

Scoping study of capacity building grants, scholarships, fellowships, and training

**Undertaken on behalf of the Partnership for African Social and
Governance Research**

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Executive Summary

Scope of study

- The purpose of this study is to provide an assessment of the current scale of capacity building support for graduate research and training in the social sciences in Africa generally, but particularly in PASGR's initial six focus countries (Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia). The emphasis is on 'significant providers' and the study has therefore concentrated principally on the major funders and larger scale initiatives.
- While the scoping study has attempted to be as wide-ranging as possible, it is inevitable that not all available capacity building opportunities will be represented here. It does not set out to provide a gazetteer of all capacity building support, but provides a foundation which might be (usefully) updated as the project progresses.

Key findings

- **There is a significant gap in support for the social sciences and there is a clear need for PASGR.** Much existing research capacity support is focused on health and agriculture and while there are a number of major schemes, few are targeted specifically at the social sciences.
- **There is little support for 'core' social science training in Sub-Saharan Africa and capacity building.** Where social sciences are included within larger institutional support programmes they may represent only a relatively minor or incidental part of overall activity, or may be only indirectly supported through wider multi-disciplinary or none-disciplinary activity. Social science activity is typically supported where it aligns with a specific development concern, or with an agency's bilateral agenda. There is little support for 'basic' research.
- **Within the social sciences, economics receives the most support,** with dedicated initiatives serving different sub-fields within the discipline, such as macro, agricultural and environmental economics. There is also **significant support for social scientists working on disease, public health or population themes** as a result of a large amount of health related research and capacity building support.
- **From the recipient's perspective, the level of support *potentially* available is hard to establish.** It has proven difficult to obtain good information on absolute numbers of awards made. **Many researchers are relatively unaware of the range of support that is potentially available to them,** or that is accessed within their institution.
- **Public sector or policy initiatives do not appear to be strongly linked to research or training initiatives.** The study touched on a number of capacity building initiatives in the governance and social policy domain but many of these were targeted at strengthening public sector administration, rather than research capacity for academics.
- While overall support is still below what is needed, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda appear to be relatively better supported than Mozambique and Zambia.
- **Demand for postgraduate training in the social sciences vastly outstrips supply.** Any level of scholarships is however unlikely to meet this need, particularly as undergraduate numbers grow further. Donors therefore need to be clear about whether they seek to increase the quantity or quality of graduates. While there are a number of substantial scholarship schemes, social scientists typically receive only a small proportion of overall support.
- **The postgraduate scholarship landscape is generally confused and fragmentary** and while there are many funders, in many cases only a few awards are offered by them each year.
- **There are relatively few initiatives providing post-scholarship support, or support to early career researchers once they have completed PhD training.** A number of agencies maintain alumni networks, but in most cases these are largely limited to print and electronic communication.
- **Scholarship and training opportunities are often embedded within broader research or collaborative programmes.** This has the potential to strengthen the capacity building

elements of such programmes, but also means that **access to much support is often restricted to researchers in a relatively small number of departments.**

- **A number of awards which appear to fund full postgraduate study are in fact limited to fieldwork or dissertation costs.** While this support is in itself very valuable, and addresses other gaps, many 'doctoral fellowships' are thus more modest than their titles suggest.
- **Although various methodology workshops and other elements of training are offered, there is relatively little research training outside of formal qualifications.** This is particularly true for core research methods, including writing and publishing skills. Such training is often supported as part of wider projects, rather than being delivered as free-standing or independently accessible support. As such access to it is relatively restricted.
- **A number of funders support short courses or professional attachments but relatively little of this is for research or social science skills development.** Such schemes are typically aimed at those in the public or NGO sector. Nevertheless, they may provide useful models for PASGR to consider.
- **While many organisations fund research, those making explicit provision for capacity building are relatively few.** Capacity building within research appears to be encouraged or expected rather than formally embedded through workshops or training components.
- **A small number of donors have built their support around large scale institutional funding** some of which includes for research, and some of which is for social science. Grants are made either to universities, departments, or networks created between one or a number of universities.
- **Much support comes from a relatively small number of core donors,** notably the European bilateral agencies and a number of independent foundations, who provide a portfolio of funding spanning Master's, doctoral and postdoctoral work and research funding.

