

## Evaluation of the DELTA Africa Community and Public Engagement Seed Fund, 2019-2021

The DELTA Africa Community and Public Engagement (CPE) seed fund was designed to strengthen CPE capacity of DELTA Africa early career researchers, and consortia staff more broadly, as well as pilot programmes of activity to promote societal impact of DELTA Africa research. Initially implemented over two rounds between Aug 2019 to May 2020, it was extended to include a third round to focus on the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic grant round; (round three) was opened to staff teams across the 11 DELTA consortia. A total of 25 awards were made (summarized in Annex 1), with individual awards for fellows each up to a maximum value of 25,000 USD and consortia awards to address the Covid-19 infodemic each up to a maximum value of 35,000 USD. The scheme was funded by Wellcome and FCDO and administered by the African Academy of Sciences through the Alliance for Accelerating Excellence in Science in Africa (AESA).

The Centre for Capacity Research in partnership with the African Population and Health Research Center evaluated the seed fund's process and performance. The evaluation drew on three data sources: An anonymous, online knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) survey completed by the 25 awardees pre- and post-project implementation; semi-structured interviews completed with eight awardees and one AAS focal point at the conclusion of the award; and 'end-of-project' reports completed by each of the 25 awardees.

---

### Key Findings

- Pre- and post-project implementation surveys revealed substantial and statistically significant shifts in awardees self-reported CPE knowledge, attitudes and proficiency (54%, 73% & 60% gains, respectively);
- 100% of awardees stated that they 'definitely will' (59%) or 'probably will' (41%) engage in another CPE activity within the next 12 months;
- At least 13,500 people were directly engaged 'in-person' across the 25 CPE projects, at least several-hundred thousand were engaged through various radio broadcasts and at least tens of thousands were engaged through social media platforms. These figures are almost certainly under-estimates;
- Where reported, community attitudes and knowledge towards the respective CPE focal areas improved, on average, 72% and 55% respectively.
- Without exception, all interviewees described their CPE project implementation experiences in positive terms. Nevertheless, a range of challenges that may usefully inform future iterations of the scheme were identified (elaborated below).

---

### Impact

The CPE seed fund was a **rewarding and positive yet highly challenging experience** as the fund exposed awardees to an applied CPE project, mostly for the first time. Awardees gained a **greater understanding** of and **enthusiasm** for CPE, and acquired the necessary **knowledge, skills and confidence** to undertake CPE (with statistically significant increases in CPE knowledge, attitude and practice scores following project implementation). Awardees further benefitted in attaining grant income and principal investigator experience as well as project management and monitoring and evaluation experience. After the award, some awardees **considered a change in career** direction towards CPE.

The extent to which awardees were able to **impact and influence CPE attitudes** and practices within their respective consortia and institutions was unclear; there was evidence of a **substantial influence** at consortia level in some cases, but not to the same degree as the **impact on the awardees** themselves. This is not unexpected, given that institutional impact achieved through individual 'championing' will take place **over the**

**longer-term.** The research consortia CPE implementing staff teams were especially well placed to **achieve broader influence** and are perhaps better able to reflect and build on their CPE experiences in the immediate period. That 25 awards were spread across 9 out of 11 DELTAS consortia suggests the **potential for longer-term influence** across multiple consortia and member institutions was achieved. Those consortia who most **actively encouraged and supported** their fellows to apply were the **most successful**, and perhaps most receptive to the subsequent learning that followed.

The findings were weakest with respect to understanding the outcome of the CPE seed fund on the various communities and public engaged in the respective awards, although some impressive results were still apparent. Several projects successfully **achieved a shift in participant attitudes and knowledge**. However, whether any of these activities subsequently resulted in a change in behaviour is unknown; despite the **intention to measure behaviour change**, this was not implemented given the **short duration of the awards** and the various **challenges awardees faced**.

### Lessons for Future Schemes

The award guidance and process was **clear**, reporting requirements were considered **straight forward**, and the support provided was **useful**; the **leadership and ongoing support** of the AAS focal point was often noted as especially **helpful and appreciated**. Awardees indicated a desire for **ongoing training** or feed-back mechanisms, as well as stronger **peer-to-peer learning** opportunities. As many awardees were **inexperienced in designing and implementing** monitoring and evaluation plans, they indicated that more **intensive and regular support** would have been helpful.

The limited **time to implement** the awards and the **timing of the awards** (often mid-way through a PhD or postdoctoral project) was highly problematic. The **strict and brief** implementation period exacerbated the consequences of other **routinely experienced challenges** e.g. delays in procurement or obtaining ethics approvals. The timing of the award placed **significant stress** on the awardees and **limited the opportunity** to extend involvement in the projects (inclusive of publications) post-implementation.

