

Swiss TPH Research Fairness Initiative Report 2019

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The Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (Swiss TPH) is a public institute, associated with the University of Basel. The mission of Swiss TPH is to contribute to the improvement of the health of populations internationally, nationally and locally through excellence in research, services and teaching and training. To help achieve its mission, Swiss TPH collaborates with national and international partners in the public, private and civil society sectors.

This RFI Report was produced according to the RFI guidelines that are current on the date of this publication. The RFI Guides and the criteria for validation of RFI Reports can be found on the RFI website (rfi.cohred.org). The publication of this report reflects the reporting organization's commitment to provide a fair and equitable research environment. The report has been validated by the RFI Team as compliant with current reporting criteria. The content of the report is the sole responsibility of the reporting organization. The Council on Health Research for Development does not endorse, nor take responsibility for, the specific content of the report.

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Glossary

CoC	Code of conduct
Co-I	Co-investigator
COHRED	Council on Health Research for Development
CSRS	Centre Suisse de Recherches Scientifiques en Côte d'Ivoire
CSSI	Centre de Support en Santé International
IHI	Ifakara Health Institute
KAA	Key areas of activity
KFPE	Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries
LMIC	Low- and middle-income country
PI	Principle investigator
REC	Research ethics committee
RFI	Research Fairness Initiative
RoE	Rules of Engagement
SARECO	Swiss-African Research Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SERI	State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation
SOP	Standard operating procedure
Swiss TPH	Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute

Foreword

The Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (Swiss TPH) is an independent institution associated with the University of Basel. Since its founding in 1943, the former Swiss Tropical Institute (STI) has developed into an institution world-renowned for research, education and services in the field of global health.

Its interdisciplinary approach, combining activities and experiences from laboratory studies, conceptual and clinical work and the practical implementation of findings in health planning and in health programmes – locally, nationally and in partner countries – are the cornerstones of its success. Instrumental for pursuing this institutional strategy are the cross-departmental collaborations that are formed in-house and our long-term partnerships with health, research and development institutions across the globe.

Our partner-oriented approach, rooted in the principle of mutual learning for sustainable development that is implemented on a day-to-day basis, helps fulfilling our mission of contributing to health development locally, nationally and internationally, especially in low- and middle-income countries.

Based on the significance that our research partners have in achieving our mission, we believe that it is essential to regularly review and update our best practice towards them. The Research Fairness Initiative (RFI) designed by the Council on Health Research for Development, provides a suitable framework to conduct a critical and comprehensive assessment of best practice with our collaborators, specifically those that might be disadvantaged by means of funding, research capacity and access to information. Crucially, the RFI emphasises continuing improvements in how to manage partnerships for equitability and global development. The initiative, moreover, assesses the consideration that researchers and teachers are bringing into the local research and educational setting. Finally, the RFI may be a useful template for joint discussions with partners to ensure that all sides contribute to continuing improvement of research collaborations.

We are pleased to be part of the RFI from the beginning and we hope that our experience can help shaping the global notion, practice and evaluation of fair research. Finally, we trust that RFI contributes to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, specifically to Sustainable Development Goal 17 that is to ‘Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development’.

Jürg Utzinger
Director, Swiss TPH

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October 2019

Executive Summary

The Research Fairness Initiative (RFI) is a service developed by the Council on Health Research for Development to improve the fairness, efficiency and impact of research collaborations globally. It is hoped that RFI becomes the standard reporting system for fairness in scientific research collaborations.

The RFI is based on three main domains, each further divided into five subtopics. Each topic is subdivided into three indicators resulting in 45 indicators overall. For each indicator, current institutional practices are to be outlined, relevant standard operating procedures, policy directives or other written guidelines are to be referenced and future steps to improve any particular indicator within the next 1–2 years are to be elaborated.

Domain 1 – **fairness of opportunity** – assesses participation of all stakeholders at relevant stages of research development. The domain encourages institutions to reflect on the relevance of their research to the settings they are working in and whether they are using appropriate corrective measures for recognizing unequal research management capacities between partners.

The action of the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (Swiss TPH) is guided by the best practice developed jointly with the most important long-term partners and by adhering to the 11 Principles for Transboundary Research Partnerships by the Swiss Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries. Although we feel that, practically, Swiss TPH is implementing mutually satisfying procedures with its main scientific partners, we realize that there is a lack of written documentation, and hence, lack of streamlined guidance for early career researchers.

Domain 2 – **fair process** – analyses how research is conducted and how research partnerships and programmes are being implemented. The domain encourages minimizing negative impacts that may arise with the implementation of research programmes and engaging in local training, hiring and sourcing.

In four out of five topics, Swiss TPH is largely satisfied with its procedures and is planning no change or only minor adaptations to its code of conduct (CoC). One topic that has been found unsatisfactory is the lack of assessment of negative impact by potential research programmes on the social-ecological setting of the country hosting the research. Considering our current transition to align with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Swiss TPH does recognize this as one of the imminent areas for improvement.

Domain 3 assesses **fair sharing of benefits, costs and outcomes**. It focuses on short-term costs, benefits and outcomes of individual studies, but also on the medium- and long-term impact that research collaboration can have on the ability of partners to grow their own research capacity.

The performance of Swiss TPH in this domain is mixed. While committed in building research capacity and aligning our research strategy with the SDGs, no environmental risk assessments are commonly done for Swiss TPH research. In transforming research outcomes, there is a current lack of practical experience and streamlined processes.

Overview of the Research Fairness Initiative (RFI)

Purpose of the RFI

The Research Fairness Initiative (RFI) is a continuous improvement system developed by the Council on Health Research for Development (COHRED) to improve the fairness, efficiency and impact of research collaborations globally. The RFI was created with the aim of improving global health, equity and development. However, the initiative may be, in principle, appropriate to any field of scientific collaboration, and it may be used by anyone who engages as actor or funder of research and research partnerships. A higher level of fairness in research has shown to result in greater efficiency and impact, longer-lasting partnerships, less conflict and reduced reputational risks. Hence, RFI is of relevance to stakeholders in any research collaboration where resources in research, administration and know-how may be distributed unequally. The RFI seeks to enable more capable research and innovation systems in every country to deal with the local, regional and global health and development challenges with a long-term view. The RFI is in direct support of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – particularly SDG 17 that is to ‘Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development’.

RFI domains, topics and indicators

The RFI is built on three domains which are each divided into five subtopics. Each topic is further subdivided into three indicators resulting in a total of 45 indicators. For each indicator, organizations are required to describe their current organizational practices, reference relevant standard operating procedures, policy directives or other written guidelines through an attachment or link, and to report on any future steps to improve that particular indicator over a two-year period.

Domain 1 – **Fairness of opportunity** – aims to improve the participation of all concerned in research at relevant stages of research development, often well before research even begins.

Domain 2 – **Fair process** – aims to improve fairness in how research is conducted and how research partnerships and programmes are implemented.

Domain 3 – **Fair sharing of benefits, costs and outcomes** – deals with improving fairness in sharing the costs, benefits and outcomes of research.

A full list of all the domains, topics and indicators can be found in Appendix A.

How Swiss TPH applied the RFI

During the second half of 2018, Swiss TPH conducted an exercise to analyse in-house practice as measured by the RFI indicators. This was achieved by discussions with a selection of Swiss TPH staff and in-depth reviews of Swiss TPH documents. Swiss TPH procedures were grouped into three different categories using the colour coding defined below. The different procedure categories, together with the additional qualitative information on case studies, examples and personal experiences obtained during the individual interviews, built the base for the present internal report presenting a summary of the results from the RFI and set of recommendations.

Swiss TPH procedures

Procedures in place	Description
Documented standard procedure	Written standard procedures and guidelines, reports and/or documentation on any measures and actions are available to support this indicator. All documents are referenced in the report and described in Appendix B.
Contracting	A streamlined in-house case-to-case contracting procedure is in place to support this indicator.
KFPE & long-term partners	The Swiss TPH rules of engagement (RoE) explicitly state an alignment of the institution with the '11 Principles for Transboundary Research Partnerships' by the Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (KFPE). The pursuit of these principles and the good practice exemplified by the long-term partnerships of Swiss TPH with the Centre Suisse de Recherches Scientifiques en Côte d'Ivoire (CSRS), the Centre de Support en Santé Internationale (CSSI) in Chad and the Ifakara Health institution (IHI) in Tanzania are supporting this indicator.
Not applicable (N/A)	This indicator is not currently relevant to the activities, approaches and processes of Swiss TPH. Consequently, there is limited or no documentation with regard to this indicator.
Action	Swiss TPH envisages taking short-term actions until the next review of the RFI Report and/or long-term actions aiming for a consistent integration of best practice.

