



**National Commission for Science and
Technology**

**THE NATIONAL RESEARCH
AGENDA IN THE SOCIAL
SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES
(2013-2017)**

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National Commission for Science and Technology

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The development of the National Research Agenda in the Social Sciences and Humanities (NRAiSSH)) was undertaken by the National Commission for Science and Technology (NCST) as a government body responsible for research, science and technology advisory services. Throughout the Agenda development process, the NCST worked jointly with a cross-section of stakeholders including relevant sectoral ministries and institutions. The NCST provided policy oversight and quality assurance services at each and every stage of the development process.

The NCST would like to acknowledge the efforts of all experts and stakeholders, all of whom so numerous to mention, that were engaged at different stages of the Agenda development process. Their valuable contributions shall ever remain appreciably high. While it may not be possible to individually mention all manner of people involved in the development process of this Agenda, I would like to pay special tribute to the following groups and individuals;

- **National Committee on Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities** which spearheaded the development of this Agenda in line with one of its terms of reference. As a technical committee of the NCST, the committee scoped the entire process and methodology including the setting up of the National Taskforce on the development of the NRAiSSH. This was the structure through which the NCST provided policy oversight, quality assurance and technical back-up services at each and every stage of the Agenda development process. The full list of membership of the committee appears in appendix one.
- **Prof Wiseman Chijere Chirwa** who was Chairperson of the National Taskforce on the Development of the National Research Agenda in The Social Sciences and Humanities. His expert leadership, guidance and zeal throughout the process have been inspiring to all members of the Taskforce. The Taskforce members, who were in themselves a force to be reckoned with, demonstrated outstanding

commitment to the development of the Agenda. Their commitment in conducting various tasks that ranged from stakeholder focus group discussions and in-depth interviews to critical reviews and analyses of secondary data in order to identify gaps and priorities remained the driving force of the Agenda development process. The work of this taskforce culminated into the production of high quality evidence informed field reports on priority areas of research. These reports informed the drafting of the NRAiSSH. The full list of the taskforce members appear in appendix two.

- **NRAiSSH Drafting Committee** which craftily drafted the actual Agenda document. This was a special team of experts that drafted the document in a logically flowing fashion using the evidence informed reports by the National Taskforce and a wide range of other source materials besides their expertise and experience. The drafting committee also served as an editorial team. It was composed of Prof Wiseman Chijere Chirwa (**Chairman of the Drafting Committee**); Dr Peter Mvula; Dr Dorothy Nampota; Mr. Mike G. Kachedwa; Mr. Andrew M Mpesi. **All stakeholders** who constructively critiqued and reshaped the document at stakeholders' consultative meetings whose inputs were duly incorporated.

It is further acknowledged with gratitude that resources for the development of this Agenda were provided solely by the Government of Malawi through treasury funding to NCST as a government subvented body. Such support remains one of the government commitments to the development of science and technology in Malawi.

I, therefore, reckon all these efforts and remain sincerely thankful.

Dr H M Chimoyo
**DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The conduct of research in the social sciences and humanities in Malawi dates back to pre-independence era. Since then, the need for research in the social sciences and humanities has been growing in order to inform evidence based knowledge, action and policy. Most of the research has been operations research commissioned by either national programmes or international bodies operating in Malawi through national centres of excellence and consultancies on the one hand, while basic research has been influenced largely by the academic community on the other hand. Over the years, a significant proportion of research in Malawi has been externally driven, thereby leaving little room, if any, for Malawi to focus on conducting locally relevant priority research in the social sciences and humanities. Recognising the growing need for research in the social sciences and humanities, Malawi through the National Commission for Science and Technology (under the latter's Division of Health, Social Sciences and Humanities) with funding from Government, embarked on a process of developing her own national priorities for research in the social sciences and humanities. The priorities cover the period of five years from 2013 to 2017.

