

**UKCDR**



# **RESEARCH CAPACITY STRENGTHENING: LESSONS FROM UK-FUNDED INITIATIVES IN LOW- AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES**

2022

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# About UKCDR

The UK Collaborative on Development Research (UKCDR) provides data analysis, tools and guidance to build coherence and best practice among government departments and other funders of global development research in the UK. A core part of UKCDR's work is supporting the impact of research through the strengthening of safeguarding, research capacity and equitable research partnerships. Our core contributing members include the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy; the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office; the Department of Health and Social Care; UK Research and Innovation; and Wellcome. UKCDR is governed by the Strategic Coherence for ODA-funded Research (SCOR) Board and exists to amplify the value and impact of research for global development by promoting coherence, collaboration and joint action among UK research funders. For further information on UKCDR, please visit [ukcdr.org.uk](https://ukcdr.org.uk)

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# Research Capacity Strengthening: lessons from UK-funded initiatives in low- and middle-income countries

## Summary

Strong research and innovation capacities in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) underpin development. When all countries can contribute towards research on global issues such as climate, food security and epidemics, everyone benefits. Research capacity strengthening (RCS) is about developing people and institutions, fostering collaborations across disciplines and sectors, building supporting infrastructure, and a strong enabling environment for research and research actors to thrive. The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasised that today's challenges are global, and we can all benefit from efforts to enhance research capacity to address these challenges. UKCDR's briefing paper published in October 2021 highlighted the extent of UK funders' investment in RCS in LMICs between 2016 and 2021. This report asks what we have learnt from these investments in terms of best design, implementation and evaluation of RCS funds and programmes. Through synthesis of evidence from stakeholder interviews, a desk-based review and learning workshop five cross-cutting enablers have been identified to support effective RCS:

- **LMIC ownership** of design and delivery of RCS
- **A long-term approach** to support sustainability
- **Coordination** across funders and programmes
- **Partnerships and collaboration** to design and deliver RCS
- **Understanding impact** of RCS initiatives

These enablers inform recommendations for different stages of RCS funding and programming, which can feed into current and future research calls and programme design as well as informing those new to the field, contributing towards quality, sustainable and impactful RCS investments by UK funders.

## About this Review

This learning report is part of a UKCDR-led cross-funder review of UK-funded research capacity strengthening (RCS) programmes in LMICs. In October 2021 UKCDR published a [briefing paper](#) mapping the extent of UK funders' RCS investments from 2016-2021, totalling £873 million in standalone RCS programmes and £1.2 billion in programmes that embed a significant component of RCS, alongside [seven case study examples](#) of research impact and coherence. This report builds upon this by collating learning from UK-funded RCS initiatives in LMICs, across disciplines, and providing recommendations for designing, implementing, and evaluating future funds and programmes.

This report is aimed at UK funders, senior decision-makers, programme leads and practitioners in RCS and oversight bodies for global development research funding.

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# Introduction

Research Capacity Strengthening (RCS) is key to supporting high-quality and impactful research systems within low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), which provide the evidence and expertise to support socio-economic development. When all countries can contribute towards research on global challenges everyone benefits. However, gaps remain in knowledge of how to fund and support RCS effectively across disciplines and in different contexts. This report collates learning from funders, researchers, and practitioners in the UK and LMICs. 57 Stakeholders (49% from the UK, 4% from other European countries<sup>1</sup>, 47% from LMICs) reflected on challenges and issues with supporting RCS and identified examples of good practice to guide future investments. An analysis of stakeholder interviews alongside a desk-based review identified five cross-cutting enablers to support effective RCS funding and programming. These enablers build upon Essence on Health Research's (2014) Seven principles for strengthening research capacity in low- and middle-income countries but look at the UK-funder context and consider RCS across disciplines. The five enablers are:

- **LMIC ownership:** support LMIC leadership of agenda setting, design and implementation of RCS
- **Long-term approach:** ensure funding and evaluation frameworks prioritise sustainability in RCS
- **Coordination:** enhance coordination of RCS approaches across funders at the individual, institutional and environment level
- **Partnerships and collaboration:** promote equitable partnerships and co-creation within funding calls and funded programmes
- **Understanding impact:** invest in understanding what works where to guide future funding decisions and programme design

This report first defines RCS and provides a brief overview of the UK development research funding landscape. Next a brief outline of the methodology used to gather evidence to inform the recommendations is presented. Then the five cross-cutting enablers of effective RCS are described before recommendations are provided for how to support these enablers in four areas: 1) Funding models for RCS; 2) Designing RCS programmes; 3) Decision making within RCS; and 4) Monitoring, evaluation, and learning within RCS.

