

SoKIA (formerly RIA) Business Plan 2019/20

Final version (4) of 1st April 2019

Introduction

This business plan is centred upon the conversion of the Research use & Impact Assessment (RIA) unit in the HSRC, a hybrid cross-cutting research and professional practice unit in the Office of the DCEO: Research, into Social Policy, Knowledge Mobilization, & Impact Assessment (SoKIA) – a standalone research programme in the HSRC consisting both of subject matter experts and process experts. This conversion is an outcome of the programme review of RIA that was conducted in August 2017. One of the key conclusions and recommendations of the external review panel was that RIA was central to the HSRC's fulfilment of its mandated objectives but its research and knowledge mobilization agenda should not be encumbered by the inclusion of HSRC Press and Corporate Communications. As of 1st April 2019 Corporate Communication was relocated to the Office of the CEO and HSRC Press was relocated to the Office of the DCEO: Research.

Pertinent background and overarching problem statements

1.1 Introduction

RIA/SoKIA is a research programme within a South African public research organization and at a macro societal level the problem statement within which we locate our work is concisely articulated in the following way by the Department of Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation (DPME). "The South African developmental state we seek to build must have visionary capacity, a long-term orientation, and organizational and technical capacity to translate policies into practical programmes and projects. In the second phase of transition to a National Democratic Society, we need to speed up the implementation of programmes of change in pursuit of shared prosperity, social justice and human solidarity (DPME, 2017:8).

At a meso organizational level, our work is located within the problem statements and plans – focused on poverty, inequality, and unemployment – that are detailed in the Human Sciences Research Council's (HSRC) strategic plan and annual performance plan.

At a micro programme level – with reference to particular social policies -- our work is focused on supporting participatory processes located within particular theories of change, co-generating research evidence, advising on programme design, and conducting assessments and evaluation. This focus on processes (provision of research support with respect to particular social policies) is combined with an emphasis on supporting the attainment of particular inclusive social outcomes.

1.2 Reimagining RIA in response to the 2017 programme review

As a follow-up of the August 2017, external peer review of RIA this draft 2019/20 business plan reflects a reimagined programme with a more clearly articulated specific purpose and research niche for the programme.

The external review panel's primary conclusion was, "That a slimmed down and appropriately-funded RIA with a clear mandate of cutting edge science communication and the promotion of science utilization is absolutely central to the HSRC achieving its overall mission." Within this larger HSRC mission, the panel envisaged a 'fit for purpose' RIA playing a central role in:

- A. Mediating the relationship between science and society as well as between science and policy;
- B. Conducting evaluations and impact assessments; and
- C. Providing general support for improving the processes and outcomes of government programmes.

This is also consistent with DST's policy intent to "support a science-literate and science-aware society" (DST, 2019: 56).

Within the context of a more clearly articulated specific purpose and research niche, the external review panel's secondary recommendation was that the reimagined RIA should be reconfigured by moving the Corporate Communication and HSRC Press sections to the offices of the senior executives in the organization i.e. office of the CEO and office of the DCEO: Research. This business plan reflects consideration and implementation of the major recommendations of the external review panel after consultations with the CEO, the DCEO: Research, and with RIA staff.

In accordance with the implementation of the recommendations of the panel and the reimagining of its strategic purpose (as detailed below), it is also proposed to re-name the RIA programme as the Social Policy, Knowledge Mobilization and Impact Assessment (SoKIA) research programme.

1.3 Inclusive Social Policy as an Analytical Framework

Research can contribute to the promotion and efficacy of inclusive social policies in a number of ways. Critically, this includes developing interdisciplinary analytical frameworks aimed specifically at critiquing the inequalities and exclusions that such policies must address. By the term "interdisciplinary", we refer not just to the application of more than one academic discipline, but also more broadly to the coming together of the social sciences and the humanities in addressing particular social problems.

An analytical framework for promoting inclusive social policy would ensure that issues around gender and race, in particular, maintain a central focus and are not marginalised through deliberately neutral social policies. In addition, it would also question whose rights and needs are rendered invisible through particular social policies and policy positions, and how such policies can be revisited and reviewed in order to promote and protect the rights and needs of those most vulnerable in society. Such a framework would necessarily examine structures of power, and work toward inclusive social empowerment. Moreover, this framework would take into account not just economic outcomes, but also the impact of policy positions on human relationships and societies. In this way, such research would seek to go beyond deconstructive critique, and work at the level of affect in a way that should be considerate of local value systems and ethics.

Accordingly, such critique should be conscious of the position from which it speaks, and recognise other forms of knowledge and other ways of knowing, therefore both complimenting and challenging the dominant epistemic paradigms, including, most critically, science and technology. Other forms of knowledge would include indigenous knowledge, cultural practices, and humanities-based research.

Indeed, what is required in order to build an inclusive South African society is not just better articulated political commitments, but also a reimagining of the social and cultural landscape, and of the symbolic order that continues to discriminate against particular social groups. This kind of reimagining takes place most profoundly through the arts and humanities, wherein discursive binaries can be explored and re-appropriated and where meaning making can take place.

1.4 The context of a social-ecological systems approach

The HSRC Annual Performance Plan 2019/20 details the backdrop – the particular character, complexity and dynamics of South African society -- against which the HSRC’s strategic plans for the current period are formulated. In addition to this backdrop, the draft business plan of the SoKIA research programme is situated within a social-ecological systems approach to sustainable development¹, with a primary focus on the imperative of transformability (creating a new and more desirable system) rather than adaptability.

Based upon the NDP and government’s medium term frameworks, we locate SoKIA’s research agenda on inclusive social policy within the following parameters:

- i. The current government’s expansion of and changes to its prioritization of the critical issues in its sovereign ‘policy space’.

