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# From extra-mural to knowledge transfer partnerships and networking: The community engagement experience at Makerere University

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George Ladaah Openjuru and John Robert Ikoja-Odongo

## Introduction

Community engagement/services, outreach activities or extra-mural services are a core function of all universities. According to Atim (2004), the history of these services in Makerere University dates back to 1953 with the formation of the Department of Extra-Mural Studies to help prepare the country for independence. This combination of services remains a core function but is now one of the strategic goals and objectives of the university, based on its vision and mission (Makerere University, 2008a). Makerere University is unusual in that it can demonstrate some university-wide strategies and structures to promote this work.

The university's strategic goals and objectives for the next ten years are premised on its core functions of teaching and learning; research and innovation; and knowledge transfer partnership and networking. The latter discourse – originally known as 'outreach' (Makerere University, 2008a) – is shifting further to the concept of university–community engagement in place of the old extra-mural outreach paradigm. This shift was brought about by the realisation that just as knowledge, technology and skills reside in universities, so public and private sectors also command knowledge bases from which the university can learn and leverage its entrepreneurial and innovative capability. Knowledge production and transfer between universities and the broader

public and private sector is a two-way traffic that calls for the development and fostering of a symbiotic relationship. Knowledge-transfer partnership is a tool that offers an edge to public- and private-sector relationships in this new global and competitive economy. The aim of this chapter is to provide information about what Makerere University is doing by way of community engagement under this new knowledge-transfer partnership paradigm.

The chapter provides examples of the existing structures used to deliver community programmes by the different academic units and the types of community engagement activities, approaches and methods being used to deliver the programmes. The chapter highlights how, in the new arrangement, the private sector and collaborating communities are seen as knowledge recipients as well as knowledge generators (Makerere University, 2009) and act as equal partners with the university. Major achievements in outreach/community activities and their challenges are also outlined. The chapter concludes with a call for a more innovative and comprehensive approach that cleverly integrates the three core focuses of the university in term of research, teaching and community engagement. There is also a need for diversification of university engagement activities to meet the most pressing learning and development needs of the communities served by the university.

### **Different understandings of university community engagement activities**

University community engagement programmes are perceived in many different ways. Some universities call them extension services. The term ‘outreach’ is still popular among higher education institutions in the USA. For instance, according to Michigan University:

*Outreach is a form of scholarship that cuts across teaching, research, and service. It involves generating, transmitting, applying, and preserving knowledge for the direct benefit of external audiences in ways that are consistent with university and unit missions.* (Provost Committee on University Outreach, 2009, p. 1)

This shows that the primary focus of all engagement activities is the deployment of university scholarly resources for the benefit of communities outside the university. These manifest themselves in a number of forms such as research projects, extra-mural training and educational programmes, online

courses, innovative community development projects and action research projects.

The University of Washington applies community engagement to continuing education and professional development in its local communities by providing opportunities such as online learning for non-traditional students, most of whom are working adults. The service runs programmes and partnerships that include offering free course materials over the internet (such as class outlines, lecture notes and handouts) and evening undergraduate programmes (University of Washington, 2010).

The University of Oklahoma offers non-traditional learning through independent study or students attending concentrated weekend or evening classes. Its community engagement mission is, 'The University of Oklahoma is a lifelong learning organisation dedicated to helping individuals, businesses, groups and communities transform themselves through knowledge' (University of Oklahoma, 2010, last paragraph).

At the University of Tennessee, engagement and continuing education services and programmes address the various lifelong learning needs of its students (The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 2010). As a development of these initiatives, community engagement programmes at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas include support of and partnership with communities, state regions and beyond. This serves learner needs and interests through innovative courses and comprehensive programmes and services to adults, senior and part-time students, military personnel, government employees, and learners who are unable to attend traditional campus-based credit courses and programmes (University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 2010).