Implications for PASGR

- The information assembled here suggest **a number of questions for PASGR to consider which may have implications for the design of its programmes.** These are considered in more detail in section 5. Briefly these are:
 - **The need to be clear whether it seeks to address the quantity or quality of graduate training,** as these have different implications for the mode of study chosen, and overall cost.
 - **How it can more effectively support doctoral entry** for researchers trained to Master's level but are unable to make the step into PhD study
 - **Whether there is a minimum period which early career researchers need to spend outside of their home institutions** in order to receive high quality research training with access to sufficient resources and mentoring, or if there are alternative ways of achieving this at cost.
 - **How it might effectively address the critical post-scholarship and early postdoctoral period,** and thus capitalise better on existing and future postgraduate funding.
 - **What potential exists for links or co-funding arrangements with other organisations,** both to tap into wider interest in supporting social science, but also to benefit from established mechanisms for delivery and evaluation.
 - **How it can ensure a stronger link between scholarship provision and research capacity building,** something which is often missing in much of existing funding, but which has the potential to significantly increase the overall potential of PASGR's funding, and strengthen its own future position.
 - **The advantages and disadvantages of embedding training within larger grants,** recognising that concentrating support may help to more rapidly increase capacity in certain

locations, but risks making PASGR more exclusive, and 'locking out' other talented junior researchers.

- **How it might contribute to greater awareness of existing capacity building initiatives within universities**, and in doing so build a greater sense of what the research and funding communities as a whole are doing. This may help researchers to secure other forms of support and ensure PASGR makes a wider contribution outside of its own direct programme support.
- **The extent to which it seeks to work with universities in developing and publicising its awards**, recognising that there are advantages and disadvantages to a joint or independent approach, but that a genuine commitment to building capacity within universities suggests that the project ought to involve them in the process.

1. Scope of this study

The purpose of this study is to provide an assessment of the current scale of capacity building support for graduate research and training in the social sciences in Africa generally, but particularly in PASGR's initial six focus countries (Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia). Relatively few programmes are focused on these or other specific countries, and therefore much of what the report details applies to all of Africa; initiatives focused explicitly or solely on non-PASGR African countries have been omitted.

The emphasis of the study, as defined by the Terms of Reference, is on the 'significant providers' of support. The study therefore concentrates principally on the major funders and larger scale initiatives; in total information on some 68 organisations has been captured. However, the capacity building landscape is in reality populated by a large number of smaller schemes and initiatives, some operated by individual universities, research departments or centres or professional and scholarly organisations, all of which provide important, if limited and small-scale, forms of support.

There is also an overlap between funders and deliverers, such that sometimes there appears to be more than there actually is, and a certain degree of double counting has been noted. For example, bilateral agencies provide block grants to research organisations; IDRC provides significant funding for early research training under its *Southern Junior Researchers* scheme, where awards are given as block grants to be administered by a number of African based research organisations such as the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) and the African Population and Health Research Centre (APHRC). These organisations then advertise these grants as part of their own core programme support, often without reference to the Southern Junior Researchers scheme.

While the scoping study has attempted to be as wide ranging as possible, it is inevitable that not all available capacity building opportunities will be represented here, and it is not intended to serve as a directory or gazetteer of all GSFT activities.¹ It nevertheless provides a good picture of the scale of support within the social sciences in Africa. The picture built up through this study is further complemented by responses received from those departments consulted through the graduate teaching survey, which helps to build a picture of actually available or perceived support 'at the point of need'.

