



# THETA

*African Solutions for Better Health*



## RESEARCH POLICY



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## OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

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**Research:** A systematic and original investigation of a phenomenon that seeks to provide an innovative and explicit answer to a well-defined question. Research is directed towards making a contribution towards knowledge within a specific field of inquiry. It includes the creation and improvement of theories, methods and techniques; the enhancement of existing knowledge; and the generation and dissemination of original results.

**Researcher:** Any person conducting and directing a research project. Where a research project is being conducted by a team, the principal researcher is the individual who is responsible for the direction and administration of the research project.

**Applied research:** Research that uses theories, principles and methods to solve practical problems

**Institutional research:** Research conducted by the Organisation to understand its services and its impact on the target population.

**Programme research:** Research conducted in order to evaluate, modify and develop new institutional programs. This type of research also includes the market analysis, implementation research and evaluation of the completed programs.

**Technological:** Research activities that apply scientific knowledge to the development of new technical applications or methods as well as the development of technical products and processes to be transferred to the market place. The use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction.

**Contractual:** Research and development projects that are funded. These projects require a formal agreement between THETA or the principal researcher and the funding Body.

**Externally-Funded:** Research projects that are supported by one or more external funding sources and carried out by THETA. These projects require a formal agreement between THETA or principal researcher and the funding Body.

**Internally-Funded:** Research projects that have been funded using THETA funds or other mechanisms of support, including Professional Development.

**Authorship:** Authors and co-authors are those persons who make a significant intellectual contribution to the collection, analysis, interpretation and dissemination of research results. Administrative and technical contributions to the research do not constitute authorship.

**Complainant:** The person making the allegation of misconduct in research. This person may or may not be directly affected by the alleged misconduct. This person may or may not be part of THETA staffs.

**Conflict of Interest:** A conflict of interest occurs whenever a researcher compromises his or her independence and impartiality while conducting a research project and the personal interests of the researcher are given priority over the objectives of the research.

**Misconduct:** Any deliberate attempt to mislead the scientific community or the public or to profit unduly from a situation related to the research activity.

**Human subjects:** Individuals or groups of individuals, such as publically identifiable social, ethnic, religious, or economic groups that are the source of raw or unformulated data in a research project.

**Research ethics:** A set of values, principles and rules that should be promoted in the framework of research involving human subjects that define the responsibilities of the researcher and the institution involved with regard to the subjects of their research project.

**Research Ethics committee (REC):** A multi-disciplinary board established by an institution to conduct ethics reviews of research projects involving human subjects developed or undertaken within that institution.

**Research involving humans as subjects:** Research that includes the observation of people going about their daily activities, testing of new drugs or medical devices, interviewing an individual in public life for any purpose , and research involving remains, cadavers, tissues, biological fluids, embryos or foetuses. It includes naturalistic observation, physical, sociological or psychological tests and measurements, survey research, non-intrusive systematic observation, and the study of recorded data from previous studies, databases, and archives, in which it is possible to identify living individuals. This also includes human remains, cadavers, human organs, tissues, and biological fluids, for individually identified subjects, embryos, or foetuses. It does not include research about individuals (usually in the public arena or an artist) based exclusively on publically-available information such as documents, records, works, performances, archival materials or third-party interviews

# CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND

THETA-Uganda is a not-for-profit Ugandan Non-THETA al Organisation (NGO) and company limited by guarantee that was formed in the year 1992 as a research project. Most of the researches carried out were in alternative therapies for treatment of HIV/AIDS at time when there were no ARVs. THETA was then registered as health and research management Non-Governmental Organisation in 1995. Since then THETA has been operating country-wide with the core mandate of improving health and access to health care through promotion of collaboration between the traditional and biomedical health care systems. This has been done through; promotion of research in traditional medicine; strengthening capacity of communities for holistic health care and building models for traditional and conventional medicine integration. Research has an important role of advancing and refining knowledge and providing solutions to health problems facing the society locally and internationally

Since 2014, THETA decided to institutionalise research in TCM as one of its key programmes to promote epidemiological and clinical research in TCM. As a first step, THETA has established a department of integrative medicine and research to champion this cause and to have a research policy in place to guide the research operations. THETA also intends to have Research and Ethics Committee (REC) focussing on research in traditional medicine products, practices and practitioners, the first of its kind in Uganda.

## Rationale

THETA plans to enhance and expand research activities in all its projects and departments. The Organisation encourages research activities that contribute to the achievement of its institutional objectives as outlined in its current strategic plan (Strategic Plan 2014-2018). The Organisation encourages both individual and collaborative research projects. In the period 2014-2018, THETA seeks to; 1) institutionalise research in TCM as one of its key programmes to promote epidemiological and clinical research in TCM; 2) implement a model for integrative medicine to support research and serve as a centre for learning for replication of similar models in the public health care system. The emphasis of research is safety and efficacy studies for herbal remedies that are currently in use to treat illnesses of public health importance with resultant product development that targets the national and international markets. With adoption of this policy, research will be mainstreamed into all projects implemented at THETA.

