



HRCSI NEWSLETTER

HEALTH RESEARCH CAPACITY STRENGTHENING INITIATIVE

MALAWI



Quarterly newsletter

Issue 1 - April 2010

We are pleased to introduce the first quarterly newsletter of the Malawi Health Research Capacity Strengthening Initiative (HRCSI), which aims to strengthen the generation and use of health research evidence in Malawi to improve the quality of policies and interventions impacting the health of individuals.

HRCSI BACKGROUND

Launched in 2009 and coordinated by the National Commission for Science and Technology (NCST), HRCSI is a five-year programme funded by Wellcome Trust, the Department for International Development (DFID), and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). HRCSI is working to strengthen health research capacity and create a more enabling environment for quality multidisciplinary health research in Malawi.

HRCSI TIMELINE

2005: Scoping and design mission
2006: Launch of the inception phase and creation of a National Task Force to develop a full proposal
2007: Approval of HRCSI proposal by funders
2008: Establishment of HRCSI Secretariat
2009: Official launch of the 5-year implementation phase

HRCSI PROGRAMME OUTPUTS:

1. Enhanced institutional capacity for high-quality multi-disciplinary health-related research
2. Evidence-based policy and programme formulation
3. Effective sharing of scientific knowledge
4. Improved regulation and coordination of national health research

What is the Programme Management Board (PMB)?

The overall function of the PMB is to oversee programme implementation and financial management of HRCSI. Some of its functions include: approving the annual budget; monitoring performance of implementing partners through quarterly reporting; and reviewing and approving the programme of work. Members of the PMB include: government representatives, funders, development partner representative, NGO/private sector representative, and representatives from the health research sector.

What is the Multidisciplinary Research Committee (MRC)?

The MRC was established to support the implementation of programme activities and provide added technical expertise to programme planning and decision-making. Among other things, it: supports the development of guidelines and criteria for grants; conducts technical reviews of applications; and supports the development of the National health research agenda. The MRC has 12 members from the Malawian research community.

Watch out for: HRCSI Briefs; RFA for training fellowships; HRCSI Website...

RFA process registers progress

In December 2009, HRCISI issued its second Request for applications (RFA) for research grants and training fellowship as one way of strengthening health research capacity in Malawi. By January 31st, 2010, a total of 1000 applicants had registered their interest and by February 18th 136 had submitted applications, with more to come. This represented a substantial increase from the first RFA (February 2009) where 91 individuals registered their interest and 37 proposals were received.

The proposals will undergo pre-screening by the secretariat before submission to external reviewers and review by the Multidisciplinary Research Committee (MRC).

How to apply for a grant or fellowship

HRCISI is offering two main types of grants: training fellowships and research grants. Applications for research grants can be submitted throughout the year. Applications for fellowships can be submitted twice a year after HRCISI issues an RFA. For more information, please send an email to hrcsi@ncst.mw or call the secretariat on 01771550 or 0888613174.



Stakeholder Review Meeting

On March 2, 2010 HRCISI convened a stakeholder review meeting in Lilongwe to share information on the programme's progress, lessons learned and emerging issues from Year 1. The meeting also presented the main activities planned for Year 2, and provided an opportunity for stakeholders to offer feedback.

Approaches to Capacity development

HRCISI has adopted a "learning-by-doing" approach to capacity development, where lessons from past successes and failures are continuously being used to move the programme forward, enhance its sustainability, and embed it in the local context. Over the past year, HRCISI has focused on establishing relationships with individuals, organisations and institutions to increase local ownership and build social capital. The programme has also provided training to individuals or groups to allow them acquire new skills and knowledge. Finally, it has sought to initiate changes in policies and practice to build organisational capacity and address research-environment bottlenecks. For more information, contact Tchaka Ndhlovu at: hrcsi@ncst.mw

NCST secretariat operational

The National Commission for Science and Technology (NCST) became operational as a regulating and coordinating agency for all research in Malawi in December 2009, with the appointment of its first director general, Dr Henderson Chimoyo. NCST was created from a merger of the National Research Council of Malawi and the Department of Science and Technology of the Ministry of Education as called for by the Science and Technology Act of 2003.

For more information on the programme, contact hrcsi@ncst.mw