expensive. However, in the long run such an investment would certainly yield handsome dividends.

#### 2.4.2 Shortfalls

Given past experiences and the planned reorientation of the next phase towards outreach and extension – and a correspondingly lower priority for institution building at Bunda – there is a strong need for a plan to maintain facilities and replace equipment as normal 'wear and tear' take their toll. This is yet to be done. Neglect of maintenance is bad economics even in the face of limited funds.

Despite the fact that most donors are disinclined to fund 'brick and mortar' projects, some of them might be susceptible to persuasion. After all, JICA contributed to the construction of the conference hall of the aquaculture department. In view of the bad experiences with some contractors in the rehabilitation of facilities, Bunda must professionalise its handling of tenders. When entering into contract the terms should enable Bunda to penalise the contractor if poor materials have been used or shoddy workmanship can be documented, if necessary by prosecuting.

### 2.5 Output 5: Enhanced teaching and research capacity

The capacity by academic staff to teach and conduct research depends to a large extent on their formal level of qualification. The age structure of the academic staff is such that a fair number of the senior members recruited in the 1960s and 1970s will reach retirement age in years to come. Furthermore, junior staff needed to be upgraded to Master's and preferably to PhD levels. Hence, scholarships for raising the overall competence level at the College were given priority during Phase II.

#### 2.5.1 Achievements

A total of 18 staff members have received long-term scholarships, although not all have completed their studies yet. Among the academic staff five have been upgraded to PhD level, five to MSc level, and two to BSc level. Among the administrative personnel three have already or will receive Master's degrees, two will be upgraded to Bachelor level, and one to diploma level (see Table 1 below for details). This is one of the major achievements of the project and represents a considerable contribution to human resources development at Bunda College.

A higher level of formal staff competence does not, however, translate directly into better teaching and research. It is probably a necessary pre-condition for improved teaching and research but hardly an adequate one. There is no one-to-one relationship between professional competence and quality teaching and research. The matter is far more complex, with a host of intervening variables – among them the pedagogical ability of teaching staff; motivated students; and an environment conducive to learning in terms of facilities such as library services, computer and laboratory equipment, and other teaching aids.

Correspondingly, the fact that a larger proportion of the academic staff has been equipped with research skills does not mean that more and better research follows. For the potential of research competence to come to fruition others factors must be taken into account, for instance, funding for carrying out research projects.

We are not in a position to assert, therefore, that higher professional competence has resulted in better teaching and research. But we are confident that a better basis has been laid. The challenge ahead is to ensure that other ingredients are factored in to realise the potential. The project has already gone some way in that direction by improving the teaching environment in various ways and by seeking additional research funding.

**Table 1: Staff trained during phase II**

No	Name	Gender	Department at BCA	Study Programme	University of the Degree Programme	Year of Completion
1	B.M. Ng'ambi	M	Library	Diploma	Mzuzu University (Malawi)	2005
2	J. Tanganyika	M	Animal Science	BSc	University of Malawi	2008
3	E. Fole	M	Administration	BSc	University of Malawi	2008
4	F. Kalengamaliro	M	Administration	B.Com	University of Malawi	2008
5	E. Nyali	M	AQFS	BSc	University of Malawi	2006
6	P.G. Mtika	M	LDC	MA	Sussex, UK	2003
7	S. Nyasulu	F	LDC	MA	Leicester, UK	2003
8	T.M. Sanjika	M	Agric. Engineering	MSc	AIT, Thailand	2004
9	H. Uluko	M	Agric. Engineering	MSc	JKUAT	2005
10	M. Kachale	F	HEHN	MSc	Univ. of Pretoria, RSA	2005
11	D.S. Banda	M	Administration	MBA	University of Malawi	2006
12	T.N. Gondwe	M	Animal Science	PhD	Goettingen, Germany	2004
13	C.S. Male mba	M	Administration	MBA	Leicester, UK	2005
14	O.M. Kabambe	F	HEHN	PhD	Leeds, UK	2005
15	M.F.A. Maliro	M	Crop Science	PhD	Melbourne, Australia	2007
16	G. Kadzamira	F	Library	MSc	Robert Gordon, Scotland	2003
17	C. Jumbe*	M	CARD/APRU	PhD (co-funded)	UMB (NLH)	2005
18	R. Lunduka*	M	NRM	PhD (research funding)	UMB (NLH)	2008

\* Only the research components were funded under Phase II of the project.

It is commendable that Bunda College has managed to retain its staff in defiance of the tendency for returning staff to seeking greener pastures elsewhere once their labour market value has increased. Although not an effect of the project *per se*, the flexible policy on consultancies, allowing staff members to benefit directly as a supplement to their regular salary, has contributed to maintaining a fairly competitive remuneration level. In fact, consultancy work has been officially included among the task of Bunda staff members. But there is a downside to a lax consultancy policy in that staff members may have a strong incentive to chase consultancies at the expense of the two core tasks of a university college: research and teaching. There is a trade-off to be made.

Staff visits within the Eastern and Southern African region and to Norway are also likely to have contributed to enhancing competence levels, although the output from such activities is difficult to measure. Collaboration with Sokoine University of Agriculture in Tanzania, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology in Kenya, Makerere University in Uganda, all financed under Phase II, has proved particularly fruitful.

Some faculties have undertaken curriculum reviews. The Faculty of Environmental Sciences reviewed its curricula for undergraduate and graduate levels alike in 2001. The Faculty of Agriculture reviewed its curriculum in 2002 for the undergraduate level only, but not yet at the graduate level. The new Faculty of Development Studies has prepared a new curriculum for undergraduates.

## 2.5.2 Shortfalls

Arguably, the greatest shortfalls are found in limited research and outreach activities, not counting those carried out within the context of master's and doctoral dissertations. Emphasis has obviously been put on building research capacity but not yet actually undertaking research and outreach by drawing on that enhanced capacity. Hence, rectifying this state of affairs is long overdue.

Research is one of the core tasks of a university college. Together with its twin activity – teaching – research is the *raison d'être* of the BCA. Consequently, efforts must be made urgently to stimulate research activity by all possible means. Now that capacity and competence levels have been heightened there is no excuse for not forging ahead by giving priority to securing funding for research projects on a broad scale. Down the line one would expect to see an increase in publication frequency. The planned course in academic writing would no doubt contribute towards that end.

Beyond producing new science-based knowledge through a research process and publishing the findings in reputable journals and other outlets, there is also a strong case for moving into the wider dissemination of findings to the ultimate beneficiaries: the smallholders and the farming community at large in Malawi. This means working in tandem with the extension service of the Ministry of Agriculture and NGOs. It should be acknowledged that outreach and extension are equally important bases of legitimacy for Bunda as are knowledge production and dissemination to fellow scientists. In the context of the dire straits that the agricultural sector of Malawi finds itself and pervasive poverty and food insecurity nationwide, Bunda has a key role to play in addressing these challenges. Bunda cannot and should not be an island unto itself. It must consider itself a producer of new agricultural technology to be applied by the practitioners who till the land. In that endeavour Bunda must ally itself with the 'bridges' or intermediaries at hand with a view to bringing new technological packages out to the farmers in understandable and practicable form. Indeed, Bunda has to become a knowledge broker in its own right between the farming communities and the multiple sources of knowledge found at national and international levels. As such a broker it would be well placed to design technological packages tailor-made for the varying conditions under which smallholders and other farmers operate.

Researchers who are accustomed to ‘top-down’ approaches whereby they themselves define the problems to be investigated and steer the remainder of the process through to scientific output, may be reluctant to change their style of work towards a more participatory approach. Such participation would make the research process more inclusive right from problem definition to application of findings. The researchers would still play first fiddle, but at the start of the process the farmers would be involved in determining what research problems to prioritise as seen from their turf and within their constraints and circumstances at the level of farming systems. At the tail end of the process when findings are ready for application, close collaboration is needed with the critical ‘bridges’ between research and the end users in field trials and full-scale practice. These ‘bridges’ are the extension workers deployed at the local level by the Ministry of Agriculture – many of whom graduates of Bunda – as well as NGOs such as NASFAM and a host of others now involved in agricultural development at the grassroots.

A brand of research that takes farming systems as a point of departure calls for inter-disciplinary collaboration. Farming systems are many-faceted and complex. Single factor solutions will not do. However, collaboration across specialised academic disciplines, although related, is challenging and time-consuming. But there is no escaping such approaches if a dent is to be made in the country’s agricultural productivity problem and the pervasive poverty problem.

There is a misconception in some academic quarters that participatory and inter-disciplinary research is second rate and that engaging in such endeavours will deflect them from ‘real’ research that would promote their academic careers. This notion must be dispelled. Of course, basic research will continue to be undertaken at Bunda and published as before. There can be no meaningful *inter-disciplinary* collaboration if each of the collaborating disciplines does not stand on solid ground. Besides, there is absolutely nothing to preclude publication on participatory and inter-disciplinary research related to outreach and extension in suitable international journals. Existing perceptions and apprehensions that increased emphasis on outreach and extension will fail to promote academic careers are baseless. Commendable measures are under way to sensitise Bunda academic staff to the ‘new’ mode of demand-driven research.

The fact that research and outreach have been neglected in Phase II is not to say that research is not being conducted at Bunda, only that it has not emanated in appreciable measure from the project being evaluated. Some publications have found an outlet in the recently resurrected *Bunda Journal of Agriculture, Environmental Science and Technology*.

Notwithstanding some staff exchanges and collaboration with the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (formerly Norwegian Agricultural University) and comparable institutions in the region closer by, these opportunities have not been exploited fully. The reason is probably that Bunda has been too inward-looking and preoccupied with building its own institution without being able to look beyond its confines to other countries. When forging ahead in its future research activities, Bunda would be well advised to seek collaboration with comparable institutions in the region or farther afield.

It has also been observed that the College does not have a clearly defined maintenance plan for buildings and equipment as well as a strategy for funding the construction of new buildings and procurement of new equipment.