The above colour code for Swiss TPH procedures was developed to deliver an objective assessment of the availability, extent and nature of in-house supporting information that govern best practice at Swiss TPH. It is not a ranking system. The appropriateness of the overall level of support available to guide best practice is being discussed, in this report, for each indicator and recommendations are being made on whether the level and nature of in-house supporting information and guidance is appropriate or whether it should be optimised.

Domain 1: Fairness of opportunity

What domain 1 measures

The frameworks and best practice in place to pursue and implement collaborative research projects are assessed in this first domain. The indicators encourage reflecting on the consideration of the local research agenda and appropriate – and above all timely – engagement of all partners in the research design. In addition, they aim to reveal whether institutional practice ensures a fair legal and administrative basis allowing for equity in the share of contributions and opportunities between partners.

How Swiss TPH performs within this domain

Swiss TPH action is guided by the best practice developed with its most important long-term partners – CSRS, CSSI and IHI – and by the day-to-day implementation of the 11 Principles for Transboundary Research Partnerships by KFPE, especially P1, set the agenda together; P2, interact with stakeholders; P3, clarify responsibilities; P4, account to beneficiaries; P5, promote mutual learning; and P6, enhance capacity. The institution’s mission, to contribute to the improvement of the health and wellbeing of populations at the local, national and international levels through excellence in research, education and services, has guided early institutional activities into establishing a research culture of tackling problems where they arise. Relevance and early engagement of the main partners are, consequently, the two topics of domain 1 in which Swiss TPH excels the most. Research strategies and priorities are annually reviewed jointly with the CSRS, CSSI and IHI top leadership. Procedures for contracting, co-financing and ensuring administrative capacity for the partners of a given project are somewhat streamlined for the long-term partners, while handled on a case-to-case basis for new and/or ad hoc project collaborators. Here, we feel that Swiss TPH will update its standard quality review of PhD proposals at the Research Commission, to better align the interests and expertise of Swiss TPH with its collaborators and to address the social-ecological context more comprehensively (see also Domain 2, Topic 6).

RFI summary table

1 FAIRNESS OF OPPORTUNITY					
Indicator Number	Indicator Status				
	N/A	KFPE	Contracting	Document	Action
<i>Topic 1: Relevance to communities – in which research is done</i>					
1.1.1.					
1.1.2.					
1.1.3.					
<i>Topic 2: Early engagement of all partners – in deciding about aims, methods, implementation</i>					
1.2.1.					
1.2.2.					
1.2.3.					
<i>Topic 3: Making contributions of all partners explicit – fair research contracting</i>					
1.3.1.					
1.3.2.					
1.3.3.					
<i>Topic 4: Ensuring that matching and other co-financing mechanisms do not undermine opportunities for fair participation of all partners</i>					
1.4.1.					
1.4.2.					
1.4.3.					
<i>Topic 5: Recognition of unequal research management capacities between partners and providing for appropriate corrective measures</i>					
1.5.1.					
1.5.2.					
1.5.3.					

Topic 1: Relevance to communities – in which research is done

It is described if and how Swiss TPH determines the health and health research priorities of countries and populations in which a given research project is planned to be conducted. How does Swiss TPH proceed when it cannot find appropriate health and health research priorities for the population concerned? If it is decided that a research programme does not directly address one of the top 10 health research priorities of the population in which research will be conducted, how does Swiss TPH justify the choice of this population?

1.1.1.	Research priorities in communities where research is being conducted						
1.1.2.	Actions if there are no research priorities						
1.1.3.	Justification to research low priority topics						

The mission of Swiss TPH is to ‘contribute to the improvement of the health and wellbeing of populations at the local, national and international levels through excellence in research, education and services. A board of trustees ensures the pursuit and the consequent implementation of this mission, meeting at least twice a year¹. Swiss TPH develops its activities in accordance with a board-approved 4-year strategic plan². Key areas of activities (KAAs) are defined as the strategic areas of responsibility in this 4-year strategic plan, and they are discussed and revised annually during a 2-day project leader retreat, together with the top leadership of the major partner institutions of Swiss TPH, in particular the CSRS, CSSI and IHI³. Swiss TPH acts thereby in accordance with its RoE⁴ that are aligned with the 11 Principles for Transboundary Research Partnerships published by KFPE (P1, set the agenda together)⁵. At Swiss TPH, new research projects often build on a history of mutual research with an established partner. Where a new partner is involved, the design of a research project commonly relies on global burden of disease data and, where available, local health burden data. Indeed, a significant share of the Swiss TPH work revolves around the most important diseases in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) including malaria and tuberculosis, as well as the world’s most neglected health issues in the most marginalized populations (e.g. Buruli ulcer, Leprosy), co-designed and executed in joint efforts with partners on the ground. The consequent pursuit of the Swiss TPH mission and the procedures in place to ensure a mutual discussion of research priorities, are safeguarding against implementing a project with no or low local priority.

Measures: Swiss TPH is satisfied with the degree and the consistency of implementing locally relevant research.

¹ Statute of the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (Swiss TPH)

² Strategy 2017–2020, Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute

³ Swiss TPH Project Leader Retreat 2018

⁴ Swiss TPH Rules of Engagement

⁵ A Guide for Transboundary Research Partnerships: 11 Principles and 7 Questions

Topic 2: Early engagement of partners

Swiss TPH policies and approaches are described to ensure early engagement of partners, enabling them to influence focus, financing and implementation of a given project. How does Swiss TPH deal with partners that mainly provide access to study populations? Does Swiss TPH have a standardized approach to identify areas of strength and weakness in partners included in research programmes and, if so, what actions follow the identification of gaps in expertise to design and implement studies?

1.2.1.	Relationship between the “main/lead/sponsoring” and “other” partners					
1.2.2.	SOPs for partner inclusion in study design					
1.2.3.	SOPs for supportive actions to partners					

A large proportion of those Swiss TPH research activities that rely on access to study populations in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) are conducted within established long-term partnership arrangements. The mutual KAAs are discussed and revised annually during the 2-day project leader retreat, together with the top leadership of the major partner institutions of Swiss TPH, particularly the CSRS, CSSI and IHI^{1,2}. The design and development a study or programme in general is conducted in a multilateral fashion. Standard strategies to involve partners from the beginning and throughout the project are kick-off meetings (Bottnar, Jan 2018; Sinergia, 12.11.2019), regular progress meetings and mid-term evaluation procedures (SCORE Schistosomiasis, central Côte d’Ivoire). Swiss TPH acts thereby in accordance with its RoE³ that are aligned with the 11 Principles for Transboundary Research Partnerships (P1, set the agenda together; P2, interact with stakeholders; P5, promote mutual learning; P6, enhance capacity)⁴. Swiss TPH is represented on the boards of governors of CSRS, CSSI and IHI that meet once or twice a year to evaluate the administrative capacity at each institution^{5,6,7}. In addition, there are ad hoc staff exchanges between Swiss TPH and its main partners according to needs and demands in administration and research; most prominently in finance, science communication and grants and publications support. For CSRS, CSSI and IHI, dedicated core funding exists for the continuous build-up of capacity which is facilitated by a small core contribution from the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI)⁸. A publications and grants writing support unit was, for instance, established in 2016 at CSRS to allow researchers to apply increasingly to Anglophone funders in a PI function and to boost their record of international first or senior-author articles^{9,10}.

For new partners, site assessments may be conducted during the project development process. In-house contracting procedures are handled case by case as is the question on whether and what kind of supportive actions may be appropriate.

Measures: Swiss TPH is satisfied with its procedures to assure early engagement of its partners and to identify and support potential gaps in its partner’s capacity to perform the tasks defined within the collaborative framework.

