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Sida Review

Björn Lundgren

SCIENTIFIC EVALUATION OF THE LAKE VICTORIA RESEARCH INITIATIVE (VicRes)

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Foreword

This evaluation was carried out in January and February 2008 in the three east African countries bordering Lake Victoria, i.e. Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya. The post-election disturbances in Kenya partly affected the work in that country, but much less than originally feared. I could visit Egerton University in Rift Valley and Maseno University in Nyanza, the two regions hardest hit by the violence, without any major problems (the only one being that all staff had not yet returned to the institutions). The only planned visit that was cancelled was to Moi University in Eldoret, which was still kept close at the time of my visit to Kenya. Thus, on the whole, the evaluation could be carried out as planned (see *Appendix 2* for itinerary and visits).

My work was very well planned and supported by the VicRes Secretariat and I had the fortune of travelling to all the institutions I visited with the VicRes coordinator, *Prof. Zadoc Ogutu*. This gave me many very valuable opportunities to access information, views and opinions from the person who has committed an enormous amount of time and energy to ensure the successful leadership and guidance of the VicRes programme since its inception in 2003. Many thanks to Zadoc and to his colleagues at the Secretariat in Kampala, *Dr. Charles Sokile* and *Ms. Nightingale Mirembe Senoga*. I also owe thanks to *Prof. Chacha Nyaigotti-Chacha*, Executive Secretary of VicRes' host institution IUCEA, with whom I had two very constructive and useful meetings.

During my visits and meetings at ten different universities and other institutions in East Africa I talked to close to one hundred scientists and research leaders involved with VicRes in different capacities. All very openly shared their experiences and views, positive and critical, with me, for which I am very grateful (see list of people met in *Appendix 3*). A lasting impression I got from all these meetings is of a genuine commitment to, interest and, even, pride in VicRes among those involved.

Also in Sweden, I have had a very good feed-back of views and ideas, e.g. from IFS, BUP and, not least, from the person responsible for the programme at Sida/SAREC, *Dr. Claes Kjellstrom*.

The overall observation I can make after having met people, visited institutions and read a considerable number of reports of various kinds, is that VicRes is a very well functioning programme. The problems and shortcomings that, inevitably, are also found are not of a serious nature and, most importantly, the VicRes coordinator is well aware of them and working on their solutions. The impact of the programme is just starting to emerge in the form of strengthened institutions, better scientists and products/results that will have an impact on peoples' wellbeing and on the environment in the Lake Victoria Basin. Given these observations, and the fact that the Secretariat is already overworked, I have not seen it as my task to add further work by going into detailed recommendations on things that should be added to the programme or things that can be made in more complicated ways than today (a too common feature of many evaluations!), but rather to endorsing what is working well and lending my support to those ideas and suggestions which I feel are relevant and viable coming out of the programme. Naturally, I have also pointed out problems and things that need to be addressed, and I have added a few suggestions of my own, but hopefully these are in line with what the programme already is aiming for.

Summary Conclusions and Recommendations

On Sida's overall goals (pp. 21–23):

Wherever relevant and possible to influence them, VicRes is doing quite well or very well on issues related to Sida's overall goals on *poverty alleviation, gender, environment* and *HIV/AIDS*.

- In my view, it is sufficient to keep up the promotion and profile of these issues in calls for proposals, team formation and harmonisation meetings, cluster workshops, in the VicRes Newsletter, and in other fora, at the level of today (which is very high).

On general aspects of VicRes (pp. 23–25):

VicRes' focus on the Lake Victoria Basin may have some imperfections related to research relevance and institutional mandates, and its approach to awarding competitive grants and building research capacity are complex, difficult and potentially quite costly, but the programme has worked very well and resulted in an emerging network of scientists and institutions that will (and to a degree already does) contribute to developmental and environmental improvements in the LVB.

- My recommendation is that neither the geographical focus nor the mode of operation shall be significantly altered in the next few years, but that VicSec shall be given sufficient resources and independence that will enable it to continue and consolidate its work (see also comments and recommendations in *Chapter 6*).

On “research agenda” (pp. 25–27):

The use of “clusters” as a frame for defining the research agenda within the overall mandate of addressing livelihood and environmental issues in LVD is a positive and appropriate development.

- While cluster formation should be flexible enough to accommodate adaptation to changing problems, opportunities and priorities, there must also be a degree of persistence and continuity to ensure impact.
- There is also a need to be aware of a “drift” back to disciplinary definitions of clusters.
- The interdisciplinary research approach in VicRes should be maintained in spite of the costs involved – the long term value of building up a regional capacity for this type of research justifies it.

On “efficiency and relevance as a research council” (pp. 27–31):

In spite of having wider roles than a normal research council – associated with the requirement to form interdisciplinary and multi-country/institution teams – VicRes has in all quantitative and measurable respects been very successful and remarkably cost effective. However, this has been achieved as a result of an enormously hard input of work and commitment by the Secretariat and there have been hidden costs associated with it, e.g. the failure to build up a functioning database on the projects, procedures, scientists and outputs of the programme, and an increasing shortage of time to deal with day-to-day problems (associated with team formation and functioning, fund disbursement, reporting requirements being followed, publication targets being met, etc.) in the programme.

- Resources of the Secretariat and all its functions must be strengthened as a matter of urgency.

On “scientific quality” (pp. 31–33):

The number of publications produced from the projects is still quite low, but picking up. The quality of projects and the experience and accomplishments of scientists involved are very high and bode well for the quality and relevance of results eventually emerging. The use of Ph.D. and M.Sc. students in the projects is an essential component for their success.

- The VicRes programme must support the projects in the production of high quality outputs, e.g. through scientific paper writing workshops. Such supporting mechanisms may best be organised through the clusters with support and resources provided by the Secretariat.

The previously highlighted geographical imbalance in participation in the VicRes programme, with Kenya being a dominating participant in terms of numbers of supported scientists, remains. There are natural explanations to this and no reasons to assume that the imbalance is caused by any biases.

- The newly introduced rule of maximising the number of scientists/institutions participating from each country to two should be sufficient to handle this issue.

On “monitoring & evaluation” (pp. 33–34):

Monitoring and evaluation activities are enormously essential in the type of projects supported by VicRes with scientists coming together with colleagues from other disciplines, institutions, countries (often for the first time), and often working in unfamiliar sites (for most scientists coming from outside LVB). So much can go wrong and M&E visits and intensive monitoring contacts from VicSec will be a great support, both in ensuring the implementation of the projects and in building the teams.

- Clusters may contribute to the quality of the M&E, and there is a great need to back up and ensure the long-term relevance and efficiency of the M&E by building up a project database at VicSec.

On “information and communication” (pp. 34–36):

The strategies and plans for dissemination of results and information from the programme and the individual projects are very ambitious and target all relevant user groups – scientists, local communities and decision makers. So far, and quite naturally in view of the limited time the programme has operated, it is mainly the scientific community within the VicRes network and, increasingly, outside, that has benefited from information from the projects.

- When projects increasingly will target user groups outside the scientific community, it will be essential that VicRes has a strategy for how to provide effective assistance in this, e.g. through the clusters. This support must be extended beyond the funding time frame of the individual projects.

On “impact of programme” (pp. 36–37):

Enhancement of capacity of individual scientists and their institutions, as well as within the teams and networks making up the VicRes programme, are the most obvious impacts of the programme so far. There are many results and “products” in the pipe-line, many of which have already attracted initial attention and interest of farmers, communities, entrepreneurs and other institutions and businesses.

- Again, it will be essential that VicRes takes on a significant responsibility in ensuring that the outcomes of projects supported by it have an impact. This will require involvement with products and results long beyond the conclusion of individual projects.

On the “medium-term (2009–2012) future” (pp. 37–40):

The proposals in the two documents, the draft “Phase III proposal” and the draft second version of the “Management Policy and Operations Manual” are basically sound and can well serve as a basis for the coming four years of continued collaboration between IUCEA/VicRes and Sida/SAREC, and as a guideline for the operations of the programme, respectively. The suggested emphases and the stated main and specific objectives are very well stated. My added recommendations are:

- After some polishing of details, accept these documents as the bases for VicRes funding and operations in the period 2009–2012;

- Consider a change of the suggested new governance structure into one Steering Committee (or Board) with a higher degree of autonomy and executive power regarding programme priorities and financial affairs than the current committee structure has; the Technical/Scientific committee (VicAc) should be a sub-committee of the VSC;
- Highest priority should be given to the strengthening of the Secretariat, both by recruitment of the suggested three new positions proposed, and by building up a *VicRes Information and Documentation Centre (IDC)*.

On the “longer-term future (beyond 2012)” (pp. 40–41):

VicRes and its stakeholders must use the next four years to enter into discussions about the long-term vision, strategy and goals of VicRes, not least on what type of organisation it aims at becoming after three phases of short-term donor funding as a dependent project without a legal status of its own and hosted by an institution that neither has the same geographic nor operational mandate as VicRes.

- Particularly, I recommend that the questions of what type of organisation VicRes should be (its vision), its institutional “home”, and what its long-term sustainable funding base should be are seriously addressed. It might be appropriate to start these processes soon and to organise a “*the future of VicRes consultative workshop*” sometime towards the middle of the next phase (i.e. late 2010 or early 2011).

1. This Evaluation

1.1 Purpose and Scope

This is the second evaluation of the Lake Victoria Research Initiative (VicRes). It was done when less than one year remained of Phase II (2006–2008) in preparation for phase III (assumed to start on 1st January 2009 and to last for four years until December 2012).

The first review, done by Sinclair Mantell three years ago (in early 2005) in preparation for Phase II, was called a “management and systems audit” and had somewhat different terms-of-reference to the current review, mainly because few results had yet emerged from the programme which had then only been operational for two years. The major component of the Mantell audit was to carry out a *“review of the VicRes programme cost effectiveness, its administration, and the flow of funds from the Secretariat to the grantees and recipient organisations, as well as the administration and the flow of funds within the beneficiary institutions and organisations”*. The audit also concentrated on recommendations on how best the activities of VicRes could be improved in the future. Many of these recommendations were incorporated in VicRes Phase II Document and are currently implemented.

In contrast to the broader and more administrative/organisational scope of Mantell’s audit, this is termed a “scientific evaluation” – the full terms-of-reference are found in *Appendix 1*. Apart from looking at how VicRes relates to Sida’s overall development cooperation goals, and discussing some general aspects related to the idea, context and vision of VicRes as a regional research council type of mechanism, the evaluation shall particularly assess and discuss:

- the research agenda,
- the grant giving mechanism,
- the quantity of publications as well as the scientific quality,
- dissemination of research results, monitoring and methods of measuring results,
- impact at local, national and regional level, and,
- institutional capacity building.

Based on these assessments, the evaluation shall provide recommendations on how to improve the performance of VicRes. After the ToRs were drawn up, but while the evaluation was still in progress, the VicRes Secretariat produced a draft document outlining the suggested third phase of the programme (2009–2012) for submission to Sida/SAREC later this spring. An analysis of this document and the proposals in it were added to the review.

Finally, it is important to mention that parallel to this review an “organisational review” of VicRes, Bio-Earn and IUCEA, and the interrelation between the three, was carried out by Mohamed Salih and Arne Svensson of Professional Management AB on behalf of Sida/SAREC. The purposes of that review were to:

- identify and verify the workability of the current decision-making powers, structures and mechanisms which govern the relationship between IUCEA and Bio-Earn on one hand and IUCEA and VicRes on the other, as well as the relations between and among these three and their wider networks;
- review the role and functions of the Advisory Committees vis-à-vis IUCEA governing and executive organs;

- assess the quality of coordination between the VicRes and Bio-Earn programmes – and with IUCEA; and,
- propose, where necessary, revision of the Agreements between Sida and IUCEA.

A draft version of their report has been available when writing my current report. Inevitably, some of my comments on “scientific quality” will touch upon some programme organisational issues when they have an obvious impact on the efficiency and quality of research, but I have not seen any contradictions in our views and conclusions.

1.2 The Way the Evaluation was Carried Out

The review was carried out during the period January to early March 2008. I made two trips to East Africa, the first one to Uganda (13–20/1) and Tanzania (20–26/1), and the second one to Kenya (9–22/2). During these trips I visited several universities and other institutions involved with the VicRes programme and talked to a large number of researchers and university leaders. In *Appendix 2* my itinerary and meetings are shown and in *Appendix 3* are listed all the people I have consulted or interviewed in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Sweden. In all, I visited seven universities in the region plus IUCEA, VicRes and Bio-Earn in Kampala, COSTECH in Dar es Salaam, and the Swedish Embassy and ICRAF in Nairobi. In Stockholm I visited Sida and IFS, and talked to a number of people on the phone.

I had the opportunity to meet with, or otherwise talk to, close to one hundred people involved with the VicRes programme in one way or the other – at the VicRes/IUCEA Secretariat (9), VicSac/VicPac members (6), scientists involved in projects in Uganda (14), Tanzania (16) and Kenya (34), and others (16). The scientists I met came from 20 different institutions and were involved with 44 of the 88 projects funded by VicRes in 2003–2007.

While visiting the three Kenyan Universities Kenyatta, Egerton and Maseno, I also attended “team formation” meetings conducted by the VicRes coordinator with c. 80 attendants at KU, 22 at Egerton and 15 at Maseno. The rather low turn-out at the latter two universities was partly a reflection of the post-election disturbances in Kenya during the review period – they are situated in areas affected and people had not yet returned.

I have also read all key documents produced on the programme – Annual Reports, reports from Annual Forums, Phases I, II and III documents, internal and external reviews, management manuals, and other relevant documents (see *Appendix 4*).

Finally, out of the 44 projects that I met active scientists from, I selected 14 for a closer scrutiny of project documents, reviewers’ comments, monitoring and evaluation reports, scientific outputs, and other relevant documentation that enabled me to make an assessment of the scientific quality and outputs. In *Table 1* below is shown from what clusters and years those projects come. The actual topics of the 44 projects and the 14 chosen ones are shown in *Appendix 5*.

Table 1. Projects selected for more in-depth analysis.

Cluster/year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total
Pollution/heavy metals	1	1				2
Ethnobotany/indigenous knowledge	1	1	1	1		4
Aquaculture/fisheries	1				1	2
Natural resources management/planning		2	1			3
Land use options		1	1		1	3
Total	3	5	3	1	2	14

Although neither the people I have met nor the projects I have looked more carefully at represent statistically valid random samples, on which I can draw any quantitative conclusions, I feel confident that I have a reasonable basis for evaluating the quality of VicRes' work and the research it is supporting.

1.3 Structure and Contents of the Report

Following a rather extensive background description of VicRes in *Chapter 2* – the aim being that people who read this evaluation without prior knowledge of the programme shall not need to extensively consult other reports and documents – the structure of this report basically follows the Terms-of-Reference. Thus, there are three chapters, one focussing on how VicRes satisfies Sida's overall goals (*Chapter 3*), one an analysis of some general aspects of the programme (*Chapter 4*), and one a rather in-depth evaluation of various aspects related to the quality and efficiency of the work programme and processes (*Chapter 5*). In a final *Chapter 6*, some future aspects of VicRes' work, procedures, institutional role, etc., are discussed against a background of the findings of the evaluation and the future plans expressed by VicRes itself in the Phase III document and in the revised "Management Policy and Operations Manual".

2. The Lake Victoria Research Initiative (VicRes)

2.1 Background

With its 68,800 km² surface area, Lake Victoria is the second largest freshwater lake in the world. The total area of the basin draining into the lake is around 180,950 km², shared between five countries – Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. Almost one third (equalling around 30 million people) of the total population in the three countries sharing the lake itself (Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania) live in the Basin. The boundaries of the LVB are shown in *Figure 1* below, and some basic geographical information is given in *Table 2*.