### 3. Overall project management and collaboration

The project document sets out in some details the management structure and the procedures to be followed. But it is not unequivocally clear in all respects. The Annual Meeting of the Governments of Malawi and Norway was the body authorised to approve budgets and work plans after submission by the Co-ordinator through the Principal's Office. Neither the Principal nor the Co-ordinator had authority to amend the budget on their own, but it appears that some 'juggling' between items has been done nonetheless. It was not explicitly stated in the project document who was given authority to incur expenditure within the framework of the approved budget. But it must be presumed that it rested with the Principal's Office and that the rules applicable to all units at the College would also apply to the project's financial management.

The Principal's Office (in effect the Programmes Co-ordinating Office or the NORAD Office as it was initially called) reported back to the Annual Meeting and to the appropriate Malawian ministries in terms of progress and audited accounts.

At the Programmes Co-ordinating Office the positions of Business Director and Development and Marketing Manager were, in effect, collapsed into one – the Co-ordinator – when it was realised that there was no need for both positions. It is not clear to the present evaluators whether the Project Implementation Team has been functional at all or to what extent. The Co-ordinator has been assisted by an accountant, a secretary, two office assistants, a driver and a guard, all of whom making up the full staff complement of the Programmes Co-ordinating Office, as it was designated as from the end of 2002.

A Project Advisory Committee (PAC) – comprising the Principal, the Vice Principal, the Deans, the Heads of Department, the College Finance Officer and the Registrar as full members, plus some ex officio members – was set up to provide guidance to the Co-ordinator to and to serve as a communicative link within the College. Its advice, however, was not binding on the Principal.

Leadership in project implementation was at times ineffective for a number of reasons. The fact that it took time to recruit a full-time co-ordinator had negative implications in that there was an absence of a mentor who could effectively and efficiently lead the project. The project was being managed in an *ad hoc* basis fashion during the initial stages, exacerbated by the fact that the project's parameters changed dramatically (budget cut and time compression) without the development of a new implementation plan (see below).

Generally, public relations or collaboration with/and between stakeholders can be said to have been relatively weak. Some key stakeholders, especially those outside BCA, have made statements to that effect. They complained that, most of the time, they were not fully involved in the running of the project through planning and implementation.

Project monitoring and evaluation (M & E) can be said to have been mediocre. Apart from the mid-term review and annual reports, there was no real M & E conducted during the lifetime of the project. For example, key recommendations of the mid-term review were not acted upon. Consequently, the project suffered from lack of re-direction.

Project supervision also left scope for improvement in some areas. Below are some of the shortfalls that did not facilitate effective supervision. The project lacked a clear implementation plan with the necessary revisions *en route*. There was an absence of an effective Project Implementation Team

with a full-time co-ordinator in the project's initial stages. Furthermore, the supervision problem was compounded by a poor or absent M & E plan, as well as inadequate collaboration between project management and some stakeholders as well as among the stakeholders themselves, for example between the project and various sectors of the BCA, some government agencies, the UMB and other academic and research institutions within the region and at the international level.

Judging by the views of the respondents, human resource management emerged as a major issue regarding the definition of the functions of the Programmes Co-ordinating Office relative to the BCA. These functions were deemed not to be clearly defined. Some respondents voiced gentle criticism of the Programmes Co-ordination Office for not being entirely transparent in all its transactions, e.g. with regard to the allocation of scholarships. Whether this criticism is based on reality or just a perception is hard to say, and it may have changed over time. The current co-ordinator asserts that the procedure is as follows: the departments forward their staff training priorities to the Principal and Registrar. These priority requests are compiled and lodged with the Programmes Co-ordinating Office as the basis for allocation of scholarships within the available resources.

Furthermore, issues of remuneration and incentives of project office staff, especially project management, came out with a tinge of discomfort. Otherwise, the relations between the Co-ordinator and the other units at the College have been mutually cordial. A recommendation would be to identify a clear mode of operation whereby the Programmes Co-ordinating Office would be streamlined within the ambits of the BCA.

It must be reiterated that the failure to amend the project document after the substantial budget cut and the project's compression in time, undoubtedly affected the project's management adversely. Since the activity programme was not scaled down commensurate with the available funds after the budget cut, lack of clarity ensued in terms of priority expenditures. Similarly, when the lifetime of the project was shortened to three years ambiguities followed. Although the time compression led to more money per year over the three-year period, it was difficult to change activity plans accordingly. We have reason to believe that these acts of omission by both parties led to loss of precision in the established priorities, which, in turn, may have encouraged, by default, a 'free for all' attitude among the stakeholders within the College itself to take advantage of the resultant ambiguities in order to secure as large a 'share of the cake' as possible when the five-year operational programme had been upset. The attempts at adjustment made at the annual meetings between the governments of Malawi and Norway appear not to have been clear enough to act as new guidelines or reordered priorities.

The failure to revise the project document can thus be seen as a mitigating circumstance with respect to project management. On the other hand, within the College structure responsibility for taking the initiative to revise the project document rested squarely with the Programmes Co-ordinating Office. The fact that this initiative was never taken is, therefore, a reflection of less than satisfactory overall project management, i.e. a *cause* of sub-standard management rather than an *effect*, or both.

## 4. Sustainability

It is the evaluation team's considered opinion that sustainability is the main challenge ahead. The achievements made must be safeguarded and maintained without external assistance in the future. A section of the project document for Phase II addresses the question of sustainability. But the subject is treated rather cursorily and confined to financial sustainability, although this aspect is important, of course, as most activities centre on money. However, other elements of sustainability need to be considered too.

A project's sustainability is critical but its precise meaning is elusive. This is not the place for an exhaustive discussion. Suffice it to say that sustainability is in many ways the ultimate test of development efforts. It requires not only that a project be successful in achieving its objectives during its lifetime but also that the benefits it generates endure beyond the time of the donor's involvement. Thus, a development programme is sustainable when it is able to deliver an appropriate level of benefits for an extended period of time *even after* major financial, managerial, and technical assistance from an external donor has been terminated. The concept has multiple dimensions. A distinction is made between (a) institutional sustainability; (b) professional sustainability; and (c) financial sustainability. They are all interrelated.

*Institutional sustainability* has to do with the stability of the structures of an organisation in terms of leadership, direction and management, internal procedures for quality control and follow-up, accounting and auditing procedures, personnel policy, generation of new ideas, etc. In short, institutional sustainability is the modicum of organisation and structure needed to ensure stability, continuity, and predictability. The extreme opposite is a set of activities based on *ad hoc* management without predetermined procedures. Bunda can be said to satisfy most criteria of institutional sustainability, as demonstrated by its resilience since its inception despite different donors coming and going. Still, challenges remain in the sphere of operation and maintenance, i.e. securing the durability of the achievements made in Phase II.

*Professional sustainability*, on the other hand, is related to the ability of the organisation to recruit staff with adequate qualifications. For a university college this is fundamental because one of the core functions of the organisation is innovation and production of new knowledge. Hence, research staff of high calibre are required for the institution to be sustainable. An institutional atmosphere and infrastructure conducive to research and innovative thinking is decisive in this regard. Sound personnel management and competitive remuneration levels are also important in attracting highly qualified researchers. Comparatively, Bunda has a higher percentage of PhDs than the other constituent colleges of UNIMA. However, that is no cause for resting on its laurels. Professional competence needs to be replenished continuously, even though Bunda has been blessed with rather low turnover of academic staff.

There is potentially a built-in tension between institutional and professional sustainability. If too much emphasis is put on the stability and predictability of the institutional set-up, the resulting research environment may become stifling and counterproductive in terms of innovation. The challenge for the College leadership, therefore, is to strike a balance between a stable institutional atmosphere and adequate scope for creativity and innovation.

*Financial sustainability* is the foundation upon which an institution bases its independence – professionally and otherwise. It is inconceivable that an institution can be sustainable in any sense of the term without a solid financial base. Without proper funding, research and teaching

institutions will not be able to recruit academic staff to teach and carry out research projects. The funding structure also influences the freedom to set a research agenda and determine teaching programmes. Ability to attract funds derives from many factors, among others:

- (a) Objectives and activities in keeping with the times;
- (b) Good reputation in terms of proven quality research output;
- (c) Relevance in terms of the needs of the country;
- (d) A good management track record;
- (e) Good accountability practices;
- (f) Good leadership;
- (g) Effective dissemination of research findings;
- (h) Close liaison with user groups.

Maintaining institutional and professional quality in all aspects is probably the best guarantee to attract funds. Operating in a research ‘market’ that has an ability to pay is also an advantage. But research is often seen as a collective good which should not be subjected to the vicissitudes of the market. This applies *a fortiori* to a public institution such as Bunda College. For example, the poor smallholders in need of Bunda’s expertise have no ability to pay for the productivity-raising technology on offer.

The financial foundation of Bunda College as an institution may be split up into three main components:

- Core funding;
- Programme funding;
- Project funding.

*Core funding* – normally extending over several years or continuously with some degree of predictability – is meant to cover basic functions in order to buttress and support research and teaching activities on a continuous basis, e.g. general administration, office facilities, library, secretarial services, computer facilities, accounting, auditing, etc. Beyond basic institutional functions, core funding may also include money for research and teaching purposes, which is not earmarked. Institutions blessed with sizeable core funding are at liberty to use part of the available money to embark on research endeavours or launch new teaching programmes without consulting the funding source in every case. In other words, the priorities are set by the institution itself. This is an enviable, but rare, situation to be in, particularly in developing countries. It certainly does not apply to Bunda College, which has received government subventions at persistently inadequate levels and erratically at that.

*Programme funding* normally stretches over multiple years as well, but is tied to specific activities around a theme, a research problem or educational programmes, with specified objectives and within a given time frame. It may cover salaries and programme-specific costs such as field work, laboratory equipment, etc. The project under evaluation typifies programme funding by being multi-year and activity-specific. *Project support* is similar to programme support, but normally *ad hoc* and of shorter duration.

In the circumstances, public university institutions have limited opportunities for raising funds for core functions themselves. They may be able to introduce tuition and other fees or rental systems for photocopying and printing services, Internet access, etc. But such cost-recovery measures are not likely to make a major contribution to financial sustainability. Although tuition fees for parallel teaching programmes have become a significant source of income, a ceiling is likely to be reached soon, perhaps owing to the high failure rate.