# CHAPTER 2: POLICY GOAL, OBJECTIVES AND MEASURES

## 2.0 Goal

Promote research that plays a significant role to influence policy and practice of Traditional medicine

## 2.1 Policy Objectives

1. To provide stewardship and governance for the coordination of research in traditional medicine
2. To set the essential research priorities of THETA in traditional medicine
3. To attain the highest possible level of ethical conduct in health and traditional medicine research
4. To provide a framework for resource mobilization for research sustenance
5. To promote dialogue and sharing of information between researchers, policy makers, and communities and translation of research findings into policy for traditional medicine
6. To build capacity to undertake research including human resource and infrastructure development
7. To promote Intellectual Properties Rights (IPRs) including material transfer, and equal opportunities in collaborative research.
8. To ensure adequate monitoring of all research activities

## 2.2 Policy measures

### **1. To provide stewardship and governance for the coordination of Traditional Medicine research**

The leadership of THETA Uganda will ensure harmonization, alignment and coordination of research. Health research requires collaboration between many different disciplines: biomedical, social and behavioural. Health being a multi-sectoral issue requires multidisciplinary efforts to identify possible solutions. The participation of all relevant disciplines and sectors in all processes from research priority setting, undertaking research and dissemination is essential. Inter-disciplinary and inter-sectoral collaboration in research must start at the early stage of identifying the research question and must continue up to

the dissemination of research findings. THETAs approach to research shall be multi-disciplinary and inter-sectoral in all research processes and application of findings.

In order to achieve this, THETA shall adopt the following strategies:

i) Develop and update guidelines and standards for research in traditional medicine products, and practices

ii) Establish platforms for consultation, stakeholder engagement, community participation and research dissemination in traditional medicine research processes and application of research findings.

iii) Establish partnerships within and outside the country as deemed appropriate to implementing the research and development agenda.

iv) Establish a framework for multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral collaboration in research and its application in Uganda and the region.

v) Work closely with related institutions in line with the mandates as provided in the statutes of these institutions.

vi) Ensure that research at THETA reflect attention to the various gender and diversity dimensions of research

## **2. To set the essential research priorities of THETA in traditional medicine**

Efforts will be made to ensure that prioritized research needs are identified addressing information gaps for policy, practice and advocacy for Traditional Medicine

In order to achieve this, THETA under the leadership of the Executive Director, shall:

i) Develop and regularly update an inventory of all institutions and practitioners involved in traditional medicine research in the country and region

ii) Develop and implement in a consultative manner a prioritized research agenda for traditional medicine research

iii) Establish a mechanism to monitor implementation of the prioritized research agenda

iv) Promote research into traditional medicine products and practices, their conservation and commercialization

v) Strengthen Traditional medical practitioners capacity to develop, monitor implementation and economically exploit their own research findings within the national framework of health research priorities in Uganda

### **3. To attain the highest possible level of ethical conduct in health and traditional medicine research**

Mechanisms will be made to ensure the highest possible ethical code of conduct and practice for research in traditional medicine including the safety and rights of research participants as well as the researchers

In order to achieve this, THETA under the leadership of the Executive Director shall:

- i) Develop and enforce guidelines for design and approval of research
- ii) Develop an ethical code of conduct for researchers at THETA and external research consortia members
- iii) Establish a REC approved by UNCST/ UNHRO
- iv) Establish a research team to oversee ethical issues” including safety of researchers and research subjects.

### **4. To mobilize funds for research sustenance**

Funding for research at THETA Uganda irrespective of source must be harnessed and applied to the prioritized agenda as much as possible. Funds mobilized for research shall be allocated and monitored to ensure proper utilization for prioritized research in traditional medicine.

In order to achieve this, THETA shall:

- i) Allocate 5% of the budget for research in all Programmes
- ii) Develop a framework for mobilizing research funds and their effective and efficient utilization including a honoraria system for successful proposal writing
- iii) Develop criteria in a consultative manner to guide funding of research activities outside the prioritized research agenda of THETA

iv) Collaborate with other health research institutions in order to solicit funds from other sources including individuals, the private sector and Development Partners

#### **5. To promote dialogue and sharing of information between researchers, policy makers, and communities and translation of research findings into policy for traditional medicine**

Efforts will be made to minimize duplication and fragmentation of research and ensure effective dissemination of research findings. Emphasis will be made to promote dialogue and sharing of information between researchers, policy makers, and communities and translation of research findings into policy

Emphasis will also be given to how research can be used to guide the development and implementation of policy on health promotion, diseases prevention, preventive treatment and health service delivery as enshrined in the National Policy for Public Private Partnership in Health.

