THRIVE’S APPROACH TO ACHIEVE VALUE FOR MONEY

The UK government’s DFID has become a global leader in pushing for value for money. Grantees of UK tax payers’ funds have to show value for money in their operations. One of the considerations that was introduced in the management of THRIVE-2 activities and processes is close attention to the concept of value for money. As is the case elsewhere the matrix for measuring value for money is not straightforward. THRIVE is picking lessons from DFID’s ‘4E’ approach comprising Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Equity. We embed efforts to achieve value for money as we utilise grant funds. These include the following:

a) Investing available resources among individuals who have the best potential for becoming research leaders and achieving research excellence. The selection of potential beneficiaries for research capacity building is merit-based, transparent, fair and based on open competitive processes for available positions right from career development fellowships, post-doctoral and PhD training, down to Masters and internships.

b) We strive to achieve very high standards of research training through south-to-south and south-north collaboration across the THRiVE network of institutions. In so doing we leverage the expertise and other institutional resources available at both universities and research institutes.

c) The procurement processes at partner institutions have to follow established institutional guidelines. The THRiVE Secretariat provides oversight and makes site visits to the African institutions to check first-hand among other things; on the processes followed, the assets acquired and their utilization and accountability procedures. Online support is also provided by the grants and finance officers at Makerere University which is the prime THRiVE grantee institution. Procurement is an area that requires more attention in future.

d) THRiVE has developed an online Monitoring and Evaluation tool which if used properly will enable a more complete real-time documentation of activities and achievements at all our institutions, thus facilitating collective learning as we implement and taking corrective action sooner than later. This will contribute to minimising waste and losing opportunities, and enhance quality partner management.

e) Partner management is a central pillar to THRiVE’s functioning as a capacity building and research network of excellence, capable of carrying out research on more complex health challenges in the region, ensuring partner compliance with similar policies and guidelines, achieving synergies through sharing resources for example research expertise and having common training courses.

f) We recognise having research outputs as a means to an end of improving people’s lives and national develop-
Editorial

Dear Reader,

March 31 marks the end of the first quarter of 2018 and the completion of year two of the DELTAS funding to THRiVE. Looking forward, several key activities are planned for the second quarter: a) the escalation of research activities by our fellows and trainees, (Career development fellows, post docs, PhDs, masters, interns); b) THRiVE 2018 annual general meeting to be held in Moshi, Tanzania hosted by KCMC, a partner THRiVE institution; c) an internal audit to be conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers on behalf of AESA for the two-year period ending March 31st, 2018; and c) site visits by THRiVE Secretariat to partner institutions as part of good practice in partner management.

The success of THRiVE as a research capacity building network depends not only on how well we prepare the next generation of African research leaders but also their enthusiasm and motivation to pursue successful research careers on the continent while contributing to development of a conducive national or regional research ecosystems. Our expectation is that at least some of them will appropriately make public engagement a core component of doctoral and postdoctoral research. Their supervisors and mentors need to show commitment to this process and similarly all partner institutions should be supportive of this approach. It is a paradigm shift that requires a mindset shift. We are in the process of developing strategies to support the above process.

Moving forward as a network of excellence all partners have to play their respective roles and the secretariat will continue to provide the required supportive partner management. A lot remains to be done towards achieving program sustainability with the financial resources required to develop a fully transformative network maximizing the capacity of its membership and leveraging the support of external partners.

Mary Vincent Mosha, THRiVE-2 PhD Fellow

My visit to London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine gives valuable Exposure to Experts in my Field

It was a great pleasure to be back to my former school, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine as MSc Nutrition for Global Health (2014) alumna. I was inspired by the teaching methodology and interactive assisted practical sessions while attending the Statistical Methods in Epidemiology Course (SME, 2018). The course has widened my knowledge base and given me confidence in my field of study.

My northern supervisor Professor Suzanne Filteau introduced me to the LSHTM nutrition group which is composed of experts in nutrition research. I had the opportunity to present my work at their seminar series. The experts provided valuable suggestions and recommendations to my work. I realize that sharing your ideas in a professional community is an important strategy.