Donors tend to be reluctant to commit themselves to long-term funding, in particular for core functions – with some justification. Recipient institutions have, therefore, been compelled to charge a certain percentage of donor-funded programme and project budgets to defray overhead costs. Most donors have reluctantly condoned such practices. In the absence of core support or an endowment fund, donors should acknowledge, however, that an overhead percentage charge is inescapable to provide a modicum of financial sustainability. The percentage could be differentiated according to the volume of core support in relation to total turnover. But since programme and project support rarely extends beyond three years, often less, the financial sustainability of the institution in question is still likely to suffer.

In some cases donors have been willing to provide core support – although on a fixed-term basis – as an expression of trust in the sound management of the institution, based on past performance. One might see the various forms of financial support in terms of degree of trust. At the lowest level of trust, programme and project support predominate because such forms are earmarked for specific purposes, which makes diversion of funds difficult if accounting conditions are adhered to. A higher level of trust warrants core support over a number of years, rarely more than three to five. This presupposes documentation of good performance over some time in terms of management, research and teaching output.

The highest level of trust is expressed in a donor's willingness to contribute to an endowment fund as a permanent feature of the institution's financial base. Beyond regular and reliable government subventions, an endowment is arguably the only means by which Bunda College may become financially sustainable – perhaps with the exception of sustained income derived from Bunda Farm Ltd. If managed well, an endowment and the investments made may yield dividends, which could sustain the necessary basic support functions, and even provide seed money for initiation of research activities without resorting to donor grants. However, an endowment would hardly be large enough to make a research institution entirely self-sustaining. The likely scenario would be continued solicitation of programme and project funding from donors, but perhaps without charging overheads on them.

Donors have been reluctant to embrace the endowment concept for two main reasons. First, they tend not to trust the institution's ability to manage an endowment fund. Admittedly, there are risks involved, but safeguards could be built into the by-laws of the endowment to minimise risk, to involve professional institutions experienced in financial management, and, not least, to divorce the management of the endowment fund from the daily management of the institutions it is intended to underpin.

Second, when supporting endowment funds donors perceive that they relinquish control. Recipient institutions with an endowment to sustain their operations would be better placed to resist pressures from donors to engage in certain types of activities which do not conform to donor priorities. Professional autonomy to set one's own agenda would be greatly enhanced with an endowment to back it up.

However, if donors are serious about promoting the sustainability of recipient institutions, they can no longer dodge the issue of endowment funds. As a matter of fact, the Phase II project document specifically seeks to establish an endowment for Bunda College. But by the completion of Phase II little progress had been made towards that end. The evaluation team finds that NORAD in conjunction with Bunda College ought to revisit the endowment proposal without prejudice as a means towards the long-term financial sustainability of the College. However, circumspection would be called for and judicious consideration of the parameters in each and every case. Initially, a

small feasibility study could be undertaken to determine the minimum size of the endowment fund, potential contributors, and the details of its management.

A most serious, yet justified, criticism of the donor community is related to the short time horizons within which it operates. It is truly amazing that as actors in the business of social engineering donors can delude themselves that sustainable impacts are possible after 3–5 years. In the case of institution-building it is indeed astounding. Rather than thinking in terms of years, decades would be more appropriate, not least when it comes to research which by definition is a long-term undertaking. In the specific case of NORAD, the duration of support has been five years to date (Phases I and II) and it appears a foregone conclusion that another five years will be added, albeit with a different orientation. Yet, altogether ten years is not along time in the context of institution building. Therefore, with the anticipated reorientation of the next phase of NORAD support, there is a case for retaining a component devoted to continued institution building at Bunda while the bulk of activities is geared towards outreach and extension. It should be recalled, though, that outreach and extension also contribute to institution-building indirectly. Additionally, they help to buttress the legitimacy of Bunda in society at large, which, in turn, could attract other donors.

Beyond the next five years, NORAD would be well advised to commit itself to perhaps another ten years of support, subject to the usual proviso of annual parliamentary approval. The challenges of agricultural development in Malawi are so formidable and Bunda's contribution to meeting them so promising that a decade-long additional commitment would not seem excessive. The only conceivable counter-argument that we acknowledge is that such a long-term commitment might lead to complacency on the part of Bunda with respect to its own sustainability efforts. However, whatever the merit of that argument, it could be counteracted by designing the programmes with appropriate mechanisms of control and accountability, including milestones and tangible indicators.

Having levelled the above criticism against the donor community, including NORAD, it must be said in fairness that as an aid agency NORAD has adopted a flexible attitude to programme implementation on account of the difficulties encountered when the budget was cut and the entire programme was compressed in time.

#### 4.1 Endowment fund

For the medium term a three-pronged funding strategy is advisable in order to build financial sustainability. First, continued soliciting of donor support for specific projects and programmes as has been done to date would contribute in some measure to the funding base – however variable and volatile over time. Second, renewed efforts by various units at the College to generate their own funds would also go some way towards financial sustainability. Third, the setting up of an endowment fund would serve as a basis for long-term core financing. It is not for this evaluation, however, 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 would have to make a first contribution to its capitalisation. One option is to put into the endowment the proceeds of the future sale of shares in Bunda Farm Ltd. to private investors once the farm is on a sound commercial footing and yielding profit. The balance could be acquired from other donors, perhaps even from government. A third contributory source might be a proportion of 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 as the core functions.

The funds generated from an endowment would not only contribute 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 make possible the generation of new programmes and facilitate long-term planning, and enable 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.

The evaluation team considers the endowment idea a good one. Apart from government subventions on a regular basis, an endowment is arguably the only way Bunda College could become financially sustainable and reduce its current donor dependence. 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 which university organisations rarely possess. If donors decide to contribute to setting up an endowment, and there is a strong case for their doing so, they should take great care that its design and management rules be worked out in great detail. Its management should be independent of the day-to-day operations of the institutions it is meant to undergird. It is particularly important to ensure that risk be spread so as to avoid adverse effects of volatile financial markets. In this regard, the donors willing to contribute to an endowment should confer carefully among themselves before embarking on such a venture.

## 5. The problematic hiatus

Phase II came to an end in June 2004. At that time the design of the follow-up phase was not completed and the project not yet approved. Thus began a hiatus which has lasted to date (March 2005), between Phase II and what is ostensibly to become a reorientated programme with emphasis on outreach and extension.

Pending the finalisation and approval of the project document for the next phase, Phase II was granted a no-cost extension of three months. During this period activities were expected to be sustained on unspent money left over from Phase II. In March 2004 about NOK 2.8 million remained on the programme budget. The Programmes Co-ordinating Office was requested to prepare a budget for the use of that money and to make sure that the scholarship holders abroad would be sustained until their studies had been completed, including money for the evaluation of Phase II too. However, it later transpired that the money set aside for the evaluation was shifted elsewhere. As a result, the cost of the present evaluation had to be financed directly by NORAD. Furthermore, complaints are now heard that the scholarship holders abroad are in limbo because funds are not available to sustain them. Moreover, it is alleged that a staff member was sent on a scholarship as late as September 2004 on the strength of the forthcoming programme extension, which in retrospect seems rather risky.

At the annual meeting in November 2004 between the governments of Norway and Malawi it was decided to apply for bridging funding since the approval of the next phase appeared to drag on. A budget was prepared and submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through NORAD/Oslo but the application remained in the pipeline for a long time, apparently due to bureaucratic inertia.

When the NOK 2.8 million was exhausted the BCA had to meet the shortfall from its own budget. This situation has prevailed to date and been a financial strain on Bunda. Evidently, the bridging funding has now been approved, covering a period through September 2005. This gives a respite and an opportunity to finalise the draft project document for the next phase, and eventual approval later in the year. It is hoped that the completion of this evaluation will contribute to speeding up that process.

## 6. Towards the future

Any evaluation is essentially backward-looking in that it scrutinises past performance. Our terms of reference are to assess the performance of Phase II of NORAD's support for Bunda College of Agriculture. That said, however, we are fully aware, that past performance – achievements and shortfalls – provides pointers to the future. One can learn from successes and failures alike. What was done well in the past should be reinforced in the future. Correspondingly, mistakes of the past should be avoided in the years ahead.

However, the compression in time of Phase II and the provisional design of the forthcoming phase were not based on assessments of past performance. External considerations – unrelated to Phase II of the project itself – were the determining factors. First, the drought in 2001/2002 brought out starkly how vulnerable the agricultural sector is to contingencies and natural disasters. Second, the continuing preoccupation with addressing the poverty and food insecurity challenge in the context of the MPRSP further underscored the need for agricultural transformation, or, more modestly in the short run, substantial enhancement of agricultural productivity across the board but especially in the smallholder sector. Everybody recognises the formidable challenges facing Malawi's agricultural sector – the mainstay of the entire economy. Its revival is paramount for poverty reduction and sustained growth of the economy. The reorientation of the planned next phase towards outreach and extension is thus based on the urgency of redressing the above problems. It does not stem directly from the achievements and shortfalls of Phase II. There seems to have been a convergence of view between the governments of Norway and Malawi towards outreach and extension.

### 6.1 New project document

A project document exists at an advanced stage of preparation and has gone through several revisions. Its current title is *Bunda College Development Programme: Poverty Reduction in Malawi using Agricultural Research and Outreach (PRIMARO)* and its design signals a determined effort towards outreach and extension. The research findings must be brought out to the ultimate beneficiaries: the farmers themselves. The document is still to be finalised but all the elements are there. A considerable sum of money has been earmarked for the next phase: NOK 50 million over five years or MWK 875 million at the current rate of exchange.

Participatory and decentralised extension services are a challenging concept. Above all, a key to success is the involvement from the very start of the farming communities in defining the research problems as seen within their constraints. The role of the research community at Bunda is that of problem-solver. In bringing new technological packages out to the farmers, extension workers and NGOs may play key roles as 'bridges'.

