

Request for Proposals

Baseline Study of Higher Education and Research in Palestine

With funding from, and in collaboration with, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the Arab Council for the Social Sciences (ACSS) seeks to commission a Research Team to conduct a 'Baseline Study of Higher Education and Research in Palestine'. Those interested are advised to read the Terms of Reference below and send the following documents to admin@theacss.org by November 30, 2017:

- Letter of interest that includes relevant experience such as similar studies conducted by the Team members
- Description of the Baseline Study methodology (maximum 2 pages)
- Work plan that lists the main steps involved in the Baseline Study process and a timeline for the Baseline Study
- Baseline Study budget
- Description of the Research Team and the roles and responsibilities of various team members
- CVs of all team members, including the publications list for team members this applies to

For any inquiries, please email assm@theacss.org

Terms of Reference

Baseline Study of Higher Education and Research in Palestine

Background

The Arab Council for the Social Sciences (ACSS) is a regional, independent, non-profit organization headquartered in Beirut, Lebanon. The ACSS works across the Arab region as well as globally. It aims to promote and support the social sciences throughout the 22 countries in the Arab region by providing funding, training, mentorship, publications and networking opportunities. It seeks to achieve this objective by promoting quality research in the region; establishing networks of knowledge production; enhancing research collaborations regionally, cross-regionally and globally; disseminating, validating and utilizing the produced knowledge; and providing a model for academic excellence and professional standards in the region.

One of the main projects of the [ACSS](#) is the [Arab Social Science Monitor \(ASSM\)](#). The ASSM is conceived of as a permanent observatory for documenting and accounting for the state of the social sciences and higher education in the Arab region and for systematically surveying the landscape and assessing the trajectories of social science and humanities research in the region.

One of Sida's main goals is to strengthen and develop scientific research and knowledge of relevance to combat poverty in developing countries. In order to achieve this, Sida works to build research capacity in developing countries and regions, and supports research of relevance to developing countries in all academic disciplines. In addition, Sida's research cooperation department has a long-term commitment to supporting the social sciences and humanities (SSH) in its bilateral research cooperation programs. In general, Sida recognizes that research has, in many cases, been steered by funding agencies/organizations who commission research, with little space for universities or scholars to define an independent research agenda. To address this issue, Sida aims to promote research and research training by supporting the training of a critical mass of independently thinking researchers; enhance research-based higher education and teaching; increase the ability to transfer and make use of existing knowledge, as well as the capacity to produce new and locally-based knowledge.

Towards these ends, Sida and the ACSS will commission a 'Baseline Study on Higher Education and Research (HE/R)' that aims to obtain an overview of the current state of higher education and research in Palestine (Gaza, West Bank, East Jerusalem), with a particular focus on social sciences and humanities. For Sida, the review will constitute a basis for strategic discussions and decision-making on possible future support to research capacity strengthening in Palestine. A main output of the Baseline Study would be concrete suggestions regarding programs and interventions that could be recommended in order to strengthen research capacity and opportunities for research collaboration in Palestine.

The ACSS is interested in this Baseline Study as part of its current effort to map the state of higher education in the Arab region with special attention to the social sciences and humanities through its ASSM project. The Baseline Study will benefit and build upon the region-wide 2015-2016 mapping of social sciences in the Arab region, which collected publically available data and presented it in the first Arab Social Science Report (ASSR). The first ASSR and the database associated with it provide a basis for structuring a more expansive and in-depth survey in Palestine. The ACSS will use the findings of this Baseline Study to inform its grants and other offerings to better meet the needs of the Palestinian research community.

As the [first ASSR](#) showed, Palestine follows the general trends identified across the region in terms of the rapid growth of higher education institutions, but the relative neglect of the social sciences within this growth. In terms of research centers both within and outside universities, Palestine also partakes in the general growth but is distinctive in having a large number of social science research centers based outside the university. In addition, together with Lebanon and Jordan, Palestine has a high density of social science research centers relative to population size. Palestine is also among the top 5 countries in the region in terms of producing scholarly periodicals although it is modest in the number of professional associations.

