

The evolution of the CARTA program

A consultative CARTA partners' meeting took place in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 21 - 22 January 2007. The meeting was a response to Wellcome Trust's (UK) call for expression of interest to develop a consortium involving African institutions to strengthen research capacity in Africa. Wellcome Trust's objective were to:

- Create equitable and sustainable South-South and North-South linkages;
- Build a critical mass of local research capacity;
- Support human resource and infrastructural needs at African institutions;
- Create active research environments;
- Develop and build research leadership Support research leaders to act as models for young scientists, and
- Strengthen research training and build career pathways in public health research.

African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) took up the challenge and invited several academic and research institutions to the meeting in Tanzania to address the issue by

focusing on identification of research capacity gaps and institutional needs of participating universities, presentation of the concept of a new initiative on strengthening doctoral training programs within African universities, discussing possible modalities of implementation and coordination of the proposed initiative, learning from other models, obtaining institutional commitment to participate in the initiative, and to chart the next steps for the creation of a consortium and submission of an Expression of Interest to Wellcome Trust.

At the end of the meeting, key action points were identified. It was agreed that a proforma be send to institutions and that each institution should supply documentation delineating staff qualifications; strengths and weaknesses of existing programs; profiles of students who have been trained (over last 10

years); publications (over the last 10 years); grants obtained; available resources that would benefit the program (e.g. libraries); explanation of how program activities fit into institutional, national, etc. goals; existing structures that could host the program; existing partnerships; copies of MOUs and other partnership agreements; list and profiles of Northern partners.

Thereafter, a series of meetings were held in various places to define the project and make the program operational. CARTA held a two day meeting in Bellagio Italy with potential funders who had expressed interest in the CARTA program or who fund higher education in Africa to raise additional funds to support the program. The meeting was held at the Rockefeller Foundation's Center in Bellagio, Italy from June 1-9, 2009. A total of three sub-meetings with funders and partners on the CARTA program were held. The goal of the meetings was to seek broader input into the implementation plans and support for the unfunded components of CARTA to carter for CARTA student fellowships and pay for the postdoctoral training component. The meeting in Bellagio culminated in a request

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CARTA and Partner institutions—Buy in

CARTA is a program in Sub Saharan Africa implemented locally by individual partner institutions. The goal of the program is to train African scholars who can generate credible research to inform policies and programs that can improve health in sub-Saharan Africa. This goal is pursued through the training of individual researchers from partner institutions as well as institutional transformation. Fellowships are awarded to young researchers who are staff of partner institutions. In addition to receiv-

ing research funding, these fellowships enable scholars to attend annual Joint Advanced Seminars (JAS) that equip them with strong conceptual, technical and professional skills; and enable them to interact with peers as well as public and population health experts from across the globe. Beyond these fellowships, CARTA also works with partner institutions for overall transformation, especially in cru-

cial areas such as Information Communication and Technology (ICT); and faculty and staff training. The idea is to build both the individual researchers as well as improve the context within which they work.

To achieve these objectives the collaboration of partner institutions is crucial. This has been attained through a carefully planned process of visits by CARTA Directors and staff, series of meetings and workshops and above all, signed letters from the heads of the institutions. In this way, there is buy-in at the highest level, usually the Vice Chancellors of universities and their equivalents in Research Institutions.

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The Journey So Far, the Launches

CARTA program has been launched in the University of Malawi, University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), University of Nairobi (Kenya), University of Ibadan (Nigeria), Obafemi Awolowo University (Nigeria), Moi University (Kenya), the National University of Rwanda (Rwanda), and the University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa). The final launch will take place at the Makerere University, Uganda, during the first quarter of 2011.

The launches accorded an opportunity for university community and the general public, to know about the CARTA program, its objectives and what is expected of each partner institutions towards the im-

plementation of the program. The program was first launched at the University of Witwatersrand (Wits) on 20th July 2009. Prof. Loyiso Nongxa, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of Wits



Administration Block of the Moi University, a CARTA university

University, said, during the launch, that the CARTA program was in line with Wits' 2010 vision and provided

an opportunity for Wits to expand its footprint in Africa. He added that CARTA was to be implemented through partnerships between institutions, and was to greatly benefit the African continent by addressing issues surrounding academic and intellectual isolation. Dr. Alex Ezeh, the African Population and Health Research Center's (APHRC) Executive Director shared his vision for CARTA by stating that the CARTA program was set to improve research capacity in the region.