¹ See Walker, Brian et.al. (2004) “Resilience, Adaptability and Transformability in Social-Ecological Systems” *Ecology and Society*, 9(2):5.

- ii. Adjustments in normative hierarchies that prioritize social and ecological objectives rather than economic objectives.
- iii. The intense vertical integration challenges in the country's system of national, provincial and local governance; and application of the subsidiarity principle.
- iv. The co-evolutionary interactions between the different kinds of formal and informal networks that animate multiple dimensions of change (social, ecological, economic, cultural, political and technological).
- v. The forging of common understandings, frameworks and methodologies to underpin social and fiscal compacts.

Based upon the social-ecological systems approach we define 'transformability' as the capacity to cross thresholds into new development trajectories².

Vision and mission of SoKIA

The vision of SoKIA is an inclusive and engaged society that makes innovative use of research evidence and indigenous knowledge to improve its understanding of social dynamics and enhance innovations for transformative change³. In the context of mediating the relationship between science and society as well as between science and policy, we see this mission as requiring that we work at the research-policy-action nexus and support open science/data and citizen science initiatives.

In fulfilling this vision, in the context of our democratic constitutional dispensation and transformation imperatives, we adhere to the following values as articulated by the International Science Council: (a) Excellence and professionalism, (b) Inclusivity and diversity, (c) Transparency and integrity, and (d) Innovation and sustainability.

Because we work at the research-policy-action nexus, knowledge mobilization (Phipps and Shapson, 2009)⁴ is a key component of our work and we coordinate the use of knowledge platforms and products to inform policy development and programme implementation. Because of this SoKIA's research agenda and the orientation of its professional practice can be conceptualised as occurring within a 'knowledge, policy and power framework' that requires understanding and sensitivity to four critical

² Folke, C. et. al. (2010) "Resilience thinking: integrating resilience, adaptability and transformability". *Ecology and Society*. 15(4):20.

³ For a discussion of the different kinds of innovations for transformative change (policy, institutional, social, technological and conceptual/discursive) see the [UNRISD Flagship Report for 2016: Policy Innovations for Transformative Change](#).

⁴ Phipps, D. J. and Shapson, S. (2009) "Knowledge mobilization builds local research collaborations for social innovation" *Evidence & Policy*, 13(4), 802-821.

dimensions: context, actors, types of knowledge and knowledge interaction processes (Jones et al. 2012)⁵.

In the context of normative change, the co-production of knowledge and narrative change are the primary logics that SOKIA uses in fulfilling its mission. Recognising that both research and policy-formulation are embedded within narrative structures that make sense of society, narrative change refers to an understanding of the way in which changes to the multiple narratives of society can bring into focus new concerns or exclusions, and can facilitate the production of new meanings and values.⁶

Working in the research-policy-actions requires a range of skills or collaboration with a range of experts – those with “political antennas and epistemic humility; with the ability to speak locally and early to the hearts and minds of citizens; with a willingness to advocate policy; and finally with an enhanced institutional awareness and peripheral policy vision”⁷. SoKIA both works with such experts and has researchers/practitioners within its team who have these requisite advocacy skills.

Broad objectives: Who are we, what do we do, and why and how do we do it?

The SoKIA research programme is an inter-disciplinary team of professionals (researchers and practitioners) primarily grounded in the social, behavioural and economic sciences. The programme includes staff grounded in the humanities (specifically philosophy, languages and the arts) and work of the programme proceeds on the basis that values and patterns of meaning are vital and central to its work. The parameters of our work are defined in the context of global transitions and transformations.

We work across the research, data analysis, science communication, knowledge brokering, policy advice, and evaluation value chain. In order to work across this value chain the programme is organized into four sections: Science communication; Systems and decision-making; Implementation science and data analysis; and Policy and research impact. As required by the HSRC Act, we are influential and trusted collaborators who focus on stakeholder-engaged science.

In fulfilling the HSRC’s public good mandate SoKIA undertakes a number of activities. Firstly, we conduct rigorous, creative and relevant research for the public good. Secondly, we conduct large-scale quantitative and representative surveys that are the basis for complex data analytics, modelling and simulations. Thirdly, we leverage a wide range of expertise,

⁵ Harry Jones, Nicola Jones, Louise Shaxson and David Walker (2012) “Providing practical guidance for in-country programming: the value of analysing knowledge, policy and power” *ODI Background Note* December 2012.

⁶ <https://onthinktanks.org/articles/the-role-of-narrative-change-in-influencing-policy/>.

⁷ Dunlop, C. (2014) “The possible experts: How epistemic communities negotiate barriers to knowledge use in ecosystems services policy” *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 2014, volume 32, p208 -228.

convene multi-stakeholder forums, manage digital platforms, and promote and produce evidence-informed understanding and decision-making.

Two additional dimensions of SoKIA's unique value proposition are that we are (a) network orchestrators for increased social/policy influence; and (b) our research and knowledge brokering activities are focused at enhancing the quality, capability, and accountability of institutions.

The programme's activities are targeted at the interfaces between scientific knowledge, indigenous knowledge, scholarship, translation and interpretation, economic and social policy, and programme implementation. This entails working with various categories of state and non-state actors to (i) develop a scientific ethos and the understanding of scientific evidence; (ii) conduct imaginative, timely and impactful projects; (iii) improve access to knowledge and its utilization; and (iv) catalyse policy learning, innovation, and action.

The premises of our work are:

- The history of knowledge production on the African continent and contemporary inequities;
- The diversity of the languages, multi-cultural expressions and identities on the African continent;
- The utilization of transdisciplinary theoretical and methodological perspectives in an increasingly digital world; and
- The value of a participatory vibrancy in government-civil society interactions that enhance transparency, accountability, trust, and support transformative societal responses.

