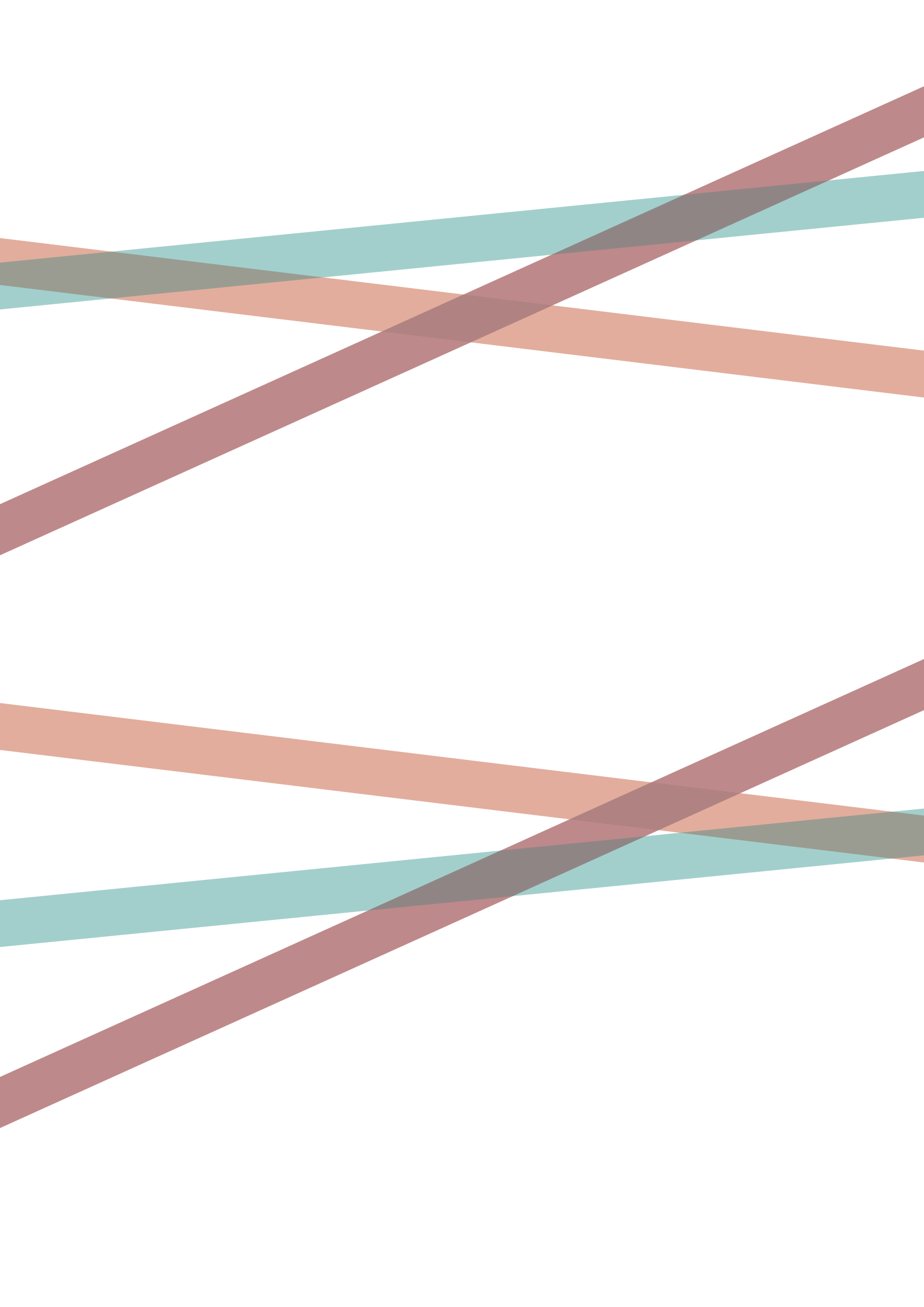
ACSS 2030

Strategic Directions in Uncertain Times

As approved by the ACSS Board of Trustees on January 24, 2023

المجلس العربي للعلوم الاجتماعية
Arab Council for the Social Sciences
Conseil Arabe pour les Sciences Sociales



Contents

I. **Introduction** 1

II. **Preparatory Steps** 2

- Interim Strategy 2021-2022 2
- External Evaluation January - May 2021 3
- Consultations and Discussions 3

III. **Strategy 2030** 4

- ACSS 2030: The Vision 4
- ACSS 2030: Components 5
- ACSS 2030: Phases and Timeline 10