## Defining Research Capacity Strengthening

RCS involves initiatives aimed at 'enhancing the ability and resources of individuals, institutions and/or systems to undertake, communicate and/or use high-quality research efficiently, effectively and sustainably' (UKCDR, 2021a, p.1). However, definitions of RCS can differ depending on funder and practitioner motivations, goals, and strategies. For instance, while some funders focus on RCS as a route to achieving development outcomes, others focus on RCS to support excellent international partners. Additionally, approaches to RCS vary depending on whether the aim is to support LMIC partners within UK-led research or to enhance LMIC research leadership. Funders' motivations and goals for supporting RCS determine the design of initiatives and how success

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<sup>1</sup> The Netherlands and Sweden

is understood. Funder priorities and understanding of success, in turn, guide needs assessment processes, learning and evaluation typologies, intervention methodologies and/or quality assessments.

Varied definitions of RCS success are shown by the examples of impact from UK-funded RCS identified by stakeholders consulted to produce this report. The different types of impact shared were categorised into similar groups, the top nine are presented in Table 1 alongside the number out of the 28 interviewed stakeholders who cited them.

**Table 1: Different types of impact identified by stakeholders**

Type of impact	No. interviews cited out of 28
Research influencing policy	12
Career development of researchers	9
Increased quantity of research evidence	8
Ability for LMIC researchers and institutions to attract research funding (from UK and elsewhere)	8
Creation and/or expansion of networks	6
Increased knowledge sharing	5
Improved research quality	5
Enhanced research management and support structures	4
Community and public engagement with research	4

### Meeting the RCS needs and demands of LMICs

- Invest time to understand LMIC needs and support partnership building
- Use a long-term strategic approach with clear objectives and goals co-created with LMIC partners
- Be flexible to adjust to changing priorities and move away from approaches that are not working

While recognising different funder motivations for supporting RCS, one way to address coherence is to advance a common language, framework and tools amongst funders and practitioners. The collaborative nature of RCS approaches translates into complex interactions of multiple actors and activities at various levels, in a process that is often dynamic, long-term and context specific. RCS is connected to other enablers of impactful development research such as equitable partnerships, safeguarding and co-creation. Within development research, a holistic and coordinated approach to RCS should inform how interventions are designed, implemented, and evaluated. Funders and practitioners benefit from sharing learning about what works in RCS in different contexts.

To realise the UK's commitment to invest in evidence and expertise to advance development<sup>2</sup> effective RCS approaches are needed to support greater research effectiveness and impact within LMICs. Reviewing what works in RCS is particularly relevant, given changes in the UK development research funding landscape. In 2020 the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) was established, and future ODA spending was reduced from 0.7 to 0.5 per cent of GNI. In 2022 the cross-government International Development Strategy was published. In 2023 the existing ODA-financed research funds, the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) and Newton Fund, will be

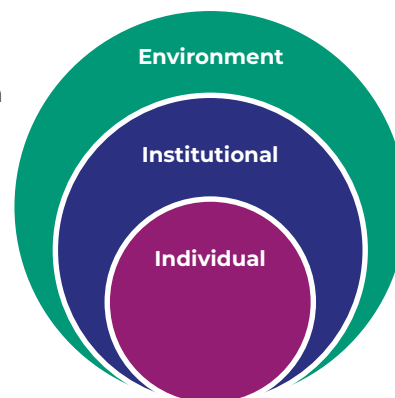
<sup>2</sup> See The UK Government's Strategy for International Development (HMG 2022).

replaced by a new international partnerships fund. Legal commitments under GCRF and Newton Fund will be met. With new approaches to international collaboration being developed, learning needs to be consolidated from previous programmes and interventions. These changes in the development research landscape highlight the importance of improving coherence and coordination amongst funders, to support a long-term strategic approach to RCS guided by the needs of LMIC stakeholders.