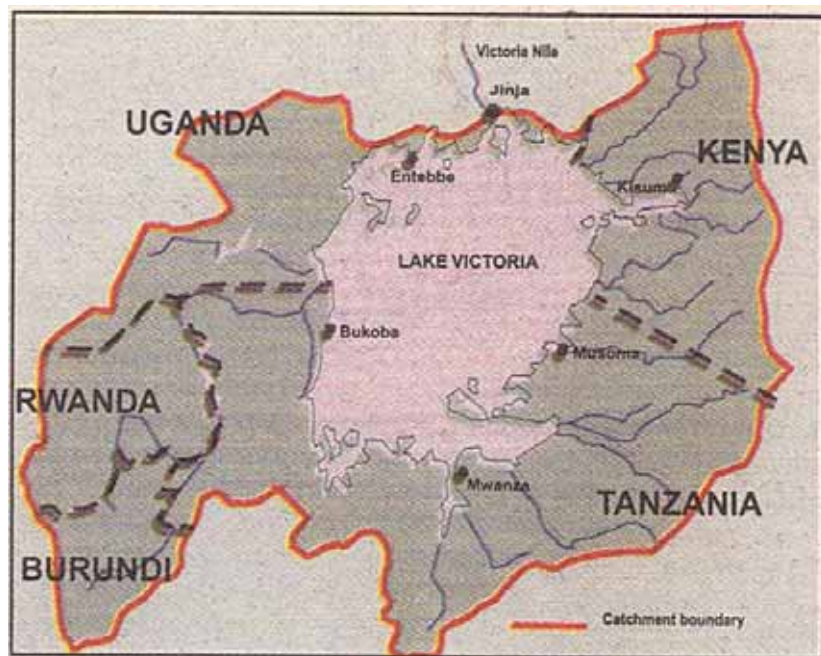
Table 2. Some geographic figures on LVB (from the EAC homepage – <http://www.eac.int/lvdp/>)

Country	Lake surface Km ² (%)	Catchment area Km ² (%)	Shoreline Km (%)
Tanzania	33,756 (49)	79,570 (44)	1150 (33)
Uganda	31,001 (45)	28,857 (16)	1750 (50)
Kenya	4,113 (6)	38,913 (22)	550 (17)
Rwanda	–	20,550 (11)	–
Burundi	–	13,060 (7)	–
Total	68,870	180,950	3450

More than 80% of the populations in the LVB are engaged in agricultural production, the majority as small scale farmers and livestock owners producing maize, vegetables and cash crops such as sugar, rice, tea, coffee, cotton, milk and meat. The population has increased almost three times in the last forty years. This has caused and continues to cause a very rapid increase in pressure on the natural resources of the region. Increased erosion, with resulting increases in sediment loads reaching the lake, deforestation, soil fertility decline are some of the more serious consequences. The fish resources of the lake sustain – directly or indirectly – livelihood for about three million people engaged in subsistence, artisan and commercial fishing. Fisheries is a very important source of local nutrition and foreign exchange

earnings with an annual landed value of 300–400 million USD. At the same time the catches and income from fisheries are declining as a result of several causes – deliberate or accidental introduction of fish (Nile perch) and plant (water hyacinth) species causing serious disturbances in the ecological balance of the lake ecosystem, increased sedimentation and nutrient loads, pollution and eutrophication from increased industrial, municipal and mining activities, destruction of wetlands and loss of littoral habitats.

Figure 1: The Lake Victoria Drainage Basin



The incidence of, and mortality rates from, many serious diseases, e.g. HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, are high. Poverty is widespread in the LVB and it is estimated that more than 50% of people live below the poverty line.

However, the basin also has many resources, and opportunities to better utilise these resources for economic, social and environmental development. There is a great variety of agro-ecological conditions within the LVB which can translate into different opportunities for cropping and income diversification. The lake itself, apart from still harbouring the largest freshwater fishery resource in the world, is a source of drinking and irrigation water, it supports hydropower generation and is important for water transport in the region. All of these functions can be further improved and be made more efficient. In addition, the LVB is still, in spite of many negative trends, endowed with a variety of natural resources (biodiversity, minerals, wildlife, forests and, at least in part, fertile soils) and scenic beauty, that can form the basis for global and regional investments in fisheries, tourism, mining, water and energy, trade and industry, transport and communication, etc. The Lake is also an important regulator of local climate – most of the rainfall, for example, is generated from evaporation from the lake itself.

The LVB is a truly regional entity, with most problems, opportunities and potentials shared between the countries around it. It is therefore not surprising that the basin is a priority for the East African Community. When Rwanda and Burundi recently joined the three original countries of the EAC, the whole basin is now within its borders. The importance EAC attaches to the LVB is shown by the recent creation of the Lake Victoria Basin Commission (LVBC) and the many programmes and activities that focus on the LVB. Many development partners have also joined the community in promoting development in the lake region. The first major programme was the Lake Victoria Environment Management

Programme (LVEMP) which ran in a first phase between 1997 and 2005, aiming at generating information to guide policy decisions on sustainable management of the LVB, although it focused mainly on research on the lake ecosystem itself – studying water quality, circulation and hydrological aspects, assessing pollution and inflows, and surveying biodiversity. A phase II of LVEMP is underway since 2005. Other institutions, such as ICRAF, ACTS, IUCN and the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organisation, have also been (or are still) involved with R&D programmes in the LVB.

A major event occurred in April 2001 when the EAC signed a partnership agreement – the “Lake Victoria Development Programme” (LVDP) – with Sweden, Norway, France, the World Bank and the East African Development Bank on promotion of sustainable livelihood and natural resources in the LVB. The Swedish “component” of this partnership is the Lake Victoria Initiative (LVI), through which Sweden has committed support to the EAC countries during a period of twenty years, and with financial support of 1.5 billion SEK during the first ten years. In the current (2004–2008) strategy for this initiative, it is stated that:

“The overall aim/goal of Swedish development cooperation in the Lake Victoria region is to contribute to poverty reduction in a sustainable development framework.”

Five key areas of activity are outlined, viz.:

1. Capacity building for sustainable development
2. Empowering communities and individuals
3. Sound environment and sustainable use of natural resources
4. Combating HIV/AIDS
5. Private sector development for economic growth

Through the LVDP partnership, in which a clear understanding was expressed of the importance of research to generate knowledge required to achieve development goals, mitigate problems and realise opportunities, the EAC approached Sida for support of a research programme. Within the framework of its LVI Sida responded positively to the request and to ensure that it became an all-inclusive initiative, Sida/SAREC supported mobilisation of relevant actors for consensus building. These consultations led to a regional workshop held in Arusha in March 2002, which was attended by scientists drawn from Universities and other research institutions in the EAC countries. At the workshop, funding and operational modalities for a regional research initiative in the LVB that would contribute towards poverty reduction and environmental restoration were discussed and agreed upon.

Thus, in late 2002, the *Lake Victoria Research Initiative (VicRes)* became operational with a Regional Coordinating Office (RCO) at the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA), in Kampala. In a first phase, from Nov 2002 to Dec 2005, Sida/SAREC supported VicRes with a total of SEK 27.3 million, and in a second, on-going phase from Jan 2006 to Dec 2008, SAREC is providing support of SEK 45.4 million (plus an additional SEK 5 million as “end of the year funds” from 2007).

The programme has made rapid and steady progress since its inception – whereas in early 2005 there were 33 teams involving 146 scientists supported by VicRes, this figure had grown to 88 teams/projects (of which three were concluded) with over 400 scientists in early 2008.

2.2 Goals and Objectives

One of the more confusing, and sometimes amusing, aspects of programmes such as VicRes, where many interests are involved (e.g. Sida/SAREC, Sida/LVI, IUCEA, LVDP, the VicSec, etc.) is the way the concepts of *goals*, *objectives* and *aims* are expressed. There are many different and opposing schools of thought of how to define these terms, and establish their hierarchical relation to each other, which contribute to such confusion. The simple fact is, of course, that the words are all synonyms, although they can (and do!) often give rise to endless discussions and controversies when a programme, project or institution shall be launched.

In *most* of the documents from the Coordinating Office of VicRes, the *overall goals* of VicRes are stated as:

- to promote sustainable livelihood and natural resource management in the LVB;
- to re-invigorate research and stimulate discussions on issues affecting people (*poverty*) and environment of the LVB (*revitalization of joint regional research in poverty and environment*)

The italicised words and expressions in brackets are alternatives found in some of the documents. Likewise, in the same internal documents, the *specific objectives* of VicRes are stated as:

to enhance (*improve*) knowledge on land-human-environment interactions so as to justify interventions relevant to poverty reduction (*livelihood*) and environmental restoration (*natural resources management*);

to promote (*improve*) access to research findings (*by individuals and institutions*) in and outside the East African (*Lake Victoria*) region for effective decision-making.

These small variations in wording are nothing to worry about and, besides, the terms *overall goals* and *specific objectives* are used quite consistently in most VicRes reports and documents. The degree of confusion increases when reading Sida's "Insats-PM" for Phase II. The following direct quotes, all from the same document, highlight what I mean:

- *The aim* of VicRes is to promote and support multi disciplinary research in the Lake Victoria Region.
- *The long term goals* with VicRes are: 1. Capacity building on the managerial level, 2. Capacity building in research, 3. Produce and improve access to knowledge in areas of central importance for poverty reduction and sustainable development.
- *The aims* of VicRes is to encourage regional and multidisciplinary research that will offer practical solutions to combating poverty and environmental degradation in the Lake Victoria basin as well as to improve access to research findings by individuals and institutions in the region and beyond.
- *The main goal* with the programme is to initiate and develop capacity for regional research on common themes in the Lake Victoria basin.
- *The aim* is to produce results based on locally situated research that can contribute to the development of the region and the local community as well as reach the international scientific community.
- *A very important goal* is also to enhance the dissemination of results at various levels.

Although an institutional *vision* and *mission* are different from operational goals (or objective, or aims), they can sometimes add to the confusion by being cast in a form that implies operational goals. For example, in the VicRes Management Policy and Operations Manual of 2005 it is stated that VicRes':

- *Vision* is "to become a leading research network in East Africa", and its
- *Mission* is "to strengthen multi- and inter-disciplinary regional research through funding, capacity building and dissemination of results/findings."

In VicRes' Phase II document, it is stated that the phase is rationalised by the following three *main objectives*:

- Multi- and interdisciplinary research, to justify poverty reduction and environmental restoration interventions,
- Capacity building, through delivering of short-term courses and training of junior scientists
- Dissemination of research findings and results in and outside East Africa for effective decision-making.

Finally, in the Logframe from the same document the following statements about VicRes can be noted:

- *Goal*: To alleviate poverty and sustain the function and services of ecosystems in the LVB
- *Purpose*: To enhance the role of research in addressing local vulnerability to environmental disasters.
- *Output (Objective) 1*: To improve knowledge of land-human-environment interactions so as to justify interventions for improving the living conditions for the local population.
- *Output (Objective) 2*: To improve access to research findings by individuals and institutions in and outside the LVB.
- *Output (Objective) 3*: To enhance scientific capacity for effective implementation of VicRes.

As I said above, this kind of variation is sometimes more amusing than a cause for serious confusion and worry. A strong recommendation to once and for all agree on one wording would probably just end up in still another set of goals, aims and objectives added to the list. To me the many and partly varied statements reflect more the enthusiasm of people involved with the programme to try to achieve as much as possible. In part, they may also be a reflection of evolving and changing challenges as the programme matures. And, after all, they are all in the same field and related, i.e. the contribution of research to development (poverty reduction) and environment (sustainable natural resources management). For all I am concerned, VicRes can comfortably work with all of them as guidelines.

However, there is one potential cause for concern, not least when doing an evaluation such as this, which needs to be brought to attention. That is the issue of how the goals (or objectives/aims) of *producing development relevant results* relate to the goal of *building individual and institutional research capacity*. Which is the important one? Judging from the quotes above, they are both important in VicRes, and I am sure that posing the question to VicRes and/or to Sida/SAREC would produce the answer that they have equal weight. This is fine as long as it goes with a recognition that you very rarely can maximise the achievement of both goals in one project – there are invariably trade-offs between them. Put simply, if the main goal is to produce relevant answers (products or technologies) to address a development problem or opportunity, the most efficient way to achieve that goal might be to ask a very strong national institution (say KARI) and/or an international institution such as ICRAF to “solve” the problem. That would not lead to any significant “capacity building” since both institutions and the individual scientists involved already have that capacity. On the other hand, if your prime goal is to build the capacity of institutions and/or individuals to carry out interdisciplinary research in multi-institutional and multi-country teams, you may unnecessarily complicate the achievement of that goal by insisting on significant developmental breakthroughs in multiple locations during the first attempt to work together. It would be much easier and more efficient to bring the team together in one location to undertake intensive training combined with research under very controlled conditions on farms, in field stations and in laboratories, where the results may have absolutely no concrete impact.

I will return to this issue in some of my comments, observations and recommendations below.

2.3 Structure and Responsibilities

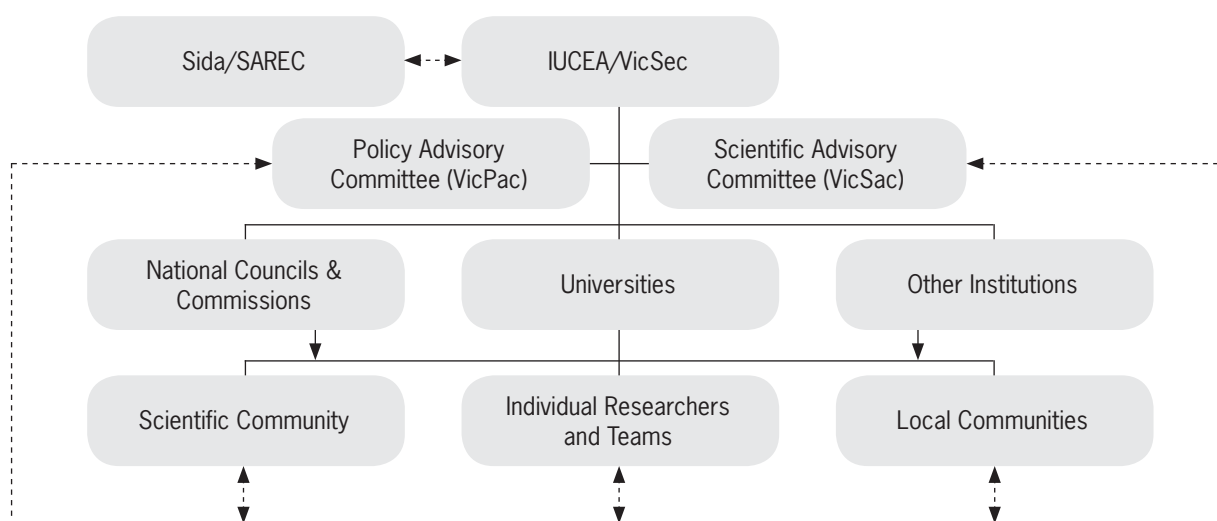
The Secretariat of the Lake Victoria Research Initiative (VicSec) is based as a project under the Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA) in Kampala Uganda. Figure 2 below depicts the organisational structure of VicRes during Phases I and II. The roles and obligations of the different actors, as described in the VicRes Management Policy and Operations Manual 2005, are summarised (and slightly edited from the original document) here:

Sida/SAREC provides, under the umbrella of Sida's Lake Victoria Initiative, funding for VicRes as per the budget approved during the beginning of a research Phase. It has no managerial responsibilities in the implementation of the day-to-day work of the programme, but is normally present as an observer at statutory meetings of the committees as well as at Annual Forums and other important events. In preparation for each new phase, SAREC initiates, and draws up (in consultation with IUCEA/VicSec) the terms-of reference for, an external and independent evaluation of VicRes, of which the current review is the second one.

IUCEA/VicSec: The contracting body with Sida/SAREC is IUCEA with VicRes being a project under IUCEA. The VicSec, based at the IUCEA HQ in Kampala, therefore reports through IUCEA. Thus, IUCEA/VicSec has the following functions and responsibilities:

- Furnish Sida/SAREC with annual budgets for administrative and research activities based on programme contract.
- Submit to Sida/SAREC biannual and annual Financial Accounting and Narrative Reports.
- Call for proposals and facilitate team building, concept harmonisation and the proposal review process.
- Disburse funds to scientists through the *host institutions*
- Enter into contracts with *host institutions* and the *individual scientist* funded by VicRes.
- Monitor individual project progress through communication with scientists and regular field visits.
- Disseminate VicRes reports and/or innovations to end-users (i.e. the public and private sectors, civil society, the scientific community etc).
- Facilitate participation of the advisory and other working committees on project activities.
- Organise Annual Project Review Meetings/Workshops at venues to be rotating among EAC Partner States.

Figure 2. VicRes organisational and operational structure



The *Policy Advisory Committee (VicPac)* members are senior scientists/ administrators drawn from IUCEA member Universities, Research Institutes, NCSTs, EAC and VicSec. Sida/SAREC will attend VicPac meetings as an observer. VicPac members are elected during the VicRes Annual General Meeting (AGM). They serve for a period of three years and are eligible for re-election except for permanent members representing statutory agencies (i.e. NCSTs/Commission and the EAC Secretariat). VicPac is, *inter alia*, responsible for:

- Overall guidance and direction of VicRes, and ensuring that VicRes is of relevance and importance to the overarching objectives of poverty reduction and environmental restoration in the LVB;
- Approve VicRes Annual Plans and Budgets before submission by IUCEA/VicSec to Sida/SAREC;
- Periodically review VicRes output to ensure compliance with the set benchmarks;
- Advise VicSec on handling structural problems and on resolving conflicts that may arise during implementation of projects;
- Review VicRes process – funding mechanism, implementation strategies and follow-up activities – each year.

