Dear Colleagues,

In this issue of THRiVE News, (Vol. 2 No.1) which comes at the beginning of the fourth year of THRiVE’s existence we celebrate our partnership and also reflect on the progress made so far. If harnessed properly, the remarkable support of our partner institutions in the North and the collective network research capacity building efforts within THRiVE can lead to remarkably staggering results that are greater than the sum of what would be achieved by the individual institutions. Building research capacity among the partner institutions is taking on the characteristics of a religion. Working together to strengthen our network is a most desirable goal so as to learn from each other, support and mentor each other and also achieve synergies.

THRiVE prides itself in the great strides that are being made in developing research and innovation capacity across the partner universities and research institutes. The network is increasingly playing an important role in enabling the institutions to work towards achieving their respective research and education missions and to eventually lead to improvement of health and health care. Our resolve and determination in this regard is evident from what we do. Indeed a senior colleague from a non-THRiVE university in the East African region remarked recently that whenever he thinks about THRiVE it leaves him salivating. We, however, should not remain complacent but continue to initiate and also support catalytic processes in our institutions that will lead to everlasting impact on science, the institutional systems and human kind.

We must keep pushing the boundaries and achieve the best even in the context of very limited resources. Globally these are times of austerity measures because of an unstable world economy. Therefore, as we accelerate our efforts to achieve the anticipated high productivity we must be mindful-more than ever before-of the value we get for every coin spent.

We greatly appreciate the support we receive from communities, institutions, partners and funders which makes THRiVE’s existence meaningful. Let me call upon all THRiVE leaders to work with top leadership in their institutions in order to bring new thinking and innovations to the institutions and achieve everlasting progressive change. We should be clear and articulate regarding what kind of support we request of them.

Nelson Sewankambo

Membership of the THRiVE Advisory Board
1. Prof Wilfred Mbacham, Chair, Rest of Africa
2. Prof. Hannah Akuffo, Outside Africa
3. Dr. JPR Ochieng’Odero, Other Consortia
4. Prof. Jerome Kabakyenga, Uganda
5. Prof. Florent Senyana, Rwanda
6. Dr. Val Snewin, Wellcome Trust
7. Dr. Elizabeth Bukusi, Kenya
8. Dr. Hassan Mshinda, Tanzania
9. Prof. Nelson K. Sewankambo, Director, THRiVE
10. Dr. Saidi Kapiga, Deputy Director
MANAGING FINANCES ACROSS A NETWORK: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Paul Teefe, Finance Officer

Makerere University is the lead institution of a consortium, THRiVE and other members of the consortium are National Institute for Medical Research (Tanzania), London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (United Kingdom), Uganda Virus Research Institute (Uganda), National University of Rwanda, Gulu University (Uganda), International Centre for Insect Physiology and Ecology (Kenya) Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Centre (Tanzania) and University of Cambridge (United Kingdom). As the lead institution, Makerere University receives funds from Wellcome Trust (WT) to support THRiVE activities.

Grant Management

The Trust has provided financial guidelines that give details of procedures and policies regarding grant management and it is the duty of the lead institution to make sure that these guidelines policies and procedures reach the sub-awardees and are followed by each sub-awardee. Makerere had to put in place subcontracts with each of the African partner institutions (sub-awardees) mentioned above before any work could start or release funds to the respective partner. It was also necessary to put controls in place that help in ensuring that the funds are utilized for the intended purpose. For example, the lead institution has to make sure that cash reconciliations are done in time. The sub-awardees that have pool Bank accounts should have a cash book/ledger for THRiVE funds, a fully- fledged assets register and all assets must be engraved.

WT Finance Officer Visit to THRiVE

In October 2011 and as part of the control measures, and providing ongoing support Wellcome Trust (WT) sent a Finance Officer to the THRiVE Secretariat at Makerere University. During this visit, the Finance Officer acquainted herself with the university context and operations, and the national and institutional policies and guidelines that Makerere follows to ensure professional management of donor funds. In addition she checked thoroughly the processes followed to manage THRiVE funds by going through selected transactions including, requisitions, procurement of goods and services, and internal audit controls. Many other issues were discussed including segregation of duties, which in most cases helps to avoid errors, etc. This was a very comprehensive process similar to the external audits that Makerere had experienced before. The WT Finance Officer was happy with the controls the University had applied to THRiVE finance operations. The officer also made a visit tone of the sub-awardees, Gulu University to learn and check firsthand how the latter was managing grant funds. The Ugandan finance officers had opportunity to ask questions on issues that required clarification, and also were able to express their opinions on aspects where the Trust guidelines and requirements could be improved to minimize confusion and enhance efficiency. As finance officers, we greatly learnt from each other. The benefits that were realized from a face-to-face interaction between funder and grantee officers cannot be over-emphasized and we encourage these kinds of site visits by the Trust officers.

Opportunities

As institution Finance Officers based at the lead institution, our aim is to help sub-awardees get and sustain high performance in financial reporting. We have had the opportunity to do that but it is mutual 1. In the Team Dynamics, in the area of Team Management, we have had consortium finance officers’ team, perform more effectively. We have shared experiences and compared notes together and learnt from each other. We have also had the opportunity to learn the financial operations across borders. There has been the opportunity to learn to appreciate views from different individuals and understanding each other as finance officers. It is said that before you criticise others, walk a mile in their shoes. We have improved our concentration and are more focused. We have also strengthened our problem- solving skills. We as finance officers have had the opportunity to manage performance stress and also emphasized planning ahead to reduce stress. There is the opportunity to communicate with each other and learning to listen. We have had a chance to learn by looking at the different financial systems and we have suggested different ways to enhance these systems.

Challenges

There are a number of challenges in managing finances across a network and they include but not limited to: Different institutional policies and systems that must be balanced with the financial guidelines of the funder. Because there are different policies and procedures in the different institutions, harmonization of reports is a big challenge. There have been at times delays by Makerere THRiVE finance officers to respond to queries from sub-awardee while the latter very often do not submit reports in time. Collecting reports from each member of the consortia is not easy. However, despite the foregoing the benefits and experience accruing from managing finances across the network and supporting each other outweigh the challenges encountered.

Way-forward

The management of THRiVE funds has been improving and with more effort, we expect to keep getting better. The elements that we think can greatly contribute to the improvement are; training and regular visits to sub-awardees by the lead institution Finance Officers.
Enhanced Learning Environment thanks to Broad-Band Internet Connection

Kiregu Joshua, Rugamba Raoul, Nzayiramabaho Manasse, Ntahobakulira Isaac and Kakoma Jean Baptiste

This October, the National University of Rwanda/ School of Public Health (NURSPH) after a long wait was finally able to join the communication superhighway when it got hooked onto high speed fibre optic internet.

“Thanks to THRiVE consortium, this also opens up the opportunity for video conferencing capabilities that the School sees as necessary in light of various Master program collaborations we are having with foreign universities and faculty”.

has been able to install 10Mbps worth of internet speed which will immediately solve poor connectivity issues the school has faced for a long time. With monthly subscription fees being jointly contributed by a pool of projects such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Belgium Technical Cooperation (BTC) and Global Fund, this is a concrete example of how joint sponsorship can achieve results.