¹ Statute of the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (Swiss TPH)

² Swiss TPH Project Leader Retreat 2018

³ Swiss TPH Rules of Engagement

⁴ A Guide for Transboundary Research Partnerships: 11 Principles and 7 Questions

⁵ CSRS-Conseil Administration_22.06.2019_minutes

⁶ IHI_Minutes of 22nd BOG Meeting (10.1.2018)

⁷ IHI_Agenda for 23rd BOG Meeting

⁸ Leistungsvereinbarung für die Jahre 2017–2020 zwischen der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft und dem Schweizerischen Tropen- und Public Health-Institut

⁹ Procédures Opérationnelles Standards de l’Unité d’Appui aux Projets et Publications (UAPP)

¹⁰ Protocole d’appui à la publication des articles de Recherche

Topic 3: Making contributions of all partners explicit – Fair research contracting

It is described whether Swiss TPH explicitly defines the roles, responsibilities and benefits for all partners during research design, implementation, write-up and follow-up of actions, before the actual research begins. It is furthermore explained how Swiss TPH deals with conflicts arising after the commencement of a collaborative research project, and the measures are described to communicate the explicit benefits to participant populations during the development of the study.

1.3.1.	Role clarification in research partnerships					
1.3.2.	SOPs for conflict resolution					
1.3.3.	Making potential impact explicit <i>before</i> starting research					

In general, Swiss TPH is bound to act in accordance with its RoE¹ that are aligned with the 11 Principles for Transboundary Research Partnerships (P3, clarify responsibilities; P4, account to beneficiaries)² also before the research begins. Contracts and post-award consortium agreements for larger projects are the standard procedure, established on a case-by-case basis, and each contract and consortium agreement undergoes internal legal review. Swiss TPH standard contracts demand transparency of the budget and the clear allocation of the budget to each participating entity. However, discussion revolving around publications, feedback to study populations and follow-up actions are often handled by the Principal Investigator (PI) case by case. For larger projects, kick-off meetings are commonly organized to clearly discuss and define roles and responsibilities. If conflicts arise from any contractual agreement, either party involved can apply to the civil court of the Canton of Basel-Stadt (Switzerland), according to the standard phrasing in the Swiss TPH contract templates³. However, contract partners are free to suggest any other civil court. The resolution of a ‘minor conflict’ that is not taken to court is handled on a case-by-case basis. Impacts of the research on the participating population, i.e., both risks and benefits are explicitly stated or communicated to the population within the informed consent procedures prior to the commencement of the research.

For collaborative work with a less formalized frame, a Memorandum of Understanding is commonly established.

Measures: The primary aim of the contracting procedures at Swiss TPH is to ensure a solid legal base for all Swiss TPH operations. We believe that our changes proposed in Domain 2, Topic 6, with long-term view to establishing an in-house system of impact assessment will also enhance the coherence of our contracting procedures. Establishing a system of impact assessment that accounts for environment, participating population and strains on local infrastructure and services may offer a basis for establishing a contract that represents the local needs and rights more appropriately.

Short-term action: Swiss TPH commits to include a ‘systems and environmental risk assessment’ as part of the already standard quality review of PhD proposals at the Research Commission (in line with Topic 6 and Topic 14, Indicator 13.4.2).

Long-term action: Swiss TPH aims for the long-term establishment of the update quality review of PhD proposals

¹ Swiss TPH Rules of Engagement

² A Guide for Transboundary Research Partnerships: 11 Principles and 7 Questions

³ Swiss TPH Subcontract Template

Topic 4: Ensuring that matching and other co-financing mechanisms do not undermine opportunities for fair participation of all partners

It is outlined how Swiss TPH deals with differences in spending ability between partners with regard to co-financing the total research expenditure. How is equality in partnership defined beyond co-financing, and to what extent is the proportion to the benefits influenced by the ability of a partner to co-finance research?

1.4.1.	Equal co-financing						
1.4.2.	Alternatives to equal co-financing						
1.4.3.	Research outside national priorities and co-financing						

Co-financing arrangements between Swiss TPH and their partners happen on a case-by-case basis and depend on the partner, project and setting. These are usually guided by the PI by orchestrating the proposed research and managing the contracting that may formally specify the each partner’s financial and/or non-financial contributions and benefits. In general, an agreement on co-financing mechanisms is based on mutual trust and institutional and governmental commitment by both parties, as seen within the long-term established partnerships with CSRS, CSSI, IHI and many others. In-kind contributions by the LMIC partner often compensate for a lack of monetary co-funding. Also in this matter, Swiss TPH is bound to act in accordance with its RoE¹ that are aligned with the 11 Principles for Transboundary Research Partnerships (P1 set the agenda together; P3 clarify responsibilities; P4, account to beneficiaries; P6 enhance capacities)².

Based on the mission of Swiss TPH and the procedures in place pertaining to Topic 1 – relevance to communities in which research is done – Swiss TPH does not commonly pursue research that is outside national priorities.

Measures: Swiss TPH can refer back to a long history of research co-financed with our long-term partners CSRS, CSSI, IHI and many others, which offers proof of sustainability of the mutually developed practices in place. Swiss TPH is currently satisfied with its performance regarding this topic. However, in the future, Swiss TPH hopes that it can contribute in leveraging more and fresh co-funding from the LMI partner countries.

¹ Swiss TPH Rules of Engagement

² A Guide for Transboundary Research Partnerships: 11 Principles and 7 Questions

Topic 5: Recognition of unequal research management capacities between partners and providing for appropriate corrective measures

It is outlined how Swiss TPH conducts research management, financial management and contracting and contract negotiation capacity assessments of partners – specifically when being the lead partner in a research programme. It is further described what internationally accepted accounting practice is used, and whether Swiss TPH requires their partners to use any, when acting as the lead institution? Are there mechanisms to increase this capacity as part of the partnership – especially before contracts are signed?

1.5.1.	Research management capacity								
1.5.2.	Financial management capacity								
1.5.3.	Contracting and contract negotiation capacity								

A large proportion of Swiss TPH research activities are conducted within established long-term partnership arrangements and based on the 11 Principles for Transboundary Research Partnerships (P6, enhance capacity)^{21,22}. The partnerships with CSRS, CSSI and IHI especially, are built on long-term institutional and governmental commitment and are characterized by a strong component of institutional capacity building, which include particularly managerial and financial capacity and to a lesser extent transfer of legal/contracting knowledge. Swiss TPH is represented on the boards of governors of CSRS, CSSI and IHI that meet once or twice a year to evaluate the administrative capacity at each institution^{23,24,25}. In addition, there are ad hoc administrative exchanges between Swiss TPH and the main partners according to needs and demands. For both institutions, CSRS and IHI, dedicated core funding exists for gradual build-up of capacity²⁶. If a project is being conducted with a new partner a site assessment may take place during the project development process, and administrative support may be offered on a case-by-case basis.

Swiss TPH follows the Swiss GAAP FER accounting²⁷ and reporting recommendations, and offer a Swiss-wide accounting standard. However, although Swiss TPH encourages and teaches good administrative practices to some of their long-term partners, it does not formally require all partner institutions to work according to internationally accepted accounting practice.

Measures: Swiss TPH has a well-established procedure with the main partner institutions on assessing gaps in administrative capacity, financial and managerial more so than legal/contracting. Beyond those establishments, Swiss TPH is lacking clear guidelines, operating on a case-by-case basis. We feel that, we could offer more support to our main partner institutions, with regard to the contracting procedures in the form of an annual administrative exchange. To do this effectively, it would be necessary to obtain some specific funding, for example by SERI or the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

Short-term action: We will consult with CSRS, CSSI and IHI in 2020 on whether any increased capacity building and exchange of knowledge is needed, especially with regard to contracting, and – if so – we will find a strategy together to leverage the means.

²¹ Swiss TPH Rules of Engagement

²² A Guide for Transboundary Research Partnerships: 11 Principles and 7 Questions

²³ CSRS-Conseil Administration_22.06.2019_minutes

²⁴ IHI_Minutes of 22nd BOG Meeting (10.1.2018)

²⁵ IHI_Agenda for 23rd BOG Meeting

²⁶ Leistungsvereinbarung für die Jahre 2017–2020 zwischen der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft und dem Schweizerischen Tropen- und Public Health-Institut

²⁷ Swiss GAAP FER accounting

Domain 2: Fair process

What domain 2 measures

The practices in place to avoid potential harm to the institutional and socio-economic set-up where the research is done, while assuring compliance with the local stakeholders, are assessed in this domain. Indicators touch upon the consideration of the wider socio-economic impact and of local staff resources and local ethics review systems, specifically. Moreover, indicators encourage reflection on fair data management and budgeting procedures allowing for a fair share for all partners.