Our interviews with stakeholders outside Bunda College overwhelmingly support and amplify the new orientation, precisely for the reasons stated above. One respondent referred to a statement by a farmer representative at a workshop with stakeholders at Salima in April 2004: "Why are you [Bunda people] so concerned with painting your offices white, you should rather be concerned with making the farmers' fields green." The new phase must not be considered a Bunda affair or a Ministry of Agriculture affair. This project is a Malawian project. The criterion of success is the delivery of results in terms of enhanced agricultural productivity! In this endeavour multiple stakeholders are to be involved in an inclusive manner, ranging from the farmers themselves, the research community, several ministries such as Agriculture; Mines, Natural Resources and

Environment; and Education, and not least NGOs as ‘bridges’ between researchers and farmers. Complementarity and synergies are the catchwords.

The government of Malawi is under tremendous pressure from forces within Malawi and internationally to deliver on its promises to reduce poverty, provide food security, and to revive agricultural production generally. This pressure is taken seriously throughout the civil service.

Rather than resisting a reorientation away from continued inward-looking institution-building at Bunda, the College should see it as an accolade and a tribute to its potential as a knowledge broker for the benefit of the agricultural sector and the development of the nation in general. It should also be appreciated that doing a good job in accordance with the new project document would boost the image of Bunda in society and underpin its legitimacy. Building legitimacy in a broader constituency is an integral part of institution-building.

Although it is not our task, strictly speaking, to appraise the draft project document on the table, we have been encouraged by our interviewees to offer some comments and advice with regard to the new document. With the qualification that we have not had occasion nor time to delve into the challenges that lie ahead, we would like to venture the following remarks.

Basically, we concur with the new thrust for the same reasons that everybody else does. However, we would like to warn against throwing out the baby with the bathwater. By that we mean to state that institution-building at Bunda is still needed, in the absence of which outreach and extension might suffer. Terminating institution building after the completion of Phase II could be very detrimental to the objectives of outreach and extension. But it would probably be advisable to reorientate institution-building activities in line with the overriding goal of the new phase. For example, scholarships could be earmarked for degrees in extension service and the expansion of teaching programme could be geared towards outreach and extension. Judging from the draft document there is provision for continued institution-building at Bunda and we would like to reinforce the argument in favour of that inclusion.

## 6.2 Management issues

In view of the diverse types of stakeholder involved and the complexity of the tasks in the follow-up phase, the management of the programme is challenging. Therefore, the management structure must be considered carefully. In our view the guiding principle should be to keep it lean and simple. Avoid top-heavy, many-layered management structures that only increase transaction costs and slow down decision-making.

In the circumstances, the only sensible locus of co-ordination of the next phase of the project is the Programmes Co-ordinating Office. Few alternatives are worth contemplating. Placing co-ordination responsibility with the Department of Agricultural Extension Services of the Ministry of Agriculture is hardly a viable option. The agricultural extension service has its own problems and the knowledge-based character of the project would probably be defeated if co-ordination were placed there. However, with hundreds of extension workers deployed all over the country the agricultural extension service is arguably the most important collaborating partner within the new thrust of the project. The new policy document from 2000 entitled *Agricultural Extension in the New Millennium: Towards Pluralistic and Demand-driven Services in Malawi* would serve as a good basis for that collaboration.

Some have suggested that the National Smallholder Farmers’ Association of Malawi (NASFAM) might be a suitable co-ordinator. We are inclined to disagree, not because NASFAM is not doing a

good job but rather because its scope and membership base is too narrow. But again, NASFAM would be a key collaborating partner in implementing the project. It has a lot of insights and experience that could be brought to bear.

A third option as co-ordinator would be the National Research Council of Malawi. The underlying rationale is that this institution would be impartial in dealing with the many stakeholders. We do not find this option viable because the Council does not have the operational capability to handle such a project.

Apart from the co-ordination node at Bunda, the Steering Committee is envisaged as the principal decision-making body. While we are reluctant to suggest a specific composition, it must have an inclusive membership comprising all the stakeholders while at the same time not becoming too large and unwieldy. It is particularly important that the ultimate beneficiaries are appropriately represented.

In between the level of co-ordination and the Steering Committee it does make sense to have a small (maximum five members) Programme Implementation Team (PIT) to assist the co-ordinator, because the meetings of the Steering Committee are likely to be rather infrequent.

Given the large proportion of the suggested budget going into the proposed Agricultural Research and Development Fund (ARDEF), we find it necessary to divorce the technical assessment of applications by referees from the general management of the programme in order to ensure impartiality. This need not be done by a committee that meets regularly. Rather it could be done by competent professionals from a compiled roster of Malawian and international experts. Otherwise, the processing of applications could be done by the co-ordinator in conjunction with the PIT. We do not see the need for an Executive Committee specifically for the ARDEF. Approval of applications – after due referee assessment – could easily be handled by the Steering Committee.

Also in the interest of leanness, we do not see the need for a formalised Annual Planning Meeting and a Programme Planning Committee. Feedback to stakeholders could be handled through *ad hoc* seminars – annually or with another periodicity. The planning functions could be delegated to the Steering Committee.

Given the pivotal role of the Steering Committee – as per our view – its terms of reference must be formulated with care. It is particularly important that the procedures are clear as to who has authority to incur expenditure within the framework of the agreed budget. Likewise, it should be clear what organ has authority to revise the budget whenever necessary. In Phase II there has been too much ‘juggling’ between budgets items, not always properly authorised.

## 7. Conclusion

Our conclusion is based on the above enumeration by output area of achievements and shortfalls in terms of the project's own objectives. The overall outcome is mixed. There are some impressive achievements but also some disappointing shortfalls.

We would like to highlight the following notable **achievements**:

- A draft strategic plan has been prepared for Bunda College for the period 2005–2010, although further elaboration is needed in terms of specifying resource needs, milestones and time schedules. Its implementation is the next challenge.
- Bunda Farm has been 'commercialised', i.e. turned into a limited liability company, and is now breaking even. The main challenge ahead is to acquire working capital to make it a profitable enterprise that can contribute to the financial base of the College.
- The erstwhile journal has been resuscitated and renamed: *Bunda Journal of Agriculture, Environmental Science and Technology*. The future challenge is to make it a sustainable publication.
- The Programmes Co-ordinating Office has been reconstituted and is functioning well but its relationship with other units within the College needs to be defined more clearly.
- A new software package has been installed for accounting purposes and staff have been trained in using it.
- A local area network has been installed and enhanced connectivity within the College. Similarly, connectivity has been improved with the outside world through a new satellite link. However, a systems administrator needs to be recruited urgently to ensure continuous service.
- A generator has been installed to counteract the disruptive effects on teaching and research of frequent electricity cuts.
- A minibus has been purchased to improve transportation of staff between Bunda and the city of Lilongwe for those who do not live on campus.
- A student and staff tracking system has been installed and promises to be useful in retrieval of information and time tabling once its teething problems are over.
- The gender balance of the student population at Bunda has improved tremendously. The intake of female students has risen from about 10–12 per cent to about 40 per cent currently.
- Under the supervision of the Programmes Co-ordinating Office – and partly resulting from a course conducted in the writing of applications – a fair number of applications for external funding is under consideration and may prove successful.
- Several buildings have been rehabilitated and a new cafeteria has been constructed.
- An array of equipment has been procured and put at the disposal of staff and students alike.
- The library has benefited from funds for acquisition of books, journal subscriptions and bibliographic databases on CD-ROM, all of which have provided access to valuable information. It is a great challenge ahead to secure these improvements.
- A large number of staff has been afforded scholarships to acquire degrees at MSc and PhD levels. This upgrading of formal qualifications has laid the basis for better and more teaching and research but additional inputs are needed to bring the potential to fruition.



Among the disappointing **shortfalls** we find it warranted to point out the following:

- The fundamental restructuring of Bunda College itself – i.e. its transformation into a fully-fledged university – has not materialised, owing partly to the legal framework not being in place as long as the new University of Malawi Act has not been passed by Parliament.
- The proposed endowment fund has not yet seen the light of day, the absence of which is jeopardising the financial foundation of the College.
- Bunda Farm Ltd. is still in dire need of working capital to turn it into a profitable enterprise. The main hurdle is lack of collateral.
- Pending the formulation of a policy on consultancies this revenue source has not yet been tapped by the College.
- The functional relationships between the Programmes Co-ordinating Office, CARD and the contemplated Consultancy Co-ordination Units has not been sorted out yet.
- A number of other objectives remain unfulfilled, including (a) reviewing and restructuring the conditions of service for staff; (b) reviewing criteria for staff appraisal and promotion; (c) downsizing and retrenchment of support staff; (d) decentralising and/or privatising some non-core functions, such as the cafeteria, security and maintenance.
- No monitoring and evaluation system has been put in place to ascertain the effectiveness of the newly installed systems and procedures.
- The considerable work that has gone into the preparation of funding applications has not borne fruit yet, even though the chances of a reasonable success rate are good.
- No uniform policy has yet been adopted for the entire College with regard to overheads charged on research projects and consultancies.
- No plan has been prepared for the maintenance of infrastructure and replacement of equipment as normal ‘wear and tear’ take their toll.
- The professional treatment of tenders leaves a lot to be desired and has probably been costly to the College.
- Arguably, the greatest shortfall of the project is the limited research and outreach activities stemming from it. The publication frequency is correspondingly low.
- Over all outputs during Phase II hovers the question of sustainability. This long-term preoccupation cannot be neglected in years to come.

Two mitigating circumstances should be pointed out to explain – in part at least – the failure to achieve some of the stated objectives. First, the non-passage of the University of Malawi Act has thwarted all efforts towards major restructuring of the College, let alone its transformation into a fully-fledged university. Second, changing of the project’s goalposts *en route* – i.e. the reduction of funding by more than 40 per cent and the compression of the project’s life span from five to three years – did not lead to a revision of the project documents. In turn, this upset the original activity plan and most probably led to the obfuscation of the set priorities.