Kentucky State University states that it offers educational community engagement programmes that strive to reach, teach and inspire members of its community in order to enhance knowledge and relationships between itself and the wider population (Kentucky State University, 2010).

One common factor in the definition of university community engagement is that it is about serving the communities outside the university through continuing education, research projects or other community intervention schemes. This brief review of universities in the USA gives a flavour of the variety of activities undertaken and will accordingly inform our discussion in this chapter.

## The community engagement experience at Makerere University

Community engagement is an important function of a university, and universities engage on the understanding that they:

- Have no monopoly on knowledge and knowledge creation and use
- Acknowledge that a wealth of knowledge resides with communities
- Acknowledge that the ultimate beneficiary of what goes on in universities is actually the community
- Run the risk of becoming irrelevant in their society if they do not maintain the engagement arm of their institutions.

For that reason, there is need for a symbiotic relationship between universities and the communities they serve (Aguti, 2010).

### **The traditional engagement and extra-mural programmes at Makerere University**

In 1953, the Department of Extra-Mural Studies at Makerere University was founded to serve the whole of the then three East African countries of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Although the name has changed several times, the department continued with its traditional programmes that reflect ‘Taking the university to the people and bringing the people to the university’ (Sicherman, 2005, p. 298). Such programmes offered extended training opportunities to non-traditional learners through short courses. However, the department has evolved into the Department of Community Education and Extra-Mural Studies (CEEMS), and its traditional programmes are now primarily the mandate of the Centre for Lifelong Learning in the College of Education and External Studies.

The current short courses focus on training and capacity-building workshops throughout the country. These are conducted through a network of nine regional learning centres. The workshops are meant to improve performance in decentralised service delivery for local governments. For example, with support from development partners, the department organises workshops on new adult and community education methods for staff from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and government departments that are promoting adult literacy education (Okech, 2004).

There is also now a Department of Open and Distance Learning in the School of Distance and Lifelong Learning which runs three degree programmes

through distance education. These are Bachelor of Commerce, Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Science. The department also runs the Commonwealth Diploma in Youth Development Work through which learners are able to access university education without the need for a full-time stay at the university.

In addition to these courses and programmes, however, community engagement is increasingly a feature of work across the university, as the next section outlines.

### **The current direction for community engagement at Makerere University**

Makerere University's engagement approach is enshrined in its mission statement, which says that the university aims 'to provide innovative teaching, learning, research and services responsive to national and global needs' (Makerere University, 2008a, p. 2). This mission brings together all the university core functions in order to ensure that the university interacts with the community for mutual benefit.

The overarching direction in the university's *Strategic Plan 2008/09–2018/19* is to reposition 'Makerere University to meet emerging socio economic challenges.' And one of the strategic directions is 'knowledge transfer partnerships' (*ibid.*, p. 14). This is meant to enhance the capacity of the university to link with and service community, private and public sectors as well as other tertiary institutions (Makerere University, 2009). This strategy is based on two broad goals, namely: 'creating an enabling environment for the public and private sector to interface with the university in the promotion of education in a competitive setting' and 'providing a partnership framework for assessment and utilisation of university products in the value chain' (Makerere University, 2008a, p. 18). The first goal is serviced by the following objectives, strategies and key performance indicators (*ibid.*).

#### Objectives:

- To increase private-sector participation in university activities
- To promote increased joint research, technology innovation and transfer initiatives to address stakeholder needs
- To establish a partnership for the public and the private sector utilisation of university competencies.

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Strategies to realise these objectives:

- Involve stakeholders in the development of the university policy agenda
- Establish collaborations and networking with public- and private-sector institutions
- Create research and technology innovation and incubation business centres and model villages.

Key performance indicators to measure success:

- Number of joint projects established with the private sector
- Number of operational business and technology innovations incubation centres established
- Number of study scholarships provided by the private sector.

Strategies to establish a partnership for the public and private sector to utilise university competencies:

- Involve the public and private sectors in the development of the university curriculum
- Involve stakeholders in planning supervision and evaluation of the students on field attachments
- Create a resource pool of university expertise for the public and private sector to utilise.