Information has principally been gathered from organisational websites, with direct contact subsequently made with organisations via email to solicit further information, qualify information obtained online, and to check for other relevant or planned initiatives. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given busy workloads and in some cases the difficulties in extracting such information from corporate systems, relatively little additional information was supplied by those organisations consulted. In many cases existing information was simply confirmed or clarified, and in many no response was forthcoming. The data provided here should therefore be treated as indicative rather than as absolute. Nevertheless, it does highlight the difficulties encountered by those seeking support in identifying appropriate sources.

How information is presented

Full details of the various capacity building initiatives considered through this study are presented in a series of appendices, grouped according to the type of funder or provider. These are, respectively, UN and multilateral organisations, bilateral donors and national development agencies, independent foundations and trusts, research and capacity building organisations, and finally research associations and networks. As already noted above, there is a degree of overlap in terms of funder and provider organisations (one may make a grant to another to manage and distribute awards). This is noted wherever possible, but rather than duplicate details, readers are referred to the relevant section.

¹ For a useful listing of research grants and scholarship opportunities, for all fields, see the IDRC's 2009 compendiums http://idrc.ca/uploads/user-S/12640048101Africa_Compndium.pdf and <http://idrc.ca/dspace/bitstream/10625/43932/1/130365.pdf>

A note on terminology

The terms 'scholarship' and 'fellowships' are used interchangeably across the research funding community, with many funders labelling what we would typically consider to be a scholarship (support for postgraduate study) as a fellowship. This may be the result of particular traditions in terminology, or it may be that 'fellowship' is preferred because of its connotations with a more advanced level of study. In addition, in some cases partial support for postgraduate study, perhaps to undertake fieldwork or to write up a dissertation or thesis, may be referred to as a fellowship, while other funders may reserve fellowship exclusively for postdoctoral research support. This can lead to significant confusion when attempting to locate available support, particularly from the perspective of an individual researcher. For clarity, and building on the definitions set out in the terms of reference, we understand scholarships to be financial support which lead to full qualifications at Master's or PhD level, and fellowships to be support for research or study which does not lead to a full qualification. For clarity we then use 'postgraduate fellowships' to refer to additional support at Master's level, 'pre-doctoral fellowships' to refer to support designed to enable Master's holders to prepare for PhD training, 'doctoral fellowships' to refer to additional support during a PhD degree, and 'postdoctoral fellowships' to refer to further support and training provided following the completion of a PhD.

2. The current landscape

This section presents a broad overview of the current landscape of research capacity building initiatives, considering their scope, scale, disciplinary or subject focus, and targeting of particular countries. A more detailed discussion of support according to the different levels of an academic career is provided in section 3.

The disciplinary focus of existing support

A 2007 ODI study,² commissioned by DFID, noted that much of the existing research capacity landscape was focussed predominantly on health and agriculture, and that there was a significant gap in support for the social sciences. The results of this study suggest that the picture has changed little in the last five years. While there are a number of major grant initiatives and funding from bilateral agencies and independent foundations, few of these are targeted specifically at the social sciences. Where social sciences are included within larger institutional support programmes they may represent only a relatively minor or incidental part of overall activity, or may only be indirectly supported through wider multi-disciplinary or none?-disciplinary activity. Social science activity is further typically supported where it aligns with a specific development concern, or with an agency's bilateral agenda, and there is thus little support for 'core' social science training and capacity building.

Within the social sciences, economics receives the most support, with dedicated initiatives serving different sub-fields within the discipline, such as macro, agricultural and environmental economics. This is not surprising, given the dominance of economic thinking and approaches in development circles, and the related need for skilled economists in and economics research by a range of public bodies. There is also significant support for social scientists working on disease, public health or population themes as a result of the large amount of health related research and capacity building support. Examples include the AERC and Collaborative Masters Programme in Agricultural and Applied Economic (CMAAE) in economics and the APHRC, TDR (UN/WB Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases), and Wellcome Trust initiatives in health.

Who funds it?