Our research expertise encompasses archival research, root cause analysis, critical discourse analysis, costing and value for money assessments, cost-benefit analysis, systems analysis, institutional analysis and assessments of decision-making, conducting surveys, data aggregation and analysis, implementation science, M& E frameworks, environmental change and disaster risk management, indicator validation, narrative change, and impact assessments. Our units of analysis are individuals, households, and institutions.

3.1 Specific strategic objectives for 2019/20 financial year

In acknowledgement of pertinent developments among our stakeholders/partners and in response to imperatives in our environment, during the 2019/20 financial year the four thematic sections in SoKIA will jointly pursue the following priority strategic objectives. It is envisaged that the pursuit of these strategic objectives will enable and shape the

trajectory of SoKIA's planned growth⁸ over the next three years. The following priority strategic objectives for 2019/20 are proposed in the context of a three-year perspective:

1. The initiation of two new collaborations (research, knowledge brokering, and capacity building) in partnership with the Research, Budget, and Language Units in Parliament (initially prioritising the National and Gauteng and Limpopo Legislatures).
2. Augmenting existing collaborations with Programme 5 at DST by initiating two new research collaborations with Programme 2 (Technology Innovation) in DST – specifically the Bioinnovation Chief Directorate – focused on the provision of decision support⁹ in the areas of IKS-based innovation, health innovation, and industry and the environment. These collaborations should lead SoKIA's into doing substantive work in the areas of prospective studies/anticipation/futures literacy.
3. Conduct research that deepens SoKIA's knowledge of its collaborators, the pertinent digital eco-systems in which they and SoKIA operate, and informs the formulation of an appropriate digital business model and strategy for SoKIA¹⁰. This strategy will include an appropriate human resource plan for SoKIA anchored to the digital sciences.
4. Building upon the work done to develop a HSRC Dashboard of Indicators of Poverty and Inequality, initiate a project that uses collaborative web-based technologies in the areas of research, knowledge-brokering, and capacity building in furtherance of a Science 2.0 agenda¹¹.
5. Pursue collaborations initiated by the DCEO: Research with the EU Joint Research Centre focused on their work on indicators and impact assessment. These collaboration may encompass (a) the

⁸ This has to take into account the following factors (a) the restructuring of RIA in 2018, which included the relocation of 15 staff posts to the offices of the CEO, DCEO: Research, and AISA – a 33% reduction in capability; and (b) the recommendation of the RIA review panel about capacitating RIA vis-à-vis e-Research (digital disruption in our industry) and the broader digital transformations affecting all aspects of social, economic and political life. Accordingly, SoKIA's growth target over the next five years is to incrementally add 35 new positions for researchers and research professionals across the four sections.

⁹ DST works with the following definition of decision support. "Decision support interventions help people think out the choices they face; they describe where and why choice exists; and provide information about options, including where reasonable, the option of taking no action. These interventions aim to help people to deliberate, independently or in collaboration with others, about options by considering short, intermediate and long-term outcomes with relevant consequences. Decision support interventions assist the process of constructing preferences and eventually decision-making in a particular situation." [DST Annual Performance Plan 2018-2019](#).

¹⁰ See Peter Weill and Stephanie Woerner (2015) "Thriving in an Increasingly Digital Ecosystem" [MIT Sloan Management Review](#) Summer 2015 for a discuss of what companies need to do to better prepare for a digital future.

¹¹ See Katarzyna Szkuta and David Osimo (2016) "Re-booting science? Implications of science 2.0 main trends for scientific methods and research institutions" in [Foresight](#) Vol. 18 No. 3 2016 for a discussion of the open science, citizen science and data-intensive science trends and their implication for scientific research processes, knowledge brokering and capacity building.

provision of technical assistance to SoKIA by the EU Joint Research Centre, (b) a site visit by one or two senior researchers from SoKIA to the EU Joint Research Centre, and (c) the development of two or three related project proposals by the Indicators of Poverty and Inequality Task Team

In the next section of this business plan, the key research themes that are pursued in the four sections in SoKIA are detailed indicating their problem statements, topical focus and overarching research questions, their theoretical and methodological approaches, and their programmatic areas of work or projects.

Key research themes: objectives, actions plans, and achievements

4.1 Science communication research: precarity, the agora and a scientific temper.

The work in this research theme is located within a 'science and society' paradigm, aligned to DST's Science Engagement Strategy (SES) and Implementation Plan, and cognisant of the need to examine the evolution and implications of contemporary open science initiatives.

A key aspect of the SES is a twin acknowledgment of the value of indigenous knowledge and the imperative of enhancing rational/technical attitudes and values among the general public so that they can better participate in debates on policy matters. A key concern in this research theme are questions of expertise and trust. These concerns are pertinent as South Africa moves from a traditional resource based economy to a knowledge-based economy that grapples with the impact of anthropogenic climate change.

With respect to the disruptive impact of digital technologies, open science and artificial intelligence, the associated emerging ICT ecosystems demand a new generation of science communicators with the digital and artificial intelligence skills to work across various sectors. In addition, science communication now encompasses the productions and performances by artists, video games developers, creative technologists, curators, archivists, social entrepreneurs, environmental and health policymakers and citizen scientists. The assessment of programmes to develop new professional capabilities in areas such as digital literacy, critical thinking, ethics, visual literacy and creative innovation will be a part of the research work done in this thematic area.