Until and including 2006, VicPac was also responsible for the annual monitoring and evaluation of on-going projects. This responsibility shifted to VicSac from 2007. As of the mid-2007, VicPac members were:

Prof. Samuel Kyamanywa	Uganda
Dr. Peter Ndemere	Uganda
Prof. Yadon Kohi (since retired)	Tanzania
Prof. Jonathan Kabigumira	Tanzania
Prof. Kenneth Mavuti	Kenya
Prof. George Kingoriah	Kenya

The *Scientific Advisory Committee (VicSac)* is composed of senior scientists drawn from Universities and Research Institutes of EAC countries, the international community and IUCEA/VicSec. Sida/SAREC in consultation with VicSec appoints international observers to attend VicSac meetings. Members from EAC are elected during the VicRes AGM. They serve for a period of three years and are eligible for re-election. VicSac is, *inter alia*, responsible for:

- Selection of peer reviewers based on academic qualifications & research experience;
- Receiving and discussing peer review reports for grading and approval of projects;
- Selection of consultants to undertake specific VicRes tasks (e.g. baseline studies);
- Co-ordination of funded activities, ensuring non-duplication of research activities, and encouraging synergies between research initiatives;
- Undertaking and/or overseeing monitoring of funded projects (from 2007)
- Ensuring that VicSac policy resolutions/recommendations are considered;
- Where necessary, to advice on study approach, work-plan, budget etc.

As of mid-2007, VicSac members were:

Prof. Edward Kirumira	Uganda
Prof. Joseph Obua	Uganda

Prof. Olive Mugenda	Kenya
Prof. Philip Aduma	Kenya
Prof. Idris Kikula	Tanzania
Prof. Philip Bwathondi	Tanzania

Host institutions will include universities, national and regional research institutes, and other organisations in the region with capacity to undertake research. In recognition of the importance of partnerships in the programme, VicSec will work closely with these institutions in the implementation of approved activities. The host institutions will be required to sign a contract with IUCEA. The role and responsibilities of host institutions will, *inter alia*, include:

- Endorsing a request for disbursement of funds by researcher who have qualified for VicRes funding;
- Supporting researchers during the project period, including giving time off for staff during fieldwork;
- Receiving funds from IUCEA for onward transmission to individual researchers;
- Approving financial accounting reports based on approved budget and conditions of contract between IUCEA and the researcher.
- The host institutions will be paid a fee of five percent (5%) of the amount allocated to each researcher.

Individual researchers making up the multi-country/institution/disciplinary teams have the following responsibilities:

- Signing a contract with IUCEA and submitting a written request for disbursement of funds;
- Receiving funds through his/her host institution to undertake project activities in accordance with the approved budget and work plan;
- Reporting, through the lead scientist, project progress for purposes of accountability and project M&E;
- Submitting financial reports through the host institution for forward transmission to VicSec;
- Disseminating research findings through departmental seminars, workshops, conferences and journal publications as individual or joint papers.
- Jointly with other members of the team, reporting findings and results to the VicRes Annual Forum.

If and when a member of a team is unable to perform assigned activities, VicSec shall initiate his/her replacement through consultation with host institution/department, national research councils, other team members and any other institution in the region that can help identifying a replacement with required competences.

A *lead scientist* will be elected for each funded team. He/she shall be a PhD holder and will spearhead project activities through regular e-mail communication and consultative meetings. The lead scientist will serve as the VicSec project contact person and will, *inter alia*:

- Coordinate all project activities including budget and work plan details through consultations with team members.
- Receive inputs from team members for regular communication to the VicSec in a form of bi-annual and annual reports.
- Share communication from VicSec with the other team members.
- Convene and chair consultative meetings and submit minutes of proceedings as progress report to VicSec.

- Mentor junior researchers in career development.
- To effectively deliver these services, each lead scientist will be paid USD 500 (accountable) for communication.

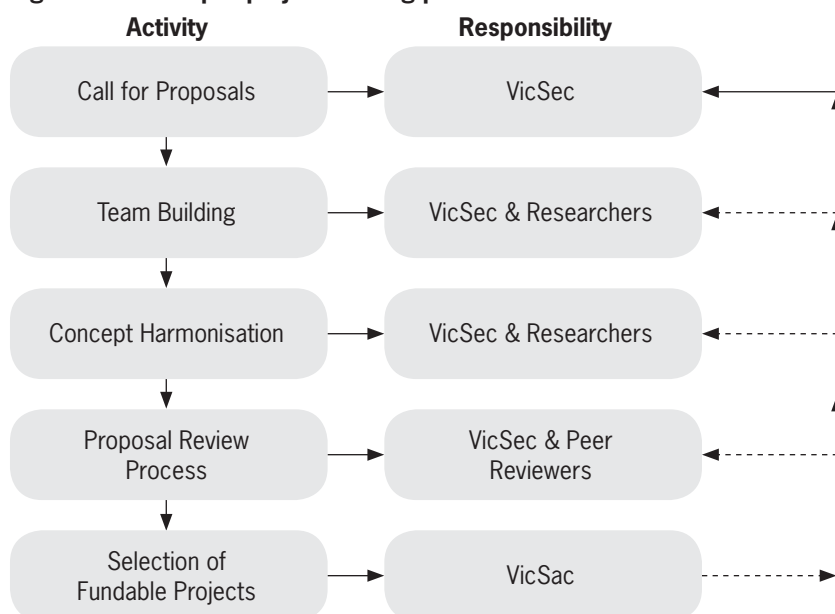
Since the structure described above, which is still the formally operational one, was put in place some things have evolved which are introduced in the draft document for Phase III and in the revised draft Management Policy and Operations Manual of November 2007. I will come back to comment more on these changes in the section on the future of VicRes (Chapter 6). However, there is one development that, in effect, already is operational related to the formation of “clusters” (see further Chapter 5). In that context, a new and important function of “*cluster lead and associate persons*” has been established:

“They are responsible for concretising outputs at Cluster level. Closely working with the RCO, Cluster Lead and Associate Persons will coordinate packaging of materials for dissemination, promote ownership of shared agendas and visions of Cluster Projects and mentor junior researchers. Occasionally, they will accompany VicAc during ‘on spot checks’ of funded activities. VSC will appoint Cluster Lead Persons based on the recommendations by the RCO. They should consist of renowned scholars. Therefore, membership shall not be limited to funded researchers.” (From the draft MPOM of 2007).

2.4 Modes of Operation

Simply put, the VicRes programme operates as a research council awarding research grants on a competitive basis to multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional and multi-country teams from universities and other research institutions in EAC countries. Teams of scientists, normally 3–5 from 2–3 institutions in 2–3 countries, can be awarded grants of up to USD 50,000 per year (the normal range is between USD 35–45,000), and they can be renewable twice. The *lead scientist* in the team should be a Ph.D. holder. The process of selecting, awarding and monitoring VicRes projects is described below (taken from the VicRes Management Policy and Operations Manual 2005). *Figure 3* depicts the pre-project funding process, i.e. up to the awarding of a grant. It has been the same during Phases I and II. This process underscores an interactive system with in-built mechanisms for transparency, capacity building (individual/institutional), quality control and linkages of research funding with policy.

Figure 3. VicRes pre-project funding process



1. *Call for Proposals:* VicSec deploys suitable strategies to advertise calls, including use of Websites, posters and brochures to reach potential researchers. A call for proposals will be advertised in local dailies in each country and in the East African Weekly Newspaper. Details on the terms and conditions for participation will be included in the call for proposals (see *Appendix 7 – Call for Proposals 2008*).
2. *Team Building:* VicSec conducts team-building meetings in all potential institutions. During these meetings, the facilitator presents requirements for participation and clarifies issues not captured by the advert. Researchers are required to submit topics and contacts that will be compiled by the VicSec and sent to scientists who have attended team-building meetings for development of joint proposals. It will be the responsibility of interested researchers to identify and contact (via email) people with complimentary ideas for team formation. Team building meetings are also used to share previous VicRes experience, challenges and accomplishments.
3. *Harmonisation workshop:* VicSec facilitates and pays for a proposal harmonisation workshop, particularly for researchers coming together for the first time. This is a one-week residential workshop of teams that need to concretise their ideas for developing a full proposal. The workshop has the following three sessions:
 - Recasting proposal writing skills (1 day)
 - Discourses of joint research (1 day)
 - Drafting of joint proposal (3 days)
4. *Submission of proposals:* The deadline for submission of proposals is three months after the call and is indicated in all ‘call for proposal’ documents. The lead scientist shall submit duly completed hard and soft copies of the proposal to VicSec. No researcher is allowed to participate in more than one proposal. Previously funded researchers do not qualify to submit proposals unless their accountability has been cleared.
5. *Pre-review:* Before submitting a proposal for peer review, VicSec in consultation with VicSac, will ascertain that the following criteria have been taken into consideration:
 - Timely submission of proposals;
 - Completeness of the proposal in terms of the sections provided in the proposal format;
 - Whether or not the topic/title has regional focus; and
 - Whether proposal formulation reflects teamwork and has team members from at least two EAC states.
6. *Peer review:* VicSec in consultation with VicSac selects peer reviewers from the VicRes pool of scientists and Sida/SAREC and IUCEA networks. Three peers (two from EA and one from outside) review each proposal that will have met the above administrative requirements. Each reviewer may receive up to a maximum of 10 proposals. USD 100 will be paid for every proposal reviewed based on satisfactory use of the information by the VicAc in selecting fundable proposals.
7. *Selection of fundable projects:* The reports of peer reviewers are received and discussed by the VicSac which will approve them in three categories – without, with minor or with major corrections – or reject them. Although the final decision on each proposal is determined by the recommendations of peer reviewers, VicSac shall consider timeliness/relevance of the subject under investigation and other scientific considerations. A member of the VicSac is assigned to verify polishing of proposals in category (ii). Revised proposals approved with major corrections are sent, with comments/suggestions of the VicSac committee, to the same peer reviewers for further advice. An *ad hoc* committee appointed by the VicSac considers re-submitted proposals and advice VicSec accord-

ingly. Scientists whose proposals are rejected are free to partake of the reasons for rejection for competition in the subsequent year.

8. *Contracting and fund dispersal*: Before funds are disbursed, each successful researcher will be required to sign a contract with the IUCEA. The researcher host institution will also sign a letter of commitment to support VicRes activities. Other important requirements include:

- Submission of a copy of polished proposal
- A formal request for disbursement of funds

9. *Renewal of funds*: VicRes can renew fundable projects twice subject to compliance to contract, evidence of relevant outputs/outcomes as reflected in project progress and monitoring reports and peer review comments on End of Year Report. A fee of USD 150 will be paid for each report successfully reviewed.

10. *Project monitoring* is a continuous process of assessing the implementation of projects based on the approved work plan and budget. The VicRes Coordinator and the VicSec will be responsible for monitoring of projects. It commences two months after all scientists have acknowledged receipt of disbursed funds and stop a month before the end of the project year. It will entail holding meetings with scientists, review of statutory progress reports, administration of questionnaires and visiting selected project sites to ensure that technical and scientific integrity are upheld, and are consistent with the VicRes objectives. In particular, monitoring will involve checking out on:

- The extent to which the objectives of the project are being addressed including diversity of research teams and interaction within research teams;
- Effectiveness in the financial flow and use between VicSec, host institutions and the researcher; including evaluating research expenses vs. planned activities
- The extent to which team members share findings among themselves, with other projects, and other stakeholders in and outside the region during their project period(s);
- Effectiveness of the lead scientists in articulating challenges and the level of teamwork in the project process;

The effectiveness of research findings in addressing the needs of LVB residents, and in linking research with sustainable development;

- The level of community participation in the project process at various levels, including information generation and sharing and;
- Effectiveness in generation, packaging and dissemination of information to stake-holders.

VicSec will communicate monitoring observations and recommendations to respective teams within a period of two weeks for information/action. Subsequent monitoring will investigate project response to previous observations/recommendations.

2.5 Overall Achievements and Challenges

The achievements of VicRes in its first five years of operation, 2003–2007, are truly impressive. In this section, I will just make a brief introductory summary in quantitative terms of some of these achievements, and I will then return with more in-depth qualitative and quantitative analyses in *Chapters 3–5*.

At the very highest level of summary, VicRes has supported 88 interdisciplinary, multi-institutional and multi-country research projects involving just over 400 scientists from more than 60 institutions in five countries in the period 2003 to date. The total level of support to these projects is in the region of SEK 40 million (USD 6 million). In the draft document outlining the third Phase of the programme, the VicRes Co-ordinator presents some very useful summary compilations and assessments of what has

been achieved in Phases I and II. From this and some other documents and presentations, one can list the following achievements and activities, in addition to the above:

- 6 calls for proposals (2003–2008);
- Including 2008, at least 230 team formation meetings with over 2000 participants held;
- 5 grant competitions to date and one in progress;
- 5 Harmonisation workshops held;
- More than 300 projects peer reviewed
- 5 Annual Forums have been held;
- 3 lead scientists workshop held;
- 6 cluster seminars held;
- 12 rounds of monitoring made;
- Newsletter and homepage successfully launched
- VicSac and VicPac meetings held, Annual Reports produced, evaluations conducted, etc.

In addition to these quantitative achievements, there are, of course, also all the important qualitative aspects of VicRes' work related to research results relevant to environment and livelihoods, formation of functioning teams, capacity building, network formation and partnership development, visibility enhancement, impact on communities and policy-makers, etc. All of these will be touched upon in later chapters.

In view of the rapid and successful expansion of the programme, several challenges and issues that need to be addressed are presenting themselves, particularly in preparation for a third phase of the programme. The current (2008) call for proposals and the process just initiated to identify new projects for support will, in all likelihood, push the number of on-going supported projects to around 110 (so far, only three of the projects awarded in 2003 have been concluded) with 500 or so scientists involved from up towards 70 different institutions. In view of this, three particular challenges are obvious:

- The first relate to the capacity of the VicRes Secretariat; today, only three staff members are running a very rapidly increasing volume of work – a considerable strengthening is urgently required;
- The question whether VicRes should continue to award the same amount of funding to a similar number of projects as earlier years, or whether it is time to give more funds to fewer and more strategically selected projects;
- Partly related to the previous issue is the one about what responsibilities VicRes could or should take on in consolidating and ensuring the impact of the rapidly increasing volume of interesting and relevant results that will soon be coming out of the supported projects;
- Finally, there is the important question of what type of organisation VicRes shall evolve into and what institutional arrangements best serves its role and mandate, it is quite clear that the research council function that VicRes in effect has today, is not best served by continuing as a “dependent” project, i.e. dependent both on one external donor and on one host organisation, whose geographical and institutional mandates only partly overlaps with ViocRes.

All involved parties – IUCEA, Sida/SAREC and the VicRes Secretariat itself – are fully aware of these challenges and issues, and we shall return to them in *Chapter 6* on VicRes future.

3. VicRes in Relation to Sida's Overall Goals

From Terms-of-Reference:

"The **overall goal** for Sida is to create conditions for poverty alleviation, in particular taking into account three themes:

- democracy and human rights,
- environment and climate
- the role of women in development (including HIV/AIDS).

Against the above, discuss and assess:

- VicRes with regard to poverty alleviation and the perspectives of the poor;
- the perspective of rural women in VicRes supported research as well as the gender balance within grantees;
- HIV/AIDS aspect in the supported research."

The focus on *poverty alleviation* through improved land-use and aquaculture/fisheries technologies (and in many cases more explicitly *wealth enhancement* through creation of technologies that may result in income opportunities), is evidenced by the fact that a very significant number of projects have got terms such as "poverty alleviation" (or reduction), "improved livelihood" (or welfare), and the like in their titles. And there are a large number of projects focussing on developing crops such as rice, maize, sweet potato, cocoyam, soybean, banana, pumpkins, sugarcane, tea, green gram, livestock fodder, mushrooms, vegetables, grain amaranth, and, of course, fish and aquaculture. The goals are either income generation and/or nutritional improvements for poor small-scale farmers.

Likewise, *environmental problem solution* is another obvious focus for a large number of projects funded by VicRes – they deal with control of pollution and toxic substances, erosion and soil fertility decline, waste treatment, wetland conservation, wildlife and ecotourism potential, etc. Sometimes livelihood and environmental goals are combined in the same project. In his review 2005, Mantell assessed the potential environmental impact of the then on-going projects and noted that at least 22 of them had a direct and positive potential impact on various aspects of the environment. This still applies and today there are probably close to half of the 88 on-going or recently concluded projects with such a potential impact.

Gender aspects and/or the *perspective of rural women* are explicitly stated in rather few projects (only five projects have the words "women" and/or "gender" in their titles). However, when looking at the projects in detail, a very large number of those dealing with poverty alleviation and economic income opportunities, have gender perspectives featuring prominently. There is also a strong and deliberate push by VicRes to further improve on this. For example, in the 2008 "Call for proposals" it is stated that "*Priority will be given to projects that have gender and environmental considerations as essential components of wealth generation and bio-technological innovations*" (see Appendix 7). In 2005, a "Gender Analysis Review" study was commissioned and it appears as "A short write-up on Gender Situational Analysis of VicRes" in Appendix 3 in the Phase II document. Out of this study came an operational "gender policy" that VicRes tries to follow.