In total, this study captures information on the activities of some 68 organisations and funders. These span a huge variety and size of organisation – from the multilateral agencies to smaller, more focused research networks, often distributing funding secured from larger donors. In reality (and as illustrated in Appendix 1) much funding comes from a relatively small number of core donors. Prominent are the European bilateral development and research support agencies, the US foundations, and the Wellcome Trust. These provide a portfolio of scholarships and fellowships spanning Master's, doctoral and postdoctoral work, in addition to other research grants in which training forms some element. Many opportunities are embedded within broader research programmes, institutional (university) grants, inter-university partnerships, or other collaborative arrangements. As a result, access to a lot of training and support is provided to 'pre-specified' individuals, rather than being part of an open competition. While there is a clear logic to this approach, which reflects a concern to institutionalise support more effectively, and to link different elements of capacity building more effectively, a knock-on effect is that researchers outside of these larger programmes often find it harder to access support to meet their particular training needs.

The view from the ground – the researcher's perspective

In an attempt to establish the level of provision from the recipient's perspective, as well as from that of the provider agency, the scoping study on graduate teaching was used to capture information on the various forms of capacity building support available to or accessed by specific departments. In many cases responses were not very detailed, but they did not indicate that a significant level of support

² *Research capacity strengthening in Africa: Trends, gaps and opportunities*. A scoping study commissioned by DFID on behalf of IFORD, December 2007.

was accessible and many complained that scholarships and fellowships were rare.³ The fact that many forms of support are relatively small scale, or spread across the whole of the continent, means that institutions may only have secured one or two awards over several years from a particular provider, indicating that their actual impact on developing the capacity of a department or institution is likely to be relatively slight.

It has proven difficult to obtain reliable information on the absolute numbers of awards made. While we have been able to successfully compile this information through correspondence with the relevant agencies in some cases, a lack of information from others, and an inability to gather this from publically available sources, illustrates how hard it can be for individual researchers to establish the level of support potentially available to them. The way that schemes are promoted and advertised can give the impression that a lot more awards are available than is actually the case, and it is remarkably difficult to establish from funder's websites how many scholarships are awarded each year in particular regions, countries or disciplines. For example, many academics consulted as part of the scoping study on graduate teaching noted that Fulbright was a major source of scholarships and fellowships, yet a closer look at the figures suggests that in reality only a handful of awards are made in a single country in a given year, and these are across all disciplines.

Focus countries and institutions

Without better data on the profile of recipients and of awards made, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about the relative levels of spending and support in particular countries. Nevertheless, there would appear to be relatively few schemes that are explicitly targeted at specific countries. Many capacity building initiatives are offered very broadly to researchers or institutions in most developing countries. Some have a stronger African focus, but many are open to researchers or institutions in all countries. Bilateral agencies however tend to have their own focus countries, and this is likely to influence the spread of funding to some extent. Some of the larger foundations and trusts have also identified particular focus countries. Carnegie, for example, has concentrated much of its support on a small group of partner universities and currently works with four institutions in three countries: Legon in Ghana; Makerere in Uganda; and the universities of the Witwatersrand and Cape Town in South Africa. By contrast the MacArthur Foundation has concentrated much of its funding on Nigeria. There is often a considerable overlap of funding, with some countries and institutions, (as is true of donor support more broadly), being particularly popular. Makerere in Uganda is perhaps the best example, with substantial support (across all areas, and not specifically for research or for social sciences) from a number of bilateral donors and independent foundations.

Of the six countries initially specified by the project, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda all appear to be relatively well covered by existing schemes compared to the other two focus countries, Mozambique and Zambia. This is not to suggest that the absolute volume of grants or scholarships being awarded is sufficient to match need, but rather that they appear to be relatively better supported than Mozambique and Zambia. To some extent, this reflects the size and existing capacity of the social science community in the first four countries as compared to the latter two where the first four countries have larger social science communities than the latter two. As the scoping study on graduate teaching demonstrated, there is only one institution in each of Mozambique and Zambia that is engaged in any significant social science activity, compared to between six and 11 in the other four.⁴

As noted above, a lack of data has made it difficult to compare absolute levels of support in the focus countries. In addition, the variety of schemes and reporting methods have made it hard to provide comparable charts or tables of support that would give an insight into country patterns, or the priorities of particular funders. However, more detailed figures on two major providers (the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission and DAAD) are given in the two case studies below.