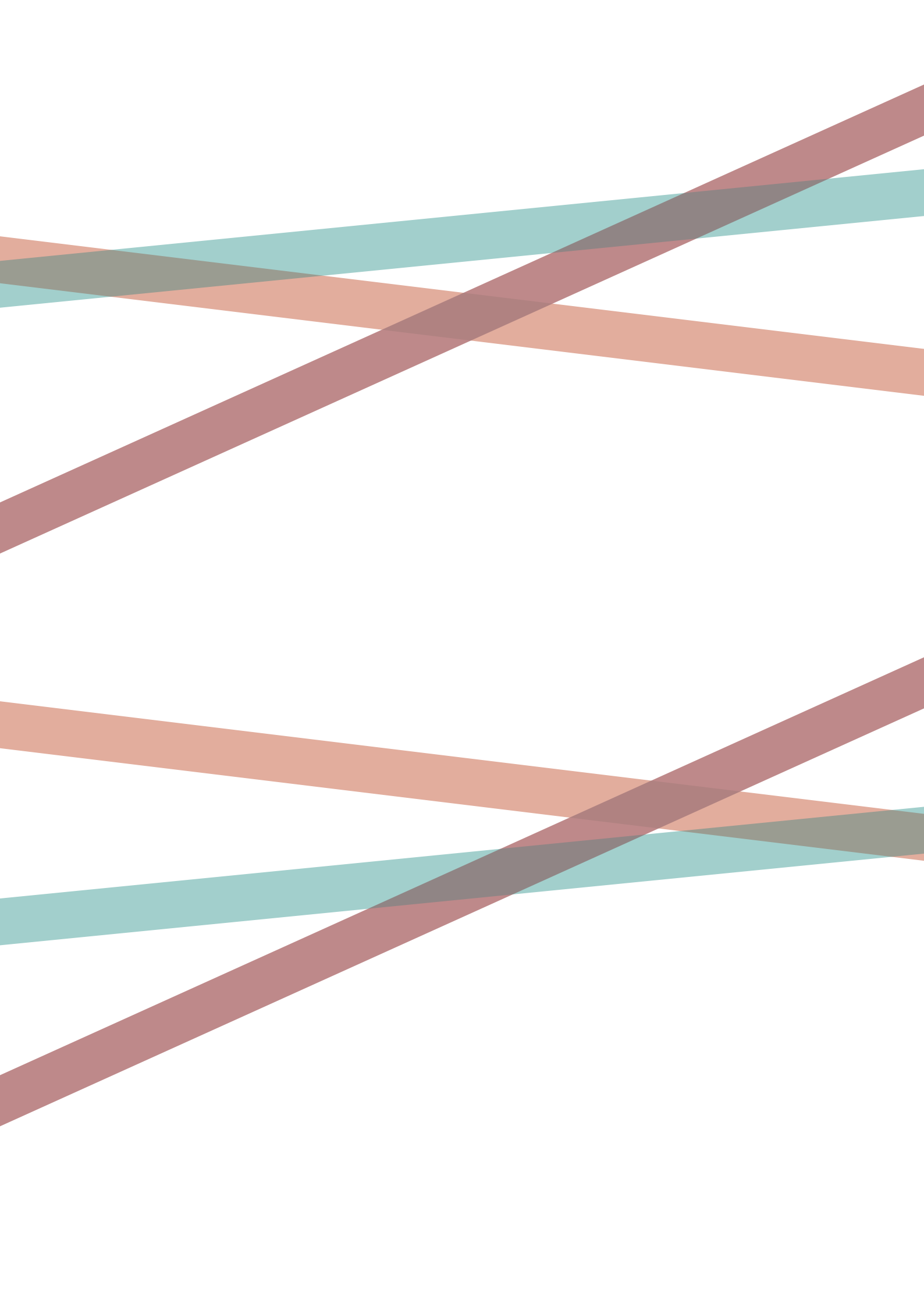
IV. **Management Plan** 15

V. **Concluding Remarks** 15

Annex I. *Phase 1: 2023 - 2024* 16

Annex II. *Relevant Background Documents* 17

Annex III. *List of Acronyms* 17



I. Introduction

In 2021, ACSS celebrated its 10th year anniversary. The highlights of the anniversary year included a series of 10 webinars and other online seminars, which reached an audience of around 4500 collectively, and the 5th ACSS conference, which gathered 160 researchers in-person in three cities (Casablanca, Cairo and Beirut) and was interspersed with online seminars and roundtables that reached 600 participants virtually. Moreover, In 2022, the ACSS reconvened its Research Forum for its grantees and their mentors, bringing together over 100 people in Beirut. Together with its regular programs of grants and fellowships, working groups, collaborative projects and more, the past years clearly expressed the solid progress that the ACSS had made since its establishment in 2011 and the central position it now holds in promoting and supporting research and higher education in the region.

Yet all this took place in somber and challenging contexts, including Lebanon's financial, political and banking crisis following an aborted popular uprising in fall 2019, similar unrest and economic recession across the region, in addition to the ravages wrought by the Covid 19 pandemic. The year 2022 saw the relative retreat of the pandemic, however Lebanon and the region continue to experience increased deterioration of contextual and infrastructural conditions. Most importantly, for the domain of ACSS, state responses to popular unrest has led to a continual shrinking of the space for free speech, the right to research and critical knowledge production across the region.

This strategy document charts the course for the continued growth and increased impact of the ACSS for the years 2023- 2030. The strategy requires building in structural safeguards and flexibilities that will help the organization navigate the long-term uncertain times, all the while enhancing its role in supporting research communities and knowledge production in the Arab region.

The strategy is built around 2-year phases, and will be thoroughly reviewed biennially by the Board of Trustees and Secretariat to take into account changing contextual circumstances.

ACSS in Numbers as of 2023

- 710 ACSS Members
- 461 Grantees & Fellows
- 6 Grants & Fellowships Programs
- 189 New Generation Fellows
- 40 Institutional Partnerships
- 75 Print & E-Publications
- 119 Datasets in the ACSS Dataverse
- 8 Annual Lecture Series
- 4 Research Forums
- 6 Conferences
- 51,000 Social Media Followers
- 6,500 Visits to our Website/month
- 30 Webinars
- 65 Trainings
- 90 Selection/Advisory Committees

II. Preparatory Steps

The 2030 strategy was developed through several stages as follows:

A. Interim Strategy 2021-2022

In 2020, the ACSS Board of Trustees decided to develop an interim two-year strategy to act as a bridge between the previous five-year strategy (2016-2020) and this current eight-year strategy (2023-2030). This formulation was adopted by the Board of Trustees given the upheaval and uncertainties of the times, which made it impractical to set firm targets and goals. Instead, the interim strategy was a framework to help the ACSS navigate and learn from the immediate crises and also plan for incorporating the needed agility and flexibility into its long-term planning.

