



The Association of Commonwealth Universities

Funders and African universities: enhancing the relationship

Report from a one-day seminar
staged in advance of the 2010
INORMS conference

Cape Town International Convention
Centre, 12 April 2010





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by the Wellcome Trust.

Published by
The Association of Commonwealth Universities
Woburn House
20-24 Tavistock Square
London WC1H 9HF
UK

Tel: +44 (0)20 7380 6700
Fax: +44 (0)20 7387 2655
Email: resman@acu.ac.uk
www.acu.ac.uk

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Background

Over the past twenty years, university-based research has become more project-based, more competitive, and more likely to be based in cross-institutional or cross-national teams. It also operates in a more complex legal, ethical, and financial environment. The growing number of bodies involved in funding such research also have increasing expectations about its conduct and impact. There is an expectation that the work will not only be properly conducted and reported, but also that it will be widely disseminated and, where appropriate, commercialised.

These are international trends. In developed countries, universities have responded by establishing and expanding specialist units to assist their researchers. In some cases, this process has been assisted by governments who recognise the economic and social benefits of university research. Research management has become a profession in its own right.

Arguably, African universities have been left behind in this process. This is likely to place them at a serious disadvantage in accessing international research funding, and limit the social and economic impact of the research that does take place.

What is research management?

There are several potential definitions of research management. For current purposes, we can assume that the term embraces anything that universities can do to maximise the impact of their research activity, other than the conduct of the research itself. The term is thus distinguished from research methodology. It includes assistance in identifying new sources of funds, presenting research applications, and advice on costing projects and negotiating contracts with external sponsors. It incorporates project management and financial control systems. It also involves help in exploiting research results, through commercialisation, knowledge exchange, and dissemination to wider society.

Is research management different in Africa?

Is it reasonable to expect African universities to develop research management systems in line with international trends? There is no simple answer to this question, partly because there is no single international model. Even in the developed world, different approaches have been adopted – for example, in the degree of centralisation in the structures; in the extent to which ‘pre-award’ and ‘post-award’

support activities are integrated into a single office; and in the location of research and innovation management within the central reporting structure.

Many of these differences reflect the wider systems in which universities operate. It is important that funders encourage African universities to develop systems that similarly reflect local needs, rather than (inadvertently) seeking to impose structures with which they are familiar elsewhere. There is a risk of over simplification here; however, we can speculate on what some of the issues might be. The relationship between central universities and their staff is very different in the African university to many northern ones, with the centre having relatively little economic power to impose new regulation. There are also significant cultural differences. Anecdotal evidence suggests that African universities seem to have relatively few middle-grade managers and administrators – with staff in these areas tending to be either very senior (such as the registrar and finance officer), or very junior. This may challenge the administrators’ ability to effect real changes on a day-to-day working basis. Research and consultancy in the African universities tends to be highly individual, rather than group or department based (as in developed countries), and may form an important part of the personal income of the recipient. There is also the question of what level of research support is needed, particularly in universities with limited research capacity. The same applies to innovation and knowledge transfer; even many UK universities have found it difficult to break even financially in this area of activity.

On the other hand, there are external pressures for African universities to develop compatible models. As research projects become more international, African universities are being asked to operate under the same terms and conditions as everyone else.

The 2009 Funders Seminar, London

In November 2009, the Association of Commonwealth Universities staged a funder roundtable in London, UK. The aim of the seminar was to compare activities and experiences, and to seek to identify ways in which a more aligned approach could add value to the collective efforts of funders. A particular priority of the discussion was to identify ways in which a research management culture could become better embedded in institutional structures in the longer term, perhaps working alongside regional research manage-

ment associations (such as those that have already emerged in south and west Africa, and are emerging in east Africa).

The seminar was open to all funding bodies with an interest in strengthening research management in African institutions, and who might be willing to work in an aligned or collaborative fashion with others in the field. Prior to the meeting, funders were asked to complete a pre-seminar questionnaire to determine their level of engagement with African research activity.

The responses to the questionnaire indicated that funders recognise the importance of research management, and that several have developed initiatives in the area. Until now, however, these have been relatively uncoordinated, and focused on individual awareness, rather than the development of robust and sustainable structures at institutional level. The seminar aimed to identify ways in which stronger cooperation could add value to this process.

