

**REVIEW REPORT OF RESEARCH PAPERS**

**One component of the:**

**ASSESSMENT OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS PRODUCED UNDER THE  
SIDA/SAREC SUPPORTED PROGRAMME:**

***SUPPORT TO AFRICAN APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH ON THE  
HIV/AIDS PANDEMIC***

Suraya Dawad  
&  
Tim Quinlan



Health Economics and HIV/AIDS Research Division  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Durban

**October 2007**

INTRODUCTION .....	3
TERMS OF REFERENCE .....	3
REVIEW PROCEDURE .....	4
Review criteria .....	5
Limitations of the procedure .....	5
Outcome .....	5
ASSESSMENT .....	6
Overview .....	6
Thematic patterns .....	10
Particular insights in reviewers' comments .....	15
SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT THEMES FROM THE STUDIES .....	15
Affirmation of knowledge .....	15
Questioning stereotypes .....	16
Illustrations of successful 'behaviour change' interventions .....	16
Gaps in interventions .....	17
DISSEMINATION .....	17
COMPARISON WITH CONFERENCE EVALUATION FINDINGS .....	18
Summary of conference evaluation report .....	18
Comparison of findings from conference evaluation and peer paper review .....	19
SUMMARY .....	20
CONCLUSION .....	22
TABLE 1: RESEARCH PAPERS RECEIVED AND REVIEWED .....	6
TABLE 2: FINDINGS IN RELATION TO GENERAL REVIEW CRITERIA .....	7
TABLE 3: FINDINGS IN RELATION TO SPECIFIC CRITERIA .....	9
TABLE 4: THEME CLUSTER SUMMARY .....	12
TABLE 5: FINDINGS IN RELATION TO OBJECTIVE 1 .....	21
TABLE 6: FINDINGS IN RELATION TO OBJECTIVES 2&3 .....	22
APPENDIX 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE PEER REVIEW .....	25
APPENDIX 2: GENERAL AND SPECIFIC REVIEW CRITERIA .....	29
APPENDIX 3: OSSREA AND SOMANET COMMENTS ON DRAFT REPORT .....	30
APPENDIX 4: NAMES OF THE REVIEWERS .....	33

## INTRODUCTION

In September 2006, SIDA/SAREC commissioned an assessment of the research results produced through its programme, *Support to African Applied Social Science Research on the HIV/AIDS pandemic*. That programme was implemented in 2003 and culminated in the international conference held in Addis Ababa in November 2006. Support was given to four African organisations, OSSREA, CODESRIA, SOMA-NET and UAPS, to commission research in accord with regionally oriented (sub-saharan Africa) programmes which each had prepared and which had been approved by SIDA/SAREC. The organisations' programmes, respectively, were:

1. A Political Economy of Patient Welfare and rights in Relation to HIV/AIDS (CODESRIA)
2. the HIV/AIDS Challenge in Africa: The Socio-Economic Impact of HIV/AIDS and Responses (OSSREA)
3. Reversing the HIV/AIDS Pandemic among Youth through Participatory Action Research in Kenya and Uganda (SOMA-NET)
4. The Demographic, Social and Economic Determinants and Consequences of the HIV/AIDS Pandemic in Africa (UAPS)

The SIDA/SAREC assessment consists of a peer review of research reports produced from the programme and a conference evaluation. Both components of the assessment are governed by terms of reference (ToR) defined by SIDA/SAREC, and many of the ToR apply to both components (see appendix 1). The conference evaluation was completed in February 2007, in the form of a report compiled by Prof. Bawa Yamba (Project Coordinator, Diakonhjemmet University College, Oslo.) and Prof. Tim Quinlan (Research Director, HEARD, University of KwaZulu-Natal). This report provides a synthesis of the peer review of the research papers that were produced under the auspices of the SIDA/SAREC programme. A draft version of this report was presented at a SIDA/SAREC review meeting in Stockholm in June 2007 and, subsequently, written comments on that draft were provided by OSSREA and SOMANET.

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

The overall purpose of the assessment is:

*'to give SIDA and the partner organisations a retrospect on the support and to inform decisions for a possible future support'.*

The general aim of the assessment is to see whether the SIDA/SAREC research programme achieved its three main objectives:

1. To enhance capacity for HIV & AIDS research among African scholars

2. To produce new research findings
3. To produce applied results that can feed into policy and practice.

The ToR for the assessment include questions to be answered in relation to each main objective. These questions as stated in the ToR are recorded below.

**Objective 1:**

- To what extent has the support enhanced capacity for HIV & AIDS research in the region?
- Did the form of support contribute to generating increased research interest and networking on HIV & AIDS in the region?
- Is there need to re-consider the organisation for a follow-up programme of support and what models can be recommended?
- Do the traditional processes of academia meet the applied research result needs for responses to the HIV & AIDS epidemic within a fast changing environment?

**Objectives 2 & 3:**

- The relevance of the research topic to the HIV & AIDS epidemic in the region?
- Knowledge of the research area shown through the literature references?
- Feasibility and effectiveness of the methodology?
- Originality and innovation of the approach in terms of research questions/results and methodology/intervention design development?
- Are the findings or methodology development of a nature that can be utilised by policy makers or practitioners?

In addition the assessment is required to answer the following ‘general questions in relation to the body of work produced’:

- What themes emerge and do they need further investigation?
- What gaps are apparent that need further investigation?
- Do the papers show a value in/need for increased cross-disciplinary approaches?
- How have the dissemination models worked?

**REVIEW PROCEDURE**

CODESRIA, OSSREA AND SOMANET-UAPS were to send all research reports from their respective programmes to HEARD which would recruit individual scholars to review 1-2 papers each. The expectation was that we would receive 40-50 full research reports except in the case of some studies originally prepared under the aegis of UAPs which were in different phases of completion at the end of 2006.

In the event, we received a large number of documents consisting of research reports, shorter papers and draft/interim reports. Of these papers, 18 were full research reports (from OSSREA and CODESRIA) and 34 were completed papers of varying length that appear to have been either short research reports, papers prepared for the conference or

scientific papers with publication in mind—. We chose these papers for the review. Appendix 4 lists the names of the reviewers.

### **Review criteria**

We devised a set of general and specific review criteria (see appendix 2) which were included in the reviewers' contracts. These criteria were to assist reviewers, to ensure that the review as a whole answered the questions set out in the ToR, and to enable methodical assessment of the papers in relation to the SIDA/SAREC programme aims.

All the criteria were in the form of questions that the reviewers were to answer in their commentaries. Recognising that peer review is, in part, a subjective and qualitative process, we divided the questions into two sets:

- General questions: those that reflect standard, scientific protocols of peer review
- Specific questions: those that presume and depend on subjective insights and judgements of the reviewers

### **Limitations of the procedure**

The following limitations were experienced:

- 1) delay in getting responses from selected reviewers indicating their agreement to review papers;
- 2) delay in allocating reports for review as result of time taken to resolve confusion with the organisations about the type of research documents required (i.e. HEARD requesting full reports; the relevant organisations sending what they had, including shorter papers; eventual realisation that these documents were what was available for review);
- 3) inability to obtain contact details of Prof Cheikh Niang who was to co-ordinate review of French language papers (ultimately 3 in total);
- 4) inability to find an appropriate scholar who would review the French language papers
- 5) delays in receiving reviews from some reviewers (including need to reschedule timelines to accommodate their work arrangements in 2007);
- 6) delay occasioned by requests to three reviewers to redo their reviews (because they did not follow the guidelines).

HEARD also accepts responsibility for these delays in part because, we did not always respond timeously to various requests and lack of response from different reviewers.