The interim strategy assessed the performance of the ACSS through the 2016-2020 strategy, and the impact of the suspension of many of the planned activities for 2020 due to the pandemic.

The interim strategy was organized around:

i. Articulating and enhancing what we do best

- Model of governance for regional organizations (effective leadership, accountability, transparency)
- Institutional culture (flexibility, nimbleness, responsiveness)
- Program development (innovating thematic priorities, new modalities, new constituents)
- Program management (independent committee structure, regular consultation, strong support to researchers)
- Convening, dissemination, publication (intensive networking, diverse outlets, multilingualism, outreach to different audiences)

ii. Identifying new operational and programmatic tracks for institutional adaptation in light of new conditions, in order to reduce and manage uncertainty for the institution and for grantees, research affiliates and partners.

- Institutional strengthening and governance
- Financial sustainability
- New modalities and mechanisms
- Institutional alliances and networks

The results of these reflections and plans, which were developed through internal and external consultations (with staff, BoT, members, external evaluators, donors and partners) are all incorporated in the 2030 Strategy.

Most importantly, the interim strategy prioritized finding alternatives for ACSS bank accounts in order to reduce or eliminate dependence on the banking system in Lebanon. After much investigation, it became clear that the only way to establish bank accounts in any country was by establishing a branch or a legally registered affiliate in that country.

The important structural achievements of the past two years were the legal establishment of an ACSS branch and bank account in Jordan, as well as the founding of an affiliate organization and bank account in the United States (The NAACSS). These two important steps bolster the administrative and financial security of the ACSS, but also require important changes in governance, operations and staffing all of which have budgetary and institutional implications.

B. External Evaluation January - May 2021

By request and support from Sida, the ACSS commissioned an external evaluation in the first half of 2021. The goal of the evaluation was to provide general and specific recommendations that would inform the ACSS future strategy. While presenting a critical overview of all ACSS programs, the evaluation focused primarily on the assessment of the Arab Social Science Monitor (ASSM), the New Generation program, in addition to the ACSS institutional capacity and development, and communications and publications.

The evaluators undertook a thorough study, surveying and interviewing a number of grantees and fellows, ACSS staff, donors, members of working groups, members of the BoT and sub-committees. The result was a 60-page report followed by 40 pages of annexes and included a number of general and specific recommendations.

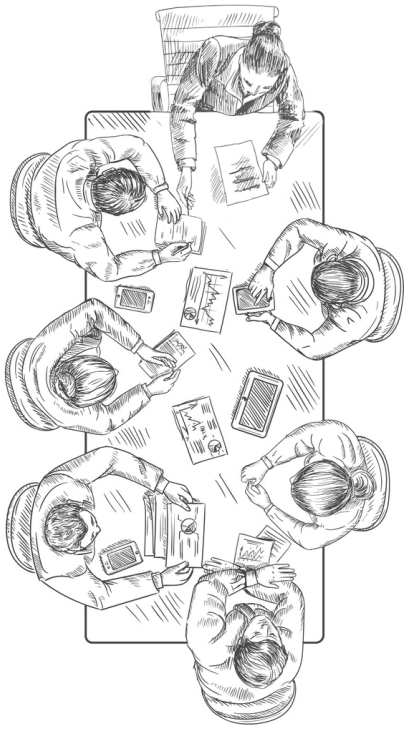
Several events were organized to discuss the evaluation findings in order to feed them into the crafting of the 2030 Strategy. The first was with the BoT on 30 June 2021, the second with representatives of the ACSS donor organizations on 21 October 2021 and the third with the ACSS General Assembly on 22 December 2021. The BoT sub-committees also reviewed the recommendations, each sub-committee within its own jurisdiction, to come up with a plan of action for the ACSS to implement over the coming years. Finally, staff discussions within each unit and across the organization provided important input into the various program areas.

C. Consultations and Discussions

Additional internal and external discussions helped clarify the ideas, options and best practices that ACSS needed to incorporate into its 2030 Strategy. These included:

- BoT discussions in January 2022 and June 2022 evaluated the progress of the interim strategy and identified as well, the long-term goals.
- BoT sub-committees on Administration and Finance, on Membership, on Publications and on Academic Freedom all discussed specific targets and goals within the scope of their responsibilities.
- Internal discussions and learning through staff meetings evaluated current performance and generated visions for the long-term.
- Discussions through individual or small-group meetings with current ACSS donors and with sister institutions as well as through the annual Partners and Donors meeting on 23 June 2021 helped clarify possibilities as well as aspirations.
- BoT review and approval of the 2023 Strategy took place on January 24, 2023.

The evaluation reviewed achievements of the 2016-2020 strategy, delineating areas of strengths and weaknesses, providing insights and lessons learnt, and presenting general and specific recommendations.



III. Strategy 2030

The uncertainties facing the region have had direct implications on ACSS activities, constituents and operations. In Lebanon, these included everyday security concerns given deteriorating economic and political conditions as well as the massive explosion in the Beirut port in August 2020. In addition, there were concerns over the financial impediments to receiving and disbursing funds, the deteriorating infrastructure (electricity, transport, internet) and the health and wellbeing of the staff. These factors and contexts make it important to rethink, for the long term, ACSS structures, finances, networks, modalities, activities and programs.