Over half of interviewed stakeholders (15) felt that UK-funded RCS programmes could do more to meet needs and demands in LMICs<sup>3</sup>. Specific recommendations for how to meet LMIC needs are presented in the box above.

## Levels of Research Capacity Strengthening

UK-funded RCS in LMICs targets three intersecting levels of the research ecosystem: individual, institutional and environment. These levels are deeply connected with each other. An initiative at one level may directly or indirectly support or constrain another. Understanding common challenges alongside examples of good practice between them can help design more coherent and effective interventions.



**Table 2: Levels of RCS**

LEVEL	INDIVIDUAL	INSTITUTIONAL	ENVIRONMENT
<b>Target group</b>	Individual researchers or research teams	Research departments, institutes, think tanks and networks of research organisations	National and international research systems
<b>Description</b>	Career development for junior, mid-career and senior scholars and research support staff	Development of organisational capacity in research funding, management and sustainability	Change in the conditions of the policy and regulatory context and resource base for research
<b>Areas of practical focus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PhD and post-doc training</li> <li>• Scholarships and fellowships</li> <li>• Soft skills development courses</li> <li>• Mentoring</li> <li>• Networking and collaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research facilities (laboratories, libraries, IT equipment)</li> <li>• Career incentives for research staff</li> <li>• Fundraising schemes</li> <li>• Research management systems</li> <li>• Networks and collaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National legal framework, research strategies and priority setting</li> <li>• Institutional architecture (councils, agencies)</li> <li>• National research budget base and allocation</li> <li>• Policy-demand and public interest in research</li> <li>• Research culture and best practice principles</li> <li>• Research links to government and society</li> </ul>
<b>UK-Funded examples (see UKCDR 2021b)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wellcome – NIHR International Training Fellowships</li> <li>• FCDO-MRC African Research Leader Scheme</li> <li>• Royal Society and African Academy of Sciences: FLAIR Fellowship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing Excellence in Leadership Training and Science (DELTAS)</li> <li>• Research Management Programme in Africa (ReMPro Africa)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alliance for Accelerating Excellence in Science in Africa (AESA)</li> <li>• Science Granting Council Initiative (SGCI)</li> <li>• Strengthening Research Institutions in Africa (SRIA)</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> This was a more common perspective amongst UK stakeholders compared with LMIC-based recipients of UK-funded RCS programmes all 4 of whom said that UK funding is meeting demands.



# Methodology

This learning report is a product of synthesising evidence from the data sources presented in Table 3. For a more detailed outline of the methodology see Annex 1.

**Table 3: Data Sources**

Data source	Description	What this involved
<b>Stakeholder Interviews</b>	28 interviews (64% UK/HIC and 36% LMIC) involving 30 organisations	To ensure the representation of different types of stakeholders (funders, delivery partners, programme leads, evaluators and recipients of RCS), and geographic locations a sampling matrix was used. The interview schedule was designed to capture learning at the strategic and portfolio level (see Annex 2). The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed and then analysed using thematic coding.
<b>Desk-based review</b>	Synthesis of existing learning and resources from UK funders and wider literature	For the desk-based review reports and evaluations about UK-funded programmes were collated. This was then complemented by an assessment of the literature where gaps existed, for example in RCS outside of global health (see Annex 3). Grey literature and academic papers were reviewed, and recommendations coded by project stage and relevant level e.g., individual, institutional, environment.
<b>Learning workshop</b>	A virtual workshop with 29 participants (59% LMIC and 41% UK) to capture learning and recommendations	Participants were provided with a presentation of the analysis of desk-based review and stakeholder interviews. They were then split into four breakout rooms: funding models; designing RCS programmes; decision making; and monitoring, evaluation, and impact. Participants were asked to expand upon the draft recommendations and share examples of best practice. The recommendations shared by participants were synthesised with existing analysis to produce an updated report.