### **Outcome**

We had 52 papers to be sent for review of which 3 were in French for which we were unable to find reviewers. As of early June we had distributed 49 papers and received 38 reviewed papers. Two reviews have been excluded because they did not follow the guidelines and, despite requests to the reviewers to revise them accordingly, the revised reviews were not done by end August 2007. Table 1 below summarises the outcome.

**TABLE 1: RESEARCH PAPERS RECEIVED AND REVIEWED**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Number research reports received</b>	<b>Number research reports sent for review</b>	<b>Number of reviews received and accepted (early June 2007)</b>
OSSREA	14	14	13
CODESRIA	1	1	1
CODESRIA-UAPS	3	3	1
SOMA-NET	-	-	-
<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Number shorter papers received</b>	<b>Number shorter papers sent for review</b>	<b>Number of reviews received and accepted (early June 2007)</b>
OSSREA	-	-	-
CODESRIA	12	9	9
SOMA-NET	22	22	12
<b>Totals</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>36</b>

## ASSESSMENT

It must be emphasised that the authors of this report were not principal reviewers. Their primary role was to pull together the appointed reviewers' assessments of papers and draw out patterns and themes within the body of reviews as a whole. Consequently, the assessment has two characteristics:

- 1) a simple statistical analysis that relates reviewers answers (to the questions in the review criteria) with the programme's objectives;
- 2) an analysis of reviewers' insights and judgements (i.e. additional information they provided in relation to some of the guideline questions)

The section begins with an overview of the reviewers assessments. Thereafter, there are sub-sections which cover specific issues as set out in the ToR.

In addition, the draft version of this report was sent to CODESRIA, OSSREA and SOMANET for comment. We received comments from OSSREA and SOMANET. Those comments have been accommodated in the report. These organisations' comments are attached in Appendix 3 (the SOMANET comments are summarised as they were made on a copy of the draft report).

### Overview

Table 2 below summarises the reviewers' answers to the set of general questions. In some cases, no answers or unclear answers were provided by the reviewers and they are marked accordingly (hyphen and 'N/R' = No Response). In a few instances, the reviewer indicated that a question was not relevant for the focus and content of a particular paper and they are marked accordingly (N/A = Not Appropriate). Table 2 also includes a number of 'Yes/No' answers that reflect the reviewer's uncertainty or qualification. We

have recorded these answers under the ‘Yes’ category but kept in the indication of the reviewer’s qualification.

**TABLE 2: FINDINGS IN RELATION TO GENERAL REVIEW CRITERIA**

Paper	Criterion 1	Criterion 2	Criterion 3	Criterion 4	Criterion 5	Criterion 6
	Is the research relevant (to HIV/AIDS in the region)?	sound knowledge through the literature references?	Was the methodology feasible and effective?	Does the research show originality and/or innovation?	Can findings or methodology of be used by policy/decision-makers or practitioners?	Does the report reveal interaction with policy/decision-makers/practitioners?
1	Yes	Yes/No	Yes/No	-	-	No
2	Yes	Yes	Yes/No	Yes	Yes	No
3	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
5	Yes	Yes	Yes/No	No	Yes	No
6	Yes	Yes	Yes/No	No	Yes/No	No
7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No
8	Yes/No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes/No	Yes
9	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
10	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
11	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	No
12	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
13	Yes	No	No	-	No	No
14	Yes	Yes	No	-	Yes	-
15	Yes	No	No	Yes/No	Yes	No
16	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
17	Yes	Yes	No	Yes/No	No	No
18	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
19	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
20	Yes	No	No	Yes	-	No
21	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
22	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	-
23	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-
24	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No
25	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
26	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
27	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
28	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
29	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
30	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
31	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
32	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
33	Yes	No	No	No	N/A	N/A
34	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
35	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	No
36	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Totals	Y: 36 N: 0 N/R: 0	Y: 24 N: 12 N/R: -	Y: 23 N: 12 N/R: - N/A: 1	Y: 22 N: 9 N/R: 4 N/A: 1	Y: 26 N: 7 N/R: 2 N/A: 1	Y: 5 N: 27 N/R: 3 N/A: 1

Collectively, the review shows that the studies were relevant and sensitive to other scientific work; that there was due consideration and exploration, with varying degrees of success, of means to do the research; but less evidence of definitive linking of the research to practical applications and the interests of agencies concerned with designing and implementing practical interventions.

Table 3 below summarises the reviewers' answers to the set of specific questions which were of a more qualitative nature. Questions 1 and 3 are included because they were part of the set. However, as is indicated in the Table, they were open-ended questions and so the answers do not suit this form of summary (hence the N/A: 'not appropriate' mark). Compared to answers for the general questions, there were more incidences of questions not being answered (or unclear answers) by the reviewers. These have been indicated by a hyphen and N/R mark –'No response'). In two cases, the table records a 'Yes/No' answer that reflects the reviewers doubts; however we have viewed them as 'Yes' answers. In two cases, the reviewers indicated that one question (Criterion 4) was not relevant in view of the focus and subject matter of the papers. Accordingly, the answers are marked 'N/A' ('not appropriate'). We suspect that these qualifications in reviewer's reports were due to the nature of the questions such that some reviewers were prepared to give categorical judgements while others were not.

This summary of the findings shows that collectively, the studies identified issues that the researchers reckoned were significant (criterion 2a) and areas for further research were identified (criterion 2b). The summary also presents a somewhat surprising finding: that there was no a definitive outcome of widespread capacity building amongst the researchers as a result of the programme (criterion 5a). However, we must caution here that the review included short papers and so in many cases, there would not necessarily be the indications of capacity building that can be apparent in full research reports. Furthermore, there is evidence elsewhere of capacity building, highlighted in the comments on the draft report from OSSREA and SOMA-NET (see appendix 3). For instance, initially, the SOMANET-supported research did not have capacity building as an objective. However, upon realisation that a number of the researchers were not familiar with Participatory Research, SOMANET arranged methodology workshops for researchers and also, with regard to external capacity building, worked with NGOs (e.g. The AIDS Support Organisation (TASO) in Uganda doing 'community dialogues'.

The finding (criterion 5b) of little evidence of capacity building amongst NGOs, CSOs and government agencies is in accord with the general assessment of limited links developed between the research, practical applications and agencies concerned with the latter.



**TABLE 3: FINDINGS IN RELATION TO SPECIFIC CRITERIA**

<b>Paper</b>	<b>Criterion 1</b>	<b>Criterion 2a</b>	<b>Criterion 2b</b>	<b>Criterion 3</b>	<b>Criterion 4</b>	<b>Criterion 5a</b>	<b>Criterion 5b</b>
	What theme(s) emerge from the report?	Are the theme(s) evident?	Do the theme(s) reveal areas for further research	What gaps are apparent in the report?	Need for cross-disciplinary approaches shown	Evidence of capacity building amongst the researchers	Evidence of capacity building amongst NGOs, CSOs, govt. dept.s.
1	n/a	Yes	n/a	n/a	No	No	No
2	n/a	-	-	n/a	No	No	No
3	n/a	-	-	n/a	Yes	No	-
4	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes/no	Yes	-
5	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	No	Yes	No
6	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes
7	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	No	No
8	n/a	Yes/No	No	n/a	Yes/No	Yes	No
9	n/a	-	-	n/a	-	Yes	Yes
10	n/a	Yes	-	n/a	Yes	No	No
11	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	-	Yes	No
12	n/a	-	-	n/a	Yes	No	Yes
13	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	-	-
14	n/a	Yes	-	n/a	-	-	-
15	n/a	n/a	-	n/a	No	No	No
16	n/a	n/a	-	n/a	Yes	No	No
17	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes
18	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	-	-
19	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	-	Yes
20	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	No	No	No
21	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	No	No
22	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	-	Yes	No
23	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	-	-	-
24	n/a	-	-	n/a	Yes	No	No
25	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	n/a	No	No
26	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	n/a	No	Yes
27	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	-	-	-
28	n/a	Yes	-	-	-	-	-
29	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	No	No
30	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	No	No
31	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	No	No
32	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	-	Yes
33	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	No	No
34	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	Yes	No
35	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	No	No
<b>36</b>	n/a	No	No	n/a	No	Yes	No
<b>Totals</b>	-	Y: 28 N: 8 N/R: -	Y: 23 N: 2 N/R: 11	-	Y: 21 N: 6 N/R: 7 N/A: 2	Y: 10 N: 18 N/R: 8	Y: 7 N: 21 N/R: 8

