



First Year Lessons Learned

SSF Investment 15B.2

Supporting the Delivery of High-quality Research in Somalia

**Implemented by the Observatory of Conflict and Violence Prevention
in partnership with
Transparency Solutions and the University of Bristol**

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Purpose of the *First Year Lessons Learned* Report

Throughout each project's lifespan, lessons can be learned, both in terms of what was good and how improvements can be made. Since this High-quality Research Support (HQRS) Programme is first of its kind in Somalia/Somaliland and unique in its design and content anywhere as far as we know, all of the implementing institutions as well as the project senior management team were in a continuous learning process. The purpose of this report is to gather all the relevant information learned during the first year of project implementation (2015/16) for better planning of the second phase of the project for the second cohort of trainees. Furthermore, the same lessons learned can be shared with project team members, sponsors, and other relevant stakeholders.

Project Background and Overview

The aim of HQRS is to create a group of up to sixty Somali mid-career researchers with significantly enhanced skills through a programme that lives up to and promotes the Somalia Stability Fund (SSF) principles of Somali ownership and capacity, shared contextual understanding, cooperation and coordination, high quality programming, and transparency and accountability. The project is led by Abdullahi Odowa, General Director of the Observatory of Conflict and Violence Prevention (OCVP) in cooperation with Latif Ismail, CEO of Transparency Solutions (TS) and Eric Herring, Professor of World Politics in the School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies (SPAIS) at the University of Bristol. The project's senior management team is composed of these three people, with Odowa as Director, Herring as Research Training Coordinator and Ismail as Mentorship Phase Coordinator. In addition, Ahmed Musa of the OCVP is Internship Phase Coordinator.

The programme has been conceived of as a traineeship and is designed for mid-career researchers from and living in Somalia/Somaliland who are eager to enhance their research skills and competencies and in due course become research leaders. The programme involves training the researchers in two roughly equal cohorts of around thirty over two years. The plan is to provide them with an eleven training programme (late October 2015 to September 2016; then late September 2016 to August 2017). In addition to a brief recruitment process, the programme is divided into three phases:

- a Training Phase in which participants attend in Hargeisa six one week modules of research training provided by the University of Bristol over four months;
- an Internship Phase in which participants were embedded within an OCVP or TS research team for three blocks of five days over three months;
- a Mentorship Phase in which participants conducted independent research projects with one-to-one Mentoring by the University of Bristol for periods as needed individually over four months.

The programme culminates in the completion of a research report edited by the project's Chief Editor from the University of Bristol; the presentation of that research report at a grand data dissemination and graduation workshop in Hargeisa organized by OCVP; and posting of the research reports on the website of the OCVP.

Lessons Learned

Origins, Foundations and Principles

The nature of the origins and foundations of this project have been crucial to its success.

First, HQRS originated in a strong existing relationship between OCPV, TS and the University of Bristol and this has been vital to providing a solid foundation for the project. TS is a formal Strategic Partner of the University of Bristol, with this status embodied in an MoU. Ismail is an MSc in International Security graduate and Alumni Award winner of the University of Bristol. Ismail and Herring have worked together for four years, including on research in Somalia/Somaliland on transforming insecurity funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council. They co-founded and are Co-Directors of the Somali First initiative to promote Somali-led development, which received the prestigious University of Bristol Engagement Award in 2015 and which has numerous successful projects. Herring was deeply impressed by the District level security assessments of the OCPV and during a visit to Hargeisa introduced Herring to Odowa and the OCPV staff. This meeting confirmed to Herring the quality of OCPV and he committed himself to working with OCPV should there be an opportunity. Hence, when Odowa proposed to Herring and Ismail that they apply to the SSF for a project in which all three entities would collaborate on a Somali-led programme of researcher training, they were keen to look into it. Too often, the sequence of events is that funding is announced, then an unfamiliar team is assembled to apply for it and the project is cobbled together at short notice. For this project the more effective approach that underpins Somali First was followed – first find good people then agree a Somali-led approach, build relationships, identify needs, design projects and then apply for funding.

