



# The AFRICA HEALTH RESEARCH TRAINING PROGRAMME (CREATE) PhD Fellowships



MRC/UVRI and LSHTM Uganda Research Unit





# Overview

**Our vision is to build a transformative programme that nurtures a new generation of diverse world-class researchers who will address existing and emerging global health challenges, working across professional and research disciplines, with equity as a core value.**

Despite Africa having to deal with 25% of the world's disease burden, how many aspiring African researchers have an opportunity to pursue their own research agenda? The current global health research arrangement is woefully inadequate in tackling inequity, alongside an imbalanced spread of investment and attention.

In response to this situation, five of the UK's most experienced global health research institutions are partnering with leading research organisations in the Gambia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Ethiopia to deliver the African Health Research Training Programme (CREATE PhD). This programme builds equitable partnerships between institutions and individuals, and will produce 50 world-class researchers who will address existing and emerging public health challenges confronting Africa. Ultimately, saving lives and livelihoods.

Whilst infectious diseases continue to be significant causes of morbidity and mortality in Africa, there is a demographic and epidemiological transition occurring, resulting in a rising incidence and prevalence of chronic non-communicable diseases. This includes mental health disorders which represent a real challenge to global public health but have received limited public expenditure and attention. Therefore, many African countries are experiencing a 'double' or 'triple' burden of disease in the face of already over-stretched health systems.

This demands the harnessing of indigenous knowledge to find innovative approaches both prevent and manage the arising public health challenges in Africa. With equity as a core value, CREATE PhD fellowship addresses these challenges by training researchers who understand health beyond disease-specific boundaries and work towards innovative and equitable solutions for global health problems.







# What makes the programme unique?

- Enrollment of registered health professionals to undertake a PhD at one of the UK or African institutions with at least half of their time spent conducting PhD research at an African Partner Institution.
- Encouragement of applications from nurses, midwives, and allied health professions, and focus on interdisciplinary research to promote a shift from a purely biomedical to a broader, more holistic approach to “health” (including social, economic, and environmental determinants).
- Pioneering an innovative approach to an international doctoral programme by pairing UK fellows with fellows from Africa, to create a blended South-North cohort.
- Establishment of the Digital Global Health Academy (DGHA) – a training programme on essential skills aimed to build equity between African and UK PhD fellows in terms of training experiences, to transform research culture and to equip fellows to grow as future global leaders. The participatory monthly DGHA training sessions and online fellow meetings (which are planned and chaired by UK and African fellows) have generated an integrated, supportive, and vibrant cohort of scholars.





# Our Partners and fellows

**brighton and sussex medical school**

- **Maureen Tshuma** Social scientist
- **Jonathan Kitonsa** Public health specialist
- **Kate Mattick** Physiotherapist
- **Claire Norcross** Genitourinary medicine physician

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**St George's University of London**

- **Miriam Nakanwagi** Public health specialist and epidemiologist
- **Sarah Sturrock** Paediatrician

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**KING'S College LONDON**

- **Racheal Alinaitwe** Psychiatrist
- **Markos Tadele** Veterinarian
- **Rhulani Beji-Chauke** Public health specialist
- **Josie Prynn** Geriatrician
- **Sam Gnanapragasam** Psychiatrist
- **Sarah Barber** Psychiatrist

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**LONDON SCHOOL OF HYGIENE & TROPICAL MEDICINE**

- **Marcello Scopazzini** Infectious disease physician
- **Rumbidzai Gumbie** Specialist high dependency nurse
- **Kondwelani John Mateyo** Respiratory physician
- **Tinashe Mwaturura** Biomedical scientist

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**Queen Mary University of London**

- **Lydia Davidson** Specialist neonatal nurse
- **Mary Tumushime** Public health specialist
- **Tim Champion-Smith** Paediatrician

