Developing research integrity capacity through training and networking in Africa

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About Africa

LAND AREA
Second largest continent

PEOPLE
Second most populous, youngest continent

HISTORY, CULTURE
Cradle of humankind, also crucible

EDUCATION, RESEARCH
Limited resources, boundless opportunities
Research Integrity in Africa

- Some unique contributions and perspectives to offer
- Many common themes, issues and opportunities
- In Africa – not yet a strong culture of institutional, national or continental guidelines on research integrity
Developing RI capacity in Africa

Much can and is being achieved, even in resource-poor settings

Capacity development involves individuals, institutions, systems and structures
Specific initiatives to build capacity

Training and workshops
- Individuals and institutions

Policies and guidelines
- Systems and structures

Networks and professional bodies
- Synergies and shared learning
Training and workshops
Formal academic programmes

SARETI

(University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa)
Institutional initiatives

University of Malawi
College of Medicine (COM)
NYA workshops to promote integrity

Starting point

- A number of cases of plagiarism brought to attention of NYA
- Decided to get involved to help change

Programme of work, and efforts to date

- Started a series of workshops dealing with plagiarism, across the country
- Conducted an online survey to assess the extent of consciousness of plagiarism among academics
NYA workshops to promote integrity

- Workshops across the country well attended, with positive feedback received
  - February 2018: A record 350 participants showed up for a daylong plagiarism workshop
  - Six more for 2018, one per geopolitical region in Nigeria

Speakers and participants at the Anti-Plagiarism Workshop held at Covenant University, Ota on 5 February 2018
Universities encouraged to make greater efforts to detect and prevent plagiarism, e.g.
- using similarity checking software
- making plagiarism a punishable offence

Acknowledgement and broader awareness
- Article by Linda Nordling in the Science Magazine (June 2018)
- Follow-up piece on plagiarism in Africa with a comment from NYA: [nyahttps://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-07462-2](https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-07462-2)

For more information: Dr Tope Olomola, NYA
Also: WCRI poster presentation by Dr Idowu Kazeem, NYA publicity secretary
Policies and guidelines
Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST)
Specific example:
Moi University, Kenya
Project at Moi University, Kenya

Starting point

- No national guidelines for research and academic institutions: How to prevent, identify and manage research misconduct
- Lack of policies and clear guidance at Moi University

Approach to project

- Initiated at institutional level
- Involves national stakeholders and international counterparts

Funding:

- USA National Institutes of Health (NIH) through Fogarty International Center (FIC)
- Funded for 3 years; currently in 2nd year of implementation
Role players and stakeholders involved

Moi University:
- PI and co-PI; Research Ethics Committee (REC) of Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital; Senior academic and research leadership

Other (Kenya)
- HIV researchers in Kenya; Administrative leads of 28 accredited RECs; National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI); Commission for University Education

International
- Research integrity experts from South Africa (University of South Africa); the Netherlands (University of Amsterdam); USA (Indiana University), Retraction Watch
Project deliverables

Research-based policy development

• Documenting
  - occurrence of research misconduct from the perspective of HIV researchers in Kenya
  - perceptions of RECs and researchers on current capacity to prevent and manage research misconduct

• Developing, through national stakeholder engagement (forum)
  - A model institutional framework for prevention and management of research misconduct in Kenya
Progress and impact to date

National forum (February 2019)

- Developed and made recommendations on *a consensus model institutional framework*

- National regulator (NACOSTI) pledged to incorporate recommendations from forum in ongoing amendment Science, Technology and Innovation Act 2013 of Kenya

- Commission of University Education also pledged to implement recommendations
Next steps?

At institutional level
- Process and framework to be adopted
- Championed by Directorate of Research
- Establishing infrastructure to promote research integrity
- Focus on prevention of misconduct through training on responsible conduct of research

At inter-institutional level
- Sharing of lessons and resources: Providing access to framework and recommendations

At national level
- If implemented by NACOSTI, compliance with (statutory) framework will be required of all academic and research institutions in country

For more information: Prof Edwin Were, Moi University, presenter at WCRI
Trends and needs emerging
Trends and needs emerging

General trends

- Often short- to medium term initiatives
- Often linked to a single champion
- Generally in isolation from each other
- Informed by consultation and/or research
- Important, positive role of international funders and guidelines
- Research integrity tends to be treated as an “add-on” to research ethics

Common needs emerging

- Awareness raising, promotion of RI through training and clear guidelines – to reduce risk of “punishable offences”
- Institutional and national policies, guidelines, support
- Training to be institutionalised, recognised .... and shared
The value of networking
The value of networking

- To learn from, about, with each other
- Sharing of resources – to achieve more with less
- Encourage, inform, reflect, challenge, activate!
- Involvement of relevant role players and stakeholders – improves legitimacy, likelihood of sustainability

“If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together”
African Research Integrity Network

Still informal

- Bringing together individuals
  - Different parts of the continent, different roles
  - Shared interest in research integrity

- Learning from and about each other
- Growing to communicate, coordinate, promote, activate

For more information: Meeting of 5 June – “African interest group”
“Solutions that make a difference”?  