Second, the HQRS senior management team is composed of determined, hard-working and innovative leaders in their fields. Odowa founded and built one of the leading Somali research institutes; Ismail is a founder of two successful Somali companies (Transparency Solutions and Horn Risk Management) and is regularly consulted internationally at high levels; and Herring is a Professor in a world class university and who has wide-ranging research leadership and researcher training experience. All members of the senior management team have gone to great lengths to ensure the success of the programme, including working long hours late at night, early in the morning, over weekends and at short notice. We have done so with a shared sense of purpose and willingness to find ways to combine our diverse skills.

Third, the project is based on the well-established but frequently ignored premise that, at its best, development is locally led while still linked to global expertise and partnership.

Fourth, the SSF's principles, especially in terms of its commitment to Somali ownership and capacity, fitted perfectly with the approach of the project team and the Somali First initiative. This meant that, unlike many other funders, the SSF did not balk at a project proposal in which the prime contractor was a Somali entity, with the external entity, the University of Bristol, in the role of sub-contractor. The project team has sought to act on these principles in everything it does. For example, any funding that goes to the University, whether expenses or fees, comes via OCPV. This provides evidence of Somali leadership and competence. In addition, the University uses Somali services at every opportunity. All flights for University trainers coming from the UK to Hargeisa are booked through a travel agent in Hargeisa, not one in the UK, so that that the business goes to the Somali economy. Similarly, logistics, security and risk management are all provided by Somali-owned and Somali-led companies, mainly Horn Risk Management. We regard establishing Somali entities as the prime contractors and external entities as the sub-contractors, routing funds through Somali entities and using Somali service providers to be vital expressions of SSF and Somali First principles and important material, symbolic and psychological contributions to sustainable development. The project team were determined that the training would be delivered in Hargeisa to maximise the sense of relevance to trainees, to increase the cultural and political sensitivity of the trainers and to open the eyes of the trainers to the capacity, potential and hospitality of Somalis. We hoped and that, by coming to Hargeisa and seeing for themselves, the

trainers would be inspired to become ambassadors for Somali-led development and possibly also become more widely involved themselves. This has proven to be the case, with all trainers enthusiastic and passionate about their experience and some collaborating in other Somalia/Somaliland-related projects.

Fifth, Herring's experience on the ground in Somalia/Somaliland was vital to enabling him to persuade the University that such a project could be carried without putting the University at reputational risk from involvement with corrupt or incompetent Somali entities and without putting University staff at physical risk from terrorism. Herring and Ismail collaborated extensively to generate a briefing document *Travel to Hargeisa: What You Need to Know* and extensive risk assessment and risk management protocols to satisfy the University and the insurers of the University staff.

Sixth, the University of Bristol, in making the promotion of Somali-led development through the Somali First initiative an institutional Strategic Priority, contributed to the confidence of the project team in devising the project and recruiting staff for it.

Project Design and Principles

We were determined to remedy key weaknesses in many researcher training programmes. The usual pattern of researcher training is to provide courses without following through to actual research projects by trainees. Attending training sessions is not proof that someone can actually conduct research or has learned how to conduct research in a better way. Indeed, the common experience of the project team is that those who receive research training still feel intimidated at the end of it regarding the thought of doing their own research. Instead, the programme would culminate in the design and implementation of a research project by each trainee, with the research report they generate at the end being proof of their competence. Furthermore, we ensured the integration of the training and the mentoring by using the six trainers who delivered the training modules as mentors for the research projects of up to six trainees each.

The Start-up and Recruitment Process

A grievance among some Somalis is that diaspora come back and take opportunities away from Somalis who have stayed here. We addressed this by having a rule stating that diaspora could not apply to the programme. We regard it as a significant achievement of the programme that we did this and were able to implement it. We also think that this will help to minimise the likelihood of brain drain: those who have shown a commitment (or unavoidable necessity due to visa or financial restrictions) to staying in Somalia/Somaliland are those most likely to stay and use their newly-improved skills for local benefit.

