

Minutes from the 6th DDRN General Assembly

Wednesday June 15, 2011 - 13:45 -16:00

IGG, University of Copenhagen

Agenda:

1. Election of chairperson and secretary for the general assembly and approval of the agenda
2. Report by the board by Olav Jull Sørensen, vice chairperson of DDRN
3. Status of current initiatives for the continuation of selected DDRN activities
 - a. Discussion and possible decision on sustainability initiatives, including amendment of articles of association
4. If applicable: Election of board members and substitutes
5. Any other business

Ad 1. Election of chairperson and secretary, and approval of the agenda

Olav Jull Sørensen (OJS) opened the General Assembly and welcomed participants. Søren Jeppesen (SJ) was elected chairperson of the meeting and Iona Eberle from the DDRN secretariat took minutes. The agenda was approved without amendments.

Ad 2. Report by the board, by Olav Jull Sørensen

OJS gave a brief presentation of the secretariat's activities, achievements and challenges encountered during the last year. Throughout the last year the DDRN secretariat has both carried out usual activities, while simultaneously rounding up the work of DDRN as well as actively trying to find new platforms and possibilities through which to continue DDRN.

A number of advances were made in the field of communication during the past year, and the website and online services have continually been improved. An online member forum was introduced; however, actual usage of the forum amongst members was limited. There has been a 60 per cent increase in online profiles, and 20 per cent increase in members. Communication training workshops were held in Tanzania (research communication) and Bangladesh (social media). While research communication e.g in the Tanzanian example has received much attention, in other research projects it has proven difficult to mobilise support for research communication. Linkages to other communication units were strengthened; and a new online Danida Research Portal is in the process of being established together with NIAS, CABI, and Danida Fellowship Centre (DFC), where it will be hosted.

In total, four research mappings and overviews were produced, and a number of events hosted together with other stakeholders, although the amount had to be reduced due to other key activities being prioritised. The four working groups and task forces have been active throughout the period, and a new working group on agriculture and development was established. A few member-driven activities were supported, including funding for participation at seminars abroad. Yet, it was highlighted that activities were found not to be very innovative, and that funding to

members' travels rarely benefited more than the individual travelling. In terms of student-oriented activities, inspiration seminars were held, the student webpage updated, Danida travel grants assessed; and a Science Shop has been established. While students have shown much interest in the Science Shop, few however actually entered into agreements with the parties offering study proposals.

Overall, anticipated activities have been carried out, and the budget has been kept. Over the course of the year it emerged that collaboration between DDRN and BSU (Building Stronger Universities) would not be possible. It now remains to be discussed how DDRN can continue in some form after Danida funding expires in order to keep building on the relations established with other networks and its vast membership.

The report of the board was approved without further comments.

Ad 3. Status of current initiatives for the continuation of selected DDRN activities

Helene Føyn and Marianne Forti presented the newly established DDRN groups, which are looking into how to continue core DDRN tasks on a voluntary basis after the expiration of funding from Danida. To date these groups include a strategic planning group, which also looks at funding scenarios and a communications group.

The group working on strategic planning and organisation of DDRN activities is looking into how DDRN can continue as a network, and in which form, amongst others what the network should focus on in the future. Currently it is debated whether there is scope and interest for the establishment of a Nordic network. Similar networks in other Nordic countries are also running out of funding, so there might be an interest in joining hands. The communications group will discuss how to continue for the newsletters, albeit at a smaller scale, matters concerning website management etc. It may be possible to hire a student assistant to continue some of the communication work after the secretariat is dissolved with the little money that remains from the Danida grant if Danida agrees to this.

The issue of funding for future activities was more closely debated. It has been suggested that the network could introduce fees for members and institutions, with students and South members for instance exempted from paying. Moreover, sourcing income through advertisements on the website is an additional option. It was pointed out that the Danish universities have offices that can provide information on funding possibilities. With respect to membership fees it was highlighted that it needs to be assessed what DDRN can offer members – newsletters alone for instance could hardly justify the fees. Additionally it was highlighted that the management of fees can be a costly affair requiring financial resources and personnel. On a more practical note, possibilities for sharing the office space which FAU has been allocated for free by/at DIIS were discussed. However, for the time being it will be easier to remain at IGG until the termination of the year, since administration and accounting matters are handled via IGG. John Christensen will be consulted with regard to issues pertaining to management – location of the DDRN office, budget proposal to Danida for use of remaining funds after 30 June in view of continuation of the website and possible

employment of a student assistant. The secretariat is in dialogue with Danida and IGG on what should be done with DDRN equipment etc.

Ad 3. a Amendments of articles of association

The proposed amendments of articles of association were discussed. The following decisions were made, based on the distributed proposal elaborated by the above-mentioned working group on strategic planning and organisation, and posted at the DDRN website:

§ 2: Amendment accepted, yet the second sentence should be left out.

§ 3: Amendment rejected.

§ 4: Amendment accepted.

§ 5: Amendment accepted.

§ 6: 6.1 was accepted; under 6.2 it was established that there should be 9 board members and a minimum of 2 substitutes; 6.3 should be adjusted according to 6.2

§ 8: Amendment accepted.

§ 11: Amendment accepted.

Ad 4. Election of board members and substitutes

Arne Wangel, Carl Erik Schou Larsen, John Christensen, Olav Jull Sørensen and Thomas Nielsen have agreed to continue as board members, and Helene Ystanes Føyn and Claus Jørgensen were (re-)elected as new board members. Niels Fold and Søren Jeppesen were elected as substitute members. It was agreed that the new board will call for an extraordinary General Assembly before the end of 2011.

Ad 5. Any other business

Before the secretariat closes, members should be encouraged to join the new DDRN groups. DDRN will furthermore send out a special newsletter on the future of DDRN. AMS plans to contact the Norwegian networks to enquire about their future plans after their funding terminates. Funding and income possibilities through for instance advertisements should be investigated. AMS moreover commented that it would be a good idea to include and present the FAU report on Nordic perspectives on development research at the next board meeting in August. A brief board meeting will be held on 29 June.