When it comes to *women scientist involved with VicRes* research, the figures appears to be stable – there were 30 % (73 out of 240) women among supported scientists in Phase I and the same percentage, 30 % (35 out of 115), in the first two years of Phase II (2006–2007). This is probably a good reflection of the general science community in East Africa. If anything, there is probably a slightly higher %-age in VicRes supported projects. It is interesting to note that there were fewer women in the 2007 *Harmonisa-*

tion Workshop – 41 women of totally 209 participants, i.e. only 20%. However, among the 14 finally approved teams/projects in 2007, the women scientists make up 30% of the team membership. This can, or should (?), be interpreted to mean that once women decide to compete for places on the teams and for funding, they are more successful than men. The VicRes coordinator makes a very strong point of the importance of women scientists' participation in "team formation" meetings.

Finally, *HIV/AIDS* is explicitly mentioned in the titles of only two or three of the funded projects. However, there are quite a large number of projects (17 out of the 88) that have a focus on health & nutrition and/or on food security in a wider sense, and many of those mention the relation between their studies and alleviation of the impact of *HIV/AIDS*. There are several medicine, health and nutrition experts involved with these and other VicRes funded projects (e.g. on medicinal plants, malaria drugs, health hazards caused by pollution, nutrition of poor people, etc.) and they are increasingly calling for the formation of a separate cluster in this area, something that will no doubt put even more focus also on *HIV/AIDS*. VicRes has responded very positively to this, and the current call for proposals opens up also for "*the proposed cluster of HIV/AIDS*" (see *Appendix 7*) – it might be more logical to be a bit more inclusive and call a new cluster "health and nutrition", for example.

Conclusion and Recommendations: wherever relevant and possible to influence them, VicRes is doing quite well or very well on issues related to Sida's overall goals on poverty alleviation, gender, environment and *HIV/AIDS*. In my view, it is sufficient to keep up the promotion and profile of these issues in calls for proposals, team formation and harmonisation meetings, cluster workshops, in the VicRes Newsletter, and in other fora, at the level of today (which is very high).

4. General Aspects of VicRes

From Terms-of-Reference:

General; discuss and assess:

- the idea of a regional research programme with focus on "Lake Victoria", natural science as well as social science – as a *competitive grant giving mechanism*. Elaborate on possible *alternative approaches* for future Sida support – the *regional vs. a bilateral approach*, *ownership* and the *interest in the scientific community*;
- the context in which VicRes is active, interaction/networking/co-operation with other stakeholders such as universities, other research institutions, initiatives funded by Sida/NATUR, World Bank etc;
- the *vision* of VicRes, strategic planning – where is VicRes heading, what development is foreseen?

A *regional research programme* defined by what in effect is a hydrological/geographic unit – a lake and its watershed – can pose problems related both to the relevance of research in terms of the geographic area defined and also with respect to the mandate of institutions and scientists involved in the work. It is, for example, quite clear that, even if most projects mention the lake and/or the basin in their titles, much of the research done in VicRes supported projects and the problems/opportunities addressed have little or nothing to do with the actual boundaries of LVB. The topics are equally relevant for areas outside the lake basin with similar agroecological, socio-economic or environmental problems and opportunities. Likewise, with the possible exceptions of the three national fisheries research institutes around the lake, none of the universities and research institutes involved in the programme define their mandates in terms of LVB. They have national, discipline and/or sector mandates. Actually, when interviewing scientists for this evaluation, the point came up quite often why scientists could not be supported for work done outside the LVB, provided that the work was relevant also for conditions

within the basin. Particularly scientists based in institutions far away from the LVB, e.g. in DSM, Nairobi or Morogoro, raised this issue. Another “argument” against the current focus on the lake basin is the fact that the host institution, IUCEA, has a mandate covering educational and higher learning institutions in the whole East African Community area and its management and governing organs are not particularly committed to the Lake Victoria Basin.

On the other hand, there are some compelling reasons for retaining the focus on LVB. Quite apart from the current fact that external support only comes from Sida’s Lake Victoria Initiative, which effectively limits the programme in its present shape and source of funding to the LVB, there are scientific/technical as well as political reasons to consider. First, the Lake Victoria region is a unit also from many points of view other than just the hydrological and limnological ones – communication, trade, tourism, regional climate, cross-boundary cultures, and many other factors interact around the lake. Even if these aspects are not normally limited by the actual boundaries of the hydrological drainage basin, there are definite potentials and logics in studying and developing them in a wider “Lake Victoria Region” context. And this view touches on what I consider the probably strongest justification for a continued focus on the LVB, namely the political one. This is related to the building of the East African Community. Whereas there are certainly other regionally essential issues for the EAC to address, e.g. communication and trade, the only *genuinely regional asset* of the community is Lake Victoria with enormous potentials and problems which *must* be tackled through regional cooperation approaches. It is, of course, not a coincidence that most successful programmes, initiatives, partnerships and institutions of EAC so far have a Lake Victoria focus, e.g. LVEMP, LVDP, LVRC and, more recently and most importantly, the Lake Victoria Basin Commission (LVBC). To have a designated research programme with the dual aims of contributing to poverty alleviation and environmental enhancement in the region on the one side and building up institutional capacity to carry out interdisciplinary and cross-country research on the other is an essential supplement and support to the EAC efforts to develop the region.

In awarding research grants and supporting research projects, VicRes has chosen a *competitive approach* based on the conditionalities of interdisciplinarity, regionality (i.e. multiple research sites in different countries) and multiple institutions involvement. This is certainly not the easiest approach and VicRes must carefully define and justify why it has taken that road, and what it wants to achieve, because the costs involved are big (time and effort in team building, difficult logistics, lack of efficiency – in short, there are many things that can go wrong). In other words, the advantages must be big! Had I been present at the drawing board five-six years ago, I would probably have expressed deep reservations about this approach – not in any of the components of inter-disciplinarity, multi-country and multiple institutions per se, but in insisting on combining all three of them in every single project that is funded.

However, after having had the opportunity of interviewing a large number of scientists involved and looking at the results so far, I have become convinced that the cost of building regional networks of functioning teams and groups of institutions able to tackle complex cross-boundary and inter-disciplinary problems and opportunities are worth the price. Many of the problems that one might anticipate have certainly been legio, but, in the end, it has basically worked. A continued use of this approach must also go with the recognition and acceptance that there will be failures, that it will take time and strong supporting mechanisms (mainly provided by the Secretariat) to teams and institutions, also after a project is concluded, and therefore the commitment to the effort must be long-term and significant in terms of resources, both from the external donor(s) and the EAC bodies responsible for the programme. It will also be important to recognise, as already pointed out in section 2.2, that there will be trade-offs between the goals of development *impact* and *capacity building* in individual projects.

The sense of *ownership* of VicRes by the scientific community taking part in supported projects and acting on advisory committees and as reviewers (well over 400 individuals and 65 institutions) appears very strong and growing in spite of the fact that few have LVB as a mandate and focus area per se, and

in spite of the complexity of the programme as pointed out above. Likewise, and although I did not have too many opportunities to interview political leaders in EAC or in the individual countries, there appears to be a growing awareness and sense of ownership in the political organs of EAC dealing with LVB, as judged from the visibility in media and the ease with which the programme can attract senior government and EAC people as speakers to its meetings.

The *context* of operating a research council function, which, of course, is what VicRes is, as a time-limited project is not ideal. Sooner or later, a more permanent or at least longer-term arrangement must be found, which involves more autonomy (for example, an independent and executive Board), including permanent and relevant funding and hosting arrangements. Only this will guarantee VicRes' ability to interact at a high enough level with partners, including research institutions, universities, policy makers and funders/donors. I will return to this issue in the Chapter 6 on the future of VicRes, where I will also touch upon the issue of VicRes' *vision*.

Conclusions and Recommendations: VicRes' focus on the Lake Victoria Basin may have some imperfections related to research relevance and institutional mandates, and its approach to awarding competitive grants and building research capacity are complex, difficult and potentially quite costly, *but* the programme has worked very well and resulted in an emerging network of scientists and institutions that will (and to a degree already does) contribute to developmental and environmental improvements in the LVB. My recommendation is that neither the geographical focus nor the mode of operation shall be significantly altered in the next few years, but that VicSec shall be given sufficient resources and independence that will enable it to continue and consolidate its work (see also comments and recommendations in *Chapter 6*).

5. Assessment of Specific Aspects of VicRes Work, Achievements and Problems

5.1 Research Agenda

From Terms-of-Reference:

Discuss and assess the **research agenda**:

- the *thematic areas* and the *relevance* with reference to problems/needs in the region, to policy- and decision-makers and to society;
- *interdisciplinarity*,

The specific goal of VicRes “*to enhance knowledge on land-human-environment interactions so as to justify interventions relevant to poverty reduction and environmental restoration*” early on translated into a *research agenda* originally defined by the two *thematic areas* “wetlands” and “land use” during the first two years of operations. In 2005, following a recommendation by Sinclair Mantell, a third thematic area, “water catchment management and conservation”, was added. However, even if these thematic areas were relevant to VicRes stated goals, they were quickly found to be far too broad, overlapping and partly confusing – isn't use of wetlands also “land use” and doesn't “water catchment management” normally boil down to questions of how to use land? In the minds of many, these thematic areas also seemed to exclude important issues, such as health and nutrition, development of products for income generation, etc.

In order to create a better and more logical framework for interaction and exchange of information and experience, as well as for priority setting, within the rapidly growing VicRes network of projects, institutions and individual scientists, projects were brought together in different *clusters*, with broadly similar topics within them. There is generally a very positive view within the network to the formation of such clusters and they are considered a much more suitable basis for defining relevance of problems and opportunities and of defining results and how to disseminate them than the old “thematic areas” were. The very high degree of scientific interaction within the clusters is evidenced in the VicRes Annual Report for 2007, but it would lead too far to repeat it here. The current clusters are:

- Aquaculture & fisheries
- Ethno-botany & indigenous knowledge
- Pollution/heavy metals
- Natural resources management
- Land use options

In *Table 3* below, the numbers of scientists associated with projects in the different clusters are shown.

**Table 3. Number of scientists in the different clusters
(based on the 88 on-going and just concluded projects by the end of 2007).**

Cluster	No. of researchers (%)
Aquaculture & fisheries	33 (9)
Ethno-botany & indigenous knowledge	91 (25)
Pollution/heavy metals	56 (15)
Natural resources management	104 (28)
Land use options	82 (22)
Total	366

It is obvious that some clusters are more narrowly defined (e.g. “pollution/heavy metals”) than others (e.g. “natural resources management”) but they represent the current views and wishes of most of the scientists involved and are not imposed on the network. This does not mean that there are not projects that feel excluded by the current cluster structure, e.g. projects working on health & nutrition feel that they should form their own cluster. The VicSec and VicSac consider these proposals in a positive and constructive way, and there are very lively discussions within the clusters at Annual Forums and in separate seminars, for example. It is important that the research agenda of VicRes is continuously evaluated, within the overall framework of livelihoods and environment, and it is important that the cluster structure and definition of their foci are flexible and dynamic. It is, however, essential to keep a close eye on one danger with a “too free” cluster formation, viz. the tendency to define clusters in more and more narrow conventional disciplinary terms (I heard, for example, one scientist who felt that the “aquaculture & fisheries” cluster should be divided into its two component parts!) – the importance and value of maintaining an interdisciplinary approach also within the clusters is essential for VicRes “brand name” and success.

In principle, an “*interdisciplinarity research approach*” should be applied where it clearly adds an advantage in addressing complex problems and solutions in the agro-ecological, socio-economic and technical interface, but need not be applied in all circumstances – some issues are, after all, quite straightforward, but nevertheless important, and can satisfactorily be addressed by conventional disciplinary research. However, in the case of VicRes, the mounting of multi-disciplinary teams that are supposed to work in an interdisciplinary fashion is a condition for receiving a grant. The reason, of course, is that the building of such an interdisciplinary research capacity is an important goal of the programme. And the fact is also

that solving problems and realising opportunities related to poverty alleviation and environmental enhancement are *normally complex* and require interdisciplinary studies. It should, however, be noted that this aim will require the acceptance of trade-offs in efficiency and speed by which many projects will achieve their stated developmental results. Another point is that the high cost of building up such capacity at regional level must be accompanied by a strategy for maintaining this capacity – it can not be assumed that the capacity will be maintained without further inputs. A final, and quite encouraging, comment on the interdisciplinary aspect of VicRes work is that quite a large number of scientists I spoke to, while admitting their initial reservations and problems, had very positive and professionally enriching experiences to report from working with scientists from other disciplines than their own. Although the situation is gradually improving, there is still a shortage of social and economic scientists attracted to the teams.

In 2003 and 2004, VicRes commissioned two baseline studies aiming at defining what had already been done in research in the LVB in the thematic areas of “wetlands” and “land use”. Considering the work by LVEMP, LVFO, ICRAF and others, these studies pointed at “*gaps in knowledge*” and the first research projects supported by VicRes were largely based on the gaps identified by these baseline studies. There is a danger in having a focus on “gaps in knowledge” since this assumes an already existing understanding of what is not defined as gaps. I assume (but I may be wrong) that research on conventional agricultural crops, agroforestry, forestry and livestock systems, or on Lake Victoria’s hydrology and fisheries, are considered well covered by institutions such as KARI, KEFRI, NARO, TAFORI, ICRAF, ILRI, ICIPE or LVEMP and the various national Fisheries Research Institutes. However, there is still much to be understood about not only *halting and reversing* deteriorating trends in yields and soil fertility, or in the hydrology and fish populations in Lake Victoria, but actually achieve a *sustainable tripling* in 15–20 years of production and productivity of crops, animals, fish and trees (which is what is required given all projections in population increase and need for income improvement). It might therefore be worthwhile to bring in more scientists from research institutions dealing with these systems and technologies.

Need for *persistence and continuity*: even if there are arguments, as pointed out above, for some shifts in emphasis and inclusion of new areas into the research agenda, VicRes should also be careful not to change the research agenda too hastily and abruptly before a reasonable degree of results, both with capacity building and development impact, has been achieved. This will take time, definitely more than the six years the programme has been running to date; it may be appropriate to do a more comprehensive review of the research agenda after the completion of the assumed Phase III, i.e. in 2012.

Conclusions and Recommendations: The use of “clusters” as a frame for defining the research agenda within the overall mandate of addressing livelihood and environmental issues in LVD is a positive and appropriate development. While cluster formation should be flexible enough to accommodate adaptation to changing problems, opportunities and priorities, there must also be a degree of persistence and continuity to ensure impact. There is also a need to be aware of a “drift” back to disciplinary definitions of clusters. The interdisciplinary research approach in VicRes should be maintained in spite of the costs involved – the long term value of building up a regional capacity for this type of research justifies it.

5.2 Efficiency and Relevance as a Research Council

From Terms-of-Reference:

Discuss and assess VicRes as a **research council**:

- the quality of the *research council operations* in terms of procedures for calls, systems for and quality of peer review assessments, justification and transparency of criteria for selection of grantees, ceiling amounts for approved projects, need for concentration and cluster formation, new countries,
- the *cost effectiveness* in the grant giving mechanism.
- the *capacity* (in terms of staff members and skills) of the VicRes Secretariat

Apart from the roles of a “normal” *research council*, i.e. defining priority research areas, issuing calls for proposals, peer reviewing them, selecting successful proposals, disbursing funds, and monitoring progress (see *section 2.4*), VicRes has the additional tasks brought about by the condition of forming multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional and multi-country teams among scientists and institutions. These normally have a very limited, if any, experience of working like that. To explain this concept, encourage and facilitate for scientists to form teams, and the additional administrative, supporting and monitoring work that goes with it, leads to a much more complex programme than is normal for a research council. In addition, VicRes is deliberately encouraging networking well beyond the individual projects (e.g. through cluster formation). The value of this will only be fully realised if these networks are supported and encouraged well beyond the time span of individual projects.

In all quantitative and measurable respects, *VicRes has been very successful* – the number of scientists and institutions involved have increased rapidly, the number of teams formed and submitting proposals likewise, the review process leading to awards has been efficient, the number of programme meetings and people involved with them (team formation, harmonisation workshops, annual forums, cluster seminars, etc.) are staggering, monitoring efforts have been intensive, etc. A financial “tracking system” of the flow of grant funds has also been introduced. In *tables 4–6* below, some relevant statistics on the research council operations are shown.

To create awareness on VicRes, the Secretariat convenes *team formation meetings* to inform scientists on requirements for participation in VicRes Grant Competition. These meetings are attended by an ever increasing number of researchers (see *Table 4*). In recent years, also scientists already funded often attend which is very valuable for new scientists. I had the opportunity to attend three such team formation meetings in Kenya – at Kenyatta, Egerton and Maseno Universities – with well over 120 participants from 13 different universities and research institutions. The purposes of the meetings are to stimulate interest for the annual call for proposals and to encourage scientists to contact colleagues in other countries/institutions/disciplines to form teams and come up with concept notes. Those doing a good job will be invited to the “harmonisation workshop” where teams will be formalised and concept notes turned into full draft proposals.

Table 4. Team formation meetings and participants 2003–2007.

