



**REPORT ON STAFF EXCHANGE VISIT TO THE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE IN
PHYTOCHEMICALS TEXTILES AND RENEWABLE ENERGY (PTRE)**

SUBMITTED TO

**DR. MAVUTO TEMBO
DIRECTOR, ACENUB**

&

**PROF. FANUEL KAPUTE
DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH**

SUBMITTED BY

**WANANGWA K. MSOWOYA
MONITORING AND EVALUATION COORDINATOR FOR ACENUB PROJECT**

13th MAY, 2024

Introduction

A Staff Exchange visit to the Centre of Excellence in Phytochemicals Textiles and Renewable Energy (ACE II - PTRE) under the School of Sciences and Aerospace Studies, at Moi University in Kenya was undertaken by Wanangwa Msowoya, Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator for the African Centre of Excellence in Neglected and Underutilized Biodiversity (ACENUB) of Mzuzu University in Malawi from 28th April 2024 to 11th May, 2024. The visit was undertaken on invitation from the Centre Leader for ACEII PTRE, Sir. Prof. Ambrose Kiprop. While on the exchange, I was hosted by Prof. Fredrick Oluoch Nyamwala, the Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator for ACE II - PTRE.

During the Staff Exchange visit, a number of engagements, involving both staff and students, were organized for purposes of promoting skills transfer, experiential learning, establishment of the ACENEB/Mzuzu University – ACE II - PTRE/Moi University linkages and initiating collaborative projects related to the role of neglected and underutilized biodiversity in Phytochemicals Textiles and Renewable Energy, focusing on phytochemical screening, extraction, detection and quantification of dyes from indigenous plants. Since the primary thematic discipline of PTRE is in the areas of Analytical Chemistry, Textile Engineering, Industrial Engineering and Renewable Energy, ACENUB leveraged on these during the visit so as to acquire worthwhile skills that can be utilized to improve ACENUB and Malawi's competitiveness in the region by replacing external suppliers of manufacturing gradually since our markets are largely dominated by imports from outside the region. During the visit the following visits were conducted to (1) RIVATEX East Africa Limited, a Ultra-modern production plant and the largest textile industry in East Africa, which belongs to Moi-University under the School of Sciences and Aerospace Studies. (2) Laboratories that were supported by PTRE, (3) Newly constructed PTRE Centre, (4) Current center office, (5) Transport section that are housing the center land cruiser and the 60 sitter bus.

Objectives

The main objective of the visit was to intensify the ACENUB's drive of strengthening linkages with local, regional and international universities, agriculture knowledge institutions and agro-based industry in agri-food system skills development. Specifically, the Staff Exchange visit was aimed at:

- i. Monitoring and Evaluation skills in managing African Centres of Excellence

- (ACEs),
- ii. Scheduling of short courses within the region and national,
 - iii. Resource Mobilisation strategies, and
 - iv. Student Enterprise and Projects.

Activity Description

During the Staff Exchange visit, the following major activities were carried out:

- i.** Courtesy call to the ACE II - PTRE to meet the Center Leader, Sir Prof. Ambrose Kiprop and the Host, Prof. Fredrick Oluoch Nyamwala, the Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator for ACE II - PTRE. to discuss areas of common interest to feed into the draft MoU between ACENUB and PTRE.
- ii.** Consultative meetings with PTRE staff to introduce ACENUB to PTRE and benchmarking/experiential learning from PTRE.
- iii.** Consultative meetings with the PTRE - Phytochemistry staff to introduce ACENUB to PTRE and for benchmarking/experiential learning from PTRE- Photochemistry Staff
- iv.** Discussing areas of common interest and drafting a Partnership Agreement between Mzuzu University (ACENUB) – and Moi University (ACE II - PTRE)
- v.** Tour around the School of Sciences and Aerospace Studies facilities for Phytochemicals Textiles and Renewable Energy.
- vi.** Industrial Visit to RIVATEX East Africa Limited, an Ultra-modern production plant and the largest textile industry in East Africa and to learn Management of Incubation Hubs – In town (satellite campus).
- vii.** De-briefing session with the ACE II – PTRE Center Leader, Sir Prof. Ambrose Kiprop and the Host, Prof. Fredrick Oluoch Nyamwala, the Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator.