An added complication in the first year was the process of trying to agree a contract with the University of Bristol for provision of the agreed services. This proved time-consuming and slow, mainly due to the fact that it took a great deal of trial and error to establish documents and processes that the University deemed suitable. The learning that has taken place will make such activities easier in future projects.

Cohort one

In our project document we proposed to target mid-career professionals who have completed a Bachelor's degree or higher and who have considerable basic knowledge in the field of social research. Hence priority was given to individuals working in government ministries, academic institutions, civil society organizations, and women advocacy groups. In order to reach the programme target group, the

project senior management team carried out an institutional mapping. We identified twenty four relevant public and civil society institutions/organizations from across all Somali regions. Each was asked to nominate candidates for the programme, while the remaining six positions were reserved for independent candidates from outside the mapped institutions but who still met the quality threshold required for the programme. An official invitation letter that detailed the programme requirements and conditions was circulated to those mapped institutions; each was asked to nominate two candidates for the subsequent interviews. Some government ministries and civil society organisations ignored the programme requirements and nominated weak candidates who did not perform well at interview. In contrast, the independent candidates who applied without invitation letters tended to be more qualified and committed than those nominated by an institution.

The goal for the first cohort was to recruit thirty qualified applicants. We found that, even with specifying mid career, it was not easy to secure the required standard of applicant. We recruited a total of twenty six people for the first cohort of which seven were female and nineteen were male. From Somaliland there were fourteen candidates recruited from public (4), civil society organizations (7) and Universities (3), from Puntland there are eight candidates recruited from public(3), civil society organizations(2) and Universities(4), and from South Central there were five candidates from civil societies(3) and Universities (2). We permitted two TS staff members to sit in on the training, without remuneration. Apart from that we excluded TS and OCV staff to avoid accusations of favouritism.

The process of sending recruitment teams out to the various regions was valuable in developing an informed judgement of the applicants and, where relevant, the institutions nominating them. It is noteworthy that the recruitment process for the first cohort was conducted solely by the Somali staff of OCV and TS. We found that it is possible to recruit across Somalia/Somaliland on merit rather than clan or other connections. Some trainees were surprised that we recruited solely on merit and we regard it as a significant contribution of the project that we are promoting a norm of recruitment on merit and challenging over-estimation of the influence of clan and other forms of favouritism.

Cohort two

The fact that the finalisation of research reports and preparations for the grand data dissemination and graduation workshop for the first cohort coincided with the recruitment of the second cohort of trainees put the project senior management team under severe time pressure. Through the commitment and hard work of all involved, all activities were delivered. To avoid creating any impression of favouritism, we adhered strictly to the tight deadlines we set. Hence any requests for delayed interviews or alternative formats such as Skype interviews. This produced repeated objections from one applicant. We explained with care our position and held our ground.

In order to attract a more qualified and diverse pool of applicants for the second cohort of trainees, we opened the process to all institutions and individuals without a quota allocated to reselected institutions. However, we decided that it was still necessary to restrict institutions to a maximum of two nominees each in order to spread the benefits of the programme as widely as possible. This resulted in opposition from the University of Hargeisa which in its view should be entitled to a larger number of nominees. While we understood its desire to have more nominees, we decided that it was appropriate to adhere to our approach on this.

During the training of the first cohort (and especially in the Mentorship Phase) it became clear that the grasp of the practicalities of research design among participants was weaker than we expected. We

therefore decided to build a research design test into the recruitment process for the second cohort. Applicants who were called to interview were given a one hour written test followed by face-to-face interview. They were not informed in advance of the test so that we could obtain an accurate understanding of their current knowledge.