London was very cold, cloudy and gloomy! It was a surprise to see the sun for the first day on the 25th January 2018! I was greeted with a ray of sunshine, and this made my day. It was also exciting to be with my Tanzanian network group and supervisors for lunch at the Life Goddess restaurant; this was fantastic! It was such a relaxing time, away from books for some hours, bonding and recharging, we really enjoyed food together with lots of laughter (mhh, but the portion sizes oh!! It’s all about nutrition!! Was one of my cheat days).
Between January and March 2018, London School for Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) one of the THRiVE-2 northern partner institutions hosted three THRiVE Fellows from Tanzania, who braved the English winter to spend time with their colleagues and co-supervisors at LSHTM. Mary Mosha from KCMC was visiting her co-supervisor Suzanne Filteau, and taking a study module on Statistical Methods in Epidemiology. Ruby Mcharo from Mbeya was visiting her co-supervisor Philippe Mayaud, and taking study modules on the Control of Sexually Transmitted Infections and on Qualitative Research Methods. Robert Kaaya from KCMD was visiting his co-supervisor Chris Drakeley, other members of the Malaria Centre, and the national Malaria Reference Lab at LSHTM.

On 9th February we went out to lunch together (see picture below), and the conversation was most in Swahili, as both Chris Drakeley and Philippe Mayaud lived for many years in Tanzania. In the evening we met again at the Pump Handle Bar at LSHTM for further discussions.

One of the popular authors and speakers on religious matters, Joyce Meyer, once said “Patience is not simply the ability to wait - it is how we behave while we are waiting”, and surely it is not of any value to wait in vain. Similarly is my journey towards, one, funding for a PhD, and second, funding for the research project to achieve one. I have always believed that everything, everything that happens, happens for a reason! Oblivious to what role THRiVE will come to play in my life, I took a decision to send in through my application on the verge of the application deadline. Little did I know that moment, that defining moment when I clicked “Send”, would later mean a solid commitment to the next 4 years of my life to achieving a dream I have patiently been waiting for.

Under THRiVE, my university of choice was Kilimanjaro Christian Medical University College (KCMUCo), and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) as a Northern Institution. Some of my colleagues graduated or took some short courses at LSHTM and I must say, I have always admired this institution (as well as its fancy name) and had aspired at some point in my career, to visit or attend a short course or even have a research project collaboration… and THRiVE opened wide these doors for me. I could not be more grateful! The LSHTM is renowned for its research, postgraduate studies and continuing education in public and global health; I feel fortunate to be part of its community.

I arrived in London mid-January 2018 (Yes! I survived winter), to undertake modules offered by LSHTM which were important for the PhD research project I am expected to complete. This visit was also useful for discussions on further details of the PhD project execution as I met face-to-face for the first time (after a number of emails and skype calls since early 2017) with my supervisor, Prof. Philippe Mayaud, an expert in Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) research in developed and developing countries. As much as the weather was a challenge to get by during this time of year, the School environment was very warm, and welcoming with excellently equipped learning infrastructure.

As my background is mainly on clinical work, and the project I am sup-
My London winter visit

posed to undertake has quite a handful of laboratory work, this visit made it possible for me to learn ‘hands-on’ on a number of STIs laboratory diagnostics in labs within the School under supervision of very committed and competent staff. I got to visit various STI clinics such as the famous Dean Street express clinic along Soho street...one word for this health facility - WOW! The clinic offers rapid, free and confidential STI screening and management, and is quite impressive (a possible idea I have carried with me for a similar twist in a developing country setting). Prof. Mayaud also organises and lectures on the ‘Control of STIs’ module offered by the School which I registered for. This module is quite intensive and exhaustive and covers most of the high risk groups, key population STI control interventions such as Female sex workers, adolescents, Men who have sex with men, refugees etc. I enjoyed these sessions and the interactions with various group members in class and the exercises that were given for brainstorming - shapes quite a lot when it comes to a unique angle of public health thinking.