However, it is important to emphasize that the fundamental objectives, aims and goals of the ACSS remain the same and bear repeating. These objectives provide the overall structure for the work and growth of the ACSS. They also serve as a framework and tool for the internal Monitoring and Evaluation of the programs and for the understanding of specific and overall impact. With the expansion in programs, the ACSS has reached a stage where it is important to assess their effectiveness and contribution to the improvement of individual and institutional capacities in the region.

The ACSS objectives are as follows:

Overall Objective

To identify and address the needs of social science communities in the Arab region, increase production of high-quality social science and humanities research as well as engage in regional, cross-regional and global collaborations and networking.

Specific Objectives

1. To improve and expand production and uptake of social science research to address regional issues.

2. To empower a new generation of social scientists integrated into regional and global networks.

3. To achieve institutionalization of ACSS as a credible recognized network of researchers and research institutions.

In planning for, and meeting these objectives, the ACSS 2030 Strategy is divided into three parts: the vision, the components and the timeline.

A. ACSS 2030: The Vision

The major targets of the ACSS 2030 strategy in terms of structure, functions, niche and impact are listed below. This vision assumes that, by 2030, ACSS will have reached its full growth as an institution, while programs and specific elements would continue to be consolidated and improved.

- ACSS reaches maximal institutional growth for efficient administration as well as regional representation and outreach (with appropriately staffed HQ, branches, focal points and committee structure).
- The Arab Social Science Monitor becomes a regional resource center and full-fledged observatory of the state of higher education and social science research.
- ACSS becomes the go-to source for Ethics in Social Science Research. This includes the establishment of an Ethics Review Board and electronic platform.
- ACSS becomes a major advocate for, and example of, open access to publications and research data.

• ACSS expands its programming in order to provide support for regional researchers at every career stage, while retaining its focus on the emergent generation.

• The ACSS Academy and other training/mentoring activities, such as summer institutes, provide innovative pedagogical resources for alternative and supplementary social science education.

• ACSS publications provide regular, high quality dissemination outlets for different audiences.

• ACSS becomes an anchor, an arena of stability, a safe and inclusive space for regional researchers in critical times.

B. ACSS 2030: Components

The goals of this ambitious vision can be organized under four components or rubrics:

Institutional Strengthening and Governance:

- Reorganizing ACSS as an institution able to effectively negotiate contexts of crisis through sound Risk Management plans and procedures, structural diversification to help spread financial and programmatic risk (branches, subsidiaries, partnerships), and viable leadership transition processes.
- Establishing a secure and sustainable institutional and financial structure thus fulfilling ACSS obligations to grantees and various constituents through timely review and selection of grants, disbursement of payments and organization of supportive activities and events (whether online or in-person).
- Establishing branches and new structures and affiliates, which may require new staff and country 'boards' or consultants and geographical expansion as well as better integration of Country Focal Points.
- Developing and implementing an integrated HR and staffing plan to achieve full utilization of internal capacities, as well as strengthening agility, team work and cross-program collaboration.
- Strengthening the Monitoring and Evaluation function at the ACSS and integrating the tools used (Results Based Management Logframe, annual grantee survey, event evaluation forms) into the planning of new programs and activities. Central to this endeavor is thinking through the issue of "impact" of the ACSS on individuals, institutions and knowledge production generally.
- Strengthening the circulation and dissemination of research within the ACSS community, through strategic communications as well as increased mechanisms for consultation and feedback on regional trends and needs with individual and institutional members, grantees and partners. This would include an ACSS "Alumni" network (of ex-grantees), country convenings, annual general convenings, the biennial General Assembly and periodic focus group meetings as means of collaboration and joint work.

Financial Sustainability:

- Planning for increased overheads and indirect costs for premises, banking, legal and staff costs.
- Anticipating potential changes in donor priorities and creating annual scenarios for best-case and worst-case situations, with the aim of maintaining continuity for core mission and siganture programs.
- Planning for true cost recovery and establishing a Capital Reserves fund through negotiations with current long-term donors.
- Launching an endowment drive,

including establishing a “Friends of the ACSS” group and convening and expansion of the annual “Partners and Donors Forum”.

- Initiating ACSS ‘services’ that can recover costs by providing institutions with training and consultation (for example, in grants management, research ethics, data management etc.).

Institutional Alliances and Networks (ACSS as a network of networks):

- Enhancing regional and international collaborations through co-organizing research, convening and dissemination as well as participation in various **South-South Forums.**
- Expanding the **Partners and Donors Annual Forum** to explore regional and global challenges in higher education and social research.
- Instituting the **Knowledge Connections Forum** to promote the circulation and exchange of knowledge and research between academia, civil society, public and private sectors.
- Exploring the possibility of a periodic **Humanities in the Arab Region Forum** (in partnership with UNESCO) to support the humanities disciplines in academia and the public sphere.
- Instituting a regular **Ethics in Research Forum** to develop and enhance a culture of research ethics among individuals and institutions and produce shared resources and training opportunities.
- Expanding the **ACSS Arab Universities Network** that encourage sharing of pedagogical resources, enhancement of social science and humanities degree and course offerings and providing opportunities for faculty and student mobility.
- Establishing a **Network of Regional Research Organizations** that can collaborate in exchange of information and expertise, development of joint resources for programming and institutional strengthening and exploring joint programming and fundraising.

Programmatic Modalities and Mechanisms:

Table 1 lays out the ways in which various programs and activities of the ACSS further its mission through eight major pillars. It is important to note that most programs and activities contribute to more than one pillar and thus can be found in more than one column.

✹ *Research*

A primary function of the ACSS is to support the production of new knowledge through offering grants and fellowships and through working groups and special initiatives. The ACSS focal points in Palestine and Algeria also develop their own research and training activities. The themes addressed through these modalities change over time, signaling the commitment of the ACSS to a broad range of disciplines and a wide scope of themes.

