ORGANISATION FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH IN EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2020

**Institutionalizing trans-disciplinary research networks for sustainable development in Eastern and Southern Africa**

January 2016

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OSSREA NETWORK OF CHAPTERS

OSSREA is a regional Think Tank with a network that connects institutions and academics in 19 countries of Eastern and Southern Africa. It collaborates with the rest of Think Tanks in Africa and abroad.
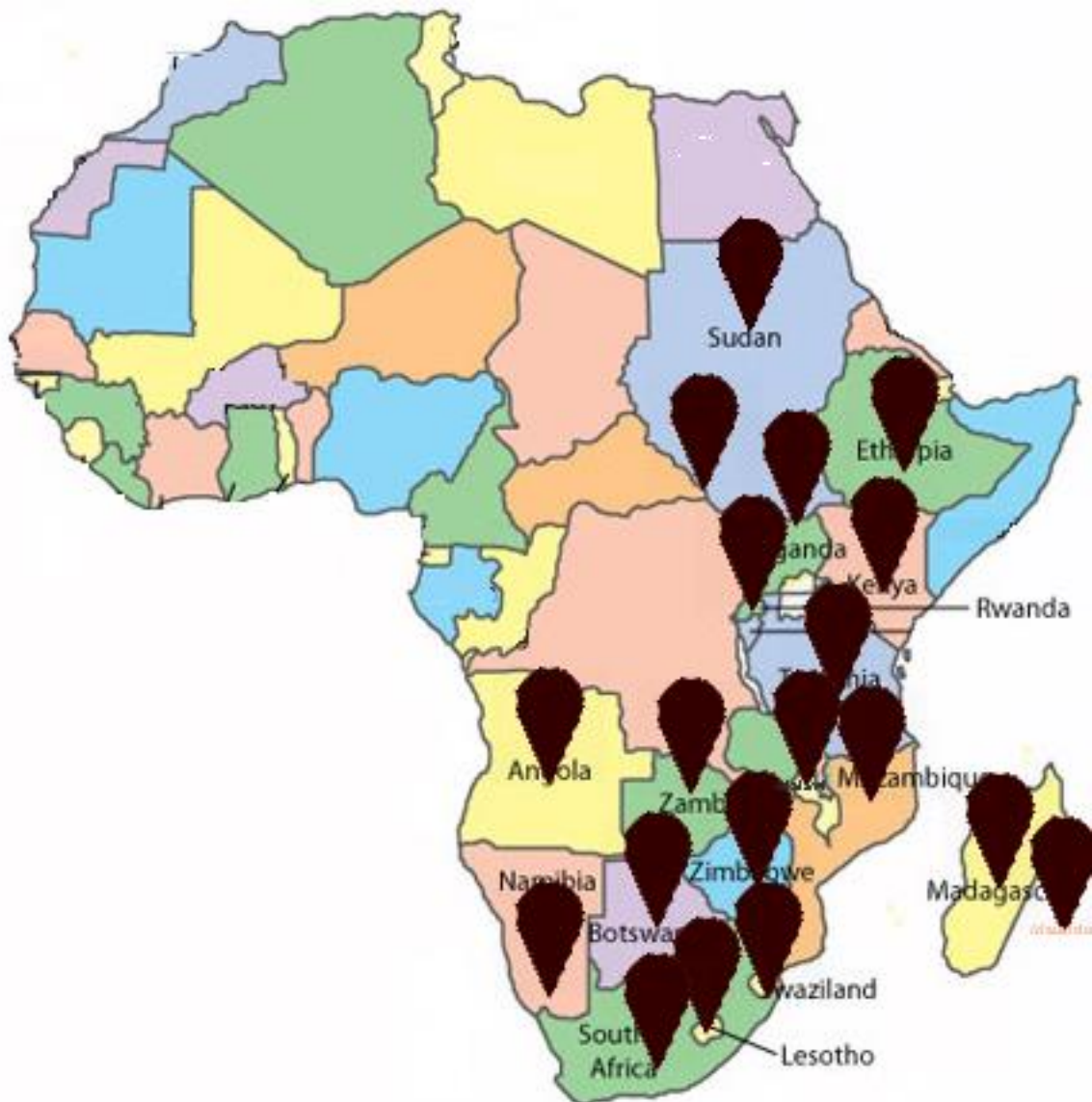
BACKGROUND

The Organization for Social Sciences in Eastern and Southern Africa was established in 1980. As it celebrates 38 years of its existence it is undergoing transformation that will enable its expansive and varied network operate better and sustainably. To date it operates from its headquarters in Addis Ababa. The secretariat at the headquarters is a two-storey building, which was built, in mid 1990s from resources mobilized from its members and partners. It is hosted by Addis Ababa University. While the site of its headquarters followed a pioneer meeting at Nazareth, a small town out of Addis Ababa, the headquarters has also continued to symbolize what OSSREA stands for. A regional research network and Think Tank strategically based at what for so long has been regarded the 'rooftop of Africa', the 'capital of Africa' the home of African Union and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. Being host by one of the largest and influential Universities in Africa, Addis Ababa University, symbolizes its constituency as a membership driven organization for universities, staff and for Africa and its African regional communities.

OSSREA's new Strategic Plan is aligned with the Global Agenda 2030 that led to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and Africa's Agenda 2063. At the moment humanity is facing major global sustainability crises, with wide-ranging impacts of an economic, political, environmental and social nature. Academia, policy makers, private practitioners and civil society are calling for a shift in the functioning of our societies. Trans-disciplinary research which addresses the complexity of problems, their diversity of perception, their underpinnings together with what might be done about them has been adopted. To develop a holistic approach, most researchers involved in the subject area apply a research strategy which is dedicated to relevant societal issues and crosses disciplinary boundaries. This often involves researchers, practitioners and other non-academics in the co-production of knowledge. The challenges are addressed by the scientists in a collaborative, iterative and exploratory mode of organization of scientific research. Therefore, it is the responsibility of scientists to engage in new forms of collaboration with stakeholders and citizens, in the urgent search for understanding and supporting the implementation of feasible options for effective transitions to sustainable societies. This calls for iterative and integrative approaches needed to address the issues of sustainability. As a Social Science Think Tank, OSSREA has capitalized on this renewed demand for social science research and capacity development and responded to the demand through a multidisciplinary inquiry into development problems. OSSREA aims at contributing to the new critical mass of interdisciplinary researchers and build their competencies to design and implement transformative research in collaboration and partnerships with legitimate communities and stakeholders geared towards sustainability.

