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Somali-Swedish Research Cooperation for Health (SSRCH) - a joint initiative by Somali and Swedish Universities to guide the Somali health system recovery process

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In the fragile Somali state, there is a research imperative to effectively guide health systems recovery, which is crucial in the national rebuilding process for societal stability and peace. Our collaboration has its roots in the early 1980's, was cut short by the civil war and revived in 2014 to meet the need for health research capacity in Somalia today. Somali universities, representing different regions (East Africa University, University of Hargeisa, Galkayo University, Benadir University, Puntland Health Science University, Amoud University, and recently Somali National University) formed a consortium with Swedish universities (Umeå, Lund, Uppsala, Karolinska Institutet and Dalarna) and Somali diaspora professionals. Most recently we joined forces with the Public Health Agency of Sweden, linking us to the National Institute of Health Somalia (NIHS). A joint action programme for capacity building in health research has been developed, as outlined in the article "Rebuilding research capacity in fragile states: the case of a Somali-Swedish global health initiative" (Glob Health Action, 2017;10:1;1348693). We have a model for working collaboratively across regions and cultural barriers, creating hope for real change. As a first step, priority was given to research capacity development of faculty staff at the Somali universities' health faculties and Ministries of Health. A 'training of trainers' course in health research methodology was carried out during 2016-2018, supported by WHO-based Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research. This has fostered health research as an integral component of these universities' academic development process. Institutional and research capacity in public health has a key role in rebuilding national health services for better health and wellbeing and to reach the SDGs (goals 3, 5, 10, 16).