This capacity now allows the School to improve the classroom experience as connection is now available in all lecture rooms, faculty offices as well as the library. Also, the School now has the opportunity to make use of available e-learning platforms that can go a long way in improving the teaching and learning experience by allowing sharing of reading resources, power-point presentations as well as enhancing the student-teacher and student-student interactions beyond the lecture room. Indeed, this connection constitutes a pre-requisite for Tufts University of USA to install the TUSK E–learning platform in Rwanda in the framework of the One Health Central and East Africa (OHCEA) regional consortium institutions. That is a tangible example of how beneficial it is to network with other consortia in achieving shared objectives.

Additionally, the School has been thinking of developing distance learning capacities due to increased demand for our academic programs by prospecting students from far and wide as well as from different public health officers from different countries seeking to learn more about the story of the Rwandan health system. This new infrastructure fills one big part of this puzzle.

The broadband internet comes following another THRiVE project capacity support in 2011 where the School received 40 computers for its IT lab and library. All these equipment is facilitating the teaching of IT-based courses such as GIS and a number of Statistical softwares as well as enabling online research. Outside trainings and workshops have also been conducted in these labs. All in all, thanks to this support, the School can confidently say that it is now fairly equipped to provide quality graduate education and a research-friendly environment.

The National University of Rwanda has even more compelling stories of change. Hanningtom Muyenje highlights them in this brief piece.

With two schools, seven faculties and eleven centres; National University of Rwanda (NUR) is located at three campuses; Butare, Rusizi and Kigali. At the recent THRiVE AGM held at icipe in Nairobi Kenya, Professor Jean – Baptiste KAKOMA, Dean of the School of Public Health had good reports to make regarding the impact THRiVE has had on his Institution. Professor Kakoma took time to educate the AGM delegates about the history of Rwanda and how its journey of recovery from civil conflict is shaping the way NUR operates. Since their engagement with the THRiVE consortium, some of the scholarly benefits he pointed out include; four masters fellowships, a scholarship in East African Diploma in Tropical Medicine, and training in research administration. In addition, two NUR computer laboratories have been equipped and useful supplementary equipment like laptops, printers and scanners have also been provided. Furthermore, plans to establish a video conferencing facility to enhance distance learning and accelerate global engagements with the university are underway. With trained personnel, upgraded internet platforms and new equipment, one can only wait to see to what height NUR will soar through the THRiVE partnership.
as the Director of THRiVE, Prof. Nelson Sewankambo states in a previous newsletter, “Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success.” The 4th THRiVE Annual General Meeting (AGM) which was held at icipe’s Duduville headquarters in Nairobi 18-20 June 2012 is a demonstration of this success that comes from working together. The AGM was attended by about 90 participants - including health researchers and administrators from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and the United Kingdom under the auspices of the Consortium. The local organizing committee received tremendous support from the office of icipe’s Director-General, Prof. Christian Borgemeister, who recognizes the contribution of THRiVE to meeting the capacity building needs for health sciences research in the region, consistent with icipe’s mandate and programmes. The organizing committee enjoyed very close working relationships with the THRiVE Secretariat that has its hub at the College of Health Sciences of Makerere University.

icipe was a good venue to host this AGM, as a result of infrastructure improved in recent years, including conferencing with multiple small meeting rooms, on-campus accommodation for most participants and good internet infrastructure that enabled a meeting of the Advisory Board, with the Chair calling in from Haiti. icipe conducts numerous workshops and trainings at its Thomas Odhiambo Conference Centre, which has several meeting rooms, as well as an International Guest House with 40 self contained rooms at the Nairobi campus.

We feel privileged to have had the honour as hosts to the THRiVE AGM, which gave us the opportunity to showcase our analytical laboratory instruments as well as the recently inaugurated Martin Lüscher Emerging Infectious Diseases Laboratory (http://eidlab.icipe.org). We look forward to working with THRiVE partners to advance the objectives for which the consortium was established, for many years to come.

THRiVE’s Footprints in International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology

From the Kenya Mountains of Western Kenya to Dar-es Salaam in Tanzania - all the way to United Kingdom, Rwanda and Kampala in Uganda; delegates assembled at International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology.
and Ecology (icipe) Kasarani campus located just outside Nairobi – the main capital of Kenya. This was the fourth time researchers, fellows and administrators from nine institutions and five countries in the THRiVE collaboration were coming together to review the past years and to plan for the next.

In his presentation titled; “Highlights of THRiVE’s footprints in icipe”, Dan Masiga the THRiVE co-applicant at icipe took time to applaud THRiVE for its inordinate contribution to the centre. He pointed out how the new hi-tech laboratory equipment procured with funds from THRiVE and the students and staff trained under the initiative have become a long term resource for the institute. “The equipment will be here for more than 15 years and it will attract more projects - long after THRiVE ends”, remarked Dr. Masiga. “Already funds from several other sources are taking advantage of the improved infrastructure attributed to THRiVE funds at icipe”, he added.

More stories of transformative impact by THRiVE at the participating institutions were shared at this grand assembly. Sabina Wachira an icipe-based THRiVE post-doctoral fellow has already received another grant of $30,000 from the National Council for Science and Technology in Kenya to carry forward the work she started under THRiVE. Another pump priming grant in collaboration with Uganda Virus Research Institute (UVRI) has also birthed an offshoot of a bigger grant outside THRiVE in which a PhD in population genetics was awarded. With additional machines, more personnel training and increased collaborations through THRiVE, icipe’s research environment will never be the same again.

After receiving medical training at Tumaini University, Kirimanjaro Christian Medical University College in Tanzania, I worked as a general practitioner in one of the rural health care centres in Morogoro region, Tanzania. I saw many patients during that time: the pediatric ward was burdened by malaria, anaemia, pneumonia and paediatric AIDS. Abject poverty, lack of knowledge and poor infrastructure were some of the external contributors to ill health. I wanted to do something more - my rural practical experience underscored the importance of approaches to prevention of illness as well as curing and ameliorating existing diseases.

My first step towards acquiring public health and research knowledge was to join one of the consultant referral hospitals in Northern Tanzania, Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Centre (KCMC) where I was fully employed as a medical officer. There I engaged in research activities within a collaborative program between Duke University and Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Centre as Study Coordinator for HIV Treatment and Care studies, building on my medical experience.

I decided that my real interest lay in research, hence I joined LSHTM in 2009 to study MSc. Public Health in developing Countries (PHDC). This course enhanced my research skills and knowledge that I needed to learn in public health discipline from Epidemiology, Statistics and other related discipline (Health Policy and Economics).

Thereafter, I realized my need to pursue a research degree to build much stronger research skills and capacity, inspired and attracted at applying for the PhD scholarship.

As one of the THRiVE PhD fellows, an award which came to me just like a dream comes true; I have learnt so much both within the consortium and through collaboration with partner institutions. It has been a great opportunity to interact with different individuals who are knowledgeable and experienced in a number of ways. I have had chances to learn almost everything I need as a PhD fellow so far and I believe that by the end of my fellowship I will have acquired tremendous research skills, knowledge and experience.
Being in the consortium has been outstanding in a number of ways, not to mention the ability to become autonomous but also an opportunity to become a leader within my own university. Since February 2012, I have been involved in chairing of a PhD student’s platform which is a cross-disciplinary network for PhD students working in the field of human health. It's a new partnership between universities in developing countries and universities in Denmark aiming at Building Stronger Universities in Developing Countries.