The trans-disciplinary approach aims both to create knowledge beyond disciplinary borders and to acknowledge the separation between researchers and social actors. It complements applied research in fields characterized by complexity and uncertainty. Scientific knowledge is not the only type included; other forms of knowledge, such as local knowledge, may also play a role. Because of the thematic focus of social innovation research on changing the social relations in society and the role of change agency, there is a need for a transdisciplinary steering of epistemology and methodology. Social innovation research is about improving social relations and tackling social problems or meeting social needs. In all of these, concerned people are at the center of interaction and should ideally be the ones who express their needs and set research

priorities, both thematically and chronologically. These stakeholders should also play a role in clarifying the research questions, the kind of answers they expect, the expected impact on collective action, etc. This means that stakeholders hold an integral role in setting the epistemology of the research and that they can become involved in the selection of relevant theories. Together with the professional researchers they explore the available research methods, and reconstruct in a transdisciplinary way methodologies and research instruments that fit the social innovation interactive logics.

This Plan outlines the interventions, programmes, activities and projected outcomes of OSSREA. It will also guide the relationship between OSSREA and its key stakeholders, who include the senior scholars, early career researchers, partnering organizations, private practitioners, civil society organizations, regional organizations and policy makers.

The priorities and strategies stipulated in this document are based on an analysis of the internal and external factors that affect the operations of OSSREA, which have been identified through wide consultations. OSSREA intends to build on its past accomplishments, while strengthening its governance structure, to establish itself as an institution that responds to the dynamics of scientific research with a pragmatic approach. Externally, the Strategic Plan is guided by an appreciation of the social, economic and political situation in Africa and beyond. Therefore, the Plan aims to strengthen the position of OSSREA as a fully multi-disciplinary Think Tank that will respond to the demands of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The traditional scientific approach has proved insufficient to address complex, interdependent and politically relevant issues which are not reserved to particular sectors or disciplines. Trans-disciplinarily gains importance as a problem-solving approach which starts from the concrete need of dealing with a problem, analyzing it and trying to tackle it using different approaches, contributions and layers of interpretation rather than starting from a single disciplinary viewpoint. OSSREA is not alone in this endeavor, but it is unique in its focus on nurturing and internationalizing African scholarship to meet its challenges, develop research quality and capacity within the continent's own cultures and partner with other stakeholders including governments, universities, civil societies, media and private practitioners-to institutionalize transdisciplinary research.

Therefore, OSSREA's Strategic Plan 2016-2020 is an investment in African scholarship, co-producing relevant knowledge based on research evidence for practical solutions through policy making in Africa. It explains OSSREA's transformative approach through social innovations, employing action research to solve Africa's problems. The re-loaded OSSREA hopes to create a critical role on the continent and build relevant capacities needed for sustainable development.

OSSREA'S STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The plan sets out five strategic objectives for 2016-2020. These are the pillars on which OSSREA stands. The methodology of implementation will adopt the transdisciplinary approach explained above. These objectives include:

- Widen the scope and improve the quality of social science research

- Enhance the social science research and public policy interface

- Establish a stable and sustainable funding framework

- Expand the outreach/visibility of OSSREA

- Strengthen strategic leadership and governance structure.

OSSREA has identified five strategic objectives and 23 major activities for the strategic plan period.

Strategic objective 1:

Widen the scope and improve the quality of social science research

Activity 1.1: Conduct action research on identified research themes by engaging key scholars, policy makers, private practitioners, civil society organizations and media in the region, including the diaspora.

Activity 1.2: Strengthen the research capacity of African universities and civil society organizations through advanced research methodology training and tailor made short courses including promoting publication of research results in books and journals. This also includes capacity building initiatives that aim at strengthening capacities in specific selected thematic areas.

Activity 1.3: Conduct research through offering competitive grants to young, senior, sabbatical, and post-doc researchers, and giving preference to those involved in staff development programmes in African universities.

Activity 1.4: Offer training programs on gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting and auditing in academic and policy-making institutions.

Activity 1.5: Developing data bases of researchers and scientific organizations which consist of experts, early career researchers, private practitioners, policy actors and civil society organizations.

Activity 1.6: Harness synergies of different actors in co-production of research and evidence.

Strategic objective 2:

Enhance the social science research and public policy interface

Activity 2.1: Organize on-line and off-line policy dialogue fora between academia and policy makers, policy influencers, civil society organizations, private practitioners and media in the region, by translating research outputs into communication products for research uptake and evidence policy making. This also aims at jointly setting the research agenda and discussing how to use research output as policy input.

Activity 2.2: Identify political and administrative impediments (and remedies) to effective cooperation between research institutions and government agencies.

Strategic objective 3:

Establish a stable and sustainable funding framework

Activity 3:1: Strengthen relations with existing donors and establish networks with donors and African governments to create new sources of funding.

Activity 3.2: Improve governance and establish partnerships with several stakeholders including private practitioners to support OSSREA to remain an ongoing concern.

Activity 3.3: Strengthen links with regional organizations, private practitioners and national authorities for collaborative research, contract research and consultancy services.

Activity 3.4: Implement a three-tier funding system: core budget and capacity building budget (funds from development partners); and special project budget (funds from contract research, other projects and mission-related consultancy).

Activity 3.5: Mobilize funding for OSSREA's endowment fund through organizing pledge events and soliciting donations from regional bodies, national authorities, corporate bodies and individual philanthropists.

Strategic objective 4:

Expand the outreach/visibility of OSSREA

Activity 4:1: Increase the dissemination of research outputs and Ph.D. theses.

Activity 4.2: Create new networks and strengthen existing networks with education and research institutions, donors, governments, and policy bodies such as RECs, parliament and NGOS.

Activity 4:3: Build a databank of researchers, scholars and consultants in the region.

Activity4:4: Develop systems and resources for networking with partners and stakeholders.

Strategic objective 5:

Strengthen strategic leadership and governance structures

Activity 5.1: Review the OSSREA constitution and existing policies and procedures on the management of human resource, finance, materials and information sharing and exchange.

Activity 5.2: Improve administration of grantees and members.

Activity 5.3: Strengthen the relationship between the Headquarters and Chapters and enhance the effectiveness and accountability of Chapters.

Activity 5.4: Set up a Quality Assurance Committee for assessment and guidance on the quality and effectiveness of research and capacity-building programs.

Activity5.5: Improve the organizational structure and effective leadership of Chapters and Headquarters.

OVERVIEW OF OSSREA

The Vision

To remain a centre of excellence for the creation and dissemination of social science knowledge as well as linking social science research with public policy and practice in Eastern and Southern Africa.

The Mission

To enrich an African research tradition that responds to national and regional challenges and opportunities through building the capacity of and opportunity for social science scholars in Eastern and Southern Africa.

The Goals

- To enhance the capacity of, and provide opportunities for, African scholars to conduct social science research and promote the expansion of an African research tradition.

- To enhance the visibility of OSSREA through networking and disseminating its research outputs.

- To facilitate dialogue, cooperation and collaboration between researchers, academicians and policymakers in Africa and strengthen the interface between public policy and social science research

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

OSSREA's membership composes of individuals and institutions engaged in teaching and/or research in the social sciences in Eastern and Southern Africa. Members register, pay fees and take part in OSSRE. Activities at National Chapter (Liaison Office) level. Currently, OSSREA has 19 Chapters: Angola, Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Sudan, South Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Chapters link OSSREA with national authorities and civil society organizations, co-ordinate OSSREA activities in their respective countries, link up with policy makers and organize local research and training activities. They conduct national

workshops, research methodology training, scientific debates, networking programmes, and consultancies. They publish proceedings of workshops and take part in OSSREA's specialized research programmes.