It is exceedingly difficult to measure with precision the cost effectiveness of a project such as that under scrutiny. The objectives and variables are simply too many. Furthermore, the gestation period of some activities is long and results may not materialise until rather late. Moreover, the nature of certain activities is such that they elude measurement. For example, the impact of measures to raise gender awareness through workshops is virtually impossible to determine. By contrast, tangible outputs are perceived to be more cost effective precisely because they are concrete and observable. It is easier and less time-consuming to change infrastructure than to change the attitudes and outlook of people. For example, whereas it is simple to rehabilitate infrastructure, it is incredibly difficult to change the maintenance culture that might obviate the need for – or at least postpone – rehabilitation or construction of new infrastructure.

All the same, any donor has a legitimate interest in knowing whether the project has given value for money. Could one have expected more and better outputs given the sums of money put in? We can only give a rough, qualitative assessment of cost effectiveness based on the information gathered and our experiences from evaluations of other projects.

It is our considered view that considerable achievements have been made in a cost effective manner. Indeed, it is unlikely that the achievements in the realms of scholarships and infrastructure could have been made much more cost effectively. The same probably applies to the investments made in ICT and most of the management systems, even though they are more ‘amorphous’ in nature. We are more in doubt with respect to the effectiveness of monies spent on workshops and similar activities. Our doubt has two sources. First, unless the purpose was to produce a specific document we do not have any data on the impact workshops have had on the participants in terms of consciousness-raising and insights. Second, there is an element in per diem and allowance hunting in the workshop and seminar business that, unfortunately, tend to overshadow the real purpose of these events. That said, we do not dismiss altogether the utility of workshops and seminars provided they have a clearly defined purpose, and are well planned and executed. All we are saying is that we do not have enough information about them to make a proper assessment.

What, then, are the reasons for the shortfalls? Are they due to cost ineffectiveness or to a flawed design of the project and its overload of objectives? A relevant question is whether the stated objectives were achievable within the resource and time constraints? We are inclined to think that some of the shortfalls, especially the limited research output, are attributable to inefficiency. But as pointed out previously, the failure to revise the project document after the budget cut and the shortening of the project’s life span did have a disruptive effect that adversely affected cost effectiveness in that focus was lost. In addition, external factors beyond the control of the project management have no doubt hindered initiatives.

Overall, while allowing for some wastage, we are inclined at this stage to consider the cost effectiveness of this project to be satisfactory. However, our judgment must be qualified with reference to the time factor and sustainability.

The ultimate criterion of cost effectiveness is linked to sustainability. If the immediate effects of a project dissipate shortly after project completion, the cost effectiveness is close to nil. Conversely, if steps are taken to secure the sustainability of project outputs beyond the lifetime of the project, the cost effectiveness is correspondingly enhanced. In the discussion above we have repeatedly referred to the need for developing plans and systems for maintenance and replacement of obsolete and worn-out equipment. They are not yet in place but it is hoped that they will be in the course of the next phase. It is premature, therefore, to pass a definitive judgement on the cost effectiveness of this project.

When a donor is willing to channel money into an institution with a view to building capability the question is often asked down the line whether the institution is capable of changing. In the case of this project one might ask: Is Bunda College of Agriculture capable of changing with the times or does it prefer to remain in its cocoon? The nuanced answer is both yes and no.

Institutions are inherently lethargic and change only slowly. Some circles at Bunda have been reluctant to move with the times and adopted a rather myopic perspective. They have only grudgingly accepted change. Other circles have assumed a progressive attitude and been receptive to impulses from outside. It is to be expected that both of these forces exist within an institution and that they seek to assert their interests.

It is our distinct impression, however, borne out by the facts, that the progressive forces are taking the lead. Three cases in point may serve to substantiate our point. First, Bunda has taken on board environmental issues and the broader perspectives of natural resource management. A new faculty has been established for that purpose. Second, the increased intake of female students augurs well for the future in terms of reorientation. Once present-day students make their way into the academic staff of Bunda further changes can be expected. Three, with regard to the transformation of Bunda into a fully-fledged university its leadership has been at the forefront.

The new orientation of the next phase of NORAD-funded activities further attests to Bunda's ability to change and adapt to new circumstances.

## 8. Recommendations

Although the design of the envisaged next phase of the project – with its emphasis on outreach and extension – differs substantially from Phases I and II, there will still be a component of institution-building at Bunda. The recommendations listed below spring principally from experiences during Phase II and will be relevant to the institution-building efforts in the next phase. However, past experiences may also be of relevance in the context of the future reorientation of the project. Therefore, we have included a number of recommendations in that vein as well.

### 8.1 Regarding organisational restructuring

- There is need for a clearly defined implementation strategy for the BCA strategic plan 2005–2010, including costing of inputs, their sourcing, and the setting of milestones and time schedules along the way.
- The creditworthiness of Bunda Farm Ltd. needs addressing, either by issuing a title deed to the land currently leased so as to allow it to be used as collateral when soliciting capital funds from commercial lending institutions, or by other suitable mechanisms. Apart from the creditworthiness issue a long-term plan needs to be worked out on the future relationship of Bunda Farm Ltd. to the College in terms of ownership structure, use of some land by the College and its staff, etc.
- The role of the Programmes Co-ordinating Office as an efficient and effective co-ordinator of externally funded projects needs to be clarified, especially with regard to how it fits within the general BCA structure and its relationships with CARD and the contemplated Consultancies Co-ordinating Unit.
- Lest the achievements made in the ICT field be lost it is critically important that a systems administrator be recruited urgently to maintain continuous service.
- Issues relating to staff conditions of service, staff appraisal and promotions, downsizing and retrenchments, and the decentralisation/privatisation of non-core functions need to be addressed in a timely and effective manner.

### 8.2 Regarding financial and administrative management

- The installation of monitoring and evaluation systems to ascertain the effectiveness of the systems and procedures adopted requires further streamlining.
- For the management systems in place to function satisfactorily continuous training and skill upgrading of relevant staff is needed.
- Suitable measures should be taken – e.g. through workshops – to inculcate ethical standards in staff behaviour and rules and regulations introduced to discipline miscreants.
- Government needs to provide a clear and irrevocable commitment regarding subventions to the College so that the latter can implement its plans effectively.

### 8.3 Regarding revenue generation

- Efforts to acquire funding from diverse sources need to be a continuous activity, without which funds for research, teaching and other purposes would soon dry up.

- Mechanisms need to be put in place to mainstream consultancy work undertaken by staff into the College activity plan and structure towards a win-win situation whereby both the College and its staff benefit from such undertakings.
- A uniform policy needs to be formulated regarding the overheads the College may charge on consultancies and projects. In doing so, care must be taken to balance the interests of the College against those of the staff.
- The potential of Bunda Farm Ltd. as a source of revenue for the College needs to be enhanced by addressing management and financial issues, especially the requirement of a title deed for the land.
- Action is needed regarding the endowment fund. A first step might be a feasibility study of its establishment, its capitalisation, and details of its management once established.

#### 8.4 Regarding improved priority teaching facilities

- A plan needs to be developed for the maintenance of existing buildings and equipment, including the identification of alternative sources of funding for the construction of new buildings and procurement of new equipment.
- The College should professionalise its handling of contracts with contractors, so as to be able to penalise, if necessary by prosecuting, contractors if poor materials have been used or shoddy workmanship can be documented in the construction or maintenance of infrastructure.

#### 8.5 Regarding improved teaching and research capacity

- Despite positive achievements to date, research and outreach programmes need further improvements in terms of quality and quantity, involving key stakeholders and other beneficiaries at all levels of development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Bunda staff need to be sensitised to the new mode of participatory and inter-disciplinary research. Special attention must be devoted to cultivating relations with the ‘bridges’ and intermediaries between research and application at the farm level.
- There is a need for establishing rules for balancing the effective participation of academic staff in teaching, research, and consultancy work so that participation in one does not jeopardise output in the others.
- Beyond the lifetime of the next project phase, the sustainability of the journal requires attention, especially its economic foundation. Otherwise, it might suffer the fate of dormancy or premature demise.

#### 8.6 Regarding future activities in new project phase

- It is recommended that a completion report be prepared for Phase II once the bridging funds have been exhausted, to serve as a baseline for subsequent reviews and evaluations.
- The main challenge ahead is the long-term sustainability of the project in all its facets: institutional, professional and financial. The sustainability objective must inform all activities.
- In conjunction with Bunda College and other prospective donors NORAD should revisit the endowment fund proposal and be prepared to contribute to its capitalisation.
- NORAD should make a decade-long commitment to continued support for Bunda College and its research, outreach and extension activities, with the proviso that performance during the coming five years is satisfactory.

- The component of the future project explicitly addressing institution-building at Bunda should not be pruned further, but rather be reorientated in line with the new thrust towards outreach and extension.
- The entire Bunda staff should make efforts to cultivate relations with potential ‘bridges’ and intermediaries between the research community and the ultimate beneficiaries at farm level.
- It is not advisable to include funding for Northern research collaborators – in this case the Norwegian University of Life Sciences – in the budget of the future project, on account of the wide differential in cost levels. The collaborative input of Northern partners should be financed from other sources.
- It is proposed that a lean, simple and clear-cut management structure be set up for the continuation of the project, i.e. moving away from a top-heavy, many-layered arrangement which only increases transaction costs and slows down decision-making.
- Responsibility for co-ordination of the future project should rest with the Programmes Co-ordinating Office, assisted by the proposed Programme Implementation Team. It is further suggested that the Steering Committee be the main decision-making body as opposed to an Annual Planning Meeting and a Programme Planning Committee. Clear rules must be established as to who holds authority to incur expenditure and how far that authority extends.
- The College should identify new suitable publication outlets in view of the future orientation of the project towards outreach and extension.