“Connected” solutions – more meaningful and sustainable

- Connected to a need or purpose
- Connected to a committed champion
- Connected to international guidelines and support
- Connected to research and/or reflection
- Connected to decision makers or influencers
- Connected to an overarching policy
- Connected to funding
- Connected to a network

Do not underestimate small beginnings
To blend together ... with time

(And feed a family)
Acknowledgements

Co- contributors

- Kenya, Moi University – Professor Edwin Were and Ms Jepchirchir Kiplagat
- Malawi University – Ms Limbanazo Matandika
- Nigeria, NYA – Dr Tope Olomola
- South Africa, SARETI – Prof Douglas Wassenaar and Ms Carla Pettit
- Uganda, UNCST – Ms Hellen Opolot

- WCRI – Prof Lex Bouter as panel convenor and chairperson
- ARIN – co-steering committee members Francis Kombe and Limbanazo Matandika
Asante
Dankie
Ke a leboga
Ngiyabonga
Thank you
Zikomo
謝謝
More information on selected initiatives
Formal academic programme

SARETI
(University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa)
The South African Research Ethics Training Initiative (SARETI)

Master’s degree programme in Health Research Ethics

- Effective 2002-2019
- PI: Professor DR Wassenaar

Funding

- US National Institutes of Health (NIH) through the Fogarty International Center

Target group

- Scholars from African continent, various backgrounds
- Competitively-selected students: Full scholarships
- Also externally- or self-funded students
The South African Research Ethics Training Initiative (SARETI)

Programme of work

First year:

- Face-to-face coursework
- Modular approach – week-long modules, 160 notional hours, compulsory, full-time, SAQA accredited
- One of the modules covers responsible conduct of research (RCR) and research integrity (RI) – facilitated by PI

Thereafter

- Return to home base to complete research project (dissertation)
The South African Research Ethics Training Initiative (SARETI)

Outputs and impacts

- One RI/RCR paper of >100 papers by SARETI students listed at http://sareti.ukzn.ac.za/StudentPublications.aspx
- More outputs on RI by the same and other students after completing studies
- Impact of alumni students taking RI further through networks, publication and training

Future plans

- Applied for NIH funding to take the initiative to the next level – PhD training, also requiring RI/RCR training (2020-2026)
- No link to national funding
- No plans (as yet) to replicate or expand elsewhere

For more information: Professor Douglas Wassenaar, UKZN
Institutional initiatives to raise awareness

Various academic institutions across the continent ...

- Operate at different levels of maturity
- Some have a dedicated or designated person or unit to promote research integrity
- Some have developed policies and/or procedures
- Some policies are publicly available and can serve as best-practice guidelines

Training and workshops ...

- Some have a stronger focus on academic staff, some more on students, some on both
- Many on plagiarism and authorship issues, some on other aspects
- Seldom part of compulsory on-boarding or induction
Institutional initiatives

University of Malawi
College of Medicine (COM)
Example: University of Malawi COM

Target group – limited to COM

- Postgraduate students
- Undergraduate students required to submit research projects
- Young and emerging researchers

Programme of work

- Training on research integrity to postgraduate students
- Information literacy course by Library department
  - Focus on plagiarism and similarity checking software
- Young researchers’ forum (YRF)
  - Aimed to nurture upcoming research leaders
  - Mentoring on good research practice, publication ethics
Example: University of Malawi COM

Funding

- Institutional funds, YRF supported by membership fees
- In collaboration with ARIN, COM-CEBESA submitted proposal for workshop funding in 2017 (unsuccessful)

Reflection, challenges and opportunities

- No overarching institutional policy on RI
- Lack of standards and procedures to prevent and detect misconduct
- No resources and communication for RI at institutional level
- Lack of feedback mechanisms to evaluate and improve existing initiatives

For more information: Ms Limbanazo Matandika, UNIMA COM
Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST)
About UNCST

An agency of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI)

- Established by the UNCT Act of 1990 (Chapter 209)
- Purpose: To support and regulate scientific research, technological innovations and product commercialization for socio-economic transformation
- Developed National Guidelines for Research involving Humans as Research Participants (2014) – currently being revised
- Accredits research ethics committees (RECs) in the country
Regarding RI, UNCST found:

- Only a few universities and research institutions have developed research misconduct policies
- Coordinated efforts to address the problem of research misconduct were lacking, nationally and at institutional levels
- There was no national policy for the promotion of responsible conduct of research (RCR) in Uganda

Against this background, UNCST responded by:

- Developing a National Research Integrity and Code of Conduct Policy
- Incorporating a chapter on research integrity in the revised Guidelines to provide guidance to everyone intending to conduct research
UNCST work on research integrity

Areas addressed in new national research integrity guidelines:

- Definition of “research misconduct”
- Definition of “research misbehaviours”
- Provision for research institutions to develop their own policies, reporting and management mechanisms for research misconduct
- UNCST will establish a Research Integrity Liaison Office (RILO), to
  - Respond to allegations of research misconduct
  - Oversee enquiries and investigations initiated by researchers and research institutions

For more information: Ms Hellen Opolot, UNCST, Uganda