# Cross-cutting enablers to guide improvements in RCS

## LMIC ownership

A cross-cutting theme from our analysis is the importance of LMIC ownership within the design, implementation, and evaluation of RCS funds and programmes. UK funders need to work with LMIC partners to understand how LMIC research systems work and design funding calls from that starting point, defining agendas in-line with LMIC priorities and promoting equitable partnerships between UK and LMIC institutions to deliver RCS. UK funders need to continue to invest in LMIC research ecosystems, and leadership within them, to support national and regional agenda setting and ownership of the research process and outputs. LMIC ownership is enhanced by recognising the value of two-way capacity building and learning between Southern and Northern institutions and research teams.

**“If [programmes are] led by Africans who understand problems and the UK support them then they have much more success.”**

RCS programme lead, Africa

**“The UK doesn’t build research capacity anywhere. It needs to partner with the relevant countries, governments and relevant funders who own the system.”**

UK funder

### SUMMARY: LMIC OWNERSHIP



Direct funding



Programme leadership



Invest in research management & infrastructure



Support national and regional agendas



Context led needs assessments

## Long-term approach

Interviewed stakeholders and workshop participants identified fluctuations in funding and short-term thinking as barriers to the impact and effectiveness of RCS. Consistent long-term funding (5 years+) is required to realise the impact of RCS at all levels. Long-term partnerships can increase buy-in amongst government, research institutions and civil society stakeholders supporting sustainability. Holistic funding support across different levels of RCS, particularly at the institutional and environment level also supports sustainability. Sustainability needs to be an indicator of programme success with mechanisms in place to understand impact over time and across projects and programmes.

**“Sustainability at the ecosystem level encompasses not only strengthening institutions but also addressing challenges in the enabling environment as well as in the demand for and use of evidence. In other words, it is a systemic issue. Addressing one element without due consideration for the other parts of the system will lead to short-term success but not long-term sustainability.”**

(Carden, Admassie, Diagne, Olukoshi & Onyewkwena, 2019, p.14)

### SUMMARY: LONG-TERM APPROACH



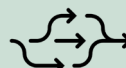
Long-term vision for sustainability



Ensure strategic investment



Portfolio approach driven by theory of change



Flexibility to changing needs & emerging research priorities



Holistic funding across RCS levels

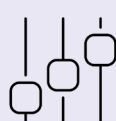
## Coordination

Funder coordination of RCS investments is a challenge, which has led to multiple funders investing in the same LMIC institutions and sectors (UKCDR 2021). Several stakeholders felt the UK needs to offer a more coordinated approach to RCS, building coherence and complementarity across funders and programmes. Funders and implementers of RCS initiatives should consider how different models and approaches work together, looking across individual, institutional and environment levels (see Essence 2014). There are existing mechanisms for funder coordination including UKCDR’s [Research Capacity Strengthening Group \(RCSG\)](#) and [Essence on Health Research](#). A UK funder highlighted that these coordination approaches have helped funders identify gaps, for example in RCS beyond health and in areas of need beyond Sub-Saharan Africa. However, more needs to be done to improve coordination and coherence across funders and capture shared learning and experiences.

### SUMMARY: COORDINATION



Build coherence & complementarity



Look across individual, institutional & environment levels



Match funding & funder-level partnerships



Balance stand-alone & embedded approaches



South-South RCS models

## Partnerships and collaboration

The importance of looking at partnerships, especially between Northern and Southern institutions, through a lens of equitability is vital for supporting LMIC ownership and the translation of specific RCS projects into broader national research capacity (Franzen,

Chandler & Lang, 2017). Equitable partnerships between UK and LMIC funders and institutions can catalyse country-level ownership of programmes, by ensuring that funding decisions, research agendas and priorities are set by LMIC partners. Similarly, long-term equitable partnerships help to ensure consistency of funding and the realisation of programme impact. Additionally, RCS can support more equitable partnerships when embedded within research programmes, by helping to address and mitigate inequities in resources and capacities between partners, whilst also ensuring UK researchers and institutions learn from LMIC partners.