To put the icing on the cake, some colleagues from KCMUCo were also around for some weeks and it was comforting to have a “Tanzanian trio”! Three months away from home with no familiar faces could be depressing. I am happy to have been reunited with Mary Mosha and Robert Kaaya, fellow THRiVE-2 PhD students, in LSHTM premises and around London. And as the saying goes. We also managed to get time off to see London, though not much as we would have seen during summer.

At Queen Mary University of London (QMUL) and University of Cambridge (UC), I met a team that was deeply interested in the concept behind my PhD project. I admire the rigor with which we have gone at depth of optimizing the methods proposed in the protocol. When an experiment doesn’t give the desired results, the despair lasts for only a moment, as plans would already be underway for the next experiment to troubleshoot what could be going wrong. The desire to make the concept work is so intense and thorough that technical support is also sought from the producers of the logistics used in the experiments. Despite the long hours put in almost each day, I have not seen any signs of giving up and the team has been a source of encouragement for me to keep going. As a result, I have done some reflection and wondered if all this would have been possible had I not had the opportunity to have this exposure in such an environment.

The state-of –the- art laboratory facilities at my disposal was a lifetime experience and has made me appreciate the level of input required to produce high impact research outputs. I can now appreciate that THRiVE’s efforts to improve the laboratory infrastructure at the local universities is a well-calculated step towards improving the quality of research done in East Africa. During my time QMUL and UC, I have realized that both clinical and biomedical researchers are attached to a laboratory in one way or another. I am therefore compelled to think, that as the infectious and non-infectious diseases’ research turns to molecular explanations of the disease etiologies and interventions
thereof, the modern day African research leaders need to pick up and excel in their laboratory skills. It’s one area that I and many of my colleagues are largely lacking.

The research exposure has been so rich with weekly research meetings at which some of the best biomedical research in Britain is presented, but, my best was to come at the Acid Fast Club (AFC) scientific meeting. The AFC meeting, to me was not only a case of hobnobbing with the experts in tuberculosis research but also an encounter with the history of molecular medicine. It was held at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine in commemoration of Robert Koch’s discovery of Mycobacterium tuberculosis. The aura was immense, the depth and quality of discussion was moving, and the opportunity for networking was insurmountable.

Finally, I feel so indebted to the team at QMUL and UC including my supervisors and the two post-docs whom I closely worked with, for their relentless efforts in giving me all the necessary support and taking great interest in me as a person. I am confident that a long term collaboration that will go beyond the Ph.D. studies has been established.

The Government of Uganda is promoting sciences at all level after realizing there were few cadres in the science professions, a situation that is reported to be tremendously jeopardizing the country’s economy. Recently, the President of the Republic of Uganda promised to increase salaries of science professionals in an attempt to promote science-related innovations in the country. However, in order to sustain this, the pipeline shouldn’t be constricted at any point along the line, right from primary school to tertiary institution education in order to replace those that have graduated or retired so that there is incessant continuity. It is against this background that I paid Iganga High School a visit. Iganga High School is one of the most highly-populated O-level & A-level mixed schools, 80 km east of Kampala and centrally located in Iganga district with both boarding and day scholars. My visit to the school was an attempt to convince students to pursue science careers. During the interaction students had this to say about science subjects:

1. Science subjects are too difficult, they are meant for bright students only
2. There are cultural beliefs that if nobody in the family before you did sciences then there is no need for you to do sciences
3. The science-related courses at tertiary institution are so expensive; not everybody can afford them in case one does not qualify for government sponsorship, so they are meant for students from rich families.

A science teacher noted that science laboratories are difficult to finance in terms of buying reagents and equipment.

After the students had voiced their concerns and fears, our discussion brought out the following issues:

1. After I explained to the students what it takes to do sciences and what it means “all human brains are equal regardless of race”; hard work, time keeping and commitment are key to success, the students noted that they need more of such career guidance talks to inspire them.