How Swiss TPH performs within this domain

In four out of five topics, Swiss TPH is largely satisfied with its procedures and is planning no change or minor adaptations to its CoC. Local hiring and sourcing are done in a way that maximises the local benefit, minimizes research costs and avoids unnecessary transportation of goods, in balance with assuring maximum quality of the research conducted. Ethics procedures are streamlined, rigorous and based on a double-ethics approval, while ownership and publishing rights issues are dealt with on a case-by-case basis and in reference to the KFPE partnership principles, particularly to discuss these issues at the onset of joint projects (P1, set the agenda together; P2, interact with stakeholders; P3, clarify responsibilities; P6, enhance capacities). For full cost recovery, Swiss TPH finds itself in the same position as many of its partner institutions, bearing the pressures of strongly relying on third-party funding (e.g. in 2018, 78% of third-party funding, only 22% core contributions from local and national governments). However, expertise and advice on full cost recovery budgeting are readily shared with its partners. Swiss TPH, however, seeks to improve in its efforts to identify and mitigate negative impacts of potential research programmes on the socio-environmental setting of a given project.

RFI summary table

2 FAIR PROCESS					
Indicator Number	Indicator Status				
	N/A	KFPE	Contracting	Document	Action
<i>Topic 6: Minimizing negative impacts of research programmes on systems</i>					
2.6.1.					
2.6.2.					
2.6.3.					
<i>Topic 7: Fair local hiring, training and sourcing</i>					
2.7.1.					
2.7.2.					
2.7.3.					
<i>Topic 8: Respect for authority of local ethics review systems</i>					
2.8.1.					
2.8.2.					
2.8.3.					
<i>Topic 9: Data ownership storage, access and use</i>					
2.9.1.					
2.9.2.					
2.9.3.					
<i>Topic 10: Encourage full cost recovery budgeting and compensation for all partners</i>					
2.10.1.					
2.10.2.					
2.10.3.					

Topic 6: Minimizing negative impact of research programmes on health and other systems

It is stated whether Swiss TPH conducts a ‘system impact assessment’ of partners for unintended harm to people or services. Standard preventive and mitigating actions when harm arises are outlined.

2.6.1.	Assessing potential harm of research							
2.6.2.	Reducing negative impact of research							
2.6.3.	Compensation for unintended (negative) consequences of research							

Swiss TPH is an institute that is set out to improving the general health of populations at the local, national and international levels. In line with this mission, the research conducted by Swiss TPH aims to introduce as little disruption to the already existing socio-ecologic order within the setting it operates. Accordingly, the CoC¹ suggests that ‘In conducting our work, we demonstrate social and environmental responsibility, professionalism and use of good business practices’. In practice, there are two current standard procedures with view to protecting the local setting. For each clinical study, liability insurance is being put in place for the duration of the study to compensate the participants, should any intervention-related effects become evident. The nature and provider of the liability insurance is trial- and country dependent. As per standard, participants are informed of purpose, procedures, risks and benefits of any intervention, prior to giving their consent². Participation is voluntary, withdrawal being possible at any time without further obligation. Secondly, standard legal agreements are being made with foreign visiting students that conduct a scholarship at Swiss TPH, to ensure their willingness to return to their home countries after completion of the official scholarship period. This procedure should safeguard Swiss TPH as host institution and – the same time – it should prevent Swiss TPH from retaining the best international students and draining collaborative countries from human research capacity. Systems impact assessments are done ad hoc, when demanded by the funder.

Measures: Systems impact assessments will be done on demand from a specific funder. We feel that there is scope for Swiss TPH to more systemically identify potential negative impact of their planned research projects. Doing so will better protect the setting where research is being done and it will offer a more comprehensive base for fair contracting between all parties involved. With a standard ‘system impact assessment’, policies or mechanisms can be set in place to enable preventive actions and to adequately deal with negative consequences of research programmes.

Short-term action: Swiss TPH commits to include a ‘systems and environmental risk assessment’ as part of the already standard quality review of PhD proposals at the Research Commission (in line with Topic 14, Indicator 13.4.2).

Long-term action: Swiss TPH aims for the long-term establishment of the update quality review of PhD proposals.

¹ Handbook for Employees of Swiss TPH: Code of Conduct

² Hürlimann et al. Antagonistic effects of Plasmodium-helminth co-infections on malaria pathology in different population groups in Côte d'Ivoire. PLoS Negl Trop Dis. 2019;13(1):e0007086.

Topic 7: Fair local hiring, training and sourcing

It is outlined how Swiss TPH decides on hiring local staff and the measures taken there is a lack of skills among the local staff pool. Moreover, the sourcing of consumables and the criteria for preferring imported materials over local ones are explained.

2.7.1.	Local staffing					
2.7.2.	Local sourcing of consumables and services					
2.7.3.	Support for local capacity development					

For local staffing, Swiss TPH procedures are largely aligned with the 11 Principles for Transboundary Research Partnerships (P3, clarify responsibilities; P6, enhance capacities)¹. The local partner is most of the times responsible for local staffing. Full responsibility for staffing lies with our long-term partner CSRS, for instance, bases on a broad agreement. Shorter, ad hoc arrangements are dealt with by case-to-case contracting procedures. Many projects have a capacity development component, offering training for locally resourced employees rather than bringing in expatriate staff. Similar procedures apply to consumables and services being locally sourced. Only locally unavailable materials, or sensitive materials where the quality may be impaired by long-term storage at local conditions, are generally being imported.

Short-term action: Swiss TPH intends to establish a guideline for the supply chain.

Long-term action: Swiss TPH intends to establish the daily implementation of the best practice outlined in the guidelines

¹ A Guide for Transboundary Research Partnerships: 11 Principles and 7 Questions

Topic 8: Respect for authority of local ethics review systems

The research ethics review process pursued by Swiss TPH is outlined in the following section. It specifies the process of finding local research ethics committees (REC) and institutional review boards and indicates where final responsibility for approval lies. The international ethics guidelines Swiss TPH adheres to are further outlined and the procedures to support partners requiring additional ethics review capacity.

2.8.1.	Research ethics approval							
2.8.2.	Supporting local research ethics review capacity							
2.8.3.	Enabling access to global expertise							

Swiss TPH has a strict policy of double ethics approval in place, applied to all projects involving humans carried out in LMICs, in which Swiss TPH has a substantial role (e.g. sponsor, principle investigator, PHD/MSc supervisor). Such projects need clearance from the Ethikkommission Nordwest- und Zentralschweiz or another Northern ethics committee if a partner has the lead in the project, plus clearance by the appropriate ethics committee in the host country, and if applicable an institutional review board of the host institution(s)^{1,2} (§18). For all projects involving biological material, rules for the exchange of genetic resources according to the Nagoya protocol should be applied [1] (§19). Partners whose activities could have potential negative effects on human health and its determinants (e.g. society or the environment), should apply the highest ethical, environmental and social standards while pursuing their activities (§20). Swiss TPH procedures also include an evaluation of each new PhD project, including ethical aspects, by the in-house research commission ('Forschungskommission').

Swiss TPH also possesses an in-house consultancy for clinical studies that reviews more than 60 clinical trials per year and offers advice on ethics. An ethics strategy is commonly based on Swiss risk assessment guidelines for different studies with humans, depending on risk. For high-risk ethical cases taking place outside Switzerland, the Office for Human Research Protection is consulted, offering a database of committees in different countries and a certain guarantee for quality of the respective, listed national REC. Additional databases may be consulted such as the COHRED ethics committee database. Local partners or in-house partners are asked for low risk cases.

The support of national and local ethics review capacity of partner institutions is not a streamlined process at Swiss TPH. However, Swiss TPH and others have supported building and training ethics committees in LMICs in the past 1–2 decades when funding for this kind of activity experienced a peak. Swiss TPH, for instance, funded RECs in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola and stimulated the process for establishing another one in the Republic of Congo some 15–20 years ago. Swiss TPH has also assisted to establish an in-house review board at CSRS and contributed to the establishment of a REC in Côte d'Ivoire a decade ago when the need for such a committee arose for the first time. In this case, the process was imbedded within the long-term financial commitment with a long-term research partner, where some funding is earmarked for capacity building. However, today, most countries have at least one ethics committee in place.