The bespoke CPE seed fund **outcome framework was only loosely applied** across projects as awardees were **not required to align** their monitoring and evaluation plans with all suitable framework indicators; instead awardees were encouraged and supported to **develop their own monitoring and evaluation plans** which were integrated into the overarching framework. Regardless of which indicators were or were not included, the **challenges to collecting** quality monitoring and evaluation data in a **short-time period** by individuals new to the process and with **considerable competing pressures** would have remained.

### Comments from awardees

*"I started as someone who basically knew nothing about how to do CPE... Since [undertaking the CPE award], I think I've really grown in leaps and bounds in terms of understanding engagement. And I now consider science engagement as a possible career path for me"*

*"Engaging with the teammates, engaging with the community leaders and the community people, engaging with the people who provided services, engaging with the fund-holder institution...has been a huge learning experience."*

*"The CPE award was a challenging opportunity. I had a lot to learn, and it has actually changed my attitude towards research. Instead of doing research for career growth and academic success, my primary goal is to help people improve their livelihood through building trust in science and scientific solutions."*

---

The full report can be accessed here from September, 2021: <https://www.lstmed.ac.uk/research/centres-and-units/centre-for-capacity-research/resources>

## Annex 1: CPE Project Summaries

---

### Round One: CPE (13 awards)

- 1. Mental health community engagement for people living with HIV**  
Target audience: Persons living with HIV and their support networks  
Primary aim/s: Engaging persons living with HIV and their support networks in participatory methods that empower them with knowledge of such conditions and to be able to utilise such knowledge or outputs from research to improve their health or treatment outcomes.  
Country: Zimbabwe
- 2. A novel scalable public engagement tool: taking KEMRI-Wellcome Trust Research virtual laboratory to young children aged 10-14 years using immersive technology**  
Target audience: Children aged 10-14 years  
Primary aim/s: To increase the appreciation of science and research in society.  
Country: Kenya
- 3. Science to Society: Raising future leaders**  
Target audience: High school students  
Primary aim/s: Expose high school pupils in otherwise neglected rural communities to the importance of infectious disease research and promote scientific research as a viable career path.  
Country: South Africa
- 4. Harnessing Adolescence Advocacy to End Tuberculosis in Botswana**  
Target audience: HIV-infected Adolescents  
Primary aim/s: To share the awardee's PhD research (understanding the predictors of incident TB in HIV-infected patients) with adolescents in a relatable and interactive manner and to inspire high school students to pursue scientific careers.  
Country: Botswana
- 5. Science-based conversation, knowledge, and skill transfer to students in selected secondary schools in Western Kenya**  
Target audience: High school Students  
Primary aim/s: Motivate and inspire students to pursue a career in science and to communicate science.  
Country: Kenya
- 6. #HepB0: Silent No More**  
Target audience: 18-40 year olds  
Primary aim/s: To share knowledge about HBV transmission, prevention, pathogenesis, treatment, and research to students in an interactive manner and to produce a poster for use in healthcare facilities to provide HBV awareness to the public.  
Country: Botswana
- 7. A public engagement initiative involving training on antimicrobial resistance and infection prevention among primary school students in Kampala District, Uganda, "Power over Bugs Project"**  
Target audience: 10-14 year olds  
Primary aim/s: Train, engage and interact with primary school pupils in selected primary schools in the topics of infection prevention and control and hand washing practices.  
Country: Uganda
- 8. Sickle cell disease - the patient's perspective**  
Target audience: Children of all age groups living with sickle cell disease  
Primary aim/s: Share the experiences of families living with sickle cell disease through the development of a comic book.  
Country: Kenya
- 9. Rural Community Partnership: A Collaborative Initiative to Empower Communities for Primary Health Care Oversight**  
Target audience: Community members  
Primary aim/s: To empower rural communities to play an effective oversight role in terms of ensuring accountable use of available financial resources and delivery of primary health care.  
Country: Tanzania

**10. Gown and Town: Synergy for Enhanced Societal Impact**

Target audience: Adolescents aged 10 to 19 years old

Primary aim/s: Foster an improved understanding of the importance of senior secondary school retention, elicit possible factors promoting or hindering secondary school enrolment (and retention), and provide a forum for wider community dialogue among selected stakeholders around this key research finding.

Country: Nigeria

**11. Process Evaluation of community-based mass dog vaccination strategies in the Mara Region of Tanzania.**

Target audience: Mara Region of Tanzania community

Primary aim/s: Empower communities with awareness of dog behaviour and handling techniques both at home and vaccination points to: i) reduce incidence of dog bites in the first place; ii) foster stronger bonding between people and their dogs; iii) ease dog catching and holding for treatment at home and vaccination points; iv) foster prioritizing of rabies as a disease of public health concern by communities and their collaborative efforts with the veterinary system towards organizing mass dog vaccinations; and v) improve dog-owner participation in mass dog vaccination campaigns.