● African Partner Fellows  
● UK Fellows

MRC Unit The Gambia

LONDON SCHOOL OF HYGIENE & TROPICAL MEDICINE

MRC/UVRI and LSHTM Uganda Research Unit

Medical Research Council

Uganda Virus Research Institute

LONDON SCHOOL OF HYGIENE & TROPICAL MEDICINE

CDT AFRICA

Zambart

Biomedical Research and Training Institute

ZVITAMBO HELPING CHILDREN SURVIVE AND THRIVE THROUGH RESEARCH

Name	Research Topic
<b>Racheal Alinaitwe</b>	Unmet needs of caregivers for older persons with dementia in Uganda
<b>Jonathan Kitonsa</b>	Metabolic outcomes among adults receiving injectable antiretroviral therapy in Africa
<b>Miriam Nakanwagi</b>	Kaposi's sarcoma herpesvirus (KSHV) transmission in children
<b>Sarah Sturrock</b>	Risk stratification for neonatal sepsis
<b>Claire Norcross</b>	HIV resistance in the context of long-acting injectable antiretroviral drugs
<b>Josie Prynn</b>	Epidemiology of dementia
<b>Markos Tadele</b>	Preclinical development of pathogen box compounds for the treatment of visceral leishmaniasis
<b>Sarah Barber</b>	Sexual and reproductive health of women with severe mental illness in Ethiopia
<b>Kondwelani John Mateyo</b>	Lung ultrasound for tuberculosis diagnosis - evaluating acquisition protocols and probes
<b>Marcello Scopazzini</b>	Tuberculosis and cardiovascular disease
<b>Mary Tumushime</b>	Control of sexually transmitted infections in youth
<b>Maureen Tshuma</b>	Optimised screening and treatment of older people with decreased cognitive function
<b>Kate Mattick</b>	Community based services to support older adults
<b>Tinashe Mwaturura</b>	Quality improvement of blood culture services for neonates with sepsis
<b>Sam Gnanapragasam</b>	Therapeutic alliance in depression symptom reduction
<b>Lydia Davidson</b>	Infection prevention and control in neonatal units
<b>Rhulani Beji-Chauke</b>	Understanding substance use among young people in Harare: a mixed methods study
<b>Rumbi Gumbie</b>	Integrating sexual and reproductive health into clinic-based HIV services
<b>Tim Champion-Smith</b>	Physiological responses in children with severe acute malnutrition





# In their own words (fellow testimonials)

## Maureen Tshuma

on the programme's high standards



One of the many things I love about the CREATE programme is its international high standards in both its academic and research community.

Through this programme I have been exposed to supervisors and mentors with a wealth of experience and knowledge, world-class peers and the opportunity to study abroad. This has given me new global perspectives on a number of research methodologies, developed my critical thinking skills and provide new insights on how to conduct research that is robust.

The CREATE programme will be instrumental in me developing community-based interventions for older adults that are economical, sustainable and scalable, which addresses challenges to mental health and cognitive function.



## Josie Pryn

on the programme's inclusivity



I really respect the way that the CREATE programme is run and how actively they are trying to address the inequalities that exist in the world. It is one of the most inclusive programmes I have seen, such as enrolling individuals from non-medical backgrounds.

This has made the programme as a whole as well as the experience of the fellows that much richer. Being part of this process and observing its structure and the family-like community created has been inspiring to me when thinking about my future and how I will endeavour to lead projects and practice research in a considered and ethical way.



## Jonathan Kitonsa

on his personal and academic growth through the programme



When registering for a PhD I was looking for a programme that would provide the best opportunities for personal and academic growth. The CREATE programme has exceeded my expectations in every way. It is a well curated programme that is challenging yet rewarding. Since joining the programme, I have seen a significant elevation in my written work, standard of research, communication, attention to detail and ability to overcome challenges.

The Digital Global Health Academy in particular has been a welcome part of the experience. Its interactive and engaging nature as well as the research and non-research related topics covered, has equipped me with the tools and confidence to not only complete my PhD but to also make a meaningful contribution towards assessing the safety of injectable ART in African settings.