It is likely that African universities will increasingly be required to account for their research activity to international, as well as domestic, authorities. However, none of the funders in our questionnaire reported having adopted different procedures for universities in developing countries. In these circumstances, it is reasonable to assume that research management structures of some sort will be required, even if such structures will not replicate exactly those of the 'north'.

At the seminar, funders identified some of the common experiences and problems encountered when funding research in African institutions. These included:

- Retention of trained staff
- Duplication in training (a tendency for the same people to be nominated for training and development)
- Use/misuse of the institutional brand – and subsequent questions on accountability
- How to assess universities (i.e., should these assessments be conducted at school/department level, or at institutional level?)
- Keeping abreast of, and matching, the recipient-country priority areas, as well as the funder priority areas

From the discussion, it also appeared that universities currently receive relatively little support from funders in terms of costing, pricing, and intellectual property management of their programmes.

Several funders expressed interest in developing new approaches to training and evaluation. For example, the funders thought it would be a good idea if audits could be made transparent (where possible), as they could then be used as a form of 'validation' by the African university. The funders generally felt that there was no reason why they would not recognise an audit from another established funder – which could save African universities having to undergo several different audits in a year.

The seminar discussion showed the willingness of funders to consider the wider institutional context in which research management takes place, as well as to inform individual applicants and grant recipients. It also suggested recognition of the need for funders to collaborate more in the field. Indeed, the funders themselves identified potential for collaboration in the following areas: sharing existing knowledge and creating new knowledge; platforms for dialogue; capacity building; and the ability to pool resources.

The funders also agreed that 2010 congress of the International Network of Research Management Societies (INORMS) would be an ideal platform to continue the dialogue on African University Research Management – this time with African Universities. Most of the funders (listed below) were represented at, and/or supported African university participation at the INORMS 2010 congress. The Carnegie Corporation of New York, the International Development Research Centre, and the Wellcome Trust, for example, collectively supported over 30 delegates from African institutions to attend the INORMS 2010 event.

Institutions represented at this seminar:

The Carnegie Corporation of New York; Department for Foreign and International Development (DFID); European Commission, Information Society/F3; International Development Research Centre (IDRC); NIH/FIC Fogarty International Center; Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association, (SARIMA); Swedish International Development Agency; UK Collaborative on Development Sciences (UKCDS); Wellcome Trust; WHO-TDR Networks and Partnership; and the Association of Commonwealth Universities.

Introduction

With over 500 member universities, the Association of Commonwealth Universities can play a unique role in bringing together good practice in both the developed and developing world. The Global Research Management Network, established by the ACU, promotes international standards in this critically important area. In the African context, the network works closely with regional research management associations in southern and west Africa, and undertakes research management work at institutional level on behalf of the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Science and Technology programme of the ACP Secretariat. The ACU has also been a partner in the establishment of the Research Africa funding and news service, funded by the UK Department for International Development and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

In April 2010, the ACU joined with the Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association to bring the International Network of Research Management Societies' (INORMS) conference to Africa for the first time. The event – the major international conference for university research managers – attracted over 400 delegates and provided a unique opportunity to stimulate contact between African universities, their international counterparts, and international funding agencies.

This seminar, supported by the Wellcome Trust and held immediately prior to the conference, allowed the ACU to bring together a small cohort of universities and donors to explore what could be done to enhance their relationship.

Outcomes of the seminar are reported in the pages that follow. Whilst these reflect comments made during the event, they do not necessarily reflect the views of all participants.

Funding and regional bodies

The seminar began with presentations from some of the key funders and regional bodies, regarding their overall provision and specific interest in African research management.

Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) – Hannah Akuffo SIDA has a long-standing interest in research management and has been supportive of university research systems since 1980. The organisation has noted continuing inefficiencies in some focus universities, particularly where these are still developing research cultures, and recognises that reforming these is a long-term issue. SIDA's geographic focus is on countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and central and eastern Europe. Emphasis is placed on giving participating universities the authority to distribute some funding according to their own priorities change, and having the leadership in place to do so.

International Development Research Centre (IRDC) – Nicole Genereux IRDC focuses on supporting regional drivers, strategic planning, and organisational structure. A particular concern is to identify the governance systems necessary to facilitate university research that is relevant to local needs. IDRC has recently produced a study on research governance systems in nine west and central African universities, and launched a new programme to be led by the Association of African Universities.

National Institutes of Health (NIH) – Regina Smith James NIH has an established record in supporting research management, specifically at institutions that themselves host NIH awards. They present an International Research Management Award and offer support across ten core curriculum areas. NIH also awards five-year grants worth USD 35,000 annually to help establish research management offices.