Partnerships and collaboration need to extend beyond research institutions incorporating government bodies, professional bodies and associations, and civil society. Transdisciplinary partnerships can contribute to RCS by bridging the gap between those doing research and research users. Investment is needed to support partnership development especially for LMIC institutions and civil society actors, where resources are often not available.

**“If we’re looking at responsive, open competitive calls from consortia or partnerships and we want them to be equitable, then allowing that time for those partnerships to come together and put in a truly collaborative proposal, you need that time.”**

ODA research delivery partner, UK

### SUMMARY: PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION



Promote equitable partnerships



Support networks & communities of practice



Agenda-setting by LMIC partners



Address & mitigate resource inequities



Bridge the gap between researchers & research users

## Understanding impact

Interviewees and workshop participants identified shortcomings of UK-funded programmes in measuring impact. Understanding what works in RCS and having a coherent approach to evaluating RCS initiatives is key for the successful implementation and sustainability of RCS efforts. An evaluator of UK-funded RCS noted that present funding models do not adequately resource the learning and impact components of specific programmes or portfolios. A long-term approach to Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) is needed, backed up by resources to maximise the measurability and usability of findings at the programme and portfolio level. Impact metrics should be designed in collaboration with LMIC partners to ensure that they are relevant to the context and feed into future RCS efforts.

**“A common set of core indicators for capacity strengthening activities that we could collect across funders would be helpful to start building the evidence base.”**

UK funder

## SUMMARY: UNDERSTANDING IMPACT



Invest in understanding what works



Long-term approach to monitoring, evaluation & learning



Support shared learning



Co-design impact metrics with LMIC partners



Feed into future RCS

These five enablers cut across four areas of funding, designing, implementing and evaluating RCS programmes: 1) Funding models for RCS; 2) Designing RCS programmes; 3) Decision making within RCS; and 4) Monitoring, evaluation, and learning within RCS. Each area is outlined below with recommendations mapped against the five enablers.

# 1. Funding models for RCS

Funders understand the importance of coherence, complementarity and coordination in RCS investments. This requires a long-term, cross-funder strategy to support alignment amongst UK funders and within LMICs. Flexibility is needed in funding models, to both allow for what works in different contexts and take account of changing international, national and local landscapes. Interviewed stakeholders and workshop participants identified challenges with existing funding models for RCS:

- Restrictive or misaligned RCS priorities which do not reflect LMIC agendas and context.
- Rigid funding requirements that prevent LMIC leadership and ownership, for example the need to have a UK partner.
- Difficulties establishing collaboration partners and networks due to a lack of time and resources to support partnership building, needs assessments and co-creation of RCS initiatives.
- RCS funding working in silos, preventing complementarity and coherence with other RCS efforts.
- Expectation of short-term impact from funded initiatives.

## Direct funding to LMICs

UKCDR's October 2021 briefing paper recommended that funders ensure RCS investments are demand led and move to LMIC owned models. This was backed up by our analysis of stakeholder interviews and learning workshop. Shifting the centre of gravity to support LMIC institutional and researcher leadership of RCS programmes was identified as an important aspect of building funding models, driven by the priorities of LMICs and institutions. One approach for facilitating this shift is direct funding to LMIC institutions, with or without a UK partner. An African recipient of UK RCS funding said that playing a bigger role in managing RCS programmes had built their capacity to identify their own needs, as well as gain funding for and lead cross-country research consortia. A UK funder urged other funders to think about what control they are prepared to let go of to allow LMIC institutions to build their capacity to win and manage research grants. UK funders who can fund LMIC institutions directly saw this as a strength of their approach and a direction of travel for other funders.