These priorities represent a National Research Agenda in the Social Sciences and Humanities (NRAiSSH). The Agenda represents a nationally set and agreed priorities in which research efforts for Malawi will be concentrated over this period. The Agenda document itself is organized into chapters or sections. These are: Introduction; Background; Goal and Objectives; Guiding Principles; Methodology; Priority Areas of Research; Financing of the Agenda; Implementation; Monitoring and Evaluation of the Agenda.

This National Research Agenda finally represents the Government of Malawi policy need and interest for research to be carried out in the identified priority areas. Research in the identified priorities is geared towards obtaining evidence which is much needed for informed knowledge, decision-making and policy. Government of Malawi, therefore, expects all cadres of stakeholders to support the implementation of this National Research Agenda in the Social Sciences and Humanities.

2.0 BACKGROUND

The Government of Malawi (GoM) recognises the importance of the disciplines of the social sciences and humanities, and research in these disciplines in fostering the socio-economic development of a country. Malawi as member state of UNESCO, subscribes to the principles, letter and spirit of declarations and conventions of UNESCO. At a global level, Malawi draws her recognition of the importance of research in the social sciences and humanities from a number of international instruments and groupings of relevance to which Malawi is a State Party including the UNESCO declarations, protocols and conventions. Nationally, the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) which is an overall national development agenda has a number of development priority areas which are linked to the social sciences and humanities. Therefore, conducting demand-driven research in the social sciences and humanities will contribute to the effective implementation of the MGDS in order to achieve a sustainable economic growth. It is against this background that the National Research Agenda has been developed. Appreciating that issues of social sciences and humanities cut across all fields of human endeavors, the implementation of this Agenda interfaces with the implementation of similar initiatives in all other sectors.

A lot of research in the social sciences and humanities is being done in Malawi. While a proportion of this research is also done by nationals for various reasons, there is another proportion which is, however, mostly commissioned, conducted and funded externally and in most cases does not align with the national priorities. In order to ensure that research addresses Malawi's priorities in the social sciences and humanities, this National Research Agenda has been developed and will guide investments in the social sciences and humanities research aimed at achieving the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy. Research in the identified priorities shall, however, be expected to be conducted in conformity to the Framework of Guidelines for Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities in Malawi dated 30th May, 2011.

3.0 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 Goal

The overall goal of the NRAiSSH is to guide researchers, policy makers, program implementers, academic institutions, development partners and other stakeholders on social sciences and humanities research priorities for Malawi.

3.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the agenda are to:

- Promote the conduct of research in the social sciences and humanities that is responsive to the priority needs of Malawi.
- Facilitate the mobilization of resources for the conduct of locally relevant social sciences and humanities research
- Promote multidisciplinary and collaboration in the conduct of research in the social sciences and humanities
- Facilitate the co-ordination of social sciences and humanities research conducted by various stakeholders.
- Promote the strengthening of capacity for conducting research in the social sciences and humanities in Malawi.
- Facilitate translation of research findings into policy and practice

4.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The conduct of research in the social sciences and humanities shall primarily conform to the Framework of Guidelines for Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities in Malawi as shall be issued from time to time by the National Commission for Science and Technology. The implementation of the NRAiSSH shall be guided by the following principles:

4.1 Political Will and Commitment

Undertaking meaningful research in the social sciences and humanities that addresses priority needs of Malawi requires adequate resources available through political will at all levels.

4.2 Demand-Drivenness

Stakeholders shall be encouraged to conduct demand driven research that is responsive to priority social sciences and humanities needs of Malawi.

4.3 Ethics, Human Rights and Law

The dignity and rights of all research participants including vulnerable populations shall be promoted and protected as enshrined in the bioethics principles, constitution of the Republic of Malawi and all relevant Malawi laws, national policies, regulations and guidelines as well as in tandem with international law.

4.4 Networking, Public and Private Partnerships and Collaboration

Key strategic partnerships with public and private research institutions and with a cross-section of other stakeholders shall be fostered to promote the implementation of this Agenda.

4.5 Interdisciplinarity, Multidisciplinarity and Complementarity

Research studies that are interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and/or complementary in nature shall be promoted to enhance skills transfer, optimal usage of resources, and translation of research findings into policy and programmes.

