

# Developing the Human Factor through the USAID Initiative for Long-Term Training and Capacity Building (UILTCB) Program

## Background

USAID, in partnership with Michigan State University, has designed and implemented an innovative master's degree training and institutional capacity building program involving U.S. universities. This program started as a pilot program in 2005 in response to the recommendation by the Board for International Food and Agriculture Development (BIFAD) to USAID to renew its commitment to graduate degree training and to test innovative and cost-effective approaches to training.

## Program Objectives

- To enhance the performance and competitiveness of institutions in developing countries identified by USAID missions as strategic to transformational development.
- To provide Master of Science degree training from a U.S. university in program areas that contribute to USAID's strategic objectives (SOs) related to agriculture-led economic growth, trade, and natural resource management.

## Unique Program Features

1. Partnership with USAID Country Missions. USAID missions partner in the design and implementation of the program, including the selection of the host country (HC) institutions, trainee candidates, and area of study.
2. Focus on Institutional Capacity Building and Rigorous Selection Process. Institutions meeting criteria established by the Mission must submit an application, nominate employees for training and be evaluated and approved before the trainee candidate(s) from that institution is/are considered for the program.
3. Master of Science Degrees from U.S. Universities. Only M.S. degree training at U.S. universities is currently supported by UILTCB. The program seeks to place trainee candidates at universities with high quality internationally recognized programs in priority areas for the HC institution and candidate.

4. Low Program Cost. The UILTCB incorporates design elements that keep costs low, including 1. limiting residency in the U.S. to one year, 2. requesting cost share by the HC institution for GRE and TOEFL exams, airfare, research expenses, etc., and 3. encouraging participant U.S. universities and professors to cost share by waiving out-of-state tuition and leveraging financial support from stakeholders and grants to assist in covering research expenses.
5. Research Project Addresses Needs of Institution. Research projects are conceptualized and designed to address priority needs and goals of the HC institution or organization. The research is conducted in the HC with assistance from the home institution and in-country supervision by a faculty member at a local university.
6. Opportunity for U.S. University Professors to Build Linkages with HC Institutions. The program supports travel by major professors to the host country in the second year of the degree program to foster institutional linkages with the trainee's institution, which can potentially lead to future collaborations independent of the UILTCB,
7. Trainees and Institutions Connected to USAID Mission (on a need basis). In partnership with other in-country USAID funded programs, short courses and professional enrichment activities can be integrated into the training program in the second year of the degree program to inform trainees and their respective institutions of USAID mission strategic objectives and funded development programs and to network with them long-term.
8. Centrally Managed Program by an Academic Institution. A central program management office based in a U.S. university (currently Michigan State University [MSU]) helps achieve economies in management costs and offers the advantage of understanding academic program requirements and negotiating innovative features within the context of meeting the goals and objectives of USAID.

## Advantages to USAID Missions of the UILTCB Model

The UILTCB model provides a flexible, effective, low-cost mechanism by which USAID country missions can achieve training and institutional capacity building goals in accord with its Framework for Foreign Assistance.

Advantages of the UILTCB model of potential importance to USAID country missions include:

- Short Program Length. Since the program only involves two years of master's level training, the program can be implemented within a three-year period (includes one year of planning).
- Cost-effective. The average cost to complete an MS degree at a U.S. university is approximately \$65,000 to 75,000 per student (includes administrative expenses).
- Potential for Cost-share. Since the program is directly linked with building institutional capacity, cost-share by the home country institution can be a program requirement, reducing the burden on USAID.
- Potential for Leveraging Other Resources. There is potential to link the institutional capacity building/training program with on-going HC USAID initiatives and thus leverage additional resources from NGOs, donor agencies, and foundations because of UILTCB program alignment with USAID Mission Strategic Objectives.
- Targeted institutions. USAID can design the program to target specific institutions of strategic importance for capacity building, such as private sector businesses, government ministries and agencies, academic institutions, etc.
- U.S. Degree and Experience. The trainees receive their degrees from a U.S. university. Moreover, the one-year residency at a university in the United States provides opportunities for the trainee to learn about American culture and society, to develop friendships with U.S. citizens, and establish long-term ties with institutions in the U.S.
- Placement in Programs at U.S. University of Choice. As long as trainee candidates meet the admissions requirements for graduate programs at their university of choice, the program can submit applications and seek admission of trainees in any public land-grant and minority serving university in the U.S.
- Guaranteed Return to Home Country. Since trainees are employees of institutions in their host country, receive salary support during their educational leave, and will be returning to positions in their home institutions, the return rate should be 100 percent. The J-1 visa also ensures that trainees return to their home countries.
- Linkage to USAID Mission. Mission partnership in training program implementation and follow-up activities (e.g., in-country short courses, etc.) facilitates the establishment of linkages and networking between USAID and strategic institutions and individuals (trainees) in positions of influence within the host countries.
- Flexibility in Programming. Arrangements can be made to augment the degree program with course offerings, short courses, and other enrichment activities in the home country in partnership with national universities.

## Contact Information

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## Program Achievements

Under the aegis of the UILTCB, training and capacity building programs have been implemented in Ghana, Zambia, and Malawi, encompassing the areas of agribusiness, production agriculture, food science and technology, food safety, nutrition, forestry, agricultural economics, agricultural statistics, and livestock and fisheries systems. To date, 51 candidates from these three countries have been supported through the UILTCB program for M.S. degree training and competitively placed in graduate programs at U.S. universities, such as Purdue, Virginia Tech, University of Florida, Michigan State, North Carolina State, Texas Tech, Texas A&M, University of Minnesota, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Kansas State, and Penn State.