**“An important part of capacity development is that the LMIC organization can bid for and manage those funds, and that’s a very different approach from saying we’re going to give them the money via an intermediary and will throw some training their way on how to handle these funds. It’s harder. You have to have a higher tolerance for risk, but it’s probably no other way really to build capacity to manage and then win grants from other organizations.”**

UK funder

## Designing funds around LMIC contexts

Understanding LMIC research environments is fundamental to avoid onerous measures affecting research projects. Funders need to recognise the dynamics and value of existing institutions and practices. As one interviewed stakeholder explained, a lack of analysis of the LMIC context can deeply affect the funded programme. For instance, the mismatch between funder administrative procedures and the reality of structures and resources in LMICs often puts an additional burden for LMIC institutions and researchers. For example, UK requirements for expense reimbursement based on a set of pre-agreed rates and not considering price volatility.

**“Partners (rightly) complained that while they had systems in place to manage finances, they had to develop parallel systems, which took a huge amount of time, and took the PI and key members away from delivering the project to deliver the reporting.”**

ODA research delivery partner, UK

An ODA research delivery partner highlighted that RCS funding needs be driven by the needs of partner countries, with funding approaches embedding within LMIC systems, where possible, rather than using UK systems and approaches.

## Building and supporting partnerships

Interviewed stakeholders saw partnerships between funders, both within the UK and internationally, as crucial for avoiding duplication of efforts. Although, a UK funder said that these partnerships could be challenging to establish due to funders' different aims

for RCS. Another UK funder noted that funder partnerships supported long-term sustainability of programmes by avoiding dependence on a single funder and, when with LMIC funders, supporting ownership.

At the programme level, South-South Consortia or LMIC-led partnerships are important models for effective RCS. A UK funder identified support and learning from other LMICs as being more relevant for RCS than looking to the UK. Partnering stronger institutions with weaker ones within LMICs, sometimes called the “hub and spoke” model, was identified by an RCS Programme Lead as a means of balancing equity and excellence within partnerships for RCS. LMIC stakeholders highlighted the importance of seed funding and time allowance to support partnership development.

**“Working in partnership with [LMIC funders] we see that as really valuable because it gives us a really key insight into what their capacity needs are and where [we] can add value and help them with their priorities.”**

UK funder

## Match-funding and efforts

The match-funding approach, in which funders in LMICs provide financial input to the design and delivery of RCS ensures alignment of efforts with LMICs’ needs. However, to date this approach has been more relevant to middle-income countries, for example through the [Newton fund](#). Match-funding approaches can allow for co-creating RCS strategies and working beyond isolated research programmes supporting a holistic and coherent approach to RCS. Furthermore, match-funding supports the movement towards LMIC-funded research (Kasprowicz et al., 2020), building sustainability. Some stakeholders argued for match-efforts as an alternative approach to RCS partnerships, which recognises the value of non-monetary resources, such as stakeholder management and programme implementation. An LMIC funder emphasised the importance of clear MoUs between partners based on mutuality and two-way collaboration to foster equity.

## Sustained funding

Funders need to think long-term, and this is also key to funding models (Essence, 2014). Short-term thinking by funders has prevented them from being able to consolidate support to LMIC institutions (Carden et al., 2019). The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency’s (SIDA) model of long-term support to LMIC institutions was highlighted by several stakeholders as a successful approach, which shifts power to LMIC partners. LMIC institutions develop an RCS strategy and plan which Swedish institutions then respond to. However, decisions regarding long-term investment in specific institutions need to consider how RCS investments balance creating centres of excellence with responding to countries and institutions that have the greatest needs.

**“The notion that one five-year grant can build capacity is ludicrous, and to expect them to then become self-sustaining and seek grants from other sources, after five years, is just not realistic.”**

ODA research delivery partner, UK

<b>RECOMMENDATIONS: FUNDING MODELS FOR RCS</b>	<b>LMIC Ownership</b>	<b>Long-term Approach</b>	<b>Coordination</b>	<b>Partnerships and Collaboration</b>	<b>Understanding Impact</b>
Embed leadership from LMIC stakeholders when designing funding models. This supports LMIC ownership of programmes by ensuring funding priorities relate to LMIC concerns and contexts.	●				
Funders should work towards direct funding of LMIC institutions to ensure RCS programmes support LMIC priorities and build the capacity for funding and managing research.	●	●			
Match funding and funder-level partnerships support alignment of efforts with LMIC priorities and coordination of RCS initiatives. A matched-efforts approach recognises the unique contributions of each partner.	●		●	●	
Support networks and communities of practice to enable shared learning, contribute to coordination, and create a platform for long-term partnerships.		●	●	●	●
Support regional and national level coordination efforts across funders to contribute to a holistic RCS approach.			●		
Fund the second stage of successful programmes to support sustainability and impact. This approach needs to be balanced with funding to countries, institutions and areas where gaps have been identified e.g. research management.		●			●
Support South-South models of RCS to ensure improved coordination, cross regional learning and stronger networks between LMIC institutions and researchers.	●		●	●	