Thematic foci address regional issues and challenges of importance not only for the development of social sciences and humanities disciplines, but also for social transformation, development, advocacy and policy making.

The programs all aspire to refine or open new research agendas, shape new fields of inquiry and encourage various forms of research uptake. Moving forward, the ACSS will develop new research programming as well as build in more time for evaluation, synthesis and dissemination of the research produced through various programs. In addition, a series of activities will be organized to explore different aspects of producing knowledge on/in crisis, including the impact of crises on knowledge institutions, thus conceptualizing “the crisis” not as a momentary or passing situation – but as ongoing and multiple. In this way “Polycrisis” itself

becomes an object of analysis and knowledge production but would also be understood as reshaping processes of knowledge production in fundamental ways.

Research Infrastructures

The problems facing researchers, and especially junior researchers in the region, are not only the lack of funding and research opportunities but are intimately tied up with the lack of research infrastructural capacities. Universities and national research centers are increasingly under-resourced and tightly controlled.

> Researchers in the region are constrained due to the lack of open and free access to libraries, archives, research data and circulation of research and findings.

The ACSS seeks to become a repository of information and data, through the expansion of the Arab Social Science Monitor and the Dataverse to become a regional Resource Center. In addition, it will be an advocate for best institutional practices in these areas across the region.

Finally, the ACSS aspires to create productive spaces for research collaboration and innovation through various grants programs and establishing an Institute for Advanced Study. The proposed Institute will provide short-term residential fellowships and will create as well non-residential collaboration opportunities, with the aim of building partnerships with other Institutes for Advanced Study globally.

New Generation

This is addressed through the flagship NewGen fellowship program (which includes networking and mentoring activities, training workshops and online courses) as well as through ongoing programs (such as the New Paradigms Factory Program) and other activities, including those organized by the ACSS Focal Points. All these will be further developed and augmented in future years with new modalities and opportunities. This will include outreach to high school, developing opportunities for research internships for students, and further development of the summer institutes organized by Working Groups as well as the biennial ACSS Academy.

> Integral to the ACSS mission is the growth of a new generation of scholars who are equipped with the tools for critical thinking and research and who are networked regionally and globally.

Collaborations

The ACSS is currently engaged in robust South-South collaborations with CODESRIA, CLACSO and the InterAsia Partnership. It also often collaborates with regional organizations and universities in research (for example the MPK Working Group) and in planning and organizing research and training events. In addition, it participates in, and contributes to, global forums. This is an area of great importance and growth for the ACSS and will fundamentally expand the structure of opportunities currently available to researchers based in the region.

> Collaborative projects are central to the production of comparative and cross-regional research and to the inclusion of the Arab region in global dialogues.

Institutional Support

The ACSS started with a focus on individual researchers, which gradually grew over the years to include support for institutions – including research teams, informal collectives, NGOs, research centers and universities. This is currently taking place through several grants programs as well as the NewGen Fellowship program. The modalities for such institutional support will expand in both small and large ways: through small grants for institutional members of the ACSS to be used for institutional strengthening, through expanded research funding for institutions and through medium and large-scale training for institutions in Data Management as well as in Research Ethics. The Working Group on “Safeguarding Knowledge”

will also examine the constraints and impediments to social science research for both individuals and institutions.

✹ *Convenings*

Despite the virtual turn, accelerated by the pandemic, and the benefits brought by such digital connections, it is the case that the majority of researchers in the region have few opportunities for mobility and networking outside their narrow circles

> In so many ACSS activities, participants express their joy at being able to visit another country in the region or participate in regional conferences.

Thus, while attentive to carbon footprints and the convenience of online meetings, the ACSS will continue to hold in-person meetings when networking is a major goal of the program at hand. The three major in-person convenings include the Conference, the Research Forum and the Academy and these will continue to expand and be refined and developed. Other ongoing convenings include the Annual Lecture Series and various periodic forums with a variety of partners and stakeholders in knowledge production.

✹ *Publications and Dissemination*

The ability of the ACSS to reach a broad and varied set of audiences has been steadily growing, especially with its higher visibility on online platforms (social media, YouTube etc.)

> The next years will see a strengthening of the publications and dissemination activities of the ACSS

This will include publishing collaborations with prestigious presses in the region, and with journals and electronic platforms in all three working languages of the ACSS: Arabic, English and French, as well as the rethinking of audiences and developing communication and dissemination outlets in creative ways (short publications/blogs/ interviews/conversations/podcasts etc.).

✹ *Membership and Outreach*

While ACSS activities and opportunities (including grants) are open to all and not restricted to members, the ACSS will give special attention in the coming phase to strengthening its communication channels with the membership and the gradual increase of targeted opportunities that will help integrate the ACSS membership into an effective scholarly community. The ACSS Focal Points wil play an important role in this regard.

> The membership of the ACSS is the governing body of the institution as well as an important focus of its work.

