



# How to conduct Research in Lubombo, Eswatini

The Lubombo Health Research Units' Easy Reference Guide

January 2020

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## Important Contact Details:

### **Lubombo Health Research Unit (LHRU)**

Phone: +268 7835 3940

Email: [lubombo.hru@gmail.com](mailto:lubombo.hru@gmail.com)

Website: [www.lubombo-hru.org](http://www.lubombo-hru.org)

### **Lubombo Regional Health Office**

Phone: +268 2343 4435

Postal Address: PO Box 85, Siteki, Eswatini

### **National Health Research Department**

Phone: +268 24040865

Email: [shrswaziland@gmail.com](mailto:shrswaziland@gmail.com)

Website: [www.nhrideswatini.org.sz](http://www.nhrideswatini.org.sz)

Postal Address: PO Box 5, Mbabane, Eswatini

Physical Address: Christian University Building, Mbabane, Eswatini

### **National Health Research Review Board**

Phone: +268 24040865

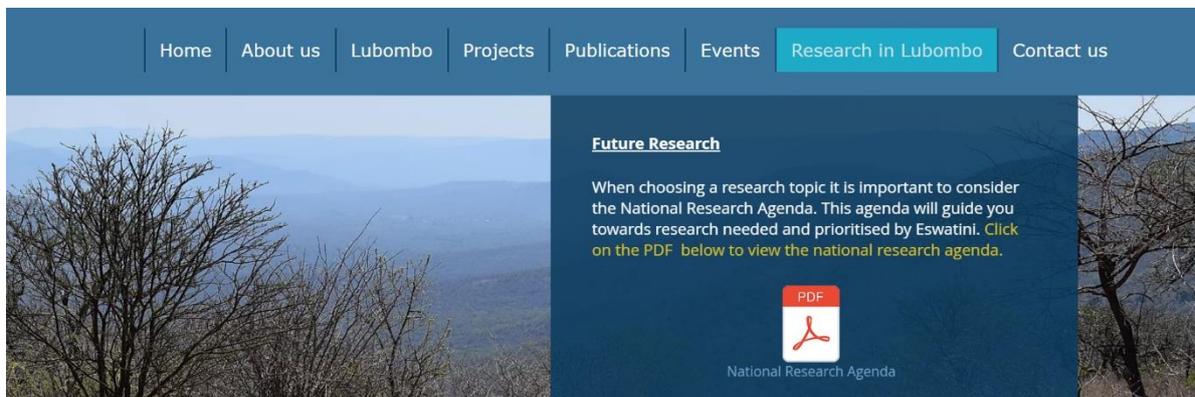
Website: <https://shrswaziland.rhinno.net/login>

## How to choose a topic

### RESEARCH POOR TOPICS

The population of Eswatini has multiple unmet health needs. Some of these needs have already been rigorously researched but have lacked funding or focus to address them. These topics may not require further research for action, rather advocacy and action. Consider whether your topic may be one of these. Do a thorough review of existing literature before progressing further, or at the very least, a good google search.

The National Health Research Unit has a research agenda. It is important that your topic fits into an element of the National agenda. This agenda can be downloaded from the LHRU website ([www.lubombo-hru.org](http://www.lubombo-hru.org)) under the tab “Research in Lubombo”.



### PRIORITISE UNMET HEALTH NEEDS

The LHRU has a list of regional research priorities shaped by stakeholders across the region. This is a list of topics which the region considers important health needs which are in urgent need of attention to improve the health outcomes of local people. This list is a good place to start when planning your research.

If you're a health worker, in your day to day work you may observe gaps in health provision in the community you serve. This would be a good starting point for a research topic.

### DON'T DUPLICATE. COLLABORATE.

Others in Eswatini may already be undertaking research on your chosen topic. One way to check for duplication is to look at the LHRU database of current research (<https://www.lubombo-hru.org/document-download>). If someone is already working on the topic, or one similar, attempt to contact them. It may be possible to collaborate, or at the very least, build on existing findings.

## How to choose a site for your project

### FOR THOSE BASED IN ESWATINI:

If you work in Health Care in Eswatini you may already have a good idea of which health facilities or communities may be appropriate settings to carry out your research. Not all health research needs to take place through a health facility, some research is based entirely in communities. If you need advice about an appropriate site please contact the LHRU.