Wellcome Trust – Val Snewin In 2009, the Wellcome Trust launched its African Institutions Initiative. This involved seven awards for research capacity building in Africa, involving 70 institutions. All grant holders are African, which should also help build experience in project management and financial reporting. The Wellcome Trust is also active at the national level, through the Health Research Capacity Strengthening Initiative, focused on Kenya and Malawi, which is helping lead to the formation of a national research funding mechanism.

Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association (SARIMA) – Peter van Eldik, Pieter van der Bijl SARIMA is a membership organisation which, since its establishment in 2002, has been the focus for training and development in university research management in the region. External programmes include the RIMI4AC project, which seeks to support and develop new regional associations in east and central Africa; and the Research Africa project, which has developed the first Africa-specific research funding and news database for universities.

West African Research and Innovation Management Association (WARIMA) – Idowu Olayinka WARIMA, formally established in 2007, performs similar training and development functions to SARIMA, but in west Africa. It has established a permanent office at the University of Ibadan, and has increasingly generated support from throughout the region.

Discussion topic 1 – Making effective contact

Despite the lack of funding opportunities for African researchers, funding bodies sometimes report a lack of good quality applications. Furthermore, those grants that are awarded can tend to focus on the same research groups. Funding bodies are keen to reach the most able and deserving recipients, but do not have unlimited resources with which to publicise their awards. In this context, participants were asked to address the following questions:

- 1 How can funding bodies most effectively promote their schemes to reach the best African researchers?**
- 2 What good practice exists in describing the needs of funding bodies?**
- 3 How can universities help in internal dissemination of research opportunities?**

■ Some universities argued that it would be more efficient to send information about funding opportunities to the research office directly, rather than to VCs. This should not preclude other methods, such as circulation through known subject groups and networks, but is likely to be more effective than large-scale e-mail circulation lists. Good research offices should be able to target suitable research groups quickly and accurately. In some universities, special committees have been set up to discuss available opportunities and select suitable researchers. This method, however, was more likely to be effective for large-scale calls for proposals.

■ To perform this function, research offices need to be staffed by individuals with appropriate skills. It was agreed that interpersonal and networking skills are key for research management personnel. Offices also need to have good communication routes within their universities, and a good understanding of what research potential already exists. Institutional databases are important in this regard.

■ An increasing proportion of research grants require collaboration between universities. Establishing partnerships can be a particular problem for universities. In the case of north-south partnerships, African universities are often approached late in the day by potential collaborators who have a greater knowledge of the scheme and its terms and conditions. Funding bodies need to make sure that the same attention is paid to promoting programmes in the south as in the north, rather than relying on northern partners to identify collaborators.

■ Likewise, special attention may be necessary where schemes actively encourage African leadership of projects, or south-south partnerships. The recent African Institutions Initiative of the Wellcome Trust made clear from the outset that projects should be Africa-led, in an attempt to ensure that African universities were in the driving seat when selecting partners. Another example of good practice was the DFID-funded Development Partnerships in Higher Education (DELPHE) programme, which offered special assistance for developing country institutions in formulating south-south applications. This has helped to generate an increase in the number of south-south awards made.

■ Universities agreed on the importance of proactively engaging with funding bodies when a grant has been secured. Accurate and frequent reporting mechanisms are useful in building confidence, and can help improve the chances of successive grants.

■ Universities felt that even where information was well disseminated, a lack of incentives for academics might restrict the number of applications. A particular challenge identified was the issue of remuneration for writing research proposals. Many academics feel that 'time is money'; preparing proposals is a time consuming and high-risk activity (some programmes have a success rate of 10% or less), for which they would not be remunerated, or receive effective remission from other duties. In this context, it is important that research offices are seen to add value and save academic time, rather than adding obstacles.

■ The universities acknowledged that it is important to allow enough time to develop quality proposals. Sometimes the process of identifying a suitable candidate can be time-consuming and this leaves no time for development of the proposal. Internal review and approval processes, while often helping the applicant, also need to be reviewed to ensure that these do not provide an additional obstacle.

