



Network for Research and Training of Tropical Diseases in Central America
NeTropica
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NeTboard Minutes
Honduras, Tegucigalpa
Hotel Portal del Angel
20 May, 2006

NeTboard Members present:

Silda Larios, Nicaragua
Josefa Moran, El Salvador
Annabelle Ferrera, Honduras
Libia Herrero, Costa Rica (Standing in for Rosario Achi)
Carlota Monroy, Guatemala (Standing in for Olga Torres)

Absences

Azael Saldaña, Panama

Coordination

Esteban Chaves
Monica Thelestam
Christina Tsagaraki

Participants

Lelany Pineda, Honduran host

Notes:

- Carlota Monroy is replacing Olga Torres who cancelled due to personal emergency.
- Libia Herrero has been chosen to participate, instead of Rosario Achi, as she is the Vice-president of the Academic Affairs from the University of Costa Rica (UCR). (Her position is within one of the 5 Vice -Rectories that are part of the governance of the UCR).
- Azael Saldaña, due to problems encountered at the airport was not able to arrive in Honduras on time, so the participation was cancelled.

MORNING SESSION:

Presentation by Annabelle Ferrera of the area that the IV Biennial Meeting will take place: La Ceiba, February 25 -27, 2006

(Power point presentation available – Annex # 1)

Key points of the presentation:

- Hotel Quinta Real, La Ceiba
- Safe city, near the sea, with easy access to different facilities for the visitor (aprox. 300.000 habitants)
- Hotel Capacity for about 100 people, with internet & audiovisual facilities available
- National & International airlines arrive 2 – 3 times a day
- The Organization Committee will hire & prepay the Guest, Fellows & Admin rooms and the rest of the reservations will be handled directly by credit card options offered by the hotel (in situ and through internet)
- Next NeTboard Meeting should take place as accustomed after the Biennial Meeting

Also was presented:

- Designs for an image, logo and brochure design
- Administration for the funds:

- Grants for 16 people (former KIRTS, former Grantees)
- Current Grantees should use their own funds to attend the meeting
- Available funds by NeTropica & sponsors for the guest speakers
- Overall organizational aspects: committees, hiring of personnel to help during the meeting, etc

(ACTIONS) – It was decided that:

1. by the 15 June the invitations should be sent out to the guest speakers offering till the 15 of July the opportunity to confirm their availability.
2. To promote the 16 fellowships available, NeTropica from Costa Rica will invite the eligible partners, handle the selection of the available candidates and forward the results to the Organization Committees in Honduras to organize the practical aspects (room reservations, flights, etc). The applicants must present a poster or an oral presentation and the quality of the subject will be giving the opportunity to the candidate.

(July starts the process and selection of Fellows should be done by 30/9 September)

Discussion on problems per Country:

El Salvador:

(Josefa Moran representing all the ELS grantees)

- Problem with Funds absorption: this is an institutional problem, coming from the Faculty management, because they are neither fast nor flexible to use them. The situation is that virtually the funds have been frozen.

Choices proposed:

- That money will be handled by FUNDEVI in the future
- Money will be transferred if possible from another department in the University

The two choices present some disadvantages. On the one hand is practical in a way for the Investigators to access their funds in a more flexible way, but that will make the idea of creating Capacity of Money Handling in that country not able to go on. (One of the missions of NeTropica)

To internally transfer from the University to ELS to another destination it has been insinuated as impossible by the current management of the funds. Nevertheless the Dean & higher entities from the faculty could be more flexible and interested in a better handling of grants received by the University.

(ACTION)

1. Libia Herrero will be in July at ELS and has a meeting with the Vicerrector Academico (Juaquin Machuca). She will be the representative of NeTropica to discuss the current situation.
2. All ELS researchers will continue searching for alternatives to handle funds from Grants.
3. If there is no successful turn of events, the money will be requested back from the University of El Salvador.
4. Money will be temporarily assigned to FUNA / FUNDEVI depending on the date of the incident & the available contracts between KI, SIDA and the FMI of NeTropica.
5. In the new SIDA/ SAREC proposal (2007-2009) there will be a request to create a fund in order to start a training program to create the capacity of the handling of money by the UELS. The way to create this could be a training workshop, meetings while temporarily if necessary money will be handled either by CR or by an alternative entity other than the UELS.

COSTA RICA & HONDURAS

(Libia Herrero's project 3-N-2003 & remaining funds)

The reason for the extension of the project has been a series of problems in the technique implementation. Nevertheless the project is still running to complete their goals.

(Lelany Pineda's project 5-N-2005 & remaining funds)

Delays due to implementation of different techniques and coordination with other projects. Nevertheless the project continues & the partners are in communication to coordinate the project.

GUATEMALA & NICARAGUA

If the money received is not spent approximately within one calendar year from the date received by the University, the law of the University allows the University Administration to take the funds away and spent accordingly to internal needs. Nicaragua has a ceiling of expenses per investigator of \$7.000 (presented by Silda Larios).