We created a research design test for cohort two which had the following content:

Your task is to develop a hypothetical research proposal in order to demonstrate your understanding of social research. The scenario is that you have been asked to carry out a three month individual social research project on behalf of local government to develop recommendations for improving bus services for a town of 100,000 inhabitants. You have 60 minutes for this task. You should address the following points:

- Title (Not the same thing as your research question)
- Research question (What single overall question is your research seeking to answer?)
- Research aims (What are the main things you are seeking to achieve in this project?)
- Limitations of the research (What do you think the limitations of the research will be?)
- Proposed literature review (Where would you look to find out what knowledge already exists on this topic?)
- Methodology (How will you answer your research question? Specifically, what main issues will you consider? What kinds of data will you gather? How will you record it? To whom will you present your findings and how will you present them? Make sure that you are practical, i.e. that you will not promise to do more than you actually could)
- Ethics issues (How will you ensure that your data is not lost? How will you ensure that personal details are kept appropriately confidential? What kinds of harm to yourself or others might occur during the research or as a result of its findings? What will you do to minimise those risks?)

Research on effective recruitment shows that structured interviews are useful, especially where they have standard questions, covering behaviour (what people do) and situations (what people would do). The project team created the following standard set of interview questions, again based on relevant research:

Why are you interested in this programme?
What is the most intellectually difficult thing you have achieved?
What has been the most important way in which you have exercised leadership?
Please tell us about your approach to completing tasks, giving examples.
How are you going to balance your job with the requirement of research training programme?
Please tell us about the most significant field research that you have carried out in the past two years and the role you have played. What were some of the challenges that you have encountered? How did you resolve them?

We devised the following scoring system for the research design test and interviews:

Scoring (1 unacceptable, 2 poor, 3 acceptable, 4 excellent)
Research design test out of 20
(a) General cognitive ability (1-4)
(b) English language (1-4)
(c) Conscientiousness (task completion) (1-4)

- (d) Standard of research design (1-4) - weight this double.
- Interviews out of 20
- (a) General cognitive ability (1-4)
 - (b) Leadership (1-4)
 - (c) Conscientiousness (task completion) (1-4)
 - (d) Research skills and experience (1-4) weighted double

Two evaluators scored the interviews and their scores averaged and an evaluator, whose work was calibrated by Herring, scored the research design tests. The two scores were then combined, weighted equally to produce an overall score which formed the basis of the offers of places in the second cohort. Furthermore, the research design test can be repeated at the end of the cohort's time on the programme so that objective measures of learning can be obtained by comparing the two materials produced in the two tests.

The best thirty candidates were invited to join the second cohort of programme. The regional breakdown was seventeen candidates from Somaliland, nine candidates from Puntland and four candidates from South Central Somalia. This is not as even a spread as first time, and we are of the opinion that the short period of time for the recruitment process was the reason. A major disappointment was the fact that only three female applicants made it into the cohort. We do not know why this occurred. In any future version of the programme we would make it clearer that female applicants would be welcome and we would actively seek to identify qualified women and encourage them to apply. One male withdrawal permitted one female to join the cohort. We permitted a further two female TS staff members to sit in on the training to improve the gender balance and the SSF approved their full inclusion in the programme, also to improve the gender balance.

Training Phase

The initial delay in starting the programme due the team waiting for a decision by the SSF on whether to fund the project caused significant challenges for Herring in recruiting and timetabling the researcher training. The project team chose July to October for the first cohort and June to September for the second cohort because they are outside the main teaching period for University of Bristol academics (October to May and especially October to December). However, Herring was able to overcome the challenges by careful planning and extensive consultation.

The training phase consisted of six five-day modules delivered in Hargeisa. During the delivery of the first module of the programme, it became clear that there were some differences between trainees' and trainers' experience and expectations on teaching styles. In particular, most of trainees were graduates from local universities or universities in neighbouring countries where a passive/spoon feeding/teacher centred teaching style is more common while in places like the UK with which the trainers are familiar there is a tendency towards a more active/participatory/student centred teaching style. The senior management team mediated and reconciled the differing pedagogical expectations. We did not merely compromise between the two approaches: pedagogical research is clear that active learning is superior to passive learning. In order to encourage the trainees to actively participate the training and improve their presentation and leadership skills, in the first module for cohort two the programme systematically explained the active participatory learning and its value over more passive teaching styles. Trainers were asked to provide sufficient direct delivery of module content through PowerPoint presentations, handouts, written exercises and lecturing. However, this is embedded within an overall active learning approach.