The 'specific criteria' also include a general question posed in the ToR (criterion 4: *Do the papers show a value in/need for increased cross-disciplinary approaches?*). The guidelines to reviewers on this criterion directed them to elaborate on their assessments in relation to other criteria (e.g. *'Feasibility and effectiveness of the methodology?; Originality and innovation of the approach in terms of research questions/results and methodology/intervention design development? Are the findings or methodology development of a nature that can be utilised by policy makers or practitioners?'*- see Appendix 2). Obviously many of the papers involved inter-disciplinary research to a greater or lesser extent but the purpose of the criterion was to support critical insights from the reviewers. The Table figures collectively suggest an equivocal response from the reviewers. We suggest that the review affirms the general finding of variable success amongst the studies with regard to exploring appropriate and innovative means to address research questions.<sup>1</sup> In so doing, it suggests that the programme did not 'push back' the boundaries of social science research on complex problems.

Two key insights emerged from reviewers comments:

- 1) the absence of psychology in many projects which dealt with psycho-social issues;
- 2) the importance of inter-disciplinary research to inform policy-making.

This is in the light of a range of comments from reviewers which were collated and which are presented in paraphrased from below:

- When dealing with psychological issues, people in the field of psychology should be involved.
- There is absence of psychological perspectives.
- Increased cross disciplinary involvement will help make more relevant policy recommendations.
- Value would be added to research if people in the associated/relevant fields pertaining to the research were included in the research team.
- No interaction with other disciplines.
- Inter-disciplinary approach in HIV/AIDS related research is essential to allow for validation of gathered information.
- More scientifically sound results obtained through inter-disciplinary research.
- Involving other disciplines may come up with answers that could be incorporated in making sound policy decisions.
- Cross-disciplinary work involving people from methodological backgrounds will help strengthen the research and hence make it more appealing to policy-makers.

### **Thematic patterns**

The programme supported a wide range of social science research. There was an expectation that the body of work would suggest foci for future research and provide

---

<sup>1</sup> A premise for the relevant criteria was that social science research would and should be open to developing innovative methodologies, including cross-disciplinary study designs in view of the complexity of the social 'problems' arising from the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

lessons with regard to the design of future programmes. Toward that end, this section presents an analysis of themes and gaps in the research that the reviewers identified. The analysis has three components:

- 1) Themes within papers that the reviewers identified as significant;
- 2) Themes inspired by the review work but not necessarily in the papers themselves and yet, which the reviewers identified as significant on the basis of their expertise and experience as social scientists;
- 3) Gaps in the research identified by the reviewers.

The analysis is based on a simple procedure of clustering. Standard foci of social science HIV/AIDS research, as reflected in the body of work, were used to define categories and the recorded themes were then allocated on a 'best fit' basis. Each theme was allocated to only one category. Subsequently, the 'gaps' were allocated accordingly.

The purpose is not to provide an exact description of foci and orientation of the body of work. The purpose is to illustrate the impression that the body of work made on the reviewers and, within that, to indicate general patterns and contrasts. The rationale is that this peer review process is an important component of the SIDA/SAREC's strategic review of the programme; hence, it is appropriate to highlight patterns in the reviewers' assessments. Although this is a very simple tool, it is also a means to check the consistency of reviewers' assessments. As we discuss below, the results of this analysis affirm the reviewers' overall general assessment described above.

Table 4 below summarises the two sets of themes and the gaps recorded by the reviewers. The descriptions reflect minor paraphrasing of the reviewers' own commentaries, to retain their perceptions. The Table also ranks the categories of themes identified within reports: the number of themes per category being the basis for the ranking. This does not apply to categories of additional themes (not in the papers) identified by the reviewers, nor to the gaps.

Not surprisingly, a large number of social issues were identified as themes. The interesting feature of this analysis is the contrast between the evident interest of the researchers in applications of their research results and the reviewers' collective assessment that this aspect of the programme's studies was relatively weak. This is indicated by the number and nature of comments with regard to applications and methodology in the 'gaps' column of Table 4.