5.0 METHODOLOGY

A demand-driven approach was used to identify and set priorities. This approach focused on the analysis of social sciences and humanities needs, people's expectations and societal trends in the social sciences and humanities research. The following are the key elements of the approach that were pursued; Analytical evidence; stakeholder

participation; transparency; iterativeness and value-drivenness. The general process that was followed included the undertaking of the following key activities;

- Establishment of the National Committee on Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities to, among others, spearhead the development of the research priorities in the social sciences and humanities
- Setting up of the National Task Force by the National Committee on Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities with concrete terms of reference for the development of the NRAiSSH
- National Taskforce undertaking Focus Group Discussions and In-depth Interviews with stakeholders to identify priorities
- National Taskforce undertaking literature reviews/analysis of secondary data and trends in research in the social sciences and humanities to identify gaps in research in the social sciences and humanities
- National taskforce meeting for critical and thematic analysis of all field reports (of both primary and secondary data provided by taskforce members) for the identification of the key priority research areas
- Drafting of the NRAiSSH by the drafting panel appointed by the Chairman of the National Committee on Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities using the taskforce reports on priority areas
- Review of the Draft NRAiSSH by the National Taskforce
- Incorporation of comments by secretariat from national taskforce meeting
- National stakeholders' consultative meeting on the draft NRAiSSH
- Meeting of the National Taskforce to consider comments from stakeholders workshop and Incorporation of the same into the draft document
- Meeting of the National Committee on Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities to vet and adopt the Agenda document

6.0 PRIORITY AREAS OF RESEARCH

This section presents the key research priorities. The priorities are organized into

thematic priority areas which were identified as key priority research areas for Malawi. Within each of these thematic priority areas, priorities are articulated in specific sub-themes. An attempt has been made to outline these priorities within each sub-theme. The research priorities are outlined in a reasonably broader sense with a view of allowing a researcher to have discretionary opportunity and flexibility to design specific research studies that address a particular identified topical area of priority research.

6.1 Social Identities

This thematic area includes the following priorities;

- Ethnicity, Race, and Class
- Citizenship, Nationality and Nationhood
- Masculinity , Femininity and Gender
- Sexualities
- Family

6.2 Physical and Moral Culture

This thematic area includes the following priorities;

- Belief Systems and Rites of Passage
- Arts and Crafts
- Sports and Performances
- Indigenous Knowledge Systems

6.3 Communities on the Margin

This thematic area includes the following priorities;

- Rural and Urban Poor
- Children and Youth
- Age and Disability
- Migrants and Refugees

6.4 Physical Resources and Infrastructure Development and Management

This thematic area includes the following priorities;

- Land Administration, Market access and utilisation
- Energy, Climate Change, Environment and Natural Resources Management

- Tourism and Recreation
- Rural and Urban Development, Housing, Water and Sanitation
- Transport and Communication

6.5 Innovations, Communications and Technology Culture

This thematic area includes the following priorities;

- Creative Innovations
- Technology Culture
- Information and Communication Systems
- Archiving
- Knowledge Generation and Utilisation

6.6 Health and Well-being

This thematic area includes the following;

- HIV and AIDS (Social and ~~Behavioral~~Behavioural)
- Maternal and Child Health (Social and ~~Behavioral~~Behavioural)
- Primary Health
- Disease and Societal Responses
- Health Systems

6.7 Human Resource Development, Management and Utilisation

This thematic area includes the following;

- Education and Human Resource Development
- Industrial Relations
- Informal Economies and the Lumpen Proletariat
- Migrations and Labour Markets
- Human Resource Information and Management Systems

6.8 Enterprise Development, Capital Generation and Financing

This thematic area includes the following priorities;

- Savings Culture
- Capital Generation and Financing
- Manufacturing and Value Addition

- Enterprise Development and Management
- Economic Information Systems

6.9 Social and Political Transitions

This thematic area includes the following priorities;

- Governance, Democracy and Human Rights
- Political Culture and Institution Building
- Public Management, Public Policy and Resource Tracking
- Citizen Participation, Voice Accountability and Action
- Non State Actors/Civil Society Organisations

