

5S Foundation Project in Ethiopia

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£3.5m foundation launched in Brighton to fight Neglected Tropical Diseases.

A new foundation to end the neglect of three tropical diseases has been launched at Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS).

The project focuses on three diseases (Podoconiosis, mycetoma and scabies). These diseases are considered huge public health problems in the three countries in which the Foundation will work: Ethiopia, Sudan and Rwanda. The Foundation is funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR).

Podoconiosis is a progressive, debilitating form of leg swelling experienced by barefoot farmers; mycetoma is a slow-growing, destructive infection of the skin and underlying tissues; and scabies is an extremely itchy infectious condition caused by skin-burrowing mites.

The 'Social Sciences for Severe Stigmatising Skin Conditions (5S) Foundation', which runs till 2023, is a £3.5 million collaborative research partnership between BSMS and the Mycetoma Research Centre (MRC) in Sudan, the Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA) based at Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia, the University of Rwanda and Institute of Development Studies (IDS).

The foundation aims to end the neglect by "bringing social sciences to bear on these conditions". The foundation in Ethiopia works specifically on the neglect of two conditions, Podoconiosis and Scabies.

Professor Getnet Tadele, Co-Investigator of the 5S foundation project in Ethiopia, said: "Stigma has been one of the major challenges in controlling NTDs in Ethiopia. The worst part of having such conditions is that once people are identified with such diseases, it becomes their master status, the most salient public marker of affected people. This conceals the true self of affected individuals and the skill they possess. The pain and physical abnormality of such conditions might be managed or improved, but the associated stigma doesn't wither away, in fact it will continue to cast a long shadow on affected people's identity. Unfortunately, attempts to tackle stigma and its effect have not been fully successful and the 5S foundation is very timely and compelling project and will contribute to enhancing and changing behaviours, practices and policies that address stigmatization."

The 5S Foundation Ethiopia project is officially launched on 01 September 2020. To find out more, visit the 5S foundation's webpage here <http://www.bsms.ac.uk/5SFoundation> and the 5S Foundation Ethiopia Website on www.ossrea.net and follow us on our Telegram page by searching for 5S Foundation Ethiopia.

