



## Building sustainable capacity for research on health and its social determinants in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)

### INTREC Newsletter Number 1, April 2012

Welcome to INTREC's first newsletter, which we hope will become a quarterly event!

#### What is INTREC, and what does it aim to do?

The name 'INTREC' stands for 'INDEPTH Training and Research Centres of Excellence'. Our aim is to develop and provide appropriate training for researchers from the INDEPTH network in Asia and Africa, (i) to investigate the social determinants of health (SDH) and health inequities in their countries, and (ii) to learn about effective presentation of their findings to decision makers at national and local/district level. Two training and research centres will be established – one in Accra, Ghana; and the other in Yogyakarta, Indonesia – and these will serve, at least initially, SAGE and other INDEPTH scientists from Ghana, Tanzania, South Africa, Bangladesh, India, Vietnam, and Indonesia. For this work, INTREC has received €1,997,402 in funding from the European Commission, to last up until May 2015.

#### Who is in the INTREC consortium?

INTREC comprises six institutional partners. These include:

- **Umeå Centre for Global Health Research**, Umeå University, Sweden (Project Coordinator). The Centre was set up in 2007 through a grant from FAS (the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research), with an overall mission to engage with and address a global agenda on health research and practice, and to facilitate collaboration between and within the North and South. <http://www.globalhealthresearch.net/>
- **INDEPTH: An International Network for the Demographic Evaluation of Populations and Their Health**, Accra, Ghana. INDEPTH is a global network of members who conduct longitudinal health and demographic evaluation of populations in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). INDEPTH aims to strengthen global capacity for Health and Demographic Surveillance Systems (HDSS), and to mount multi-site research to guide health priorities and policies in LMICs, based on up-to-date scientific evidence. <http://www.indepth-network.org/>
- **Center for Health Service Management**, Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia. The Center was established in 1998. CHSM conducts research, consultation, networking, advocacy and dissemination, and training based on the four main pillars: service provision, regulation, health financing, and human resource development. This framework is applied in conducting activities for both public and private service provider institutions, bureaucratic/government organizations, building collaboration with various universities and international organizations,

and organizing seminar, training, research & dissemination and workshop in health service management. <http://chsm.fk.ugm.ac.id/>

- **The Institute of Public Health**, Heidelberg University, Germany. The Institute of Public Health was founded in 1962 and has steadily grown since. It currently has a staff of about 60. The Institute's mission is to contribute to the improvement of health through research, teaching and direct services (patient care, consulting) in developing countries and at home. <http://www.klinikum.uni-heidelberg.de/Institute-of-Public-Health.5358.0.html>
- **Centre for Social Science and Global Health**, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands. The Centre was founded in 2009 (originally as the Centre for Global Health and Inequality). It builds on a long tradition of multidisciplinary social science research on health and illness in the faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences at the University of Amsterdam. The Centre includes anthropologists, political scientists, sociologists and behavioural scientists who have a strong track record in studying the sociocultural, political and historical factors that influence the health and illness of individuals as well as the functioning of health systems. <http://www.ssggh.uva.nl/ssgh/home.cfm>
- **Harvard Centre for Population & Development Studies**, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA. The Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies (Pop Center) is dedicated to understanding the dynamic interplay between global population health, demographic changes and the social and physical environment. We bring together scientists from across schools at Harvard and globally to make exciting advances in population research. <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/centers-institutes/population-development/>

### What we've done so far

INTREC started work in January 2012, with a 'kick-off' meeting in Umeå, Sweden, at which all six of the Consortium partners were represented. Following on directly from this, the first substantive 'Work Package' of the project was initiated, which involves undertaking a needs assessment in each of the seven participating countries. Seven high quality INTREC Social Scientists (ISSs) have been recruited to do this work, one from each of the target countries, and most of them from HDSS sites involved in the SAGE network. The Asian ISSs are coordinated through Gadjah Mada University, while the African ISSs are coordinated through INDEPTH headquarters in Accra and the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa.

The ISSs met together with trainers from Sweden, South Africa and Indonesia at Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, for a week's training in February 2012, and they are now engaged in researching and drafting county reports that will include the following components:

- 1) An epidemiological review, focusing on Non-Communicable Diseases among adults;
- 2) A review of all SDH-related post-graduate courses currently available in the country;
- 3) A literature review on activities, actors and institutions engaged in social determinants issues in their country;
- 4) Findings from a series of interviews with key stakeholders from national and local level.



**ISS training in Gadjah Mada University, February 2012**

Meanwhile, a 'concept mapping' exercise is also underway. In this participatory qualitative research technique, 160 INDEPTH scientists have been asked online to consider what their training needs would be if they wanted to conduct research into health inequities and the social determinants of health in their countries. The responses we receive, representing the collective wishes of the scientists, will constitute the 'demand' side of the coin, in contrast to the 'supply' side, which will consist of the courses currently being taught on SDH-related issues in schools of public health in the respective countries (as identified in '2' above). A core task of INTREC will be to fill the gap between what is currently being provided on the supply side with what is wanted on the demand side.

### **The future**

The output of this work will be a country report and a one- or two-page policy brief for each of the seven countries. We expect to have these completed by September 2012. Based on the findings, and in coordination with the HDSS leaders, we will then start the process of developing training packages for the INTREC centres. A workshop will be held in Heidelberg, Germany, in October 2012 to formally kick-start this next stage in the process.

We also aim to produce two peer-reviewed articles from this needs assessment work, one each summarizing the key findings from Asia and Africa.

To learn more, please visit [www.intrec.info](http://www.intrec.info); or contact:

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We welcome all ideas and involvement, and especially from the HDSS sites!