6.10 Peace and Security

This thematic area includes the following priorities;

- Conflict Management
- Peace Keeping
- Crime, Violence and Social Injustice
- Access to Justice
- Alternative Dispute Resolution

6.11 Legal and Justice Systems

This thematic area includes the following priorities;

- Law and the citizen
- Justice delivery Systems
- Law/Legal Reforms
- Law and Politics
- State and Customary Law Interface

6.12 International Relations

This thematic area includes the following priorities;

- Foreign Relations
- (Socio-economic) Aid and Development
- Regional Co-operation and Integration
- International NGOs

6.13 Education

This thematic area includes the following priorities;

- Employability and higher education curriculum development
- Quality Assurance, Assessment and Examinations
- Primary Curriculum and Assessment Review (PCAR) Evaluation
- Learning and the Environment
- Education, Gender and HIV/AIDS
- Development in Public Education Systems since 1964
- Education Governance
- Education Management Systems
- Testing Measurements
- Knowledge Generation, Utilisation and Development

6.14 Rural and Urban Farming Systems

This thematic area includes the following priorities;

- Urban Agriculture and Food Security
- Environmental Migration
- Environmental History
- Agrarian History and Rural Transformation
- Environment and Poverty

7.0 FINANCING OF THE AGENDA

Financing of research in the identified priority areas is critical for the realization of the goal and objectives of this Agenda. Stakeholders are, therefore, implored to support the financing of research geared towards addressing priorities outlined in this Agenda. The following mechanisms of financing this Agenda shall be pursued;

7.1 Government Funding

Government shall commit direct resources at various levels to support the undertaking of research in the identified priorities. The Ministries and institutions with direct relevance to the thematic priority areas identified herein shall be expected to be particularly proactive

in leveraging support for resourcing this Agenda as it applies to their sectors and jurisdictions.

7.2 The Research Grant Scheme

The National Commission for Science and Technology shall establish and operate a grant scheme to support research and related endeavors, on competitive basis, in the identified priority areas. Researchers shall be advised to apply for a research grant under this scheme.

7.3 Public and Private Partnerships

Public and private partnerships shall be an important vehicle for nurturing resource mobilization for research in the priority areas. Researchers in public and private sectors shall be encouraged to pursue a spirit of collaboration in undertaking research. Deliberate efforts in cultivating corporate social responsibility to support the financing of the Agenda shall be encouraged and sought after by researchers at various levels.

7.4 Other Potential Sources of Funding

Researchers and all other stakeholders wanting to undertake research in the identified priorities shall be encouraged to take advantage of the international research grant schemes that appear to support research in the social sciences and humanities. Some research grant schemes and international organizations have guidelines that are open to directly support research of a multidisciplinary nature. It would be incumbent upon researchers to target such organisations and schemes. For example, a social research that also addresses a specific health problem may easily be considered for funding by a grant giving organization established to support health research. Before applying to such organizations, it is important for researchers to first familiarize themselves with guidelines of such grant schemes.

8.0 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESEARCH AGENDA

The NRAiSSH is the overarching guiding instrument for generating evidence that will be used in the social sciences and humanities sectors and in its applied arena to inform the development of new knowledge, policy-making, actions and decision-making. To ensure full implementation of the Research Agenda, there is a need for involvement of various stakeholders at both national and international levels in the design and execution of social sciences and humanities research. With the support of the legal tutelage of the National Commission for Science and Technology (NCST), the sectoral ministries and institutions, in partnership with various stakeholders, will support and advance the objectives of this Agenda to ensure promotion, facilitation, co-ordination, development and management of social sciences and humanities research activities in ~~Malawi~~Malawi with efforts geared towards addressing research activities in the identified priority areas.

While Government of Malawi appreciates the diversity of needs and interests of different stakeholders in the social sciences and humanities research, stakeholders are, however, called upon to ensure that such research in Malawi is geared towards addressing the research priorities that have been outlined in this document during the implementation period of the Agenda. It is therefore, expected that stakeholders will make deliberate efforts in conducting and supporting research in the identified priorities. **Public resources will not be used in supporting research outside these priorities.** The established research review and approval structures shall only support research that is geared towards addressing the identified priorities.