## 2. Designing RCS programmes

Interviewed stakeholders saw support for research programmes with embedded aspects of RCS, alongside a combined approach to individual, institutional and environment level support as positive features of how UK-funded RCS initiatives are designed.

When considering the different levels of RCS, interviewed stakeholders and workshop participants felt that individual and institutional capacity building efforts needed to be considered alongside the research environment. While some funders may focus on the individual or institutional level, these efforts must be connected to broader efforts to support the research environment (Fosci, Loffreda, Velten & Johnson, 2019). Each funded initiative, whatever size, needs to be looked at in terms of how it contributes towards strengthening the research ecosystem as a whole (Carden et al., 2019). This makes funder coordination crucial. Mapping out contributions to different levels at the design stage allows pathways to impact to be better articulated and aligned.

**“Increased local grant funding, infrastructure development, and investment in training of science support staff will lead to the development of local research environments optimally supporting ongoing science and the scientists based therein.”**

(Kasprowicz et al., 2020, p.4)



### Environment

Support for LMIC funding and management of research is key to building the capacity of LMIC research ecosystems. Investment in research management provides the support system around research and helps ensure research is used effectively. Research uptake was seen as a gap in existing approaches to RCS by several interviewed stakeholders. When thinking about support for the research environment, long-term, strategic thinking is needed to consider the research pipeline and system within which researchers are working. As an ODA Research Delivery Partner highlighted, funders should not expect to change the research environment within one funded programme. However, each grant/programme should have an element of RCS, which contributes to a long-term strategy within a funder's portfolio or national policy.

**“Good research management is crucial...it helps researchers access new funding, helps them navigate complex rules and procedures, provides the tools for effective management, and helps ensure that findings are used effectively.”**

(AAS, Wellcome, India Alliance, n.d.)



## Institutional

At the institutional level long-term, strategic thinking aligned with support to the research environment is important. Funders and practitioners should not assume academic structures from the UK translate to LMIC contexts, but rather engage with national and institutional dynamics and priorities within LMICs, building upon existing capacities and supporting research management and technical services (e.g., libraries and IT systems) to support LMIC leadership of research proposals and funding.

**“If you’re looking at capacity at the institutional level, not involving some key people right from the core proposal is a missed opportunity and is often overlooked. The same goes with research management as well, as research support offices or services may be less well developed in a lot of institutions.”**

ODA research delivery partner, UK

Analysis of stakeholder interviews highlighted a debate around the focus of institutional level support, between developing centres of excellence and focusing on areas of greatest need. This is connected to differing funder aims in pursuing RCS in LMICs. One UK funder acknowledged the different motivation of funding from a development perspective, compared to investing in RCS to develop excellent scientific partners. This debate is connected to issues of equity and whether funders aim to create a more level-playing field, or focus efforts on targeted individuals, institutions or countries.



## Individual

Fellowships and scholarships have long been mechanisms to support RCS at the individual-level (UKDCR, 2020). An African RCS programme lead felt that individual schemes helped LMIC institutions to attract additional funding, whilst a Latin American ODA Research Delivery Partner thought that fellowships supported relationship building between LMIC and UK researchers and institutions. However, interviewed stakeholders and workshop participants said funders need to consider the impact of brain drain from LMICs to the UK. Kasprowicz et al. (2020) argue that, in Africa, investment is needed in training large numbers of early career researchers to create a critical mass, to recruit and retain talented researchers. Programmes supporting researchers to remain in LMICs through awards attached to LMIC institutions can bridge individual and institutional RCS support.