OSSREA is governed by a Congress, whose members are representatives of Chapters, which meets every three years to evaluate performance, set new plans, and elect an Executive Committee that meets annually to oversee activities and guide major undertakings. The Secretariat is headed by an Executive Director, who is responsible for implementation of directives from Congress and the Executive Committee, and for day-to-day oversight. There are two directorates (Research and Publications) and a finance and administration department. The Secretariat's 25 employees include directors, coordinators, and technical and administrative staff. These are supported by executive committees of usually three people in each of the 23 Chapters who work on a voluntary basis. OSSREA has financial support from bilateral aid agencies, especially SIDA, The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, NORAD and IDRC. OSSREA has developed an extensive network of collaborative partnerships with key universities in the region and is in the process of establishing institutional relationships with regional organizations, especially the African Union, African Development Bank, African Capacity Building Foundation and several regional economic communities. In addition, it has collaborative partnerships with individuals and institutions in both the Northern and Southern hemispheres.

Figure 1. The structure of OSSREA as a network

CONGRESS

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

SECRETARIAT

CHAPTERS in 19 countries
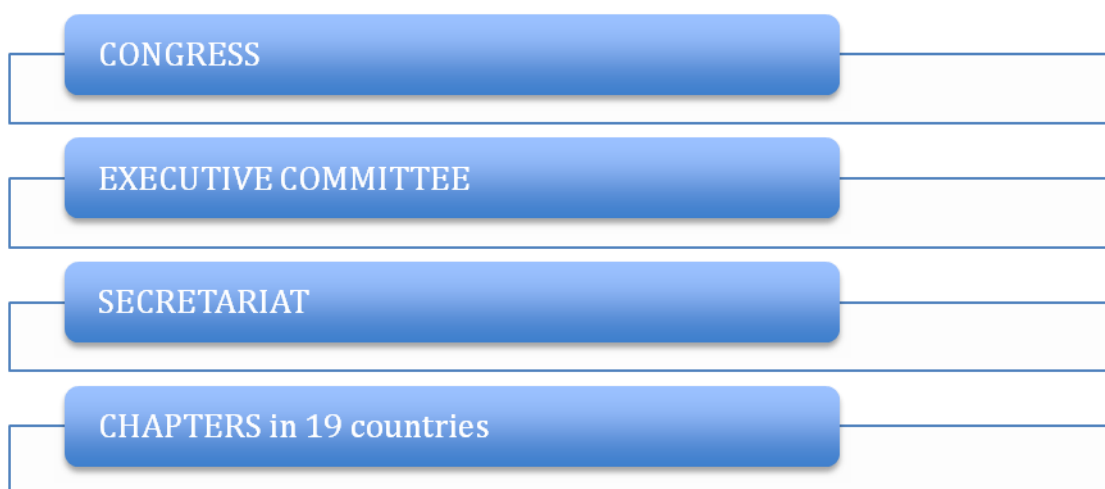
The Congress is the highest decision-making organ in all matters pertaining to the organization. The Congress meets every three years or as the Executive Committee may determine or as justifiably requested by at least two-thirds of national committees in the member countries. The Congress performs its functions through two separate proceeding, namely, the Conference and the Business Meeting. Conference is a forum for exchange of ideas and views on a wide-range of social science issues while the Business Meeting is a forum for making policy decisions of the organization. Each chapter is represented at the Business Meeting by maximum of three members and is entitled three votes. Due to the transition explained the business of the congress

and executive committee might have to be conducted from a distance if new sources of resources to support them are not tenable.

The **Executive Committee** is responsible for implementation of policies and resolutions adopted by the Congress and overseeing general affairs of the Organization. It consists of:

(a)   The President;

(b)   Three Vice Presidents, one of whom should be a citizen or permanent resident of the country in which the organization has its headquarters and at least one of them should be a woman;

(c)   Three members at least one of whom should be a woman; and

(d)   The Executive Director as a non-voting member and Secretary of the Executive Committee.

With the exception of the Executive Director, members of the Executive Committee are elected from among the full members of the organization. The Executive Committee meets at least once a year to inter alia:

(a)   Give effective direction to the Organization;
(b)   Review past performance of the organization from the last Executive Committee meeting;
(c)   Adopt progress reports and financial statements; and
(d)   Consider future plans of action.

The Secretariat headed by the **Executive Director** consists of the Executive Director, Directors, Coordinators and other technical and administrative staff deployed as per the organizational structure of the organization.

The Secretariat's duties and functions include, among others, to:

(a)   Assist all OSSREA governance organs in fulfilling their institutional duties and realizing OSSREA's institutional objectives;

(b)   Undertake all administrative, financial, protocol and legal affairs of the organization,

(c)   Assist in preparation, publishing and dissemination of OSSREA Publications;

(d)   Assist in development of research and capacity building programmes and compiling of financial and progress reports to donors and partners
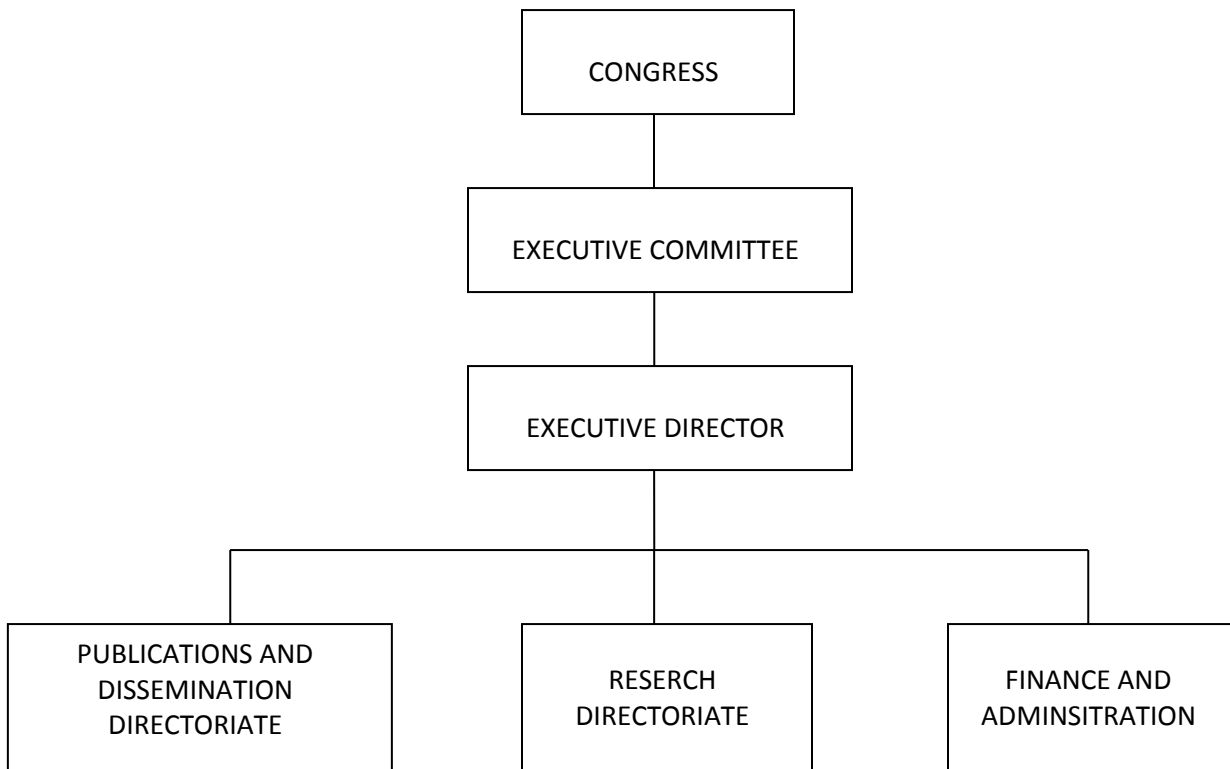
OSSREA has 19 chapters namely: Angola, Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius (includes Seychelles), Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Chapters link OSSREA with Universities and faculty, national authorities and civil society organizations, co-ordinate OSSREA activities in their respective countries, link up with policy makers and organize national workshops, research methodology training, scientific debates, networking programmes, and consultancies, publish proceedings of workshops and take part in OSSREA's specialized research programmes.