TABLE 1: Main Pillars

Research	Research Infrastructures	Empowering New Generation	Collaborations	Institutional Support	Convenings and Networking	Publications & Dissemination	Membership & Outreach
F+G: RGP - Research Grants Program	ASSM	NewGen Fellowship Program	South-South (CLACSO) The Right to Higher Education	F+G: SGP - Small Grants Program	Biennial General Assembly Meetings	Qiraat Annual Publication	Biennial General Assembly Meetings
F+G: ECFP - Early Career Fellowship Program	Arab Public Data Initiative: Dataverse	Incubation (High Schools) (NEW 2024)	South-South Sahel - Reimagining the Sahel (joint program with CODESRIA) (NEW 2024)	F+G: RGP - Research Grants Program	Biennial Conference	Working Papers	Members Individual travel grants
F+G: SGP - Small Grants Program	Data Management and Sharing Trainings	Internships (NEW 2024)	South-South InterAsia Partnership	Membership institutional grants	Biennial Research Forum	Occasional Publications	Members Institutional grants (NEW 2023)
F+G: STMP - Short Term Mobility Program	Research Ethics Initiative	Online Courses	WG: MPK - Mapping Production of Knowledge on Women and Gender (with UCDAR)	WG: SKPP - Safeguarding Knowledge Production Program	Annual Lecture Series	Co-Publishing with Journals and Publishers	Knowledge Connections Forum (NEW 2024)
F+G: SCG - Scholars Collaborative Grants (NEW 2023)	WG: SKPP - Safeguarding Knowledge Production Program	Training Workshops	Arab Public Data Initiative: Dataverse (with UNC & Oxford University)	Data Management and Sharing Trainings	Annual Partners and Donors Forum	Social Media	Annual Partners & Donors Forum
F+G: NPF - New Paradigms Factory	ACSS Universities' Network	ACSS Academy	WG: GOHA - Gender Oral History Archive (with AUB)	NewGen Fellowship Program	ACSS Universities' Network	Website	Ethics in Research Forum (NEW 2024)
F+G: Sahel - Reimagining the Sahel (joint program with CODESRIA) (NEW 2024)	Network of Regional Research Organizations (NEW 2025)	WG Summer Institutes	WG: REMENA - Research Ethics in MENA (with Columbia Universtiy)	Research Ethics Initiative	Knowledge Connections Forum (NEW 2024)	Youtube Channel	ACSS Arab Universities' Network
F+G: New Cross-Regional Grants Program (NEW 2027)	Institute for Advanced Study (NEW 2026)	F+G: NPF New Paradigms Factory	F+G: STMP - Short Term Mobility Program (with FMSH)		Ethics in Research Forum (NEW 2024)	Digital outputs	Alumni Network (NEW 2024)
F+G: Scholar Research Exchange Program (NEW 2025)		F+G: ECFP Early Career Fellowship Program	WG: RAP - Research on the Arts (with AFAC)		Arab Humanities Forum (NEW 2025)	Webinars	Focal Point Membership and Grantee Activities
WG: CSS - Critical Security Studies		Focal Point Training Activities	Arab Humanities Forum (with CISH) (NEW 2025)				Jordan Branch Activities
WG: EKWG - Ethnography as Knowledge			Joint Workshops + Conferences				NAACSS - (New York Office)
WG: NR - New Regionalisms			Joint Trainings				

Research	Research Infrastructures	Empowering New Generation	Collaborations	Institutional Support	Convenings and Networking	Publications & Dissemination	Membership & Outreach
WG: CV - Contexts of Violence (Polycrisis)							
WG: SKPP - Safeguarding Knowledge Production Program							
WG: HEAR - Higher Education in the Arab Region (NEW 2023)							
WG: RAP - Research on the Arts							
WG: GOHA - Gender Oral History Archive							
WG: MPK - Mapping Production of Knowledge on Women and Gender							
WG: CHI - Critical Humanities Initiative							
WG: REMENA - Research Ethics in MENA							
WG: New Research Agendas on Gender (NEW 2024)							
WG: New Topic (NEW 2027)							
Focal Point Research Activities							
Institute for Advanced Study (NEW 2026)							

C. ACSS 2030: Phases and Timeline

Table 2 presents the 8-year plan for the development of programs and activities of the ACSS. This includes a balance between continuing modalities and programs and the introduction of new areas and activities. The first two years (2023-2024) are cautious, due to the continuing financial uncertainties and the need to consolidate the new structures (branches and affiliates) recently established. Importantly, the plan builds space for thoughtful evaluation and synthesis between cycles of a program, when themes are changed. If new funding opportunities arise, even if these necessitate a change in pace or in thematic direction, the ACSS will be open to these new opportunities as long as they remain within the parameters of the strategy and existing or planned programs.

Note: For the sake of clarity, in Table 2, unlike Table 1, programs and activities are only mentioned once under one heading "Activity or Modality". On the other hand "Collaborations" and "Institutional Support" in Table 1 are folded into other categories in Table 2 since these are realized through programs listed under "Research", "Research Infrastructure" and "Empowering New Generation".

TABLE 2: Programs and Activities by Year

Activity or Modality	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Research								
F+G: RGP - Research Grants Program		EVALUATION and new call end of August	YES	YES	YES	EVALUATION and new call end of August	YES	YES
F+G: ECFP - Early Career Fellowship Program	YES	YES	EVALUATION	YES	YES	YES	EVALUATION	YES
F+G: SGP - Small Grants Program	YES	YES	YES	EVALUATION	YES	YES	YES	EVALUATION
F+G: STMP - Short Term Mobility Program	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
F+G: SCG - Scholars Collaborative Grants **NEW!**	YES	YES	YES – PLANNING for an Institute for Advanced Study (below)					
F+G: NPF - New Paradigms Factory	EVALUATION	YES	YES	YES	EVALUATION	YES	YES	YES
F+G: Sahel - Reimagining the Sahel (joint program with CODESRIA) **NEW!**	PLANNING	YES	YES	YES	YES + EVALUATION			
F+G: New Cross-Regional Grants Program **NEW!**					YES	YES	YES	YES + EVALUATION
F+G: Scholars Research Exchange Program **NEW!**			YES	YES	YES	YES + EVALUATION	YES	YES
WG: CSS - Critical Security Studies	CONSOLIDATION OF QATAR HUB	YES						
WG: EKWG - Ethnography as Knowledge	YES	YES	YES					
WG: NR - New Regionalisms	WIND DOWN and publications							
WG: CV - Contexts of Violence (Polycrisis)	YES	YES	YES					
WG: SKPP - Safeguarding Knowledge Production Program	YES	YES – leads into new institutional modalities						