## APPENDICES





## Appendix 1: People interviewed

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17. Bunda College of Agriculture, NORAD Support to BCA Minutes of the NORAD Project Advisory Committee (PAC) held on Wednesday, 3 November 2004 in the Aquaculture Conference Room at 2.00 pm.
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### Appendix 3: Schedule of activities

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Venue</i>
27 Feb 2005		<i>Arrival in Malawi of Norwegian Consultant</i>	
28 Feb 2005	08.00 - 10.00	Briefing at the Royal Norwegian Embassy	
	11.30 – 12.00	Call on the Registrar, <i>Mrs. F.T. Zalira Msonthi</i>	Registrar's Office
	13.15 – 13.45	Call on the Librarian, <i>Mr. Geoff Salanje</i>	Library
	13.45 – 14.00	Call on Programmes Office for project documents and agree on programme	Programmes Office
	14.00-17.00	Briefing at Bunda College (Call on the Vice Principal)	Principal's Office
1 March 2005	All day	Review of documents, Bunda/RNE	Hotel/Bunda
	13.00 – 14.45	Call on and meeting with the Principal, <i>Prof. G.Y. Kanyama-Phiri</i>	Principal's Office
2 March 2005	08.30 – 09.30	Meeting with the Registrar (Mrs. Msonthi) and Assistant College Finance Officer ( <i>Mr. J. Msubunda</i> )	Registrar's Office
	09.30 – 10.30	Meeting with Dean, Faculty of Agriculture, <i>Dr. T.N. Ngwira</i>	Dean of Agric's Office
	10.30 – 11.30	Meeting with Dean, Postgraduate Studies, <i>Prof. R.K.D. Phoya</i>	Dean of PG Studies Office
	11.30 – 12.30	Meeting with Dean, Faculty of Environmental Science, <i>Prof. M.B. Kwapata</i>	Forestry and Horticulture Department
	13.30 – 14.00	Meeting with Chairperson, Research and Publications Committee (RPC) <i>Mr. ACL Safalaoh</i>	Mr. Safalaoh's Office
	14.00 – 14.30	Project Advisory Committee (PAC)	AQFSD Conference Room
	14.30 – 15.30	Meeting with the Director, Centre for Agric Research and Development (CARD), <i>Dr. Stanley Khaila</i>	AQFSD Conference Room
3 March 2005	08.30 – 09.30	Meeting with Programmes Coordinator, <i>Prof. JW Banda</i>	Programmes Office
	09.30 – 10.30	Meeting with Programmes Office Accountant, <i>Mr. B. Kondowe</i>	Programmes Office
	10.30 – 11.00	Meeting with Interim Bunda College Student's Union (Mr. Brown Banda to also attend)	Senior Common Room
	11.00 – 12.00	Meeting with Chairpersons of Bunda Student's Social Clubs supported by NORAD	Senior Common Room
	13.30 – 14.30	Meeting with the Farm Manager, <i>Mr. Foley</i>	Programmes Office
	14.30 – 15.30	Meeting with the Librarian, <i>Mr. Geoff Salanje</i>	Library

4 March 2005	08.30 – 09.30	Meet Dr. TN Gondwe, Staff trained with support from NORAD	Dr. TN Gondwe's Office
	09.30 – 10.30	Meet Ms. S. Nyasulu, Staff trained with support from NORAD	Ms. Nyasulu's Office
	13.00 – 13.30	Collect Statistics from the Registrar	Registrar's Office
	13.30 – 15.00	Department of Agricultural Research Services (DARS), Meet <i>Dr. AP Mtukuso</i>	Chitedze Research Station
	15.00 – 16.00	Meet Dr. Mary Shawa, for the Bunda-Magomero Gender Training Programme	Chitedze Research Station
5 March 2005	Weekend	Review of documentation	
6 March 2005	Weekend	Review of documentation	
	16.00 – 17.00	Meeting with the Internal Auditors	Mafumu Guest House
7 March 2005	08.30 – 08.45	Courtesy call on the PS of Ministry of Education	MoE Headquarters PS's Office
	08.45 – 10.00	Meeting Directors/ Heads of Department, Ministry of Education	MoE Headquarters Conference Room
	13.30- 13.45	Courtesy call on the PS of Ministry of Mines, Natural Resources and Environment (MoMNRE)	MoMNRE Headquarters PS's Office
	13.45 – 15.00	Meeting Directors/ Heads of Department, Ministry of Mines, Natural Resources and Environment (MoMNRE)	MoMNRE Headquarters Conference Room
8 March 2005	08.30 – 08.45	Courtesy call on the PS of Ministry of Finance	MoF Headquarters PS's Office
	08.45 – 10.00	Meeting Directors/ Heads of Department, Ministry of Finance	MoF Headquarters Conference Room
	14.30 – 16.00	NASFAM	NASFAM Offices St. Martins Building, City Centre
9 March 2005	08.00 – 10.00	Natural Resources College	NRC Offices
	10.30 – 12.00	Meeting the Programme Officer of RNE, <i>Mr. A. Chikuni</i>	Royal Norwegian Embassy, City Centre
	13.00 – 14.00	Pro Vice Chancellor, <i>Prof L A Kamwanja</i>	Bunda College
	14.30 – 14.45	Courtesy call on the PS, Ministry of agriculture	PS's Office
	14.45 – 16.00	Meeting Directors/ Heads of Department, Ministry of agriculture	MoA Hqters Conference Room
10 March 2005	All Day	Preparation of preliminary report	
11 March 2005	09.00 – 11.00	Presentation of preliminary findings to Bunda College, RNE and Ministries (Education, Finance, MoMNRE, Agric)	AQFSD Conference Room, Bunda College
	13.00 – 13.15	Courtesy Call on the Ambassador	RNE, City Centre
	13.15 – 14.30	Debriefing (RNE)	RNE, City Centre
12 March		Norwegian Consultant departs from Malawi	
13-31 March		Report preparation by the Norwegian and Malawian consultants and solicitation of comments from stakeholders	Norway and Malawi
1 April		Submission by the Evaluation Team of draft report to the BCA and the RNE	Lilongwe, Malawi
8 April		Submission of Final Report after modification of draft report	Lilongwe, Malawi

## Appendix 4: Output evaluation matrix

### Output 1: Organisational restructuring

Indicators	Achievements	Shortfalls	Remarks	Recommendations
Level to which project has achieved outputs in relation to organisational restructuring, i.e. to what extent restructuring has been implemented and its effect on other activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The recruitment of a fulltime Project Co-ordinator in 2003 improved project administration and management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delays in the approval of the University Act is negatively affecting proposed organisational arrangements at BCA such as proposal to turn BCA into a fully-fledged university</li> <li>Phase II was mostly a BCA affair and did not fully include other stakeholders such as Department of Agriculture Research (DARS), NRC, and NASFAM in relevant areas of common interest</li> <li>Some key stakeholder, mostly outside BCA, have not been fully involved in project implementation though at times have received progress reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The role of CARD should be clearly defined especially in terms of project and programme co-ordination</li> <li>Policy change at Malawi and Norway government levels regarding food security affected the project's goal-setting, activity choice, planning and timing of implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme Co-ordination Office should be sustained to co-ordinate projects at BCA but should be restructured as an integral part of the college in terms of conditions of service, structure and funding. Staff incentives within the office could be provided to promote efficiency and effectiveness</li> <li>Project coordination should be supported by a representative and functional Steering Committee</li> <li>Government to reduce red-tape so that more graduates from BCA are recruited on time to fill the many vacant posts in the civil service</li> <li>DARS should play a key role in the newly proposed research and outreach project and proper mechanisms should be put in place for programme planning and allocations of project resources</li> <li>Government need to address the low allocations of subvention funds as this negatively affects implementation of projects</li> <li>Linkages between University Office and Colleges as well as Colleges with their different faculties need to be improved</li> </ul>



## Output 2: Improved financial and administrative management

Indicators	Achievements	Shortfalls	Remarks	Recommendations
<p>How equipping and training of accounts and administrative personnel has improved financial management, reporting, handling and access to financial statements at BCA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current direct funding to BCA through Govt. subvention other than through UNIMA head office has assisted in the timely allocation of such resources</li> <li>• Funding through subventions has improved since last year and this may be attributable to changing priorities by the new government</li> <li>• Prioritisation is not clearly defined when it comes to financial allocations within the college departments</li> <li>• In general, equipping and training of accounts and administrative personnel has improved financial management, reporting, handling and access to financial statements at BCA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The delay in the provision of bridging funds by NORAD has negatively affected implementation of certain activities such as professional training</li> <li>• Reduced Government subvention below approved budget has also negatively affected BCA meet its annual obligations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a feeling at BCA that their representation at the UNIMA senate should be strengthened to the benefit of the college</li> <li>• At college level financial allocations are generally influenced by the nature of requirements from the various programs</li> <li>• Deans have no financial votes while Heads of Departments do; a situation considered by some as an anomaly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The University Act requires urgent revision and consequent approval in view of new developments such as the University Strategic Plan, Human Resource issues, Auditing, and recommendations from the Malawi Institute of Management (MIM) study</li> <li>• The proposal to have one Act for higher education and within it Acts for specific academic levels will also affect the University Act and therefore should be investigated in the planning of future programs/projects</li> <li>• The auditing of accounts need improvement and the newly upgraded UNIMA Audit Department, apart from the university cooperate auditor Graham Carr, should play a frontline role so that accounts are audited in a timely manner</li> <li>• BCA like most government funded institutions suffer from low subventions and this issue need to be addressed if such institutions are to function efficiently and effectively</li> </ul>

### Output 3: Revenue generation

Indicators	Achievements	Shortfalls	Remarks	Recommendations
<p>Impact regarding increase in revenue or reduction in government subvention or both and what has been done to find other sources of funding and income generation; assess why the endowment fund has not been created and recommend how best this could be done in future</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some improvement in ability to increase revenues through activities such as Bunda Farm, a course conducted in writing funding applications, the execution of parallel programmes, and other miscellaneous revenues from fees</li> <li>• The college from time to time receives financial and technical support from other donors such as JICA, EU, ICEIDA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased income generation has not yet improved</li> <li>• Bunda Farm not yet producing a profit and lacking capital inputs</li> <li>• Endowment fund is not yielding revenue yet</li> <li>• Mechanisms are lacking to allow the college benefit from consultancy revenue</li> </ul>	<p>Donors need to be encouraged to support infrastructure development programmes such as buildings especially in cases such as the college requiring to increase intake due to demand</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Endowment Fund must be fully operationalised urgently to assist in revenue generation</li> <li>• Mechanisms should be sought to resolve the land lease issue for the Farm so that it could be used as collateral</li> <li>• Plan to become an internet service provider (using the newly acquired V-SAT) and the charging for use of facilities such as printers and photocopiers will assist in generating revenue</li> <li>• BCA needs to aggressively promote income generating activities to foster its survival and sustainability</li> </ul>

