

Minutes 5/9/06 Meeting on Africa Initiative

Present:

Becky Boger GLOBE
Roelof Bruintjes RAL
Greg Byrd (for Tim Spangler) COMET
Ed Geary GLOBE
Kaye Howe NSDL
Ben Lamptey RAL
Arlene Laing MMM/COMET
Mary Marlino DLESE
Mitch Moncrieff MMM
Anne Oman (for Peter Backlund) NCAR
Raj Pandya SOARS
Mohan Ramamurthy UNIDATA
Bob Roesch HR
Marianne Weingroff DLESE

Each of the attendees gave a brief introduction and the reason for their interest in Africa. Most had worked on projects in Africa; two were native of Africa (Roelof and Ben). Some were very familiar with Africa and were currently working on projects in Africa (AMMA and GLOBE in particular).

Bob gave an overview of Shirley Malcom's e-mail concerning the AAAS initiative; he explained that information was preliminary and that neither he nor Rick Anthes have discussed this in any detail with Shirley.

From Shirley's e-mail to Rick:

AAAS is considering working toward collaborations that focus on institutional capacity building and research support in areas of interest throughout Africa. Not just selecting a small number of countries (and institutions within those countries) with whom to work.

The science research themes must be critical to Africa and where research infrastructure of the US can add real value, such as through collaborative research, exchanges, etc., wherever the African researchers may be based.

The first topical choice that has been floated is "water" and all the attendant areas associated therewith...(water and agriculture, water and health, etc.)

UCAR may have an opportunity to get in on the ground floor and affect the direction/amount of any collaboration.

Bob stated the goals of today's meeting

- a. An informal response for Shirley Malcom for the w/o 5/15 at the UCAR BOT Meeting.
- b. Next Steps

Under general discussion, all of the attendees contributed, and highlights of the discussion are listed below:

UCAR has a lot of involvement in Africa now, and that it would be appropriate for UCAR to coordinate the current activities, regardless of the AAAS initiative. NCAR previously inventoried African collaborations and Anne provided spreadsheets with that information.

There was discussion about a further or updated inventory, with a recommendation that it could be categorized into four sections: Research, Development/Education/Training, Infrastructure, and Data. It was also suggested that a matrix could be developed showing short term or currently funded activities and longer term or unfunded activities.

There was considerable discussion about the size and breadth of Africa. While the AAAS initiative focuses on all of Africa, we need to be mindful of regional alliances and the logistics of working with a large diverse continent. Some of the groupings within Africa are language based (French or English) some groupings are geographic. There are wide regional differences in language, culture, infrastructure, and maturity of scientific and academic institutions

Water was seen as an excellent focus for an initiative and has links throughout much of the research focus for UCAR.

Any initiatives need to be Africa centric with Africa based entities taking the major role in the initiative. One suggestion would be to hold one or more workshops in Africa to bring local entities together to determine needs and focus.

Sustainability was discussed as a major issue. Short term initiatives will not have a lasting impact, and the development of capacity and people needs to be a key component to ensure sustainability.

Other partners in the initiative were discussed. All UCAR Member Institutions, especially Penn State, OU, Howard, FSU, CSU, MIT who have strong African collaborations or projects (this is not a comprehensive list). UCAR members are essential partners in an initiative like this. HBCUs in general may be potential partners. One other group with whom UCAR should liaise is the CLIVAR Africa Panel.

A significant UCAR involvement in Africa would be critically comprised unless new sources of funding are available especially in the present situation where funding is level (at best).

The European community has been more involved in African initiatives; the European Union has funded AMMA at the ~\$20M level. USAID is a potential source for funding, but is more likely to be involved if the request comes from African entities than US entities. The World Bank was also mentioned as a resource.

At the conclusion of the meeting, there was general, enthusiastic agreement that UCAR should be involved with the AAAS initiative. There were questions about the specifics of the initiative and more information would be needed.

There was also agreement that there would be value in coordinating and leveraging all UCAR activities in Africa whether or not the AAAS initiative takes root.

For next steps, we will wait for additional information from Rick following his discussion with Shirley.