Building upon projects undertaken by the science communication team over the past two years (i.e. knowledge from precarity and international mobility, needs assessment for Sesame Street programme development, communication impact assessment of ARV adherence campaigns) the following projects will be pursued in 2019/20:

Knowledge from precarity and international mobility. The project aims to collectively develop a reflection that situates academic work in a set of

relationships to knowledge producers and productions, particularly those marked by conditions of impediment or vulnerability. The work is linked in particular to the notion of subalternities, and to an epistemological and political concern about the alliances between the social sciences, knowledge of proximity and the imaginary of a habitable world. The team working on this project is international and includes members from France, Turkey, India, Brazil, Chile and South Africa.

Using narrative approaches to communicate science. This project investigates effective ways in which narrative and storytelling can be used to communicate science to the public. In particular, the project will focus on the discursive features of stories that can be exploited to facilitate understanding and acceptance of new science and technologies.

Social media and science knowledge in crises. Using the current outbreak of listeriosis, this study will explore the ways in which social media can be harnessed as a science communication tool. It looks at both the advantages and disadvantages of using social media to communicate science and some of the pertinent semiotic features that have merged as useful in speeding up the popularization of messages. Ultimately, these insights will provide evidence for the development of future science communication through social media.

Scientific Temper. This concept is increasingly used to convey the degree to which society and the public is broadly engaged in, and supportive of, science. It refers to a society that embraces science, involves itself in the development, application and use of new technologies and celebrates national science achievements. In addition, we keep in mind that a scientific temper encompasses many dimensions of the public's relationship with science and is a product of experiences in formal and informal settings – beyond the formal and institutional environments. Scientific temper in a society tends to reflect the interconnectedness of the governance of science and public involvement in S&T policy decision making. This project will bring together scholars interested in developing science indicators to measuring the attitude, understanding and acceptance of science (both formal and IKS) within society with the aim of developing a national survey on Scientific Temper.

A survey to establish the level of scientific culture in South Africa. Scientific culture refers to the degree in which a society engages with science. It highlights a countries' historical, social, cultural, linguistic, political and geographic environment and reflects the manner in which a government supports the institutional and academic development and adoption of science and technology for the good of its people. A science culture is showcased through the support of science shows, science museums and scientific research. A strong science culture celebrates the experience of science and ensures that all individuals and segments of society have opportunities to share in research findings. A set of key indicators will drive the project: Support for life-long learning; Inclusiveness of science learning and engagement; Adapting to new

technologies; Enhancement of Science Communication and Engagement; Provision of National and Regional leadership. A similar survey was conducted by the Council of Canadian Academies (Science culture: where Canada stand – expert panel on the State of Canada’s Science culture 2014) which will enable the introduction of comparative benchmarks.

4.2 Policy and Research Impact Assessment: SA as a social laboratory and the evidence ecosystem

The work in this research theme is a response to three intersecting imperatives. Firstly, the fact that in historical and contemporary terms South Africa is an interesting ‘social laboratory’ that has developed and implemented innovative policy and regulatory regimes from which much can be learnt. Secondly, that fact that the country is confronting acute social challenges and struggling to construct a fit for purpose ‘evidence ecosystems’ that can inform desired trajectories. Thirdly, the impact assessment agenda both with respect to its intrinsic value and as a response fiscal constraints and demands for demonstrations of value for money.

Work done to date in this thematic area include the compilation of Research Impact guidelines; an assessment of the impact of a large HSRC research project, namely SANHANES-1; and the first phase report on a survey of satisfaction of the stakeholders of Parliament. In addition the third wave of the study of global health and ageing (SAGE) is being completed on behalf of the World Health Organisation and Wollongong University.

The research agenda in this thematic area is interrogate and enhance the theoretical and methodological rigor of research on the impact of national and provincial policies, programmes or projects; and to undertake research projects that assess the impact, quantitatively and qualitatively, of selected HSRC projects.

This agenda is informed by the knowledge brokering objectives of SoKIA, including engagements with policy makers and researchers; setting agendas and common goals; packaging research syntheses; communicating and sharing advice; and monitoring impact. The agenda is aligned with the work that will be done by the Implementation Science and Data Analytics’ section to develop national capacity in evaluation. Thus, we aim to develop and utilise our in-house skills and expertise to facilitate wider awareness of the importance of measuring impact and of the methodologies that exist to accomplish this task. The overarching objective is enhancement of the country’s evidence ecosystem.

The matrix of projects in this thematic area are detailed below:

Theme -- Evaluation Methodologies

Sub Theme	6 months	12-18 months	2-3 years
Evaluation of HSRC project	Determine which project to evaluate (possibly education-related)	Conduct evaluation	Secure longer term funding for internal evaluations, through budgeting process.
Evaluation of IID seminars	Completion of current survey of respondents and evaluation of impact of the IID seminars		

Theme -- Indicator Development

Sub Theme	6 months	12-18 months	2-3 years
Indicator Dashboard	Develop Dashboard for Local Government, Health and Education outcomes, using HSRC data	Implement Indicator Dashboard.	Secure funding for expansion of Dashboard.
Social Media data analysis and cell phone survey	Collaborate with Citizen for Research Centre in seeking funding for project.		

Theme – The evidence ecosystem in migration studies

Sub Theme	6 months	12-18 months	2-3 years

Migration policy analysis	Draft paper/s and chapter/s pertaining to migration policy stasis.	Develop larger migration project.	
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Theme: The evidence ecosystem in the area of human rights

Sub Theme	12-18 months	2-3 years	2-3 years
Stakeholder satisfaction survey for Parliament	Completion of current tender project	Second phase of stakeholder survey in progress in 2018 and 2019.	
Needs analysis in Bo-Kaap	Consolidation of relationship with Bo-Kaap community and commencement of needs analysis, community history collaborative project		

Theme – The evidence ecosystem in the area of intergenerational solidarity

Sub Theme	6 months	12-18 months	2-3 years
Impact of historical trauma on current cohort	Approach to be developed, using PhD thesis as baseline.		
Monitoring of youth employment and development interventions	Analysis of literature and data, subject to success in accessing funding.	Extension of youth intervention work.	