Postgraduate training outside Africa is very expensive therefore, an African based alternative like CARTA program is a blessing and most welcome development. This benefit, among others, was cited during the launch at the National University of Rwanda (NUR) on 31st March 2011,

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CARTA Fellows, Cohort 1

The first cohort of 25 fellows has been selected after a rigorous selection exercise that included initial vetting of applicants by their universities' CARTA Committees and final selection during the inaugural Partners' Forum, an annual meeting of all CARTA partner institutions. Each institution placed a call for preliminary applications from junior researcher who are staff at the institution. A total of 108 applications were received by university CARTA committees. However, only 55 applicants were nominated by these committees for the next stage. The nominees had to complete an online set of tasks (the Pre-JAS) and submit a research proposal for grading. Grading of the pre-JAS tasks was

conducted by the CARTA secretariat and partners from the University of Warwick. Each applicant's proposal was assessed by three independent reviewers from the partner institutions. The final selection was based on performance on the pre-JAS tasks and the quality of the research proposal. The Partners' Forum also considered institutional representation, gender balance, and age, among others.

CARTA Fellows will undertake their PhD studies at one of CARTA's nine partner African universities. The Fellowships include tuition fees for those registered in universities other than

theirs; modest monthly stipends; small grants for research activities; laptops and relevant software; funds for travel to conferences, as well as costs for participating in joint program activities. Fellows will also participate in annual series of 3-5 week-long, residential Joint Advanced Seminars (JAS) – a total of 4 are planned throughout the fellowship, which will serve to: Expose fellows to key theories and concepts, seminal readings, and research methods of disciplines relevant to public and population health; Train fellows in critical research skills; and Build and maintain a network of researchers for scientific collaborations, professional support, and mutually beneficial exchange of scientific resources. Each fellowship is provided for a period of four years. The following 25 fellows were selected for Cohort 1 to proceed for pre-JAS 2 and JAS 1.

List of Cohort 1 CARTA Fellows

1	Victoria Mathew Mwakalinga	Ifakara Health Institute, Tanzania	14	Jacqueline Halima Mgumia	University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
2	Mphatso Steve Kamndaya	University of Malawi	15	Babatunde Olubayo Adedokun	University of Ibadan, Nigeria
3	Kanyiva Muindi	African Population and Health Research Center, Kenya	16	Joshua Odunayo Akinyemi	University of Ibadan, Nigeria
4	Sulaimon Atolagbe Afolabi	Agincourt Population and Health Unit, South Africa	17	Esnat Dorothy Chirwa	University of Malawi
5	Joseph Matovu,	Makerere University, Uganda	18	Fresier Francis Chidyaonga Maseko	University of Malawi
6	Caroline Sultan Sambai	Moi University, Kenya	19	Wells Robert Utembe	University of Malawi
7	Esther Clyde Nabakwe	Moi University, Kenya	20	Peter Maturi Mwamba	University of Nairobi, Kenya
8	Celine Niwemahoro	National University of Rwanda	21	Rose Okoyo Opiyo	University of Nairobi, Kenya
9	Dieudonne Uwizeye	National University of Rwanda	22	Teresa Njeri Kinyari	University of Nairobi, Kenya
10	François Niragire,	National University of Rwanda	23	Kennedy S.Naviava Otwombe	University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa
11	Sulaimon Taiwo Adedokun	Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria	24	Nicole Claire De Wet	University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa
12	Sunday Adepoju Adedini	Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria	25	Peter Suwirakwenda Nyasulu	University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa
13	Taofeek Oluwole Awotidebe	Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria			

Evolution of the CARTA program—from pg1

for a proposal for funding to the Carnegie Corporation of New York to support the program for 3 years. Also, as part of the proposal to Carnegie, Obafemi Awolowo University of Nigeria, one of Carnegie's key recipient institutions in Africa, was invited to join CARTA. Other funders present made commitments to follow up with other funding agencies to support CARTA. It was also suggested that the CARTA management framework be restructured to ensure full participation by CARTA member institutions. Present in the meeting were CARTA general partners who seized the opportunity to hold a CARTA partners meeting.

