



# Supporting capacity building for research: A perspective from academic institutions

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Four decorative circles are positioned at the top of the slide. From left to right: a solid light purple circle, a hollow light purple circle, a solid light purple circle, and a hollow light purple circle.

Building the evidence base:  
What kind of research? What kind of researchers?

Capacity building is needed for the high quality  
production of impact studies/ implementation research  
+ more

- Need measurement disciplines: statistics, demography
- Need experimental disciplines: epidemiology, survival analysis
- Need health systems and medical disciplines
- Need economics
- Need development disciplines
- Need information scientists
- Need social scientists
- Need geographers



# What kind of research? What kind of data?

We need to build, maintain and protect tools and data sources for impact studies/ implementation research +more

- Survey data and tools– DHS, WHS etc plus MICS, LSMS etc. Needed for monitoring outcomes.
- Cohorts – e.g. INDEPTH. Needed to link interventions to impact
- Census and vital registration to calculate rates
- Health system data including staffing, facility audits, record of services provided (clinic records) etc
- Inputs, processes, outputs – data to describe the extent and nature of programmes
- And much more – data also needed at different levels – individual, community, district, country



# What kind of research? Who does it?

- Donor analyst
- Analyst at programme level e.g. MOH, or local level
- International agency analyst
- Civil society/ advocacy analyst
- University analyst

For any of these - need the academic skill base and availability of tools

# Population and statistics



- Recent reviews of scientific capacity building in the population sciences in the developing world indicate a skills dearth which is particularly acute in Africa.
- This compromises the ability of African scientists—ironically, those most-knowledgeable of that context—to contribute to the global discourses on health and development.
- It is precisely also this human capacity that is required for the monitoring and evaluation of progress towards MDG4 and 5

# University context



Professor Francis Dadoo, University of Ghana

- Often staff development and postgraduate programmes have focused on technical and methodological skills, without attention to the development of conceptual and logical abilities
- Opportunities to train African scientists overseas dried up
- Non-return of those who go abroad for graduate-level training,
- Many of those who do return end up leaving universities for local offices of international organizations, NGOs,
- This is provoked by low remuneration, scientific isolation, and poor support and research infrastructure in local universities.
- Universities also often lack well-established research management, IT and financial systems

# University context continued...

Professor Francis Dodoo, University of Ghana

- Few mechanisms for remaining informed about research opportunities and priorities, and to learn new methodologies
- Researchers can become professionally demoralized as well as disadvantaged in international scientific and funding competitions
- Fleeing scientists leave behind even weaker institutions
- Those that stay find it hard to maintain their research agendas and tend to concentrate on consultancies to the detriment of basic academic research and publishing

# Some solutions

- rethink sandwich opportunities
- training should be more holistic –logical thinking
- the best training is based on good research, need to be actively engaged in intellectual research, rather than just contract work
- address low salaries (by supplementing from grants) and poor infrastructure (by replenishing infrastructure through grants and, especially, overheads)
- academics have to be grants-savvy - need grantsmanship workshops, co-authoring of grants with other institutions
- sustainability
  - costs should not be artificially high
  - the grantsmanship model has to be an investigator-initiated one (versus a benevolent-donor one),
  - an intergenerational culture of grantsmanship should be cultivated

# Example: Universities of Southampton and Ghana – strengthening capacity of a network of African institutions

Over 3-5 years – strengthen academic and institutional capacity in 5 departments to research the failing health MDGs

- Creating data – fieldwork
- Colloquia for thinking through research problems
- Making cleaned and high quality data available – information science
- MScs, PhDs, curricula etc
- Academic management and targetting VCs
- New techniques e.g. GIS



# Capacity strengthening initiatives

Need for direct capacity strengthening initiatives

Need for research donors to stimulate research in the area of MNCH so that analytical skills already there....

# In summary

- ensure the quality of the next generation of academic scholars as well as the next generation of analysts
- produce excellent researchers but also seek to build the institutions that contain them
- stimulate research in the area of MNCH so that analytical skills are put in place
- promote investigator led research and publishing – not just consultancies.
- support existing data sources and databases – clean, manage and promote use, make data available, store carefully, support routine collection of data and the improved quality of all data: surveys, censuses, vital registration, cohorts, health system and administrative data
- ensure the future collection of data of increasing quality. Support statistical services, national statistics development strategies (NSDS) and the joining up of analysts from different government offices

# Building the evidence base by doing MNCH 'impact/implementation research'

## recommendations

- Support key university depts because a weak academic base is a barrier to building the evidence base for MNCH—
- Support and build basic data sources – especially vital registration, as key for impact research in MNCH