Swiss TPH maintains a policy of openness, mutual learning and early stakeholder involvement (KFPE: P1, set the agenda together; P2, interact with stakeholders)³ to deal with the need of higher-level expertise demanded on the boards of RECs to accommodate today's increasing complexity of research. Ethics committee members are, for instance, involved at early stages of project design to foster mutual understanding. Swiss TPH has been part of a collaboration where another Switzerland-based PI has acted as facilitator, setting up an ethics committee in Paris to accommodate a joint ethics review board that included experts from each participating country including from Europe and sub-Saharan Africa. Swiss TPH is eager to take such innovative concepts on board.

Measures: Swiss TPH is satisfied with the level of rigour of its ethics policies and will continue to support local capacity in research ethics.

¹ Swiss TPH Rules of Engagement

² Handbook for Employees of Swiss TPH

³ A Guide for Transboundary Research Partnerships: 11 Principles and 7 Questions

Topic 9: Data ownership, storage, access and use

It is stated how Swiss TPH, in the position of the lead or co-applicant institution, proceeds with data ownership agreements and material transfer agreements with partners. It is further stated how Swiss TPH deals with rights of use of data – e.g. sharing the rights of use of data, and ability to publish results, by all partners.

2.9.1.	Data ownership agreements							
2.9.2.	Material transfer agreements							
2.9.3.	Rights of use of data for publication							

According to the Employee General Swiss TPH policy is that ‘Data may not be disclosed to third parties or groups, and results may not be disclosed or published externally, without the consent of the project management. This applies equally to external employees within the framework of the project. Exceptions to this rule are possible if the management or the sponsor of the study in question decides that the data should and may be made accessible to a particular group of people or to a wider scientific community’¹. Practically, for both data ownership and material transfer, the Swiss TPH in-house legal procedures and standard templates^{2,3} are key in guiding the establishment of the mostly case-to-case based contracts and consortium agreements. Unitectra, a legal entity formed to support certain Swiss Universities in their collaborations with industry, are being consulted for more complex, technological matters, such as the commercialization of research results. Material transfer in particular, also depends on national regulations and materials often remain in the main beneficiary country and/or the country where they have been generated.

The rights of use of data for publication are not commonly outlined in the standard contracting procedures and may be handled individually by each co-investigator (Co-I). In the same manner a publishing strategy may be defined between partners and outlined in a contract agreement. In practice, the most widely applied practice at Swiss TPH is that the junior researcher in charge of conducting the actual work and writing a first publication draft will be appropriately featured in the lead author position, regardless of whether they are affiliated with the institution of the PI or Co-I. The PI institution, however, will often take the senior role in such a set up. Our experience with our long-term partners offers some proof of success of our mutually established publishing codex. A recent assessment has demonstrated that CSRS, for instance, is among the top publishers in Côte d’Ivoire as assessed by quantity and quality of original articles⁴, and also IHI established among the top publishing institutions in Tanzania.

Short-term action: To formalize this widespread informal but successful strategy applied by Swiss TPH researchers, we will develop an internal guideline document on rights of data use for publication and publication procedure to increase consistency and transparency and to offer guidance to early-career researchers, in particular.

Long-term action: Swiss TPH intends to establish the consultation of the guidelines document and the daily implementation of the best practice outlined in the guidelines.

¹ Handbook for Employees of Swiss TPH

² Data Transfer Agreement Template

³ Material Transfer Agreement Template

⁴ Saric J, Utzinger J, Bonfoh B. Research productivity and main publishing institutions in Côte d’Ivoire, 2000–2016. *Global Health*. 2018;14:88.

Topic 10: Encourage full cost recovery budgeting and compensation for all partners

It is described whether Swiss TPH requires itself and its partners do ‘full cost recovery’ budgeting and whether it assesses the competence of partners in providing standardized budgets and if it provide financial expertise to the partner, if competences are not appropriate. Moreover, the internationally accepted accounting practices are specified to which Swiss TPH adheres.

2.10.	Full cost recovery budgeting						
2.10.	Improving/standardizing budgeting						
2.10.	External financial audit						

As a research institution that heavily relies on third-party funding, Swiss TPH is not in a position to exclusively apply to funding schemes that cover for a full cost recovery budget, nor does it place this demand on its partner institutions. However, Swiss TPH is strongly encouraging its long-term partner institutions, to implement a policy for demanding appropriate indirect costs. The CSRS, for instance, now demands for a maximum of 15% for overheads for any given project it acts as PI or Co-I institution allowing to adequately compensate for support staff, facilities and services. In 2016, a grant and publications support unit was implemented at CSRS with support from Swiss TPH. This service ensures that the budget of each request for funding reflects this demand in a manner that is adjusted to a given funding call.

Swiss TPH also regularly conducts administrative exchanges with its long-term partners, including finance representatives that align procedures between the institutions and assure appropriate capacity with regard to the finance and budgeting capabilities of the local finance team. An annual internal audit is conducted for the main partners – CSRS and IHI – for administration and management. With new partners, a site assessment may be done. On a project basis, budgets are done in collaboration with the main partner(s) for mutual guidance on local costs.

Swiss TPH adheres to the Swiss GAAP FER accounting and reporting recommendations¹ and is subjected to an annual financial audit by Price Waterhouse Coopers². This practice was also taken over by CSRS that undergoes an annual financial audit by Deloitte.

Measures: Swiss TPH will continue sharing its expertise in budgeting and in optimising the financial support for its partner institutions in a way that is beneficial to the partners beyond a given project and that contributes sustaining and building up the research capacity.

¹ <https://www.fer.ch/en/>

² Swiss TPH_Financial Report 2018

Domain 3: Fair sharing of benefits, costs and outcomes

What domain 3 measures

The practices to assure short-to-long term benefits from research studies on institutional capacity in context of the current funding climate and the socio-environmental landscape are assessed in this domain. Indicators pertain to support for research management capacity and the ability to transform the research conducted. Moreover, in-house due diligence practices and expectations towards partners to adhere to a best practice standard in research collaborations are questioned by the indicators.

How Swiss TPH ranks within this domain

The performance of Swiss TPH in this domain is mixed. The institute is committed in contributing to capacity building at our partner institutions, and it is advocating for sustainable research while increasingly aligning its own research strategy with the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. On the other hand, Swiss TPH does not demand any environmental assessment for research projects conducted by or with Swiss TPH. Swiss TPH realises that the lack of a wider research impact assessment (see also Domain 1, Topic 6) when designing a research project may lead to a certain isolation of a given research question from the larger interconnected set of challenges that the SDG Agenda represents. Moreover, the knowledge and knowhow of Swiss TPH staff with regard to transforming science from findings to application is limited. To move closer to sustainable development, a good grasp of this skill in a broader scientific work force may influence projects from the design stage and stakeholder involvement on and highly benefit the transformability of the science conducted at Swiss TPH.

RFI summary table

3 FAIR SHARING OF BENEFITS, COSTS AND OUTCOMES					
Indicator Number	Indicator Status				
	N/A	KFPE	Contracting	Document	Action
<i>Topic 11: Research system capacities</i>					
3.11.1.					
3.11.2.					
3.11.3.					
<i>Topic 12: Intellectual property rights and technology transfer</i>					
3.12.1.					
3.12.2.					
3.12.3.					
<i>Topic 13: Innovation system capacities</i>					
3.13.1.					
3.13.2.					
3.13.3.					
<i>Topic 14: Due diligence</i>					
3.14.1.					
3.14.2.					
3.14.3.					
<i>Topic 15: Expectation of all partners to adhere to a best practice standard in research collaborations</i>					
3.15.1.					
3.15.2.					
3.15.3.					

Topic 11: Research system capacities

The standard practice is described for providing resources for training and higher education for research staff and for staff managing research at the partner institutions of Swiss TPH. It is further described how Swiss TPH supports partners to become better able to access competitive grants.