## Community engagement in university schools and colleges

In line with the strategic plan, Makerere University's various colleges, schools and institutes are part of its community engagement activities.

From 2005, many faculties and colleges started running short courses for the public on campus. For example, the Faculty of Computing and Information Technology (FCIT) conducts a number of computer training programmes aimed at equipping non-university students with computing and ICT skills. These include training military and police personnel and out-of-school youths. FCIT runs a 24-hour study programme which has significantly increased access by non-traditional learners. As a follow-up, it is establishing several IT academies for schoolchildren. So far, 15 primary and secondary schools have been set up to cater for the training needs of universal primary and secondary education (Makerere University, 2010). Other faculties are running evening and weekend training programmes for both university and non-university students.

All community engagement activities since 2008 have been guided by research, innovations, the knowledge-transfer partnerships and networking strategic focus. Some of these activities form a tripartite relationship between Makerere University, international development partners and the communities (Okech, 2004). Under this arrangement, the university raises winning grant proposals that are supported by development partners. In the years 2008–10, for instance, the university received research-grant support from the governments of Sweden and Norway, Japan International Cooperation Agency, Carnegie Corporation of New York, World Bank, Danish International Development Agency and United States Agency for International Development/Collaborative Research Support Programmes. These were all for funded research projects in the College of Health Science and the Faculty of Technology in which the tripartite partnership between Makerere University, international development partners and the local communities is visible.

The Faculty of Technology is working with different communities in Uganda to come up with alternative fuel-efficient and environmentally friendly energy sources for rural communities (Makerere University, 2009).

The College of Health Science has focused research on areas such as improving newborn health and survival through community-based intervention linked to health facilities in Mayuge and Iganga Districts. Mayuge and Iganga are located in the eastern part of Uganda, are largely rural and are made up of poor peasant farmers growing maize, millet, sorghum and other food crops. Education to prevent infant mortality is a key concern for such impoverished communities. The College of Health Science is also active in the fight against malaria by providing the anti-malaria drug, Coartem, and contributes to the fight against HIV/AIDS through the provision of free antiretroviral drugs, and HIV and AIDS test kits.

There are several ways in which other parts of the university contribute to the university mission by working in partnership with communities, NGOs and the private sector.

Under the knowledge-transfer concept, faculties are working in districts and sites around the country to develop new methods of production and technologies to improve the productivity of the Uganda farming communities. The Faculty of Agriculture, for instance, is working with farmer groups to demonstrate and extend appropriate pig-production strategies as an avenue for alleviating poverty among resource-poor farming households. The faculty

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also carries out research in Ankole cattle to develop appropriate technology for intensive goat and cattle meat production with a view to producing quality meat for local and export markets.

Another good example of a partnership is the collaboration between the faculty and Kakira Sugar Works, Dairy Development Authority and Kakira Outgrowers Rural Development Fund. This has focused on development of molasses urea blocks with local feedstuff for improved cattle productivity in the dairy farming communities in Busoga Region and Mukono District. Through this project, the dairy farmers have been linked to the agro-processing industries to improve the nutrition of their dairy livestock (Makerere University, 2009).

Other examples since 2008 include the improvement of energy efficiency and environmental conservation at Mpanga Growers Tea Factory, promotion of food security and livelihoods in Pader and Gulu Districts (all in the northern part of Uganda), and animal and human trypanosomes in four districts in northern Uganda through treatment and follow-up surveillance.

The Faculty of Social Science, in collaboration with Wakiso District Local Council in central Uganda, near Kampala, has formulated a community-based wetland management plan under the Wetlands Inspection Division. Faculty staff participate in a number of committees that formulate government policy. The Department of Women and Gender Studies uses telecentres in Iganga and Mbale Districts in eastern Uganda and Kanungu District in western Uganda to train people in networking (Makerere University, 2009).

