

Anette Wenderoth and Charles Lusthaus  
(Universalialia):  
Co-Authors of the Makerere University  
Case Study

**Anette Wenderoth**

Originally from Northern Germany, I started working with Universalialia in 2001, initially as a field based staff member of a CIDA-funded education sector project that Universalialia implemented in former Yugoslavia. Since 2003, I have been working out of Universalialia's Ottawa office, and have since then focused on consulting work, primarily on monitoring and evaluation of development projects, programs, and on organizational assessments. I got involved in the *Makerere* case study through Charles Lusthaus, who had been asked by IDRC to lead the Makerere study.

One of the key reasons why I was interested in the assignment was its intention to explore the concept of capacity development in more depth. A lot of our consulting work is - directly or indirectly - addressing issues of planning for, implementing, and measuring/assessing the results of capacity development for individuals or units. In many cases however, capacity development is turning out to be a rather vague concept, with different players having different, usually implicit, assumptions on what capacity development 'is', and 'how it works' in their particular context. The Makerere case study offered an opportunity to take a closer look at this evasive notion by focusing on the specific collaboration between IDRC and one particular partner organization. An additional 'bonus' was the question of how capacity development would be conceptualized and put into practice in a University setting and thus an institution whose core mandate includes teaching (and thus capacity development).



## Charles Lusthaus

Dr. Lusthaus is a founding partner of Universal Management Group. His expertise lies in the areas of organizational assessment, evaluation and performance management. Dr. Lusthaus has over 25 years of experience in evaluating projects, programs, policies and organizations. He has conducted over 100 evaluations. Besides extensive work with IDRC his client list includes International Institutions, Aid Agencies, NGOs Canadian Government Agencies and so forth. Dr. Lusthaus was a Professor in the Department of Administration and Policy Studies at McGill University and has retired this year.



He is author of the three books, which explore approaches to evaluating and strengthening organizational capacity. One of these books “Enhancing Organizational Performance” has been a best selling book at IDRC. In addition Dr. Lusthaus has published more than 50 articles on topics related to evaluation, management and policy development. He has a long list of presentations at conferences and workshops.

## About the study

Established in 1922, Makerere University is the oldest institution of higher education in Uganda. During its history, the University has experienced multiple changes – from its ‘golden age’ in the late 1960s, through the political turmoil of the 1970s and 80s, to a phase of recovery and change beginning in the 1990s and continuing to date. Makerere is regarded as Uganda’s most prestigious university and as the country’s main centre for academic research. IDRC’s partnership with Makerere goes back to 1972. For the case study, we reviewed 22 IDRC supported research projects at Makerere all of which had commenced between 1996 and 2006.

For a summary of key findings and observations, please see the Executive Summary of the Makerere study that IDRC has made available.

## Points of surprise and/or special interest

We would like to point out two topics that came up during the study, and which we think might be interesting to explore in more detail during the Book Club session:

- 1) Asking the case study’s guiding question whether and how IDRC’s support had helped to strengthen Makerere’s (institutional) capacity for research led to a number of broader questions on what characterizes Universities as specific types of institutions different from others. What implications do these characteristics have for the appropriateness and effectiveness of capacity development interventions? What does it actually mean for a university to have ‘*research capacity*’? What types of support are likely to be useful for addressing different aspects of this research capacity?

- 2) The further we got into the study, the more we realized that we had set out to explore something that did not exist – namely a defined *institutional relationship* between IDRC and Makerere University. That such a relationship existed and that it could be described in terms of a coherent ‘story’ was one of the implicit assumptions underlying the idea of an ‘organizational case study’. What we found however was a ‘patchwork’ of individual relationships. And as the relationship between IDRC and Makerere proved to be constituted by a set of individual relationships, so was IDRC’s capacity building work: The Centre does not ‘do’ capacity building of Makerere University, but of individual researchers and teams, ‘one person/team at a time’.