I have improved my teaching skills and methods through the learning experience that I gained and acquired both at my local and partner institution. Through this fellowship I had opportunity to visit LSHTM, where I attended four course modules of my choice with support and advice from my supervisors. The level of teaching, organization, expertise and the academic environment at LSHTM is astonishing. People coming from all over the world brought to the courses, multidisciplinary academic environment, sharing of knowledge, skills, and experiences and even developing networks.

With the support of THRiVE travel award, I managed to travel to USA to participate in the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (ASTMH) 60th annual meeting, held in Philadelphia, where I had an oral presentation on one of our collaborative research projects in Tanzania (LSHTM and JMP-KCMC) under the support of ACT Consortium.

My expectations and goals are so far being met and I feel that I have been fortunate enough to be in the consortium.
Harnessing the Power of ICTs as an enabler of Change at Gulu University

By Dickson Muyomba, THRiVE Secretariate

Situated on the hill overlooking Gulu - the biggest town in Northern Uganda, Gulu University Faculty of Medicine is quickly leaping for higher heights – thanks to ICT support from the THRiVE (Training Health Researchers into Vocational Excellency) project. Despite the perceived high cost and the potential technical challenges associated with its use; the power of ICTs as enablers of change in the education system is undeniable. It is upon this backdrop that this ten-year old institution has taken the bold step to upgrade their internet accessibility.

Although the university has six computer labs between its four faculties, few of these are adequately equipped to handle the learning and communication needs of this fast growing University. The Faculty of Medicine decided to upgrade their computer laboratory into a modern facility capable of providing e-learning, support online collaboration with other scientists and meet the research needs of their staff and students. Fitted with thirty (30) brand new desktop computers, large display screens and new furniture; the faculty lab provides an excellent learning and teaching environment.

Commenting on the new Lab facility, Prof Emilio Ovuga, the former Dean of the Faculty of Medicine said; “This lab has established infrastructure, which through the university’s open door policy, permits sharing with other students and staff from other faculties.”

Some anonymous person once remarked, “Life was easier when Apple and Blackberry were just fruits.” However, we believe that ICTs are a very necessary tool for any educational institution that aspires to compete in this information marketplace.

Building Capacity in IT

Meanwhile, THRiVE sponsored Mr. Dickson Muyomba (IT THRiVE) for a five day hands-on training in fiber optic technology in Uganda by the Fiber Optic Association (FOA). The course focused on equipping participants with skills and knowledge in fiber optic technology, Fiber backbone installation and fiber termination and testing.

As institutions are revamping their IT infrastructure to support gigabit speeds, fiber optic is the most appropriate solution. Building capacity in fiber technology is seen as a strategic move for THRiVE institutions to address the challenges and position themselves appropriately.

Redefining the Research Landscape at Makerere and beyond: Creativity in Delivering THRiVE Catalyzing College and University-Wide Changes

By Hannington Muyenje

Maximising returns on research investments seems to be one of the dreams Professor Nelson Sewankambo – the Director/Principal Investigator for the THRiVE consortium. Pleased with the many college and university-wide innovations catalyzed by the THRiVE project, Prof Nelson who is also the Principal of Makerere University College of Health Sciences (MakCHS) shared how the THRiVE-funded upgrading of the internet infrastructure to accommodate video conferencing and enhance overall internet connectivity at the College is yielding great dividends. He pointed out how the use of Skype and drop-box has helped to save sums of money which would have been spent on telephone calls and procuring expensive file-storage servers respectively. “This is good use of research funds,” he beams with satisfaction.

Commenting on the new Innovations and Knowledge Translation (IKT) office at MakCHS, Principal Sewankambo says, “It is new and we do not know of any African institutions with this position. I think it is safe to call it an innovation.” The THRiVE-initiated IKT office establishes linkages and creates platforms for engagement between research producers from MakCHS and strategic research users in order to accelerate use of innovations and research evidence in public decision and policy making processes. In addition, through the THRiVE-initiated Grants and Contracts office, the college has supported writing of more than 70 grant proposals submitted in less than one year of the office’s existence. The Grants and Contracts office finds and circulates grant calls to faculty and students at the college. The office also supports researchers to conform their proposals to funders’ requirements and to manage budgets and other post-award processes.

What’s more, recently - through THRiVE’s influence, Makerere University Council adopted a post-doctoral policy. The policy opens a door for post-doctoral fellows to establish their own research initiatives with support of a suitable supervisor and mentor – thereby increasing the university’s research capacity.

Asked how he hopes to carry on with the gains made when the THRiVE project ends, Nelson Sewankambo pointed out how pump priming grants (PPG) are creating opportunities for institutions to network for even bigger initiatives. “As researchers collaborate across institutions and produce preliminary data using small grants they gain experience in winning and managing research grants through the THRiVE PPGs,” he noted. PPGs generate the requisite baseline data to be used in bigger studies. He narrated how MakCHS Dr. Noah Kiwanuka – a recipient of a THRiVE pump priming grant together with his collaborators at UVRI have used their data from the PPG to win a grant for a larger study among fishing communities on the shores of lake Victoria.

As we strengthen collaborations amongst African institutions; and as we get more efficient at implementing existing studies, we open the door for more funding opportunities at our institutions. And with our finger on the pulse to maximize returns on research investments, we get to do more to serve and impact society.
Voices of the first graduates of the THRiVE supported Masters in Epidemiology and Biostatistics programme at KCMC.

By Tolbert Sonda, Rija Abeid, Jane Rogathi, Filimoni Temu

“Thank you all, and THRiVE for all you have done in putting this program together and administering it”.

THRiVE has supported the establishment of a department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at KCMC. The department developed and coordinates a two year Masters programme which aims to support the development of a critical mass of qualified African research scientists. The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine has supported KCMC in the development of the course structure, the course materials as well as in the coordination and teaching of this unique Masters programme. The course began in 2010 with four students, in 2011 another three students and in 2012 year ten students were enrolled and we already have applications for 2013. The first graduates were delighted to be given the opportunity to share their experiences of the course.

The following are excerpts compiled by the students who attended and completed the MSc in epidemiology and biostatistics from 2010-2012

“We were the first batch of four students enrolled on this course in 2010 and enjoyed full sponsorship from THRiVE Tanzania. During our training in KCMU College, we acquired adequate knowledge and skills in the field of Epidemiology and Biostatistics which can be used to solve health related problems in Africa. The modules covered in this course have given us sufficient knowledge and skills to design and carry out different types of epidemiological studies, analyze data from such studies and provide scientific interpretation of research outputs”.

“We admire and are very grateful to Jim Todd and colleagues’ efforts to oversee and coordinate the day-to-day needs of the MSc Epidemiology and Applied Biostatistics at KCMU College. We thank staff at LSHTM who gave lectures especially Vera Mann who introduced us to advanced survival analysis techniques and Kathy Baisley who taught us Poisson regression analysis; staff from NIMR, especially Bruno Mmbando who introduced us to the R program and some analysis techniques using R and Wambura Chacha who taught us logistic regression analysis. We also extend our thanks to Jonathan Levin of MRC/UVRI and Henrik Ravn (BSU)”.

“We most certainly felt the benefits of our Institution being a THRiVE member. What a privilege it was to be a part of such an amazing consortium, having been taught by such experienced health research professionals! We are very proud to have been a small part of the consortium and feel we have received the greatest benefit imaginable”.

