

Theme of the Month

Facilitating Equitable Scientific Career Progression

Preliminary analysis of primary data shows that the career progression of female and male researchers to senior positions within the DELTAS supported institutions is influenced by individual, socio-cultural and institutional factors. A summary of some of the facilitators of scientific career progression are:

1. **Family and spousal support** is critical through provision of child care and emotional support.
2. **Good mentorship** was viewed as crucial, especially at early research career stage.
3. Support by PIs through **allocation of research assistants** to help female fellows/researchers with data collection where they have family demands because of young children.
4. **Support for childcare** (subsidy for childcare) when travelling abroad (mainly reported by female mid-career and senior scientists).
5. **Flexible working arrangements** agreed upon with supervisors/line managers (referred to as 'pro-family research leaders').
6. **Work-life discussion panels** between junior research fellows and senior scientists within the workplace, are helpful in understanding the career progression issues faced by juniors and seniors, who may be able to provide support - e.g. with time management skills.
7. Presence of a **well-being team** that supports the **work-life balance** of researchers/staff through encouraging them to undertake physical exercise and avoid working over weekends. Some institutions have deployed **occupational therapists and counsellors** who help with the psychological issues experienced by researchers.
8. **Encouraging fellows**, as well as facilitating them financially, to pursue **English courses** (e.g. at the British Councils in their respective countries).
9. Provision of fellowships to researchers to **visit their collaborators abroad** to enable them to gain scientific and English speaking and writing skills. Some fellows (from Francophone countries) have applied for **AESA's mobility fund** to visit Anglophone countries during the analysis and writing phase to improve on their English language.
10. Institutional support for **networking and collaborations to share career experience** (i.e. through annual retreats for senior researchers and mentors).
11. Some PIs are providing **supervisory opportunities to doctoral and post-doctoral fellows** to co-supervise their juniors which is useful for co-authorship in publications, and in gaining leadership, teaching and supervision skills early in their careers.
12. **Bridge funds** by research institutions which support salaries for able researchers until they obtain research funding, as well as transition of PhD fellows upon their successful completion of fellowship.



The **IDeAL programme** offers a one-year bridge fund to PhD fellows, commonly known as 'Career Development Year', which aids them to start thinking about their future career pathways through undertaking grant and paper writing, and establishing research collaborations, although it is not guaranteed for all PhD fellows.

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

For more information about the LRP please contact justin.pulford@lstmed.ac.uk



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Some of the LRP team at the DELTAS Africa AGM 2019

The four LRP themes include:

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