	Year	No. of meetings	No. of participants
Phase I	2003	21	186
	2004	19	248
	2005	40	381
Phase II	2006	37	411
	2007	45	436
Total		162	1662

It can be added that in January and February 2008, the VicSec conducted another set of meetings with well over 400 participants. Of these, 225 have tentatively formed teams and developed 62 concept notes for consideration and refinement into full proposals after a “harmonisation workshop” that all have been invited to. A month after this workshop, full proposals will be submitted and sent out for peer review.

Table 5. Nos. of peer reviewed and successful projects 2003–2007.

Year	No. peer reviewed	No. funded projects	Success rate %
2003	37	13	35
2004	43	20	46
2005	73	24	32
2006	84	17	20
2007	64	14	22
Total	303	88	29

There are currently 28 peer reviewers (20 from EA, 8 from outside), all senior and highly accomplished scientists, assisting VicRes in this process (see *Table 5*). The average success rate of 29% (range 20–46%) can be considered normal for an operation like this and the type of research supported by VicRes (it is, for example, very close to the approval rate in the IFS small grants programme) and it ensures a sufficiently high degree of competitiveness and, thereby, quality of proposals.

Another important activity of VicRes is the *Annual Forums* which bring together scientists from all on-going projects and from several other institutions and authorities with an interest and stake in the LVB, such as the farming and media communities, the private sector and entrepreneurs, IUCEA member Universities, research institutes, NGOs and regional organisations like LVFO, LVRLAC and ECOVIC. Sida/SAREC is normally also represented. These meetings are essential for information exchange, research priority setting, and clusters normally organise break-out workshops during the ARs. Scientists were unanimously praising the importance of the AFs for network building and several people wanted to expand the role of the Forums into Annual Scientific Conferences.

Table 6. Participants and institutions at Annual Forums.

	Year	No. of participants	No. of institutions represented
Phase I	2004	128	28
	2005	179	43
Phase II	2006	216	51
	2007	238	67

Generally, it can be said that the *operations as a research council*, with the various steps explained in *section 2.3* on “Structures and responsibilities” and in *section 2.4* on “Modes of operation” have been successful and achieved an efficient, transparent and high quality programme. This would not have been possible without a very high degree of commitment and hard work by the Secretariat, reasonably good back-up by IUCEA and a very strong input by committee members, particularly VicSac (some committee members claimed that they use two months per year on grant evaluation, advisory and project monitoring work for VicRes), peer reviewers and most lead scientists. This naturally does not mean that there have been no problems and failures – the previously mentioned lack of experience of working in inter-disciplinary, multi-institutional and cross-country teams certainly have caused frictions, delays, frustration and logistic problems. Some teams have totally failed and have only been rescued through drastic measures taken by the Secretariat, e.g. suspending scientists or changing team leaders. Reporting is quite often behind schedules and plans because of the need to have timely contributions from all team members. Many scientists and institutions also complained about late payments of funds – sometimes this was probably due to failure by the scientists and their institutions to understand requirements, but quite often it was due to complications at the IUCEA/VicRes office (often caused by the fact that any payment require the signatures of two out of only three senior IUCEA staff with that right, and if two of them are away, no payments can be made – the VicRes Coordinator has no signa-

tory power). The distribution of roles and responsibilities between VicPac and VicSac did not work out as intended and had to be revised in 2007. There is a very high degree of awareness and recognition of all these problems by the VicRes co-ordinator and, with some support from IUCEA, he constantly tries to address them.

In spite of the problems, the overall impression is of a highly efficient and successful research council operation. A very clear majority of the scientists and committee members I had an opportunity to talk to expressed their satisfaction and confidence in the way VicSec operated. And, although there were certainly some who complained about the shortage of funds in the programme – for more expensive equipment and for support to sufficiently frequent trips to field sites and for team interaction – there was surprisingly little mention of the need for more money, although the timely dispatch of funds sometimes caused problems. The fact that the programme has succeeded in its goal of building up multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional and multi-country team is evidenced by the summary facts from late 2007 below:

Total number of funded projects:	88
Number of scientists involved:	366 (plus M.Sc./PhD students)
Institutions involved:	66
Av. No of scientists per project (range):	4.2 (2–7)
Av. No of institutions per project (range):	3.5 (2–5)
Av. No of countries per project (range):	2.7 (2–4)

Cost effectiveness in strictly monetary terms can be derived from financial expenditure figures from the 2006 audited statement: of a total expenditure of USD 2,017,970, 68% were for grants, 21% for grant related costs (calls, screening, M&E, committee meetings, annual meetings, dissemination, cluster meetings, other meetings, audit fees, etc.), 7% staff costs, and 4% OH. By any standards, these figures indicate a *highly cost effective* programme. However, as stated above, it would not have been possible without an enormous commitment and hard work by the VicRes Coordinator and the staff at VicSec (during the first half of 2006, only the assistant – the programme officer joined during the year) and a strong dedication and heavy work input by VicSac members, peer reviewers, contact persons at institutions, lead scientists and, more recently, cluster lead and associate persons. And there are, as yet, hidden costs and neglects – e.g. the enormous pile up of data on projects, scientists, monitoring reports, publications, etc., which are in dire need of a well functioning database and information retrieval system. Likewise there has been increasingly limited time to solve day-to-day problems related to late disbursement of funds, delayed reporting, interactions within teams, etc.

This all points to the inevitable fact that the *capacity of the secretariat* needs to be urgently and significantly strengthened, particularly if VicRes moves towards a more independent Research Council status. A Data Manager is an urgent must; staffing suggested in Phase III (see *Chapter 6*) proposal is a minimum for effective operations. The secondment of staff and hosting of possible collaborative undertakings (e.g. IFS, BUP) will, if not directly add to the internal capacity, create a more active scientific environment. Encouragement to others filling key functions in programme and the research council operations, e.g. VicSac members, peer reviewers, lead scientists, cluster lead persons, etc., must be maintained at a generous level and preferably revised upwards.

Conclusions and Recommendations: In spite of having wider roles than a normal research council – associated with the requirement to form interdisciplinary and multi-country/institution teams – VicRes has in all quantitative and measurable respects been very successful and remarkably cost effective. However, this has been achieved as a result of an enormously hard input of work and commitment by the Secretariat and there have been hidden costs associated with it, e.g. the failure to build up a func-

tioning database on the projects, procedures, scientists and outputs of the programme, and an increasing shortage of time to deal with day-to-day problems (associated with team formation and functioning, fund disbursement, reporting requirements being followed, publication targets being met, etc.) in the programme. Resources of the Secretariat and all its functions must be strengthened as a matter of urgency.

5.3 Scientific Quality

From Terms-of-Reference:

Discuss and assess the *scientific quality* of VicRes:

- number of publications and scientific quality,
- balance between Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania

As a basis for making this part of the evaluation, I had to make a selection of projects to have a closer look at – there was no time to scrutinise the work and outputs of all 88 projects. As stated in *section 1.2*, I had the opportunity to meet scientists working in 44 of the 88 projects so far supported by VicRes, and even if I did not have time for any in-depth interviews with all these, I certainly got a good impression of the width of topics covered, the general quality, level and experience of scientists involved in the programme, and the degree of functionality of the teams. In addition, I had the opportunity to very briefly look through all publications produced within the programme up to late 2007 of which copies had been submitted to the VicRes Secretariat (which are most, though not all). Again, I did not have time to read them all in detail (and, besides, I would only have been able to understand half of them), but I certainly could form an impression of the type of journals used, the general quality of the way the papers were presented, and the degree of sophistication of the results. However, the most important bases for my evaluation are the 14 projects I have looked at in more detail – see *Table 1* and *Appendix 5*.

According to a list of “Publications from VicRes work” (see *Appendix 6*) as of December 2007 provided by the Secretariat, there were 12 papers in *peer reviewed journals*, 42 *workshop presentations*, which had been printed in proceedings, and a number of poster presentations and papers that had been submitted but not yet accepted by the time of compiling the list. I met some scientists that recently had papers published that had not made it to the list. Thus, we can quite safely assume that by today (early March 2008) there are around 20 peer reviewed papers published or in print and up towards 50–55 workshop presentations, plus some posters and the odd chapter in books. This is well below the target that VicSec had put up and even tried to regulate in the “Management Policy and Operations Manual”, viz. that each team “*present at least a paper in an International Conference or Workshop for the scientific community*” per year (compulsory!), or “*publish at least a paper in a refereed academic journal or as chapter in a book and manuscript in each financial year*” (optional). Against these targets it is not surprising that the VicRes co-ordinator expresses a disappointment in the Annual Report for 2007: “*funded projects disseminated a total of 26 publications through journals, workshops and conferences as unpublished materials; this was below a target of at least 2 papers per project or 144 papers per year*”.

I would be less worried about these figures – they can also be interpreted as if the expectations expressed in the manual are too high. After all, projects normally do not yield publishable results until the end of the project time. In the case of VicRes, and given due considerations to the delays caused by the complications pointed out above (it is, for example, worth noting that only 3 of the 33 projects awarded in 2003 and 2004 had been concluded by early 2008, whereas all of them ought to have been finished), it is really only relevant to start demanding published results in journals for projects from 2003/04 and workshop presentations from those projects awarded in 2003/06. It is probably symptomatic that out of the 14 projects I looked at, only the ones awarded during the first two years had published anything at

all. Some of these had been very productive (with 5–10 publications), others had not yet published anything at all, although all had publications “in the pipeline”.

The project documents, peer review reports, and some of the monitoring reports I looked at indicated that all the 14 projects I scrutinised were of *high to very high quality*, both from relevance and scientific points of view. Some had been delayed in their start up, and/or had not been able to follow the plans, but all were actively pursuing their research. If the scientists involved with the VicRes projects are anything to go by, then the quality of science will indeed be high. The vast majority of senior scientists on the teams have Ph.D. degrees from highly reputable universities in Europe, USA, Japan and East Africa; many are Professors and Heads of departments, and virtually all had an impressive record of scientific work and publication prior to joining the VicRes programme. They are often well connected in the international scientific communities – judging by their stated contacts, memberships in professional associations and the frequency with which they are attending international scientific meetings. The published papers I have seen and/or read appear to be of high quality.

There are many *products of high quality and highly interesting results* starting to come out of those projects that got support in 2003–2005, and the intended output from later projects are also potentially very relevant. Some research is quite innovative, even if most projects are relevant but rather straightforward when it comes to methods, lay-out and topics studied.

In comments from scientists I met, a frequent point was the importance of support from VicRes also in the publishing of research results. Suggestions ranged from having an “in-house” Lake Victoria Research Journal, organising a programme peer review system, or running scientific research report writing training courses. One of the most interesting suggestions has evolved out of the cluster formation and the discussions within these, viz. to organise systematic assessments at cluster basis on what publication and other material should be produced from projects within the clusters (see also below). Another point related to the ability to carry out high quality work in the field, particularly by those scientists residing far from the LVB, was the importance of having Ph.D./M.Sc. students attached to the projects and/or having functioning agreements with institutions on the spot (e.g. extension services or NGOs) who could assist in continuing monitoring and measurements of field experiments.

For some reason, the Terms-of-Reference indicates that the *balance in participation in the programme between Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania* (and nowadays also Rwanda and Burundi) is a question of scientific quality, which quite obviously it is not. However, I will treat it here. First, a summary of the current situation is shown in *Table 7* below indicating the numbers and % of scientists and team leaders from the different countries in the currently supported 88 projects.

Table 7. Numbers and nationalities of scientists (not including graduate students) and team leaders in VicRes projects as of late 2007.

Country	No. of researchers (%)	Number of team leaders (%)
Kenya	163 (43)	46 (52)
Tanzania	103 (29)	27 (31)
Uganda	93 (26)	15 (17)
Rwanda	4 (1)	–
Burundi	3 (1)	–
Total	366	88

These figures do not say anything about the trends, but if one looks at the participation in the last two “Harmonisation Workshops” the distribution figures appear to be quite stable, i.e. a considerably higher number of scientists from Kenya.

Table 8. Nationality of participants at Harmonisation Workshops in 2006 and 2007.

Country	Harmonisation workshop 2006	Harmonisation workshop 2007
Kenya	113 (52)	110 (53)
Tanzania	49 (22)	44 (21)
Uganda	53 (24)	49 (23)
Rwanda	1 (0)	3 (1)
Burundi	3 (1)	3 (1)
Total	219	209

Thus, in spite of deliberate efforts by the VicSec to increase participation from Tanzania in particular, the dominance of Kenyan scientists prevails. However, I do not think there is any case of a structural bias or “positive discrimination” in these figures. The fact is simply that the research infrastructure and number of scientists are much higher in Kenya than in the other two countries (not to talk about Rwanda and Burundi). For example, in the 1990s when I was associated with IFS, Kenya was the third country in Africa in terms of number of grant recipients (after Nigeria and Morocco) and far ahead of both Tanzania and Uganda. In the case of the VicRes programme there is also the fact to consider that there are very few Tanzanian research institutions located in the LVB.

The recently introduced rule that there can be maximum two scientists from each country and or institution in a team will partly take care of the “problem”, which in my view really is not a problem but just a reflection of realities.

Conclusions and Recommendations: The number of publications produced from the projects is still quite low, but picking up. The quality of projects and the experience and accomplishments of scientists involved are very high and bode well for the quality and relevance of results eventually emerging. The use of Ph.D. and M.Sc. students in the projects is an essential component for their success. The VicRes programme must support the projects in the production of high quality outputs, e.g. through scientific paper writing workshops. Such supporting mechanisms may best be organised through the clusters with support and resources provided by the Secretariat.

The previously highlighted geographical imbalance in participation in the VicRes programme, with Kenya being a dominating participant in terms of numbers of supported scientists, remains. There are natural explanations to this and no reasons to assume that the imbalance is caused by any biases. The newly introduced rule of maximising the number of scientists/institutions participating from each country to two should be sufficient to handle this issue.

5.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

From Terms-of-Reference:

Discuss and assess the *monitoring and evaluation*:

- methods of reporting results, IT-issues and data bases,
- the cost effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring activities are quite intense and increasing (for example whereas 13 projects were paid monitoring visits in 2004, not less than 55 were visited in 2007) within VicRes with field monitoring visits by the co-ordinator and a VicSac team (before 2007 by VicPac), electronic questionnaires sent out by VicSec, annual reporting by teams and scientists, and reporting at Annual Forums and cluster seminars. Some scientists commented that there sometimes was a degree of inconsistency in the advice and comments

provided by the monitoring teams (mainly before 2007), and that there could be gaps in competences among monitoring team members. Some also complained that there was poor time planning of visits (particularly those scientists based far away from sites), although the VicRes co-ordinator sends out “schedules of events”, which includes monitoring visits, well in advance. Positive comments included that there was often very helpful advice from M&E, it keeps “discipline” in projects and among scientists, and it assists in team building by necessary joint preparation for team visits.

The suggestion to let *clusters appoint a member* of the teams when visiting cluster projects is good. One VicSac member suggested even more intensive monitoring by having two visits per year to each project

One major concern, which was pointed out above in relation to the “hidden costs” of having a far too small secretariat, is the fact that M&E results are not entered into an *easily retrievable data base*. For example, when I requested monitoring reports for the 14 projects I wanted to look at in more detail, it turned out to be very cumbersome and had to be done manually and in many cases by scanning reports that were not even available in electronic form. The overburden of the secretariat is the reason for this but it must be given very high priority to develop a functioning project database.

No opportunity to make a separate analysis of *cost effectiveness* of M&E, but since it is contained within the generally very favourable overall cost effectiveness of the whole programme (see *section 5.2* above) there should be little cause for concern – there may even be strong justification for using even more resources on M&E.

Conclusions and Recommendations: Monitoring and evaluation activities are enormously essential in the type of projects supported by VicRes with scientists coming together with colleagues from other disciplines, institutions, countries (often for the first time), and often working in unfamiliar sites (for most scientists coming from outside LVB). So much can go wrong and M&E visits and intensive monitoring contacts from VicSec will be a great support, both in ensuring the implementation of the projects and in building the teams. Clusters may contribute to the quality of the M&E, and there is a great need to back up and ensure the long-term relevance and efficiency of the M&E by building up a project database at VicSec.

5.5 Information and communication

From Terms-of-Reference:

Discuss and assess the information and communication:

- dissemination strategies,
- the visibility of VicRes, is VicRes known in the region

Strategies and plans for dissemination of results and information generated within VicRes supported projects are ambitious and partly already operational, particularly with regard to dissemination within the programme itself (statutory progress reports, presentations at AF and cluster seminars, etc.). The dissemination to the wider scientific community is rapidly picking up through workshop and conference presentations and posters (a growing number at international meetings outside EA). Also publications in refereed journals are picking up, although still well below the (probably too ambitiously) set target in the Management Policy Manual (see further *section 5.3* above).

Much less has, not surprisingly in this still early phase of VicRes, been done so far on dissemination of results to stakeholder groups outside the research world, i.e. *policy makers* and intended *local target communities*. However, all VicRes funded projects are required to have a dissemination strategy and plan to get results and information to all relevant target groups in the most appropriate forms. When reading the

proposals of the 14 projects I looked at I was struck by the very comprehensive plans presented – if anything, they may appear to be too ambitious (all projects seem to have every possible group as potential targets of their results). Still, in some cases, there are already mechanisms in place for field dissemination of results, e.g. farmers’ associations for technologies and products generated by the projects, or active farmer/community training events taking place, farmers field days are being organised, etc.