**TABLE 4: THEME CLUSTER SUMMARY**

CATEGORY	THEMES (within papers)	THEMES (arising from review of papers)	GAPS
<b>Cultural/social context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Understanding the context of childcare</li> <li>▪ Children orphaned by AIDS offer manual labour to their guardians</li> <li>▪ Extended families and guardians Preference for female orphans of HIV/AIDS</li> <li>▪ Availability and accessibility of ARVs in Ethiopia</li> <li>▪ Role of faith healing, specifically the healing offered by Islamic <i>Marabouts</i></li> <li>▪ Role of herbal medicine and traditional service providers</li> <li>▪ Questioning the assumption that family caregivers of PLWHAs are naturally equipped and always comfortable to take care of ill family members.</li> <li>▪ Advantages and disadvantages of caring for PLWHAs at home</li> <li>▪ Poor communication between people, parents and teachers</li> <li>▪ School as centre of influence</li> <li>▪ HIV and traditional practices</li> <li>▪ Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs)</li> <li>▪ Polygamy</li> <li>▪ Male street youth and the HIV/AIDS pandemic</li> <li>▪ Religion and HIV</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ HIV/AIDS related illness experience, disclosure practices and support needs of PLWHAs and how stigma and discrimination affects the work of <i>iddirs</i></li> <li>▪ ARV treatment for youth on the streets</li> <li>▪ Quality of care received by PLWHAs from various sources of support</li> </ul>	<p>Religious practices of churches in relation to HIV/AIDS</p>
<b>Applications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community involvement/partnerships</li> <li>▪ Issues in the current policy on HIV in Ethiopia</li> <li>▪ The role of government in ensuring the availability of ARVs</li> <li>▪ Need to situate HIV/AIDS related research within the African context, which includes gender relations, social/cultural practices, and sexuality in relation to HIV infection</li> <li>▪ The challenges faced in the implementation of HIV/AIDS related activities in the school context</li> <li>▪ Education is the only sustainable social vaccine against HIV/AIDS</li> <li>▪ Higher education is not just to service the economy and society as it exists, but also to shape it into what it could and should be.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Low risk perception regarding HIV/ADS and the aspects on intervention programmes</li> <li>▪ To assess/evaluate whether school as centre of influence actually works</li> <li>▪ How people benefit from the training provided to the TBAs</li> <li>▪ Sources of support for PLWHAs taking note of the primary as well as secondary sources of support and which the PLWHAs find most useful</li> <li>▪ Designing practical interventions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Omission of information of how the research intended to disseminate the results of the study to the users (policy/decision-makers/practitioners)</li> <li>▪ Lack of attention to data on possible intervention programmes</li> <li>▪ Focus on perceptions only narrowed the study and limited its usefulness for policy and practice change. Furthermore, very few perceptions, if any, are quantifiable.</li> <li>▪ Narrow focus of interviewees/ study participants. This reduces use in policymaking</li> <li>▪ Dissemination of findings not clear</li> <li>▪ No attention given to potential for capacity building</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Social disregard for youth on the street, and the opportunities which exist for interventions to ameliorate their situation</li> <li>▪ Complexities of community responses to ART power of pharmaceutical companies &amp; 'north'/'south' tensions</li> <li>▪ Donor funding of NGOs and CBOs to do 'community-driven' care</li> <li>▪ Research ethics</li> </ul>		
<b>Gender</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The prevailing gender roles, power in relationship and sexual communication</li> <li>▪ Factors influencing power in gender relations</li> <li>▪ The influence of gender relationship on the knowledge, misconceptions, stigma, risk awareness and risk perception regarding HIV/AIDS</li> <li>▪ The influence of gender relationship power on the uptake of VCT</li> <li>▪ Gender differentials in information seeking and information giving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The views of males</li> <li>▪ Increase of relationship power control among women</li> </ul>	<b>NIL</b>
<b>Sexuality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sex education</li> <li>▪ Adolescent sexuality;</li> <li>▪ Sexuality and reproductive health in the time of AIDS</li> <li>▪ Self-reported sexual behaviour amongst youth</li> <li>▪ Condom use;</li> <li>▪ Poor knowledge about condom use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cultural factors/barriers of adolescent sexual behaviour</li> <li>▪ Understanding, perception and practice of condom use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Require information on how church can address issue of sex and sexuality in the context of the pandemic in an open and honest way.</li> <li>▪ More information on religious practices of the Apostolic faith and sexual risky behaviour</li> </ul>
<b>Economic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ HIV/AIDS direct and indirect costs</li> <li>▪ Cost for tests and obtaining ARVs</li> <li>▪ Perceived magnitude of HIV/AIDS impact (production losses and labour costs)</li> <li>▪ Factors affecting poverty differentials in HIV/AIDS affected households</li> <li>▪ Determinants of poverty dynamics in HIV/AIDS affected households</li> </ul>	<b>NIL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Analysis and findings did not adequately cover factors attributing to poverty differentials and dynamics in HIV/AIDS affected households.</li> </ul>
<b>Workplace</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on the health workforce, focussing on the nursing cadre</li> <li>▪ HIV/AIDS and health human resources</li> <li>▪ Health staff and community alliance in addressing the problems posed by HIV/AIDS</li> <li>▪ HIV/AIDS workplace policies and programmes</li> </ul>	<b>NIL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Level of infection rates among educators</li> </ul>
<b>Psychological</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Difficulty of making simplistic statements about the psychological well-being of the caregiver</li> </ul>	<b>NIL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of specification of the stigmatisation status of the two churches involved in the study</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A rational approach to the disclosure of HIV/AIDS</li> <li>▪ Stigma</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How mothers felt about being helped by TBAs</li> </ul>
<b>Methodologies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Synergy between social science and biomedical research</li> <li>▪ Participatory action methodologies</li> <li>▪ Participatory action research (PAR)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Need for models that draw upon the strengths of all medical sectors: modern biomedicine, traditional healing or faith-based healing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Methodological gap related to sample size</li> <li>▪ Absence of research questions organising the study and on which the study objectives were based</li> <li>▪ Absence of an interdisciplinary perspective in literature reviews</li> <li>▪ Lack of inclusion of the participatory research perspective in the design of the study</li> <li>▪ Limitations of methodology used</li> <li>▪ Methodological gaps</li> <li>▪ Methodology not adequately discussed</li> <li>▪ Attention to ethical issues need to be highlighted</li> <li>▪ No cross disciplinary approach</li> <li>▪ No mention of capacity building efforts</li> <li>▪ No comprehensive background or methodology provided for the study</li> <li>▪ Theory not integrated into the body of the paper.</li> <li>▪ No clear conclusions</li> <li>▪ No literature review</li> <li>▪ More thorough engagement with the literature and with more critical literature – could improve interpretation of results and the recommendations based on these results</li> </ul>
<b>Vulnerability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cultural vulnerability</li> <li>▪ HIV prevention with youth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To establish feeling of community members about stigmatisation of HIV/AIDS patients</li> </ul>	<b>NIL</b>
<b>Other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ HIV testing</li> <li>▪ Perceived impact points of HIV/AIDS</li> <li>▪ Environmental promotion</li> <li>▪ VCT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Role of <i>iddirs</i> in the AIDS epidemic – maybe they can play a greater support role</li> <li>▪ Youth place more trust in older people performing VCT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No concrete examples of issues discussed</li> </ul>

### **Particular insights in reviewers' comments**

Reviewers expressed concern about presentation of some reports. Aside from that, one notable insight was that the programme had led to research on two previously unexplored areas:

- 1) Marabouts in Gambia;
- 2) Non-sexual relationships amongst the youth.

In addition, we note that research on particular churches or religious sects and their roles in relation to HIV/AIDS seems to be relatively unexplored. Research on 'faith-based organisations' is a known area of enquiry and much is on the community support role they play. However, we discern scope for deepening the focus of such research. For instance, research on particular churches or sects, in localities, and/or the extent to which they work together or give different messages with regards to HIV/AIDS and in-depth assessments of how they influence the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of their congregations. This suggestion is based on a reading across the reviews as well as the comments of a reviewer of the relevant study in the programme.

The reviewer's insights as well as our own reading suggest five significant themes pervaded the body of research:

1. (as noted above) Identification of 'new' areas for research of relevance to practical interventions
2. Affirmation of scientific knowledge
3. Useful countering of stereotypes
4. Illustrations of successful 'behaviour change' interventions
5. Identification of gaps in intervention design

We provide a brief discussion of these themes in the following section.

### **SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT THEMES FROM THE STUDIES**

It is important not to forget that the programme produced a substantive body of work of relevance for social scientists in Africa. We illustrate the scope of that work on the basis of the five themes noted above (excluding the first theme which has been outlined). We illustrate the themes by reference to a few studies; they are just a small selection.

#### **Affirmation of knowledge**

We refer here to issues of practical relevance for combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa, which social science research has continually raised over the years. Principal issues include:

- Exclusion of people from treatment due to costs of accessing treatment. This is in context of international efforts to enable people to receive 'free treatment at 'point of service' (i.e. clinics/hospitals). However, a common refrain in research studies is that transport and time taken off work to access treatment are substantive costs for many people in addition to continuation of treatment fees in some African countries.

- Fraught doctor/patient relationship due to lack of drugs and resources. This is in context of the challenges for delivering treatment therapies in many African countries where there are inadequate health facilities.
- Official statistics on HIV prevalence rates being viewed with caution by social scientists; the general view being that the statistics may serve as valid indicators of effective interventions only when they reveal sustained reduction in HIV prevalence and incidence rates over several years
- Limitations of Home-Based Care (HBC) programmes. The issue is primarily the reliance on volunteers in many programmes such that the effect is to defray costs of HIV/AIDS treatment onto communities which can least afford that burden. Additional issues include the difficulties with sustaining volunteer efforts contexts where many volunteers are themselves poor and often HIV infected.

### **Questioning stereotypes**

A principal value of much social science research is that it confronts subjective, prejudicial assessments of situations and emphasises the importance of context sensitive interventions. The insights, often through qualitative analysis, can provide a check against ill-informed policy formulation and practical intervention plans and, conversely, to support due consideration in defining the focus and form of practical interventions. For example, one of the SIDA studies in Ethiopia concluded that commercial sex workers were more likely to be infected by their by their ‘protectors’ (boyfriends/pimps) than by their clients. A Kenyan study challenged a common perspective in Africa, that fostering of orphans within communities and extended family members is essential. The study indicated that orphanages can provide better emotional care.