GUATEMALA: The case is similar and that is why all researchers have different FMI's than the University

NICARAGUA: The following actions need to be taken:

(ACTION):

1. The NeTboard member Silda Larios will investigate if all Nicaraguan grantees have the same problems (recycling of the money by the University and a top of possible expenses)
2. Create a list of what percentage of the money received so far has been spent per investigator and has been "recycled" by the University.
3. Create a list of what activities have been blocked by the University Administration according to internal laws. This would be used in order to create a basis of future negotiation.
4. In the future there should be a signed contract between a legal entity of NeTropica & UNAN Leon.

PANAMA

(Lelany Pineda & Christina Tsagaraki)

The case of INDICASAT was presented: frozen funds of Amador Goodridge & Sara Ahumada (projects of 2003).

FUNA & CURRENT SITUATION

(Esteban Chaves)

Presentation of the current situation: Contracts signed between:

- SIDA – KI – FUNA, dates: 1/7/2003 – 31/3/2006
- KI – Netropica – Funa: dates: 1/1/2003 – 1/3/2007

NeTropica has no legal status other than being a private project within FUNA. During the year 2006 NeTropica is running with the funds of the calendar year 2005. The reason for that has been that since the beginning of NeTropica there is a 10 months delay of each of the money transfers. NeTropica officially runs from January of each year but the funds are always available from October (that is how we survive this year and that is why the next proposal starts from 2007 even though all the administrative contracts finished within 2005).

Presentation of the FUNA – UNA incidents: FUNA was not able to renew the contract with the University; there has been a legal movement from the University towards FUNA to resolve some internal issues that has led to the freezing of the administration of the accounts and the receipts of the period 2004 and 2005. These internal problems have led to diminish the size of the personnel of FUNA (from 30 to 2) and delays in the daily running of the activities. Nevertheless the funds of NeTropica have not been affected.

NeTropica as a preventive measure has decided to reallocate all the funds that are related to student support to accounts of their supervisors and is moving to earlier transfers of the project grantees of the funds of the second year.

(ACTION)

Monday 22/5/2006: meeting with FUNA representatives and NeTropica Administration (Monica Thelestam, Esteban Chaves and Christina Tsagaraki).

Issues to discuss:

- the stability of FUNA for the year 2006
- if there is any danger for the current funds to be frozen
- Administrative capability of FUNA to continue assisting NeTropica¹

AFTERNOON SESSION

(Esteban Chaves & open discussion)

(Power point presentation available Annex # 2)

Presentation of the NeTropica achievements and the development of the activities through the different proposals to SIDA (1999 – 2005) and the formulation of the new proposal to SIDA/ Sarec (2007 – 2009).

Key subjects discussed:

- **Research Grants:** actual grants, history of applications, and distribution of funds.
Continue the networking, aim to have per Call of Applications 8 approved projects, with an aprox. of \$ 24.000 per project. The NeTboard should increase its participation and review the final selection of the projects once the External Evaluators have finished evaluating and ranking the projects.
- **Students:** First time the training component was added in the Sida application in 2003. Current MSc, PhD, research grantees which used their grant to support their studies, future expectations.
It is important to continue insisting to the Swedish the need of such an activity (create MSc programs in Central America, look collaborations, etc) because it is still very much needed to create training centers and train people in CA.
A critical mass of MSc is the one that can lead to good PhD candidates
Post Doc: A proposal to SIDA is that 2 or 3 positions should open at KI and this part should be handled directly by KI. The request would be for full time salaries for the period of 2 years.
- **Publications:** this new requirement imposed by the NeTboard (valid since 2005) and validated by the current meeting, is to require at least a manuscript as a final product of a Research Project.
- **Collaborations:** IFS course, CyTED
- **Mission** of NeTropica: proposed mission
- **Scientific Priorities:** Five main subjects mainly derived from the previous experiences of the NeTropica consortia. This logic is to strengthen to Sweden the image of experts and the on going

¹ (Note added on the 5/6/2006). The results of this discussion were positive and NeTropica administration decided to continue the relation with FUNA until the end of the year 2006.

works achieved. That does not exclude new necessities arising or urgent matters not treated so far by the so far beneficiaries of NeTropica:

Blood and arthropod transmitted viral diseases,
Chagas disease,
Snake envenomations,
Bacterial and Viral zoonosis,
Infectious diarrheas.

Sub-topics will be chosen too as priorities within a main subject. This does not exclude a good application in a different subject. For example "malaria" subject: still is an urgent matter for the region, but since so far there has not been any grant given so far in the subject it was not included, because there are no established "experts" yet.

Each of these subjects has been elaborated by different scientists that will be credited in the application to SIDA. The reasoning for that is to assign the corresponding authoring credits and also to reinforce the image that NeTropica is the result of a network of scientists and not an individual's application.

