

project partners



Scaling up of Capacity of Research Ethics Committees in Uganda (SCRECU) Newsletter No. 4 SCRECU participates at the 10th EDTCP Forum May 2021

The Tenth EDCTP Forum which was held as a hybrid meeting hosted from the Joaquim Chissano International Conference Centre in Maputo under the theme *Equity in research for health* took place from 17 – 21 October 2021.

Maxwell Otim Onapa, the PI and Peter Olupot-Olupot the Co-PI of the SCRECU project participated virtually at the Forum.

Maxwell Otim Onapa presented an oral paper entitled *Scaling up Capacity of Research Ethics Committees in Uganda (SCRECU)* under Track on Capacity strengthening, collaborations, enhancing the research environment, knowledge translation, Ethics and human rights on 19th October 2021.

The PI gave the overarching goal of SCRECU, which was to scale up sustainable capacity for the Clinical Trials Information Management System (CRIMS/NRIMS) so that it can enhance the effectiveness of *Scaling up of Capacity of Research Ethics Committees in Uganda (SCRECU): CSA2018ERC-2315*

Research Ethics Committee (REC) to conduct their work.

He explained the aim of the project which to build capacity for the NRIMS framework for all the RECs in Uganda so that it can facilitate:

- multi-REC ethical review of research proposals,
- national registration of research and
- Subsequent monitoring of approved studies by Research Ethics Committees in Uganda.

He also presented the overall objective of the project, which was to develop capacity among the RECs to adopt and implement NRIMS as a tool for electronic review and registration of research in Uganda with specific objectives being

- i. To conduct training for research ethics committees so that they can use and maintain NRIMS to facilitate review processes,
- ii. To test the feasibility and effectiveness of NRIMS for review,

registration and monitoring of research in Uganda

iii. To evaluate the cost economics of implementation of NRIMS and

iv. To propel UNCST to a centre of excellence (CoE) Status on NRIMS.

Capacity Building

Under capacity building the PI reported that the project had developed a training curriculum covering the following areas:

- ✓ Online Submissions using the NRIMS;
- ✓ Overview of the REC Dashboard;
- ✓ Submissions Management by performing Administrative and completeness checks, Scheduling, Review
- ✓ Communication processes by the RECs
- ✓ Post Approval Processes such protocol amendments, revisions, SAEs reporting, Notifications, Deviations etc.;
- ✓ Practical Enrolment of REC Admins and REC Members into NRIMS

The PI reported on the 3-day joint training workshop they had delivered for all the RECs members, Administrators and Information Technology (IT) Personnel on the National Research Information Management System NRIMS/ based on the curriculum noting that each trainee was followed up at their respective REC institution to ensure that the NRIMS

was well received, installed and networked.

He already reported the NRIMS has been tested at every site



Testing the Feasibility and Effectiveness of the NRIMS

The PI reported that the project has carried out a nested study where data on the entire cost of initiation, implementation and monitoring of the NRIMS were collected and analyzed

The PI reported that the project was testing the feasibility and effectiveness of the NRIMS for reviewing, registering and monitoring of research in Uganda by conducting a study through which data was collected prior and after initiation of CRIMS (NRIMS) and a pairwise analyses of the “before and after” for number of proposals reviewed, quality of review, turnaround time and communication.

The aim of the project was *to Use the outcome to inform guidelines for operationalization of CRIMS (NRIMS) in Uganda and similar settings.*

Results from the project

Capacity building

The PI reported that the project had developed and operationalized a curriculum on NRIMS and that a total of 26 REC Administrators and their IT support staff 26 REC Chairpersons had been trained on using NRIMS for managing of protocol submissions, reviewing and feedback processes and managing approvals and post approval processes

Infrastructure

Regarding infrastructure, the PI noted that the RECs had been equipped with the requisite ICT equipment to operationalize the NRIMS at their sites. He also reported that the NRIMS was now being used to for review, registration and monitoring of research in Uganda and that over 8,500 researchers and reviewed 1,086 research proposals had so far been registered on the NRIMS.

With this progress he noted that UNCST was on course to becoming a CoE for Research Ethics Information Management System

Prof Olupot, the SCRECU Co-PI made a poster presentation entitled *Determining health research priorities in Uganda* where he reported on the aspect of the SCRECU project, which aimed at assessing the scope of research being conducted in Uganda from the NRIMS database as a means of informing research priorities for the country.

He reported that through an ongoing cross-sectional study, approved research proposals for the period 2019-2021 were studied for research focus, research geographical area, type of

research (interventional or non-interventional), quality of regulatory review and registration of research (Figure 1).

He reported categorized data and proportions



Figure 1: Process of Determining Research Priorities

The results of his study indicated that a total of 1086 approved proposals were analysed (Figure 2).

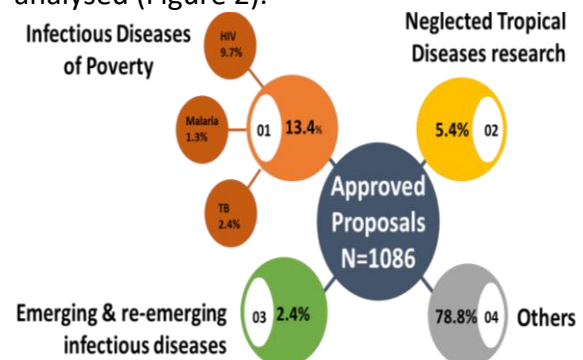


Figure 2: Research Priorities Areas

- By proportions research into infectious diseases of poverty accounted for HIV 105, (9.7%), Malaria 14 (1.3%), and Tuberculosis (TB) 26 (2.4%).
- Neglected tropical diseases research accounted for 59 (5.4%). Emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases accounted 26 (2.4%).

- Non-communicable disease research was less researched compared to other fields, with allergy/immunology 1(0.1%), cardiology 10(0.9%), dentistry 9(0.8%), dermatology 5(0.5%), genetics 3 (0.3%), geriatrics 1(0.1%), hematology 8(0.7%), maternal health (alone) 36(3.3%), rheumatology 4 (0.4%), surgery general (11, 1.0%), urology (1, 0.1%), neurology 4(0.4%), obstetrics/gynecology 33 (3.0%) and oncology 38 (3.5%).

Conclusion

He concluded that research in Uganda was very diverse, but mainly focused on infectious diseases. He noted that although infectious Diseases of Poverty have been prioritized in the country, research into the areas still remains low.

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