CARTA Partner institutions— from pg 1

CARTA currently has 20 partners, who can be broadly categorized into:

Nine Public African Universities

- Makerere University, Uganda
- Moi University, Kenya
- National University of Rwanda
- Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria
- University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
- University of Ibadan, Nigeria
- University of Malawi
- University of Nairobi, Kenya
- University of Witwatersrand, South Africa

Four Research Institutes in Africa

- African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), Kenya

- Agincourt Health and Population Unit, South Africa
- Ifakara Health Institute, Tanzania
- KEMRI/Wellcome Trust Research Programme, Kenya

Seven Northern Partners:

- Canadian Coalition for Global Health Research (CCGHR), Canada
- Monash University, Australia
- Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, Switzerland
- University of Colorado, USA
- University of Warwick, UK
- WHO Special Programme for Training and Research in Tropical Diseases (TDR), Switzerland
- The Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

In addition, each partner has specific roles to which commitment at the highest level is required. These roles include the following: established African universities provide facilitators for JAS and other workshops, serve on CARTA register student for Ph.Ds; while promising African Universities identify faculty who can benefit from mentoring, participate in JAS as well as potentially host JAS. Northern partners host visiting CARTA scholars, assist in finding visiting lecturers as well as serve on CARTA committees.

As the program increases the implementation pace with the first cohort of fellows already on board, running of the first of its series of flagship courses, the Joint Advanced Seminars (JAS), commencement of faculty and staff training workshops, it is anticipated that this highest level commitment would be crucial for success and sustainability.

CARTA Staff

The CARTA team at the secretariat comprises Chimaraoke Izugbara, Caroline Kabiru, Ogoh Alubo, Eva Kiragu, Evelyne Kemunto and Makau Ngola. Overall support in the running of the program, and other necessary administrative support are provided by Dr Alex Ezeh, the Program Director, and Prof Sharon Fonn, the Deputy Program Director. Dr Alex is the Executive Director of the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), while Prof Fonn is the Head, School of Public Health at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. Dr Alex and Prof Fonn have overall responsibility for CARTA's strategic direction. They play critical roles in fundraising for the program and ensure effective donor relations. The directors also facilitate strong networking among member institutions.

Each CARTA staff member has a distinct function to perform in support of the CARTA program. CARTA program falls under APHRC's Research Capacity Strengthening (RCS) Unit. Chimaraoke, fondly referred to by APHRC staff as Chima, heads the Unit. He provides

overall oversight for CARTA program implementation, ensuring that everything within CARTA program is done in line with RCS Unit's mandate to



Chimaraoke Izugbara

contribute to the improvement of graduate level training within sub-Saharan African universities. He ensures that standards and guidelines of the program implementation are adhered to in order to guarantee delivery of intended outputs by the program.

Ogoh Alubo, CARTA Program Manager, is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the program. He ably manages the operations of CARTA program by communicating and linking up with the various CARTA partners to plan, organize, direct and coordinate



Ogoh Alubo

aspects related to the CARTA fellows ranging from fellowship announcement, selection, development of the curriculum for the Joint Advanced Seminars (JAS) and managerial aspects of CARTA. It is within his mandate to engage in fundraising for the program in collaboration with the Executive and Deputy Director of the program and maintain good donor relations. CARTA program, under the guidance of Ogoh, runs smoothly through maintenance of a network of partners. He reports on the program and oversees evaluation of the program internally and externally.

Financial aspects of the program are handled by Evelyne Kemunto, the Program Accountant. She works in close collaboration with APHRC's Finance and Administration Unit to undertake program related procurements and institute all program related payments. She also monitors the program's implementation against the planned budget.