### Output 4: Improved priority teaching facilities

Indicators	Achievements	Shortfalls	Remarks	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement in repair maintenance of buildings;</li> <li>• Improvement in procurement of equipment and installation and operation of equipment in laboratories and offices including computers, upgrading of books, journals and CD-ROM databases;</li> <li>• Improvement in classroom and laboratory conditions i.e. repair of these facilities;</li> <li>• Production of a maintenance plan for new equipment and buildings and rehabilitated ones</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some buildings have been repaired and rehabilitated</li> <li>• Some equipment such as computers, a vehicle, power generator, communication systems have been procured</li> <li>• The current training of an IT specialist commendable</li> <li>• Teaching and learning facilities upgraded</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance of building not done satisfactorily due to poor choice of contractor and lack of supervision of maintenance work undertaken</li> <li>• There is generally no plan for the maintenance of buildings, equipment, classroom and laboratory facilities</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is an urgent need for the college to develop and effectively implement a maintenance plan for buildings, equipment and other facilities</li> <li>• Alternative funding sources for the replacement of equipment and construction of new buildings to be sought</li> </ul>

### Output 5: Improved teaching and research

Indicators	Achievements	Shortfalls	Remarks	Recommendations
Improvement in teaching and research competence	Low staff turnover partly due to flexible consultancy policy	Limited research and outreach is considered as one of the major shortfall of the project		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is need for clear and elaborate mechanisms aimed at balancing teaching, research and consultancy being undertaken by academic staff</li> </ul>
Improvement in teaching, research capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research funded projects are increasing but not necessarily attributable to the project</li> <li>The project has assisted the college with procurement of equipment such as computes, printers, UPS; books; journal subscriptions; internet access; etc.</li> </ul>	Not easy to quantify or qualify at this early stage		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mechanisms need to be put in place to moderate staff participation in consultancies to the benefit of the college</li> </ul>
Improvement in collaboration with partners in Norway and other institutions	There has been some collaboration though at minimal level mainly due to the high cost factor	Collaboration has room for improvement		
Increase in number of lectures through staff training at various levels including PhD and MSc	Upgrading of eleven academic staff members (6 at MSc and 5 at PhD level)	College needs further support in this area		There is need for a level playing field in the selection of staff for further training

Improvement in curricula	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum review undertaken in some departments</li> <li>• Inclusion of new relevant topics in the curricula such as business management, gender issues, training of dieticians, HIV/AIDS, etc. is a welcome development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College needs to exert more effort to improve curricula in areas where this has not been</li> <li>• Students have not been represented in curriculum review programmes</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum review to be done in line with the changing agricultural and natural resource management and conditions in the country, involving all stakeholders including student representatives</li> <li>• Curricula should address the issue of training of trainers especially those who teach in schools and colleges</li> <li>• BCA should carry out study on the relevance of its curriculum such as research and outreach e.g. the development and dissemination of new and appropriate technologies</li> <li>• BCA should also promote short courses targeting specific communities</li> </ul>
Improvement in staff exchange visits and joint research	Staff exchange visits (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Norway)	The cost factor affected this, especially with Norway		Staff exchange visits and joint research with other institutions need to be promoted to foster a cross-fertilisation of ideas between the institutions
Increase in publications	Some increase in publication such as production of Bunda Journal of Agriculture, Environmental Science and Technology, various academic theses and dissertations	Limited research and outreach has had a negative effect on publication frequency		Research activities must be promoted to fulfil this core function of a university college
Increase in workshops	The project has supported a number of seminars and workshops for staff, students and other stakeholders	This item seems to have used financial resources at the expense of other activities		

<p>Improvement in other linkages that have been established under the project and how these linkages have improved teaching and research, (livestock and crop research)</p>	<p>Main linkages have been through staff visits and exchanges which has assisted in teaching, research and to a lesser degree, funding of some activities at college by some Norwegian well-wishers</p>	<p>Generally limited achievement regarding other linkages through the project</p>		
<p>How the project has improved subscription for internet journals</p>	<p>The college is subscribing to a number of electronic journals through internet subscription using project resources</p>	<p>There are no clear mechanisms especially financial ones to sustain this activity</p>		

## Appendix 5: Terms of reference

### **NORAD Support to Bunda College of Agriculture**

#### **End of Phase II Evaluation**

##### **1.0 BACKGROUND**

Bunda College of Agriculture (BCA) is one of the four constituent colleges of the University of Malawi. It is an educational institution of higher learning in agriculture and natural resources in Malawi with main focus on promoting sustainable food production and utilisation; improving income, food and nutrition security of the rural and urban populations; and conservation and management of bio-diversity, natural resources and the environment, through the provision of information services, teaching and training, research, outreach and consultancies.

During its existence, BCA has transformed into a two Faculty College: Faculty of Agriculture and Faculty of Environmental Sciences. The College now offers a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and other services. Over the past 35 years, the College has made significant contributions towards both human resources development of the country as well as research and outreach. As of 2002, the College had graduated more than 3000 diplomas, 1700 BSc Degrees, 170 MSc degrees, and one PhD. More than 90 percent of the agricultural professionals working in government, non-governmental organisations and the private sector in Malawi are graduates of Bunda College.

Currently the College runs many BSc and MSc degree programmes and offers both full and part time PhD programmes. The College also has the highest concentration of research projects in the whole University of Malawi.

The College received funds from the Government of the Royal Kingdom of Norway in support of Phase II activities to strengthen core programmes and services of teaching/learning. In addition, the funding was meant to enhance establishment and expansion of linkages and cooperation with Norwegian partners and other universities in the region. The Phase II of the NORAD Support to Bunda College Project was planned for five years initially (2001 – 2006), but during implementation, this period was reduced to three years (2001 – 2004). The project period ended in June 2004, with a no-cost extension up to December 2004.

##### **2.0 DESIGN OF THE PROJECT**

###### **2.1 Development Objective (Goal) and Indicators**

The *development objective* (or goal) of the project was:

***“Performance of BCA in learning, teaching and research improved”.***

This development objective or goal provided the justification for investment in the Project, which was expected to be achieved beyond the project period of five years. Visible evidence would be measurable in the medium-to-long term.

The primary, direct and intended beneficiaries of the Project were:

- ***Graduate and undergraduate, male and female students at BCA as well as the staff and management of BCA.***

The achievement of the development objective (goal) was expected to contribute to the overall strategic plan of the College. Since this is a long-term goal and only a portion of it may be achieved by the direct contribution of the project entailed in the proposal, the indicators were only tentatively formulated:

**Planned tentative indicators to measure success:**

Indicators were:

- *At least 35% of students obtain awards of at least credit level or above starting 7 years after start of phase II*
- *Increased number of funded research projects at the end of phase II and beyond.*
- *At least 1 publication/year per staff member in refereed journals starting 5-7 years after start of phase II.*

## **2.2 Immediate Objective (Purpose) and Indicators**

In order to achieve the development objective mentioned above, the **immediate objective** (purpose) of the proposed project was:

***“Managerial performance and teaching competence at BCA improved.”***

This was the expected impact at the end of the project period. It was envisaged that performance of BCA would be of high professional standards. Indicators to measure success were:

**Planned indicators:**

It was expected that:

- *By end of year 5, there would be increased public confidence in BCA in terms of:*
  - *More clients using BCA*
  - *More donors contributing*
  - *Increased funding available for infrastructure development*
- *By end of year 5, there would be increased autonomy in terms of:*
  - *Financial*
  - *Managerial, and*
  - *Administrative powers.*
- *Number of demand driven programmes and services by BCA would increase.*
- *There would be increased transparency and communications*
- *Rules and regulations would be made available on request and accessible electronic form and these are implemented*
- *Annual reports of BCA produced timely, and*



- *Regular PhD programmes established in chosen areas.*

### **2.3 Planned Project Outputs (Results) and Indicators**

In order to achieve the immediate objective, the following outputs needed to be attained during the project implementation period:

1. *Organizational restructuring implemented*
2. *Financial and administrative management improved*
3. *Revenue generation improved and facilities maintained*
4. *Priority teaching facilities improved*
5. *Teaching and research capacity improved in selected areas.*

The indicators to measure the achievements on each of the expected outputs above are contained in the Phase II project documents that will be given to the Evaluation Team.

### **3.0 TERMS OF REFERENCE**

#### *3.1 Evaluation Team*

The Evaluation Team shall comprise one Norwegian and one Malawian Consultant. The Norwegian Consultant, the team, leader will be identified and recruited by NORAD. BCA will be responsible for recruiting the Malawian consultant.

#### *3.2 Purpose of the evaluation*

- To provide an objective assessment of the project, its implementation and implementation arrangements in relation to the project goal, objectives and expected outputs.
- To assess existing products of the project in relation to the target audience and their impact.
- To identify opportunities and recommendations for improving performance of BCA in project implementation, teaching and research.

#### *3.3 Issues to be addressed by the evaluation*

In the assessment of the overall performance of the project in relation to the goal, objectives and expected outputs, the Team should evaluate the role of the different stakeholders namely the funding agency Government of Norway, Bunda College of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture with the objective of streamlining and providing more focused collaboration.

Considering the following broad areas, the Team is required to assess the level at which the outputs were achieved (using the indicators as the basis for the evaluation). The Team shall also comment on the efficiency of implementation of the activities on each output and recommendations on the future course of action. Further, on each of the broad areas, the Team will determine activities, which have not been implemented, the reasons and the way forward.