The activities of OSSREA at secretariat are

(a)   Research activities

(b)   Capacity Building

(c)   Publications and Dissemination;

Figure 2: OSSREA Organogram

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This strategy is guided by the following principles:

- **A holistic approach** to capacity development that combines individual, institutional and organizational development. **Complementarily** between the research capacity development needs of institutional partners and those of OSSREA;

- **Selectivity:** Priority to institutions of higher education that are also involved in research and capacity development for research, publications and dissemination with view to influencing policy. Other sectors will be prioritized according to demand;
- **Results and outcome-driven activities:** in choosing activities and partners, a key criterion will be potential for verifiable and measurable results and impact. Self assessment will be guided more by outcomes than quantum of inputs;
- **Quality versus quantity:** quality will take precedence in assessing outcomes and impact of activities, publications and training courses;
- **Timely reporting and accounting:** this will be a guiding principle for OSSREA towards meeting donors' and OSSREA's objectives and it will be expected from management, staff and grantees.

PRIORITY THEMATIC AREAS

The thematic areas in the Strategic Plan 2011-2015 were extensively exploited and policy forums and knowledge products have been reported annually. The Strategic Plan 2011-2015 was well endowed with donor support. In 2016 to 2020 the Thematic Areas have been prioritized in relation to the changing environment at OSSREA cognizant of the Global Vision 2030 and the African Agenda 2063. These are themes for which some knowledge has been harvested and stored and are the basis for further action research in collaboration with other organizations. These are themes that answer the demands of the emerging issues at global, regional, national and community levels. The selected themes include:

1. Youth Employment
2. Social justice, development and governance
3. Peace, security and good governance
4. Agriculture and Food security
5. Inclusive growth and development
6. Internationalization of Higher Education
7. Gender issues
8. Natural resources, rural development and climate change
9. Global Health
10. Migrations and Trade

IMPLEMENTATION

This strategic plan will be implemented under the oversight of the OSSREA Executive Committee on behalf `of the Congress. The Secretariat will do the following:

- Establish information systems linked to all stakeholders in terms of their policies, priorities, programmes and schedules of activities;

- Ensure research, capacity building and other activities remain aligned to the vision and mission of OSSREA and the overarching objectives of poverty reduction and strengthening good governance;

- Ensure the capacity needs of all stakeholders are assessed before interventions are launched;

- Establish effective monitoring systems to encourage and enable innovation and renewal;

- Maintain critical skills and competencies required to carry out the mission and implement the strategy;

- Maintain a lean, agile, flexible and responsive secretariat with capacity for rapid response to changing situations.

METHODOLOGY

Methods used to develop this plan include strategic planning workshops at the Headquarters and at eight Chapters, through interviews with key personnel, and desktop study. Two workshops, one full day and another half-a-day were organized at the OSSREA Headquarters for professional and then administrative staff. Participants were introduced to various data-collection instruments. They completed forms and presented at the workshop. Issues raised were discussed thoroughly in the workshop and were taken as inputs. This was followed by a SWOT analysis. Stakeholder demands and leverages were identified, strategic issues assessed; and vision, mission and objectives were articulated.

The eight Chapters visited for intensive consultation on the draft strategic plan and on how to develop national chapter strategic plans were Botswana, Kenya, Namibia, Rwanda, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania and Uganda. At a joint meeting of the Executive Committee and national chapter leaders, the gap and SWOT analyses reports were discussed and the new research programme which forms part of the plan was endorsed. The final process was the development of the Results-based Management Log-frame, produced by the Secretariat.

SWOT ANALYSES

To explore the external environment in which it is operating and the internal environment in which it is functioning, OSSREA has undertaken a SWOT analysis.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Rich experience in providing African scholars with ample opportunities to conduct research • Reputable publications • Well functioning documentation centre • Transparent grant award system • Good interpersonal relationships among staff	• Overreliance on external donors with a weak resource mobilization model as a fund-raising mechanism; • Weak membership registry that lacks a systemized mechanism for

• Lean internal structure at HQ • Capacity to do more with less • Acceptable level of employee competence and motivation at HQ	membership fee; • Dependence on donors for support so as to schedule and run research methodology and Gender Mainstreaming courses; • Weak relationship between Chapters and Headquarters; • Ad hoc election of jurors and reviewers of the journal articles and other research outputs; • No formal human resources development policy; • Inadequate ICT infrastructure
Opportunities	**Threats/Challenges**
• Positive attitudes and political commitment from African governments for trans-disciplinary research; • Supportive relationship with regional and international organizations as a globally recognized Think Tank; • Increasing demand for evidence-based research for policy making; • Strong overall performance record; • Increasing number of female scholars; • Goodwill from OSSREA members who are skilled, knowledgeable and multi-disciplinary; • Continued commitment of international donor agencies; • Strong links with higher learning institutes in the region; • Potentials of better IT; • Real and considerable need for continuous and in-depth research; • Regular and of high quality research products that are shared on-line and off-line to a wide audience; • Wide demand for OSSREA's research, consultancy and capacity-building programmes.	• Maintaining and sustaining the research network especially with the trans-disciplinary approach; • Lack of commitment from researchers to help the secretariat fund-raise; • Competition from profit-making research and consultancy institutions; • Donors and governments preference for national Think Tanks; • Changing donor priorities.
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Strengths: Enhancing Factors

Rich experience in providing African scholars ample opportunities to conduct research, and in building researchers' capacity

OSSREA is well regarded by both beneficiaries and donors as an asset for African scholars. In the past 30 years, OSSREA has fostered more than 1,000 scholars of all cadres to set their own research agenda, to carry out in-depth and analytical research on social science issues confronting Africa, and to produce social science knowledge with relevant input to public policy and dialogue. Further, it has offered training courses in research methodology and gender mainstreaming to equip African scholars with state-of –the art techniques in these fields.