During the delivery of training modules for cohort one, it became clear that delivery of would be better over four rather than five days but with the same number of hours of content. This change is necessary on the one hand to enable trainers to travel from and back to the UK on Saturdays and Sundays while also avoiding the Somali weekend (Fridays) for participants.

At the end of each module, participants are asked to complete a feedback form anonymously. They are asked to give their views on the strengths of each module and what could be improved about it. Administrative staff then type up the feedback and circulate it to the senior management team and to the trainer running the module. This feedback led to more provision of handouts, more lecture content, more guidance on supplementary reading, adjustments in the daily timing of sessions and for cohort two a shift to delivery of the same amount of class time and content over four days rather than five. We discussed the participant feedback with each module owner, in particular in relation to amendments to the module.

The six modules are essentially unchanged from the first cohort to the second. This is unsurprising as the project team are very experienced in the design of such modules and took a hands-on approach in working with the trainers as they developed them. The modules are Research Writing and Citation; Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods; Research Design and Ethics; Gender and Social Research; Evidence for Policy and Practice; and Policy and Programme Evaluation Research. Throughout we have been careful to ensure that the modules are focused on social research (engaged with social issues and related policies) rather than academic research (advancing the scholarly literature).

For the second cohort, each module owner has been asked to audit the knowledge of participants at the beginning and end of each module so that data can be obtained on the extent of learning during the module.

For the second cohort a crucial change is that we are requiring the participants work on their own research projects throughout the entire training programme and not just during the Mentorship Phase. During the first module, participants were required to begin work on their research design. On the last day just before the end of all five following modules, there is now a new session in every module where participants apply what they have learned on that module to their research proposal. The reason for this major change is that we found that the first cohort did not draw sufficiently on what they had been taught when drafting their research proposals. The research topics of participants can evolve and even change completely (especially at first) if necessary.

We are requiring trainers to put a short biography (200 words or so) at the start of the module document for the second cohort. This is to be focused on impressing the participants regarding the trainer's research and teaching experience and qualifications. This especially matters where trainers do not have a PhD; participants need to know that the trainer is well qualified. The trainers for the first cohort were Gilberto Algar-Faria (a University of Bristol PhD candidate with an excellent teaching record), Professor Tim Edmunds (a University of Bristol Professor of International Security and Director of the University's Global Insecurities Centre), Sandra McNeill (a University of Bristol Research Affiliate as well as senior member of staff of TS), Natalie Jester (a University of Bristol PhD candidate with an excellent teaching record), Dr. Adrian Flint (a University of Bristol Senior Lecturer in Development Politics with extensive research experience in South Africa) and Dr. Ann Laudati (a University of Bristol Research Associate with extensive research experience in the DRC). Hence half of the trainers are female. The participant feedback on all of the trainers was very positive, and the project senior

management team concurred. We were happy to invite all trainers back to teach the second cohort. All were able to accept apart from Professor Edmunds who has other commitments. Fortunately we were able to bring on board Dr. Fili Ejdu (University of Bristol Research Fellow already working on issues of local ownership of security sector reform and an expert on research design). The fact that almost everyone found a way to be available for the second cohort demonstrates the positive experience they have had.

All twenty-six participants complete the training phase. Nearly all attended all six modules and those few who missed one or (rarely) two gave us valid reasons for their absence.

Internship Phase

The Internship Phase involved the participants being divided into four groups spending three blocks of five days over three months at one of the OCVF offices in Hargeisa, Garowe and Mogadishu or the TS office in Hargeisa. Embedding with competent Somali research organisations was intended to consolidate and develop the research skills of interns; to facilitate their networking; and to show them that Somalis can and do lead high quality research already. This phase was delivered as planned. However, we judge this to have been the least successful phase of the programme for cohort one; this judgement was confirmed in the feedback solicited from participants, who tended to feel that they were not making any progress. All twenty-six participants complete the internship phase. There was some absenteeism from some of the agreed internship periods. Upon investigation, we conclude that this was indicative of some dissatisfaction due to this lack of progress. We are in the process of reviewing the Internship Phase with a view to making it more productive for all concerned by making it based on more explicit planning of how interns will consolidate and develop their skills and more ongoing monitoring and evaluation within the project team of that consolidation and learning.