In order to achieve this, THETA shall:

- i) Develop and regularly update an inventory of health research
- ii) Put in place dissemination mechanisms, fora and communication networks for sharing of research findings
- iii) Build capacity of policy makers and researchers in dissemination and application of research findings

#### **6. To build capacity to undertake research including human resource and infrastructure development**

To develop and sustain research for traditional medicine capacity building will be required in key areas such as human resource, infrastructure and grants management.

In order to achieve this, THETA shall:

- i) Undertake capacity assessment for research in the organization
- ii) Promote institutional and individual research interests in traditional medicine
- iii) Develop and support a capacity building plan addressing identified gaps
- iv) Develop and implement mentoring Programmes to enhance skills of researchers in traditional medicine

- v) In collaboration with institutions of higher learning, train health workers in traditional medicine and research
- vi) Harness active community involvement in traditional medicine research
- vii) Develop and implement motivation schemes to improve attraction and retention of skilled researchers in traditional medicine
- viii) Engage health training institutions to incorporate traditional medicine training in their curriculum.

## **7. To promote Intellectual Properties Rights”(IPRs)**

To promote the protection of IPRs THETA in collaboration with UNCST/UNRHO and relevant agencies shall work to promote intellectual property rights for innovations generated locally through

To achieve this THETA shall:

- i) Promote development of innovations relating to new knowledge and products in traditional and indigenous medicine
- ii) Work in collaboration with UNCST/UNHRO/URSB to support researchers in the protection and promotion of IPR and patenting in Traditional medicine
- iii) Promote awareness on benefit sharing agreements with the knowledge holders (traditional health practitioners) in collaborative research

## **8. To ensure adequate monitoring of all research activities at THETA**

Each research shall have in-built mechanisms for continuous monitoring of the research development, identifying and addressing unethical research, research plagiarism and mechanisms for redress. THETA will develop an instrument to be used in the monitoring process. The THETA Executive Director will be responsible for overall coordination and guidance of research at THETA and will work in liaison with universities, other research institutions, and other regulatory bodies, professional associations, in collaboration with the UNCST/UNRHO.

## CHAPTER 3:

# POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND STRUCTURES

This policy will guide all research activities at THETA Uganda for the period 2015 – 2025 and reviewed periodically by the Executive Director in consultation with the Board of Trustees. The Policy shall be implemented or supplemented in any way consistent with its terms and those of other THETA Policies and guidelines or procedures.

### 3.0 Institutional Research Ethics Committee

This policy establishes an IREC comprising of experts from various fields with high level of integrity and ethics and constituted according to the UNCST guidelines. The committee shall oversee the ethical and professional conduct of research involving Humans as research participants and for reviewing, evaluating and approving all research proposals for research projects directed by this policy as well develop, operationalize and review periodically guidelines on good research practices and misconduct. Therefore, all people subject to this policy shall adhere to provisions therein and guidance by the IREC, and apply them at all stages of their respective research. The responsibility of ensuring that research is conducted in a manner that respects the institutional Policy on ethics and integrity lie primarily to the researcher. When submitting an application as part of a team of researchers, the researcher shall ensure that the participation and roles played by each of these establishments have been defined and accepted.

This Committee shall be the only body authorized to govern all research involving human participants conducted at THETA to ensure research compliance with the national guidelines by UNCST on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human Participants. The IREC shall have powers to regulate all internal research involving human participants including but not limited to stopping research contrary to the ethical principles in this policy. Affected research projects under this policy shall be conducted only after IREC review and approval. The IREC shall be an independent technical committee within THETA.

### 3.1 Research Administration Office

This office shall be responsible for;

- Implementing all decision by THETA REC and THETA Management regarding research coordinates between the researchers, the IREC and external funding bodies;
- Keep an inventory of and circulate information on research grants;

- Create and maintain the institution's research and innovations data base accessible to all authorized stakeholders;
- Provide the necessary support for researchers to prepare research proposals and research management;
- Manage and administer the grants awarded to individual researchers;
- Refer all research proposals to the IREC for approval and participate in other IREC activities;
- Store all documents concerning IREC activities;
- Create platform for dissemination of research results;
- Organize annual events to implement as well as promote awareness of the policy;
- Periodically organizes training of staffs in current research trends;
- Draw up procedures for intellectual property identification, protection and management;
- Analyze reports, agreements and contracts between THETA and various researchers
- Advise THETA management on all issues related to research and Intellectual Property;
- Develop and update research management tools such as hand books and guidelines;
- Any other duties assigned by the Executive Director.

## Scope of Policy Applications

All research involving THETA staff, goodwill and any other resources shall be subject to this policy

## Effective date

The Executive Director shall inform all persons subject to this Policy of its terms as soon as possible after its adoption and at regular intervals thereafter through the Research and Innovations Administration office.

**Approved;**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. Kirya', with a large, stylized flourish above the name.

Prof. George Barnabas Kirya,  
Chairman Board of Trustees,  
THETA- Uganda



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