

## Practical actions for fostering cross-disciplinary research

The Centre for Capacity Research multi-disciplinary capacity development research project (MUDI) has undertaken a literature review to determine the practical actions for fostering cross-disciplinary global health research. The review found that the existing published evidence on fostering cross-disciplinary research in practice is mainly from high-income countries and that practical actions for fostering cross-disciplinary global health research are closely linked to leadership, management, collaboration, and teamwork. As shown below, recommendations are provided at the individual-, research team leadership-, academic-, and research funder-level and all have practical implications for conducting cross-disciplinary research. Across all levels these findings can be applied to improve cross-disciplinary research in global health.

### Individuals

- Identify your own **motives and believe** in the value of cross-disciplinary research
- **Be receptive** to new ideas, deal with the unknown, tolerate ambiguity
- Gain cross-disciplinary research **experience** through networking and mentorship/menteeship
- Take time to **understand** other disciplines and team members
- **Foster team-work** through good communication, negotiation, interpersonal relationships, time management and leadership **skills**

### Research Team Leadership

- Define **research problems** collaboratively to produce a common theoretical framework, a **shared understanding** and a **common language**
- Develop a **clear vision** with an **explicit goal** of knowledge integration across disciplines
- Establish a cross-disciplinary **team** that includes clearly defined **roles, rules and boundaries**
- Engage **local stakeholders** and develop working relationships through transparency, trustworthiness, fair recognition and realistic goals
- Build **trust** and minimize academic and discipline **hierarchy**
- Encourage **team-level reflection** on both the process and outcomes of cross-disciplinary research

### Academic Institutions

- Implement **incentives** that value cross-disciplinary research
- **Provide administrative support and tools** for good cross-disciplinary research management and coordination
- Provide **seed money**, and identify external funds, for cross-disciplinary research and its dissemination
- Facilitate **spaces** for researchers from multiple disciplines to **work and meet**

### Research Funder

- Commission research on cross-disciplinary **communication and coordination**
- Recognise that cross-disciplinary research projects may need their own **metrics**
- Ensure the process for **reviewing cross-disciplinary proposals** is fit for purpose
- Encourage academic institutions and publishers to **recognise and promote** cross-disciplinary research

# DELTAS: Learning Research Programme

The Learning Research Programme (LRP), led by the Centre for Capacity Research, works alongside the DELTAS Africa consortia to produce research-based learning about how to train and develop world-class researchers, foster their careers and collaborations, and promote research uptake. For more information about the LRP research activities and to access the LRP resources (annual reports, in-depth newsletters and all our publications), please visit our DELTAS research page at: [www.lstmed.ac.uk/projects/deltas---learning-research-programme](http://www.lstmed.ac.uk/projects/deltas---learning-research-programme)

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Some of the LRP team at the DELTAS Africa AGM 2019

**Equitable Career Pathways** - This theme is framed within the context of a PhD project, led by Millicent Liani, titled: “Examining barriers and enablers to gender equitable scientific career pathways in African research institutions”. Millicent has employed a qualitative case study design, focusing on three DELTAS consortia, including: **IDeAL** (Initiative to Develop African Research Leaders); **MARCAD** (Malaria Research Capacity Development in West and Central Africa); and **SANTHE** (Sub-Saharan African Network for TB/HIV Research Excellence).

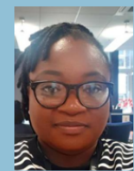
**Research Training** - Currently led by Abiola Aiyenigba, this theme explores the range and quality of professional development opportunities available to African-based researchers as well as the individual and institutional benefits – in terms of professional development – associated with DELTAS Africa membership. Research activities have included a mapping of health-related postgraduate training courses available in sub-Saharan Africa, an online survey of African researchers’ professional development needs, opportunities and barriers, and a qualitative case study exploring the extent, and process by which, researcher training in sub-Saharan Africa may be enhanced through consortia membership. Participating DELTAS Africa consortia include: **CARTA+** (Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa+); **MARCAD**; and **Afrique One-ASPIRE** (African Science Partnership for Intervention Research Excellence).

**Knowledge Translation** - Also framed within the context of a PhD project, led by Violet Murunga and titled: “Exploring the research uptake strategies being used by African researchers to promote evidence-informed decision making”. Phase one of Violet’s research is a qualitative case study of selected DELTAS Africa consortia: **AMARI** (African Mental Health Research Initiative); **THRIVE-2** (Training Health Researchers into Vocational Excellence in East Africa-2); and **WACCBIP** (West African Centre for Cell Biology of Infectious Pathogens).

**Consortia Management** - Framed within the context of a PhD project, led by Nadia Tagoe and titled: “Examining the process of establishing and managing health research capacity strengthening consortia”. Nadia is based at KEMRI-Wellcome Trust, Kilifi, Kenya, under the **IDeAL** programme and has employed a mixed methods research design. To date, Nadia has completed key informant interviews with almost all DELTAS Africa consortia Directors and Programme Managers as well as a focused case study in three selected DELTAS Africa consortia including: **CARTA+**; **THRIVE-2**; and **DELGEME** (Developing Excellence in Leadership and Genetic Training for Malaria Elimination in Sub-Saharan Africa).



Millicent Liani



Abiola Aiyenigba



Violet Murunga



Nadia Tagoe