

## Announcement



It is with great sadness to inform you of the loss of our dear friend and colleague Dr Abiola Aiyenigba who passed away suddenly in July. Abiola joined the DELTAS LRP team within the Centre for Capacity Research in 2019 to explore the research training theme. She was a proactive member of the team and she delighted in the opportunity to travel, visit consortia members, and attend the DELTAS AGM. She will be sorely missed at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and within the DELTAS LRP team.

## Towards gender transformative approaches: Participants' desired actions for change

For the 'equitable career pathways' theme, this month we provide some of the emergent key challenges alongside participants' desired actions for change, which we classify as gender transformative approaches. We draw on the usefulness of the continuum of approaches to gender integration<sup>1</sup>, a commonly utilised systematic tool for classifying actions by how they address gender inequities in programming as either gender-blind, accommodating, or transformative. Juxtaposed within the collective efforts made by DELTAS Africa at narrowing the gender inequity gap in scientific career progression, the tool recognises the need to go beyond good practice measures that are gender accommodating, which may only partially address the problem of gender inequity, towards investing in transformative approaches. The latter approaches may act to address the underlying causes of the disparities - the systems, norms and attitudes making gender differences acceptable parts of everyday life - which may lead to better equitable and more lasting outcomes.

Key challenge	Participants' desired actions for transformative change
<i>Conflicts between the normative demands of family and scientific research career that calls for long working hours and frequent mobility, resulting in poor work-life balance, relationships and family suffering, and prejudice against women who prioritize establishing a career over marriage</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Build and nurture a supportive research community by launching spaces and forums where female and male researchers can discuss and provide mutual support around career progression challenges, career decisions, and work-life balance issues.</li> <li>- Provide leadership training at all career stages to help build confidence, resilience, and support decision making around career progression.</li> <li>- Create community and public awareness on what research scientists do, particularly about the nature of science that requires long working hours and frequent scientific mobility, for which women researchers tend to be more disadvantaged based on their reproductive gender roles compared to the men.</li> </ul>
<i>Inequitable structures of gendered support systems within institutions characterized by insufficient mentoring and a dearth of female role models, inflexible working policies and culture, and lack of accommodating women's needs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop a structured approach to career and psycho-social mentoring for fellows (viewed as crucial for career progression), especially at early career research stage.</li> <li>- Improve representation of women in science leadership and management positions to help enhance gender equitable decision-making on career progression matters affecting research fellows.</li> </ul>
<i>Experiences of negative practices and culture at workplace characterized by gender stereotypes, unconscious biases, sexual harassment, bullying and intimidation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish and implement formal standard operating procedures at consortia level on how to report and handle sensitive malpractices experienced by fellows at the workplace.</li> <li>- Provide training and coaching to scientists and faculty staff on how to identify and deal with unconscious biases and gender stereotypes at the workplace.</li> <li>- Funders and consortia leaders to establish sanctions for grantees and researchers who portray negative behaviours at the workplace.</li> </ul>
<i>Uncertainties with funding structure and career progression opportunities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Actively support early career researchers in gaining relevant leadership experience, including allocating them primary supervisory roles for masters fellows.</li> <li>- Negotiate memorandum of understanding with research and academic institutions in Africa for career placement opportunities for fellows.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup>Interagency Gender Working Group. Accessed online at [www.igwg.org](http://www.igwg.org), on September 20, 2020.

# 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