Towards the end of this phase, the project senior management team devised an evaluation of the readiness for research of the participants, with a maximum score of nine points:

Capacity for individual research: Fully ready (3 points); Ready for a small individual project (2 points); Not ready (1 point).

Standard of English: Excellent (3 points); Adequate (2 points); Poor (1 point).

Reliability: Excellent (3 points); Adequate (2 points); Poor (1 point).

The Internship Phase Coordinator scored and ranked all of the participants. The participants were also asked to self-evaluate, with written comments as well as a numerical score. Generally speaking, the evaluations and self-evaluations concurred, evidenced a significant areas of weakness and showed the need for substantial efforts to make sure that the participants got on track; those efforts are set out below.

Mentorship Phase

During the Mentorship Phase trainees were asked to return to their regions and work places and conduct their own research project. They were to carry this out over four months, spending time on it as and when they deemed necessary. Participants were assigned in groups of five or six to a mentor from the University of Bristol. As mentioned previously, the mentors were the trainers who had delivered the training modules in order to link the two phases coherently.

In consultation with their mentor, using templates provided by us all participants had to produce a research proposal and a research ethics statement that the project senior management team approved. This phase proved to be the most challenging aspect of the programme. It generally took two months and sometimes longer for these two documents to be produced. We fed back extensively and sometimes repeatedly on both documents per participant (and so over fifty documents). It was often obvious that the participants were drawing unevenly on the training that had been provided to them. There was one occurrence of plagiarism in a research proposal; this was resolved quickly and constructively by the senior management team and mentor in making it clear what was expected. This is why we have for the second cohort, as explained above, instituted the process of working on the research design (proposal and ethics) throughout the Training Phase and we intend to integrate work on this into the Internship Phase. In essence, the mentors and senior management team guided the participants through the process of applying general principles and techniques to their specific area of research.

The senior management team dropped one person from the programme due to their consistent failure to submit a substantial or acceptable research proposal or research ethics document, after making strenuous efforts to provide support to the participant and.

The relationships between mentors and participants worked well over the summer. Occasionally there were worrying periods of non-response from participants but vigorous efforts by the senior management team and mentors revived the communication. We are sure that this tenacity was vital to bringing the research projects to fruition. We would like to commend all of the mentors for their dedication, skill and conscientiousness. We know that the mentors were influenced positively by their belief in the value of the programme to sustainable development for the Somali people.

The final crucial step was the work of the Chief Editor, Dr. Jo Tidy. Her remit was to address the clarity of the text and to alert us to any instances of plagiarism. Her editing work made a significant difference to the presentation of the materials so that the original research content generated by the participants could shine through. She correctly identified a second instance of plagiarism by a different participant, this time in the text of a research report. The participant concerned was penalised by being refused participation in the grand data dissemination and graduation workshop. However, it was clear that the participant had also engaged in proper research as well and so was allowed to submit a rewritten report which the senior management team checked was free from plagiarism and accepted.

Only one participant out of twenty six failed to complete this Phase. Herring read every research report and graded them qualitatively. He evaluated thirteen as excellent, seven as good, five as acceptable and none as unacceptable.

