

# swissuniversities

## SUDAC Programme

### swissuniversities

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## COFER Academy 2030 – Partnerships for transformative knowledge and policy

### Summary

The overarching goal of this project is to support the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda through collaborative partnerships between five Swiss higher education institutions and two partner institutions from Kenya and Ethiopia and their multi-thematic and multi-stakeholder networks. The partnerships are designed to enhance societal dialogue and support policy processes, by developing and testing innovative, multisectoral approaches for data and knowledge sharing at the land–health–conflict nexus.

Concretely, the project aims to develop and test a showcase – that would act as an incubator – for scaling out new knowledge generation approaches by amalgamating periodical official data sources with near real-time big data from earth observation and social media sources. Combining these different data sources is expected to lead to enhanced knowledge provision for dealing with trade-offs and synergies between the target dimensions, which are often contradictory. The project will then test the new approaches and processes in dealing with conceptual challenges inherent in the 2030 Agenda. This is intended to lead to improved steering and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as to more informed policy processes amid interrelated targets in differing sociopolitical contexts. The project has selected to focus on the interlinkages of SDGs 15, 3, and 16 (i.e. “Life on Land”, “Good Health & Well-being”, “Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions”).

To fulfil the project’s aim of providing a multisectoral perspective of trade-offs and co-benefits at the nexus of land resources, health, and social conflicts, the participating entities will pool their resources and competencies. The five Swiss partners – CDE, the Software Institute of HSR, swispace, Swiss TPH, and PH Bern, have a strong international track record in science and applied research. The disciplines represented encompass geography, environmental science, epidemiology and health, political science, informatics, and education for sustainable development. Equally, the partners from the global South – CETRAD (Kenya) and WLRC (Ethiopia) – are leading interdisciplinary national and regional research and education centres with a long-standing international track record in education, research, and evidence-informed policy dialogue for sustainable development. This consortium will follow the principles of transboundary research partnerships of the Swiss Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (KFPE), of which the Director of CDE is the president, and the Directors of swispace and Swiss TPH are ad personam members. Further, the consortium will make use of the partners’ proven experience in working in

research partnership programmes such as the NCCR North-South or the r4d programme. Duties, obligations, and benefit sharing in the different phases of the project will be negotiated and assigned to each partner at the project's inception, and continuously monitored. To successfully cope within the given time and resource limits, activities will be partially sequenced. While a number of activities will be conducted in parallel in the two Southern partner countries, programming and testing of the enhanced data component – combining official periodical data sources with near real-time big data – will be done first in Kenya with its comparatively high level of freedom of expression (see activities in objective 3), with subsequent transfer and adaptation to Ethiopia.

As an integral part of its activities, and to amplify its intended outcomes, the project will engage in targeted education and training efforts for sustainable development. Capitalizing on the context-specific lessons learned, the project will prepare various training materials and carry out formal and informal training in technical and conceptual issues, both for staff of the partners as well as for people engaged in policy and dialogue from governmental and non-governmental organizations. Institutional capacities will be addressed by supporting academic entities and their lecturers in integrating sustainable development into existing courses and curricula. Additionally, tailor-made courses for students at PhD level will be elaborated and integrated into the curriculum of the inter-university International Graduate School (IGS) North-South of the Universities of Basel, Bern, Lausanne and Zurich.

Besides its conceptual and methodological innovations (e.g. enhanced data and knowledge generation, multisectoral perspective for dealing with trade-offs between different target dimensions) and its expected development outcomes (e.g. improved steering, monitoring, and negotiation of transformation towards sustainable development), the project also aims to have lasting institutional impacts. This involves developing and institutionalizing interdisciplinary cooperation between the partners, to be able to conceptualize, validate, and apply a trade-off perspective for dealing with the inherent target conflicts of the 2030 Agenda. The project will ensure that the Southern partner institutions are better equipped to more comprehensively assume their roles as knowledge hubs and brokers in policy and development dialogues. To help secure and maintain the institutional sustainability of this consortium, we will further develop the showcase by refining and incorporating new modules that address different sets of development targets and trade-offs. Given the stable funding situation of all partner institutions, we are confident of securing the financial means for continuous further development of the consortium.