

## African Researchers' Knowledge Translation Understanding, Appreciation, Practice & Support

In this month's bulletin we present the key findings from the knowledge translation (KT) theme and recommendations for research capacity strengthening programmes such as the DELTAS Africa programme. The study findings, though not generalizable, indicate that DELTAS Africa was effective in increasing awareness of the importance of community and public engagement (CPE) and CPE activities as an integral part of research practice.

### Key Findings

- **Budget allocation** for the DELTAS CPE component was widely considered **inadequate** and this was a **key challenge** among the programme beneficiaries
- Researchers have a **narrow conceptual understanding of KT** that is not nuanced by type of researchers. For example, basic researchers often share the view that KT starts after product development and is more relevant for applied researchers.
- Researchers face **different pressures** throughout their career, **shaping their interest in KT and KT practice** - early career researchers focus on metrics associated with academic status i.e. publications, whilst established researchers have more interest and freedom in undertaking KT, also being more in demand from policy actors including the public.
- Researchers undertake a **narrow range of KT activities, influenced by their understanding of KT** and the research environment that emphasizes publications and/or a narrow set of KT activities.
- Basic researchers' KT practice is hindered by **few KT opportunities** due to a lack of research and development capacity in local industries - an important link for researchers to translate their research findings into applicable products.

### Recommendations – For Funders

- Hire KT specialists to **provide strategic leadership** for the KT component of the programme.
- Provide a substantive **budget allocation for KT components** and conduct a cost assessment to determine reasonable allocation.
- Provide **guidance on expectations for the KT component to grantees at proposal development stage** and during implementation e.g. a document and webinar to provide specific examples of potential KT target audiences and strategies, approaches and activities by researchers' career stage and type of research.
- **Score the quality of KT proposals** in relation to the programme expectations, guidance provided and budget allocation.
- **Monitor and evaluate KT progress and outcomes** including **defining appropriate indicators** capturing the range of KT target audiences and strategies, approaches and activities by researchers' career stage and type of research and supporting appropriate approaches for measuring KT outcomes.
- Encourage and support grantees to **publish lessons and outcomes of their KT efforts** in academic and non-academic formats.
- **Fund opportunities for cross sharing of lessons** within the programme and beyond i.e. KT Knowledge Exchange/Communities of Practice conferences or workshops or meetings.
- Encourage grantees to **incorporate institutional interventions** that aim to improve the **institutional incentives and support** for KT e.g. emphasis of KT in tenure and promotion processes, postgraduate training, research ethics review, institutional research impact assessments and advocating for strengthening of KT and technology transfer departments/staff.

# 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, framed within the context of a PhD project, is 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, focussing 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** – Led by Abiola Aiyenigba, this is the only theme not framed within a PhD context. 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. Survey data were collected from across the DELTAS Africa network, whilst the case study focused on: **CARTA+** (Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa+); **MARCAD** (Malaria Research Capacity Development in West and Central Africa); 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 titled: *“Exploring the research uptake strategies being used by African researchers to promote evidence-informed decision making”*. Violet has also employed a qualitative case study design focusing on three DELTAS Africa consortia: **AMARI** (African Mental Health Research Initiative); **THRIVE-2b** (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 qualitative research design. Nadia has obtained data from all DELTAS consortia, although has primarily focused on: **CARTA+** (Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa+); **THRIVE 2** (Training Health Researchers into Vocational Excellence in East Africa-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