The titles are indicative of the impressive range of areas of research and their social relevance, though only a reading of the reports can do justice to their richness:

- Education System in the Doomeey Internally Displaced Camp in Beletweyne: Challenges & Opportunities
- Perceptions of University of Hargeisa Staff of the Implications of Tribalism for Somaliland's Peace and Security
- Does Foreign Aid Help or Hinder Somaliland's Development?
- Internally Displaced Camp in Beletweyne: Challenges & Opportunities
- Influence of Social Media on Secondary School Students in Garowe

- The Role of Somali Poetry for Somaliland Disarmament
- The Impact of Food Aid on the Food Security of the Hargeisa Area
- Clan Democracy in Somaliland Prospects and Challenges
- Somaliland Judicial Reform
- Challenges and Opportunities of Federalism in Mogadishu, Somalia
- Sustaining peace through youth empowerment
- The Effects of Youth Based Urban Crimes and Violence on the Community in Garowe, Puntland
- The role of conflict management in organizational performance
- Public Perception of Female Lawyers in Hargeisa
- Communities Perception of Electronic Banking in Somaliland
- Federalism for Somalia: Internal and external challenges
- Voters' Expectations of Elected Councillors in Burao, Somaliland
- The Role of Facebook in Peace and Conflict
- Comparing Employment Opportunities for Graduates of Vocational Courses with Graduates of Degree Courses
- How Khat Impacts Negatively upon Families in Hargeisa
- The Impact of Education in Garowe Prison
- State tackling of violence against women and girls in Somaliland
- Improving Technical and Vocational oriented education within Somaliland
- Decentralization and Service Delivery in Hargeisa: a case study of Mahmoud Haybe District in Hargeisa City
- Littering Behaviour and Waste Management

All of the research reports can be found to download from the OCPV website here:

<http://www.ocvp.org/ocvp5/index.php/publications/hqrs1-reports>

Grand Data Dissemination Workshop and Graduation

This was a moving and important event that brought home just how much was achieved. In addition to brief comments from the SSF and the project senior management team plus award of certificates, all those able to attend presented a two minute speed summary of their research question, methodology and main findings and, impressively, managed to keep to time comfortably, supported by a single PowerPoint slide. This was followed by a poster session, where the slides were printed on large sheets and stuck to the walls round the room, with the researcher standing by their poster to answer questions and receive comments.

Factors That Contributed to Success

By any reasonable measure, the first year of the programme was a tremendous success. The initial aim was to recruit thirty researchers who would then demonstrate the effectiveness of the project by producing their own research output. The project identified twenty six people as being suitably qualified and in the end twenty five completed the process (a 96% success rate for participants and 83% of the first cohort target), generally with excellent research reports, some with good research reports and a remaining handful with acceptable research reports. Factors that contributed to this success include the following:

- The project design and content are based on experienced local research organizations (OCVP and TS) working hand-in-hand with a world class research institution (the University of Bristol) under Somali leadership and supported by a funder operating on the basis of good principles shared by all concerned. The programme has responded to the training needs of local institutions and individuals.
- The staff from the University of Bristol were knowledgeable, skilled and fully committed for the ultimate success of the programme.
- Internal communication between members of project management team was strong and thorough.
- Challenges were quickly identified and turned into lessons learned for the improvement of the subsequent project phases.
- High quality training materials were delivered in each training module.
- Participants were asked to give anonymous written feedback on each module and on each phase. That feedback was shared among the project senior team and also among the trainers and was used to improve the programme within phases and also for the next cohort.
- The Programme is rooted in an understanding of the fundamental role high-quality research plays in enabling communities and wider society to critically analyse their social problems, attain a deeper understanding of social realities, and contribute to positive social transformation.

The programme is contributing to learning about how Somalis can lead their own development, not at some vague point in the future, but now, using their capacity and combining it with the capacity of external partners. Aware of the potential challenges local institutions and organisations (governmental and non-governmental) may currently face, the implementing partners have developed this Programme to strengthen their capacity to effectively design, implement and report research on different social issues.

Follow on Activities

We are committed to three follow on activities using our existing resources:

- Establishing peer mentoring of the second cohort by the first cohort;
- Publicising the research papers of the participants;
- Seeking to connect the participants to employment opportunities as researchers.

We also request that the SSF also consider funding these follow on activities for the project team:

- In depth lessons learned research;
- Further publicity for the research reports;
- Linking the research reports to policy processes;
- Further activities linking the researchers to research employment opportunities;
- Scaling up the programme and developing it further;
- Extension of the scope of the programme beyond social research