3.11.1.	Training							
3.11.2.	Research management							
3.11.3.	Increase (predictable) funding							

A large proportion of Swiss TPH research activities are conducted within established long-term partnership arrangements and are based on the 11 Principles for Transboundary Research Partnerships (P5, promote mutual learning; P6, enhance capacity)^{1,2}. The partnerships with CSRS and IHI especially, are built on long-term commitment and are characterized by a strong component of institutional capacity building which includes in particular the training of researchers and training and knowledge transfer to staff in charge of managerial and financial capacity. There are *ad hoc* administrative exchanges between Swiss TPH and the main partners and scientific exchanges and visits for training workshops (e.g. scientific writing, statistics) according to needs and demands^{3,4}. For both institutions, CSRS and IHI, dedicated core funding exists for gradual build-up of capacity⁵. If a project is being conducted with a new partner a site assessment may take place during the project development process and scientific training and/or administrative support may be offered on a case-to-case basis.

Both long-term partner institutions IHI and CSRS have a grants and publications support unit to allow for a more streamlined and efficient process of applying for funding and enhancing the quality of both funding proposals and articles. For CSRS this unit was established in 2016 with direct involvement of Swiss TPH staff, opening up new, international funding sources owing to the English language check service to these francophone researchers^{6,7}. For other partners, the training and support in acquiring new funding happens on a case-to-case basis; however, in consideration of the partnership principles and the Swiss TPH history, new partnerships are often formed with a view to further developing a mutual research strategy, therefore former team members at Swiss TPH will often take a mentoring and consulting role in shaping new proposals of former partners.

Measures: Swiss TPH is satisfied with the efficacy of the current procedures to enhance research capacity at their partner institutions, and does not plan to change its policies and practices. Indeed, the External review Board evaluates and consults on the 4-year strategy of Swiss TPH and follows the strategic plan for the duration of the 4-year cycle looking at certain aspects that include partnership projects.

¹ Swiss TPH Rules of Engagement

² A Guide for Transboundary Research Partnerships: 11 Principles and 7 Questions

³ Communicating Science Workshop, Grand Bassam, Côte d’Ivoire

⁴ Afrique One-ASPIRE Annual Meeting 2018, Nairobi, Kenya

⁵ Leistungsvereinbarung für die Jahre 2017–2020 zwischen der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft und dem Schweizerischen Tropen- und Public Health-Institut

⁶ Procédures Opérationnelles Standards de l’Unité d’Appui aux Projets et Publications (UAPP)

⁷ Protocole d’appui à la publication des articles de Recherche

Topic 12: Intellectual property rights and technology transfer

It is described what standard guidelines on technology transfer are in place and procedures to manage the sharing of intellectual property rights. It is further outlined if and how competent and fair contracting for IPR is ensured for partners.

3.12.	Technology Transfer						
3.12.	Sharing Intellectual Property Rights						
3.12.	Contracting Support for IPR						

As for ownership agreements and material transfer agreements, technology transfer and IPR issues at Swiss TPH, are dealt with by establishing case-to-case contracts and consortium agreements, guided and reviewed by the in-house legal team and Unitectra.

The use of intellectual property by Swiss TPH employees is defined as follows¹:

2.5.1 Inventions of employees made in connection with the performance of official work duties and in fulfilment of contractual obligations remain the property of Swiss TPH (Art. 332 Para. 1 of the Swiss Code of Obligations (OR)). By written agreement, Swiss TPH may impose the acquisition of inventions made by employees in the performance of their official work duties, but not through the fulfilment of the contractual obligations (Art. 332 Para. 2 of the Swiss Code of Obligations (OR)). Contractual agreements with third parties in the context of research collaborations remain reserved.

2.5.2 The initial revenues that arise for Swiss TPH from any usage are initially used to cover the incurred and anticipated patenting and exploitation costs (e.g. patent attorneys).

The remaining revenues (=net revenue) are – subject to any financial claims by third parties – as a rule, distributed as follows: 40% to the inventor or to the author; 30% to the participating research groups; 30% to Swiss TPH

2.5.3 The authors keep the copyrights and revenues of works created in the context of the employment (e.g. textbooks, scientific publications). A contractual transfer of copyrights to Swiss TPH is possible.

Contracting support may happen on a case-to-case basis with long-term or ad hoc partners by consulting the Swiss TPH in-house legal services; however, the exchange on contracting/legal issues is less than for other administrative support and exchanges for partners, owing to the limited in-house capacity in this domain.

Measures: Swiss TPH is not planning to change its procedures with regard to technology transfer and IPRs owing to a relatively low current level of transformative research taking place.

¹ Handbook for Employees of Swiss TPH

Topic 14: Due diligence

The criteria for the Swiss TPH workforce are presented and guidelines to act if inequity is found. Moreover, the policies or practices to ensure that research programmes assess, report and minimize environmental impact are outlined as well as the policies or strategies to maximize the contributions of Swiss TPH research collaborations towards achieving one or more SDGs.

3.14.1.	Promoting participation of women in science and innovation								
3.14.2.	Reducing negative environmental impact								
3.14.3.	Achieving SDGs								

The Swiss TPH fosters diversity among its staff with different strategies aiming to creating equal conditions. For instance equal pay is ensured for both genders¹, legally bound by an equal pay certificate signed in 2017 by the Swiss Federal Department of Finance and Swiss TPH. In the Swiss TPH statutes it is furthermore stated²:

1.4 Gender equality

- a) The Swiss TPH pays attention to the equal rights of women and men.
- b) The Swiss TPH enacts appropriate measures to promote gender equality and supports the combination of study, work and family.
- c) The Swiss TPH aims for a well-balanced representation of women and men at all hierarchy levels

While staff at administrative, research and student level is characterised by a large diversity, at the directorial and managerial level there is strong male dominance. Therefore particular encouragement is given to female candidates in management job positions advertised by Swiss TPH with the standard phrasing: ‘to ensure a gender balance within our management team, Swiss TPH highly encourages applications from female candidates’. In general, human resources at Swiss TPH recommend practicing merit-based choice of candidates giving preference to minorities if same merit applies. In 2014, Swiss TPH has recruited two HR Business Partners with the primary aim to establish a fair and standardised recruitment system for all applicants using standardised questionnaires. They support and educate supervisors in recruitment including on the questions of diversity and raise awareness on relevant topics such as unconscious bias among the leadership. Swiss TPH specifically assures the inclusion of mothers into its workforce by encouraging part-time work and by offering fully paid maternity leave as opposed to the standard Swiss 80% cap³. In 2019, a female candidate has been appointed to succeed the Head of the Education and Teaching Department in 2020, representing the second woman at the ‘Instituts Leiter Konferenz’. In addition to the HR efforts, a Diversity & Inclusion Network exist at Swiss TPH that aims to change Swiss TPH culture by initiating and supporting measures which enhance the workplace for women, various nationalities, various sexual orientations and those with family obligations, with the goal to provide and inclusive work environment (<https://intranet.swisstph.ch/en/aoc/human-resources/diversity-inclusion/>).

In line with the Swiss TPH mission to improving the general health of populations at the local, national and international levels, the research conducted by Swiss TPH aims to minimize its ecologic impact on institutional level and within each setting it operates. Accordingly, the CoC³ suggests that ‘In conducting our work, we demonstrate social and environmental responsibility, professionalism and use of good business practices’. The RoE⁴ further state that ‘Partners whose activities could have potential negative effects on human health and its determinants (e.g. society or the environment), should apply the highest ethical, environmental and social standards while pursuing their activities’. Finally, the Handbook of employees states on the use of environmental resources that ‘We are committed to an economical use of natural resources and to conducting our work in a way minimising emissions. In purchasing equipment and when planning infrastructure, we give preference to energy and resource saving solutions. We avoid unnecessary flights and work as much as possible through modern means of ICT for communication and coordination processes. For instance, Swiss TPH has tried recently to join external PhD examiners remotely and will continue along those lines. However, webinars and other useful e-tools are not on the standard IT package, which limits the flexibility and feasibility of a high-quality remote interaction. The Swiss TPH promotes and supports the use of public transport and bicycles for staff commuting to work and for attending business meetings within Europe.’³ Indeed, Swiss TPH supports an annual ‘Bike to Work Challenge’ (<https://www.biketowork.ch/en>) where employees get offered a bicycle service

¹ Erklärung zur Einhaltung der Lohnleichheit Swiss TPH

² Statute of the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (Swiss TPH)

³ Handbook for Employees of Swiss TPH: Code of Conduct

⁴ Swiss TPH Rules of Engagement

for recording their kilometres per day cycled for commuting into work. Swiss TPH has also made some efforts to bring in environmental considerations in the design of its new building that is foreseen to be finished by 2021 within the available budget (e.g. compact, energy-saving building, use of geo-thermal probes and solar panels as source for renewable energy and the use of recycled concrete). However, Swiss TPH realizes that those efforts are small in view of the energy resources that Swiss TPH as an institution with a global mandate, state of the art laboratory facilities and equipment and the global travel necessary invests. Just like every research and global institution, we have to ask ourselves if we can identify strategies that are financially and strategically affordable, that avoid some of the major energy uses at Swiss TPH such as reduced air travel, choice of suppliers and tapping into alternative energy sources also for laboratory facilities and equipment (e.g. biobank). On project and programme level, Swiss TPH has so far no mandatory systems-impact assessment unless demanded by the funding body.

