

Summary of the Mid Term Report by University of Basel on the Swiss South African Joint Research Programme (SSAJRP) including Tanzania & Ivory Coast <http://internationalaffairs.unibas.ch>

1. South Africa

Goals

Established in 2007 by the Swiss and South African governments to promote scientific and technological cooperation between Switzerland and South Africa, the SSAJRP rests on the principles of mutual interest, scientific excellence, and reciprocity (matching funds). The research institutes that Switzerland has been working with for the past fifty years in Tanzania (Ifakara Health Institute, IHI) and Ivory Coast (Centre Suisse de Recherches Scientifiques, CSRS) are included in the cooperation strategy with South Africa.

Swiss budget: CHF 6.85 (first funding period 2008-2011)
Coordination: University of Basel (Swiss Leading House)
Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (Swiss Associated Leading House)

Priority research areas:

- Public Health and Biomedicine
- Bio- and Nanotechnologies
- Human and Social Sciences

Funding instruments: to strengthen existing research partnerships, aid the formation of new scientific networks and support knowledge transfer and innovation in Switzerland and South Africa, SSAJRP implements:

- Joint Research Projects (JRPs)
For 2008-2011, 16 Joint Research Projects were selected by the SSAJRP Joint Committee out of 39 eligible proposals. There was a slight preference for Public Health & Biomedicine (8 projects) over Bio- and Nanotechnologies and Human and Social Sciences (4 projects each).
- Faculty and student exchanges (FEs & SEs)
21 exchange grants were approved in 2009; since an enlarged call for exchanges on 13 July 2009, grants can be used for purposes beyond traditional exchange such as joint workshops and conferences, joint seminars and joint summer/winter schools. Grant funding may also be used to help researchers gain greater visibility and establish contacts. Proposals for the open call are submitted on a rolling basis.

Achievements in 2009

- 16 JRPs were launched in the last quarter of 2008 and the first three quarters of 2009. These led to the creation of research teams, assembly of equipment and meetings with South African partners. The high resonance with the 2007 call for proposals is the result of top-notch research networks, the willingness of researchers to extend existing cooperation ties and to initiate new ones as well as strong interest in the designated priority research areas.
- SSAJRP exchange activities have started and are receiving increased attention by the scientific community. The introduction of further fields of eligibility for exchange grants (e.g. participation in joint workshops and conferences) has met with very positive responses and has significantly increased the number of incoming proposals.

Geographical Dispersion

- SSAJRP has worked with researchers from a wide geographical range; CH: Basel, Geneva, Lausanne, Lugano, Neuchâtel, Zurich; RSA: Cape Town, Durban, Grahamstown, Johannesburg and Pretoria.

Higher Education Partners

- CH: ETHZ, EPFL, almost all Swiss cantonal universities, university hospitals and associated research institutes; RSA: University of Cape Town, University of Stellenbosch, University of the Witwatersrand, Rhodes University, et al., South African Human Sciences Research Council.

Promotional Activities

- SSAJRP information: Exchange grant possibilities were publicised to all Swiss universities and universities of applied sciences on 22 April and on 13 July 2009 (enlarged call); projected 2010: SSAJRP exchange information tour of all Swiss universities and universities of applied sciences.
- Industry participation: To encourage public-private partnerships, the Swiss Working Group Industry/UAS Integration was formed.
- Web-outreach: An SSAJRP website was launched in May 2009, listing JRP and exchange projects and programme details (<http://internationalaffairs.unibas.ch/priority-countries/south-africa/>).
- Event presentation: BioValley Science Day in Basel, 13 October 2009; projected 2010: presentation of SSAJRP at the 14th Conference of the International Education Association of South Africa (August), University of Basel "Festival of Sciences" and BioValley Science Day 2010 (September).

Outlook

The focus in 2010 is to (1) further consolidate and expand the SSAJRP among the Swiss and South African science community, (2) to facilitate the participation of further Swiss higher research institutes, and (3) to equally support exchange activities in all priority research areas.

August 2010.