Activity or Modality	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
WG: HEAR - Higher Education in the Arab Region **NEW!**	YES	YES	YES	YES	WIND DOWN			
WG: RAP - Research on the Arts	Publications and fold into Critical Humanities							
WG: GOHA - Gender Oral History Archive	YES	Fold into Critical Humanities						
WG: MPK - Mapping Production of Knowledge on Women and Gender	YES							
WG: CHI - Critical Humanities Initiative	YES	YES	YES	YES				
WG: REMENA - Research Ethics in MENA	YES	YES	YES					
WG: New Research Agendas on Gender **NEW!**	PLANNING	YES	YES	YES				
WG: New Topic **NEW!**					YES	YES	YES	
Focal Point Research Activities	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Research Infrastructures								
ASSM	YES	YES	YES PLANNING FOR SCALING UP TOWARDS A REGIONAL RESOURCE CENTER	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Arab Public Data Initiative: Dataverse	YES	YES	YES PLANNING FOR SCALING UP TOWARDS A REGIONAL RESOURCE CENTER	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Data Management and Sharing Trainings	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Research Ethics Initiative	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

Activity or Modality	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
ACSS Arab Universities' Network	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Network of Regional Research Organizations **NEW!**	PLANNING	PLANNING	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Institute for Advanced Study **NEW!**			PLANNING	LAUNCH	YES	YES	YES	YES
Empowering New Generation								
NewGen Fellowship Program	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Incubation (High Schools) **NEW!**		YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Internships **NEW!**		YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Online Courses	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Training Workshops	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
ACSS Academy		YES		YES		YES		YES
WG Summer Institutes		YES		YES		YES		YES
Focal Point Training Activities	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Convenings and Networking								
Biennial General Assembly Meetings	YES		YES		YES		YES	
Biennial Conference	YES		YES		YES		YES	
Biennial Research Forum		YES		YES		YES		YES
Annual Lecture Series	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Annual Partners and Donors Forum	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

Activity or Modality	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Knowledge Connections Forum **NEW!**		YES		YES		YES		YES
Ethics in Research Forum **NEW!**		YES		YES		YES		YES
Arab Humanities Forum **NEW!**	PLANNING	PLANNING	YES			YES		
Publications and Dissemination								
Publications (Working Papers, Qiraat, Occasional Publications)	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Co-Publishing with Journals and Publishers		YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Website, Social Media & YouTube Channel	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Digital Outputs	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Webinars	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Membership and Outreach								
Membership Individual Travel Grants	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Membership Institutional Grants **NEW!**	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Alumni Network **NEW!**		YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Focal Point Membership Activities	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Jordan Branch Activities	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
NAACSS (New York Office)	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

IV. Management Plan

The Strategy will be managed as follows with periodic reviews and adjustments as necessary:

- For items that are the responsibility of the Secretariat/staff: these will be reviewed every three months during special staff meetings. One of these meetings every year will be preparatory for the BoT review.
- For items that are the responsibility of a particular sub-committee of the BoT (e.g. membership or finance and administration): these will be reviewed two times a year to assess progress and make adjustments as needed.
- For items that are the responsibility of the BoT and Secretariat: these will be reviewed yearly during regular BoT meetings. In January every year the Director General will present an assessment to the BoT regarding progress made and recommendations for adjustments in timelines or in action items. In addition, every two years (in January 2025, 2027, 2029) the previous two-year phase will be thoroughly assessed and targets will be set for the next two-year phase.

V. Concluding Remarks

This Strategy guides the second decade of ACSS operations and growth. The original road map from 2009 and the five-year strategy of 2016-2020 helped the institution establish its niche, main functions and signature activities. They established the ACSS as a leading institution, delineating the required institutional capacity and financial sustainability for supporting and promoting research for social change, through grant making, assessment of the social science landscape, institutional partnerships and active communications activities. However, starting with 2020, the region and the ACSS home base in Lebanon has been rocked by instability and financial precarity. This required a phase of consolidation and shoring up organizational sustainability, which was addressed by the Interim Strategy 2021-2022.

The 2030 Strategy is a dynamic document that will be periodically reviewed and revised and is currently accompanied by a four-year budget. Both the narrative and financial planning will be thoroughly discussed and revised by the Board of Trustees every two years. The first two years of Strategy 2030 is characterized by some caution as we continue to work on the financial and administrative changes necessary to meet the challenges of these times and to bring back the funding base of the ACSS to secure levels. At the same time groundwork will be laid in these two years for programmatic and substantive growth and diversification.

We are optimistic that in 2025-6, ACSS will mark its 15th anniversary with successful and demonstrable impact on the production of new knowledge, the growth of a new generation of social scientists as well as the promotion of research for social transformation in the Arab region.

Annex I:
Phase1: 2023 - 2024

Table 3 below shows the activities in the first phase (2023-2024) under the four rubrics, and by staff member responsibility. In January every two years, the Board of Trustees will review performance on the targets of the earlier phase and detail the targets of the coming two years.

> This phasing will enable the ACSS to remain agile and responsive to external and contextual changes in the region and in the funding landscape.

These targets identify areas of institutional development that require particular attention and new programmatic initiatives. In addition, ACSS will continue to consolidate and expand ongoing work with special attention to key programs related to the New Generation, Research Ethics, Data Management and Sharing and Gants and Fellowships.