The recently discussed idea of identifying, within each cluster, two scientists and/or information experts to *analyse information generated within the projects of the cluster* and decide about publications, for dissemination as books, articles, policy briefs, educational material, etc., to different audiences – local and international scientists, policy makers, farmers/fishermen/communities/NGOs/CBOs – is a very good one and should be followed up and given resources in the next phase. Such a mechanism can also assist in guiding future priority setting for research within clusters. This will be a key issue for Phase III and it must be recognised that VicRes will have a continued responsibility for promoting and supporting dissemination of results also after projects have been concluded. Again, the need for a functioning database with easily retrievable results becomes apparent.

The growing importance and potential of VicRes website (www.vicres.net) and Newsletter for disseminating information and communicating with stakeholders should be highlighted. They are both already serving important functions for communication within the network and have clear potentials for external dissemination.

VicRes undoubtedly has acquired a high degree of *visibility* within the relevant science and academic communities and institutions in the region judging from the very impressive turn-out at “team formation” and other meetings organised by the programme. The fact that many articles based on VicRes research and other activities have appeared in local media is another testimony to the increasing visibility of the programme. I also got the distinct impression when travelling around in the region and talking to people not directly involved with VicRes that it is a well known programme.

Conclusions and Recommendations: The strategies and plans for dissemination of results and information from the programme and the individual projects are very ambitious and target all relevant user groups – scientists, local communities and decision makers. So far, and quite naturally in view of the limited time the programme has operated, it is mainly the scientific community within the VicRes network and, increasingly, outside, that has benefited from information from the projects. When projects increasingly will target user groups outside the scientific community, it will be essential that VicRes has a strategy for how to provide effective assistance in this, e.g. through the clusters. This support must be extended beyond the funding time frame of the individual projects.

5.6 Impact of Programme

From Terms-of-Reference:

Discuss and assess the *impact of the programme*:

- *output, outcome and impact* of research– at local, national and regional level, (science, policy, development)
- the role and impact of VicRes in capacity building, with regard to both individual as well as institutional capacity (i.e. networking, workshops etc).

Capacity building of individual researchers and institutions is the most obvious impact already observed. It includes acquisition of laboratory and field equipment, computers (hardware and software), Global Positioning Systems (GPS), the use of Masters/Ph.D. students as laboratory and/or field assistants (the programme has provided partial support to over 60 graduate students’ research), production of teach-

ing/ educational material, etc. Furthermore, through demonstrations and field activities, researcher-users collaboration was enhanced and thereby scientists' capacity to work directly with target groups. A significant degree of leadership skills have also been built up within the programme. For some researchers coming from universities with very limited research programmes, VicRes has provided the only way of acquiring research skills and capacity.

Among *concrete outputs and products* in the pipeline can be mentioned new knowledge generated through activities in the Aquaculture and Ethno-botany Clusters on value addition in utilisation of natural products, e.g. significant contributions towards development of alternative medicines/food supplements for malaria and TB, and HIV/AIDS, respectively. These projects isolated compounds and identified active ingredients from a wide range of trees, herbs and fruits, and intend to scale up their activities through micro-enterprises and private-sector partnerships. Likewise, work on heavy metals pollution has identified and mapped different hot points of land degradation. It is also encouraging to note that a growing number of VicRes supported projects are attracting interest from other donors, international and UN institutions, commercial enterprises, etc.

Some projects have seen an *interest among farmers* close to field work in adopting technologies, e.g. integrated aquaculture-horticulture, mollusc shells, cocoyam, fish fingerling production, banana juice, and some others. Contacts and interactions have also increased with the private sector, relevant government agencies, NGOs and other potential users of outputs from VicRes research. These contacts are both found in the field directly with projects and also by inviting these players to VicRes meetings, e.g. the Annual Forum.

One interesting comment on impact that deserves to be considered is that it is easier to get research results and recommendations based on them accepted by policy makers and development agencies when "sensational" results are involved (e.g. mercury pollution, medicinal breakthroughs, obvious commercial potential, etc.), much more difficult when results are further down the final impact point.

Finally, and almost surprisingly in view of the rather short time of operation after all, one impact that came out very strongly in many comments was the significant impact of VicRes as a *network builder*; many used the expression that "a family feeling" and a "special philosophy" had evolved within the programme and clusters, even that a "human heart" is apparent (not least shown in connection with current crisis in Kenya). This may well turn out to be one of the most significant short- and medium-term impacts of VicRes.

In spite of the reports on emerging impacts above, it must be appreciated that VicRes is still in a very early stage of reaching an impact, particularly in the developmental and policy fields (somewhat more advanced in terms of capacity building within participating research institutions). A major focus must be given to this in the next phase.

Conclusions and Recommendations: Enhancement of capacity of individual scientists and their institutions, as well as within the teams and networks making up the VicRes programme, are the most obvious impacts of the programme so far. There are many results and "products" in the pipe-line, many of which have already attracted initial attention and interest of farmers, communities, entrepreneurs and other institutions and businesses. Again, it will be essential that VicRes takes on a significant responsibility in ensuring that the outcomes of projects supported by it have an impact. This will require involvement long beyond the conclusion of individual projects.

6. The Future of VicRes

When drawing up the Terms-of-Reference for this evaluation the draft proposal from IUCEA/VicRes for a third phase of support for the VicRes programme was not yet available, although Sida/SAREC had already signalled that a positive response to such a request would be likely, and also that they would prefer a duration of four years rather than three as the previous (I) and on-going (II) phases. The draft proposal was made available to me and SAREC subsequently requested my comments on it. Likewise, a revised version of the “Management Policy and Operations Manual” was presented which incorporates some proposed changes in the structure, work procedures and roles of different organs, as well as confirming some changes that already have been made operational. Below, my comments are divided between those applicable to the medium-term future (the assumed period of a phase III) and those that could be seen on a longer term. Apart from commenting on the two documents, I am also making some comments and suggestions based on my own assessments and ideas about needs and opportunities for VicRes.

6.1 Medium Term Future (Phase III – 2009–2012)

As phase II is coming to an end in December this year, many things have changed for VicRes since its inception. First of all, the programme has supported c 100 projects (assuming that the 2008 call will result in 10–15 successful proposals), there are well over 400–450 scientists and 65–70 institutions in the VicRes network. The *clusters* have developed into very active and interesting “sub-networks”, and a rapidly increasing stream of results is coming out of the projects. Two more countries have joined EAC and some relevant new Community organs have been put in place, e.g. the Lake Victoria Basin Commission (LVBC) and the East Africa Research Council. The visibility and status of the programme are considerable. The question implicit in the *proposal for phase III* – “*shall we just do more of the same, or is it time for some new approaches and activities?*” – is very relevant, and the suggestions for innovations are basically very sound.

After analysing the results of phases I and II, the draft proposal lists five *challenges* to be considered in entering the next phase. These challenges are partly addressed in the stated *main objectives* for phase III:

- Increase capacity for discussions on livelihood and sustainable resource management by concretizing research outputs and,
- Initiate a process through which research findings, recommendations and innovations may be incorporated in national and regional policies, strategies and, where possible, in national legislations.

And the following *specific objectives*:

- To consolidate research findings on land-human-environment interactions so as to stimulate discussion and boost innovations for wealth creation and environmental restoration.
- To promote policy-related discussions through dissemination of information to scientific and non-scientific communities in and outside East Africa.
- To enhance and broaden participation of different stakeholders (i.e. governments, civil society, private sector etc.) through increased and strengthened researcher-user forums.

I fully endorse these stated objectives with their explicit emphasis on consolidation, follow-up, ensuring impact of results, enhancing dissemination, and closer links to users and policy-makers. I also like the use of the expression “wealth creation” rather than the more pessimistic “poverty alleviation”. The objectives are then translated into suggested activities in the proposal. Without going into detail, I

can generally conclude that these priorities and activities are basically well designed (some may need a bit more polishing, though) and very relevant, and I am of the opinion that they should form the basis for a phase III of VicRes. A few points need some more comments:

The suggestion is that the current committees, VicPac and VicSac change names and partly roles. Thus, it is suggested that a *VicRes Steering Committee* (VSC) is created to provide the overall policy guidance to ensure that programme components and activities implemented at project and cluster levels blend as intended to meet VicRes objectives. Specifically, it will: (i) make decisions on the overall implementation of VicRes; (ii) provide advice about collaborative needs and arrangements with relevant partners in and outside the LVB; (iii) approve Programme Annual Budget and Work Plans; and (iv) vet VicAc members. In addition, an *Advisory Committee* (VicAc) will provide technical reviews and advice to the *Regional Coordinating Office* (RCO) for ensuring quality research output, including approving fundable proposals. Occasionally, it will undertake on spot checks of funded activities. The two committees will work independent of each other as it appears in an accompanying organogram. I can't help getting the impression that these are just new names on the previous committees and the VicSec, incorporating some changes that already have taken effect, e.g. removing VicPac from the monitoring responsibility.

I would design these changes and new roles in a slightly different way. First of all, it is always a cause for potential problems to have two independent committees guiding a programme or an institution – even if the roles are designed not to overlap, there is a danger that they will (it is, for example, not easy to separate budget issues from scientific project design and implementation). I suggest instead that the VSC is the “Board” of VicRes and that VicAc is a scientific/technical sub-committee of the VSC. The VicAc can still have a membership of independent scientists (it is enough if the chairperson and one more member are also members of, and responsible for reporting to, the VSC). An even more important aspect is that I am convinced that the Steering Committee ought to have a much higher degree of autonomy and executive power, e.g. over budget and programme priorities, than the current VicPac has in relation to IUCEA. If VicRes should move towards more permanency (I will be back to that below), such an arrangement should be a first step, which can be taken while remaining hosted by IUCEA during phase III.

The new version of the “*Management Policy and Operations Manual*” contains many new suggestions and clarifications related to the roles of different players (e.g. “cluster lead persons” are mentioned), new meetings are introduced, strengthened efforts to get good proposals out of the team formation and harmonisation workshops, intensified monitoring of projects, etc. On the whole, it is very good and addresses many of the problems in implementation, money flow, reporting, etc, that have emerged in the first six years. It will, however, add a lot of work to the Secretariat!

Related to what was said in the previous paragraph, another point that should be strongly endorsed is the need to *strengthen the Secretariat* (or RCO as it is now called), both in terms of more staff and in terms of building up a functioning *VicRes Information and Documentation Centre* (IDC). The suggested staffing in phase III is to eventually reach six positions – the Programme Coordinator (in place), an Assistant PC (new), an Information and Communications Officer (new), a Project Officer (in place), a Programme Assistant/Accountant (in place), and an Office Assistant/Driver (new). As soon as a decision has been taken by Sida/SAREC to provide funding for a third phase, these recruitments and the starting up of an IDC should be initiated without further delay.

There are several existing and planned *partnerships* mentioned in the texts and proposals from VicRes, most notably, of course, the network of universities and institutions already involved in the various projects funded by the programme. Some Swedish institutions are mentioned, no doubt as a result of Sida/SAREC being the source of funding. For example, a proposal for a programme on “Education for sustainable development in the Lake Victoria Region” between IUCEA/VicRes and the Baltic Univer-

sity Programme (BUP), based at the University of Uppsala, has been developed and awaits a decision for funding from SAREC. While I consider the proposal basically sound and interesting (it will provide for research outputs from VicRes to be incorporated and used in educational programmes), I can see certain lopsidedness in the way funding is proposed to be shared between the two partners. Likewise, the International Foundation for Science (IFS) in Stockholm, which already has co-hosted meetings and training courses with IUCEA/VicRes, is interested in continued collaboration – one concrete suggestion, which I fully endorse, is that IFS carries out (say, in two years time) an in-depth analysis on the science capacity building impact of VicRes using its “MESIA method”. There is also mention of potential collaboration with the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), which already has very close ties with VicRes’ “sister programme” at IUCEA, BioEarn. Even if most of such partnerships and collaborative activities are likely to have separate funding, it is also important to acknowledge that they do require time and therefore have a cost other than money. It is important that VicRes can feel absolutely free to make its own assessments of how and if such partnerships fit into its priorities and add value to the programme. And VicRes must also feel free to initiate international partnerships which are not linked to Swedish institutions.

The *budget* proposed for phase III, from USD 2.5 million the first year to USD 3.5 the fourth year (for a total of USD 12.3 million for the four years), is considerably higher than the budget allocated in the first two phases. Although I am not able to make any detailed recommendations, I certainly see the justification for some of the increases – the cost of the secretariat will inevitably have to be higher (staff cost increase from 7% today to 12%, for example) and there are some line items related to consolidation, dissemination, cluster based activities, etc., which I find innovative and essential. There is also a proposal to increase the budget for individual projects from a maximum of USD 50,000 per year today to USD 70,000 per year in phase III (in talks with the VicRes Coordinator, he even mentioned that there is justification to increase it to USD 100,000 per year). At the same time, the number of new projects would be smaller and funds would be allocated for follow-up work on dissemination and “scaling-up” of results from successful projects. These all appear as sound suggestions.

Conclusions and Recommendations: The proposals in the two documents, the draft “Phase III proposal” and the draft second version of the “Management Policy and Operations Manual” are basically sound and can well serve as a basis for the coming four years of continued collaboration between IUCEA/VicRes and Sida/SAREC, and as a guideline for the operations of the programme, respectively. The suggested emphases and the stated main and specific objectives are very well stated. My added recommendations are:

- i. After some polishing of details accept these documents as the bases for VicRes funding and operations in the period 2009–2012;
- ii. Consider a change of the suggested new governance structure into one Steering Committee (or Board) with a higher degree of autonomy and executive power regarding programme priorities and financial affairs than the current committee structure has; the Technical/Scientific committee (VicAc) should be a sub-committee of the VSC;
- iii. Highest priority should be given to the strengthening of the Secretariat, both by recruitment of the suggested three new positions proposed, and by building up a *VicRes Information and Documentation Centre* (IDC).

6.2 Longer Term Future (beyond 2012)

Where and what will VicRes be in 2012, and what visions, strategies, priorities and modes of operation should it adopt beyond that year? Naturally, I can’t give any in-depth answers to all these questions and big issues, but I will share some thoughts on a few aspects. The vision stated by VicRes itself is “*to be a*

leading innovative research network on poverty and environment in Eastern Africa". Although I have also seen slightly different wordings, indicating that the vision statement is "work in progress", I am not quite comfortable with it. There are three reasons:

- To be a "research network" is not really what VicRes is all about – it supports research leading to networks of many kinds but also to stronger institutions and more effective researchers; in other words, it is a *research supporting mechanism*, or a *research council*;
- To work on "poverty" gives more the impression that VicRes studies the phenomenon of poverty *per se*, which is what some social scientists certainly do, but VicRes works on "poverty *alleviation*" or, even better, "wealth enhancement" or "social and economic development";
- Finally, I don't know if the mention of "Eastern Africa", rather than the Lake Victoria Basin, is just a slip of words, or if it denotes a higher level of ambition re. the programme's future mandate area.

I would rather suggest a vision for VicRes along the following lines (the detailed wording needs polishing):

"to be the primary mechanism in the LVB supporting research and building research capacity related to the contribution of sustainable management, use and conservation of natural resources to livelihood improvements and environmental stability".

More important for the future of VicRes than the precise formulation of a vision is, however, to determine *what kind of institution* it will develop into. It is quite obvious that the function of a research council with a long-term mandate of supporting research and research capacity building is not best satisfied as a project hosted by an institution with a rather different mandate and through short-term external funding from a donor outside the region. There is need for a longer and more secure planning horizon, for a more autonomous status, and for a more secure and stable funding base. Although I agree with Sida/SAREC and with the comments by the parallel organisation review by Salih and Andersson that a continued hosting of VicRes at IUCEA may be preferable for another couple of years, I strongly suggest that a thorough review of the future institutional status and mandate of VicRes is initiated during the next phase.

Such a review must also look into the question of what is the *most appropriate host* for VicRes, or whether it should be completely independent. The most obvious options for hosting VicRes are i) to remain at IUCEA, ii) to be hosted by the Lake Victoria Basin Commission, or iii) by the East African Research Council. There are advantages and disadvantages with all these options and my knowledge of the two latter institutions is not sufficient to express any strong preferences. Whatever the final outcome of this question an equally important issue, probably even more important, is how to ensure a *long-term secure funding* for VicRes. A continued dependence on one external donor is clearly not a satisfactory option. Either multiple donors, with a significant core support from within the EAC region, and/or an endowment fund arrangement are definitely to prefer.

