Capacity development, training and research uptake

OC - (8586) - INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH CAPACITY BUILDING FOR MULTI-DISCIPLINARY HEALTH RESEARCH TO SUPPORT THE HEALTH SYSTEM REBUILDING PHASE IN SIERRA LEONE

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Background
The EDCTP funded ‘Institutional capacity development for multi-disciplinary health research to support the health system rebuilding phase in Sierra Leone’ (RECAP-SL) project created a solid platform wherein sustainable research capacity can be built at the College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences (COMAHS) at the University of Sierra Leone. This in turn will support the much needed evidence based health systems reconstruction phase in Sierra Leone and support the evolution of the research landscape at COMAHS.

Methods and Results
We established a research centre at COMAHS and conducted a research needs assessment of COMAHS. This informed the development of short and longer term action plans to support sustainable institutional research capacity development, and enabled the development of a 4-year research strategy. This aforementioned report also served as a guide for subsequent research partnerships in terms of capacity building efforts to address identified challenges.

We also focused on developing four research fellows and a wider student engagement platform to help cultivate a research culture. The research fellows will support other researchers at COMAHS, thus promoting sustainability of the research centre. Continued professional development opportunities for the fellows are also being actively sought, to train them up to doctoral level, which addresses one of the gaps identified in the capacity assessment report.

Conclusion
To support sustainability, capacity building efforts are being designed to ensure that these gains are maintained over time, with international and national research partners and funders recognising the importance of further developing local research capacity. Through a multi-pronged approach, health systems research capacity has been strengthened in Sierra Leone. This will support the generation of evidence that will support the building of sustainable health systems fit for responding cohesively to outbreaks and for delivering services across the country, especially for the most disadvantaged populations.