### **Illustrations of successful ‘behaviour change’ interventions**

In southern Africa, there is little evidence of success with efforts to prevent escalation of the epidemic and, specifically, to reduce incidence of HIV infection. Elsewhere in Africa, there is variable success; some countries have succeeded, others face the threat of an escalating HIV epidemic. Practical efforts inevitably involve efforts to get people to change their sexual behaviour which is difficult. The difficulty is due to many factors – psychological and social – and, not least, because the problem is often the circumstances of sexual intercourse, not that people have sex. The programme approaches can be direct (e.g. catholic church calls for abstinence) and/or indirect (e.g. South Africa’s Lovelife project).

The SIDA programme included research that was very relevant in this context. For example, there was a Zambian study that reported on a successful intervention to change levirate practices. Traditionally, a widow would be ‘cleansed’ via the rituals including sexual intercourse with a male kinsman of the deceased husband. The intervention supported the cultural values of the levirate but succeeded in modifying it to exclude the requirement of sexual intercourse. A Kenyan study reported on an ‘indirect’ intervention that created forums for sex education amongst Maasai women and families which served to break the barriers of silence and stigma associated with HIV/AIDS. .



## **Gaps in interventions**

Many of the studies provided critiques in some way of current and/or planned interventions and gaps and problems with interventions were a feature of the conference debates. In sum, the broader intent of the programme was to stimulate ‘applied research’ and that intent was reflected in many studies. For instance, a study in Botswana assessed the design and outcomes of various interventions to prevent HIV infection amongst boys and men. The assessment provided a useful critique, notably for highlighting the way many of those interventions were based on orthodox perspectives on men and approaches for HIV education rather than being based on research and, in particular, research on the changing constructs of masculinity in Africa.

## **DISSEMINATION**

Various means were used to disseminate the results of the programme. These included:

- OSSREA’s organisation of ‘research dissemination’ workshops in Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe, in 2005 and 2006, for presentation of research conducted under its sub-programme;
- Meetings and small workshops between 2003 and 2005, where representatives of CODESRIA and SOMA-NET met researchers to discuss interim research results;
- OSSREA published executive summaries of study reports, prior to dissemination of research reports, in order to broadcast widely the results of the programme;
- The conference held in November 2006 in Addis Ababa that was the forum for presentation of all the research and which included participation of government agencies.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, other means of dissemination were planned (and may have happened but, at the time of writing this report, we do not know):

- SOMA-NET intended to produce ‘Briefs’ (summaries of studies focused on policy issues and directed at policy makers) once the research conducted within its sub-programme was complete;
- CODESRIA, OSSREA AND SOMA-NET were to meet in April 2007 and discussions were to include consideration of further dissemination;
- Researchers were submitting papers for publication.

The intent was to disseminate results to ‘policy makers’ (government, NGO agencies) and, widely, to scientists throughout Africa (see the conference evaluation report, February 2007).

Reportedly, for internal dissemination within the programme, there were procedures for comment and review of draft papers. These exercises worked; indicators being the presentation at the conference and for this peer review, of a number of papers that were close to being ready for publication. We do not know whether those papers have subsequently been published.

---

<sup>2</sup> The ‘International Conference on the Social Sciences and HIV/AIDS in Africa: New insights and policy perspectives’, 20-22<sup>nd</sup> November 2006, Addis Ababa.

We are not able to comment on means of dissemination to study participants and stakeholders. A number of studies used the methodology of Participatory Research and most sought to produce results for use by policy makers and practitioners. Accordingly, there would have been an imperative to disseminate interim research result, for instance, in the form of ‘stakeholder feed-back meetings’ or planning meetings with government and NGO agencies on applications of the research. However, details of these exercises did not emerge in the conference sessions or from the peer review of papers. Our suspicion, in view of peer reviewers’ comments on study methodologies, is that this form of dissemination occurred in some studies but possibly not many.

## **COMPARISON WITH CONFERENCE EVALUATION FINDINGS**

The adjunct to this peer review is the evaluation of the conference. The ToR are the same for both forms of assessment; hence, it is appropriate to compare the results. We briefly outline the conference evaluation before comparing them with this review.

### **Summary of conference evaluation report**

The conference programme featured 53 presentations of research results by the vast majority of researchers who had participated in the programme. The content of the presentations ranged from discussion of results, to interim findings in some cases, to methods and methodologies as well as a number of papers that were versions of published or about to be published articles based on projects. Representatives of national AIDS councils (NAC) from around Africa were invited and at least four appear to have attended the conference. They played a significant role in the conference, chairing sessions and presenting ‘official’ country perspectives on national epidemics and national strategies. Frequently, there was lively, constructive debate.

The evaluation report authors identified several key themes and criticisms within the conference deliberations and the presentations, respectively:

1. **Disputation between scientists and policy-makers:** debate between presenters and government officials on study results and official AIDS statistics.
2. **Diverse topics and focus of presentations:** The ordering of sessions around particular themes, groupings of themes and categories of research led to unfocused discussions on occasion and dependence on session chairpersons to guide debate, and there was only one session (*Youth, sexuality and HIV/AIDS*) where the focus was on research designed to directly inform interventions.
3. **Critical review of methods and results:** The discussion periods after the presentations frequently included critiques of the methods, methodologies and study results as well as scope of the research to inform practical interventions. The conference authors recorded absence of citations to recent work, the lack of comparison of results with those of other research, limited the scope and depth of the studies, and limited critical use and reflection of the methodology of Participatory Research (PR).

4. **Affirmation of existing knowledge:** Many presentations affirmed existing knowledge, endorsing findings of other studies in Africa rather than yielding a number of ‘new’ observations.

The conclusion of the evaluation report stated, in summary:

- Evident intent to inform policy-making, but nothing substantive;
- Many of the studies presented were directed towards enabling informed policy-making but lack of critical reflection on uses and limitations of methods and methodologies and of comparative analysis) meant that there really weren’t clear, substantive policy-relevant revelations. Generally, the results presented were interesting rather than arresting;
- The programme had successfully promoted ‘intergenerational’ research and dialogue (i.e. inclusion and collaboration between young and ‘senior’ African researchers), ‘multi-disciplinarity’ (i.e. research across a wide range of disciplines), and ‘multi-nationality’ (i.e. collaborative research by researchers in different countries);
- Organisation of the conference that deliberately targeted ‘policy-makers’ (NGOs, government representatives, donor agency representatives);
- Consideration, during and after the conference, by senior African scientists and representatives of OSSREA, CODESRIA and SOMANET of how to enable collaboration and use of research findings.

### **Comparison of findings from conference evaluation and peer paper review**

The common findings of both exercises were:

- The research had not produced results that could be applied by policy makers even though there was much that should inform practical applications;
- The research had identified many issues that deserve further investigation .
- Research methodology was a weakness in many cases and, in particular, both highlighted the importance of inter-disciplinary research to inform policy-making.

The conference evaluation indicated that there had been capacity building of researchers. This was not confirmed by the paper review but, as we have mentioned, reviewers would not always have been able to make an assessment from the shorter papers and OSSREA, SOMANET and CODESRIA organised capacity building initiatives during the course of research studies .

The paper review suggested that there was little evidence of capacity building amongst NGOs, CSOs and government agencies. The conference evaluation indicated that this was an issue which researchers, the conference organisers and senior scholars were concerned about.