The Margaret Trowel School of Industrial and Fine Arts is involved with women with HIV/AIDs from three up-country stations and imparts new skills through arts and crafts. The women's works of art are exhibited both locally and internationally. The school organises workshops to revitalise bark-cloth making in rural communities of Buganda.

The Faculty of Forestry and Nature Conservation is working with communities near forests to raise alternative crops that are not eaten by monkeys and that also provide fast-maturing seeds which farmers grow and sell in order to alleviate poverty. Training farmers in deterring monkeys is another feature of this project. The faculty is also active in forestry regeneration, which entails planting seedlings, researching the best areas for tropical rainforests, wildlife conservation, the study of primates and their effects on people, and fighting

the effects of logging on wildlife. It is doing this in Budongo forest in Masindi District in mid-western Uganda.

The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine provides consultancy and support to the community through:

- A small animal clinic, for both teaching and patient care
- A large animal mobile clinic that serves a 40 km radius
- An artificial insemination sub-centre and breeding consultancy
- Short courses and seminars for animal farmers and extension workers.

An example from the East African School of Library and Information Science includes training both professionals and non-professionals in various areas of new knowledge in libraries and information management.

Staff from the Main Library Services Department go out to train school librarians in their settings and help them to organise their libraries. The libraries also develop databases that are shared with other institutions.

The Faculty of Law operates a refugee law project which seeks to ensure fundamental human rights for all asylum seekers, refugees and internally displaced persons within Uganda. It envisions a country that treats all people within its borders with the same standards of respect and social justice. It works to see that all people living in Uganda, as specified under national and international law, are treated with the fairness and consideration due to fellow human beings. This project has a fully operational office outside the campus, complete with its own management structure (Refugee Law Project, 2010). Through this organisation, the faculty provides support to a number of refugees coming across the borders of Uganda. For example, it provides language education and helps to resettle refugees in the country.

At the School of Distance and Lifelong Learning, a number of action research projects with communities are operating in addition to the traditional provision. One of these outstanding projects addresses the problem of youth employability and entrepreneurship. It aims to train young people in applying successfully for a job or going into self-employment by establishing an enterprise. Other projects focus on improving the participation of parents and communities in the performance of their children in universal primary education programmes (Makerere University, 2010).

## University-wide structures for partnership and networking

The university has interpreted its engagement mission to interface with its wider community and region in a very proactive way. This section provides examples of a number of structures that have been established specifically to facilitate the growth of university partnerships and networking opportunities at university-wide level.

### ***The Innovation at Makerere project***

The Innovation at Makerere project (codenamed I@mak) was established to develop local long courses (undergraduate and full-time Master's); an internship programme; short courses; support for research on decentralisation; and curriculum development (Ogeda and Nakabugo, 2006, p. ii).

Following these objectives, a number of projects were implemented by different faculties, schools and institutes at Makerere University. It was therefore a university-wide project. According to the assessment report (Ogeda and Nakabugo, 2006), the specific objective of the programme was to improve decentralised service delivery to contribute to poverty reduction through the improvement of agriculture, health, education, governance and financial management.

The university has produced a number of publications for use by both academics and practitioners involved in service delivery in a decentralised system. These include: *Frequently Asked Questions on Decentralisation in Uganda*; *Handbook on Decentralisation in Uganda*; *Decentralisation and Transformation in Uganda*; *Psychiatry for Primary Health Care in Uganda*; *Teaching Mental Health in the Districts*; and *Agro Forestry Approach to Land Use: A Training Manual for Extension Agents*. This was a university-wide multidisciplinary project managed by the university's Institute of Social Research. Different schools and faculties collaborated to run community engagement projects under the common theme of I@mak.

Higher education institutions are well placed to offer sustainable capacity building and provide a continuum of activities including research, skill building, career development and curriculum reviews that are likely to outlive external-driven capacity-building interventions. The programme was mutually beneficial to both government and higher education institutions (*ibid.*, p. ii).