Conclusions and Recommendations: VicRes and its stakeholders must use the next four years to enter into discussions about the long-term vision, strategy and goals of VicRes, not least on what type of organisation it aims at becoming after three phases of short-term donor funding as a dependent project without a legal status of its own and hosted by an institution that neither has the same geographic or operational mandate as VicRes. Particularly, I recommend that the questions of what type of organisation VicRes should be (its vision), its institutional "home", and what its long-term sustainable funding base should be. It might be appropriate to start these processes soon and to organise a *"the future of VicRes consultative workshop"* sometime towards the middle of the next phase (i.e. late 2010 or early 2011).

Appendix 1 Terms of Reference

Scientific Evaluation of the Lake Victoria Research Initiative (“VicRes”).

1. Background

Sida has since 2002 supported the Lake Victoria Research Initiative (“Vic Res”), under an agreement with the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) in Kampala, Uganda. VicRes is a research council, to encourage regional and multidisciplinary research, that was developed within the framework of the Swedish strategy for support to the Lake Victoria region.

The overall objective with the Swedish support in the region is “to contribute to poverty reduction within a framework of sustainable development”. VicRes is mainly directed to contribute towards informed decision-making through generation of information on poverty reduction and environmental restoration.

The overall goals of VicRes are:

- to promote sustainable livelihood and natural resource management;
- to re-invigorate research and stimulate discussions on issues affecting people and environment.

The specific objectives of VicRes are:

- to enhance knowledge on land-human-environment interactions so as to justify interventions relevant to poverty reduction and environmental restoration;
- to promote access to research findings in and outside the East African region.

Sida has supported VicRes with MSEK 97.8, out of which MSEK 45.4 has been designated for use during the current agreement period (2006–08).

2. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

This evaluation shall assess and discuss the research agenda, the grant giving mechanism, the quantity of publications as well as the scientific quality, dissemination of research results, monitoring and methods of measuring results, impact at local, national and regional level and finally, institutional capacity building.

The evaluation shall also provide recommendations, to form a basis for learning, feedbacks and knowledge sharing on how to improve the performance of VicRes.

In parallel to this evaluation an organisational review on decision-making, implementation and reporting in the VicRes (and BIOEARN programme) is carried out. Furthermore, Sida and IUCEA will also continue to discuss financial management and internal control of VicRes funds.

3. The Assignment

The evaluation shall focus on, but not necessarily be limited to:

Overall

The overall goal for Sida is to create conditions for poverty alleviation, in particular taking into account three themes: *democracy and human rights, environment and climate* and, finally *the role of women in development*

(including HIV/AIDS). Furthermore, Sida is requested by the Government of Sweden to develop methods of reporting results.

Against the above, discuss and assess:

- VicRes with regard to poverty alleviation and the perspectives of the poor;
- the perspective of rural women in VicRes supported research as well as the gender balance within grantees;
- HIV/AIDS aspect in the supported research.

General

Discuss and assess,

- the *idea* of a regional research programme with focus on “Lake Victoria”, natural science as well as social science – as a competitive grant giving mechanism. Elaborate on possible *alternative approaches* for future Sida support – the *regional vs a bilateral approach, ownership* and the *interest in the scientific community*;
- the *context* in which VicRes is active, interaction/networking/co-operation with other stakeholders such as universities, other research institutions, initiatives funded by Sida/NATUR, World Bank etc;
- the vision of VicRes, strategic planning – where is VicRes heading, what development is foreseen?

In particular

Discuss and assess,

- research agenda;
 - the *thematic areas* and the *relevance* with reference to problems/needs in the region, to policy- and decision-makers and to society,
 - *interdisciplinarity*,
- research council;
 - the quality of the *research council operations* in terms of procedures for calls, systems for and quality of peer review assessments, justification and transparency of criteria for selection of grantees, ceiling amounts for approved projects, need for concentration and cluster formation, new countries,
 - the cost *effectiveness* in the grant giving mechanism.
- scientific quality;
 - number of publications and scientific quality,
 - balance between Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.
- monitoring and evaluation, information and communication;
 - *methods of reporting results*, IT-issues and data bases,
 - the *cost effectiveness* of the monitoring and evaluation,
 - *dissemination strategies*,
 - *output, outcome and impact* – at local, national and regional level,
 - the *visibility* of VicRes, is VicRes known in the region?
- the *capacity* (in terms of staff members and skills) of the VicRes Secretariat.
- institutional capacity building;
 - the role of VicRes in *capacity building*, with regard to both individual as well as institutional capacity (i.e. networking, workshops etc).

4. Methodology and Timetable

Discussions should be held with IUCEA staff, the VicRes Regional Co-ordinator and the VicRes Secretariat, a selected number of VicSac/VicPac Committee members as well as VicRes grantees, institutions working in the Lake Victoria Basin etc.

The VicRes Regional Coordinator will provide logistical support to the consultant and facilitate contacts.

The evaluation shall be undertaken during xx, and a draft report shall be presented not later than xx.

The draft report will be discussed with IUCEA, the VicRes Regional Coordinator and the VicSac/VicPac before a final report is prepared.

5. References

- S Mantell, 2004: The Lake Victoria Research Initiative (VicRes), Management and Systems Audit.
- Annual Reports, Review Meetings, Annual Forum etc
- Organisational Review, VicRes and BIOEARN Programmes at IUCEA – (to be carried out beginning 08). *For information.*

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Appendix 2 Itinerary and Meetings

Date	Time	Activity/People Met
First trip 13–27 January, 2008		
Su 13/1	15.05	BA 779 to London (arr. 16.45)
	21.05	BA 063 to Entebbe
Mo 14/1	08.30	Arrival Entebbe; transport to Kampala; Sheraton Hotel
	12.30	Lunch with IUCEA/VicRes/BioEARN staff at Shanghai Restaurant
	14.00	Preliminary talks with Zadoc Ogutu at VicRes offices
Tu 15/1	09.00	Meeting at VicRes offices: Ogutu, Sokile and Mirembe Senoga
	14.00	Meeting at IUCEA offices: Chacha, Golola, Amri, Lutaaya, Mtasiwa
We 16/1	09.00	Makerere University: Muyonga, Twesigye, Naigaga, Rutaisire, Mwanja, Akol, Berga Lemaga, Barifaijo, Kasaka, Musisi, Olila, Muwanga, Kamoga, Nsumba (VicRes scientists)
	p.m.	Work in hotel
Th 17/1	09.00	Makerere University: Obua, Kirumira (VicSac members)
	13.00	Lunch with Prof. Nyiira
	p.m.	Work in hotel
Fr 18/1	09.00	VicRes offices
	10.30	Meet with BIO-EARN Coordinator Bananuka
	p.m.	Work in hotel
Sa 19/1		Work in hotel
Su 20/1	10.40	KQ 411 to Nairobi
	12.45	KQ 482 to Dar es Salaam (arr. 14.00); Hotel Protea Court Yard
Mo 21/1	09.00	UDSM: Moshi, Pauline, Valimba, Howell, Mutakyahwa, Minja, Kibazohi (VicRes scientists)
	p.m.	Work in hotel
Tu 22/1	09.00	COSTECH: Bwathondi, Kingamkono
	p.m.	Drive to Morogoro; One Hotel
		Visit to SUA; meet and dinner with Ishengoma
We 23/1	08.00	Meet with Moses Ndunguru at hotel
	09.00	Call on Prof. Jayro A. Matovelo, Director of Research and Post-Grad
	09.15	SUA: Kimaro, Mdegela, Ndabikunze, Munishi, Mganilwa
	p.m.	Back to DSM
Th 24/1	a.m./p.m.	Work in hotel
Fr 25/1	a.m.	Work in hotel
	13.30	Ardhi University: Kyessi, Makalle, Mushi, Lupala
Sa 26/1	a.m./p.m.	Work in hotel
	23.45	KL 571 to Amsterdam
Su 27/1	07.15	Arrival Amsterdam
	09.20	KL 1109 to Stockholm (arr. 11.25)
Second trip 9–26 February 2008		
Sa 9/2	06.20	KL 1106 to Amsterdam (arr. 08.40)
	10.20	KL 565 to Nairobi (arr. 20.10); Intercontinental Hotel
Su 10/2	a.m./p.m.	Work in hotel

Mo 11/2	09.15	Call on Dr. Charity Gichuki, Director Research, Dev. & Consultancy
	09.30	Kenyatta University: Team formation meeting; c. 80 participants
	11.30	Kenyan VicRes scientists: Gichuki, Lukhoba, Mwayuli, Ondigi, Siboe, Waudu, Wambugu, Obando, Thoruwa, Machocho, Mwangi, Kisovi, Mburugu, Shisanya, Kimiywe, Michieka, Kariuki, Abukutsa, Makokha, Chhabra, Kokwaro, Langat-Thoruwa
	p.m.	Work in hotel
Tu 12/2	a.m./p.m.	Work in hotel
We 13/2	06.00	Car to Egerton University (arrival 09.30)
	09.30	Call on Prof. J.M. Mathooko, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research & Extension
	10.30	Team formation meeting; 24 participants
	11.45	Kenyan VicRes scientists: Wegulo, Mavura, Deng, Ngétich
	14.00	Drive back to Nairobi
Th 14/2	a.m.	At ICRAF
	p.m.	Work in hotel
Fr 15/2	06.45	5H 0407 to Kisumu (arr. 07.30); car to Maseno University
	09.00	Call on Prof. Dominic W. Makawiti, DVC Academic Affairs, and Prof Stephen Agong, DVC Planning, Research and Extension Services
	10.00	Team formation meeting; 15 participants
	11.00	Kenyan VicRes scientists: Owuor (P.O.), Owuor (B), Onyango, Waindi, Nandi, Palapala, Korir, Radull, Netondo, Jondiko
	15.30	Meeting with Prof. Philip Aduma, VicSac member
	18.40	5H 0410 to Nairobi (arr. 19.25)
Sa 16/2	a.m./p.m.	Work in hotel
Su 17/2	a.m./p.m.	Work in hotel
Mo 18/2	a.m./p.m.	Work in hotel
Tu 19/2	a.m./p.m.	Work in hotel
We 20/2	a.m./p.m.	Work in hotel
Th 21/2	10.00	Meetings at ICRAF
	14.00	Meet Kikki Nordin and Torsten Andersson at Swedish Embassy in Nairobi
Fr 22/2	09.00	To Kampala on U7 203 (Ug. Airways) (arr. 10.05)
	11.00	Meeting at IUCEA/VicRes offices; reporting preliminary findings
	18.00	To Nairobi on U7 204 (arr. 19.05)
Sa 23/2	a.m./p.m.	Work in hotel
Su 24/2 Tu 26/2		Work not related to VicRes review
Tu 26/2	23.20	BA 64 to London (arr. 05.20 27/2)
We 27/2	07.15	BA 776 to Stockholm (arr. 10.45)
Tu 4/3–Su 9/3		Writing report in Stockholm

Appendix 3 People Met

Name/title/position	Institution/address
VicRes and IUCEA staff	
Amri, Ms. Lilian David Administrative Officer	Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) Plot 4 Nile Avenue, 3rd floor, EADB Building, P.O. Box 7110, Kampala, Uganda Lda264@yahoo.co.uk
Bananuka, Dr. John Armstrong Programme Coordinator	BIO-EARN c/o IUCEA, Plot 4 Nile Avenue, 3rd floor, EADB Building, P.O. Box 7110, Kampala, Uganda bananukaja@yahoo.com or bio_earn@iucea.org
Golola, Prof. Moses L. Deputy Secretary	Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) Plot 4 Nile Avenue, 3rd floor, EADB Building, P.O. Box 7110, Kampala, Uganda Luutu2000@yahoo.co.uk
Lutaaya, Ms. Gertrude K. Internal Control Systems Officer	Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) Plot 4 Nile Avenue, 3rd floor, EADB Building, P.O. Box 7110, Kampala, Uganda Lutaya_gertrude@yahoo.com
Mtasiwa, Dr. Benedict Projects and Programme Officer	Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) Plot 4 Nile Avenue, 3rd floor, EADB Building, P.O. Box 7110, Kampala, Uganda bnmtasiwa@hotmail.com
Nyaigotti-Chacha, Prof. Chacha Executive Secretary	Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) Plot 4 Nile Avenue, 3rd floor, EADB Building, P.O. Box 7110, Kampala, Uganda cnchacha@iucea.org or exsec@iucea.org
Ogututu, Prof. Zadoc Project Coordinator	Lake Victoria Research Initiative (VicRes) c/o IUCEA, Plot 4 Nile Avenue, 3rd floor, EADB Building, P.O. Box 7110, Kampala, Uganda Za2ogutu@yahoo.com
Senoga, Ms. Nightingale Miremba Project Assistant	Lake Victoria Research Initiative (VicRes) c/o IUCEA, Plot 4 Nile Avenue, 3rd floor, EADB Building, P.O. Box 7110, Kampala, Uganda nmirembes@yahoo.com
Sokile, Dr. Charles Project Officer	Lake Victoria Research Initiative (VicRes) c/o IUCEA, Plot 4 Nile Avenue, 3rd floor, EADB Building, P.O. Box 7110, Kampala, Uganda sokile@email.com
VicSac/VicPac members	
Aduma, Prof. Philip (VicSac)	Dept. of Biomedical Science, School of Public Health and Community Development, Maseno University Private Bag – 40105, Maseno, Kenya ragenaduma@hotmail.com
Bwathondi, Prof. Philip (VicSac)	Faculty of Aquatic Sciences and Technology (FAST), UDSM P.O. Box 35064, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania bwathondi@yahoo.co.uk
Kingamkono, Dr. Rose Rita Ag. Director General (VicPac – for Kofi)	Tanzania Commission for Science & Technology (COSTECH) P.O. Box 4302, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania rkingamkono@costech.or.tz

Kirumira, Prof. Edward K. Professor and Dean (VicSac)	Faculty of Social Sciences, Makerere University P.O. Box 7062, Kampala, Uganda ekirumira@ss.mak.ac.ug
Nyiira, Dr. Zerubabel M. (Ex-VicPac)	National Foundation for Research and Development P.O. Box 28840, Kampala, Uganda nyiirazeru@yahoo.com
Obua, Prof. Joseph (VicSac)	Dept. of Forest Biology and Ecosystems Management, Faculty of Forestry, Makerere University P.O. Box 7062, Kampala, Uganda obua@forest.mak.ac.ug

Ugandan scientists participating in VicRes research

Akol, Dr. Anne M. (Proj. No. 10)	Dept. of Zoology, Makerere University P.O. Box 7062, Kampala, Uganda aakol@sci.mak.ac.ug
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Appendix 4 Reports and References

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- VicRes, 2006. 3rd Annual Forum; Theme: *Towards Development of Policy Agendas*. May 2006.
- VicRes, 2007. Annual Report January to December 2006.
- VicRes, 2007. 4th Annual Forum; Theme: *Linking Research to Action*, May 2007.
- VicRes, 2007. 4th Annual Review Report 1st July 2006–30th June 2007; report from meeting held 14–15 August, 2007.
- VicRes, 2007. Dissemination Strategy. (Draft).
- VicRes, 2007. Management Policy and Operations Manual (draft 2nd edition).
- VicRes, 2007. Phase I Review Report.
- VicRes, 2008. 5th Annual Report January to December 2007.
- VicRes, 2008. Phase III Proposal 1st Jan 2009–31st December 2011. (Draft).