OSSREA's primary goal is to promote African scholarship through internationalization of social science research and capacity building. OSSREA primarily achieves this goal through provision of research grants for senior and early career researchers. As they carry out research, they are equipped with skills and knowledge in research development framework, institutional strengthening, academic writing and communicating research for research uptake.

Table 1: Research grant categories and total number of grant awardees by Gender

Categories of research grant awards	Number of grantees			
	Female	Male	NI	Total
Young Scholars research grant				
Gender issues research grant (1989-2009)	150	15	25	290
Social science research grant (1988-2009)	53	233	8	294
Total Young scholars	203	348	33	584
Post-doctoral research grant (2004-2009)	8	12		20
Sabbatical research grant (2004-2009)	6	14		20
Senior scholars research grant (2001-2009)	10	41		51
Knowledge harvesting research grants(2014-2016)	17	34		51
Total number of grantees (all categories)				726

Table 2: Types of capacity-building programs and total number of trainees at Chapters and Regional level

Types of capacity building program	Number of trainees
Research methodology training (2000-2009)	445
Research Methodology Training (2016)	32
Gender training (2005-2007)	104
Gender Mainstreaming in Research Training (2016)	98
Research Development Framework and Institutional Strengthening (2016)	21
Total	700

Reputable Publications

OSSREA has a proven system for publication, documentation and dissemination of research outputs. Through its books, monographs, tri-annual bulletin, and the internationally recognized social science journal (EASSRR), OSSREA has achieved prominence in the production and dissemination of social science knowledge. The books and the journals have high academic quality and international reputation. They all undergo rigorous peer reviews. They are used by several African and Western-based universities and research institutions for teaching and research. Some of the books are co-published with reputable international publishers. Between 1985 and 2015, OSSREA has produced and disseminated two issues of the EASSRR Journal per year and 201 peer-reviewed books in total.

Table 3: OSSREA publications by thematic area (1985-2010)

Thematic area	Number of Publications
Global health and Gender Issues	33
Natural Resources Management (NRM), Agriculture and Environment	112
African Conflicts, Migration and Peace	12
Good Governance, Democracy and Human Rights	15
Dry-lands Husbandry Project (DHP) and Pastoralism	12
Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSP)	12
Trade, Investment and Economic Development	12
Youth employment	03
Agriculture and food security	8
Miscellaneous	34
Total	253

Well-functioning documentation centre

OSSREA has a documentation centre in Addis Ababa holding 2,500 books and journals which are widely used through a library system with an organized search database.

Transparent grant award system

OSSREA's grants system for young scholars, sabbaticals, senior researchers and post-doc fellows is acknowledged as rigorous, credible, effective and transparent. Research grants are determined by juries. OSSREA helps identify manuscript reviewers from a wide range of social sciences experts in Africa and worldwide, and has continuous follow-up disciplines.

Good internal working relationships

After earlier difficulties, participatory and transparent management practices now prevail and employees are working cooperatively, with professionalism and with positive internal networking. Changes recommended by NORAD and DANIDA evaluation reports were effected. OSSREA now has a new face.

Lean structure

OSSREA performs its activities through two-line units (research and publications) and one staff unit (administration and finance). The structure is lean and simple and allows easy coordination of activities and smooth flow of information. It has now adopted the project method approach where most of the academic staff are aligned to projects that they are running.

Capacity to do more with less

Despite severe financial constraints over recent years, the OSSREA Secretariat has maintained a high standard of service delivery in research and capacity building and it has cleared the publications and the financial accounts backlog. Cost effectiveness is embraced as a virtue with guidance of OSSREA Procurement and Financial Manual. The performance potential, given more resources, is clear.

Employee competence and motivation

OSSREA has 11 employees at the moment. The staff capacity was down-sized when donor funding was halted. It is heavily relying on its network of scholars for accomplishment of tasks. Their qualifications and experience are appropriate in each assignment. Some staff work well in collaboration where activities (such as organizing workshops and training) call for joint efforts. Many members of the administrative staff are willing to provide support to the technical units. Professional staff shows strong commitment to the objectives of their units. However, this model is hampering the effectiveness of the organization. There is urgent need to hire competent regular academic staff at the secretariat so as to boost her capacity.

WEAKNESSES: INHIBITING FACTORS

Adherence to conventional programmes and means of delivery

Alternative mechanisms for knowledge creation such as commissioned research, contract research, comparative and collaborative research are a new paradigm shift from the conventional methods of research and capacity building. Transdisciplinary research is meeting resistance due to specialization of knowledge, limited training opportunities, and the dilemma that scholars have on how their research outputs will be received and published in the academic space. OSSREA's is at a nascent stage of this paradigm shift and is determined to contribute to new frontiers of knowledge.

Unsustainable financial position

For the past five years OSSREA has not been able to mobilize enough donors or other funding for research grants. In 2007 the plan to award grants for 30 young scholars, 5 sabbaticals, 4 senior researchers, and 4 post-doctoral fellows was not totally achieved. In 2008 no grants were awarded. In 2009 the plan to give grants for 30 young researchers, 4 senior scholars, 4 post-doctoral fellows, and 5 sabbaticals was reduced to only 10 young and 2 senior scholars. In 2015, DANIDA fund was limited though it produced 53 research products, out of which were 5 books, one dissertation and one Social Science Research Series. One of the problems is over-reliance on conventional resource mobilization.

Planning and coordination bottlenecks

Between 2005 and 2007, planning became over-centralized and coordination between units weakened. There was no unity of commands, and friction between major units arose. This was exacerbated by the fact that the Finance and Administration unit primarily served the Executive Office and marginalized the affairs of the directorates. As a result, information bottlenecks surfaced, files and grant and contract information became personalized, and accounts were not disaggregated per activity. Between 2008 and 2009 corrective measures were taken to harmonize systems, enhance internal communication, and institutionalize procedures and integration of funds and budgets. More needs to be done to institutionalize improved management systems and procedures as well as coordination of budgets and funds.

Policy gaps

Some areas of policy and procedure are not sufficiently systemized, and some need to be updated. Problems exist in each directorate, in areas including management of grants, defaulters, reviewers, and juries; human resource management (e.g. staff development, leadership succession); ICT (e.g. provision of content for publishing, helpdesk services, supporting devices and network infrastructure). New policies are needed to make it easy to identify responsibilities, evaluate performance, link salaries to activities and make directorates and units more accountable.

Membership registry

No system exists to show Chapter membership figures over time, nor precise individual membership profile and fee payment status in the Chapters, nor particulars of institutional membership such as country, nature of undertaking and other details, nor updates on membership circulation within and between Chapter countries. Currently members are "lost" when they move from one country to another.