With regard to the issue of capacity building generally, the review is equivocal on the matter. As has been indicated in this report and in the comments from OSSREA and SOMANET, the paper reviews suggested there was limited capacity building but the papers themselves were not a sound basis for such assessment. There clearly were capacity building initiatives directed at researchers and at participants. However, the effects and effectiveness of them has not been revealed by this review (it would actually require a separate evaluation exercise). Consequently, it is an issue that remains in question.

## **SUMMARY**

The programme was successful in producing a large body of relevant research. In addition, it produced studies in two areas of enquiry that have not been explored (Marabouts in Gambia; non-sexual relationships amongst the youth).

There was wide variation in the quality of the research and limited scope for application of much of the research, even though there was evident interest amongst the researchers for their work to be used by practitioners. Nonetheless, these were issues which African researchers did not shy away from - as was witnessed during the conference and as expressed by reviewers of the papers. Indeed, the programme supported this critical reflection by African scholars which is of benefit to social science research in Africa.

The conference itself was an event where there was much critical reflection by African scholars. The conference also brought together a large number of researchers and it was evident that this event built upon and promoted interaction between social scientists from many different countries and disciplines. This, together with the fact that many studies involved teams of researchers, indicates that the programme was successful in building capacity for social science research on the continent. We do not have information of developments since the conference, so cannot comment on the extent to which the programme has stimulated more networking and other research projects.

The review has revealed four 'themes/gaps' that could inform the orientation of a future programme:

- 1) Focused, in-depth studies of churches and religious sects;
- 2) Psychological research studies and/or include psychological expertise in socio-economic studies to deepen capacity to understand social and cultural dynamics of behaviour;

- 3) Research methodology (improve rigour of study designs);
- 4) Research studies designed overtly to result in practical applications.

The interesting characteristic of these ‘themes/gaps’ is the expressed need for more attention to be given to the design and form of social science research. This stands in contrast with the few new topics or fields of enquiry that emerged from the programme.

Furthermore, the need for research designs which support practical application of results is significant. This was one of the objectives of the programme yet it was not achieved. This suggests that the mechanisms for selection, preparation and implementation of the studies were not adequate to ensure achievement of this objective. For instance, the procedures for commissioning the studies may have been appropriate but not the review of project plans or, perhaps, the research teams did not adhere precisely to those plans.

We are not in a position to assess what happened. However, a cause is suggested by the peer review’s highlighting of methodological limitations in many studies. The design of research to include ‘pure’ science aims in combination with ‘applied’ aims requires experience and expertise coupled with very clear terms of reference. We suggest that the programme itself may not have provided these at the start and that, subsequently, there may not have been sufficient guidelines to ensure that the design, implementation and monitoring of projects produced results that could be applied by policy makers and practitioners.

This criticism is not intended to be negative. We are simply suggesting that the programme set itself a hard task by having two major aims: to boost social science, HIV/AIDS research generally in Africa, by commissioning a large number of projects and, at the same time, to promote applied research studies.

In view of the above, Tables 5 and 6 present summary answers to the questions that were set out in the ToR in relation to the programme’s three main objectives.

**TABLE 5: FINDINGS IN RELATION TO OBJECTIVE 1**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>
To what extent has the support enhanced capacity for HIV & AIDS research in the region?	Considerably
Did the form of support contribute to generating increased research interest and networking on HIV & AIDS in the region?	Yes
Is there need to re-consider the organisation for a follow-up programme of support	Yes
Do the traditional processes of academia meet the applied research result needs for responses to the HIV & AIDS epidemic within a fast changing environment?	No

**TABLE 6: FINDINGS IN RELATION TO OBJECTIVES 2&3**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>
The relevance of the research topic to the HIV & AIDS epidemic in the region?	Very relevant
Knowledge of the research area shown through the literature references?	Variable
Feasibility and effectiveness of the methodology?	Variable
Originality and innovation of the approach in terms of research questions/results and methodology/intervention design development?	Limited
Are the findings or methodology development of a nature that can be utilised by policy makers or practitioners?	Limited

Finally, there is the question, ‘what models for dissemination can be recommended?’ in the light of the programme’s experience. A standard model was used for the programme as a whole: workshops to present interim and final results, and a conference at the conclusion of the programme.. The workshops were useful exercises. Likewise, the Addis Ababa conference was a major, successful event. With regard to ‘stakeholder/community’ feedback meetings, if they happened then that would have been appropriate for the studies that involved participatory research methods.

Our recommendations pertain to what dissemination entails for any project that uses a Participatory Research methodology or has applied aims such as influencing policy makers. ‘Dissemination’ for this sort of research is an extensive exercise and what it entails depends on what the project’s aims. Generally speaking, it involves ‘feedback meetings’ but cannot be limited to that. Feedback meetings are not simply for the purpose of giving research results to a ‘community’. They should be also to allow review of the results; to enable the researchers to gather more data from insights and comments given by that community; and to set out further actions and ‘community participation’ towards achieving the desired practical aim of the project. In addition, this process can involve various types of report; for example, result summaries and other short papers written in indigenous languages and prepared for meetings; records of plans made with communities and even draft plans for practical interventions arising out of that process. In sum, ‘dissemination’ can be a significant action and budget line item of a project.

## **CONCLUSION**

The SIDA/SAREC programme had three principal objectives:

1. To enhance capacity for HIV & AIDS research among African scholars

2. To produce new research findings
3. To produce applied results that can feed into policy and practice.

This peer review report affirms the conclusion of the conference evaluation report; in essence, the programme achieved its first objective but not the two other objectives. However, in qualification, the programme did include studies which broached two new topics for research (see also conference evaluation report).

These objectives were in support of the programme's broader aim to 'support African applied social science research on the HIV/AIDS pandemic'. This review shows that the programme did that but many of the studies struggled to make the link between 'pure' and 'applied' research.

The broader purpose of this report and the conference evaluation report is:

*'to give SIDA and the partner organisations a retrospect on the support and to inform decisions for a possible future support'.*

Two questions in the ToR are pertinent for this discussion:

- Is there need to re-consider the organisation for a follow-up programme of support and what models can be recommended?
- Do the traditional processes of academia meet the applied research result needs for responses to the HIV & AIDS epidemic within a fast changing environment?

This review concludes that there is a need to reconsider the organisation (design, orientation, etc.) of a follow-up programme and that the 'traditional processes' are inadequate. This conclusion stems largely from the critiques of study methodologies and limited scope for application of project results made by African researchers during the conference, as well as by the paper reviewers. The two reports simply elaborate reasons behind those critiques.

The implication is that a follow-up programme should include a specific focus on methodology to ensure the studies do focus on producing practical outcomes. This means a modification of the 'traditional processes'(if by this is meant individuals applying for competitive research grants and their proposals being assessed primarily on an academic basis - the projects' potential 'to produce knowledge). The modification would be an overt emphasis in the grant conditions on methodologies that produce knowledge **and** applicable results. Otherwise, we see no need to change the proposal review procedures which would still require use of senior scholars and expertise throughout Africa to assess applications. There could be additions; for example, training of researchers whose proposals look promising or supporting some researchers who were involved in this programme with specific training on methodologies and enabling them to conduct follow-up studies (i.e. deepen the capacity building component of a programme).

This discussion outlines very broadly a model for organisation of a follow-up programme. There are possibilities for including other foci as suggested by the review; for example, particular emphases on inter-disciplinary teams and inclusion of psychological instruments. These foci would need to be informed by consultation with practitioners (government, non-government, development programme agencies) to define the practical orientation of research.