(ACTIONS)

1. The final product (the application) will have a clear chapter division with the author mentioned from the beginning and the individual writing style would be respected.
2. (Lelany Pineda) The Subject of "Bacterial & Viral zoonosis" needs to be scientifically restructured partially to allow to include more sub-topics.

- Current & Future Administrative Legal Structure of NeTropica:

See Proposal discussed in Nicaragua, 2005

NeTropica will be part of the Vice-presidency of Research (on of the 5 VR of the UCR).

- Concerns regarding the good functionality of the proposal within the UCR administration:

Libia Herrero:

Esteban Chaves's legal position: needs to be defined how his NeTropica responsibilities can be combined with the current position in the UCR.

What happens in case of a change in the Vice-presidency (with new priorities, for example now the policies are pro-research what happens if that changes?)

How can NeTropica protect itself: if the consortium wants to get out from the UCR how can that be possible?

Protection from political changes, pressures or preferences from the UCR.

Carlota Monroy, shared and supported the above mentioned concerns and added that the same problems (integration of an independently funded program, such as NeTropica, within a University structure) might arise in any University of the Region and not only UCR. At the same time the handling of private funds within a public University structure, due to the different existing legislations is often very hard.

At USAC in Guatemala, most researchers prefer to have their grants deposited in private FMI's rather than the University. In cases of Nicaragua and El Salvador, where the main problems of the handling of the NeTropica funds have rose, there should be done a careful study of the laws and possibilities, in order to point out new alternatives, rather than the central university administration.

(ACTION)

1. Submit the application to SIDA (15 of June)
2. As soon as the proposal is presented start negotiations with lawyers and continue negotiations with UCR in order to establish a formal "joining" of NeTropica to UCR.
3. A "final" format should be available before the trip to Sweden to "defend" the proposal. (NeTropica Administration is expected to travel between September and October in Sweden to discuss the new proposal to SIDA. Dates are pending to the Swedish invitation).

With the general discussion on the future of NeTropica, the meeting was adjourned.

Notes Taken:

Christina Tsagaraki

NeTropica Administration

Revised by: all NeTboard Members

Attached: *Time Schedule of ACTIONS*

Power Point prepared by Annabelle Ferrera (Annex 1)

Power Point prepared by Esteban Chaves (Annex 2)

TIME SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

#	ACTION	MEMBER	DATE START	DATE END
1	The Subject of "Bacterial & Viral zoonosis" needs to be scientifically restructured partially to allow to include more sub-topics.	HN -Lelany Pineda	20/05/2006	10/06/2006
2	Meeting at FUNA regarding the possibilities of the continuation of the handling of the NeTropica funds till the end of the year 2006	NeTropica Admin	22/05/2006	22/05/2006
3	The final product (the application) will have a clear chapter division with the author mentioned from the beginning and the individual writing style would be respected.	NeTropica Admin	01/06/2006	15/06/2006
4	Invitations to Guest Speakers & deadline for confirmation	HN -Biennial Organization Committee	15/06/2006	15/07/2006
5	In the new SIDA/ SAREC proposal (2007-2009) there will be a request to create a fund in order to start a training program to create the capacity of the handling of money by the UELS. The way to create this could be a training workshop, meetings while temporarily if necessary money will be handled either by CR or by an alternative entity other than the UELS.	NeTropica Admin	15/06/2006	15/06/2006
6	The NeTboard member Silda Larios will investigate if all Nicaraguan grantees have the same problems (recycling of the money by the University and a top of possible expenses)	NI - Silda Larios - NeTboard member	15/06/2006	30/07/2006
7	Create a list of what percentage of the money received so far has been spent per investigator and has been "recycled" by the University.	NI - Silda Larios - NeTboard member	15/06/2006	30/07/2006
8	Create a list of what activities have been blocked by the University Administration according to internal laws. This would be used in order to create a basis of future negotiation.	NI - Silda Larios - NeTboard member	15/06/2006	30/07/2006
9	Promotion of 16 Fellowships available for participating in the Biennial Meeting (ex-grantees & KIRTS)	NeTropica Admin	15/07/2006	30/09/2006
10	In the future there should be a signed contract between a legal entity of NeTropica & UNAN Leon.	NeTropica Admin	01/01/2007	31/12/2009
11	Meeting in El Salvador with the Vicerrector Academico (Juaquin Machuca), to discuss the current & future possibilities of Grants received from NeTropica by El Salvadorian Investigators	CR - Libia Herrero, NeTboard Member	July 2006	July 2006

12	Discussion with the UCR lawyers regarding the legality & independency of NeTropica within the UCR structure	NeTropica Admin	August 2006	September 2006
13	All ELS researchers will continue searching for alternatives to handle funds from Grants	ELS - NeTropica Grantees	ongoing	
14	If there is no successful turn of events, the money will be requested back from the University of El Salvador	NeTropica Admin	ongoing	September 2006
15	Money will be temporarily assigned to FUNA / FUNDEVI depending on the date of the incident & the available contracts between KI, SIDA and the FMI of NeTropica.	NeTropica Admin	pending	pending