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Cambridge and Africa: Building on the ‘THRiVE’ Link

By Pauline Essah, Cambridge

Over the past few years, the Wellcome Trust-funded MUII and THRiVE Programmes have provided opportunities for researchers at the University of Cambridge to build mutually-beneficial collaborative relationships with their colleagues in East Africa, and provide mentorship to several talented African researchers. However, the unexpected level of interest shown by Cambridge for more of such Cambridge-Africa mentor/collaborator relationships sent Cambridge THRiVE Steering Committee members in a search for more funds to increase and strengthen such engagements with African researchers. We are, therefore, very excited to have successfully raised extra funds (US$1.2M funding from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, US$1M from The Alborada Trust and £179,000 from the Isaac Newton Trust) to support our wider ‘Cambridge in Africa’ Programme over the next three to four years.

The Carnegie and Newton funds are being used to establish and support the Cambridge-Africa Partnership for Research Excellence (CAPREx) Programme, which commenced in October 2012. CAPREx links together Cambridge and both East (Uganda) and West (Ghana) Africa (hence expanding the MUII/THRiVE link in East Africa) by providing research mentorship, training and support to postdoctoral researchers in the two countries—and improves opportunities for South-South linkages. In addition, CAPREx allows Cambridge to widen the scope of engagement with African researchers by focusing on new subject areas (social sciences and humanities, engineering and biological sciences), to support the health-related foci for the MUII and THRiVE Programmes. The additional specific focus on strengthening research management and administration capacity in the African partner universities provides for important underpinning expertise.

This is excellent news for Cambridge (as well as our partners, we hope!), as it gives our researchers and staff the opportunity to meet and collaborate with each other internally too, across different disciplines, support a new country in sub-Saharan Africa, and engage with new funders (Carnegie, Alborada and the Newton Trust).

An inception meeting between senior representatives from all three CAPREx partners (the University of Cambridge, Makerere University and the University of Ghana, Legon) took place in October 2012. The high-level meeting was attended by Dr Jennifer Barnes (Cambridge University’s Pro-Vice Chancellor for International Strategy) to confirm the University of Cambridge’s interest in, and support for, our Cambridge-Africa partnerships. Professor Eli Katunguta-Rwakishaya from Makerere and Professor Yaa Ntiamoa-Baidu, represented by Professor Ebenezer Oduro Owusu, led the African delegations.THRiVE Fellow Dr Kennedy Amone-P’Olak was in Cambridge at the time, and therefore joined attendees for dinner. A Cambridge-based coordinator dedicated to the CAPREx Programme will commence work in December 2012. Although Makerere University is the only THRiVE institution that could benefit directly from these new ‘Cambridge-Africa’ fellowships, other THRiVE researchers will be equally placed to apply to the Alborada Trust Research fund at Cambridge for supporting research conducted by Africans linked to Cambridge University researchers.

In addition to the inception of the new CAPREx Programme, some other recent and future Cambridge-Africa activities that have a ‘THRiVE link’ are provided below:
a) **Neuroscience Course in Uganda**: With the support of THRiVE in Cambridge, present and immediate past researchers from the Department of Zoology in Cambridge, organised a three week course (August-September 2012) focusing on ‘Insect Neuroscience and Drosophila Neurogenetics’ at Kampala International University in Uganda. This is the second successive year that the course has been run, but for 2012, it was sponsored by the International Brain Research Organisation (IBRO) as an IBRO School. This annual course is open to researchers from THRiVE institutions, and some have already attended the course and benefited. More information about this course is available at [http://www.trendinafrica.com/](http://www.trendinafrica.com/).

b) **Dengue virus research**: THRiVE in Cambridge informed our partners in East Africa that Cambridge dengue virus researchers (who are compiling strains across the world, through collaborations with over 20 research groups) were interested in collaborating with African scientists researching this virus. They could then try to characterize the genetic variation in dengue viruses across the continent, assess how effectively current vaccine candidates protect against dengue strains circulating in Africa, and increase surveillance. They also hope to learn what priorities African researchers identify for the study of dengue viruses, and integrate these objectives into the wider project. We were quickly put in touch with appropriate researchers in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Through networking, we have also now reached researchers in Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroun, Central African Republic and Sudan. The first newsletter focusing on ‘African dengue antigenic cartography’ was circulated from the University of Cambridge to the interested African researchers in October 2012.

c) **Zoonoses in Africa**: Professor James Wood (the current Director of the THRiVE Programme in Cambridge, and a core member of the Cambridge Infectious Diseases initiative), together with 19 research partners in the UK and Africa, have just been awarded a £3.2M grant (by the Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation - ESPA) to set up a research consortium exploring the connections between ecosystems, health and poverty in Africa. The ‘Dynamic Drivers of Disease in Africa Consortium’ (dddac.org) will enable natural scientists to work with a range of social scientists (including anthropologists, economists and geographers) in an integrated approach, to understand zoonoses – diseases which pass from animals to humans. Henipavirus in Ghana, Lassa fever virus in Sierra Leone, the Rift Valley fever virus in Kenya and trypanosomiases in Zambia and Zimbabwe are the diseases to be considered by this consortium.

d) A ‘Cambridge and Africa’ website is to be launched by the University of Cambridge in October 2012, as a reflection of the growing interest shown by Cambridge academics to link up with Africa. Cambridge THRiVE was consulted in the construction of this website, which will reflect the several activities (seminars, conferences, capacity building programmes such as MUII, THRiVE and CAPREx, individual research collaborations, etc.) that have been going on in Cambridge, in relation to Africa.

e) **Recognising THRiVE partners**: Three years after the THRiVE Programme’s inception, the North-South and North-North ‘THRiVE link’ in Cambridge is continuing to strengthen and receive recognition in our University. This is exemplified by the fact that Professors Nelson Sewankambo (Director of the THRiVE Consortium) and David Mabey (Director of THRiVE at the LSHTM) have been invited to Cambridge University in December 2012, to speak at the highly rated ‘Meeting of Minds’ annual seminar organised by the Cambridge Infectious Diseases Initiative. Cambridge THRiVE is looking forward with pleasure to hosting both speakers in Cambridge.

By building on its existing link with the (MUII and) THRiVE Programme, the University of Cambridge is continuing to meet its aim of engaging with Africa and helping to strengthen Africa’s capacity for sustainable excellence in research. We value these Cambridge-Africa relationships immensely, as they are undoubtedly beneficial for both African and Cambridge research. We will, therefore, push for more funding to be able to establish more partnerships: watch this space............
Group work in action in the Kilimanjaro Christian Medical University College (KCMUC) Foundation course

By Jenny Renju, KCMC

On the 1st of October 2012 Kilimanjaro Christian Medical University College (KCMUC) welcomed 66 postgraduate students onto this year’s foundation course; a six-week intensive programme with two weeks of three interlinked modules (Epidemiology, basic biostatistics and research methods). For many of the postgraduates this is the only time they will ever be taught these fundamental areas.

THRiVE has supported the course in a number of different ways. First, THRiVE supported the refurbishment of a large modern teaching facility and computer laboratory that enables students to have access to course materials which are posted online. Second, through funding three lecturers who coordinate and teach on the course; the lecturers use up-to-date teaching pedagogy and focus on team-based learning. Third, THRiVE has supported the course through collaboration across the consortium, whereby teaching techniques and materials are shared, and lecturers from LSHTM have supported the development of the modules. Finally, THRiVE-funded PhD students have taught and mentored students on the course.