## Kondwelani John Mateyo & Marcello Scopazzini

on the Fellow pairing



By pairing UK fellows with a fellow from Africa, we feel the CREATE programme has added a vital support system to what can oftentimes be a very long, difficult and lonely journey. The benefits of being in a pair (or having a "twin" as we call it!) are endless, including: having constant support, feedback, someone to challenge you, uplift you, help you recalibrate your research questions and refine your output, help you familiarize yourself with new environments and cultures, make vital introductions, laugh with, learn with and grow with.

We are both medics and we have several areas of intersection in our research which has enabled us to provide specific insight and support to each other and also recognise an opportunity for future collaborations.





## Our commitment

- Train 25 UK-based and 25 African early-career health professionals
- Form a cohesive network of South-North fellows and mentors
- Generate impactful research outputs relevant to African countries
- Contribute to positive research culture changes within UK and African institutions



## Funding Partnership

In 2021, the Wellcome Trust invested just under £12,000,000 over seven years to support 25 UK registered health professionals. Matched PhD fellows have received fee reduction waivers, travel and training costs, and stipends, but there is a need for additional funding to secure for fellows, for the academic years 2025/26.

To fully support our fellows throughout the lifetime of their studies, £100,000 is needed per fellow. The financial support and fee waivers provided by the UK partner institutions have been invaluable in ensuring the programme's success to date. However, for the CREATE PhD fellowships to succeed and for the programme's fundamental principles not to be threatened, we need partners who support us in our mission with funding.

**£1,000,000 would fund a cohort of 10 African researchers to complete PhD training**

**£100,000 would fund one full-time CREATE African fellow throughout the lifetime of their PhD studies**

**£25k/year over 3-4 years would fund one full-time CREATE African fellow**

**£10k would go towards supporting meeting or travel bursaries etc.**



# Funding Partnership

In supporting this programme, funders become a recognised partner in the success of not only the academic attainment of our fellows, but also wider global health achievements of our cohort. Our funding partners are provided access to:

## 1. Future Talent

- **Recruitment:** Partners have access to a pool of highly trained and skilled fellows who may become future employees.

## 2. Innovation and Research

- **Cutting-edge science:** With our consortium of 11 acclaimed health education institutions, partners have an opportunity to be at the forefront of collaborative, pioneering research that can lead to innovative products, services, or processes beneficial to their particular area of industry or philanthropic focus.

## 3. Enhanced Corporate Reputation

- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):** Demonstrate a partner's commitment to health education and capacity development
- **Brand visibility:** Increase recognition through association with our prestigious academic institutions and programmes.

## 4. Societal Impact

- **Addressing skill gaps:** Help bridge skill gaps in African clinical research capacity by supporting the development of clinical academic professionals.
- **Economic development:** Contribute to regional and national economic development by fostering innovation and entrepreneurship through academic partnerships.

## 5. Long-term Strategic Benefits

- **Sustainable growth:** By investing in education and research that ensures long-term innovation and competitiveness.
- **Future-proofing:** Stay ahead of trends by supporting cutting edge research that explores future technologies and responds to public health and market needs.

Through our experienced fundraising offices, we are able to provide written reports and online acknowledgements, with some specifics being:

## 1. Written Reports

- **Regular reports:** Provide periodic progress reports detailing the milestones achieved and a comprehensive final report summarizing methodologies, results, and potential applications.

- **Technical publications:** Co-author technical papers and publications in peer-reviewed journals, highlighting the partnership and contributions of both parties.

## 2. Online Acknowledgement

- **Website recognition:** Feature the funding partner's logo and a description of the partnership on the academic institution's website.
- **Social media:** Acknowledge the partner's contributions on the institution's social media platforms, such as X or LinkedIn.
- **Case studies:** Develop case studies showcasing successful projects and the benefits of the partnership, which can be shared on websites or in reports.

## 3. Events and Conferences

- **Recognition at events:** Publicly recognize the funding partner's contributions at our biennial conferences and other institutional events.

# Thank you

Thank you for reading about the CREATE PhD Programme.

Through collaboration, we can revolutionise global health research by nurturing a new generation of world-class researchers.

Visit: [www.create-phd.org](http://www.create-phd.org)

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