2. The students lacked updated information about other Universities in the country apart from Makerere University and Busoga University and this was a big de-motivator to majority of them. So in the end we discussed the various tertiary institutions and what their mandate are in terms of training.

3. I explained to the students the various avenues of joining tertiary institutions; joining at diploma level after completing A-level exams (mainly for nursing, Clinical health officers, engineering etc.), joining a professional sciences course at university level (for Medicine, Nursing, engineering etc.). Other avenues discussed included joining any course of choice as a mature student either on private or government funding. The students seemed to like these options.

4. The issue of choice of subject combination at A-level and weights for specific courses in tertiary institution was a big one. In Makerere University, each course has subjects they consider as essential for a given programme of study. This was a new piece of information to the students, yet this can tremendously affect any admission at Makerere University.

5. I also introduced to the students potential scholarship opportunities for economically disadvantaged yet bright students to access University education. Such opportunities include Mastercard Foundation at Makerere University, district bursaries and Madhvan Foundation Scholarship Programme.

In conclusion, from the discussion with the students, the will to take up science subjects was there but obviously there were some lingering fears and concerns that this talk helped to address. Such talks therefore should be encouraged in schools, starting from the lower secondary levels before students start dropping subjects considering them not doable. Government should also come up with a policy on how to help schools whether private or government to procure laboratory equipment and reagent to support a good teaching and learning environment.

Students pose for a group photo after the career talk
A risk is the effect of uncertainty on the attainment of objectives. Risk management acknowledges that every activity involves some kind of risk. It is extremely critical therefore to identify risks, assess them and manage them effectively so as to aid decisions and to achieve objectives.

The recent risk management workshop for all DELTAs programs organised by AESA / Welcome Trust from 26-27th February 2018 in Nairobi, Kenya went a long way in emphasizing the above key activities while carrying out risk management with special recommendations on the formulation of meaningful risk registers for all funded programs. Different DELTAs programs had an opportunity to formulate and present their risk registers using a template provided by the organisers of this workshop with informative discussions thereafter.

Some key discussion points noted during this exercise included; the need to categorise our risks according to departments and risk areas, the description of the risk factors which should be done carefully to avoid listing threats as risks, for example if the threat of data loss is described as a risk instead of the actual risk that leads to data loss.

On completion of the detailed description of the risk, a pre-control assessment of the risk in terms of likelihood and impact on a scale of 1-5 in each case is carried out. It’s recommended that the scores 1-5 should be given after institutional management agrees on the detailed definition of each score. The 2 variables that is likelihood and impact scores are then multiplied and given an overall rating as either high, medium or low to form a pre-control assessment.

Completion of pre-control assessment is followed up by the formulation of mitigating measures taking into consideration the cost-benefit analysis method which ensures that the cost of the mitigating measure does not outweigh the benefits accrued.

Timelines and risk managers for each risk factor should then be assigned. And after a given period, on a regular basis a post control assessment just like the pre-control assessment above should be carried out by an independent team. This team should re-assess the risk factor scores after application of the agreed upon controls.

It was noted that, in some instances, mitigating measures are developed but stop on shelves of organisations; hence rendering them ineffective and creating a problem that is compliance related. Such a scenario requires not only enforcement but education and awareness of the concerned parties in these organisations.

Ultimately risk management and updating of risk register information is very key and should not be left to so-called experts in our institutions but we should endeavour to make it an all-inclusive activity for all employees / program team members to ensure that expected benefits outweigh the risks in attainment of our objectives.
Interviews, behavioural economy, ethnolab and human centred design methods. In the same line of work, I conducted workshops and wrote qualitative field reports. Field work have been of great importance during my stay at NIMR as they have furthered my team-working skills as well as interactions with the community for real-time experience. During my placement at NIMR, I had opportunity to learn qualitative data analysis processes as well as preparation of a scholarly manuscript for publication. With very close support from NIMR staff, I have managed to prepare a manuscript for publication, titled ‘Alcohol Use among Young Women in Northern Tanzania: Implications for Sexual and Reproductive Health Interventions’. Apart from field research and data analysis, I have also attended two in-house research training workshops on research ethics and photo voice. I have also participated in the Social Science Journal Club, where I acquired analytical skills on reading and assessing different published research.

