Namibian International Centre of Excellence (NICE) for Value Chain Economic Development

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Abstract
Vision: The University of Namibia, through its proposed Namibian International Centre of Excellence (NICE) for Value Chain Economic Development will generate an integral system to reduce poverty by increasing value within all stages of the production to market.
Education in the Value Chain approach will provide a strong, long-term benefit for Namibia and the region. One goal is to strengthen the human capacity, curriculum, and outreach programs in higher education addressing economic growth and poverty reduction in local communities through a value chain approach. Indicators for this goal impact all areas of higher education:

- Creation of a Centre of Excellence for Value Chain Economic Development;
- Enhanced University of Namibia Faculty of Agriculture and Natural Resources outreach activities;

- Improved effectiveness of the Teaching Learning Improvement Unit;
- Improved University of Namibia Faculty of Agriculture and Natural Resources research capacity; and
- Improved University of Namibia Faculty of Agriculture and Natural Resources university ranking.

An additional goal is to improve the capacity of primary and secondary teachers to provide relevant agricultural skills to their students. Indicators for this goal focus on individual communities:

- Primary and secondary school teachers trained to incorporate agriculture in their curricular;
- Establish School or Community Agricultural Processing and Training Programs at UNAM Regional Centres.

The 10-year project complements the Namibian government’s efforts in addressing development challenges in Namibia.

The long-term partnerships among the University of Namibia, Texas A&M University, Michigan State University, University of Arizona, and Louisiana State University provide the cultural knowledge and the educational expertise to enhance the University of Namibia’s agricultural education and teacher training/preparation programs in support of identified national development goals. Faculty improvement and curriculum enhancement will focus on advancing and building linkages between research, teaching and outreach to provide new entrepreneurial strategies for rural farmers based on sustainable natural product development. Ultimately, a Center of Excellence in Agricultural Value Chain Education is envisioned as a unique resource for educational institutions throughout Southern Africa whereby faculty and students will increase their knowledge of production methods, marketing strategies, and the potential for public-private partnerships, and will work directly with rural farmers to employ these techniques.

Expanded partnerships with government agencies, NGOs, local organizations such as the Namibian Women Summit, the Women’s Action for Development, the Agricultural Scientific Society of Namibia (AGRISSON) and the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE) also will be key to achieving overall project goals. In addition, a co-hosted AIAEE/AGRISSON conference, to be held in Namibia in 2011, is in the planning stages and will be a primary venue for strengthening these partnerships. The implementation of the proposed strategic plan will lead to improved agricultural education academic programs, curricula, and leadership particularly in agricultural value chain methods and, ultimately, to economic gains for rural farmers in Namibia and the Southern Africa region.

**Keywords:** Namibian International Center, International development, value chain economic development, partnerships