Health and ageing	Wave 3 of Survey of Health and Ageing (SAGE) on behalf of WHO.	Fieldwork across the country during 2018 and 2019. Data analysis of wave 2 and 3 data including the international comparative dimensions.	Wave 4 of Survey of Health and Ageing (SAGE) on behalf of WHO.
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Specific examples of recent measurable / attributable contributions to improve policy or practice that have been made, by virtue of research undertaken in the Policy and Research Impact section.

<i>Sub-theme</i>	<i>Project title (if applicable)</i>	<i>MTSF outcome, National Development Plan (NDP) chapter and / or HSRC mandated objective addressed</i>	<i>Contribution(s) made</i>
Evaluation Methodologies	Research Impact Guidelines	HSRC objective: monitoring of policy and evaluation of policy implementation	Produced first report on guidelines for the assessment of research impact, for wider use within and outside of the HSRC
	Evaluation of SANHANES-1	HSRC objective: monitoring of policy and evaluation of policy implementation	Impact assessment conducted, piloting different methods.

<i>Sub-theme</i>	<i>Project title (if applicable)</i>	<i>MTSF outcome, National Development Plan (NDP) chapter and / or HSRC mandated objective addressed</i>	<i>Contribution(s) made</i>
Human Rights	Mapping Human Rights funding in SA	HSRC objective: monitoring of policy and evaluation of policy implementation	Determined funding environment for human rights and social justice organisations in SA on behalf of EU.
	Annual report for Human Rights Foundation	HSRC objective: monitoring of policy and evaluation of policy implementation	Compiled inputs for annual report for HRF.
Indicator Development	Indicator Task Team	HSRC objective: monitoring of policy and evaluation of policy implementation	Conceptualised the development of an HSRC Indicator Dashboard to showcase research findings pertinent to the National Outcomes and SDGs.

Partners and new Initiatives

Thematic Area	Planned project / area of work	Potential funder / client
Social media	Analysis of social media responses to key issues such as Xenophobia, HIV/AIDS interventions, Tertiary Education Funding	Working with Citizen Research Centre to secure funding.
Migration	Further development of initial research done on migration policy and statistics	It is envisaged that previous collaborative engagements with Statistics South Africa and the Department of Social Development will result in project funding.
Disaster drought management	Analysis of the drought disaster mitigation interventions made at household and organisational level in response to the 2017/18 drought in the Western Cape	HSRC-CEO Grant, Water Research Commission, National Disaster Management Centre

4.3 Implementation Science and Data Analytics

The work in this research theme is premised upon the fact the HSRC has rich databases that have been utilized and analyzed to varying levels of depth. A number of large national surveys have been conducted over the years with the SABSSM, TIMSS, SANHANES, R & D Survey and SASAS being some of the prominent national surveys. These surveys have provided indicators used to track health, education and other outcome indicators. The country is still grappling with a number of challenges; the data in the HSRC supplemented with other data sources can provide some of answers, insights and possible solutions to these challenges. This requires more nuanced data analysis using appropriate methodologies and theories. Coupled with this is an understanding of how programmes/projects/systems are implemented, thus issues of

efficiencies. Sometimes desired/expected outcomes and/or impacts are not be realized because programmes/projects/interventions are not implemented as designed, i.e. on time, with appropriate resources and as designed or because parameters have changed, thus a need to adjust implementation.

The team that has been put together to work on this research theme possess a range of critical competencies. These include:

Conceptualize, design and undertake rigorous impact evaluations. - Our team of experts has extensive experience in designing experimental and quasi- experimental studies in health, education and social sciences including social protection. We are familiar with a wide range of evaluation designs such as randomized control studies (including cluster randomized trials) cross sectional surveys, panel studies, longitudinal designs, and interrupted time series designs. We are also familiar with evaluation techniques such as instrumental variable techniques, regression discontinuity designs, propensity score matching models, and hierarchical models. We can undertake subject matter (health, education, social protection as well as other social sciences) impact evaluations, economic impact evaluations and social return on investment evaluations. We have experience supervising and undertaking data collection including training of enumerators. We can undertake advanced qualitative (Atlas IT, NVIVO) and advanced quantitative data analysis (Generalized Linear/Non-linear models, survival analysis, multivariate analysis models including structural equation modeling, factor analysis, and principal component analysis). We help in the interpretation and verification of results and we develop practical, understandable and locally appropriate recommendations to inform decision-making and practice.

Combined experience in quantitative and qualitative research skills. The team can undertake participatory research, focus groups discussions, key informant interviews, thematic analysis as well as advanced quantitative data analysis. There is however need to strengthen capacity in quantitative skills especially at the middle and junior levels.

Development of research tools/instruments. The team has experience developing research tools/instruments as well as designing M & E frameworks and systems. We are familiar with validating tools/instruments including checking for internal and external validity including assessment of construct validity.

Facilitate and undertake dissemination workshops. These include seminars to disseminate research findings, as well methodology workshops.

Training and capacity building. As part of the learning agenda, training workshops with key relevant stakeholders a key milestone for the Evaluation and learning unit. These include training on understanding and interpreting research findings, training on methodologies to help gather evidence. We can also undertake training on M & E frameworks as well as training on reviews to synthesize research findings.