#### **a) Organisational restructuring**

The Evaluation Team will determine the level to which the project has achieved the outputs set out in the project document in relation to organisational restructuring. In particular, the Team shall assess to what extent organisational restructuring has been implemented. If not or partly implemented, the reasons for this should be examined with a view of making

recommendations. The Team will also examine how this has affected implementation of other activities of this output and of the whole project.

**b) Improvement of financial and administrative management**

The Evaluation Team will assess the progress made in achieving the outputs in relation to financial and administrative management. The evaluation will determine how equipping and training of accounts and administrative personnel has improved financial management, reporting, handling and access to financial statements at BCA. In addition, consultant will assess the improvement in access to and communication of information through computer networking, internet services and employment of a systems administrator. Of particular significance is the evaluation of access and use of the students and staff tracking system that was installed. Recommendations should be made on any improvements, if any, that still need to be made.

**c) Revenue generation improvement**

The Team will assess to what extent the activities leading to increased income generation have been implemented. It shall also determine the impact of these activities regarding the levels of increase in revenue or the levels of reduction in Government subvention or both due to implementation of the activities on this output. What has been done regarding exploring other sources of funding and income generation activities. Specifically, the Evaluation Team will assess why the endowment fund has not been created and recommend how best this can be done in future.

**d) Improvement of teaching facilities**

The assignment will evaluate whether the repair and maintenance of buildings, procurement of equipment has improved the condition in classrooms and laboratories. Specifically, the Team will evaluate and assess the improvements brought about due to repairs of classrooms, lecture rooms and laboratory structures; installation and operation of equipment in laboratories and offices, including computers; procurement of and upgrading of books, journals and CD-ROM databases; production of a maintenance plan for equipment and buildings; and maintenance of the rehabilitated equipment and buildings.

**e) Improvement of teaching and research capacity**

The Team will assess and evaluate improvements in competence, teaching and research capacity of Bunda College and its collaborating partners in Norway and other institutions. Specially, they will look at the number of lecturers, number of lecturers with MSc and PhD (staff training), curricula, staff exchange visits, joint research, publications and workshops and other linkages that have been established under the project and how these activities have improved teaching and research. In addition, area of livestock and crop research and subscription for inter-net journals should be considered.

**f) Project management and project collaboration**

The Evaluation Team shall do the following:

- Assess project management procedures.
- Assess the efficiency of the project management.
- Assess and evaluate the role and efficiency of involvement of the Agricultural University of Norway, Ministry of agriculture and other partners.
- Suggest any improvements in management set-up.

#### 4.0 TASKS TO BE PERFORMED BY THE CONSULTANTS

The Team shall use multiple tools depending on data needs and availability. The design of the evaluation shall permit the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data to maximise participation of project holders and other stakeholders in the process. Information could, however, be gathered through review of documents, group and individual interviews and discussions, including site visits. More specifically, the mission will base their sources of information on the following:

a) *Review of background information*

A study or review of available document related to the project such as project proposal documents, all annual and semi-annual work plans and progress reports, minutes from the PIT, PAC and annual meetings, financial and audit reports, the mid-term evaluation report, agreements and memoranda of understanding, a sample of correspondence files, and any relevant report related to the objectives and scope of the mission. The Programmes Co-ordinating Office (PCO) and the Principal's Office shall supply most of these documents. A preliminary list of the documents will be supplied during briefing sessions.

b) *Interview with key stakeholders*

- Bunda College of Agriculture; Principal, Head and Deans, Project Advisory Committee (PAC), Project Implementation Team (PIT), Student representatives..
- NGOs, e.g. NASFAM
- Ministry of Agriculture, PS, Directors, Head of Departments
- Ministry of Mines, Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs
- NLH, representatives
- Any other relevant stakeholders

c) *Analyses and reporting*

The Team shall submit a preliminary report not later than two weeks after completion of the mission and a final report three weeks after the mission. The review shall contain the observations made through field visits and consultations and clear recommendations for future collaboration.

The report shall contain the following standard headings

**Executive summary**

**Introduction**

**Findings**

- Project objectives and their relevance
- Project design
- Project management and implementation
- Project activities and outputs
- Project effects, impacts and sustainability
- Cost effectiveness of the project

**Conclusions**

**Lessons for the Future**

**Recommendations**

The report should be completed, to the extent possible, in Malawi and the findings and recommendations fully discussed with all stakeholders. The Team Leader will be responsible for finalisation of the report, which will be submitted to Bunda College in final form. It should be submitted typed, preferably in Word (Latest version). Bunda College will submit the report to the Norwegian Government.

## 5.0 OUTPUTS

- a) Main evaluation report.
- b) Presentation of preliminary findings to Bunda College.
- c) Annexes on:
  - Evaluation Terms of Reference (TORs).
  - List of documents consulted.
  - List of individuals, institutions and stakeholders consulted.

## 6.0 INPUT AND BUDGET

NORAD will cover consultancy expenses related to the Norwegian consultant whilst BCA will cover all costs in connection with the Malawian Consultant.

## 7.0 TIME SCHEDULE AND WORKPLAN

The time allocated for the evaluation is as follows:

- a) Contract negotiation and preparation of review instrumentation (2 man-days).
- b) Review of documentation, visits and interviews (10 man-days).
- c) Analysis, verification and reporting (5 man-days).
- d) Briefing or presentation of preliminary findings (1 man-day).
- e) Final report writing (2 man-days).

The following is the tentative activity schedule that will be finalised by the Evaluation Team, the Royal Norwegian Embassy (RNE) and Bunda College.

	<i>Date</i>	<i>Activity</i>
1		<i>Arrival in Malawi of Norwegian Consultant</i>
2		Briefing at RNE and Bunda College
3		Review of project documentation
4		Meetings with College management, Project management teams and staff
5		Visits to other stakeholder institutions and interviews, discussions
6		Analysis and interpretation of information collected
7		Report writing
8		Preliminary report presentation and discussions
9		The mission departs
10		Final report submission to Bunda College
11		Bunda College submits report to RNE

## Recent Reports

- R 2005: 12 FJELDSTAD, Odd-Helge et al.  
Local governance, urban poverty and service delivery in Namibia. Bergen, 2005, 111 pp.
- R 2005: 11 KNUDSEN, Are, with Hamidullah Natiq and Sadiqa Basiri  
Norwegian NGOs in post-Taliban Afghanistan: Review and lessons learned. Bergen, 2005, 59 pp.
- R 2005: 10 ISAKSEN, Jan and Carlos Rafa Mate  
Micro and small-scale industry. Development in Cabo Delgado Province in Mozambique. Bergen, 2005, 44 pp.
- R 2005: 9 ISAKSEN, Jan (team leader) et al.  
Poverty in Mozambique. Discourse, analysis and monitoring. Bergen, 2005, 114 pp.
- R 2005: 8 MATHISEN, Harald and Vera Devine  
Corruption in Bosnia and Herzegovina – 2005. Options for Swedish Development Cooperation 2006-2010. Bergen, 2005, 70 pp.
- R 2005: 7 TJØNNELAND, Elling N., Jan Isaksen, Garth le Pere  
SADC's Restructuring and Emerging Policies. Options for Norwegian Support. Commissioned by the Norwegian Embassy, Harare. Bergen, 2005, 53 pp.
- R 2005: 6 LANGE, Siri and Marianne Rønnevig  
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- R 2005: 5 LANGE, Siri  
The Norad Programme in Arts and Cultural Education. A review of the first phase 2002-2004. Bergen, 2005.
- R 2005: 4 WANG, Vibeke and Lise Rakner  
The accountability function of supreme audit institutions in Malawi, Uganda and Tanzania. Bergen, 2005.
- R 2005: 3 VILLANGER, Espen  
Does social development affect poverty? The role of participation in income dynamics in Indonesia 1993-2000. Bergen, 2005, 31 pp.
- R 2005: 2 HATLEBAKK, Magnus and Øystein Evjen Olsen  
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- R 2005: 1 WANG, Vibeke, Astri Suhrke, Elling N. Tjønneland  
Governance interventions in post-war situations: Lessons learned. Bergen, 2005, 23 pp.
- R 2004: 13 SØRBØ, Gunnar M.  
Peacebuilding in post-war situations: Lessons for Sudan. Bergen, 2005.
- R 2004: 12 SKAAR, Elin, Ingrid Samset, Siri Gloppen  
Aid to judicial reform: Norwegian and international experiences. Bergen, 2004.
- R 2004: 11 MIRANDA, Armindo  
Angola 2003/2004. Waiting for elections. Bergen, 2004, 52 pp.
- R 2004: 10 SØREIDE, Tina  
Corruption in international business transactions: The perspective of Norwegian firms. Bergen, 2004, 60 pp.
- R 2004: 9 Report from a Symposium at Chr. Michelsen Institute, Bergen, Norway 24-25 May 2004.  
Palestinian State-formation: Prospects and challenges. Bergen, 2004, 14 pp.

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## SUMMARY

This report is an evaluation of NORAD's support to Bunda College of Agriculture, University of Malawi to the tune of NOK 35 million for the period 2001–2004. Results were assessed in five output areas: (a) organisational restructuring; (b) financial and administrative management; (c) revenue generation; (d) improved priority teaching facilities; and (e) improved teaching and research capacity. Notable achievements included the preparation of a strategic plan for the College; the commercialisation of Bunda Farm; the resuscitation of the Bunda Journal of Agriculture, Environmental Science and Technology; installation of a local area network and a new software package for accounting purposes; rehabilitation of buildings; provision of equipment and improvement of library services; and upgrading of professional staff qualifications through a large number of scholarships at MSc and PhD levels. Among the shortfalls were the failure to transform Bunda College into a fully-fledged university; the continued undercapitalisation of Bunda Farm; no monitoring and evaluation system installed to ascertain the effectiveness of new systems and procedures; no policy formulated on consultancies, including overheads to be paid to the College; and limited outreach to the ultimate beneficiaries of agricultural research, i.e. the farmers. With respect to the next phase, it was recommended that more attention be given to outreach activities; that sustainability concerns be taken more seriously; and that a lean and simple management structure be established to avoid top-heavy, multi-layered arrangements which would increase transaction costs.

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