- In some cases, major national universities could take a leading role in the dissemination of information on funding opportunities and research grant management to other universities in the same country with less capacity. Likewise, such universities could play an important role developing new and shared research management systems. Arrangements of this nature are already being considered in Uganda.
- Funding bodies felt that they would be willing to publicise opportunities through university research offices, but would need to have a reliable and regularly updated list of these. It was agreed that the regional research management associations (RMAs) could lead in developing this, either in hard copy form or via their web sites. It was recognised, however, that this should not replace the universities' role in undertaking their own publicity.
- The model, adopted by SIDA, of providing universities with funds for internal distribution could represent a good means of developing organisational capacity and helping central offices to build their profiles. Universities acknowledged, however, that governance systems in the university must be strong in such cases, and that there should be no loss of accountability in reporting.
- Universities spoke of the role of major national universities in helping to establish systems of research management nationally, and of the lessons that smaller and merging research universities could learn from their experiences. There was some agreement among universities that major donors should be mindful that the leading national universities can and do play this role.
- Funders themselves could organise more information sessions for potential applicants. This is not always possible logistically or for financial reasons, but meetings of regional associations could provide a cost effective form of dissemination. There is, however, a strong need to ensure that information about calls is as clear and simple as possible. In some cases, these could be trailed through African researchers or the regional associations. Regional organisations could also be used as a feedback and consultation mechanism in this and other areas.
- More discussion between funders might help to avoid 're-inventing the wheel' in this area, although it would be difficult to ensure total coordination of process. Models such as the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa, which has been established between US foundations, were cited as examples of good practice in this area.

Discussion topic 2 – Making application easy

Faced with increasing teaching and administrative loads, communication difficulties, and a relative lack of access to partners, African universities face additional problems in mounting applications on equal terms, even when they are aware of opportunities. This section of the discussion was asked to address the following questions:

1 What obstacles do African academics face in accessing opportunities?

2 Can these be reduced without compromising standards?

- Issues in this section were divided into three categories – access to information, competing demands, and resources and submission procedures.
- As stated in the previous session, it is important to get information to potential applicants as quickly as possible. Whilst applicants and universities have prime responsibility for this, funding bodies could help by providing clear statements not only of specific opportunities, but also of the thinking that underpins them. Timescales should take into account the potential communication difficulties that can exist.
- In the medium to long term, facilities such as the Research Africa database could be used as a means to alert relevant members of staff directly. However, this would require wider use and a high level of initial input at institutional level.
- Donors would benefit from the existence of robust databases of expertise. However, these need to be developed at institutional level in the first instance. A database of existing research might be a starting point. This would also allow potential researchers to identify others within their institutions with experience of similar applications.
- Technical assistance from donors as part of the application process can make a big difference. The policy of the NIH to offer pre-application conference calls to applicants is an example of good practice in this area, as is the support offered under the DFID DELPHE programme.
- Funding bodies could also assist more through the provision of partner search facilities on their web sites.
- Some administrative chores in the application process could be eased through greater use of standardisation – for example, the submission of CVs and other administrative details in a consistent way.
- Universities need to ensure that their support is seen as a help to potential applicants, rather than an additional obstacle. Examples include the provision of standard text that can be used for administrative issues, constructive advice, and streamlined internal approval procedures.
- Universities can also help by identifying researchers with the potential to succeed in external applications. There is a need to ensure that such researchers can be released, or bought out, from other duties at critical times.
- Pre-proposal grants are offered by some donors to fund the proposal preparation process of pre-selected projects. An example of this is the Wellcome Trust African Institutions Initiative. Such grants make travel and communication between partners possible and result in better-developed proposals. Other donors prefer not to offer such funding, as they believe that the university should take ownership of the project and invest in it. Some differences in funders' approaches to funds distribution should be accepted. Access issues may largely depend on donors' policies on funds distribution.
- It was pointed out that a high proportion of applications from universities do not meet the eligibility criteria of some calls. Universities could develop better systems for explaining these to staff. This might also help in identifying the most suitable candidate to apply. Universities could also benefit from more group discussions of funding opportunities and peer review of the proposals to ensure better quality.

Discussion topic 3 – Equitable shares and financing

Even when they are successful in external applications, African researchers sometimes argue that they are not treated on equal terms compared with northern partners. This session involved discussion around the following issues:

- 1 Should African institutions be treated differently in the negotiation of projects?**
- 2 Should they expect the same treatment on indirect costs?**
- 3 Should the terms for payment for African and northern university staff be the same?**
- 4 Do African universities need special treatment in terms of intellectual property?**

■ Research collaborations can fail because of issues of shares and financing. Sometimes, the smaller partners are not allowed to have input at the proposal budgeting stage and have to choose between leaving the partnership or taking what is given. Funders could help ensure that the budgeting is not left solely to the lead partner by incorporating this requirement in the proposal criteria.