The course is now in its third year of implementation. Each year the course has been highly acclaimed and has often been cited as one of the major highlights on the different postgraduate courses. One area that is consistently recognised and enjoyed by the students is the strong focus on practical and group work. Each session begins with a short lecture providing key information, the students are then provided with questions to work on in groups. The student’s recognise these group sessions to be an excellent opportunity for them to learn and to challenge and help one another. The sessions are normally lively making the students reluctant to leave as this quote from a weekly evaluation from illustrates:

“It is our belief that the success of these sessions is pinned on the detailed preparation and the approaches used. The coordinators have spent time developing detailed group work assignments; these involve a series of questions that the students work through together. For the statistics course the students work directly with a data set enabling them to apply their newly gained knowledge immediately. The approach develops their problem solving skills and motivates them to move away from just restating the lecture notes to applying this in a practical situation. Teaching a large class with mixed abilities can be a challenge for a formal lecture and question-answer approach, and can lead to some students being left behind. However, the group work approach encourages those who are quicker to grasp the concepts to teach those who are taking more time. To teach their fellow students further reinforces the lessons in their own minds and builds their mentoring and teaching capacity (many of our students will be a technical resource in their own respective fields of work).”

Each year the course is evaluated and changes are made to ensure it continues to meet the requirements of the postgraduate education at KCMUC. We believe that THRiVE’s support has been fundamental in the development and success of the course to date, and we hope to continue this level of development across all the postgraduate education within KCMUC.
The National Institute for Medical Research (NIMR) with financial support from the THRiVE consortium has conducted a research methods course for two consecutive years since 2011. The annual course is hosted at the NIMR Mwanza Centre and is facilitated by researchers from the NIMR Mwanza Centre, the Mwanza Intervention Trials Unit (MITU) and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM).

The course targets beginners and mid-level researchers with the objective of introducing participants to methods used in health research, developing their expertise in the use of research methods and enabling them to select the right methods for future research projects. The course is most suitable for health researchers and students undertaking professional training (MSc, MMed, MPH, and PhD).

“This course is one example of how the THRiVE consortium continues to build research capacity in the East African region”.

So far it has been attended by a total of 37 participants from Tanzania and other countries in the East African region, out of a total of 89 candidates that had applied to attend the course. The course is run for two weeks and covers a wide range of topics including introduction to epidemiology and public health, statistical methods, qualitative research methods, laboratory methods, field methods, introduction to clinical trials, research ethics, referencing and literature searching and personal development planning.

The course is conducted in a participatory manner and utilises both lectures and practical sessions to enable the participants follow the training closely. All participants are issued with a certificate of attendance upon successful completion of the training. There is no fees charged for the course, but participants contribute $100 each for meals and refreshments. The course is advertised through local newspapers, NIMR, MITU and THRiVE websites towards the end of the year providing enough time for potential candidates to complete their applications.

From the course evaluation feedback, participants have liked it and find it very useful. We plan to continue running it and involve facilitators from other research and higher learning institutions in the region in order to broaden its appeal.

With a network of ten research stations and seven centres across Tanzania, NIMR now boasts of an impressive research portfolio of over 200 research scientists covering a broad range of disciplines.

Apart from the equipment and infrastructural support with equipping and refurbishing laboratories, connecting some NIMR centres on fibre optic backbone and the construction of lightening arrestors at the Mwanza centre; THRiVE has supported the centre to establish a training facility. Dr. Saidi Kapiga the THRiVE Co-Principal Investigator at NIMR narrates how several NIMR staff have received training in genetic epidemiology at University of Cambridge, others in use of GIS/GPS, laboratory and others in writing skills. Moreover, through THRiVE, NIMR has developed research and teaching collaborations with icipe in Kenya, UVRI in Uganda, KCMC in Moshi, Tanzania and with Cambridge University in the United Kingdom. These collaborations provide opportunities for NIMR staff to win even bigger grants and to further strengthen the capacity of the institute to produce research for transforming lives of the Tanzanian people.

Participants of the course pose for a group picture with their facilitators in front of the training facility.
Learning, Re-learning and Unlearning Concepts at the Society of Research Administrators’ 2012 Annual Meeting

Harriet Nambooze, MakCHS

As if to re-echo the instruction of God to Adam to: “…….. go fill the earth and subdue it”, the Society of Research Administrators’ (SRA) 45th Annual Meeting had its theme: Grow, evolve and Flourish. The meeting was held at the serene Gaylord Palms Resort and Convention Centre set in the warm central Florida, USA from September 29th to 3rd October 2012. Attended by over 1200 participants from around the globe; Makerere University and its affiliates were represented by twelve participants – three of whom were THRiVE Research Administrators. Presenter upon presenter shared new and interesting best practices on research administration. The meeting made me realize that although I have attained some modest achievements in my career as a research administrator (RA); I have been taking a lot for granted. The importance of reading and internalizing institutional policies and procedures, the terms and conditions of the notice of award documents as well as funder’s policy manuals and the federal regulations were emphasized during the meeting. In managing grants; while I usually attached more attention on the notice of award and much less on the other documents mentioned above, at this meeting, I learned that it is equally important to read and to keep copies of key policy documents on file for ease of reference and in case different institutional regulations contradict each other. I learned that it is the responsibility of the RA to study and understand the notice of award terms, funders’ special conditions, programme rules, agency rules and state rules. This can only be achieved by RAs keeping abreast with new policies and regulations being proposed. In essence, RAs need to aim at achieving acceptable compliance standards if we are to uphold our profession’s esteem. My other “aha moment” came with regard to principles for costs charged to grants. I realized that though I normally laid emphasis on the 2CFR 220 (OMB Circular A21) that is associated with US federal grants; the principles at play actually apply to grants from other sponsor organizations. My general tendency has been to attach specific cost principles to a particular funder yet a particular funder’s principles can generally ease the process of managing another grant. This was another great take-home lesson for me from this SRA meeting. I will always subject costs charged to grants to the four tests of: allocability (do the items charged to a project benefit the project); reasonableness (simply referred to as the prudent person test); consistency (treating like costs the same way) and methods and sponsor specific allowability dependant on terms, conditions and restrictions.

Finally, like Robert Schumann the famous German composer and pianist said; “There is no end to learning”.

THRiVE intensifies Research Administration Management Capacity building through international networks

By Regina Namirembe

It was big! It was welcoming and warm! The prestigious Gaylord Palm Resort in Orlando Florida was host to the 45th Society of Research Administrators’(SRA) Annual Meeting from 29th September to 3rd October 2012. The meeting which attracted over 1200 participants from all over the world was organized under the theme “Grow, Evolve and Flourish”. Africa was represented by Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, Nigeria and Botswana – with Uganda featuring the biggest number of country participants. This conference provided a platform for the two THRiVE participating staff to network with other global research administrators and an opportunity to fulfill one of THRiVE’s objectives to: Support systems for improved governance/management of research activities.