Training programme challenges

OSSREA's research capacity-building services through training on research methodology and gender mainstreaming are in high demand, but face many problems.

- Some planned training activities have not been conducted because of shortage of funds
- Funds set aside for training have supported only some countries
- Low fee rates make recruitment of lead facilitators difficult
- Criteria for selection of facilitators is not well developed and approved
- Lack of information on funding makes advance planning of courses unpredictable
- Up-to-date data on applicants and facilitators in not sufficient to make the selection process easy and transparent
- OSSREA has not conducted tracking studies to measure the impact of courses on research capacity.

These weaknesses affect the quality of training programs and the capacity to assess their relevance and contribution to research capacity development.

Research output by young scholars

The standard of research output from young scholars is a cause for concern – especially the tendency to place description and narrative information above analysis, failure to establish validity and reliability of methods, and weaknesses in statistical techniques. Causes include lack of mentorship, insufficient emphasis on writing skills, and no "continuous learning" forum for young scholars. The quality of some reports – even from senior scholars, sabbaticals, and post-doctoral fellows – also falls below expectation.

Management of grants and grantees

The system of managing and monitoring grantees – provision of services and information, follow-up and recording of performance and payments - has lost momentum since 2005. While these problems are being addressed an adequate and effective monitoring and contract enforcement system needs to be put in place.

Relationship between Chapters and Headquarters

Communication between Chapters and Headquarters has been erratic. While most Chapters have organized workshops and discussion forums, many have not initiated research or capacity building projects and maintained membership records. Some have not been accountable for

publications and the yearly subsidy sent from headquarters. Part of the problem is that Chapters are poorly funded and incapable of employing workers. The seed money provided for their core activities is very small, and some cannot raise funds locally. There is also an acute need to develop a system of networking among chapters, to create national Chapters' websites, and to empower and enable Chapters to act on-behalf of OSSREA in their respective countries.

Jurors and Reviewers

OSSREA's long and successful experience working with juries and reviewers has been more speculative than strategic. There is not yet a system for identifying reviewers who are specialized in particular social science areas, nor a directory of reviewers /social scientists in the region beyond lists compiled in 1994 and updated in 2001 without e-mail or telephone contacts. The selection of reviewers and jurors has continued to be ad hoc and wanting in transparency. There is need for a systematically compiled and updated data on these resources in the region and the diaspora, with guidelines on transparent selection.

Avenues for disseminating research output

Distribution outlets (e.g. direct mail, book fairs and on-line services) are few and published materials are not usually distributed on time. Recent trebling of postal charges has made conventional means more problematic. It is not clear how many of OSSREA's publications are accessed and used. The Secretariat's search for new avenues of dissemination is pivotal.

Human resources development policies

OSSREA does not have a formal staff development program. Some staff members have taken the opportunity of evening courses at Addis Ababa University that lead to a BA degree. A few are attending short-term online training programmes in foreign countries. However, training is on a case-by-case basis, not founded on OSSREA's human resources needs and not systematically supported through funding or time allowance. In 2009 the Secretariat gave limited funding for lower categories of staff to upgrade their operational and communication skills and gave study leave to technical and professional staff doing higher degrees. These initiatives have yet to be built into a long term human resources and management development plan, especially on short-term training that leads to retooling the technical capacity of the administrative and professional staff.

Inadequate IT Infrastructure

OSSREA's IT infrastructure is not well developed and requires the installation of different systems— upgrading the library system and introducing a new database program, systems for internal messaging and collaboration, e-learning, document management, research database, web-based ERP, etc.

Headquarters' connectivity is ill-equipped to make use of Internet-based ICT services. Service to OSSREA customer outside Ethiopia is particularly afflicted by the absence of an online ordering and payment facility. Most of these problems are not OSSREA-specific, but depend on national policies and bandwidth. A search for new entry points needs to continue.

OPPORTUNITIES
Favorable attitudes from African Governments

African leaders increasingly recognize the need for African-based social science knowledge in its own right and as a vital policy input. OSSREA's research outputs on poverty reduction, conflict, HIV/ AIDS, good governance and related social issues are being used to inform policy making and implementation. OSSREA has launched collaborative research projects with the Ethiopian government in policy reform. It is negotiating collaborative research methodology courses with parliaments in Botswana, Namibia and the East African Community. There is existing and growing opportunity for OSSREA to continue conducting policy-oriented social science research that supports government goals of political, social and economic development.

Supportive relationships with regional and international organizations

OSSREA has established links with AU, ECA, COMESA, IGAD, SADC, ILO, UNDP, ACBF, UNFPA, UNHCR, the African Development Bank, etc, some of whom have approached OSSREA for commissioned research and consultancy. OSSREA has observer status in all AU meetings. OSSREA is thus in an advantageous position to network and conduct joint research activities on African sociopolitical issues. Negotiations are on-going for more tangible collaborative activities with regional bodies.

Increasing number of applicants for research methodology training activities

For more than two decades, OSSREA has been providing research methodology and gender mainstreaming courses, and the beneficial results are well recognized. The number of applicants for training far exceeds the number of places available, indicating the need for, and value viability of capacity growth.

Research methodology training program			Gender training program		
Year	**Applied**	**Accepted and Benefited**	**Year**	**Applied**	**Accepted and Benefited**
2000	156	28	2005	39	9
2001	184	31	2006	104	13
2002	124	34	2007	43	15
2003	220	34	2008	5	17
2004	245	35			
2005	186	39			
2006	178	41			
Total	1293	242		237	54

Commendable overall record of performance

The validity of OSSREA's mission, and its on-going importance, is widely recognized for its relevance to African Scholars and universities, its contribution to production of social science knowledge in Africa, and the impetus it gives African academics (often marginalized in the global production of knowledge) to think and write about African social problems and opportunities. A recent external evaluation report (SIDA Evaluation 2007) stated that OSSREA's research and training grants demonstrate relevance, quality, effectiveness, and transparency. It also appreciates OSSREA for continuing to deliver on capacity building and institutional strengthening.

Increasing number of female scholars

The increase in the number of female researchers in OSSREA's programmes (including post-doc and senior scholar levels) provides role models, capacity to better address gender issues, and reveals African challenges and opportunities from different perspectives etc.

Goodwill from OSSREA members

Members of the 19 Chapters are enthusiastic senior and young scholars who are committed to social science research in Eastern and Southern Africa. Some of the Chapters are equally committed to mobilizing scholars and the promotion of relevant African-based social science research. The wide Chapter network allows OSSREA to reach and tap into expertise throughout the region and to make itself more visible and relevant. With websites, Chapters could become national reference centers.