2. Bilateral Research Cooperation with Tanzania and Ivory Coast

The two well-established Swiss research institutes in Ifakara, Tanzania (Ifakara Health Institute, IHI) and Abidjan, Ivory Coast (Centre Suisse de Recherches Scientifiques CSRS) form part of Switzerland's cooperation strategy with the African Continent. As Associated Leading House for South Africa, the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (Swiss TPH) is responsible for coordinating projects with these two countries.

A. Ifakara Health Institute (IHI), Ifakara, Tanzania

Following the change of Directorate from Dr. Hassan Mshinda to Dr. Salim Abdulla in 2008, the major events in 2009 were (i) the adoption of the IHI Strategy 2008-2013 by the Board of Trustees and consistent implementation of this strategy, and (ii) additional support of IHI core funding by the "basket-funding" mechanism of the Ministry of Health. The latter is directly due to recognition of the effectiveness of IHI long-term support by the SDC and SER.

All activities of the Swiss TPH with regard to IHI were related to the main goal of promoting the development of the IHI in Ifakara, Tanzania to build its reputation as a national and international biomedical research, training and resource centre at the scientific and university level - in particular in areas of major health problems in Tanzania and the region. Activities included the following:

- Reinforcement of basic and clinical research at the IHI in the field of poverty diseases (HIV / AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria) and neglected diseases (worm disease, sleeping sickness).
- Extension of technology transfer (esp. diagnostic technologies) as part of development and validation of control technologies (vaccines and drugs) at the national level in Tanzania and partner countries.
- Strengthening of education services (MSc, PhD, special courses) and technology transfer (in particular gene chip technology in malaria, HIV, and tuberculosis).
- Development of research focus areas with the networks for intervention studies such as the European Developing Countries Clinical Trials Platform (EDCTP), African Malaria Network, Malaria Vaccine & Clinical Trials Initiatives, HIV & tuberculosis networks and HIV/AIDS, INDEPTH and INCLEN Trust.
- Strengthening of the connection / collaboration of research and implementation activities with the Swiss – South Africa bilateral programme (SSAJRP) and the CSRS, Abidjan, Ivory Coast.
- Corroboration of the role of IHI at the university level in Tanzania (University of Dar es Salaam, University College of Health Sciences, Sokoine University) and as a platform for implementation of research findings into health and social policy.

B. Centre Suisse de Recherches Scientifiques, Adiopodoumé / Abidjan, Ivory Coast

The most important event at CSRS was the change of leadership from Prof. Guéladio Cissé to Prof. Bassirou Bonfoh in June 2009. The CSRS then began consistently implementing its previously developed strategic plan. More importantly, in 2009 the Government of Ivory Coast increased its contribution to core funding for the first time (CHF 100,000 in addition to previous ca. CHF 250,000 for material resources and personnel, to be maintained in the following years).

All activities of the CSRS were related to strengthening its role as a knowledge and resource centre in the national, regional (Africa) and international network of scientific excellence, along with the corroboration of knowledge transfer within the North-South partnership for the benefit of universities in Africa and Switzerland (linking of competence centers of ETHZ, EPFL and cantonal universities). The following components of this partnership were addressed in 2009:

- Reinforcement of fundamental and applied research at CSRS in four recognised research areas (i) conservation and biodiversity, (ii) nutrition and food security, (iii) parasitic diseases, and (iv) urbanisation.
- Continuation and underpinning CSRS' role as a regional center (West Africa) in the context of Swiss National Science Foundation priority programs (NCCR 14, "North-South").
- Strengthening of education services (MSc, PhD, special courses) and technology transfer (especially molecular biology techniques) in the context of joint research projects.
- Development of research focus areas with regional research networks, particularly ecosystem research of the IDRC, INDEPTH, African Malaria Network and CGIAR.

- Strengthening of the connection / collaboration of research and implementation activities with the bilateral programme between Switzerland and South Africa (SSAJRP) and the IHI, Ifakara, Tanzania.
- Corroboration of the CSRS in its national and international role as a knowledge and resource center (four research axes) and at the university level in Côte d'Ivoire (Université de Cocody, Abobo Adjamé Université, Université de Bouaké).

August 2010