Country: Tanzania

**12. Community Engagement for Social Inclusion in Substance Abuse and HIV in Mufakose, Harare, Zimbabwe**

Target audience: Young adults dually afflicted with substance use disorders and HIV

Primary aim/s: Raise awareness, generate insight, and start a critical conversation around fighting stigma and promoting social inclusion in HIV and substance abuse.

Country: Zimbabwe

**13. Epidemiology of streptomycin induced ototoxicity in Ibadan**

Target audience: Patient groups, healthcare workers and wider public

Primary aim/s: Increase the awareness about hearing loss secondary to aminoglycosides ototoxicity.

Country: Nigeria

**Round Two: Gender Equity in Research (7 awards)**

**14. Scientific culture development in teenagers from Bouna**

Target audience: High school pupils, parents, the local and the international actors of education.

Primary aim/s: Create awareness among parents, opinion leaders, young girls, mothers, etc. about female participation in higher education.

Country: Côte d'Ivoire

**15. Promoting science and health research awareness among university students in Kenya with a focus on second- and third-year undergraduate students from four universities**

Target audience: University Students

Primary aim/s: Create awareness and raise an interest in science and research amongst university students.

Country: Kenya

**16. Awareness and sensitization of Maternal Mental Health issues among Zimbabwean men** Target audience: Male participants, community gatekeepers, traditional leaders and church leaders

Primary aim/s: Increased male involvement in maternal mental health thereby improving help/health seeking behaviours. Increased availability of maternal mental health information Country: Zimbabwe

**17. Creating a powerpack of super scientists: reframing gender narratives to empower female scientists**

Target audience: SANTHE and wider DELTAS scientific communities and local high schools.

Primary aim/s: To increase awareness of and reframe problematic narratives that contribute to gender inequity in science.

Country: South Africa

**18. Dialogues in the wilderness: camels, science and the girl child**

Target audience: Secondary school students and members of the general population in the school catchment area.

Primary aim/s: to determine the role of socio-cultural factors on gender distribution profile, gender performance and progression in formal education among school going students of Laisamis Secondary School (LSS) in Laisamis, Marsabit County, northern Kenya.

Country: Kenya

**19. A Mentorship program to address socio-cultural barriers on gender disparity in the science field**

Target audience: Universities, Colleges, Polytechnics and Secondary.

Primary aim/s: To address socio-cultural barriers that affect the progress of women and girls in science careers in Malawi.

Country: Malawi

**20. Africa DISCUSS**

Target audience: University students, lectures, policy makers and legislators

Primary aim/s: Bringing to fore bullying, discrimination and harassments of girls and women resulting directly or indirectly in under-representation and slow progression of women in science and senior scientific career positions.

Country: Nigeria

**Round Three: Covid-19 Infodemic (5 awards)**

**21. Living with COVID-19 in Côte d'Ivoire: engaging communities and the public on One Health**

Target audience: General Population

Primary aim/s: Provide a platform for scientists and policy makers to discuss Covid-19 and related concerns enabling the community to reach a consensus on how to stay safe and maintain their livelihoods.

Country: Côte d'Ivoire

**22. A Public engagement strategy to interrupt SARS-CoV-2 transmission in markets located in Kampala City, Uganda**

Target audience: Market vendors and customers

Primary aim/s: Minimize SAR-COV-2 infections in markets located in Kampala, Uganda.

Country: Uganda

**23. Public Engagement in Zimbabwe during COVID-19 through a mental health radio drama programme**

Target audience: General public, researchers, policy makers and health professionals

Primary aim/s: Provide a platform for the general public to contribute in coming up with solutions to improve their mental health during COVID-19, inform researchers on lived experiences, provide a platform for policy makers to understand the experiences of the public and how policy can contribute to better mental health outcomes and provide an informed approach in responding to the mental health needs of the general public.

Country: Zimbabwe

**24. COVID-19: Where art and science meet**

Target audience: General Population

Primary aim/s: To understand the interplay with HIV and between COVID-19 and *Mycobacterium tuberculosis (Mtb)*.

Country: South Africa (although artists invited to participate from across Africa)

**25. COVID-19: The public as partners at the COVID-19 battlefield**

Target audience: General Population

Primary aim/s: Use radio and virtual spaces to drive conversations around COVID-19 research particularly the development of vaccines and unpack the processes and efforts involved.

Country: Kenya