The pre-conference workshops provided an opportunity for the THRiVE administrators to acquire new perspectives on research administration and management. These workshops were organized under 11 modules including; Clinical Trials Administration, Financial Management, Grantsmanship, Human Research Protection and Introduction to Research Administration and Management. In addition, topics on; Leadership, National Institutes of Health Grants, The Practice of Research and Management Program, Pre-Award, Research Integrity and Research Law were also covered. The modules were delivered at different concurrent sessions and so, one had to choose their modules of interest. Of particular interest to me was the Grantsmanship module. While many topics were discussed in this session, “Expediting and completing the application” using the Strawman’s model for writing and submitting grant applications thrilled me. The model helps the grant-writing team to identify areas where there is slow progress and so accord them more attention. I believe this will strengthen my skills in supporting research and write competitive grants. The various breakout sessions as well as the plenary meetings at this conference have definitely added another brick to strengthening the capacity of research support systems – especially the Grants and Contracts Office.
THRiVE Changes the Face of Gulu University

Emilio Ovuga and Mshilla Maghanga, Gulu University

In an effort to promote population health, combat communicable diseases, improve quality of life lived with chronic illnesses, and improve health interventions outcomes in the Eastern Africa region, THRiVE consortium set out to build a critical mass of health researchers in the region to drive evidence-based health care. The success of THRiVE consortium will undoubtedly be judged by the extent to which the critical mass of health researchers will have been achieved during the lifetime of the consortium. Another indicator of success of the consortium will be the extent to which the activities of THRiVE will have affected the manner in which health care practice or the training and mentorship of undergraduate students will have changed by the end of the project period. In this article, we highlight what has happened so far at Gulu as a THRiVE consortium member.

Research enterprise: Both the academic staff and medical students are now more research oriented than before. Five years ago, faculty members lacked the motivation to engage in research, let alone express interest in attending research-related training workshops. Though research is an examinable course unit in the medical curriculum, undergraduate students previously saw this as an extra-burden on them. Now as we near the end of THRiVE project, students have established a young researchers league and nearly every student wishes not to be left behind in the business of research enterprise. Arising from several research trainings, conferences and workshops conducted in Gulu University, grants proposal writing has soared; seven groups of undergraduate students have submitted research proposals to be funded by MEPI-MESAU.

THRiVE Pump-Priming Grants: A number of academic staff from Gulu University responded positively to THRiVE pump-priming grants calls in the last two years. Many staff are now carrying out collaborative research projects while others have already completed their projects. These collaborations have mainly been between Gulu and Makerere universities. In total, not less than seven members of staff have been involved either as PIs or as co-researchers. At the same time, a number of those who participated in the just concluded (30th September 2012 Call for proposals) are waiting for the outcome. Though it is yet difficult to determine if THRiVE has positively impacted health care practice in Gulu, efforts are being put in place to ensure the routine dissemination of research findings for the purpose of improving health interventions outcomes through informed health care practice.

Masters training for Gulu: After three years of searching for applicants to fill the four slots awarded to Gulu University, we have finally filled three of the slots; one in Master of Health Services Research, one in Master of Public Health and the third in Master of Medicine in Obstetrics and Gynecology. At this rate we are hopeful that THRiVE will realize its dream of establishing a critical mass of researchers at Gulu University.

Although ravaged by a more than two-decade war, with families disbanded and health infrastructure broken down, several developments in Gulu – the main town in Northern Uganda are beginning to restore the town’s glory. One such highlight is the Gulu University. At the recently concluded THRiVE Annual General Meeting (AGM), Professor Emilio Ovuga - the immediate former dean of the Gulu University Medical School had a lot to report for the close to three years that his institution has benefited from THRiVE. The soft spoken professor narrates how the plan for a faster internet connection to the whole university and a newly equipped computer laboratory – complete with security cameras, the ground is set for students and faculty to conduct health research that contributes to mitigating the long-term effects of the war on the communities.

Dr Kennedy Amone-P’Olak, a postdoctoral research fellow at Gulu University is currently conducting research on the trajectory and consequences of long-term mental health illnesses among war-affected youths in the districts of northern Uganda. He has recently submitted an application for an intermediate research fellowship grant to continue with this work. Commenting on the impact THRiVE has had on his institution, Dr. Amone-P’Olak says, “With the reliable internet connectivity, research funds, and of course the human capital investment that THRiVE has made in folks like me, the environment is set for Gulu University’s postgraduate education to attempt to mitigate against human suffering in Northern Uganda.”

As more postdoctoral fellows like Kennedy engage in community relevant research, the faculty of medicine at Gulu University will be fulfilling its mandate of contributing to peace and development through its academic programmes and multi-disciplinary health systems research.

A THRiVE Researcher at a conference in Switzerland
THRiVE has been central in the consolidation of the Uganda Virus Research Institute’s (UVRI) scientific personnel and physical infrastructure upgrades during the past 3 years. This has happened through either sole THRiVE funding or in some instances other partner funding leveraged off the THRiVE support. We are extremely proud to highlight the following developments that have come off the on-going THRiVE partnership.

**The UVRI Centralized Molecular Biology/Bioinformatics Laboratories (CORE-Labs):** This dream facility at the institute is a product of THRiVE and other capacity building partnerships at UVRI. It is a multi-disciplinary laboratory for specialized molecular biology and bioinformatics applications that include nucleic acid extractions, PCR, electrophoresis, sequencing and bioinformatics analysis. THRiVE has additionally provided salary support for senior scientist and lab-technologist at the facility. This laboratory initiative has already ushered in enhanced molecular biology computing and analytical capacity, which has gone a long way in serving staff, partner needs at the institute and those of other scientists in the country, especially for HIV drug resistance studies and immunological studies. The core facility has in-turn made leveraging for more capacity building support possible from other development partners such as, the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP), International Association of National Public Health Institutes (IANPHI), UK Medical Research Council (MRC), CDC, Makerere University Walter Reed Project and Government of Uganda (GOU) among others. The most recent success on this is UVRI’s participation in the application for the just awarded H3ABionet grant, a consortium to develop Bioinformatics in Africa, which will enhance bioinformatics capacity at the institute even further. This would not have been possible without the CORE facility backbone and staffing in place for UVRI to base some of its contribution on.

**UVRI-Information Technology (IT):** This has tremendously benefited from THRiVE support. Local Area Network (LAN) extensions, increased internet band-width, new servers, new inverters, a institutional Website (www.uvri.go.ug) and purchases of various specialized software have been made with additional funds leveraged from EDCTP and IANPHI. As a result, the Information Communication Technology capacity and capabilities at the institute have greatly been enhanced. Students and scientists can get in touch with their overseas mentors and collaborators respectively through Skype or teleconferencing. Project planning, proposal applications and implementation are increasingly being jointly carried out online between colleagues and staff are taking on-line training modules.

**Staff training:** Several UVRI staff have benefited from THRiVE sponsored training. This has occurred both for short-courses (such as in Geographical Information Systems, student supervision and more) leading to improved skill-sets and long-term courses (such as Ph.D.) leading to further academic qualifications. One of our staff (Dr. J. Bwogi) in the Division of EPI is currently pursuing her Ph.D. under the THRiVE fellowship scheme, which will go a long way in furnishing her with much needed research skills to become an independent investigator as well as a mentor of others.

Furthermore, THRiVE has ushered in shared opportunities for accessing complementary research funding of 4 fellows on Masters Degree programmes (a female scientist at UVRI, and three males at Masaka regional referral hospital, KEMRI-CDC in Kisumu and from NIMR-Mwanza). Not only has such co-funding contributed to the successful completion of training programmes by addressing financial gaps in their research projects, but also bolstered
human resource development for promising excellence in health research and health of Uganda as well as the East African region in partnership with the EDCTP-funded East African Consortium for Clinical Research (EACCR). EACCR co-funded 3 of the above mentioned upcoming research fellows and this demonstrates fruition of successful networking of the 2 regional consortia. Our scientists have harnessed grant writing skills resulting in joint grant applications submitted in response to the highly competitive peer-review THRiVE grant calls. As a result, successful grants have been awarded in partnership with MRC/UVRI Unit and the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI) and young scientists mentored.