### FOR INTERNATIONAL RESEARCHERS:

If you are not local, it is best to get in contact with the National Health Research Department for advice about which facilities may be appropriate study sites. This department will be able to provide you with the relevant contact details for each facility.

## How to get permission to undertake your project

**Principles: tell others about your research early on, keep others updated about your research, leave plenty of time to seek relevant permissions and ethical approval.**

### FOR LOCAL RESEARCHERS;

- 1) Inform the LHRU (via email or phone) that you are undertaking research in the region. The LHRU are also available to offer advice and support in development of your research ideas and protocol.
- 2) Discuss your research with the facilities where you wish to undertake research. Get senior leaders of the organisation on board at an early stage. Are they happy for you to peruse the project (assuming you receive other relevant approvals)? *IF you are working with a community, you will need to seek permission from the community elders (Umphakatsi) through the Indvuna and/or the Bucophu.*
- 3) Write a letter to the Regional Health Office and informing them of your intention to undertake research in Lubombo (see Appendix 1 for a template letter). You will require a letter of permission from the office to be able to undertake research in health facilities in the region.

- 4) Write a letter to the National Health Research Unit informing them of your study (again see Appendix 1 for a letter template). This letter can be emailed to the National Research Unit along with your research protocol. The unit may have input and advice for your study design.
- 5) Apply for ethical approval through the National Health Research Review Board (online application- see below for more details).
- 6) Inform your facility once you have ethical approval from the National Health Research Review Board. Show the facility any approval letters you have been given by the Regional Health Office and the ethics board. You will then need to negotiate with your facility when you start your research project.

#### **FOR INTERNATIONAL RESEARCHERS;**

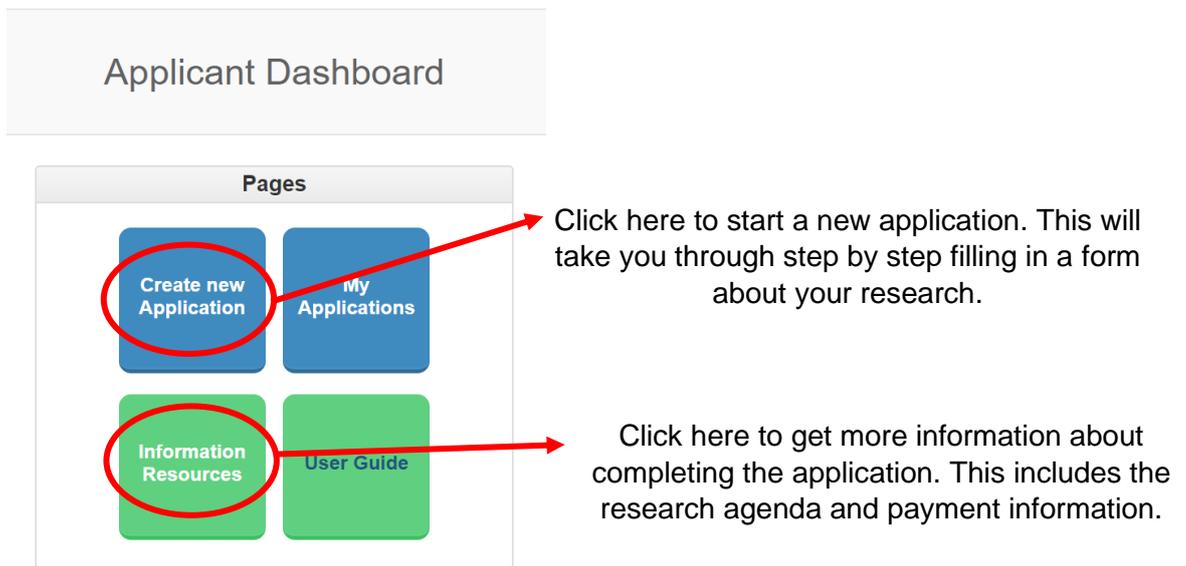
- 1) Inform the LHRU that you are undertaking research in the region via email or phone. The LHRU are also available to offer advice and support in development of your research ideas and protocol.
- 2) Contact the National Health Research Unit by phone or email. It is useful to send a draft research protocol of your intended research when contacting the unit. The unit will act as your main point of contact with other organisations. They will be able to provide you with the contact details of the relevant facilities, communities and organisations where you may need to seek approvals for your research. You may need to write a formal letter of permission to undertake your research (see Appendix 1 for a template letter).
- 3) Apply for ethical approval through the National Health Research Review Board (online application- see below for more details).

