

*Key Findings and Good Practice Examples from the Centre for Capacity Research***Research Management and Support Service Challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa**

The Centre for Capacity Research recently completed a synthesis of 28 research management support (RMS) capacity assessments completed in 25 universities/research institutions from across 15 sub-Saharan African countries. The outcomes of this synthesis are presented below. As shown, 13 distinct capacity gap categories emerged from across the 28 RMS capacity assessment reports. Almost all of the 28 institutions assessed faced significant gaps in RMS capacity within and across each of these 13 categories suggesting multi-focal interventions/strategies may be necessary to 'shift' current RMS capacity to a significantly stronger position within many sub-Saharan African universities and research institutions.

1. **Physical Infrastructure:** Unreliable power supply; insufficient laboratory-, office-, study-, meeting or physical storage-space.
2. **Information and Communication Technologies (ICT):** Insufficient ICT hardware; nil/limited access to specialist software; limited internet access or bandwidth capacity.
3. **Operating Equipment:** Absence or critical shortage of essential laboratory, field and office equipment; vehicle shortage.
4. **Laboratory Services and Support:** Poorly maintained laboratory equipment; limited funding to support laboratory maintenance; limited/nil laboratory quality control systems or accreditation; insufficient biosecurity/laboratory safety protocols and resources; nil/sub-optimal revenue generation from provision of laboratory services.
5. **Research Funding:** Limited/nil availability of national and/or institutional research funding; limited funding to support post-graduate research required for attainment of award.
6. **Workforce:** Excessive workloads for research and research support staff; prolonged staffing vacancies due to hire freezes and/or absence of suitably qualified candidates; aging workforce; under-qualified and/or unexperienced workforce; insufficient laboratory technicians and/or research support staff.
7. **Remuneration:** Uncompetitive and/or insufficient salary relative to living costs; inequitable salary 'top-up' system applied to externally funded research grants (e.g. academics costed in, but support staff not).
8. **Professional Development:** Limited/nil access to training/professional development activities for research and research support staff (technicians and support staff having lowest levels of access); limited/nil institutional structures/services to support professional development; limited/nil staff mentorship schemes; limited/nil staff appraisal and performance mechanisms.
9. **Career Progression:** Limited promotion opportunities (especially for technicians and research support staff); job-insecurity; poor staff retention (primarily support staff); limited opportunities for junior academics to enter faculty positions (exacerbated by aging workforce remaining in post).
10. **Institutional Support Services:** Inefficient/inadequate financial management, procurement, data management, human resource support services; limited access to research literature/e-resources; limited/nil functionality of institutional review boards.
11. **Research Support and Project Management:** Limited/nil pre- and post-award support services, quality assurance and monitoring; limited research cost recovery policies/expertise; limited/nil institutional research strategy.
12. **Internal Communication and Collaboration:** Limited internal (inter-departmental) communication and collaboration mechanisms; limited access to and/or awareness of institutional policies and/or available support services.
13. **External Communication and Networking:** Limited/nil institutional communications strategy; limited/nil institutional funds and/or staff incentives to support knowledge translation activities; limited/nil research output repository; limited support or oversight of institutional website (content and maintenance).

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

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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