### **Model village**

As part of the I@mak initiative, two model villages were created – one located in Nsumba Village in Rakai District and the other in Obayia Village in Terego District in West Nile. The project produced new ideas for communities of practice meetings with the partnering local governments. Regular meetings are held to share experiences and practices in service delivery (Makerere University, 2007b; Makerere University, 2008b). This model village project, complete with a village resource centre, was implemented by a university-wide project committee known as the I@mak.com (Innovation and Makerere Committee) in collaboration with the local government district leadership.

The model village idea is one of the most unusual examples of community engagement activity by Makerere University and is based on community needs. In addition to motivating the provision of services by local government, it includes setting up agricultural sites through which local communities can be equipped with skills for self-sustainability. These skills come through agriculture, establishment of resource centres, provision of interlocking soil-stabilising brick-making machines, alternative energy technologies, provision of soil kits, training of extension staff and peer farmers on the use and supply of improved seeds, and training village members on improved sanitation options.

The model village concept mobilises local communities into productive working groups. To explain some of the above skills in more detail, agricultural demonstration sites are set up, for instance, and appropriate plant varieties are introduced. With technologies developed from the university, the communities are trained in constructing water-harvesting tanks, and alternative energy technologies. Through the village, local people are trained in the skills of constructing latrines and as a result the majority of surrounding homesteads have developed further sanitation facilities following the model village examples (Makerere University, 2009). The idea of a model village is an effective way of bringing about change in the lives of rural people.

### **Makerere University private sector forum**

The objective of the global Smart Partnership movement is to promote socio-economic transformation. The university-wide Makerere University Private Sector Forum (MUPSF) was set up in response to the Africa-wide Smart Partnership Dialogue to work as a cross-sector forum that brings together the public and private sectors and the university to address issues of mutual concern. Within the university, the Academia Network Committee provides the

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university-wide committee structure that works with MUPSF. Through this arrangement, the private sector is brought into close collaboration with the university (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2009).

Through MUPSF, the university is stimulating the private sector's active participation in university activities and policy agendas, and the promotion of education and access of the private/public sector to university services. A Smart Partnership Dialogue Think Tank, established in July 2009, is charged with identifying the type of knowledge that can be transferred between the university and the community (Makerere University, 2010).

### ***Research management and coordination system***

In an effort to make research accessible to the wider community in Uganda and internationally, the university has developed a Research Management and Coordination System (RMACS). Through this endeavour, stakeholders, the general public and the international community are rapidly informed about the research activities and outputs from Makerere University.

### ***The Triple Helix Intervention***

Makerere University's Triple Helix Intervention brings together actors from government, academia and the private sector to find innovative solutions to problems faced by businesses in order to improve performance and profitability and make business more competitive locally and globally. To date, 22 cluster initiatives have been launched in the areas of agriculture and food value additions, manufacturing, management consultancy, ICT and education. The Uganda Gatsby Trust (UGT), based in the Faculty of Technology, is a good example of such an initiative and has established the first industrial parks in Jinja and Mbarara. These parks are aimed at improving the performance of small and medium enterprises. The government is now working with UGT to execute its industrial programme. The Department of Food Science also contributes to the Triple Helix Intervention by training entrepreneurs in food processing.

### ***Gender mainstreaming***

The university has established two schemes to support women and girls, who are statistically underrepresented at secondary and tertiary levels of education.

The first is a Female Scholarship Initiative (FSI) run through the gender mainstreaming division. The aim is to provide financial support for girls from poor families so that they can access higher education at Makerere University. This

scheme has proved successful in increasing access, and more than 690 girls have benefited. In addition to the scholarship support, all the FSI beneficiaries undergo mentoring in building self-esteem, gender, leadership, entrepreneurship and job-seeking skills. This mentoring has contributed to the quality of the FSI graduates.