## How to get ethical approval

All ethical approvals need to go through the National Health Research Review Board. This is an online application process (<https://shrswaziland.rhinno.net/login>)

Allow at least 4-8 weeks for the National Health Research Review Board to process your application. If there are multiple queries about your application, this process may take longer.

- 1) Create a login for the website (set a username and password and keep this safe).
- 2) When you first login you will see this screen.



- 3) Complete the online form with details about your research for example the title, aims, objectives and names of the principle investigator. In this form you must;
  - a. Specific how your topic links with the National Research Agenda (to see this go through the 'Information Resources' tab).
  - b. Provide details of data ownership. Any data about the people of Eswatini belongs to the Government (the central statistics office). International researchers only have formal ownership of the data they collect for 12 months after completion of the research.

- c. Include details about the roles and responsibilities of each of the team. **For international researchers, your project should include a local principle investigator with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.**
- 4) You will be required to upload to the website various documents. The core documents you will be required to upload are listed below. For other, more complex studies, additional documents may be required- a list of these documents can be found in **Appendix 1.**
- The CV of the Principal Investigator/Co-investigators (for large projects with multiple investigators it is only necessary to submit up to 4 CV's).
  - Translated informed consent (English and SiSwati).
  - Translated information sheet for participants (English and SiSwati).
  - Data collection tool
  - Proof of payment (see below)
- 5) At the time writing prices for applications were; E250 for students, E500 for local organisations and E1000 for International Organisations. However, please contact the National Health Research Review Board to check the price before payment. Pay at bank branch or through electronic fund transfer into the below account. Ensure you leave your name and research topic as a reference for the transfer.

**Standard Bank, Save the Children, Bank Account 9110002777072,  
Branch Code: 663164**

## **How to make an impact**

To ensure that your research benefits the people of Eswatini, it is vital that your results are disseminated effectively. Disseminate to communities, facilities, the region and nationally.

### **COMMUNITIES:**

- Ensure you disseminate to communities using an appropriate and accessible method.
- Simply explain your findings, how the community have contributed and what you expect may change as a result of the research
- Consider supporting these discussions with visual aids

#### **FACILITIES:**

- Ensure the facility is informed of the results.
- Many facilities have regular staff meeting where you may be able to attend and present the research
- Discuss with senior staff any possible changes that the facility could make to their practise as a result of the research that has been undertaken
- Health professionals will be excellent guides to help you develop feasible and appropriate recommendations from your research- consult them!

#### **THE REGION:**

- The Regional Health Management Team will be interested in receiving the results and recommendations from your research
- Contact the team and discuss how best to disseminate your results to them (for example a report or a presentation)
- Ensure you have shared your results with the Lubombo Health Research Unit. The unit may be able to help you with regional or national dissemination (especially for researchers no longer in-country).
- Each year the Lubombo Health Research Unit puts on a conference for the region. It may be appropriate for you to produce a poster or verbal presentation to present at this conference to disseminate your results to important stakeholders all across the region.

#### **NATIONALLY:**

- Send your final report to the National Health Research Unit
- Discuss with the Lubombo Health Research Unit which members of the ministry of health that it would be helpful to disseminate your results to. The unit and yourselves may then work with these members to influence changes in policy
- For larger research projects it may be important to host a dissemination event for National Stakeholders, engaging them about how your research shapes future policy and practise in Eswatini