Continued commitment of international donor agencies

For the past 30 years, OSSREA has been generously funded by international donors, especially SIDA, the Netherlands Government, NORAD and IDRC. While in one sense OSSREA's over-dependence on donor funding is a weakness (90% of the annual budget has come from donors) the prospects for maintaining and increasing this support are good. Except for recent holdbacks owing to management and financial crises that surfaced in 2007, OSSREA has been in good financial standing and has continued to get the necessary support and commitment from donor agencies. OSSREA has also managed to reorganize itself very quickly after the internal crisis of 2007, clearing its publications backlog and securing clean certificates of accounts in 2008 and 2009. This has increased the potential for continued donor trust and support.

Strong links with institutions of higher learning

Many universities in the region are planning to produce a large number of Masters and Ph.D. graduates, although they are challenged by lack of resources and capable professionals to teach and guide the research activities. OSSREA has long and close relationships with these institutions and an acknowledged role. All national chapters are physically hosted by universities. Some have Memoranda of Understanding with the universities on working partnership. With such goodwill and with OSSREA building capacity for university researchers, potential for advanced cooperation is high.

Information communication technology

Advanced communication systems -internet service, online forums for capacity building, dialogue and networking, online journals, online transaction (e-commerce), e-learning facilities, internal messaging and collaboration systems, document management systems, increased bandwidth etc – have huge potential. If existing national policy and bandwidth problems are solved, OSSREA can increase its IT-based service delivery, enabling members and other users to share documents and access global research outcomes. OSSREA can also use online transaction to sell its publications in all parts of the world and maintain an online membership directory. IT has reduced the need and cost of physical meetings or even capacity building. For example, MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) are now a tool for reaching wide audiences in teaching and learning. For management, strong ICTs where they are available, can be used to facilitate meetings using skypes, webinars and online communication. So far OSSREA has done well using its website. In the absence of donor support meetings like those of Liaison Officers could be made online pending mobilization of funds.

Increasing demand for continuous and in-depth research

High demand for OSSREA's services is assured. Eastern and Southern Africa's political, social and economic challenges and opportunities require in-depth research to explore and analyze their causes and dimensions and to suggest possible remedies. Poverty, conflict, bad governance, HIV/AIDS, migration, unemployment, climate change, etc, are persistent. This presents a regional research organ with both an obligation and a hungry market.

Widening scope for collaborative research, consultancy and capacity building programmes

OSSREA is increasingly approached by regional and international organizations to conduct commissioned research. There are also requests from individuals and academic institutions on the twin capacity-building programmes -research methodology and gender training. These trends present outreach, capacity and revenue opportunities.

CHALLENGES AND POSSIBLE CONSTRAINTS

Link between academic researchers and policy makers

As a leading research and capacity building organization, OSSREA aspires to work with governments in the region to close the gap between policy and research. There are, however, challenges to be overcome. Some of them are: a) politicians' wariness towards research findings that question the feasibility and appropriateness of existing policies or that are contradictory to their policy agenda; b) politicians' reluctance to accept alternative policies suggested by researchers; c) researchers' tendency to be overly critical of existing government policies without suggesting viable alternatives; d) researchers' inability to package their findings in a language and format that can easily be understood by, and be accessible and acceptable to, policy-makers; and e) governments' unwillingness and lack of resources to finance social science research.

Commitment from researchers to produce quality research outputs

Some scholars in the region are reluctant to develop new African-based social science theories and methodologies or even innovative research output. To the detriment of relevance, very few develop or use African case studies in higher learning institutions. In some cases, it is impossible to attract high caliber researchers in particular social science fields. Moreover, OSSREA has had a number of dropouts of grantees who have not completed their research work within the agreed time, or at all. The reasons for such problems include staff mobility, OSSREA's competition with other agencies for commitment of the same researchers, lack of time due to heavy teaching loads by some teachers/researchers, and lack of continuous support and monitoring.

Competition from other research and consultancy institutions

In the region, the competition for donor-funded research activities and consultancy work is intense. There are many interests vying for funds from similar donors. OSSREA needs to promote its distinctive role and to network with these institutions to minimize duplication of effort.

Donor dependence

OSSREA has not been in a position to create its own sources of funding. Since its establishment, 90% of OSSREA's expenditure has been covered through funding from a limited number of donors. During the period 2007–2009, it experienced different funding problems—some donors questioned the long-term sustainability of OSSREA, and the global financial crisis has obstructed efforts to widen its financial base. This challenges the organization to look for ways to guard itself against financial insecurity, such as widening the donor base, anchoring its activities in the programmes of regional organizations such as the AU, ECA and the RECs, increasing funds through contract research, respecting the requirements of the active donors, and keeping the good image of OSSREA as a reputable and transparent research and capacity-building organization. The Resource Mobilization Policy should be re-examined and implemented especially in areas relating to the following:

- *Forging partnership with corporate bodies: The* Secretariat is developing a programme on private sector development. The aim is trying to solicit support from private enterprises to support research and postgraduate courses on the private sector. EC Members are requested to take lead in their own countries and those in their portfolios to mobilize banks and transnational corporations to fund projects on issues of interest to them.
- *Mobilizing support for OSSREA at national and regional levels:* EC Members are requested to use their membership of this august Think Tank to mobilize support in terms of donations and project activities in their countries. You are the ones in your countries who know where the money is. What you need to do is to convince the authorities that OSSREA can handle the problems they are grappling with and deliver. You will be the coordinators of these projects you identify.

Networking with members, Chapters, regional and international institutions

OSSREA can enhance its relevance and visibility through networking with relevant organs or Stakeholders and utilizing them most effectively. The challenges for OSSREA are looking for ways and means to develop a clear and appropriate strategy to expand its network, and use it well to generate funds, mobilize qualified and talented researchers, disseminate its research outputs, and to link policy and research.

Human resources retention challenges

For the past three years OSSREA has operated with a small number of professional staff, the majority of whom are Ethiopians. To reflect the regional nature of the organisation, OSSREA will need to increase the number of staff from other member countries. With limited financial resources, recruiting, motivating and retaining such staff remains a serious challenge.

STAKEHOLDERS ANALYSIS

The process of strategic planning enabled OSSREA to identify the organization's key stakeholders and their concerns and expectations, and to explore how they influence the organization. OSSREA has carried out an extensive exercise to identify institutions that have any kind of stake in its overall operations. It has also analyzed their interests/expectations, their contributions and their possible reactions if their interests are not met.

Internal stakeholders include staff, Chapters and OSSREA members. They have a joint responsibility to meet the needs of beneficiaries -mainly the poor African communities upon whose needs the whole OSSREA mission is predicated. External stakeholders include universities, individual researchers, grantees and trainees who seek to address the concerns of poor sectors of the region; authorities (donors, national governments, regional and international organizations) and other actors addressing the development needs of communities.

Working very closely with universities, researchers, governments, CSOs, private practitioners and policy influencers will enable OSSREA not only to fulfill its mission of addressing the development needs of the poor, but will also enable research sectors to deliver effectively on policy research. Linking research and policy in a participatory manner will help donors and regional and national authorities to achieve their development objectives.