Purpose of the Baseline Study

The purpose of the Baseline Study is to (1) obtain an overview of the current state of Higher Education and Research (HE/R) systems and structures in Palestine, and (2) survey the social sciences and humanities (SSH) research infrastructure and the characteristics and qualifications of social sciences and humanities researchers in Palestine.

To achieve the stated purposes, the Baseline Study will:

(1) Current state of higher education and research systems and structures (HE/R)

- Conduct a critical review of relevant disciplinary and inter-disciplinary literature on HE/R in and on Palestine today, and refer to broader regional and global literature as needed.

Mapping

- Map institutions of HE/R and the research system in Palestine (public, private and foreign-based): mandates, academic orientation, sources of funding and cost-sharing strategies, number of students disaggregated by sex, enrolment policies, examination rates, and degrees offered.
- Map national policy-making bodies in charge of HE/R and other relevant bodies, including their mandate and role in policy-making, implementation, evaluation and financing.
- Describe the national system of accreditation as well as presence and effectiveness of monitoring institutions.

Vision, Policies and Strategies

- Describe the vision/educational philosophy that frames the principles of HE in Palestine.
- Describe existing policies and strategies for HE/R at the national and sub-national levels.
- Analyse the fundamental problem areas on a systemic level in HE/R, including access, gender and equity.

Governance and Reform

- Critically discuss forms of existing HE governance, institutional autonomy and academic freedom.
- Reference possible existing plans for reforms of, or major interventions in, the HE/R systems, or in key institutions and how to generally improve capacity for research collaboration.
- Compare the current capacity of academic institutions to that of a decade and two decades ago.

Funding

- List current national and international organizations/donors financing HE/R, including their current financial contribution to the HE/R systems. Provide an estimate (5-year average) of the government's spending on HE/R (specified by institution and area of research), including the proportion of the national budget allocated and disbursed.
- Provide an overview of resources for HE/R: infrastructure, ICT, equipment, etc.
- Provide an overview of the disciplines, fields and research areas to which funding has been allocated. Have some sectors been repeatedly funded and others neglected? Do funding gaps exist?
- Recommend how funding to research collaboration and research capacity strengthening (both local and international) could be strategically used considering complementarity to other funders.

PhD training

- Describe and assess currently available PhD training: disciplines; curriculum; funding; through-put; research up-take; quality.
- Assess to what extent HE institutions are in a position to embark on extensive, high quality PhD training.
- Assess the capacity strengthening needs at PhD level in relation to national priorities with focus on current substantial gaps.

(2) Social science and humanities research infrastructure and researchers (SSH)

- Map the infrastructure of social sciences and humanities in Palestine (in Universities, Research Centres in and outside universities, Professional Societies, Periodicals and Publishing houses) (see Annex 1).

- Conduct a sample survey on the characteristics and career trajectories of individual social scientists in Palestine (Education, Career path, Research and Publications).
- Document and evaluate teaching and curriculum of the social sciences and humanities as well as training opportunities offered by universities as well as by NGOs and international organizations operating in Palestine.
- Document policies of promotion and tenure in social sciences and humanities departments.
- Assess the publishing, dissemination and circulation of social sciences and humanities research findings among different audiences (scholarly, policy, media).

Assumptions and Risks

- The Baseline Study should factor in the specific political and economic conditions and constraints within which knowledge production takes place.
- The challenges of communication and mobility between different parts of Palestine must be integrated into the research design and data collection.

Outputs

The information collected will be presented in a Report which fully reflects the Terms of Reference and is the main output of the Baseline Study (see Annex 2). The Report shall be available to the public via Sida. The information collected will also be integrated into the ACSS databases and made publically available. Other possible outputs include ACSS policy briefs and analytical reports. There will be Sida and ACSS dissemination events of the Baseline Study findings for which PowerPoint presentations and other material will be produced.