Table 3:

Institutional Strengthening and Governance

Activity	2023	2024	Responsibility
Finalization of Risk Management Plan	X		DG/AD/HR
Planning for Leadership Transitions		X	DG/AD/BoT
Full operationalization of Branches and Affiliates	X		DG/Finance
Integrated HR Plan	X		DG/AD/HR
Strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation Function	X	X	DG/AD/M+E Coordinator
Establishing ACSS Alumni network		X	AD/F+G Coordinator
Strengthening Strategic Communications		X	DG/AD/Comms

Financial Sustainability

Activity	2023	2024	Responsibility
Strategic Budgeting and Cost Recovery Planning	X		DG/Finance
Capital Reserves	X	X	DG/Finance
Establishing Friends of the ACSS	X	X	DG/BoT
Planning for Endowment	X		DG/Finance/ Legal Counsel
ACSS Services		X	DG/AD/ASSM

Institutional Alliances and Networks

Activity	2023	2024	Responsibility
South-South collaborations	X	X	DG/AD
Knowledge Connections Forum		X	DG/AD
Ethics in Research Forum		X	DG/AD
ACSS Arab Universities Network	X		DG/AD
Planning for Network of Regional Research Organizations		X	DG/AD

New Programmatic Modalities and Mechanisms

Activity	2023	2024	Responsibility
Scholars Collaborative Grants	X	X	DG/AD/F+G Coordinator
Working Group on Contexts of Violence (PolyCrisis)	X	X	DG
Working Group on Higher Education	X	X	AD
Working Group on Safeguarding Knowledge	X	X	DG/AD
New Research Agendas on Gender		X	AD
Sahel Program		X	DG/AD
Membership Institutional Grants	X		DG/BoT

Annex II: Relevant Background Documents

The following background documents were utilized in the development of this strategy:

- ACSS LogFrame for Results Based Management
- External Evaluation (January – May 2021)
- Risk Management Matrix
- Interim Strategy (2021 – 2022)
- 4-year budget (2023 – 2026)

Annex III: List of Acronyms

ACSS
Arab Council for the Social Sciences

AD
Associate Director

ASSM
Arab Social Science Monitor
Permanent Observatory for the monitoring & evaluation of the state of Social Sciences in the region, producing biennial reports, policy briefs, & background papers. Also responsible for the ACSS Dataverse repository and providing training in data management and sharing.

AUB
American University of Beirut

BoT
Board of Trustees

CISH
International Center for Human Sciences

CSS
Critical Security Studies
Collaborative & comparative research that challenges the dominant understanding of the Arab region as a threat to global security and provide an alternative critical approach to security studies that focuses on the production of insecurity.

DG
Director General

ECFP
Early Career Fellowship Program
Open call for applications for support for twelve months provided to junior scholars who are 1-3 years out of the PhD; fellows must be affiliated with a regional institution.

EKWG
Ethnography as Knowledge Working Group
Collaborative research on how ethnography can counter dominant regimes of knowledge about the Arab countries and produce a more nuanced ethnographic understanding of the Arab region today.

F+G
Fellowship and Grant

HE
Higher Education

HR
Human Resources

M+E
Monitoring and Evaluation

MPK
Mapping Production of Knowledge on Women and Gender
Coordinating a regional network of universities to map the production and circulation of scholarly knowledge on women and gender in the Arab region since the 1970's and ways forward.

NAACSS
North American Arab Council for Social Sciences
An affiliate 501c3 organization incorporated in

the United States

NewGen
New Generation Fellowship Program
Training, mentorship and online courses for a new generation of social scientists in collaboration with regional universities.

NPF
New Paradigms Factory
Mentorship program for writing & advocacy targeting scholar/activists with an MA in the social sciences. The last three cycles focused on the theme "Gendered Resistance."

NR
New Regionalisms
Comparative research on new regional dynamics involving inter-state, sub-state and trans-state relations reconfiguring power, social and cultural relations to arrive at a better understanding of the relationships between the local, national, regional and global scales.

REMENA
Research Ethics in the Middle East and North Africa
Organized by the Middle East Institute at Columbia University in collaboration with the Columbia Global Centers, the American University of Cairo, the Rabat Social Studies Institute and the Arab Council for the Social Science.

RGP
Research Grants Program
Open call for proposals for research under a broad theme, providing funding & support to individuals, teams, collectives and institutions. The last three cycles focused on the theme "Health, Livelihoods and Wellbeing"

SCG
Scholars Collaborative Grants:
Proposed new program to provide support to mid-career and senior scholars over two years to produce a major work on selected themes. Program will include short term residential stays in Lebanon or at a partner university or an Institute for Advanced study

SGP
Small Grants Program
Seed funds for travel grants, workshops, internships, & pilot research. Travel grants also available for ACSS members.

STMP
Short Term Mobility Grants Program
Funding for 2-3 months research stays for junior post-doctoral fellows, 1-6 years after the PHD. Currently, organized in collaboration with FMSH for research stays in France for archival or field research.

UCDAR
University of California, Davis Arab Region Consortium

WG
Working Group

Arab Council for the Social Sciences
John Kennedy Street, Ras Beirut
Alamuddin Building, 2nd Floor
Beirut, Lebanon

T. +961 1 370 214
F. +961 1 370 215
E. info@theacss.org
www.theacss.org

theacss
@acss_org
acss_org
@theacss

المجلس العربي للعلوم الاجتماعية
شارع جون كينيدي، رأس بيروت
بناية علم الدين، الطابق الثاني
بيروت-لبنان