Table: Stakeholders Analysis

No.	Stakeholders	Interest/Expectations	Contributions	Risk if expectations not met
1.	OSSREA	To participate in major decisions, Obtain access to information/ Research findings; benefit from Opportunities – research grants and Training; define research agenda; Network with other researchers.	Financial; intellectual-defining research agenda and participating in research work, end OSSREA training programmes and Workshops, disseminating information, making OSSREA more visible.	Passive participation; stop Paying membership fees; badmouthing; complain; withdraw from OSSREA membership.
2.	OSSREA Chapters	Act in behalf of and represent OSSREA in their respective countries; Participate in major decisions; conduct research through their members; organize policy and training workshops; disseminate information; expand network	Mobilize members and resources; define research agenda; create and disseminate knowledge; build the capacity of their members; make OSSREA visible and relevant in their respective countries	Make Chapters inactive and disorganized; chapters forming themselves into autonomous organizations
3.	Researchers, scholars, academicians	Opportunity to conduct research; to contribute to OSSREA;s capacity building; to publish; to network with other researchers; recognition	Generate and disseminate social science knowledge; define research agenda; review and assess research manuscripts; make OSSREA more visible	Discontinue being part of OSSREA's research and capacity building activities.
4.	Grantees and Trainees	Get technical and financial support to conduct research; involve in training and workshops to develop capacity; publish; network with other researchers	Generate information and knowledge; define research agenda' make OSSREA visible and relevant	Stop applying for OSSREA's research grant programs; training and workshops; criticize and complain
5.	Donors major (SIDA/SAREC, NORAD, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs); others (IDRC, FORD Foundation, ADB)	OSSREA's programmes supported; effective, efficient and transparent use of resources; timely and high quality of research outputs that addresses social problems; sustainability of activities, policy impact; visibility of OSSREA; expanded network; value for money	Continued support and financial assistance; defining research agenda; end users of research outputs; monitoring and evaluating OSSREA's performance; make OSSREA more accountable, relevant and visible	Decrease or withdraw financial and material supports; reject OSSREA services

No.	Stakeholders	Interest/Expectations	Contributions	Risk if expectations not met
6.	All universities in the regions	Researcher grants and capacity building programs for their staff; collaborative research work; quality research output or publications to be used for research and teaching; institutional membership networking	House OSSREA's chapter offices; mobilize members; define research agenda; undertake research projects; end users knowledge; OSSREA members	Stop housing OSSREA and withdraw from OSSREA's activities

continued…

No.	Stakeholders	Interest/Expectations	Contributions	Risk if expectations not met
7.	Collaborating Universities and research institutions	Collaborative research work; high quality research output or publications to be used for research and teaching; institutional membership networking	Capacity enhancement for higher degrees specially Ph.D. programmes; institutional capacity develo0pment for managing research programmes; supporting the publication and dissemination capacity of staff; technical and financial support; defining research agenda; undertake joint research projects; became OSSREA members; end users and disseminators of OSSRA's research outputs; make OSSREA more visible	Lack interest to work with OSSREA' and undermine OSSREA's research output
8.	International and Regional organizations- ACBF, ADB, AU, COMESA, EAC IGAD, ILO, IMF, SADC, UNDP, UNICEF, UNECA, WB	Collaborative research work; delivery of quality action-oriented research output or publications; partnership and networking	Financial support; commissioned research projects; institutional membership	End partnership and collaborative research
9.	Governments of OSSREA member countries	Research outputs that inform public policy; capacity building programs for their higher learning and research institutions; collaborative research work	Legitimacy; financial support; end users of research outputs networking; make OSSREA more visible and relevant	Lack confidence and interest to work with OSSREA; and undermine OSSREA's research outputs

10.	Staff members	Enabling and stable working environment, adequate facilities; motivating pay and incentive mechanisms; training and development; recognition	Realize OSSREA objectives though performing its activities, engage in research, training, publications and consultancy services	Lack of motivation, absence of smooth functioning of various units; limited contributions, increased turnover
11	Service providers – publishers (project Muse, African Journal online, AVC publication); information services (internet service providers); and suppliers of office utilities and equipments	Smooth working relationship; respecting contractual agreements; transparency	Publications on time; internet services,	

SUMMARY OF THE SWOT AND STAKEHOLDER

From the SWOT analysis, it is clear that OSSREA should continue providing social science scholars in Eastern and Southern Africa with opportunities to conduct research, to set a research agenda of their own, and to promote social science knowledge production with relevant input to public policy and dialogue in Africa. Most of OSSREA's publications have high academic quality and international reputation and have been used by several African and western-based universities and research institutions for teaching and research. A well-functioning documentation centre, transparent grant award system, lean internal structure, good interpersonal relationship and good level of employee competence and motivation are striking strengths OSSREA should maintain.

Shortcomings include the need for effective operational planning, dynamic operational policies and procedures, up-to-date registries of members at Headquarters and Chapters; efforts towards cutting-edge research outputs, strengthening collaboration with institutions of higher education in research and training; better management of grants and grantees; stronger relations between Chapters and Headquarters; policies to guide the selection of jury members and reviewers; new avenues for disseminating research output; clear staff development plans linked to OSSREA's activities; and more creative ways of using IT and mobilizing resources. Moreover, OSSREA needs a new generation of research projects covering new areas of research and capacity development.

There is wide demand for OSSREA's research, consultancy and capacity-building programmes; African governments' have an appetite for social sciences research; and regional and international organizations such as the AU, ACBF, ADEA, ADB, ECA, COMESA, EAC, IGAD, ILO, UNDP and others are supportive. External situations that provide OSSREA with ample opportunities include: increasing demand for research methodology workshops for Ph.D. and other higher degree students; the goodwill from OSSREA members to actively participate in research and capacity-building activities; the continued commitment of international donor agencies; the strong links between OSSREA and higher learning institutions; ICT and the increasing demand for more in-depth empirical research and dissemination of research results.

The external environment has not been conducive to Research-policy linkage. OSREA has heavy donor dependence and strong competition from other research and consultancy institutions vying for similar support. Networking with members, Chapters, regional and international institutions is not as strong as it could and should be.

OSSREA's stakeholders have different demands and leverages. Chapters expect to act on behalf of and represent OSSREA in their respective countries, to participate in major decisions, to conduct research through their members; to organize policy and training workshops; to disseminate information; and to expand networks. Donors expect value for money; effective, efficient and transparent use of resources; timely research outputs of high quality that address wide areas of social problems and have policy impact. The higher learning institutions in the region demand research grants and capacity building programs that enhance their own research and staff development programmes; collaborative research work; a wider scope of research outputs; support for staff to publish high-quality research output; and networking with other learning and research institutions in both south and north. Nonetheless, stakeholders' expectations share a common

denominator: using research to enrich policy for poverty alleviation in the region. Informed by the SWOT and stakeholders analyses, the following sections provide OSSREA's vision, mission and goals as well as the strategic objectives and activities.

MANAGEMENT MATRIX

A Result-based Management Matrix has been used in working out the strategic objectives, key activities, expected outputs, outcomes, indicators, and assumptions (Table below).