Duties and Responsibilities

- Initial briefing/Preparatory meeting (virtual meeting)
- Prepare a detailed work plan and timetable for accomplishing all tasks
- Prepare a detailed budget
- Conduct a review of relevant literature on higher education and research
- Map the infrastructure of social sciences and humanities
- Develop the methodology for the sample survey of individual social scientists. The methodology will include the Target Population, Sampling Frame, Sampling Method, etc.
- Develop/Adapt data collection instruments for the Baseline Study (in consultation with the ACSS, Sida and the Swedish Consulate-General in Jerusalem)
- Data collection using data collection instruments developed/adapted
- Data analysis
- Preparation of draft Report (see Annex 2 for Report content)
- Revisions based on peer review and input from the ACSS, Sida and the Swedish Consulate-General in Jerusalem
- Preparation of final Report (see Annex 2 for Report content)

- Presentation of Baseline Study findings to the ACSS and Sida
- Participate in the dissemination of Baseline Study findings

Deliverables

- Detailed work plan and timetable (January 31, 2018)
- Budget (January 31, 2018)
- Methodology (February 28, 2018)
- Facilitation of expert meeting to review methodology (February 28, 2018)
- Data collection instruments (March 31, 2018)
- 2 interim progress reports (March 31, 2018 and May 31, 2018)
- Draft Report (June 30, 2018) (see Annex 2 for Report content)
- Facilitation of review meeting of Draft Report (June 30, 2018)
- Final Report and Executive Summary (July 31, 2018) (see Annex 2 for Report content)
- PowerPoint presentation (August 31, 2018)
- One or two dissemination activities including at Sida Headquarters

Duration of the Baseline Study

The assignment will be initiated January 1, 2018 and completed no later than September 30, 2018.

Estimated Implementation Schedule:

- January – March 2018: Development of detailed work plan, timetable, budget, survey methodology, data collection instrument
- April – May 2018: Data collection, with periodic consultation meetings and coordination with all stakeholders
- June – July 2018: Report writing and submission
- August – September 2018: Production of final Report in Arabic and English
- October – November 2018: Dissemination activities

Discrepancies between the planned and actual implementation schedule of the Baseline Study must be explained in the Report.

Budget

The overall budget for the design and implementation of the Baseline Study is \$90,000. Expenses related to convening of review meetings and dissemination activities will be borne by the ACSS.

Qualifications and/or specialized knowledge/experience of Baseline Study Team

The Baseline Study Team shall consist of a team of researchers led by a Lead Researcher.

- Senior team members, other than the Lead Researcher, should have a minimum of a Master's degree.
- At least one senior member of the Team should be resident in Palestine or highly familiar with the higher education in Palestine.
- It is preferable that one senior member of the Team have work experience outside Palestine.
- It is also preferable that the composition of the team be diverse in terms of gender, seniority (junior and senior researcher/scholar), experience in multiple institutions, and understanding of various higher education systems globally.
- The team members should be independent scholars who are not part of the Ministry of Education or University boards or administration. The research team should also have no institutional or personal conflict of interest issues in their relationship with the ACSS.
- There is preference for research teams who have an institutional affiliation who can act as the fiscal sponsor of the project.

Lead Researcher qualifications:

- PhD in a relevant area with a minimum of 10-year experience in survey design and implementation, quantitative and qualitative research and research management.
- Currently active researcher with up-to-date record of publications.
- Fluency in spoken and written Arabic and English.

Implementation Arrangements

- Development of the Terms of Reference for the Baseline Study Team by the ACSS, Sida and the Swedish Consulate-General in Jerusalem.
- Launch of the open call for a Request for Proposals (November 2017).
- Selection of the Research Team by a committee convened by the ACSS including outside experts (December 2017).
- The ACSS will oversee the commissioning and process of the Baseline Study, with appropriate involvement of its Palestine Focal Point and in coordination with the Swedish Consulate-General in Jerusalem.
- A number of deliverables and activities entail sufficient consultation throughout the duration of the Baseline Study as well as for dissemination. As such, the Baseline Study Team will interface with the key actors noted in the Milestones (see Annex 3) and work plan and will work closely with ACSS staff in Beirut and the ACSS Palestine Focal Point in Ramallah in coordination with Sida and the Swedish Consulate-General in Jerusalem throughout the duration of the Baseline Study.
- The data collected by Baseline Study will be owned by the ACSS, Sida and the Swedish Consulate-General in Jerusalem. Other publications by the Research Team based on the data collected will be discussed in due course.