I am very grateful for the internship placement in THRiVE-2 programme due to the knowledge skills and experience I have acquired. This could not have been possible without mentorship and support from NIMR staff. In that regard, I am indebted and thankful to Dr. Gerry Mshana for the mentorship he has offered throughout my stay at NIMR Mwanza; he was always there to guide and support me throughout my internship placement.

In order to develop my career, I am determined to pursue a Masters’ Degree in Public Health so as to further consolidate my skills and research experience. This will enable me to contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of Public Health as well as advancing the wellbeing of society.

**THRiVE-2 Internship Programme a major Initiative in Boosting Career Growth of Young Scientists**

**THRiVE-2 Internship introduces me to Statistical Modelling and opens up a whole new world for me**

Within my study in MSc. Biostatistics I was interested in working in a medical research institute. Being part of THRiVE-2 from May to November 2017 helped me practise my statistical knowledge in a research setting. The internship was concentrated on training me on doing intuitive and practical statistical models which contribute to solving real life health problems. At the beginning of the internship, I set several learning goals regarding the improvement of my knowledge and skills on research methodologies.

During my internship, I contributed to achieving a number of goals for the project I was working with. I worked with the TAZAMA project, whereby my daily activities involved, analyzing, and, writing scientific reports for the Magu Health and Demographic Sentinel Surveillance (HDSS). I also worked on other scientists’ raw data upon request.

I have been trained and practiced giving presentations at international conferences. I attended and presented at the; International Conference for Child Indicators (ISCI) 2017 in Montreal, Canada and International Biometric Society (IBS) Sub-African Network (SUSAN) in Lilongwe, Malawi. The objective of these conferences was to not only sharpen my presentation skills but also broaden my statistical skills in a professional environment.

The internship was a useful experience. I gained new knowledge and skills and collaborated with a variety of researchers. I achieved many of my learning goals; also I got insight into the work of medical research institute. This internship has given me new insights and motivation to pursue a career in biostatistics in a broader way.

**THRiVE-2 internship helps put my future in Perspective**

Being part of THRiVE-2 from May to November has been very beneficial. I have been able to work with NIMR as a laboratory scientist under the mentorship of Dr. Manjurano - an expert in Infectious Diseases. I mainly worked with the Indoor Residual Spraying (IRS) project as part of the laboratory team. I can now confidently perform molecular
activities including identification of anopheles mosquitoes through Polymerase Chain Reaction and determining their infectivity rate through Enzyme linked Immuno-sorbent assay (ELISA). The roles extended to include blood meal analysis and checking for \textit{kdr} through real time PCR. I also assisted in the maintenance of the Entomology molecular biology laboratory.

Being part of the IRS project also involved analysis of data resulting from the laboratory experiments to determine the effect of the intervention which I was trained to do. I also served as secretary in the IRS weekly meetings, which brought together the laboratory, insectary and field staff to discuss their respective duties and progress. I coordinated the meetings and took down minutes.

In the duration of the internship, I have also participated in a variety of trainings, in-house and off campus. In May 2017, I took part in a malacology course with a focus on human Schistosomiasiis. In September 2017, I was able to attend the VectorBase workshop held in Nairobi where I was introduced at length to Bioinformatics and disease modeling. Moreover, I was able to participate in a regional laboratory training that aimed to standardize laboratory processes in approximately eleven (11) IRS-participating countries.

