

University of Namibia



Developing long-lasting academia-industry partnerships

Programme objective | **To stimulate ties with industry to increase the scale of impact**

Region | **Southern Africa**

Introduction

The University of Namibia (UNAM) has acted as a hub university in two consecutive two-year long HEP SSA projects since 2017. The two projects received a total funding of £340,000. The 2017 project developed academia-industry partnerships with local industries in Namibia to improve the quality of engineering education through joint research and industry secondments. The subsequent 2019 project was built on these established partnerships and enhanced their scale and scope by focusing on translational research and commercialisation activities.

Spoke universities

- Durban University of Technology, South Africa
- University of Nairobi, Kenya
- Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia

Industry partners

- Weatherly Mining Namibia
- Navachab Gold Mines Namibia
- Ohorongo Cement Factory
- Namibia electric power utility NamPower and South African power utility Eskom
- Namibia Water Corporation (NamWater)
- Rolls Royce (UK)
- Rossing Uranium Mines Namibia

UK partners

- University of Cambridge



Main activities

Through academic staff secondments, student internships, workshops and mutual visits with the University of Cambridge, UNAM successfully built relations with key industry partners during the 2017-19 HEP SSA project. The project saw 24 staff members seconded to industry – 17 staff from UNAM and seven from spoke universities – almost double the planned number, as the positive feedback from initial secondees spurred a great demand from academic staff for secondment places. Further activities could therefore capitalise on these established relations and focus on entrepreneurship and commercialisation through the development of joint academia-industry research projects as well as industry-led applied research.

Results and impact

A key result from the HEP SSA projects at UNAM has been the establishment of several **long-term partnerships between the universities (hub and spoke) and local industry** going well beyond the duration of the project lifetime. The initial agreements to host students and seconded academic staff were expanded to include **joint applied research projects focusing on industry-based problems**. These were co-funded by industry, both at the hub and spoke universities. The academic secondments have also led to new industrial contacts and collaborations and the signing of multiple long-term Memoranda of Understanding. These results also filtered through to UNAM which has become more open and industry oriented.

The **industry-led applied research projects during the second HEP SSA project** were designed to provide opportunities for students to be exposed to real-world problems, as well as to address the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and pursue commercial opportunities. One such example is UNAM's collaboration with NamWater on the sustainable desalination pilot plant to produce water for human consumption, as well as for desert agriculture. Other examples focus on lithium mining (UNAM), provision of low-cost wireless internet (Nairobi) and research on microalgae for food production (Addis Ababa).



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Sustainability of the results

In addition to the immediate results and enhanced industrial collaboration, the HEP SSA projects have been instrumental in **building capacity** at the participating universities in several ways, helping to ensure the long-term sustainability of the achieved results. Project funds directed at PhD tuition and a post-doc fellowship have enabled access to locally unavailable research infrastructure for materials and water research. The **seconded university staff reportedly apply their industry experience in the courses they teach**, which has had a positive influence on the curriculum and teaching methods. The experience with the HEP SSA grants also demonstrated to UNAM the need to build more project management capacity. As a result, the university has now established a Centre for Grants Management and Project Services.



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