ANNEX 1

Mapping the infrastructure of social sciences and humanities in Palestine

(Universities, Research Centers in and outside universities,
Professional Societies, Periodicals, Publishing houses)

Universities

Information on universities to be compiled includes: Contact information, Year of establishment, Public or Private, Degrees offered, Language of instruction, Admissions and diplomas.

For social science departments and faculties in these universities, the following information is to be compiled: List or profiles of faculty members (specialization, seniority, research experience, ...), Diplomas and Admission requirements per faculty, Academic staff, Students, Scholarships, Collaboration, and Curriculum.

Research Centers

Research Centers to be included are those that are university-based, non-university based, governmental, for-profit, non-profit and branch centers of international think tanks that conduct research (scholarly and non-scholarly) on social sciences and humanities disciplines. Research centers that have been closed or were suspended and for which closure date is available should be included as well.

Examples of information on research centers to be compiled: Contact information, Focus, Source funding, Director and Board, Number of researchers, Number of administrative staff, Publications, Events, and Grants and Fellowships.

Professional Societies

Professional Societies are those related to social sciences and humanities disciplines.

Examples of information on professional societies to be compiled include: Contact information, Focus, President and Board, Staff, Source of funding, Membership, and Events.

Scholarly Periodicals

Periodicals are publications that are issued regularly by an institution (e.g. monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly, annual), reviewed by a reviewer (e.g. expert in the subject matter/professional editor/editorial board), part of a series of publications of substantive nature (e.g. scholarly and research journals/ book series/journals of commentary and opinion/working papers/ studies), peer-reviewed or non-peer reviewed, and current or have been discontinued.

Information on Scholarly Periodicals include: Contact information, Focus, Frequency, Format, Circulation, Size, Access (Print, Online), and Source of funding.

ANNEX 2

The Baseline Study Report

The Baseline Study Team will prepare a draft Report submitted electronically to assm@theacss.org, for comments by the Swedish Consulate-General in Jerusalem, Sida and the ACSS as per timetable. After receiving comments on the draft Report, a final version shall be submitted to assm@theacss.org. The final Report will be submitted electronically and in two paper copies no later than July 31, 2018.

The Report will:

- Be written in English;
- Not exceed 80 pages, excluding Annexes;
- Contain an Executive Summary which will provide an overview of the Report highlighting the main findings and conclusions and that will not exceed 3 pages. The Executive Summary should be submitted in both Arabic and English;
- Make underlying assumptions explicit;
- Describe research methods used, with choices justified and limitations and shortcomings explained;
- Analyse, interpret and present data in a systematic way;
- Clearly identify findings that should flow logically from the data analysis;
- Distinguish clearly between findings and conclusions, with conclusions substantiated by findings and analysis;
- Acknowledge any constraints encountered and their impact on the Baseline Study.

ANNEX 3

Baseline Study Milestones

Milestones	Timeline	%	Budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upon signature of contract 	By Jan 1, 2018	10%	\$9,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share a detailed work plan and timetable • Develop methodology • Facilitate an expert meeting to review and finalize methodology 	By Feb 28, 2018	20%	\$18,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop/Adapt data collection instruments • Interim progress report 	By Mar 31, 2018	40%	\$36,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize data collection • Interim progress report 	By May 31, 2018	10%	\$9,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit a draft Baseline Study Report • Facilitate a review meeting of draft Baseline Study Report 	By Jun 30, 2018	10%	\$9,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit final version of the Baseline Study Report based on received feedback and an Executive Summary • Presentation of the Baseline Study findings 	By July 31, 2018	10%	\$9,000
TOTAL		100%	\$90,000