Throughout this period, I have most benefited from interaction with the diverse community of researchers and scientists from different disciplines in the institute. I have learnt how to work within a team and independently when need be. From this, I developed an interest in infectious diseases and their effect on the general population. I was thus able to decide that I will pursue Infectious disease epidemiology with a focus on disease modelling, health policy and health economics.

h) Whereas we are a merit-based network, we pay attention to equity through a gender lens by encouraging and supporting development of capacity for women in science and promoting gender sensitive approaches to ensure success of women.

i) We welcome external parties to look into our work and management processes and check on how we are achieving value for money. This happens for example through AESA’s site visits to THRiVE, internal audits by finance management and external audits outfits like PricewaterhouseCoopers or Deloitte and Touche and external audits.

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**THRiVE’S APPROACH TO ACHIEVE VALUE FOR MONEY**

ment. Both public and policy engagement are key areas of focus in THRiVE. As we support and mentor the next generation of researchers we require them to put public and policy engagement among their priorities as appropriate to the research they are carrying out.

g) THRiVE has tried to look ahead at potential risks and prioritize those of greater potential significance. By having a risk register which is revised regularly based on changing circumstances and planning for how to address these risks minimizes the shocks that otherwise would have occurred.

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**MUII Plus celebrates 10 years of partnership in research & capacity building**

Ritah Namisango, Senior Public Relations Officer, Makerere University

On Wednesday 7th February 2018, the Makerere University-Uganda Virus Research Institute Centre of Excellence of Infectious and Immunity Research and Training organised a symposium to celebrate the successful 10 years of hard work in capacity development and implementation of basic science, cutting edge technology and modern analytic methods to address health research needs in Uganda and the region.

Officially opened by the Makerere University Vice Chancellor Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe, the symposium provided a platform to scientists to discuss the various solutions to the health issues that affect human capacity on the African continent. Among the invited speakers was Professor Abdoulaye Djimde, Director of DELGEME who delivered a key note address on @Plasmosium genetic diversity and malaria elimination in Africa.”

The Makerere University-Uganda Virus Research Institute Centre of Excellence of Infectious and Immunity Research and Training symposium was held as part of the general annual meeting. The symposium brought together African institutions, African Scientists and global leaders in scientific research, and equal partners with international colleagues in conducting research to solve the health problems of Africa and the World.

The Centre of Excellence was launched in 2008 as a partnership between Uganda’s leading research
Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in sub-Saharan Africa don’t have a long standing research culture despite the increase in funding for global health research from the North in the last decade. Only research institutions and Universities having strong international partnerships with the European and United States institutions show a steady growth in their research activities compared to those that are without. Such HEIs face the challenge of adjusting to optimally respond and become internationally competitive. In the East African region, one of the initiatives undertaken to address this challenge was the formation of a consortium, Training Health Researchers into vocational Excellence in East Africa (THRiVE) to target critical areas in institutions. To date the programme has supported Masters, PhDs, Post-Doctoral and research group leaders fellowships for 50 fellows as well as providing small grants for many centres members to foster training and collaboration regionally and internationally.

For details, please follow the link below: https://news.mak.ac.ug/2018/02/muii-celebrates-10-years-partnership-research-and-capacity-building

Building a Transformative Research Culture among sub-Saharan Universities for Effective Partnerships with Northern Institutions: A case of THRiVE Institutions

by Dickson Muyomba
Building a Transformative Research Culture Cont’d

building a research culture for effective south-south and south-north partnership. THRiVE is one of the most successful research capacity building consortia in East Africa and has greatly influenced how partner institutions conduct research and research administration. By virtue of being in the consortium, member institutions have direct contacts with the northern partner institutions (University of Cambridge and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine) offering opportunities to access their state-of-the-art research facilities and learn advanced skills in research, training and grants management. The skills and practices are transferred to the African partner institutions. Through the consortium, the African partner institutions can leverage on each other’s strengths to build their own capacity and environment for example, academic institutions are encouraged to use research facilities from partner research institutes. The collaborative research strategy supported by the career development awards where research teams are formed with members from different institutions to conduct a specific research are very popular and rewarding. This allows for cross pollination of ideas. The consortium has provided a platform to develop guidelines for collaborating within the partner members. Institutions share policies and approved standard operating procedures for example procedures on financial management including compliance with donor terms and conditions. The oversight role played by the lead institution is to ensure that all partner members comply with established international standards and making them fit to undertake international research collaborations. The THRiVE approach has proved effective with member institutions now having capacity to attract more research funds to their individual institutions. The lead institution has become more proficient in managing partners while all partners are acquiring more skills in how to be an effective partner in a research collaboration.

