Global, Regional and National Health Research Capacity Strengthening Initiatives Relevant to Africa: An Inventory

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Introduction
The HRCS Inventory is an updated and edited version of an “Inventory of Global Health Research Capacity Strengthening Initiatives” prepared by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in 2008. This update includes only initiatives that focus on Africa. We updated the previous inventory and conducted new web searches of funders as well as projects and initiatives on health research capacity development. We restructured some sub-headings and added others; dropped organizations whose activities ceased providing support to African initiatives after the first inventory was compiled; and added initiatives which were missing in the previous inventory. Information was collated from a comprehensive review of project and program websites in the first quarter of 2011. The currency of information reflects the extent to which such data sources present recent activity. In a number of cases, sites have not been updated for some years. Where there was evidence of the listed initiative having ceased it was excluded; however the lack of updated information over the last three years was not automatically seen as a basis for exclusion. Readers are advised to consult listed sites or contacts, using the HRCS Inventory as a living document.

Framework of analysis and results
We reviewed each funding initiative using concepts adapted from the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) Framework designed by ESSENCE (Enhancing Support for Strengthening the Effectiveness of National Capacity Efforts) (2011) whose mandate is to improve harmonization among funders of health research capacity strengthening in Africa. ESSENCE intends that donors/funders should align with priorities of countries in which they work and harmonize their actions and procedures in order to facilitate complementarity among funders and to reduce administrative overload for recipients of funding. The review found 63 initiatives working to build and strengthen research capacity at different levels in Africa. Of these, 34 were global initiatives, 14 were regional initiatives whilst 15 were national initiatives. Although we did not find initiatives that specifically targeted gender or building capacity of female health researchers, a number of initiatives, especially those that supported individuals, encouraged females to apply for their fellowships. The ESSENCE analytical framework was used to assess the levels of operations regarding funding of research capacity as follows:
1. **Individual level:**

In the ESSENCE framework, the individual level of research capacity strengthening refers to “capabilities and requirements that if acquired /fulfilled enabled an individual or members to undertake good quality research”. 39 out of the 63 initiatives in the Inventory support individual-level work. The most common capacity building programmes at individual level include supporting PhDs, Masters Degrees, supporting conference attendances and workshops. National initiatives represented the greatest percentage (38.5%) of initiatives supporting individual research activities.

2. **Institutional/organizational level:**

We sought to assess whether initiatives supported research capacity strengthening of scientific research organizations (which include research groups and research institutions) to develop their capacities in infrastructure, staffing (including financial and management staff), curricula development, acquisition of funds, forging and maintaining external contacts. Fifty-eight initiatives listed supported research capacity at institutional levels. Of these, 30 were global initiatives, whilst regional and national initiatives were 14 each.

3. **National research systems strengthening:**

This dimension relates to factors such as capacity and commitment at the broader financing and policy level to promote research capacity, to set standards, or to link policy, research and practice and stewardship. Organizations/Initiatives were assessed to check if they implemented research capacity strengthening at national level in their operations. Eighteen organizations (out of 63) supported national level research capacity development and strengthening efforts. Four regional organizations provided support to nation-wide capacity building projects with one national initiative supporting research capacity at national level. See table 1.

**Conclusion**

Whilst most funders were providing support to more than one level, the most commonly supported level was the institution/organization. Nearly all funders (global, regional and national) supported institutions. Individual researchers were receiving most of their support needs from the national and regional funders whilst global initiatives tended to fund institutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizations/Initiatives</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
<th>Individual (%)</th>
<th>Institution (%)</th>
<th>System wide (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global</td>
<td>34 (54%)</td>
<td>13 (33.33%)</td>
<td>30 (51.7%)</td>
<td>13 (72.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>14 (22.2%)</td>
<td>11 (28.2%)</td>
<td>14 (24.1%)</td>
<td>4 (22.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>15 (23.8%)</td>
<td>15 (38.5%)</td>
<td>14 (24.1%)</td>
<td>1 (5.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63 (100%)</td>
<td>39 (100%)</td>
<td>58 (100%)</td>
<td>18 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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