8.1 Stakeholders

Key stakeholders that are being called upon for the implementation of the Agenda include Government Ministries with line functions that have a bearing on social sciences and humanities determinants of socio-economic development; academic institutions and their research centres of excellence, and affiliates; research institutions; the civil society organizations; private sector organizations; NGOs and international co-operating partners with interests in Malawi.

8.2 Co-ordinating Structures

Key co-ordinatory and regulatory structures and mechanisms for social sciences and humanities research review and approval in Malawi in the identified priorities shall remain the National Committee on Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities (NCRSH) and any institutional research ethics committee that shall be recognized/designated by the National Commission for Science and Technology that shall be existent in Malawi.

8.3 Capacity Building, Transparency and Accountability

To ensure ownership in the design and execution of the NRAiSSH, stakeholders' efforts aimed at fostering capacity building in the conduct and dissemination of research results by local researchers and research institutions will be promoted.

9.0 MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE AGENDA

The tracking of the stakeholders' adherence to the NRAiSSH shall be part and parcel of monitoring the Agenda implementation. The tracking will be informed by some tools/indicators as described below. This tracking shall benchmark the review of the Agenda.

9.1 Tools for Tracking Adherence to the Agenda

9.1.1 Checklist for Submission of Review of Research Protocols

The National Committee on Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities shall have a checklist for submission of protocols for ethical review. This checklist shall contain an element of whether the study is addressing any of the priority areas.

9.1.2 Catalogue of Protocols Developed from the Priority Areas

Using the databases of the National Committee on Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities and any other institutional committee databases, the NCST in collaboration with stakeholders shall compile catalogues of approved protocols of studies addressing the priority areas.

9.1.3 Inspection, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Reports

The National Committee on Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities shall be supported to be undertaking Inspection and M+E visits to sites where the approved studies are being conducted.

9.1.4 *Progress and Final Reports*

Progress and final reports shall be submitted to the National Committee on Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities (NCRSH) and any institutional research ethics committee that approved a particular study. At the end of the research study, final report shall be deposited with the research ethics committee that approved that study with copies to the National Committee on Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities in the case of a study that was approved by an institutional research ethics committee other than the national committee.

9.1.5 *Database and Directory of Research Studies*

Final reports of the approved studies shall be used to compile databases and directories.

9.2 Review of the Agenda

This Agenda has a lifespan of five years. Informed by ever emerging issues in the social sciences and humanities and the aforementioned indicators for tracking the stakeholders' adherence to the implementation of the Agenda, there would be a midterm evaluation followed by a final review of the Agenda after five years.

10.0 APENDICES

10.1 Appendix 1: List of Members of the Committee on Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities

- Prof Wiseman Chijere Chirwa (Chairman-individual Member)
- Dr Peter Mvula, Vice Chairman, Centre for Social Research,
- Dr Stanley Khaila, Bunda College
- Fr Dr Kazingatchire, Catholic University of Malawi
- Mr J Ndawala, National Statistical Office
- Dr Dorothy Nampota, Centre for Education Research and Training
- Mr Chrispin Mphande, Mzuzu University
- Mr Mtafu Zeleza Manda, Mzuzu University
- Mr Emmanuel Konzakapansi, Malawi Human Rights Commission
- Dr Pearson Ntata, Chancellor College

10.2 Appendix 2 : National Taskforce on the Development of the NRAiSSH

- Prof Wiseman Chijere Chirwa (**Chairman**)
- Dr Stanely Khaila
- Dr Nampota
- Dr Kazingatchire
- Mr Konzakapansi
- Mr Chrispin Mphande
- Mr Mtafu Zeleza Manda

10.3 Appendix 3: Drafting Committee

- Prof Chijere Chijere Chirwa (**Chairman**)
- Dr Peter Mvula
- Dr Dorothy Nampota
- Mr Mike Kachedwa
- Mr Andrew Mpesi