³ It should also be noted that this information was largely provided by a single source within the department, and may not have provided the most accurate picture of all support being accessed, or of which other staff were aware.

⁴ See 'Scoping study of graduate teaching provision in the social sciences, governance and public policy' prepared by the Association of Commonwealth Universities for PASGR.

Capacity building in public sector administration and policy making

The focus of this study is on initiatives with a clear focus on research and research training capacity. In the course of identifying relevant initiatives and organisations it has touched upon a number of other networks or programmes focused on capacity building in the governance and social policy domain, such as the African Association for Public Administration Management. Early exploration of a number of these did not indicate a strong link to research or research capacity or training initiatives, with the majority focusing on professional training and capacity building within specific public sector domains. Indeed many capacity building initiatives in various aspects of public administration appear to overlook the link between policy and research, focusing on more operational and technical concerns. This may therefore be an area where the present project could make a significant contribution, perhaps by forging research-driven partnerships with particular professional networks or initiatives.

3. Capacity building by career level

A central objective of this scoping exercise is an attempt to identify the gaps in current capacity building support. One approach to this is to consider how existing initiatives fit the trajectory of a typical research career, in order to see the stages at which researchers are better or less well supported. The project is principally concerned with early career development and training, and we have therefore concentrated on the early postgraduate (Master's) to the early career (postdoctoral) phases of research. The discussion below highlights some of the most significant providers and programmes according to career level, rather than listing all of those captured by the study. The results of the full exercise are presented in Appendix 1, which also provides fuller details of each of the programmes or schemes noted below.

Qualifications versus training

When the results of the scoping study are plotted according to academic/research career level the gaps in support become quite evident. Most support appears to cluster around the early postgraduate training level. This is not to suggest that there are *sufficient* scholarships to support postgraduate training, but rather that more funders have chosen to focus their support here. By contrast early career researchers are relatively under-supported, with few funders explicitly providing support for early career postdoctoral research and research training. A previous study has shown that those researchers who are fortunate enough to obtain funding for postgraduate study struggle to make the transition into their early research career after the completion of their degree.⁵ Although they have obtained a PhD, perhaps from a foreign university, on return to their home institution they are unable to access the additional support and training they need to become professional researchers, and to develop skills in proposal development, project management, and publishing and communication of research, amongst other things.

On the institutional side, this reflects the lack of structured research training for postgraduates and academics and mentoring programmes within Africa universities. Although postgraduate training can be accessed elsewhere, where sufficient capacity is not available locally to mount doctoral programmes and supervise students, staff development is typically seen to be the responsibility of the employing institution. Where this is not available, it is perhaps much harder for funding bodies to arrange to deliver this type of additional training. In most Northern universities, such training is locally offered as part of staff development and mentoring programmes, or is provided by national researcher-development bodies. In the African context, where this kind of support is not available, funders must either develop their own programmes, or identify opportunities to 'buy' places on those run by other universities or organisations.

Furthermore, most funding for work at the postdoctoral level tends to be pitched at mid-career academics who have already established themselves in research. It typically provides funding for conducting research, often by spending several months abroad on a research fellowship. Capacity building may be implied, but it is less often explicitly designed or embedded within an award. The following sections consider support at the various stages of the research career and indicate the various funders involved.

⁵ See for example Harle, J. (2010) *The Nairobi Report: Frameworks for Africa-UK Research Collaboration in the Social Sciences and Humanities*, London: British Academy/Association of Commonwealth Universities (www.acu.ac.uk/publication/download?id=174)