The second scheme relates to a national policy to enhance female education opportunities. In the 1990–1 academic year, the university introduced a strategy of adding 1.5 points to the entry grades for every girl aspiring to higher education at Makerere University. This strategy has been adopted by the government and has enabled an increase in the number of girls entering all institutions of higher learning across the country.

### **Field attachments**

A field attachment system was approved by Senate in July 2006 to provide students with hands-on work experience in their discipline. This is now a major component in many academic programmes at Makerere University. The university has written guidelines for field attachment, with a useful feedback loop to improve the curriculum. There are several models of implementation, such as school practice for teachers and internship for medical students. The importance of field attachments in university training and as an engagement function cannot be disputed (see Northern Illinois University, 2005) but the arrangements do not necessarily reflect the more formalised service learning approach such as that described in chapter 11. In service learning students are assessed, as part of their course work, on their own identified learning from the experience. Nevertheless, all stakeholders in university education recognise the valuable contribution that field attachments make to the quality of training and the immediate support they provide to the communities outside the university. As a result, many programmes include compulsory field attachments.

Field attachments at Makerere University have been known by different names in different faculties, such as internship, school practice, community-based education and services (COBES), and industrial training. After several consultations with various stakeholders, the university adopted ‘field attachment’ as the official name for this educational practice.

One of the primary objectives of field attachment is to enhance and strengthen links between the university and stakeholders. Through this arrangement, partners have an opportunity to be involved in the training and review of programmes at the university while the university is better able to appreciate

client demands and the quality of graduate required to fulfil these demands (Makerere University, 2007a). Empirical studies into the outcomes and effectiveness of these programmes are limited since the schemes are relatively new. Nevertheless, the following section highlights some of the anecdotal and informal observations that will need to inform future studies.

## **Challenges of university engagement programmes**

While Makerere University has taken some unusually positive steps to embed community engagement within its infrastructure, there are a number of challenges when it comes to implementation. The greatest of all these challenges is lack of funding. The bulk of the funding for university engagement has been from the government but this support is slowly disappearing (Atim, 2004). The university now depends almost exclusively on donor support from development partners and locally generated funds.

Another challenge is that there are no clear objectives for encouraging engagement and no comprehensive guidelines for operating the wide range of activities outlined above. This can result in duplication, wasted efforts and lack of coordination. For example, the provision of short courses is duplicated by different faculties that offer the same course under the name of the same university.

Furthermore, not enough is being done to increase access to university credit-based education even though this is what the engaged agencies and communities most desire. People want access to standard university courses and to be able to obtain credit towards degrees on a part-time and distance basis without having to leave their work or home responsibilities.

An additional issue is the unevenness with which community engagement operates across the university. Most of the research-related activities, for instance, operate from science-based faculties and largely from the Faculty of Agriculture. This means that equally crucial issues such as good governance and management are not being addressed by the university through community engagement.

Finally, the charging of fees for some of the non-credit courses for non-university students tends to exclude many people who could benefit from these engagement activities.

## Conclusion

This review of examples of university engagement activities indicates that engagement is a very important function of Makerere University, which it executes in a number of ways: collaborative research projects; direct community intervention services; field attachments; continuing education; and flexible programmes such as distance-learning evening and weekend programmes both on and off-campus. It is through community engagement that the university can improve its teaching and learning in terms of curricula that are immediately relevant to the needs of the community.

However, there is not enough public or private support for the implementation of the important community engagement functions of the university. Even within traditional university community engagement units, it is treated as a secondary role in spite of being listed as a core function.

This position will need to be changed by more direct policy interventions at senior management level. One of the changes that can be made is through a curricular integration of community engagement functions into the normal or regular teaching and learning functions of the university. Curriculum delivery should be that which naturally utilises and promotes community/university coexistence whereas current practice is that the two are separate. A positive trend has started, however, in the form of compulsory field attachment for all university programmes.

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