Public Engagement to make Science Meaningful to the People

Stella Kepha, THRiVE-2 Postdoctoral Fellow

Public engagement describes numerous ways with output of operational research that can be shared with the public to enhance its use and realize the benefits for which it was undertaken. Kenya successfully implemented a 5-year school-based deworming programme delivering albendazole to all school children living in Soil Transmitted Helminthiasis (STH) and Schistosomiasis (SC) area districts. My PhD funded by THRiVE was embebbed in monitoring and evaluation component of this programme. I was part of the programme’s monitoring and evaluation team and participated in data analysis and report writing. One key observation noted during the five-year monitoring and evaluation period, was the consistent bounce back to pre-prevalence level of the STH infection. The intended goal of eliminating STH and SC was not achieved. These results pointed to the need of adopting a comprehensive approach which includes: expanding the range of potential interventions beyond school-based deworming, mass drug administration and broadening the network of stakeholders working on these NTDs. In 2017, after successfully implementing the programme for five years, the funders of the school-based deworming programme, Children’s Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) together with the Ministry of Health thought it best to develop a new control strategy that would have an integrated approach and focusing on the four the priority WASH-related NTDs (STH, SC, Trachoma and Lymphatic Filariasis (LF). With this intention to develop a new integrated control strategy for the priority NTDs and a need to disseminate information from the school-based deworming programme, I successfully co-organized a symposium that was funded by CIFF, during the Kenya Medical Research Institute annual scientific conference (KASH) held in Nairobi in February 2018. The Panel session during the symposium
With audit exercises, comes the feeling of the auditee being haunted by the auditor and the process of snooping around for mistakes or faults during this exercise. In fact this exercise is tagged a fault-finding mission in some cases. Little wonder that when individuals and organisations in general are going through such an exercise, there is a lot of tension and negativity towards the whole exercise. However, if we all tried to follow guidelines as set out by the different funding agencies for both program and finance activities, there would be no cause for concern or fear. This exercise in actual sense is meant to keep on steering us towards near-perfection while enabling us avoid certain risks that might affect the attainment of our objectives. So as THRiVE2 we have embraced such audit exercises because they are an opportunity to check ourselves in terms of our core business and the ability to deliver it successfully while obtaining Value for Money.

During THRiVE 1, we had an audit team from Deloitte and Touche that carried out an audit on our ability to conduct business from a program perspective, financial, and or IT systems point of view. Even if the audit was largely a success, we were able to get invaluable knowledge that informed a lot of our transformation. The internal audit exercise required us to provide plenty of documentation and proof that we were doing the program business in line with the donor requirements agreed to in the award letter and other policy documents. The internal audit also wanted to confirm that THRiVE2 had the necessary institutional infrastructure, human resource and policy to successfully deliver on its objective. Once again we provided most of what was needed however there were a couple of areas that raised the need for improvement. These included among others the need to have policies such as ant bribery, antifraud, whistleblowing, and risk management policies as well as risk registers and inclusion of clauses in the partnership sub agreements to cover for CORE funds / supplemental funds that are sent to partner institutions for various CORE funded activities.

Generally, the whole exercise was time-consuming as we tried to respond to the various internal auditors requests. However, the knowledge gained again was invaluable and we have not wasted time in attempting to improve some of these areas of deficiency as we feel once corrected, these will put us in an advantageous position for the next phase of funding which we anticipate to be even more stringent and competitive.

Audit exercises are can be long processes and mind-boggling but are ultimately rewarding at the end.