



SORT-IT Operational Research Course-2020, Islamabad, Pakistan

Introduction:

“SORT IT”(Structured Operational Research and Training Initiative) courses have been developed by The Union and MSF, and currently the WHO is an important stakeholder, (in the Special Programme for Research into Tropical Diseases (TDR) at the World Health Organization). SORT IT supports organisations, projects and countries to undertake operational research in accordance with their own priorities, develop adequate and sustainable operational research capacity, and create an organisational culture of policy and practice being informed by operational research, leading to improved programme performance. This course runs in many countries; Paris, Panama, Central Asia and Africa.

National TB Control Program, Pakistan has honour to conduct this international course at Pakistan under the joint collaboration of WHO TDR and Global Fund at national level. Pakistan is conducting SORT-IT course adopting the same international module since 2016. The subsequent engagement of multiple health programs and wide geographical coverage has also substantially increased in recent years. The current merger of three diseases in a common unit (HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria) under the Ministry of Health is another good opportunity to expand the integrated multi sectoral approach in the country by involving different programs i.e. National Health Insurance, Benazir Income Support programs, nutrition, MNCH and academia/research institutes & university. National SORT IT courses have shown encouraging findings and this initiative deserves to be sustained to address Pakistan health systems bottlenecks and programme implementations, thus contribute towards achieving universal health coverage. This course will be facilitated under the supervision of international facilitators. The course encourages researchers affiliated with academia, research institutions and universities. Candidates from academia / research institute and universities will be given preference.



1. SORT-IT Course:

The initiative teaches the practical skills needed to undertake and publish operational research. The course duration is 10–12 months with 3 modules with clear milestones and measurable targets. Failure to fulfil the expected outputs linked to each module implies the candidate does not return for the next module. Participants go through the whole research process and complete the course with a defined product which is a peer-reviewed manuscript to be submitted for publication in peer-reviewed scientific journals.

Purpose: To develop the practical skills for conducting operational research and publishing the findings

Course curriculum: The course comprises three modules which will be held at Islamabad, Pakistan, as follows.

Module 1: Research Questions and Protocol Development (6-11 April 2020)

This will be a six day module to help participants develop a thorough understanding about what operational research is all about and to ensure that a draft research protocol is produced before they completion of the module. The teaching will be through lectures and discussions, based on completed and published operational research, participants will write their own protocols with hands-on supervision by the facilitators, and all the drafts will be presented and discussed in plenary. This six-day module will continue with Module 2 using the drafted protocols.

Brief content overview

- Introduction to Operational research
- Asking the right research questions
- Basic data analysis
- Aims and Objectives
- Developing research protocols
- Ethics

(Key Deliverable Output: A Draft Scientific Protocol)



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Module 2: Data management and data analysis (13-18 April 2020)

This will be a six-day module to help participants understand data management and data analysis. The module will consist of:

2 days: Data entry (Ensure efficient quality assured data entry)

2 days: Data analysis

1 day: Application of learning on specific projects

1 day: Plenary and feedback

Brief content overview

- Designing an efficient data entry instrument
- Making an efficient computer data entry questionnaire
- Entering and validating data entry
- Introduction to data analysis
- Producing relevant analysis results in tabular form
- Daily homework on own electronic data entry instrument

(Key Deliverable Output: Draft electronic data entry instrument and a plan of analysis)

Module 3: Scientific paper writing (6-13 November 2020)

This will be a seven-day module to help participants write their scientific papers and deal with on-line submission and editors' and reviewers' comments

Brief content overview

- Learn the principles of writing a scientific paper
- Learn how to deal with peer review

(Key Deliverable Output: Draft paper to be submitted to a scientific journal)



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2. Faculty for the course

The course will be conducted by professionals with experience in facilitating operational research courses.

3. What does the participant's organisation gain?

- A person who is well trained in operational research and can help their program or institution undertake relevant operational research to identify challenges and improve programme performance in a sustainable manner.
- This will be a “pioneering initiative” giving rationale for longer term contracts, a career opportunity including the possibility of pursuing a PhD in the field of operational research. The approach will strongly complement “innovation” within routine operations and contribute to critical reflection on program orientation and its impact over time.
- The initiative would also foster medical staff-retention and attract qualified staff and reduce turn-over which may hamper continuity of research initiatives.

4. What does the participant gain?

- Practical skills for undertaking the entire operational research process from concept to publication
- The experience of learning and sharing knowledge within a team of motivated participants and talented facilitators in operational research (who act as mentors) from different countries.
- An opportunity to excel and gain visibility in operational research and to prepare for increased research responsibilities and research leadership in their country
- Possibilities of submitting published papers and eventually acquiring a PhD
- Participants are strongly encouraged to help train and eventually lead others (as mentors) to maximise long term capacity development and impact. The philosophy used is “see one, do one, teach one”



5. Course follow-up

- In between the modules 2 and 3, candidates will return to their respective health programmes/projects to continue their routine work and in addition collect the data pertaining to their research projects.
- Participants will be contacted intermittently after course completion to determine accomplishments and policy and practice impact of their studies. They will also become part of an operational research “alumni” organisation. A specific website forum has been developed to foster interaction.
- Course facilitators will be available to provide advice upon request.

6. Criteria for successful applicants

- a) Involved actively in the running of a national or state or NGO programme or major health institution in a program or disease specific field (TB, HIV, lung health, tobacco control, communicable or non- communicable diseases)
- b) Provide written commitment to attend all three modules of the training course, return to their programme or institution after the course and implement course knowledge at programme level for a minimum of at least 18 months.
- c) Provide a written statement from the supervisor or coordination/operations or relevant authority attesting to the investment of resources and granting the applicant permission to have time and opportunity to carry out and publish operational research and adhere to all the course milestones and timelines
- d) Provide a written statement from a mentor (if available) describing how the mentor knows the candidate and how the mentor proposes to provide support to complete the course successfully.
- e) Ability to mobilize the funding required to carry out operational research
- f) Outline a half page of text that a) describes a problem that the candidate has identified within a given program and b) formulates a research question that is proposed to be



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developed into an operational research project. Please note that the research questions using already available routine programme data are preferred as prospective studies are unlikely to fit into the time-line and expected outputs of the course.

- g) Masters in Public Health (MPH) or an equivalent, or a strong recommendation
- h) Fluent in written and spoken English
- i) Computer literate

7. Research Questions – guidance

In your application you will be asked to formulate and submit a research question based on a perceived problem within the programme or health system in which you work. The research will have to be carried out within a 6 - 8 month time frame and therefore we strongly encourage simple research projects that are based on monitoring and evaluation data that are already collected and available in registers or treatment cards. Prospective studies and studies involving patient interventions and patient questionnaires are less likely to be accepted as suitable for this course as they cannot usually be completed within the time frame.

8. Application deadline: **March 1, 2020**

Complete applications (along with all the other required documents) may be sent by e-mail or post with a subject “Application for SORT-IT Operations Research Course-2020” to: research wing (CMU).

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Note:

1. Failure to provide all of the above requested information will result in the rejection of your application. Incomplete applications will be discarded.
2. Please note that all supportive documents must be in Word or PDF format.