



Country: **South Africa – Nelspruit, Mpumalanga**
Host site: **Mpumalanga Department of Health
Health Systems Research, Research Coordination & Epidemiology
Directorate**
Assignment title: **Strategic Planning and Research Specialist**
Length of assignment: **3 months**

OVERVIEW OF VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENT

The South African Health Research Policy (2001) stresses the importance of coordinating health research activities. In order to achieve this, Provincial Health Research Committees (PHRCs) are required to be established in every province to coordinate local research activities, and to drive the process of health research prioritization. The Research Policy specifically stipulates that PHRCs should:

- Coordinate health research by liaising with all individuals and institutions conducting research within the province
- Manage the process of priority setting and assist in the development of health research priorities for the province
- Review preliminary and final research reports and give advice on policy implications of completed research projects

In addition to the three above mentioned key objectives, the Health Systems Research, Research Coordination and Epidemiology Directorate further drew up the Terms of Reference for PHRCs, and outlined their main functions.

Although the Committee had been established, it also faced some challenges. The fact that the Committee had to perform dual tasks, i.e. that of being the Research Committee as well as the Ethics Committee, put pressure on Committee members. As a result, the Committee more often focused mainly on giving ethical approval to research proposals while other tasks were left unattended to as outlined in the Committee's Terms of Reference.

The Committee constitutes of a few members and they find it difficult to review all the research proposals in a reasonable timeframe, in order to allow the researchers to proceed with their work. Additionally, committee members found it difficult to attend monthly meetings as agreed, especially those from academic institutions. This also prolonged the time it took to review proposals and therefore the research activities were at a halt until all the members were available to review the proposals.

Organizational problems also delayed and affected the functioning of the Committee. Different sub-directorates have been responsible for monitoring the process of the establishment of the Provincial Research Committee. The department needs to strengthen its Directorate and consolidate all activities that are presumed to be carried out by the Committee. A Strategic Planning and Research Specialist will fulfill this role and build the capacity of the department.

OBJECTIVE OF THE VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENT

Objective: To build capacity of the planning and research department in setting up systems and procedures.

ACTIVITIES OF THE VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENT

Volunteer activities:

- Assist to facilitate and coordinate the development of a Strategic Plan, Annual Performance Plan (APP) and operational plan
- Train and capacitate department staff on preparation monthly, quarterly and annual reports
- Train and capacitate department staff members in the management of research databases
- Co-facilitate the process of provincial research priority setting
- Ensure the alignment of all departmental plans with the Strategic Plan and APP
- Co-facilitate and coordinate the development of the District Health Plans in line with the Integrated Development Plans of municipalities
- Co-facilitate and coordinate input for the Social Cluster Plan of Action (POA)
- Assist in aligning Strategic Health Programme plans with National and Provincial mandates
- Assist in coordinating the activities of the project in collaboration with National Department of Health
- Liaise with various stakeholders

EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF THE VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENT

Deliverables:

- Monthly and quarterly progress reports to the host site and AIHA's HIV/AIDS Twinning Center tracking experiences, successes, and challenges
- The Strategic Plan, Annual Performance Plan (APP) and Operational Plan in place
- Final report

REQUIREMENTS & QUALIFICATIONS

Length of the assignment: 3 months
(8 hours per day; 5 days per week)

Name and title of supervisor: Mr. Molefe Machaba, Mpumalanga Department of Health

Volunteer qualifications:

Required:

- Masters' degree in health, international development (organizational development) or related field.
- At least 5 years experience in planning and research
- Competency in applied strategic thinking, creative thinking, decision making, technical proficiency, networking and building bonds, continuous improvement, planning and organizing
- Clear understanding of legislation pertaining to strategic planning and research



- Computer skills
- Knowledge of statistical software
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills
- Ability to work under pressure
- Willingness to travel extensively within the province

Preferred:

- Previous experience working with multi-disciplinary research teams in a developing country
- Previous research experience in the fields of TB and/or HIV/AIDS

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTICIPATING STAKEHOLDERS

Volunteer:

- Complete the scope of work in the timeframe outlined
- Complete and submit all deliverables to host site and the Twinning Center

Partner organization/host site:

- Provide resources necessary for the volunteer to carry out assignment successfully
- Identify a suitable assignment and site for the volunteer to ensure sustainability of volunteer activities
- Submit performance assessment reports on the volunteer to the Twinning Center

AIHA HIV/AIDS Twinning Center:

- Conduct pre-assignment orientation for volunteer and placement site staff
- Provide ongoing support of volunteer as needed