## APPENDIX 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE PEER REVIEW

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

ASSESSMENT OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS PRODUCED UNDER THE SIDA/SAREC SUPPORTED PROGRAMME: *SUPPORT TO AFRICAN APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH ON THE HIV/AIDS PANDEMIC*

#### 1. BACKGROUND

In September 2003 Sida/SAREC gave support to four African research organisations within a programme entitled *Support to African Applied Social Science Research on the HIV/AIDS Pandemic*. The support was for a regional programme in sub-Saharan Africa. The organisations and the overall themes for the research proposals supported were:

CODESRIA:	A Political Economy of Patient Welfare and rights in Relation to HIV/AIDS
OSSREA:	The HIV/AIDS Challenge in Africa: The Socio-Economic Impact of HIV/AIDS and Responses
SOMA-Net:	Reversing the HIV/AIDS Pandemic among Youth through Participatory Action Research in Kenya and Uganda
UAPS:	The Demographic, Social and Economic Determinants and Consequences of the HIV/AIDS Pandemic in Africa

All four organisations made calls for proposals and assessed them according to their review procedures, before submitting their final research projects to Sida<sup>3</sup>.

The support has been for three and a half years (2003 – 2006). Field work has been undertaken 2004 – 2005. Dissemination of results has taken place through national and regional workshops 2005 - 2006 and will culminate in a joint international conference in November 2006. A number of in-house publications are to be issued by the organisations in 2007, as well as a conference proceedings and a joint book highlighting exceptional research from the programme.

The conference for the completion of the programme is now approaching. Sida has decided to commission an assessment of the research results.

---

<sup>3</sup> The proposals and Sida memorandum for support are attached as Annex 4.

Fifteen research projects have been supported through CODESRIA, sixteen through OSSREA and twelve studies have been produced by the multi-disciplinary teams working within the SOMA-Net project. Due to organisational problems at UAPS, funds were not disbursed. In 2005 CODESRIA took over stewardship for the UAPS research and nine projects have been supported. The CODESRIA fast-track process for these projects is expected to deliver draft papers at the conference. Thus in all 43 final papers and 9 draft papers are expected to be ready for the conference. It should be noted that some of the papers are in French.

## 2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE ASSESSMENT

The purpose of the assessment is to give Sida and the partner organisations a retrospect on the support and to inform decisions for a possible future support. The assignment consists of two main tasks.

- (i) Conference report: the conference proceedings will be followed by two senior social science researchers. They will write a report on their assessment of the presentations and discussions, including conclusions/recommendations.
- (ii) Research review report: the papers will be assessed by an independent network of reviewers. This work will be led by a consultant from a social science research institution, who will summarise the reviews and draw conclusions/recommendations.

## 3. THE ASSIGNMENT (ISSUES TO BE COVERED IN THE ASSESSMENT)

The main objectives of the Sida supported programme have been:

- To enhance capacity for HIV & AIDS research among African scholars
- To produce new research findings
- To produce applied results that can feed into policy and practice.

Questions in terms of the **first objective** are:

- (i) To what extent has the support enhanced capacity for HIV & AIDS research in the region?
- (ii) Did the form of support contribute to generating increased research interest and networking on HIV & AIDS in the region?
- (iii) Is there need to re-consider the organisation for a follow-up programme of support and what models can be recommended?
- (iv) Do the traditional processes of academia meet the applied research result needs for responses to the HIV & AIDS epidemic within a fast changing environment?

Questions to be answered in relation to the **second** and **third objectives** are for each paper:

- (i) The relevance of the research topic to the HIV & AIDS epidemic in the region
- (ii) Knowledge of the research area shown through the literature references

- (iii) Feasibility and effectiveness of the methodology
- (iv) Originality and innovation of the approach in terms of research questions/results and methodology/intervention design development
- (v) Are the findings or methodology development of a nature that can be utilised by policy makers or practitioners?

Furthermore general questions in relation to the body of work produced are:

- (i) What themes emerge and do they need further investigation?
- (ii) What gaps are apparent that need further investigation?
- (iii) Do the papers show a value in/need for increased cross-disciplinary approaches?
- (iv) How have the dissemination models worked?

#### **4. METHODOLOGY, ASSESSMENT TEAM AND TIME SCHEDULE**

##### **4.1 Methodology**

The *Conference Report* entails participation at the end of programme conference entitled *The Social Sciences and HIV/AIDS in Africa: New Insights and Policy Perspectives*. It will be held from 20<sup>th</sup>– 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2006 at the United Nations Conference Centre Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. A short questionnaire shall be conducted among the programme researchers.

The *Research Review Report* entails an assessment of the papers by an independent network of reviewers. Electronic and paper copies of the research papers will be given the assessment researchers at the conference.

Documentation from the Sida programme will be made available to the assessment team: the original proposals, Sida's memorandum for support, annual reports and workshop reports from the organisations.

Discussions will be held between the assessment researchers, the organisations and Sida, on the Thursday directly after the conference. The assessment researchers will also be able to follow-up with the Project Coordinators and Executive Secretaries for the organisations, as well as with Sida.

##### **4.2 Assessment team**

###### For the Conference Report

Two senior social science researchers shall attend the conference and write a joint report. The researchers shall receive 12 consultancy fee days in total and be re-imbursed for costs in relation to attending the conference.

#### For the Research Review Report

An academic based social science research institution will make a review of the papers through an independent research network. The institution shall receive 20 consultancy days for organising the review and writing the report. The fee will also include honoraria for the reviewers.

### **4.3 Time schedule**

#### For the Conference Report

As noted above, the conference will be held from 20<sup>th</sup>– 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2006 at the United Nations Conference Centre Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The report on the conference shall be delivered in draft electronically no later than the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2007 and in final version – hard copy and electronically - no later than the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

#### For the Research Review Report

The report papers will be received at the conference in both electronic and paper copy format. The report reviewing the research papers shall be delivered in draft electronically no later than the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2007 and in final version – hard copy and electronically - no later than the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007.

## **5. REPORTING**

#### For the Conference Report

The report shall be between 20 to 30 pages and shall be written in English. It shall contain a summary, introduction, review of the proceedings, conclusions and recommendations. It shall follow (but is not limited to) the questions outlined under heading 3 in this terms of reference. The draft report will be sent to the partner organisations, as well as Sida for comments. The final version shall be delivered both electronically and in 10 hard copies (2 copies each for the partner organisations).

#### For the Research Review Report

The report shall be between 25 to 40 pages and shall be written in English. It shall contain a summary, introduction, thematic review of the papers, conclusions and recommendations. It shall follow (but is not limited to) the questions outlined under heading 3 in this terms of reference. The draft report will be sent to the partner organisations, as well as Sida for comments. The final version shall be delivered both electronically and in 10 hard copies (2 copies each for the partner organisations).

## APPENDIX 2: GENERAL AND SPECIFIC REVIEW CRITERIA

### General review criteria:

- 1) Is the research topic relevant to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the region?
- 2) Does the report show sound knowledge of the research area/field through the literature references?
- 3) Was the methodology feasible and effective? (*if answer is negative, please specify reasons*)
- 4) Does the research show originality and/or innovation with regard to the research questions, the methodology, the methods and/or the results and, where relevant, to design or development of an intervention? (*where applicable, please specify the nature of the originality or innovation and intervention*)
- 5) Are the findings or methodology of a nature that can be used by policy/decision-makers or practitioners? (*i.e. was the research designed to be 'pure' research or did set out to be to be 'applied' research; were there substantive participatory research methods?; irrespective of methodology, are the results of immediate pertinence and use to policy/decision-makers?*)
- 6) Does the report reveal interaction with policy/decision-makers/practitioners? (*if report records intent to **disseminate findings to and/or engage in some way with decision-makers/practitioners** to enable use of the research findings, please record whether the intent/aim was achieved and how the reports says it was achieved*).