The research agenda in this thematic area will encompass:

1. Advanced methodology research on rigorous impact evaluations. This includes study designs, analytical methods and reporting to produce correct and relevant inference from such studies. The aim is to strengthen both analytical and qualitative skills within the unit while solving/researching on real life problems. The main focus for the research should be on finding solutions and/or evidence of what works, but using the most appropriate and up-to-date methodologies that are available. There may be instances where new methodologies have to be explored, e.g. work on the indicators for poverty and in-equalities.
2. Social Science and Humanities theories that shape how individuals/organization makes decisions/policies, e.g. narrative change theories, nag theory. Conventional science uses theories and models with predictable outcomes. It is however clear that social science and humanities do play significant roles in decision making; for example the influence of individuals (not necessarily a large group) in setting the agenda and outcomes, e.g. the #metoo, #feesmustfall etc. movements.
3. To actively work with stakeholders to move away from the narrative of “natural disasters” so as foster an understanding of the trigger factors that underlie disaster events and understand that communities often have traditional disaster coping capacities that should be strengthened through government support.
4. Research on and incorporate issues of risk accumulation through small-scale disasters into disaster risk reduction policy & practice and build or support existing social capital within communities as a way to strengthen DRR and Climate Change Adaptation.

Some of the analytical/methodological tools that we will utilize to undertake research on the above mentioned subject matter areas include:

- Advanced data analytics
 - Hierarchical modelling (unit of analysis modelling and correlation issues)

- Assessment of biases and how to adjust for these in survey data
- Quasi-Experimental Designs
 - Weighting methods
 - Balancing methods
- Predictive Modelling and projections:
 - Differential equations
 - Discriminate analysis
 - Factor analysis
- Modelling and Simulation to assess the impact of certain policies and/or interventions under specified assumptions.
- Visualizations methods (Power BI and Tableau)
- Implementation science including understanding Government systems
- Systematic reviews and meta-analysis
- Behavioral economics

Project work undertaken to date includes:

1. Pro-actively engaging with various government departments. Based on government systems of outcome based monitoring, there is demand for M & E support including impact evaluations and implementation science services from various government departments. Most government departments' evaluation projects are supported by DPME, and DPME has indicated that it has limited capacity to fully support all government departments (national and provincial) and metros to undertake evaluations. Positive and promising relationships have been established with the new leadership of the Evaluations section in DPME and the team are waiting for decisions on various responses to RFP's.
2. Preliminary work on establishing a monitoring system for CDC-funded VMMC demand generation activity through Blue Label PPP efforts.
3. Responses to calls on data use for decision making submitted as sub-recipient of the International Business & Technical Consultants, Inc.

The unit is pursuing a number of new initiatives with the following partner organizations:

- Mandela prescient
- Measure Evaluation
- 3ie
- BRICS
- Trust/Foundation groups – Gates Foundation, Ford Foundation, Templeton Foundation
- Multi-lateral groups USAID, DFID etc.

4.4 Systems and decision making in transformative social policy

The work in this research theme is operationally located within 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, and will be approached from a transformative social policy perspective with a particular leaning towards social protection in 2019/20. Social protection is defined as a set of policies and programmes designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability by promoting labour markets, diminishing peoples' exposure to risks, and enhancing their capacity to protect themselves against hazards and interruptions/loss of income. The policies and procedures included in social protection involve five major kinds of activities: labour market policies and programmes, social insurance programmes, social assistance, micro and area-based schemes, and child protection.

Whilst transformative social policy research and analyses forms the major part of the initial activities portfolio of the Unit, other related studies and initiatives in the areas of food and nutrition security, health and wellbeing (especially universal health coverage) decent work, inclusive and sustainable cities and human settlements, and climate change will be gradually included. *The transversal theme in all these study areas is a quest to understand interaction of social, political and economic systems, and the multiplicity of factors that enable or hinder implementation of policies and programmes at national and sub-national levels.*

The following overarching research questions will be pursued in this thematic area:

1. What policies are required to break the vicious circle that produces poverty, inequality and environmental destruction?
2. How appropriate, adequate, equitable, effective and efficient are current social protection policies and programmes in reducing poverty and vulnerabilities?
3. How can existing social protection policies and programmes be reformed to ensure sustained impact?

4. What lessons on social protection floors can be drawn from other countries that can be applied to South Africa and Africa? And,
5. How can we ensure that research evidence is effectively utilised to inform policy and practice?

The specific objectives in this thematic area are as follows. The overall objective of the sub-unit is to conduct research and initiatives that engender systems development and evidence-based decisions making in addressing poverty, unemployment and inequality in South Africa.

More specifically, it seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To conduct research that examines the effectiveness and impact of social protection and other social policies.
2. To conduct policy and systems research on SDG 2, 3, 8, 11, and 13.
3. To convene targeted knowledge brokering initiatives to promote both demand and use of evidence.

The nature of the posed research questions and hence the types of evidence to be generated requires different conceptual frameworks, theories and methodologies. A multi-disciplinary team of researchers in the fields of social policy, health systems and policy research, implementation science, health economics and economics, behavioural sciences including behavioural economists, sociology, communication science, institutional and development economics. It is expected that post-doctoral students will also contribute to the proposed general body of work.

Studies that seek to understand and inform systems development and decision making are by nature complex and multi-dimensional. The diagnostic theories will range from new public management (Lane 2002), neo-classical institutionalism (North, 1986, 1995; Williamson 2000)¹², behavioural economics including the nudge theory (Thaler & Sunstein 2009)¹³, systems theories (Kast & Rosenzweig 1972; Schneider & Somers 2006), complexity theory (Byrne, 2002) and many others that allow systematic analysis of complex and wicked phenomena. We seek to conduct institutional analysis that goes beyond governance analysis but

¹² **New institutionalism** or **neo-institutionalism** is a school of thought that focuses on developing a [sociological](#) view of [institutions](#)—the way they interact and how they affect [society](#). It provides a way of viewing institutions outside of the traditional views of [economics](#) by explaining why and how institutions emerge in a certain way within a given context (Wikipedia).