■ Intellectual property regulations in research projects can often relegate African universities to a minor role, on the assumption that they do not have the capacity to create or exploit their results effectively. Whilst there are occasions where differential roles are reasonable, these need to be properly negotiated to ensure that African institutions derive appropriate benefit. Funding bodies need to review not only their own regulations, but also be aware of collaborative agreements negotiated between project partners.

■ Universities need clear policies on whether fees and salary costs supplement the salary of staff, and how far they are retained by the institution. In practice, some retention could provide an incentive to undertake research, rather than consultancy or other external activities. Once adopted, these rules should be publicised to, and respected by, funding bodies. Research managers have a critical role in explaining these policies, both internally and externally.

■ Universities noted that they need better to articulate the nature and scale of their indirect costs, both to funders and to staff within their institutions. An initial exercise could be carried out to develop a simplified model of such costs, which could be adopted as a standard throughout regions, perhaps using SARIMA and WARIMA. Clear policies are also needed on internal allocation of indirect costs paid as part of research contracts, and how universities should respond in cases where funding bodies decline to meet these. For their part, funding bodies should be willing to meet indirect costs in African universities on the same basis as elsewhere, unless there are clear reasons to the contrary. If such reasons exist, they should be clearly stated and justified in calls for proposals.

■ Clear rules and incentives are needed regarding consultancy activity. At present, many academics do not report these. The issue could be addressed by a combination of incentives and regulation. Incentives could include retention of the bulk of consultancy fees, the establishment of personal research accounts, and greater weight being given to consultancy in promotion criteria. Funding bodies should also play their part by ensuring that all consultancies are processed through the institution.

■ Funding bodies agreed that they should have a better awareness of other externally funded project activity at African institutions. It was noted that funders sometimes approach African universities for cooperation on areas already covered by other external funding. This question should be addressed more explicitly in the application and reporting procedures.

Discussion topic 4 – Delivering the goods

If they are to invest directly in African universities, funding bodies need to be assured that robust management and accountability are in place. This may require investment on the part of universities, and lead to significant changes in the relationship between institutions and their staff. In this section, participants were asked to consider the following issues:

- 1 How well equipped are African universities to deliver project results, and the necessary financial and results reporting?**
- 2 Are bodies that fund African research taking on extra risks?**
- 3 If so, what can be done to reduce these?**

- The universities agreed that overall financial management is one of the most difficult parts of running the projects externally. Research managers with experience in financial reporting are needed to support in this process – either directly or through organising training sessions.
- Some funding bodies safeguard against risk by auditing and monitoring expenditure on projects directly. Consideration should be given to whether parallel systems of this nature are necessary (i.e. each funder auditing their own projects), or whether funders could recognise each other's systems – thus saving the universities from conducting several similar audits.
- At a basic level, universities need to ensure that project based accounts are available within their financial systems, which have clear access and reporting rules. Many institutions have established these during the past decade.
- Regulations regarding financial reporting need to be clear – both between funding bodies and institutions, and within institutions themselves. It is important that everyone in the 'chain' has a clear idea of their responsibility. One obstacle is the substantial difference in the requirements for reporting between different donors, which complicates the job of a researcher.
- It was acknowledged that the language barrier could present a problem, especially in the context of a large collaborative process.

- Funding bodies should seek to simplify procedures as far as possible, without losing accountability. Simple software could be useful in this context.
- Universities and funding bodies need to be clear that efficient finance systems could depend on the payment of indirect costs. Equally, when such costs are made available, they would need to be devoted to maintaining infrastructure in these areas.
- It was recognised that projects need to be delivered in more than just a financial sense. At a time when funding bodies are increasingly concerned with ensuring clear impact, the effective dissemination of results is also an important deliverable. Target audiences need to relate to those stated in the research application.
- It was recognised that many universities lack capacity at institutional level in this area, and that research and communications offices need to develop their skills. University websites could also play an important role in this area.