Evelyne Kemunto

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CARTA Staff—from pg 3

The CARTA program has a strong training component that is coordinated by Caroline Kabiru, CARTA's Training Officer. Caroline supports the development and delivery of the Consortium's training programs. Key activities under the training program include the formulation of policies, procedures and schedules for the training workshops, as well as the development and implementation of monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that these training programs meet the needs of the beneficiaries.



Caroline Kabiru



Eva Kiragu

Eva Kiragu holds the activities of the CARTA unit together by tracking all activities going on in the secretariat, as well as within partner institutions and tirelessly addresses those that require her intervention. She provides administrative support necessary for the implementation of the program.

With CARTA partners spread in various continents, there is need to employ a fast, reliable and cost-effective method of communication. The internet is used extensively in delivering content for CARTA fellows as well as exchanges among partners. Makau Ngola, the CARTA Communications Officer, oversees the implementation of CARTA's communication activities. He maintains and updates the CARTA website to ensure that the program's information exchange needs are met. He offers information support to the CARTA program through e-mail or online and carries out advocacy activities to enhance CARTA's visibility in order to achieve maximum impact. He is involved in the CARTA program training activities.

The journey so far—the launches—from pg 2

when the Vice-Rector (Academic), Professor Martin O'Hara informed those present that NUR had a staff of 150 who had trained or were still undergoing training outside Rwanda. CARTA program was aimed at strengthening the postgraduate research and training centers in Africa.

Moi University Vice Chancellor Prof Mibey saw the launch of the CARTA program at the Moi University on 17th June 2011 as augmenting research and extension by addressing research and capacity building in African universities. The situation in the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) is similar, where, according to the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic Affairs, Prof Makenya Maboko, representing the Vice Chancellor Prof Rwekaza S. Mukandala, the CARTA program would be very beneficial to UDSM as it was geared towards PhD level training. He said "55% of the teaching staff in UDSM either had a first or a Masters degree, and 6 - 7% were on post-retirement contracts." CARTA program supports all postgraduate students as it cuts across all disciplines.

Up-coming activities for the first quarter 2011

Capacity Development Training Workshop for CARTA Universities 9 - 11 March 2011

Administrative staff and faculty members in CARTA institutions, will attend a three day training workshop in Nairobi, Kenya, from 9 - 11 March 2011. The two groups will be split in order to focus on and address each group's specific needs. Areas to be covered includes the challenges of conducting research in Africa, an exploration of key issues facing higher education in Africa, curriculum development process and the methods of delivering the content, developing and implementing an institutional research strategy, writing grant proposals and identifying sources of funding, thesis supervision, mentorship, and getting published and raising one's academic profile. The workshop will address supporting research and postgraduate programs in African Universities.

Call for application for Cohort 2, February 15, 2011

The call for applications for the 2011/12 CARTA fellowships will be announced on February 15, 2011. The deadline for applications in May 15, 2011. Successful applicants will be announced in August 2011.

Joint Advanced Seminar (JAS) 1

Cohort 1 fellows will be in Nairobi from 14th March to 8th April to undertake the Joint Advanced Seminar (JAS) 1. There are four JAS planned throughout the fellowship.

Funders' Meeting

Donors who support CARTA activities will hold a meeting in Nairobi, Kenya from 23 - 24 March 2011. The Meeting was deliberately planned to coincide with JAS

1 will in order to give the funders some opportunity to interact with CARTA Fellows.

CARTA Patrons Advisory Group (PAG) Meeting

Patrons Advisory Group (PAG) is a group comprising high-level individuals with strong commitment to higher education, development, and equity issues in sub-Saharan Africa. PAG provides strategic advice to the CARTA Management Board and Executive Directorate on CARTA's program of activities, support fundraising efforts, and provide entry into Departments/Ministries of Health and Education, and other regional governmental and non-governmental bodies. PAG members serve as CARTA's global ambassadors. Members of the PAG will be in Nairobi from 22 - 23 March 2011 for an inaugural meeting. They will also have an opportunity to meet CARTA fellows and the funders.

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