Appendix 5 Projects Analysed

Out of the total of 88 projects supported by VicRes between 2003 and 2007, the 44 (i.e. 50%) in the table below are the ones where I have had an opportunity to meet active scientists involved; the 14 with numbers in grey boxes are those which I have analysed in more detail

Proj. No.	Project name; year/cluster; scientists met
1	Impact of mining and other human activities on heavy metal loading and their physico-chemical effects on wetlands of LVB. Year/cluster: 2003; Pollution/Heavy metals Scientists met: Dr. Erasmus Barifaijo (MU), Dr. Andrew Muwanga (MU), Prof. M.K.D. Mutakyahwa (UDSM); plus M. Sc. students Nathan Musisi Lubowa and Moses Kasaka (MU)
2	Investigation of common radioisotopes and mercury levels, and assessment of their socio-economic impact on selected wetland ecosystems in the LVB: a case study of Uganda & Kenya. Year/cluster: 2003; Pollution/Heavy metals Scientists met: Dr. Irene Naigaga (MU)
6	Ethno-veterinary medicinal wetland plants of the LVB: a bioprospection. Year/cluster: 2003; Ethno-botany & IK Scientists met: Dr. Dennis Kamoga (MU)
7	Enhancing food and nutrition status of households in wetlands of LVB. Year/cluster: 2003; Ethno-botany & IK Scientists met: Prof. Judith N. Waudo (Lead scientist, KU)
8	Appropriate utilisation of Lake Victoria natural resources: prioritisation of wetland mushrooms for food, medical and biotechnological applications. Year/cluster: 2003; Ethno-botany & IK Scientists met: Dr. Deogracious Olila (Lead Scientist, MU), Prof. Pantaleo K.T Munishi (SUA), Dr. Leonard M. Kisovi (KU)
9	Development of appropriate breeding technologies for wetland Clariid fishes in the LVB, East Africa. Year/cluster: 2003; Fisheries & Aquaculture technologies Scientists met: Dr. Justus Rutaisire (Lead Scientist, MU)
10	System designs and guidelines for wetlands-based aquaculture in the LVB. Year/cluster: 2003; Fisheries & Aquaculture technologies Scientists met: Dr. Anne M. Akol (MU), Mr. Wilson W. Mwanja (Dept. of Fisheries Resources, Ug.)
14	Evaluation of potential land use/cover types for sediment filters on the Lake Victoria shoreline. Year/cluster: 2004; Pollution/Heavy metals Scientists met: Dr. Didas Kimaro (Lead Scientist, SUA)
15	Developing regional systems for sweet potato planting material supply, pollution mitigation and wetland stabilisation. Year/cluster: 2004; Pollution/Heavy metals Scientists met: Dr. Berga Lemaga, (Lead Scientist, CIP/Ug.), Mr. James Nsumba (CIP/Ug.)
17	Improved community land use for sustainable production and utilization of African indigenous vegetables in the LVR. Year/cluster: 2004; Ethno-botany & IK Scientists met: Prof. Mary O. Abukutsa-Onyango (Lead Scientist, JKUAT)
18	Management of aflatoxins and storage pests in maize using solar-biomass powered drying, storage and plant pesticides technologies in LVB for food security, health and biodiversity conservation. Year/cluster: 2004; Ethno-botany & IK Scientists met: Prof. Sumesh C Chhabra (Lead Scientist, KU), Dr. C.C.Langat-Thoruwa (KU), Dr. T.F.N. Thoruwa (KU)

19	Community based conservation of sacred habitats on the landscape in the LVB Year/cluster: 2004; Ethno-botany & IK Scientists met: Prof. Barack Owuor (Lead scientist, Maseno University)
20	The revival of aquaculture for food security and poverty alleviation among the rural communities in the LVR using all-male Nile tilapia Year/cluster: 2004; Fisheries & Aquaculture technologies Scientists met: Prof. E.N. Waindi (Lead scientist, Maseno University)
22	Land use management for sustainable livelihoods and poverty alleviation in the LVB: the case of urban agriculture in Mwanza, Entebbe and Kisumu. Year/cluster: 2004; Natural resources management and planning Scientists met: Dr. Alphonse Kyessi (Lead Scientist), Dr. Nimrod Mushi (both ARU)
23	Exploring linkages between land tenure, land use and food security and their implications on gender land resource management in the LVB. Year/cluster: 2004; Natural resources management and planning Scientists met: Prof. Francis N. Wegulo (Lead scientist, Egerton University)
25	Transferring soil carbon sequencing best management practices to smallholder farmers in Lake Victoria catchment ecosystem. Year/cluster: 2004; Natural resources management and planning Scientists met: Prof. Chris. A. Shisanya (Lead scientist, KU)
26	Sustainability and economic viability of farming systems among communities bordering the LVB wetlands. Year/cluster: 2004; Natural resources management and planning Scientists met: Dr. Wariara Kariuki (JKUAT)
29	Sustainable management and utilisation of wetland resources for poverty alleviation in Nzoia river, Nakivubo and Mwanza drainage basins. Year/cluster: 2004; Natural resources management and planning Scientists met: Dr. Charles Twesigye (Kyambogo Univ., Ug.)
30	Improving human welfare and environmental conservation by empowering farmers to combat soil fertility degradation through use of agro forestry green manure and rock phosphate. Year/cluster: 2004; Land use options Scientists met: Dr. Gitonga W. Mburugu (KU)
31	Evaluating the productivity of integrated rice-catfish culture systems and the effect of the integration on wetland communities in the LVB Year/cluster: 2004; Land use options Scientists met: Dr. John Radull (Lead scientist, Maseno University)
33	Improving farm yields and income through integrated aquaculture-agriculture in LVB. Year/cluster: 2004; Land use options Scientists met: Dr. Genevieve A. Mwayuli (CUEA)
35	Domestication of safe medicinal species for income generation, improvement of the herbal health care provision and conservation of the environment. Year/cluster: 2005; Ethno-botany & IK Scientists met: Dr. Mainen Moshi (ITM-MUHAS)
36	Improving indigenous banana juice production technology. Year/cluster: 2005; Ethno-botany & IK Scientists met: Dr. Oscar Kibazohi (UDSM)
40	Utilization of fresh water molluscs in sustainable community livelihood around Lake Victoria in view of existing cultures and stakeholder enterprise activities. Year/cluster: 2005; Ethno-botany & IK Scientists met: Prof. Elizabeth Kokwaro (KU)
42	An investigation of the poverty-environmental nexus: A case study of selected watersheds in the LVB. Year/cluster: 2005; Natural resources management and planning Scientists met: Dr. S.K Wambugu (KU)

43	Effect of land use changes in the Lake Victoria transboundary river basins on livelihoods and environmental health. Year/cluster: 2005; Natural resources management and planning Scientists met: Dr. A.M.P. Makalle (ARU), Dr. Joy Obando (KU)
45	Linking functional agro-biodiversity to land use and nutraceutical based cropping as a poverty and hidden hunger reduction strategy: A gender based pilot study on women smallholders in the LVB. Year/cluster: 2005; Natural resources management and planning Scientists met: Dr. Judith Kimiywe (Lead scientist, KU)
46	Physico-chemical and pharmacological evaluation for sustainable exploitation of <i>Toddalia asiatica</i> in the LVB. Year/cluster: 2005; Natural resources management and planning Scientists met: Dr. Rwaichi Minja (UDSM), Prof. Job Isaac Jondiko (Maseno)
47	Women groups in environmental conservation. The case of Mwanza, Jinja and Kisumu. Year/cluster: 2005; Natural resources management and planning Scientists met: Dr. John Lupala (ARU)
48	Agronomic and physiological characteristics related to improved productivity of rain fed rice and legumes in relay cropping system in the LVR Year/cluster: 2005; Land use options/alternative technologies Scientists met: Prof. John C. Onyango (Lead scientist, Maseno University)
49	Developing decentralised rice seed and fish fingerling production by farmers in the LVB. Year/cluster: 2005; Land use options/alternative technologies Scientists met: Mr. Moses Ndunguru (Mzumbe University, Tz.)
52	Evaluation of prospects and constraints to sustainable cocoyam (<i>Colocasia asculentum</i>) Year/cluster: 2005; Land use options/alternative technologies Scientists met: Dr. Valerie Palapala (Lead scientist, MMUST), Dr. Bernadette Ndabikunze (SUA), Mr. Mark K. Korir (Moi), Dr. Jacob O.M. Nandi (MMUST)
55	Introduction and evaluation of conservation of agricultural technologies for sustainable crop production in the LVB. Year/cluster: 2005; Land use options/alternative technologies Scientists met: Dr. Zacharia Mganilwa (Lead Scientist, SUA)
58	Environmental lead pollution, food safety and its impact on human health in LVB. Year/cluster: 2006; Pollution/heavy metals Scientists met: Dr. Anselimo O. Makokha (Lead scientist, KU)
62	Ethno-botanical production for insect pest management in subsistence agriculture in the LVB. Year/cluster: 2006; Ethno-botany & IK Scientists met: Prof. Arop L. Deng (Lead Scientist, Egerton University)
66	Evaluation of production and utilisation of pumpkins (<i>Cucurbita pepo</i> and <i>C. maxima</i>) by smallholder farmers for food security and poverty reduction in the LVB Year/cluster: 2006; Ethno-botany & IK Scientists met: Dr. Alice Ondiki (KU)
68	Bioactivity and value-added processing of medical plant products for the management of HIV/AIDS-fungal infections in LVB. Year/cluster: 2006; Ethno-botany & IK Scientists met: Dr. Catherine W. Lukhoba (UoN), Prof. George M. Siboe (UoN)
69	Assessing the effects of sugarcane production on environmental quality and community livelihoods in the LVB using integrated ecosystem and corporate social responsibility approaches. Year/cluster: 2006; Natural Resources Management Scientists met: Dr. Godfrey W. Netondo (Maseno University)
71	Trends in livestock production systems and their impacts on environment and livelihoods in LVB Year/cluster: 2006; Natural Resources Management Scientists met: Dr. Kibet A Ngétich (Egerton University)

75	Evaluation of the response of different tea cultivars to growing environments & agronomic inputs in EA countries. Year/cluster: 2007; Natural Resources Management Scientists met: Prof. P. Okinda Owuor (Maseno University)
77	Enhancing integrated pest & disease management strategies in the production of green gram in parts of LVB. Year/cluster: 2007; Natural Resources Management Scientists met: Dr. Alex K. Machocho (KU)
83	Banana tissue culture and nutrient enhancement for food security and income generation among people living with AIDS in the LVB. Year/cluster: 2007; Land use options Scientists met: Dr. John Muyonga (Lead Scientist, MU), Ms. Mary Nduta Mwangi (KU)
87	A survey of indigenous salts consumed around Lake Victoria: Physico-chemical characterization, purity, methods of preparation and possible wider marketing Year/cluster: 2007; Aquaculture and fisheries Scientists met: Prof. Ward J. Mavura (Egerton University)
88	Enhancement of sustainable productivity in fish in Lake Victoria through control of pollutants with emphasis on endocrine disruptors and microbial pathogens. Year/cluster: 2007; Aquaculture and fisheries Scientists met: Dr. Robinson Mdegela (Lead Scientist, SUA)

Appendix 6 Publications and Reports from VicRes-supported Research

(as of December 2007)

A. Refereed Journal Papers

Pollution & Heavy Metal Cluster

Muwanga, A & Barifaijo, E (2006) Impact of industrial activities on heavy metal loading and their physico-chemical effects on wetlands of Lake Victoria Basin (Uganda). *African Journal of Science and Technology* (AJST), Science and Engineering Series, Vol.7. No. 1. pp 51–63

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E. Forthcoming Manuscripts

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Appendix 7 Call for Proposals 2008

Sida

IUCEA

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Website: www.vicres.net

Research Grant Competition 2008

The Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) is pleased to announce the 6th Round of the Lake Victoria Research (*VicRes*) Initiative Grant Competition. *VicRes* is funded by Sida/SAREC to support scientific research on sustainable livelihoods in the Lake Victoria Basin. A team of researchers drawn from different disciplines can get up to USD 50,000 per year (renewable twice) to cover travel, purchase of equipment, expendable supplies, literature review and fieldwork *but not* salaries and other remunerations.

VicRes grant will be awarded to an inter-disciplinary team of researchers with PhD or one headed by a PhD holder. The researchers must be staff of Universities, Research Institutes and other Institutions and, citizens of EAC Partner States of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. A foreigner will qualify to apply for this grant if her/his contract and/or sabbatical leave in the qualified institution span the duration of the funding period.

Proposals can be in *any one* of the following current Clusters *ethno botany and indigenous knowledge, aquaculture, pollution/heavy metals, natural resources management and planning* and *Land use options* and proposed Clusters of *HIV/AIDs*, and *Water Resources*, focusing on biological, chemical or physical as well as socio-economic, cultural and political aspects of poverty reduction and environmental restoration. Priority will be given to projects that have gender and environmental considerations as essential components of wealth generation and bio-technological innovations.

To enhance participation of potential researchers, the VicRes Secretariat will conduct team formation meetings in the following Centres:

- 1 *Burundi*: Burundi University (8 Jan. 2008)
- 2 *Rwanda*: National University at Butare (10th Jan. 2008) and KIST (11 Jan. 2008).
- 3 *Uganda*: Makerere University (25th Feb), Mbarara University (27th Feb. 2008), Uganda Christian University (28 Feb. 2008), Mbale University (29th Feb. 2008)
- 4 *Kenya*: Kenyatta University (11th Feb. 2008), Egerton (13th Feb. 2008), Moi University (14 Feb. 2008), Maseno (15th Feb. 2008)
- 5 *Tanzania*: USDM (18th Feb. 2008), Sokoine University (19th Feb. 2008), Tumaini University (6th Feb. 2008), Zanzibar State University (21st Feb. 2008).

Those interested are advised to attend the Meeting at the Centre nearest to their institution.

Concept harmonization and team member familiarization workshop will be held in Jinja between 16th and 22nd March 2008. Those, whose concepts will have been accepted, and are interacting for the first time, will be invited to participate. Note that you can still submit a full proposal without attending the

harmonization workshop.

All qualified applicants are encouraged to download 2008 format and proposal guidelines from www.vicres.net. Dully completed application forms should be submitted to: VicRes Coordinator as soft copies BEFORE 5pm, 18th April 2008. *Applications received after this date will not be considered.*

Prof. Z.A Ogutu
VicRes Coordinator

Appendix 8 Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACTS	African Centre for Technology Studies
AF	Annual Forum
AGM	Annual General Meeting
AIDS	Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome
ARDC	Aquaculture Research and Development Centre
ARI	Agriculture Research Institute
BIO-EARN	East African Regional Programme and Research Network for Biotechnology, Bio-safety and Biotechnology Policy Development
BUP	Baltic University Programme
CIAT	International Centre for Tropical Agriculture
COSTECH	Commission for Science and Technology (Tanzania)
CUEA	Catholic University of Eastern Africa
EAC	East African Community
EADB	East African Development Bank
EARC	East African Research Council
ECOVIC	East African Communities Management of Lake Victoria Resources
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
FIRRI	Fisheries Resources Research Institute (Uganda)
GPS	Global Positioning Systems
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
ICRAF	World Agroforestry Centre
IDC	Information and Documentation Centre
IFS	International Foundation for Science (Stockholm, Sweden)
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
IUCEA	Inter-University Council for East Africa
JKUAT	Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology
KARI	Kenya Agriculture Research Institute
KEFRI	Kenya Forestry Research Institute
KEMFRI	Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute
KEMRI	Kenya Medical Research Institute
KIPPRA	Kenya Institute for Public Policy and Research Analysis
KU	Kenyatta University
LVB	Lake Victoria Basin
LVBC	Lake Victoria Basin Commission
LVDP	Lake Victoria Development Partnership programme

LVEMP	Lake Victoria Environmental Management Programme
LVFO	Lake Victoria Fisheries Organisation
LVI	Lake Victoria Initiative
LVRLAC	Lake Victoria Region Local Authorities Association
LVRC	Lake Victoria Resource Centre (at EAC Secretariat)
MMUST	Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (Kakamega, Kenya)
MSA	Management and Systems Audit
MU	Makerere University (Uganda)
NARO	National Agricultural Research Organization (Uganda)
NCST	National Council for Science and Technology (Kenya)
NGO	Non-governmental Organisations
NMK	National Museums of Kenya
NRM	Natural Resources Management
PRAPACE	Regional network for the improvement of Potato and Sweet Potato in East and Central Africa
RCO	Regional Coordination Office (VicRes Secretariat)
SAREC	Swedish Agency for Research Co-operation
SEI	Stockholm Environment Institute
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SUA	Sokoine University of Agriculture (Morogoro, Tanzania)
TAFIRI	Tanzania Fisheries Research Institute
TPRI	Tropical Pesticides Research Institute (Arusha, Tanzania)
UDSM	University of Dar es Salaam
UNCST	Uganda National Council for Science and Technology
UoN	University of Nairobi
USD	United States of America Dollars
VicPac	VicRes Policy Advisory Committee
VicRes	Lake Victoria Research Initiative
VicSac	VicRes Scientific Advisory Committee
VicSec	VicRes Secretariat
VSC	VicRes Steering Committee

Recent Sida Evaluations

2008:61 Regional AIDS Training Network (RATN), Strategic Plan 2004–2008

Lovemore Zinyama, Peter Mazikana, Phares Mujinja
Sida

2009:01 Sida's Trade-Related Assistance: Results and Management

Karlis Goppers, Claes Lindahl
Sida

Recent Sida Reviews

2009:01 Swedish Health Forum in South Africa – from point of view of the Swedish Partner

Staffan Engblom
Sida

2009:02 Assessment of Forum International de Montréal (FIM)

Charlotte Örnemark, Line Friberg-Nielsen.
Sida

**2009:03 Namibia – Sweden Development Cooperation in the area of
Public Administration 1990–2006
Description Analysis and Lessons Learned**

Lage Bergström.
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**2009:04 Apoyo Institucional de Suecia (Asdi) para el Instituto Nacional de la Mujer (INAM),
durante el período 2003–2008**

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**2009:05 The Swedish Support to the South African Revenue Service through
an Institutional Cooperation with the Swedish Tax Agency, 1998–2008**

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Sida

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Kerry S. McNamara
Sida

2009:08 Sida-Amhara Rural Development Programme 1997–2008

Bo Tegnäs, Eva Poluha, Seán Johnson, Sosen Demissie, Yared Fekade Mandefro
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Scientific Evaluation of the Lake Victoria Research (VicRes)

VicRes is a regional research council with a competitive grant giving mechanism and peer-reviewing of project proposals, open to scientists in the 5 EAC countries. As of 2008, more than 90 projects involving ca 400 scientists were supported. This evaluation concluded that "... VicRes is a very well functioning programme, very successful and remarkably cost effective". However, it also concluded that the number of scientific publications were quite low, but increasing.

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