

July 10, 2020

Dear Professor Bhushan Patwardhan,

Re: Invitation to help lead development of a UN Research Roadmap for the COVID-19 Recovery

I am writing to invite you in your role at the Indian Council of Social Sciences Research to Co-Chair a Social Protection Steering Group (one of five such steering groups composed of international research funders) created to advise on the development of a *United Nations Research Roadmap for the COVID-19 Recovery*. Commissioned by the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, this UN Research Roadmap will complement and support the recently published UN COVID-19 Recovery Framework and will ensure that national and international socio-economic recovery strategies are informed by scientific evidence and by early lessons from the global response. This is a rapid initiative with the final roadmap to be published in September 2020. Your leadership is requested to co-chair three one-hour meetings of your steering group and help foster consensus around priority knowledge gaps and research areas.

Background

Building back from COVID-19 demands coordinated, decisive, and innovative policy action that is attuned to the needs of the most vulnerable populations. In order to catalyze and coordinate global research efforts, the UN Deputy Secretary-General asked me to lead a participatory process to identify the research priorities that will support an equitable global socio-economic recovery and continued progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This process will include outreach to research funding organizations, implementation leaders, and researchers in order to identify and articulate the research needed to support local, national, regional and global decision-makers in their work to rebuild and strengthen following COVID-19.

Analogous to the World Health Organization's Coordinated Global Research Roadmap, the UN Research Roadmap resulting from this process will focus on the downstream socio-economic consequences of COVID-19 and knowledge necessary for an equitable recovery. This roadmap will aim to help align research and funding efforts within five priority areas outlined in the UN COVID-19 Recovery Framework, including: 1) protecting health services and systems; 2) ensuring social protection and basic services; 3) projecting jobs, small- and medium-sized enterprises, and informal sectors workers; 4) supporting macroeconomic response and multilateral collaboration; and 5) strengthening social cohesion and community resilience.

The invitation

We would like to invite you to Co-Chair the Social Protection Steering Group, one of five steering groups composed of research funding leaders that are being convened to provide input on the content and research priorities for COVID-19 recovery. Each steering group corresponds to one of the five priority areas outlined in the UN COVID-19 Recovery Framework. Your steering group will bring together 8-10 senior representatives from other research funding organizations from around the world to help identify COVID-19 recovery-related knowledge gaps and articulate global research priorities to address these gaps. A template to efficiently guide the steering group work will be provided.

Priorities identified by the steering groups will form the core of the UN Research Roadmap set to be published in September 2020. For purposes of recognition and transparency, all steering group co-chairs and members will be acknowledged in the final roadmap document.

As Co-Chair, you would be responsible for chairing three one-hour virtual meetings with another co-chair and shepherding the group towards consensus. We expect this co-chairing role will require a minimum of 6 hours of your time spread over the next two months.

Since we are working on extremely compressed timelines and must be efficient, we have already set the three meeting dates for your steering group and hope you might be able to make yourself available:

- 1) **Monday, July 27, 2020** to open discussions on the group's mandate and brainstorm potential priority areas;
- 2) **Monday, August 3, 2020** to discuss early findings and begin deciding the top priority areas; and
- 3) **Tuesday, August 25, 2020** to refine and finalize the top research priorities for inclusion in the UN Research Roadmap.

Specific meeting times and logistics will be coordinated by my team at the Canadian Institutes of Health Research's Institute of Population & Public Health.

Next steps

Given the rapid timeline for this work, we request you reply to this invitation with cc to Morgan Lay (morgan.lay@globalstrategylab.org) before Friday July 17, 2020. Should you be unavailable to represent your organization, we would welcome suggestions of another senior executive who could fill this role. We will try to act on your suggestion while ensuring gender parity within each steering group.

Thank you in advance for considering this invitation and for your possible engagement in this process. Your contributions will help to catalyze a worldwide learning effort where national and global COVID-19 socio-economic recovery strategies are informed by the best possible research evidence.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Hoffman', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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