¹³ **Nudge theory** as espoused by Thaler & Sunstein (2009) involves people being subtly guided towards what is the right choice, rather than being told in a prescriptive way what the correct choice would be." Nudge is a concept in behavioural science, political theory and economics which proposes positive reinforcement and indirect suggestions as ways to influence the behaviour and decision making of groups or individuals (Wikipedia).

explores the complex formal and informal “rules of the game” that affect policy or programme implementation and indeed decision making in general.

The principal focus areas include implementation research in the area of universal health coverage in South Africa and Africa; systems and decisions modelling, cost analyses and economic evaluation of priority programmes in the social and economic sectors; engagement initiatives to support policy implementation for selected priority policies and programmes.

Currently, the unit has core or basic capabilities to initiate flagship projects but as the research portfolio expands, it will be necessary to acquire additional systems, econometric and decision modelling capacity.

The idea is not to try to implement research projects and initiatives in all the areas highlighted in annexure I all at once. A landscape analysis of existing research within and without the HSRC will be conducted to identify knowledge gaps. Furthermore, engagements with other research programmes and external stakeholders will be held as part of a prioritization process. The initial activities will be anchored on the following projects:

PROJECTS	6 months	12-18 months (2019)	2020
Supporting Policy Engagement for Evidence based Decisions (SPEED)	Policy Implementation Barometer in Uganda-Wave 2 protocol development	Conduct PIB wave 2 Publication of 1 article and 3 blogs on UHC	EU close out report (2015-2020) EU extension proposal submitted
NCD and labour participation	Data analyses	3 papers published	Thesis submitted
Costs and economic impact of NCDs	Data analyses	4 papers published Thesis submitted	

Food and Nutrition Security (MOU-AISA)	Ethics submission	Fieldwork, data cleaning and analysis	
Health Impact Assessment	Data analysis and paper preparation	1 article published	
PROPOSALS:			
Knowledge brokering (WHO) in Lesotho, South Africa and Zimbabwe	Submitted to WHO		
Coherence of agricultural policies and NCD policies in South Africa: South Africa and Zambia	Submitted to IDRC		

In this thematic research area there are partnerships with national departments and councils, research institutions and universities in South Africa (University of Pretoria, Tshwane University of Technology, Fort Hare, University of KwaZulu Natal, Witwatersrand); Africa (Makerere University & University of Zimbabwe), and internationally (University of London, Maastricht University in Netherlands, University of Antwerp).

With respect to new initiatives the Universal Health Coverage (NHI in SA) Initiative will form the major part of the activities in the first year as new proposals are developed in collaboration with mainly the Department of health, Social Development and other relevant actors. Concerning, National Health Insurance, a number of potential dialogues/engagements and implementation studies have been identified and more will certainly be added through consultations with departments of health.

5. Highlights of RIA's recent major achievements

- 5.1 In the 2018/19 financial year RIA achieved or exceeded 11 of its 18 ADEPTS targets and thus accomplished 61% of its targets. Most importantly, given the long-standing imperative of securing and registering more multi-year research projects in RIA and simultaneously correcting the balance between research and knowledge-brokering projects, in the 2018/19 financial year RIA exceeded its external research income target (achieved 139% of a 100% target) and its multi-year research grant target (achieved 67% of a 56% target).
- 5.2 At the end of the 2018/19 financial year RIA had a surplus of over R500, 000 which reflected both good generation of external income and good financial management.
- 5.3 Successful completion of the 7 million Rands Study on global AGEing and adult health (SAGE) wave 3 national survey on behalf of WHO. Despite significant challenges arising from the quality of the fieldwork in previous of the survey, wave 3 was successfully completed in terms of accomplishing the required sample sizes, improving the accuracy and completeness of respondent information collected, and finishing the project on time and under budget. This project, whose PI is Dr Rule, is being used to leverage research collaborations with (a) HSD on broader issues of aging and inter-generational solidarity, and (b) with DGSD on issues of military veterans and inter-generation trauma/dialogues.
- 5.4 Being a lead partner (the co-PI is Prof Hongoro) together with PHHSI and AISA in securing a 78million Rand Food and Nutrition Security research grant from DAFF for a national survey.
- 5.5 Successful implementation of the key recommendations of the external programme review of RIA, most importantly the formulation of a new vision, mission and strategy for RIA as standalone research programme (SoKIA) without Corporate Communications and HSRC Press as part of its dissemination and impact value chain.

Collaborations, funding opportunities, and challenges

6. Examples of research collaboration involving universities/science councils

University of Limpopo

RIA/SoKIA leads the HSRC's collaborations with UL. Concept notes for research collaborations in four areas – IKS; rural development; vulnerability and climate change; governance and service delivery in public health institutions – were negotiated by a joint HSRC team (RIA, DGSD, HAST, ESD). In addition, staff exchanges (sabbaticals, joint appointments), supervision of PhD students, and appointment of UL MA and PhD students as HSRC research interns were agreed.

Outputs and outcomes for the RIA aspects of the UL collaboration include the following:

- 6.1 A published journal article and a published policy brief by RIA team members (Mmakotsedi Magampa, Wilfred Lunga & Konosoang Sobane) with Prof Tholene Sodi.
- 6.2 Community engagement initiative: A series of meetings were held by the RIA team (Dr Edmore Marinda, Dr Wilfred Lunga, Ms Mmakotsedi Magampa) and Prof Sekgothe Mokgoatsana with two communities in Tafelkop under chief Harry Rammupudu and Ga Mogashoa under Chief Mogashoa respectively, in Sekhukhune district, Limpopo Province. These meetings led to a workshop on *Vulnerability of People, Places and Systems to Environmental Change* out of which three proposals were jointly developed and submitted to the NRF.
- 6.3 Editorship of an IKS journal: Dr Lunga, Dr Sobane and Dr Adams have been appointed as associate editors of the University based IKS journal, Calabash. The joint writing of articles for the journal is also being undertaken.