All in all, the above developments greatly enhance UVRI’s physical infrastructural and human resource capacity in research. They also facilitate information access, data management and storage. We are extremely pleased that the joint efforts of THRiVE and others have been effective in the facilitation of institutional capacity strengthening.

**THRiVE Accelerating UVRI’s Revival Ambition**

Overlooking Lake Victoria – the fresh water body that connects the four East African countries collaborating under the THRiVE initiative; Uganda Virus Research Institute (UVRI) – one of the very first research institutes in EA is warming up for glorious days ahead. Like Jonathan Kayondo, (PhD) remarked while speaking at the 3rd THRiVE Annual General Assembly, “UVRI is at the brink of a great of revival – thanks to THRiVE’s contribution.”

Dr. Kayondo narrated how UVRI’s collaborations with icipe have already given rise to wonderful fruits like sharing of laboratory resources and staff exchange arrangements that have led to joint applications for grants. In addition, this 76-year research facility has been greatly rejuvenated by the several THRiVE-sponsored staff trainings, upgrade of the Bioinformatics lab and the improved ICT infrastructural developments that have enabled the extension of the Local Area Network to the UVRI labs. Access to internet and telephone services enables scientists working in the labs to improve their work as they keep abreast with new trends from other researchers in the global fraternity. What’s more, with additional funds mobilized from other sources and using the improved internet platforms; UVRI has acquired an internet driven telephone system (Voice over IP), which allows staff at different sites across the country to communicate at telephone rates that are much lower than those of the providers on the market. Probably, the higher lab accreditation score accorded the institute recently has been due – in part to such improvements by THRiVE. This high score increases funders’ confidence and subsequent interest in investing research funds at UVRI.

From the growing numbers of collaborations already initiated between UVRI and; Makerere University College of Health Sciences and Gulu University in Uganda, icipe in Kenya, and with the National Institute for Medical Research (NIMR) in Tanzania, it is fair to say that; THRiVE is indeed contributing to the acceleration of UVRI’s revival ambition.
The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine’s contributions to Postgraduate training in Epidemiology and Statistics

By David Mabey, Jim Todd, Hugh Reyburn, Phil Gothard, LSHTM

The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) is collaborating actively in research projects with five of the African institutions in the THRiVE Consortium, and Consortium funding has enabled us to make substantial contributions to strengthening research capacity in all of them. We have focussed particularly on strengthening postgraduate research training at Kilimanjaro Christian Medical University College (KCMUC). In collaboration with the Director of Postgraduate training at KCMUC, we conducted a needs assessment, which identified epidemiology and biostatistics as the most important disciplines in need of strengthening. Jim Todd, a Reader at the School with many years experience of research in East Africa, was seconded by LSHTM to KCMUC to lead a new Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics. We have also recruited two epidemiologists to LSHTM staff, who will be based permanently in the new department at KCMUC. Working with the postgraduate dean at KCMUC, and making extensive use of the LSHTM’s distance learning materials, our staff in Moshi have re-designed the Masters programme at KCMUC, bringing together all 60 MMed, MPH and MSc students in a six week Foundation course in which they learn the basics of epidemiology and statistics. Further optional modules in advanced epidemiology have been developed, which are open to all Masters students, and as stand-alone short courses to students from other institutions in Tanzania, with the potential to bring financial rewards to the College. We have also set up a new, two year MSc course in epidemiology and biostatistics, in which 12 students are currently enrolled. Our aim is to develop the talents and skills of the next generation of researchers and epidemiologists, and to share the expertise and skills in teaching at LSHTM, developed over the last 30 years, with the Faculty of KCMUC. We have offered to share our staff development courses with staff at KCMUC, which would enable them to achieve professional certification in postgraduate teaching. Bringing all Masters level students together for an initial Foundation course brings benefits to the whole College Faculty by enabling team teaching, and making more efficient use of staff time. It also enhances the learning by students, who share experiences between diverse groups, and develop inter-disciplinary collaborative links. The modular approach, based on the School’s own teaching programme, means that new Masters courses can be developed by adding strategic modules. As a result of this initiative, LSHTM staff have developed and submitted 10 major research proposals in collaboration with KCMUC, the National Institute for Medical Research in Mwanza, the Uganda Virus Research Institute, and Makerere University School of Public Health in the past 12 months. These proposals, which include 3 submitted in response to the current Joint Global Health Trials call, have involved staff and students who have gained skills and expertise from the MSc programme in KCMUC. Next year, we aim to secure funding for more research using the talents that have been nurtured by the THRiVE consortium.

In collaboration with KCMUC and Makerere University (MU), and partner universities in the USA, LSHTM staff have developed a new East African Diploma Course in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (DTM&H). This three month course for medical doctors is now in its second year; students spend 6 weeks in Tanzania, and 6 weeks in Uganda. This year we have 61 students, 40 of whom are from outside Africa and pay an international fee, and 21 from Africa, all of whom are awarded scholarships which cover their course fees and living costs. Each year we offer scholarships to 6 MMed students from MU, and up to 9 from KCMUC. Faculty for the course includes many leading international researchers in the field of global health. Students are given access to the resources of the LSHTM library, and open seminars are organised by video conference with library staff at LSHTM to discuss how to search the scientific literature. Students are encouraged to critically review the most recent available evidence in support of the clinical and public health interventions they learn about on the course, the first week of which is devoted to training in research methods.

Students are expected to undertake a small research project during rural placements which are organised for them in both Tanzania and Uganda. Field projects from the 2011 DTM&H led to several presentations by students at international scientific meetings. In addition, in October 2012 we organised a one day research seminar at KCMUC, at which 9 students from the 2011 and 2012 courses presented results of research they had done. We also invited international speakers to present their research at this meeting, including Harriet Mpaiwre, a Ugandan doctor supported by a Wellcome Trust post-doctoral fellowship, who was awarded the prize for the best clinically relevant PhD at LSHTM in 2011. Professor David Mabey from LSHTM gave a talk on careers in clinical research. Students who successfully complete the East African DTM&H course are awarded 60 credits towards an MSc at LSHTM. To complete the MSc they require a further 120 credits, which can be obtained by taking 4 further study modules (in London or by distance learning), and completing a research project. In this way we aim to provide high quality training in research methods for East African doctors enrolled in specialist training programmes that will allow them to compete for internationally funded PhD programmes.