## How to be culturally sensitive

### TOP TIPS FOR INTERNATIONAL RESEARCHERS;

- Ensure that you have a local principle investigator to advise you regarding culturally appropriate behaviour
- Make sure you formally introduce yourself and explain your project to all key stakeholders (for example management and senior medical staff within the facilities in which you are operating) before starting your research
- If you are working directly with communities, ensure that you have approached the community elders for permission before starting your research. Seek advice from the Lubombo Health Research Unit or the National Health Research Unit on how best to do this
- The culture in Eswatini is very relational. For example, meeting someone face to face or making a phone call is often much more productive and well received than sending an email (especially when forming initial relationships).
- Greetings are vital in Swazi culture. Ensure you greet those you are working with. Before beginning a conversation with someone, ensure you greet them appropriately.
- Respect that the health professionals and communities you are working with have their own duties, workloads and priorities. Do not expect your research to be prioritised immediately. Expect that meetings may need to be rescheduled or timelines adjusted. Furthermore, those on the ground have extensive expertise of the inner workings of the health care system, process and protocol. Always respect and listen to this expertise.
- Dress appropriately for the setting. Professionals are expected to be clean and formally presented. Women, especially in rural communities, are expected to dress modestly and to wear a skirt or a dress. Women are required to cover their heads when meeting community elders. Men should wear a jacket and remove hats when meeting with community elders.
- Swazi culture is polite and indirect. Having a very direct, confrontational or aggressive manner is likely to cause offense and create barriers to you working productively in Eswatini.

## Appendix 1- Template letter for Research Approval

**ADD YOUR ADDRESS**

**ADD YOUR EMAIL AND PHONE NO.**

**ADD DATE**

**ADD ADDRESS OF RHO OR NHRU**

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: ADD BRIEF TITLE OF YOUR RESEARCH**

I am writing to inform you of my intention to undertake research in the Lubombo Region and seek your approval for this research.

**ADD BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT YOURSELF AS A RESEARCHER. Example:** *“I am a master’s student at the University of Eswatini and have a background in Midwifery. I am currently employed at Good Shepherd Hospital and work in the maternity unit. I wish to undertake a piece of research to contribute towards my master’s thesis.”*

**ADD INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR RESEARCH PROJECT INCLUDING:**

- **Aims and Objectives:** What are the key aims and objectives of your research?
- **Site:** Where will the research take place (for example a hospital or clinic)?
- **Timeline:** When do you propose to start the research and how long will it take?
- **Participants:** Who will be involved in your research and how many?
- **Summary of Methods:** Brief summary of your research methods.

**ADD INFORMATION ABOUT HOW YOUR RESEARCH WILL CONTRIBUTE TO THE HEALTH OR WELLBEING OF THE PEOPLE OF LUBOMBO. Example:** *“My project will examine patient safety errors. I will use the study findings to formulate recommendations to present to the managerial and clinical staff at the hospital to improve patient care”.*

My research project will be reviewed by the National Health Research Review board. I have supplied my research protocol for any detailed queries you may have about my research **[ATTACH YOUR RESEARCH PROTOCOL]** and I am happy to answer any further questions. I look forward to hearing from you soon regarding your approval of my research.

Yours faithfully

**ADD YOUR NAME and SIGNATURE**

## Appendix 2

### Checklist for National Health Research Review Board

#### APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Tick appropriate box against documents which have been included where applicable

Ref.	Document	Tick
1	Completed application form	
2	Cover letter	
3	Evidence of administrative permission to conduct the research by involved institutions/sites (where applicable)	
4	Detailed current resume or curriculum vitae of Principal Investigator/s including Principal investigators declaration	
5	Summary resume or biography for other investigator(s)	
6	Evidence of approval/rejection by other Ethics Committees, including comments and requested alterations to the protocol, where appropriate.	
7	Research protocol (see outline in Annex 1)	
8	Questionnaires and interview guides (with back-translated versions where applicable)	
9	Case report forms (CRFs), abstraction forms and other data collection tools	
10	Participant/subjects Information Statement(s) (where applicable)	
	Informed consent form(s) including photographic and electronic media consent statements.	
11	Advertisements relevant to the study (where applicable)	
12	Source of funding and detailed budget breakdown including material and incentives to participants if applicable	
14	Notification form for adverse effects/events.	
15	Proof of payment	
16	Proof of insurance cover for research subjects in clinical trials or where applicable	