



Research Capacity Building in Zambia by the World Health Organization Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases

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- Focused on research capacity building in LMICs to tackle diseases of poverty
- Total of 67 grantees and 136 grants to students from Zambia from 1977-2018
- 2014 survey of student alumni revealed 91% agreement of importance of TDR in support of research career development

TDR at the
WHO

The Role of the Granting Scheme

- How did grantees benefit from financial and other supports?
- How have TDR grants catalyzed research careers of alumni?
- What are the priorities and unmet needs for training of current young researchers?
- How do we best support new grantees and existing alumni?

Identification and
collaboration with
Global Country
Coordinators

Creation of portfolios
to feature Zambian
researchers and
increase visibility

Semi-structured
interviews with Zambian
alumni and thematic
analyses

Methods

- 30-minute conversation with a semi-structured interview guide
- Questions on research interests, host institution, level of collaboration, publications, demographics, impact of TDR grants and previous participation



Semi-structured interviews with Zambian alumni and thematic analyses

Results

Grantees
identified

63

Considered for
interview

45

Selected for
contact

15

Interviewed

10

Thematic Review

- Motivation for continued research progress
 - Close association with national pride
 - Wanting to “pay it forward” and “give back” to their country
 - *“Even if we do not reach elimination [of malaria], we will definitely make a long-lasting impact on malaria mortality and incidence in our country”*
- Decisions for area of study determined by need rather than personal gain
 - *“my main motivation for infectious diseases [is because it has] a very big impact on our country and on the region - it is the biggest cause of death and morbidity”*

Thematic Review

- Development and transfer of new research skills and methodologies
- *“if I had not gone to South Africa, I couldn’t independently analyze data. I couldn’t even think of publishing on my own. And so, it was the skills that I picked up [that] helped me do a lot of abstracts for colleagues as well”*
- Helps to increase opportunities for vertical movement from beginning
- *“It was a catalysis, an accelerator...it broadened my horizon in the efforts to try and support the malaria control program”*
- Opportunities for ongoing collaborations
- *“I continue to interact with [my mentors for my masters] through electronic means. They review my articles and help with my academic writing”*

Thematic Review

- Unmet needs of new generation of researchers
 - Lack of research training in Zambia
 - TDR senior researchers acting as role models for younger generation – wishing there was a systematic way for engagement
 - *“it’s one thing to learn something in class and another thing altogether to put it into practice. I am hoping that the next generation can be mentored so they can be the change agents that we need”*
- Lack of autonomy in research topics and funding
 - *“the current framework of international aid creates vertical interventions and short-term research commitments that result in programs operating largely in silos”*

Discussion

1. Gratitude

2. Intention to work in area of need

3. Altruism

4. Catalysts in mentorship

5. National gap in research funding


1. Develop research networks

2. Online platform for collaboration

3. Ongoing virtual training

4. Longitudinal mentorship program

5. Change in national funding schemas

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- Initiation of social media and online platforms to engage students
 - Stories of the 10 alumni on the WHO website
 - TDR Global – a alumni platform for 7000 alumni around the world

Creation of portfolios to feature Zambian researchers and increase visibility



Thanks

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