Future plans

When the Director of LSHTM visited KCMUC in May 2012, the possibility of establishing a School of Public Health at KCMUC, supported by LSHTM, was discussed. As a first step, plans have been made to merge the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at KCMUC College with the Department of Community Medicine at KCMC Hospital, to facilitate greater dialogue and exchange of ideas between researchers in various specialties. We anticipate that this will provide a framework for new MSc graduates to move into PhD and post-doctoral research programmes at KCMUC. We look forward to forging closer links with the highly successful School of Public Health at Makerere University and other Schools of Public Health in East Africa, and are exploring the possibility of sharing key lectures at LSHTM with our African partners using videoconferencing facilities provided by THRiVE.
Universities - Research Institute Partnerships: An opportunity not fully exploited

Secretariats

For decades African countries have had universities that were established during the colonial period but many more were started soon after independence. Some have prospered with recognizable research outputs while others have experienced stagnation. Since the turn of the century there is a tsunami of new universities both public and private being established across Africa and in other low- and middle-income environments in the world. The problem is that it is difficult to keep track of how many approved or licensed universities there are in a given country. They all struggle with the formidable challenges of establishing a vibrant research enterprise in an institutional context of competing huge demands for educating the next generation of professionals and researchers. All this is happening in an institutional and environmental context of understaffing, underfunding and a generally less than optimally supportive research environment. Many are swimming against the tide.

In the same or neighboring countries there are also state and non-state owned research institutes that stand alone. Whereas there are new emerging research institutes the rate of their creation is much less than that at which we see new universities being established. Some research institutes have flourished largely with generous outside funding and expatriate staff. Over time however, the institutes have also been developing local capacity and some researchers are at the stage where they, as principal investigators can win national and international competitive research grants. The institutes and universities have generally had little if any meaningful collaboration between them. The WellcomeTrust African Universities Initiative provides an excellent opportunity to bridge this gap. THRiVE offers some excellent examples where there are deliberate efforts to develop and strengthen meaningful partnerships and ensure an ever growing collaboration between the academic institutions and research institutions.

The Uganda Virus Research Institute (UVRI) and the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (icipe) are two international centers of excellence which have strong links with universities. icipe collaborates with a network of universities across Africa and is home to students doing research internships, as well as masters and doctoral students who undertake their research and research training but receive degree awards from the participating universities. The icipe laboratory facilities are available to students on a cost recovery basis and the institutional researchers are fully involved in providing joint supervision with their university counterparts. icipe’s African Regional Postgraduate Programme in Insect Science (ARPPIS) has a network of >30 universities across Africa. The Uganda Virus Research Institute (UVRI) is another example of a research facility with strong partnerships with THRiVE partner universities of Makerere and Gulu. As in the case of icipe, UVRI is home to students undertaking their masters or doctoral studies (PhD and post-docs). Moreover, UVRI researchers are appointed (without a salary) as honorary or adjunct staff members of Makerere University and enjoy all university privileges and appropriate academic ranks like Honorary professor and Honorary Associate Professor. Both UVRI and icipe are collaborating on joint research programmes with universities in the region, and have also enhanced collaboration between them under THRiVE.

We celebrate the above achievements in university-research institute partnerships and collaboration. However there are still many missed opportunities which call for strengthened partnerships between Universities and research institutes. It is an accepted fact that research, education/training and service delivery feed off each other and are mutually reinforcing. Therefore failure to link the three is a missed opportunity that can be fully exploited with better linkages and partnerships between universities and research institutes. We also recognize the complimentary efforts of the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) which is supporting the creation of effective networks of excellence among academic and research institutions to build quality clinical research capacity. As is the established practice by THRiVE to build linkages with other research capacity building networks we have established partnerships between the East African EDCTP supported network based at UVRI and THRiVE and will continue to develop other partnerships.
“Religious and cultural leaders are frustrating our efforts of promoting small and sizable families that can be well catered for in the rural areas” lamented a female MP from Usuk County, Soroti District.

This remark was made after the presentation I made during the parliamentary dialogue on Family Planning which was preceding the launch of Family Health Research and Development Centre at Kasangati.

Uganda has one of the youngest and most rapidly growing populations in the world with the highest population increase almost three times that of the world. With a current population estimated at 34 million people, for the past decades, Uganda’s growth rate has been over 3 percent and high total fertility rate of over 6 children born per woman. This leaves the country with a young age structure which creates a high dependency ratio. It also creates a heavy burden on the working age group and constraints the provision of basic needs and social services.

Population dynamics of fertility, mortality and migration determine the changes that take place in a population size, growth rate, density, sex composition and age structure of any given country. High births and a reduction in mortality rates can cause increase in growth rate.

Although half of Uganda’s population is under 18 years (very young population) presents a big burden of unproductive population and high dependence it also presents an opportunity for demographic dividend. With good policies in places, the young people who
Evaluation and Learning: Institutional Processes and Networking

By Achilles Katamba

In the last issue (Vol. 1 Issue 4) we reported on selected THRiVE experiences in Evaluation and Learning (EL) over a 2 year period. In this issue we provide evidence that THRiVE has influenced institutional processes and is functioning as a network.

On institutional processes, the THRiVE merit-based selection process for PhD and post-doctoral fellows has been adopted and used by Makerere University College of Health Sciences (MakCHS). In addition THRiVE has facilitated the development of a University policy on post-doctoral positions. Although THRiVE was funded to support post-doctoral fellowships there was no institutional policy for post-doctoral positions at African Partner academic institutions. Thus THRiVE stimulated the need to develop a post-doctoral policy at Makerere University. The good will of the THRiVE director facilitated the process of development and approval of the post-doctoral policy at MakCHS, one of the nine (9) constituent colleges of Makerere University. However, when the policy was submitted to the University senate for approval, it was adopted as a University policy. Makerere University is willing to share the post-doctoral policy to facilitate wider scale adoption not only at THRiVE African partner institutions but at other African Institutions Initiatives.

As far as functioning as a network, THRiVE’s requirement of jointly organizing and conducting activities between different institutions such as; joint appointments of senior research scientists; joint academic programmes; joint supervision of PhD students; joint grant application has enabled the establishment of new partnerships that have leveraged capacity that would not be available in the short run. The requirement that each PhD fellow is jointly supervised by a faculty member of a Northern and African partner institution (API) is not only benefiting the fellow but also the less experienced supervisor from the API. Similarly jointly organized and taught courses have strengthened networks between faculty and trainees from other partner institutions. For example, following the Epi-Data software training at KCMC and Gulu University, Dr. Achilles Katamba of Makerere University has continued to network and support trainees at KCMC and Gulu University. Since short courses are not only facilitated by faculty from THRiVE consortium, new partnerships have developed. For example a scientific writing course at KCMC was run in partnership with Prof. Joy Obando from Kenyatta University which provided an opportunity to learn from each other and collaborate on short course teaching and other ventures in the area of capacity strengthening. Although the courses were or are a onetime issue, the networks that develop provide opportunities for fellows or trainees to access resources that would not have existed in their settings in the short run.

Demographic dividend occurs when a country's birth and death rates gradually drop and change the age distribution of a country whereby fewer investments are needed to meet the needs of the youngest age groups and there is a bigger number of adults in the productive labor force.

However timing is pertinent in that countries have to capitalize on it through appropriate policies and programmes. In conclusion; the key demographic issue in Uganda is related to the age structure which the policy makers can capitalize on to harness the demographic dividend and transform the national economy. Fertility reduction and a lower rate of population growth are critical to Uganda's ability to achieve its national vision of transforming society from a peasant to a modern and prosperous country. In addition we need to eradicate the cultural and traditional barriers to modern contraceptives use and promotion of small manageable families.

A manageable population may have better access to education and other social services.

And….Something a Little Different:

are about to join the working age can be transformed into a productive labor force which in turn can lead to economic growth. Then and only then will the country get many more of us going through the complete education cycle, graduating from University and benefiting from wonderful training opportunities like the ones presented by THRiVE.