For decades, Swiss TPH has been contributing in the domains of health and strengthening international research partnerships both defined as separate SDGs (SDGs 3 and 17) in the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. However, since 2016 when the new agenda took effect, Swiss TPH has significantly increased its activities and its advocacy on SDGs internally and externally. Internally, in the annual project leader retreat 2016, the SDG were included as a 'thematic nucleus theme' to be further developed and grown in the subsequent year^{5,6}. The Project and Grants Support Unit at Swiss TPH is in the process of re-organising its streamlined grant submission process. In future, all applicants will have to report on the specific SDGs that a project is seeking to advance. All projects affiliated with Swiss TPH will have to be aligned with the 2030 Agenda in one or the other way in the future. A recent lunch time seminar series at Swiss TPH aimed to inform Swiss TPH staff on the SDG Agenda in general and on the position of Swiss TPH in it, in particular⁷. For an internal and external audience, Swiss TPH conducted a one-day symposium on 'Health in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' on the 23rd November 2018 (<https://www.swisstph.ch/en/about/events/snis-symposium-2018/>)⁸ to again, foster exchange between decision-makers in funding and researchers working to address the SDGs. Also in 2018, Swiss TPH has launched the SARECO call for early career researchers in its Leading House Africa function. Swiss TPH significantly shaped the final format of the call that encouraged proposals on 'Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals Era'⁹.

The RoE underline that: 'Swiss TPH welcomes the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Agenda, and notes in particular goal no. 17 which seeks to "Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the SDGs in all countries, in particular developing countries'. Along the lines of this statement and drawing from its decade-long experience with international research partnerships, Swiss TPH together with KFPE and others, published a forum article on 'Leveraging research partnerships to achieve the 2030 Agenda', that should offer some guidance on the do's and don'ts of research partnerships to the wider research community¹⁰.

Measures: As for systems impact assessments (Topic 6; indicator 2.6.1.) environmental impact assessments will be done on demand of a certain funder which suggests a certain isolation of a given research question from the larger interconnected problematic of the SDG Agenda. We feel that there is more scope for Swiss TPH to systematically identify potential negative social-ecological impact of their planned research project..

With regard to environmental considerations, we would like to have a stronger encouragement and support system in place for train travel of less than 1000 km of distance as alternative to air travel. With regard to the 2030 Agenda, a closer alignment of Swiss TPH has been taken shape since 2016. We aim to continue to direct our advocacy and actions towards advancing the SDGs increasingly by the means of our PGS Unit and a stronger involvement in transdisciplinary and cross-SDG research.

Short-term action: i) Swiss TPH commits to include a 'systems and environmental risk assessment' as part of the already standard quality review of PhD proposals at the Research Commission (in line with Topic 6, Indicator 2.6.1); ii) we commit to update our travel procedures and integrate train services and advocacy more rigorously as a first step in curbing air travel; iii) our PGS Unit will update the streamlined project submission system to include information on what SDG is being targeted by any given project proposed for funding.

⁵ Swiss TPH Project Leader Retreat 2017

⁶ Swiss TPH Project Leader Retreat 2018

⁷ The SDGs @ Swiss TPH Seminar Series

⁸ Health in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

⁹ SARECO Swiss-African Research Cooperation, Call for Proposals

¹⁰ Saric J, et al. Leveraging research partnerships to achieve the 2030 agenda: experiences from North-South cooperation. *Gaia*. 2019;28(2):143-150.

Long-term action: Swiss TPH aims for the long-term establishment of the update quality review of PhD proposals and the update streamlined project submission system.

Topic 15: Expectation of all partners to adhere to a best practice standard in research collaborations

It is stated whether Swiss TPH requires its partners or research sponsors to produce/subscribe to RFI Reports or to use existing codes of research practice, or how else Swiss TPH creates a culture of fairness in its research collaborations. It is further stated whether Swiss TPH has a research office that contracts and administers research funds and whether research leaders, project managers or legal staff at Swiss TPH have an exposure to mechanisms and resources for fair research contracting.

3.15.1.	Partner requirements for fair research partnerships								
3.15.2.	Sponsor requirements for fair research partnerships								
3.15.3.	Fair research contracting								

Swiss TPH does not demand partners to have an RFI report nor its funders to be RFI subscribers. However, Swiss TPH has phrased some minimal requirements for collaboration in its RoE that are save guarding against working with partners that apply bad practice affecting research, environment and public health¹.

Contract signatories are responsible to systematically assess if the following minimal requirements for collaboration with partners are met:

- 1) The partner is not involved in in the production, manufacture, distribution or sale of tobacco or arms or any tobacco products or representing the interests of any such entity.
- 2) The partner or its activities have no mission that is harmful to human health or violate human rights.
- 3) The partner adheres to and applies the highest ethical, social and environmental standards applicable in the relevant sector or industry.
- 4) For independent research, the collaboration does not compromise scientific judgement, intellectual integrity, control over research design, implementation, data analysis, interpretation and freedom to publish research results.
- 5) Protection of proprietary information is guaranteed and confidentiality agreements have been assessed.
- 6) The collaboration does not put at risk or harm the reputation of Swiss TPH.

Swiss TPH, moreover, acts in accordance with the 11 Principles for Transboundary Research Partnerships², which, as far as we understand, have fed into the development of the RFI indicators and are hence highly overlapping. Many partners of Swiss TPH, in particular those in LMICs, including the main partner CSRS and IHI, are familiar with the KFPE principles and align their actions accordingly when cooperating with us and other research partners. Likewise, many sponsors that we are working with, are aware of the need for fairness in research collaboration (e.g. SNSF, SNIS, R4D, ESKAS) and are seeking out to the beneficiaries of their funding schemes to adapt their own policies accordingly (SNSF visiting RFI workshop). In turn, Swiss TPH uses its global network and sphere of influence to liaise with decision-makers in governments and other funders to advocate for shifts in funding policy and strategy towards funding research partnerships on a basis of equity, longevity and sustainability in research. A forum article on ‘Leveraging research partnerships to achieve the 2030 Agenda’, offering guidance on the do’s and don’ts of research partnerships for researchers and funders, published by Swiss TPH, KFPE and partners is one such contribution³.

However, owing to the high dependence on third-party funding, Swiss TPH is at the moment not in a position to exclusively select funding bodies on other grounds than scientific.

Swiss TPH has in 2017 taken over the mandate for being the ‘Leading House for the Region Africa’ in Switzerland (<https://www.swisstph.ch/en/research-we-do/leading-house/>)⁴. With this mandate, Swiss TPH is now actively involved in launching calls and channelling the funds entrusted with by SERI. The tasks of administering and contracting have fallen to a team of persons that have already build up the necessary expertise and sensitivities in multiple years of relevant exposure in the Swiss TPH environment, and with their partner institutions. In line with our wider contracting procedures it should be emphasized that, although they are seeking for correctness primarily, the mutual negotiation leading up to a final contract agreement with Swiss TPH are based on a decade-

¹ Swiss TPH Rules of Engagement

² A Guide for Transboundary Research Partnerships: 11 Principles and 7 Questions

³ Saric J, et al. Leveraging research partnerships to achieve the 2030 agenda: experiences from North-South cooperation. *Gaia*. 2019;28(2):143-150.