Review and conclusions

The seminar was characterised by the openness and informality of discussions between funding bodies and universities. In addition to highlighting the importance of such communications, the event also produced a number of highly practical suggestions:

- It would be desirable if various funding bodies could cooperate in defining common objectives and form consortia to implement large funding programmes collaboratively. Perhaps funders could market similar schemes together and share a common mechanism of dissemination.
- Both funding bodies and recipients should disseminate information on existing projects more effectively, both to identify opportunities for cooperation and collaboration, and to avoid duplication.
- Both funding bodies and universities need better to understand the nature and size of universities' indirect costs, and the means through which overhead payments are distributed. Where such costs are appropriately defined and justified, funding bodies should seek to ensure that they are met, at least to the same extent as in developed countries. The regional research management associations (RMAs) could coordinate an exercise to calculate the true cost of research in an African academic research environment – with the outcomes informing funder groups on reasonable indirect cost rates.
- Universities (perhaps working through the RMAs and the Association of Commonwealth Universities) should provide an up-to-date list of research office contacts which funding bodies can use for the purposes of communication.
- Donors could seek to introduce more consistency into the calls and application process. The Essence group of health research funding bodies might be an appropriate body for such discussions.
- The qualities required of research managers and administrators needs to be defined, and their training to become more professional. This could be achieved through the design and implementation of recognised and accredited training programmes. The sharing of current training materials could also contribute to this process.
- Experiences in the development of effective and equitable partnerships should be shared.
- National universities can play an important role in sharing expertise in research management training with other institutions in their regions.
- The boundaries between research management and the conduct of research need to be defined and understood. Research offices need to help researchers to concentrate entirely on research through effective research management. They need to balance a strong culture of facilitating, with the needs of institutional accountability.
- Strong institutional backing is needed to reinforce the importance of research management. The importance of research managers should be emphasised at the highest level. It should be clear that research managers are there to help and assist the researcher. To be accepted, they have to be skilled and competent in their field.
- The RMAs must work to ensure equal participation and engagement of Francophone and Anglophone researchers and organisations in research management meetings and training. The RMAs could play a role in lobbying African governments for small scale seed funding for proposal writing and preparation, as a cost effective investment in national research.
- University polices may need to be more selective in targeting support to staff with the most potential to develop effective research. In some cases, this may require the recognition that not all staff can, or should, be research active.

Discussions from both seminars confirm that funders recognise the importance of research management, and that significant potential exists for collaboration in the field. A number of models could be developed for such collaboration, ranging from an agreement to share information – perhaps through some form of modest ‘observatory’ function – through to collaboration on specific programmes, perhaps building on the opportunity provided by the EU-funded RIMI4AC project (Research and Innovation Management Improvement for Africa and the Caribbean – see <http://rimi4ac.typepad.com> for further information).

African universities, for their part, are moving from the *awareness raising* phase, to embedding intuitional structures for research management within their institutions. However, it was acknowledged that the process of embedding institutional structures may require regular revision because universities in general are increasingly required to work with an ever wider range of funders and partners – many requiring adherence to their own idiosyncratic ‘way of doing things’ as a pre-requisite to funding research activity or embarking on a collaboration. In addition, there is no single international model for research management that works for everyone; therefore, finding a model that fits will require some degree of trial and error.

The success of the seminars demonstrates a willingness for greater flexibility from both funders and universities, while also highlighting the need for better communications between the two groups. A regular forum for discussion – face to face or electronic – is desirable, if we are to avoid spending resources on ‘re-inventing the wheel’.

Institutions represented at the event

- Institute of Professional Studies, Ghana
- Islamic University in Uganda
- Makerere University, Uganda
- National University of Science and Technology, Zimbabwe
- Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria
- Stellenbosch University, South Africa
- University of Botswana
- University of Buea, Cameroon
- University of Ghana
- University of Ibadan, Nigeria
- University of Jos, Nigeria

- Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU)
- Association of Liberian Universities
- Initiative to Strengthen Health Research Capacity in Africa (ISHReCA)
- International Development Research Centre (IDRC)
- Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO)
- National Institutes of Health / Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health & Human Development (NICHD)
- National Institutes of Health / Fogarty International Center (NIH/FIC)
- Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA)
- Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association (SARIMA)
- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)
- UK Collaborative on Development Sciences (UKCDS)
- Wellcome Trust
- West African Research and Innovation Management Association (WARIMA)
- World Health Organisation (WHO)

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Woburn House
20-24 Tavistock Square
London, WC1H 9HF
Tel: +44 (0) 207 380 6700
Fax: +44 (0) 207 387 2655
www.acu.ac.uk
resman@acu.ac.uk