### Specific Review Criteria

What themes emerge from the report? (*these will vary and reviewers are to use their discretion*) If nature of theme/themes relate to research questions, methods, and/or methodology: are they made evident in the report? are they indicated but require further investigation? (*here, the issue is not whether the researchers should have investigated further but to identify potentially useful areas for research that emerged from the Sida/Sarec programme*) What gaps are apparent in the report? (*If gaps include research questions, topics or foci, please identify*) Do the papers show a value/need for increased cross-disciplinary approaches? (*i.e. where applicable, did the research involve several disciplines and was it to good effect; if the research did not involve 2 or more disciplines but should have done so, in the reviewer's assessment, please say so and why*) Do the reports show evidence of capacity building: amongst the researchers (*e.g. researchers using the project as part of post-grad degree research; establishment of a network; research unit/centre; relationship with government department and/or NGO*) amongst NGOs, CSOs, government departments

## **APPENDIX 3: OSSREA AND SOMANET COMMENTS ON DRAFT REPORT**

### **A) OSSREA Comments on the Evaluation Report on the Conference held 20-22 November 2006 and Review Report of Research Papers**

We appreciate the report as it is quiet thorough and presents a very well thought analysis and synthesis of the various aspects of the conference sessions, the research papers and the overall research programme.

The following are comments after carefully examining the report.

- The conference incorporated a plenary sessions which gave the opportunity to some representatives of NAC and scholars to speak on various issues concerning the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The report does not seem to recognise that session.
- p. 8 - Regarding influencing public opinion - the answer provided in the report is no. This aspect requires explanation. How did the authors come to that conclusion? Is it really possible to answer such a question by only reflecting on the sessions of the conference? Such inquiry requires a more thorough investigation perhaps even looking at the post conference period. But as to the conference, the publicity of the conference may or may not influence public opinion. Clearly, the findings of the various research projects were shared and discussed by participants but to measure the influence of such findings on public opinion by just looking at the conference may not seem feasible.
- P. 11 regarding applied social science research - the argument in that paragraph (sentence beginning with the evidence for saying...) may be true for the research projects sponsored by SOMA-NET. OSSREA's programme did not overtly stress the use of participatory methodologies in the selection of the research proposals. Attempts were made to ensure that appropriate and clear research methodologies which could yield reliable data were proposed by the researchers.
- P. 13, first paragraph (sentence beginning with - in sum) states that the presentations identified issues which could feed into policy. It is good to indicate these policy issues. Perhaps the explanation would help one analyse if there are policy issues emerging from the research papers. If that is the case then there is a need to revisit what was discussed earlier (and the other assessment report) about the contribution of the research projects towards policy.
- p.15 - appendix 1 - The title of OSSREA's programme is the HIV/AIDS challenge in Africa: An impact and response assessment. The report mentions that the call for proposals was made before submitting the final research projects to Sida. In the case of

OSSREA, the OSSREA project proposal was initially submitted for funding to Sida and once it got approval, the call for proposals was made in eastern and southern Africa.

### **Research review report**

- Page 6 last paragraph- sentence beginning with collectively- this comments should also be seen vis à vis the project proposal submitted by the various research organisations/networks. Some designed their project to develop practical interventions whilst others focused on examining impacts and assessing various socio-economic scenarios. Thus, such statements should also be checked against the project proposals of the four participating organisations. Perhaps such closer look will reveal that although the Sida programme objectives have identified three main objectives, the various proposals submitted by the participating organisations were not designed to directly address all three objectives of Sida. Perhaps the majority of the proposals (of the organisations) focused and intended to address only some of the objectives. For instance, with the case of SOMA-NET some of the research projects focused on designing interventions. Whilst for OSSREA maybe CODESRIA as well, their main focus was for knowledge production.
- The report indicates that out of the 52 papers, 35 were reviewed; the topics of these papers and the names of the sponsoring organisation should be listed. Related to this, it should also identify the short and the full reports submitted for the review.
- p. 7 - Table 2 - The table would be more useful and easy to understand, if the topics of the papers and the brief reasons stated by the reviewers were indicated. As it stands, the table by itself does very little to understand and learn from the reviews, it just a simple yes/ no. The same is true for tables 3 and 4. Such and other details should be annexed at the end of the report.
- p. 8 - Concerning capacity building (the paragraph above the last paragraph) - states that there is no apparent capacity building. It is not clear how the reviewers reached such conclusion based on the research reports. At least in this case, researchers themselves should have been asked this question as reviewing the research reports may not fully give the wider picture.

Related to this, the last paragraph also discusses the lack of capacity building amongst NGO, CSO etc. this has not been the objective of the programme in our case. When we talk about capacity building we are focusing on the capacity of the respective grantees. If reviewers wanted to see the possibility of developing links with other organisations (NGOs, CSOs GOs) the information may not be available in the research reports, at least in all cases. Further inquiry should have been made either by asking researchers or the four organisations/networks. Again the analysis in this regard should be separated for each organisations/network and it should also take into account what is stated in their project proposal.

- P. 9, regarding dissemination of findings - OSSREA also published the executive summaries of the various reports. This was done in order to disseminate the findings prior to the publishing of the final manuscripts.
- P. 19, Tables 5 and 6 - These tables require some explanation to understand how the reviewers reached such conclusions i.e. method of analysis.
- P. 28, it would be more helpful if the academic and research background or area of specialisation of the reviewers in addition to the names is provided.

Thank you!

## **B) Summary of comments received from SOMANET**

*The general interest was for more examples drawn from the body of research to support the conclusions in this report, as is illustrated below:*

‘You need to give illustrations of papers, that showed originality and/or innovation; and those which had findings or methodology that could be used by policy/decision-makers or practitioners and those that revealed interaction with policy/decision-makers/practitioners. This will help use them as lessons learned for future.’

*In relation to report statement: The finding (criterion 5b) of little evidence of capacity building amongst NGOs, CSOs and government agencies is in accord with the general assessment of limited links developed between the research, practical applications and agencies concerned with the latter.*

‘But this depended on the nature of the research not all aimed at building capacity of NGOs.’ :

*In relation to Table 3:*

‘What were the type of cross-disciplinary approaches shown? You also need to demonstrate evidence of capacity building, amongst the researchers or amongst NGOs, CSOs, govt. dept.s. how did you decide on this from the papers only!

*In relation to issue of capacity building:*

‘What do you mean by capacity building is it human resources and institutional development?’



#### **APPENDIX 4: NAMES OF THE REVIEWERS**

Dr. Olagoke Akintola, University of KwaZulu-Natal

Mr. Caesar Cheelo, University of Zambia

Ms. Suraya Dawad, HEARD

Dr. Esther William Dungumaro, University of KwaZulu-Natal

Ms. Kerry Frizelle, University of KwaZulu-Natal

Prof. Suzanne Leclerc-Madlala, University of KwaZulu-Natal

Prof. Stephen Bugu Kendie, University of Cape Coast

| Ms. Grace Malindi, ?

Ms. Dorris Mbata, KISESA, Tanzania

| Dr. Mughwira Mwangu, Muhimbili College of Health Sciences, Dar es Salaam

Dr. Namposya Nampanya-Serpell, HIV/AIDS Activist & Consultant, Lusaka

Dr. Busiswe Nkosi, HEARD

Prof. Augustine Nwoye, Kenyatta University

Prof. Tim Quinlan, HEARD

Dr. Geoffrey Setswe, Human Sciences Research Council, South Africa

Dr. Leichness Chisamu Simbayi, Human Sciences Research Council, South Africa

| Dr. Beverly Killian, Children in Distress Network/University of KwaZulu-Natal