Partnership Agreement between ACENUB and ACE II – PTRE

The objective of the Africa Center of Excellence project is to promote regional specialization among participating universities in areas that address regional development challenges and strengthen the capacities of these universities to deliver quality training and applied research. The overall development objective of the project is to meet the labor market demands for skills within specific areas where there are skill shortages affecting development, economic growth and poverty reduction. Partnership is a key modality of national and regional collaboration. The ACE is required to serve as a hub for a network of partner institutions including academic and industry partners. The objectives of this partnership are to; raise the quality and improve capacity of research and education; enhance innovation through commercialization and uptake of research, innovation and technology outputs.

The following were the areas of common interests that were identified to form a basis for the partnership agreement between ACENUB and ACE II – PTRE:

- i.** Staff Collaborative Research.
- ii.** Staff and postgraduate student exchange.
- iii.** Masters and PhD students training.
- iv.** Joint research publications.
- v.** Sharing of research facilities/equipment.
- vi.** Joint proposal application.
- vii.** Joint supervision of postgraduate students.
- viii.** Exchange of information: books, publications and other relevant e-resources.
- ix.** Holding joint conferences, workshops and seminars.

The MOU was received by MOI, Unfortunately due to the changes the document is being reviewed by the legal team.

Lessons leant from ACE II – PTRE

The following are some of the key lessons from ACE II – PTRE during the visit:

- i. Team work is very essential. PTRE ensured that everyone was actively involved at each and every project implementation phase. Specifically, the following key sections, Administration, departmental sections of the center and key supporting service sections like finance and procurement.
- ii. Academic Center Leaders/ Thematic Leaders were given individual TORs. The TORs among others included the following;
 - Initiate research related activities in the department under the center.
 - Ensure there are progress in training of PhD and MSc Students in related to the department/thematic area. This also ensured that the quarterly reports for the students were adhered to in collaboration with the supervisors, head of department and students.
 - Consolidate Publications specific in their specific area
 - Organise data collection and field collection of specimens in this area.
 - Initiate linkages of student's community and companies within the program specific areas
- iii. Some PBC has special coordinators. PTRE had a special coordinator for short course and workshops. This enabled the coordinator to achieve the target within the shortest period. It was also noted that the short courses were for free to the participants and the Center covered all logistical arrangements such as staff facilitation fees and refreshments.
- iv. Staff Motivation contributed to the success of the center. PTRE understood that the ACE was additional work for the members. Hence it motivated the following sections of the University; Management, Students Supervisors, Members of staff this include lectures and supporting staff of the hosting departments and Procurement.
- v. Partnership is vital for incubation and spin offs. PTRE entered into partnership strategically with partners that supported incubation process.

- vi. Timely Initiation of the procurement process is the key to timely procurement of goods and services.
- vii. Checking the student progress is a MUST for the Center. In order to keep the students on track the students should be required to report every quarter. The center adopted the University template. However, the template need buy in of the supervisors and Head of Departments to be implemented effectively.
- viii. On resource Mobilization, The Center has a dedicated team for proposal and consultancies development. This has also contributed greatly to sustainability of the center. The Center is able to recruit more students even after the project period.
- ix. Project Visibility. The Center is for the University hence continuously engagement of university staff is key in developing a sustainable center. The center has branded vehicles (Land Cruiser and Bus), Branded pens, note books, calendars, and tagged all the materials that have been bought by the center.

Pictorial Report



Figure 1: Courtesy call to PTRE -Centre leader Sir Prof. Ambrose Kiprof(Center) , Prof. Fredrick Oluoch Nyamwala (left) and Mr. Wanangwa Msowoya (Right)



Figure 2 & 3: Visiting Centre of Excellence in Phytochemicals, Textile and Renewable Energy (PTRE) new building



Figure 4&5 Visiting Incubation Centre Hosted at Rivatex (Rivatex is a textile company that is owned by Moi University)