University of Lesotho & Women University in Africa, Zimbabwe

A jointly proposal for an International Development Research Centre (IRDC) call on climate change induced migration by women and young girls was submitted in May 2018

North West (NWU) – Potch Campus

Research collaboration with the Hypertension in Africa research team at NWU led to the integration of an additional project (population level effects of changes in tobacco and salt legislation) funded by the University of Wollongong, Australia into SAGE wave 3.

North West University (NWU) - Mafikeng Campus

Research collaboration with the IKS Centre in Mafikeng on the topic of IKS and disaster risk reduction. A joint research proposal was submitted to NRF in May 2018.

7. SoKIA's important external funding opportunities for 2019/20

A key overarching objective of SoKIA in the 2019/20 period is to secure large anchor projects that answer key questions in and ensure the sustainability of the four thematic research areas. All these projects are approached using a transformative social policy analytic framework, are linked to various SDG's, entail interrogating or enhancing evidence ecosystems, and the use of advanced data analytics/visualization techniques. These anchor projects will be based on the following identified opportunities:

- a) The relationships between science culture, science literacy, science engagement and the knowledge economy (IDRC, EU, DST);
- b) Development of M & E frameworks and impact indicators or dashboards (DPME, DPSA);
- c) Measurement and verification of indicators (EU Joint Research Centre, 3ie, Templeton Foundation, USAID);
- d) Conduct systems and decision-making research on SDG 2, 3, 8, 11, and 13, and their interactions (IIASA, Wellcome Trust);
- e) Big data and digital engagements for social impact (Rockefeller Foundation);
- f) Artificial intelligence, indigenous knowledge, language, narratives and translation (University of Cambridge);
- g) Building institutional capacity for the demand and use of research evidence in health (WHO);
- h) Analysis of migration data, narratives, policies and programmes (IOM, StatsSA, DSD);
- i) Disaster drought responses and management (Water Research Commission, National Disaster Management Centre).

8. SoKIA's Challenges and Needs for the 2019/20 financial year

- I. The e-Research and digital transformations challenge: As recommended by the RIA external review panel, SoKIA needs to use various mechanisms to increase its capabilities vis-à-vis the digital disruptions occurring at all points in the research co-production and knowledge-mobilization value chain. In addition SoKIA needs to focus more attention on understanding the societal impact of digital transformations occurring in various industries and markets. Accordingly, SoKIA's growth target over the next five years is to incrementally add 25 new contract positions for researchers and research professionals across the four research thematic areas. Not only will this bring on board new capabilities it

will result in a research programme, based upon the HSRC's business model and past experience, of optimum size – 40 researchers.

- II. The decision support challenge: SoKIA needs to be more responsive to the request from DST for more research and evaluation studies that provide decision support for government's 'big ticket' social protection expenditure programmes. DST works with the following definition of decision support. "Decision support interventions help people think out the choices they face; they describe where and why choice exists; and provide information about options, including where reasonable, the option of taking no action. These interventions aim to help people to deliberate, independently or in collaboration with others, about options by considering short, intermediate and long-term outcomes with relevant consequences. Decision support interventions assist the process of constructing preferences and eventually decision-making in a particular situation." DST Annual Performance Plan 2018-2019.

Annex I (Exemplar 1): Social Protection Study Areas and Specific Questions

Themes	Specific Questions
<p>Labour Markets</p> <p>(Programmes designed to facilitate labour adjustments and promote the efficient operation of labour markets)</p>	<p>Is the current labour market efficient?</p> <p>Are exiting policies and programmes promoting efficient labour markets?</p> <p>[Outcomes: (un)employment, pay and employment conditions]</p>
<p>Social Insurance</p> <p>(Policies and programmes designed to cushion the risks associated with unemployment, disability, work injury, and old age)</p>	<p>Are current policies and programmes cushioning against the risks associated with unemployment, disability, work injury, and old age?</p> <p>Contributory/ Non-contributory programmes e.g. RAF, IUF, Pensions, Disability Insurance, Injury and workman compensation, etc.)</p> <p>**National Health Insurance (NHI) and reconfiguration of the Health Care System</p>
<p>Social Assistance and Welfare</p> <p>(Programmes to protect those with no other means of adequate support)</p>	<p>Are current means-tested programmes protecting against the contingencies of old age, disability, death, or unemployment?</p> <p>E.g. Old age grant, Child Support Grant, disability grant including chronic diseases grant, UIF</p> <p>What is the role of government and non-governmental organizations in providing social assistance?</p> <p>How effective is current means testing and or proxy-means testing?</p> <p>Are there effective exit strategies from social assistance?</p>
<p>Micro and Area-Based Schemes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Funds are usually provided by governments to support local communities sometimes through NGO, to provide temporary employment in public works and services. Projects are usually designed to improve local social 	<p>Are existing programmes such as Expanded Public Works Programmes creating employment and reducing poverty?</p> <p>In what ways can these programmes be improved to ensure temporary protection against the vagaries of poverty?</p>

<p>infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals, and roads</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Microfinance refers to voluntary and contributory schemes for the community, handing small-scale cash flows, by way of income and expenditure, to address their members meet unpredictable burden of out-of-pocket expenses such as hospital emergency, death, or funeral expenses	<p>What role can micro-insurance play in addressing community risks?</p> <p>Does micro-insurance create the possibility to provide social insurance at affordable prices, expand coverage by having a realistic understanding of the problems that communities face, and most importantly contribute to community involvement and cohesion?</p>
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