⁴ Action plan 2017-2020 for the bilateral research collaboration between Switzerland and sub-Saharan Africa, including South Africa

long experience of working with partners that may have a relative resource disadvantage towards us (scientific, administrative and/or financial) and the KFPE common nominator.

Measures: Swiss TPH is satisfied with the level of research fairness at and with their partner institutions. Swiss TPH is not in a position to exclusively select for funding bodies based on whether they are outspoken advocates for research fairness. However, Swiss TPH is making regular use of its spheres of influence to cooperate, advise and shape the policies and strategies of some major funding bodies in Switzerland, Europe and beyond. In the upcoming funding period (2020–2021), Swiss TPH is committed to increase its activities around advocating for research fairness by seeking out opportunities to liaise with decision-makers from governments and other funders, and by continuing to disseminate knowledge on research fairness as a means to achieve impactful and transformative research to advance the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

Short-term action: i) Swiss TPH will recommend reviewing and updating the RFI Report in two years as a way to keep focussed on implementing many of the KFPE objectives, and the goals listed throughout the Swiss TPH RFI Report; ii) the PGS Unit will send a 'request for clarification' to Swiss TPH's main funders - whether they will support the implementation of RFI reports themselves, or at grantee institutions.

Summary of Actions

3. Making contributions of all partners explicit – fair research contracting

Short-term action: Swiss TPH commits to include a ‘systems and environmental risk assessment’ as part of the already standard quality review of PhD proposals at the Research Commission (in line with Topic 6 and Topic 14, Indicator 13.4.2).

Long-term action: Swiss TPH aims for the long-term establishment of the update quality review of PhD proposals.

5. Recognition of unequal research management capacities between partners and providing for appropriate corrective measures

Short-term action: We will consult with CSRS, CSSI and IHI in 2020 on whether any increased capacity building and exchange of knowledge is needed, especially with regard to contracting, and – if so – we will find a strategy together to leverage the means.

6. Minimizing negative impact of research programmes on health and other systems

Short-term action: Swiss TPH commits to include a ‘systems and environmental risk assessment’ as part of the already standard quality review of PhD proposals at the Research Commission (in line with Topic 14, Indicator 13.4.2).

Long-term action: Swiss TPH aims for the long-term establishment of the update quality review of PhD proposals.

7. Fair local hiring, training and sourcing

Short-term action: Swiss TPH intends to establish a guideline for the supply chain.

Long-term action: Swiss TPH intends to establish the daily implementation of the best practice outlined in the guidelines

9. Data ownership, storage, access and use

Short-term action: To formalize this widespread informal but successful strategy applied by Swiss TPH researchers, we will develop an internal guideline document on data use and publication procedure to increase consistency and transparency and to offer guidance to early-career researchers, in particular.

Long-term action: Swiss TPH intends to establish the consultation of the guidelines document and the daily implementation of the best practice outlined in the guidelines.

13. Innovation system capacities

Short-term action: When establishing the new Leading House strategy with SERI in 2020, Swiss TPH will co-design a set of new instruments for the forthcoming funding cycle that will feature innovation and entrepreneurship components.

14. Due diligence

Short-term action: i) Swiss TPH commits to include a ‘systems and environmental risk assessment’ as part of the already standard quality review of PhD proposals at the Research Commission (in line with Topic 6, Indicator 2.6.1); ii) we commit to update our travel procedures and integrate train services and advocacy more rigorously as a first step in curbing air travel; iii) our PGS Unit will update the streamlined project submission system to include information on what SDG is being targeted by any given project proposed for funding.

Long-term action: Swiss TPH aims for the long-term establishment of the update quality review of PhD proposals and the update streamlined project submission system.

15. Expectation of all partners to adhere to a best practice standard in research collaborations

Short-term action: i) Swiss TPH will recommend reviewing and updating the RFI Report in two years as a way to keep focussed on implementing many of the KFPE objectives, and the goals listed throughout the Swiss TPH RFI Report; ii) the PGS Unit will send a ‘request for clarification’ to Swiss TPH’s main funders - whether they will support the implementation of RFI reports themselves, or at grantee institutions.

A first review of the short-term actions is envisaged for Q2 2022.

Appendix A: Full listing of RFI domains, topics and indicators

Domain1: Fairness of opportunity

1. Relevance to communities – in which research is done

Indicator 1.1.1. Research priorities in communities where research is being conducted

Indicator 1.1.2. Actions if there are no research priorities

Indicator 1.1.3. Justification to research low priority topics

2. Early engagement of all partners – in deciding about aims, methods, implementation

Indicator 1.2.1. Relationship between the ‘main/lead/sponsoring’ and ‘other’ partners.

Indicator 1.2.2. SOPs for partner inclusion in study design

Indicator 1.2.3. SOPs for supportive actions to partners

3. Making contributions of all partners explicit – fair research contracting

Indicator 1.3.1. Role clarification in research partnerships

Indicator 1.3.2. SOPs for conflict resolution

Indicator 1.3.3. Making potential impact explicit *before* starting research

4. Ensuring that matching and other co-financing mechanisms do not undermine opportunities for fair participation of all partners

Indicator 1.4.1. Equal co-financing

Indicator 1.4.2. Alternatives to equal co-financing

Indicator 1.4.3. Research outside national priorities and co-financing

5. Recognition of unequal research management capacities between partners and providing for appropriate corrective measures

Indicator 1.5.1. Research management capacity

Indicator 1.5.2. Financial management capacity

Indicator 1.5.3. Contracting and contract negotiation capacity

Domain 2: Fair process

6. Minimizing negative impact of research programmes on health and other systems

Indicator 2.6.1. Assessing potential harm of research

Indicator 2.6.2. Reducing negative impact of research

Indicator 2.6.3. Compensation for unintended (negative) consequences of research

7. Fair local hiring, training and sourcing

Indicator 2.7.1. Local staffing

Indicator 2.7.2. Local sourcing of consumables and services

Indicator 2.7.3. Support for local capacity development

8. Respect for authority of local ethics review systems

Indicator 2.8.1. Research ethics approval

Indicator 2.8.2. Supporting local research ethics review capacity

Indicator 2.8.3. Enabling access to global expertise

9. Data ownership, storage, access and use

Indicator 2.9.1. Data ownership agreements

Indicator 2.9.2. Material transfer agreements

Indicator 2.9.3. Rights of use of data for publication

10. Encourage full cost recovery budgeting and compensation for all partners

Indicator 2.10.1. Full cost recovery budgeting

Indicator 2.10.2. Improving/standardizing budgeting

Indicator 2.10.3. External financial audit

Domain 3: Fair sharing of benefits, costs and outcomes.

11. Research system capacities

Indicator 3.11.1. Training

Indicator 3.11.2. Research management

Indicator 3.11.3. Increase (predictable) funding

12. Intellectual property rights and technology transfer

Indicator 3.12.1. Technology transfer

Indicator 3.12.2. Sharing intellectual property rights

Indicator 3.12.3. Contracting support for IPR

13. Innovation system capacities

Indicator 3.13.1. Localizing innovation

Indicator 3.13.2. Financing to link research with innovation

Indicator 3.13.3. Support innovation culture

14. Due diligence

Indicator 3.14.1. Promoting participation of women in science and innovation

Indicator 3.14.2. Reducing negative environmental impact

Indicator 3.14.3. Achieving SDGs

15. Expectation of all partners to adhere to a best practice standard in research collaborations

Indicator 3.15.1. Partner requirements for fair research partnerships

Indicator 3.15.2. Sponsor requirements for fair research partnerships

Indicator 3.15.3. Fair research contracting

Appendix B: Swiss TPH references

Document citation	Source
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Communicating Science Workshop, Grand Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire	http://afriqueoneaspire.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Scien-Com-Training-
CSRS-Conseil Administration_22.06.2019_minutes	In-house document
Data Transfer Agreement Template	In-house document
Erklärung zur Einhaltung der Lohngleichheit Swiss TPH	In-house document
Handbook for Employees of Swiss TPH: Code of Conduct	In-house document
Health in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	https://www.swisstph.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/SwissTPH/Events/Symposia/SNIS2018/Flyer_SNIS2018.pdf
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