

ABSTRACT
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EDUCATION

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**Building Research Capacity for Global Development through
North-South Relationships in Higher Education:
The Irish African Partnership Model**

Various partnerships and international research networks linking Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the global North and South have emerged in the past decades, as an expression of higher education's contribution to international development, and of the need to bridge the North/South knowledge divide.

Such partnerships have contributed to enhanced human and infrastructural capacity, as well as to a better integration of the southern partners in international exchanges. Nevertheless, they have also been criticised for focusing too much on the one-directional 'transfer' of capacity from North to South, at the expense of *genuine* partnership working, mutual learning and responsiveness to need. Furthermore, the challenge of nurturing long term mutual partnerships has frequently proved to be at odds with the shorter-term timelines of most donor-funded programmes.

A recent Irish based partnership attempts to address some of these problems. The Irish-African Partnership for Research Capacity Building, a programme supported by Irish Aid and Universities Ireland, brings together all nine universities on the island of Ireland in partnership with four universities in Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda, to develop a coordinated approach to building research capacity for poverty reduction both within Africa ('South') and Ireland ('North').

Drawing on the preliminary results of a stakeholder consultation that was undertaken in the thirteen partner universities, and a mapping exercise of the key education research priority research areas in Africa for the next 10 years, we illustrate the potential mutual benefits from partnerships in Higher Education that stress capacity building in both North and South. We also make recommendations on how these partnerships can be harnessed to contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Education for All, in particular. The challenges associated with the model and the strategies instituted to achieve a mutual and sustainable partnership are also highlighted.