



BACKGROUND NOTE FOR THE CONSULTATION MEETING SCHEDULED FOR JANUARY 15-16, 2018 AT UMEÅ UNIVERSITY, SWEDEN

Introduction and Background

During the 1980s, Somali-Swedish research collaboration was established and supported by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) and the Somali Academy of Science and Art. The partnership was spearheaded by a group of Somali and Swedish research and university institutions. This successful experience was, however, overshadowed by the Somali civil war of 1990. Two years later, the Somali Swedish Researchers' Association (SSRA) was established to sustain this productive technical legacy by supporting different public health interventions based in Somalia. Subsequently a coalition of Somali and Swedish universities and SSRA jointly initiated an effort to revive the essence of the previously initiated inter-country and interuniversity research collaboration.

Accordingly, joint consultations were organized in 2014 and 2015 at Umeå University, hosted by the Unit of Epidemiology and Global Health. Six Somali and five Swedish universities in addition to SSRA created a research collaborative programme aimed at building the research capacity of the Somali academic institutions and strengthening the health system by generating evidence on priority public health areas for enhancing access and quality in the delivery of essential health services. The stipulated research training and capacity development plan entailed the initial launch of a one-year research programme, started in late autumn 2016 with a research training of 2-weeks duration held in Hargeisa, Somaliland, where 20 locally designed research projects were approved, which were subsequently cleared by the ethical committees established by these universities. The implementation of these research projects was supported by the Somali universities, while the Swedish universities ensured the necessary online and face-to-face technical coaching and training support to their assigned Somali researchers. A midterm seminar was successfully conducted in October 2017 to assess progress, and bridge and respond to the technical field challenges, while a final evaluation of this group of researchers is planned to take place in Hargeisa during June 2018.

This research collaboration also supported by SIGHT, SWEDISH INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL HEALTH TRANSFORMATION, is gaining momentum with the active participation of the WHO ALLIANCE FOR HEALTH POLICY AND SYSTEM RESEARCH (AHPSR), which creates *the potential for continued growth in the applied health research programmes in the Somali health system and its academic institutions over the coming years.*





Consultation Intent and Structure

The Somali and Swedish interuniversity collaborating partners, SSRA and AHPSR’s collective involvement will offer a real boost to this sandwich research training programme, where online coaching is interfaced with face-to-face teaching contacts. This experience is aimed at developing a research model/prototype in the context of the fragile Somali health system. The gained experience would then be scaled up and sustained in the coming years to become an integral part of the health system development process.

Health policy/systems/implementation and operational research is essential for an evolving and responsive health system, particularly in a fragile setting where many of the globally successful programmatic interventions are unable to produce or deliver the expected results. This cooperation is also guided by a participatory leadership, leveraging diversity, sharing accountability and promoting a context driven research, where the scope of the studies is determined in close coordination with the Somali public health system. This research is therefore aimed to produce policy relevant knowledge and enhance demand to use this evidence for policy and practice. The constituted network of international partners and engaged Somali Diaspora will offer the technical assistance and support needed for this venture to thrive and create opportunities for mutual learning and health system development.

There is no doubt that the enhanced *research capacity and implementation* of the Somali academic institutions will generate local solutions for the currently encountered health challenges. The consultation is structured to bring together a group of lead representatives from the Somali-Swedish and SSRA research collaborating partners and mentors of the different research projects, who will be joined by the Executive Director of the AHPSR, thus engendering a wider network for this research process.

Goal and Objectives of the Consultation

Goal of the Consultation

The overall goal of this consultation meeting is to establish a strategic partnership between the Somali Swedish Research Cooperation for Health and the WHO AHPSR, and thereby promote an atmosphere of learning and research implementation aimed at generating evidence for policies and practices that in turn improve the health of the population.

Consultation Objectives

- To build the Somali institutional research capacity and increase faculty research production capabilities that are necessary to conduct priority operational/implementation and health system research projects in close coordination with and of benefit to the public health system





- To consolidate the prevailing intra- and inter-university partnerships within the Somali and Swedish universities on the one hand, and between Somali and Swedish universities on the other
- To recognize the Swedish mentors' excellent online coaching and training for Somali researchers using emails and Skype Business as communication and research tools, and to sustain these technologies for effecting regular interaction between the mentors and their assigned researchers, operating in remote and hard to reach Somali geographical locations

Brief Participation Plan and Process

The agenda of this consultation meeting stipulates an initial welcome event function on the afternoon of 15th of January and a full day consultation proceeding on the 16th of January 2018.

The Swedish universities and SSRA core members assisting this research programme and representatives of the Mentors' group will attend the consultation and share their collective experience. During the proceedings, lead representatives of the Somali universities will also join the consultation by Skype Business, deliver a joint presentation and participate in the discussion, as necessary.

The centrepiece of this consultation is the strategic participation of the WHO-AHPSR in this research initiative, substantiating the AHPSR's trust and confidence in the relevance of this collaborative research mission, and hence its readiness to extend every possible support.

The detailed proceedings of the consultation are comprehensively outlined in the agenda for the consultation given above and that has been disseminated previously.

