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# Microbiome Task Force

## Terms of Reference

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Version 1 (03 September 2020)

### Contents

Background and Purpose	2
Aims and Objectives	2
Membership and Meetings	2
Meetings	3
Agenda items	3
Minutes	3
Frequency of meetings	4
Quorum requirements	4
Task forces	4
Publications	4
Reporting and Evaluations	4
Appendix	5
Achievements and Milestones	5
Membership List	5

## 1. Background and Purpose

The field of microbiome research has grown considerably in recent years. Microbial composition dysbiosis has been repeatedly shown to be associated with various diseases. African population data have, however, not been adequately represented in these efforts. To this end, a growing number of researchers within the H3Africa network have incorporated microbiome studies into their project portfolios to provide much needed data on the African microbiome. This will facilitate more robust associations, applicability in the African context as well as contribute towards more comprehensive reference datasets.

## 2. Aims and Objectives

### A. Harmonize and meta-analyse data from the different microbiome projects within H3Africa. For this to be accomplished, we aim to:

- Encourage the collection and sharing of a minimum set of defined variables
- Employ standardized protocols, as much as possible, to ensure similar data integrity levels.
- Develop frameworks for meta-analysis of microbiome data
- Sharing technical experiences and methods

### B. Experience and knowledge sharing to build capacity

- Create avenues (workshops, special-focus meetings, etc) for training
- Journal Clubs
- Webinars
- H3ABioNet Workshops
- Collaboration with H3ABioNet Microbiome Portal team

### C. Provide focused data analyses support

- Organize data analyses jamborees to facilitate thorough analyses of group microbiome data with assistance from the H3ABionet.

## 3. Membership and Meetings

The Microbiome Task Force (TF) will consist of members and a planning committee. Membership to the Microbiome TF is voluntary although every H3Africa project with a microbiome component is encouraged to be represented. The role of the individual members of the H3Africa Microbiome TF includes:

- Attending meetings regularly and actively participating in the group's work.
- Partaking in the scheduled microbiome-relevant presentations during meetings.

The planning committee will include the Chair, Co-Chair, Coordinator/Facilitator, and at least one representative from each funder. Additional members could be included as deemed necessary. All members of the planning committee will discuss and help drive the agenda of the Microbiome TF.

The Chair's duties are outlined below:

- (i) To provide leadership and direction for the Microbiome TF, mainly through reviewing agenda items and following up on action items.
- (ii) To Chair Microbiome TF meetings.
- (iii) To report to the Steering Committee of the H3Africa Consortium; during teleconference calls and during consortium meetings.
- (iv) To liaise with the Coordinator/Facilitator, as well as representatives of funding bodies (US-NIH and UK-Wellcome Trust)

The Chair and Co-Chair will serve for **18 months**. After the Chair steps down, the Co-Chair will automatically be promoted to be Chair if (s)he is willing, and a new Co-Chair will be elected.

#### ○ **Meetings**

The Microbiome TF meetings are open to all Microbiome TF members. Other H3Africa task force Chairs and members can be invited when synergies between the different H3Africa task forces are identified. External experts may also be invited to Microbiome TF meetings in instances where their input is deemed important.

If a motion/action item is agreed upon, it shall be assumed that it will be adopted unless members raise objections within a week of the motion/resolution being passed.

#### ○ **Agenda items**

All agenda items will be forwarded to the planning committee for discussion, but the Chair will be responsible for prioritisation. All agenda items should be sent to the coordinator/facilitator by close of business 7 working days prior to the next scheduled meeting and the Chair should approve agenda items 5 working days prior to the next scheduled meeting.

The agenda and associated attachments will be distributed at least **5 working days** prior to the next scheduled meeting by the Facilitator/Coordinator. Our core goals will form standing agenda items.

#### **A. Progress reports on actionable items with respect to microbiome projects data**

#### **B. Microbiome-relevant presentations**

#### ○ **Minutes**

The Facilitator/Coordinator will assist in taking microbiome TF minutes and distribute these to the microbiome TF mailing list for approval. Full copies of the minutes, including attachments, will be provided to all H3Africa microbiome TF members no later than **7 working days** following each meeting. By agreement of the group, out-of-session decisions

will be deemed acceptable. Where agreed, all out-of-session decisions will be recorded in point form.

- **Frequency of meetings**

The H3Africa microbiome TF task force will meet once monthly (3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month). However, task forces could meet separately when and if the need arises.

- **Quorum requirements**

A quorum will comprise at least five (5) task force members.

#### **4. Sub-groups**

The task force could have a maximum of 4 task forces who will report on progress during each meeting. Each task force will revise their deliverables/milestones every 6 months during H3Africa consortium meetings. The task forces will report on progress and discuss challenges during microbiome TF meetings. However, the task forces may also continue discussions via email should they choose to. Suggested task forces are below:

- A. Coordinate and support training across the consortium**
- B. Track developmental needs across member projects**
- C. Funding**

#### **5. Publications**

Publications will be based on the H3Africa publication policy. Any member of the microbiome TF can suggest and lead a publication based on the work they conducted within the microbiome TF by providing a manuscript concept document (MCD).

#### **6. Reporting and Evaluations**

The effectiveness of the Microbiome TF will be reviewed after 6 months based on agreed upon milestones (see Appendix). The Chair will also provide oral presentations to the Steering Committee at least once a year on progress. The Chair will provide reports on the task force's activities during annual H3Africa meetings.

## 7. Appendix

### 7.1. Achievements and Milestones

**Table 1:** Outcome and Milestones

Pillar	Target	Plans from February 2020	Team members
<b>Coordinate &amp; Support Training</b>			
<b>Tracking Developmental Needs</b>			
<b>Funding</b>			
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### 7.2. Membership List

**Table 2:** Names, Affiliations and Contact Details of Members

Surname, Name	Email Address	H3Africa Project	Country	Contact Numbers
<b>Mariam Hanachi</b>	mariam.hanachi@gmail.com	H3ABioNet	Tunisia	
<b>Scott Hazelhurst</b>	scott.hazelhurst@wits.ac.za	AWI-Gen & H3ABioNet	SA	
<b>Eddie Mujjwiga Wampande</b>	wamps@covab.mak.ac.ug	IBRAU	Uganda	
<b>Nicky Mulder</b>	nicola.mulder@uct.ac.za	H3ABioNet	South Africa	
<b>Julius Mulindwa</b>	mujuls@gmail.com	TrypanoGEN	Uganda	
<b>Lamech Mwapagha</b>	lmwapa@gmail.com	NUST	Namibia	