Individual level RCS needs to look holistically across all stages of research careers and the research support system. Several stakeholders identified early career researchers as a gap in current approaches, post-PhD efforts are needed to ensure access to opportunities and mentoring. At the same time, investment is also needed in research leadership to provide role models and support LMIC-led research bids. Beyond researchers, individual level RCS needs to consider technical and managerial roles to support the development of strong research institutions and the broader research support system.

Several interviewed stakeholders highlighted the need for support for individuals to be connected to institutional and environmental level change to be effective.

## Stand-alone versus embedded approaches to RCS

[UKCDR's October 2021 Briefing Paper](#) identified embedded RCS programmes as a growing area, with UK funders investing £1.2 billion in programmes with a significant component of embedded RCS from 2016-2021. Our analyses identified different views on the strengths and weaknesses of stand-alone versus embedded approaches, presented in Table 3:

**Table 3: Strengths and weaknesses of stand-alone versus embedded RCS**

RCS model	Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>Stand-alone</b>	RCS becomes an explicit objective of a project with resources focused on achieving RCS outcomes	Hard to mobilise funds for stand-alone RCS without an element of developing research outputs
	Acknowledges that RCS is a specialist area with recognition of skills needed to achieve impact	Detached from funding streams that support 'doing' research
	Builds capacity across research disciplines rather than in one research area, prepares LMIC institutions to pivot to new topics	
<b>Embedded</b>	Enables capacity to be built through the process of doing research	Can lead to RCS being 'tagged-on' to projects and not being a core component, as research topic takes precedence
	Mobilises more funding for RCS as cuts-across different thematic investments	Non-specialists in RCS can end up being charged with delivering and evaluating RCS components
		Can lead to siloed capacity in one area

Essence's (2014) guidance recommends that RCS should be an explicit objective of programmes rather than a spin-off benefit. This is true for both stand-alone and embedded approaches. Several stakeholders said there needed to be a balance between stand-alone and embedded approaches, with both needing to be designed based upon the needs of LMIC researchers, institutions and flexible to changing needs over the programme cycle. Working in partnerships and consortia supports the coordination of stand-alone and embedded RCS across funders and institutions.

<b>RECOMMENDATIONS: DESIGNING RCS PROGRAMMES</b>	<b>LMIC Ownership</b>	<b>Long-term Approach</b>	<b>Coordination</b>	<b>Partnerships and Collaboration</b>	<b>Understanding Impact</b>
Individual level RCS programmes need to look holistically across research career stages and the research support system. This includes investment in early career researchers, research leadership and technical and managerial roles.	●	●	●		
Individual level RCS needs to coordinate with institutional and environment support even when delivered by other funders or institutions. Supporting researchers in LMIC institutions, can bridge individual and institutional RCS efforts.	●		●		
RCS programmes should address research management and monitoring and evaluation capabilities to strengthen the support system around research and understanding of impact.		●			●
Environment level RCS needs to consider the uptake and use of research and evidence to strengthen development impact.		●			●
Investing in a balance of stand-alone and embedded RCS can support long-term change whilst maintaining flexibility to emerging research priorities. Partnerships or consortia can support coordination.		●	●	●	
Recognise the specialist skills required to support RCS, especially within embedded programmes, ensuring it is a fully resourced component of a research programme as opposed to an add-on.			●		●
Design RCS programmes to amplify two-way learning and knowledge sharing between UK and LMIC partners, recognising that UK institutions and researchers can learn from LMICs.	●		●	●	
A portfolio approach, with programmes at different levels-of-entry, from centres of excellence to new entrants, supports a long-term RCS strategy to have impact.		●	●		●

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## 3. Decision making within RCS funding and programmes

Funders need to ensure programmes are guided by knowledge of the national and regional research ecosystem within LMICs, as supporting LMIC leadership and ownership of RCS initiatives increases the chance of interventions being impactful and sustainable. LMIC stakeholders should be at the centre of decision making when designing calls and approving funding.

### Designing funding calls

Stakeholders noted issues with funders setting agendas which are not appropriate or relevant to LMIC contexts. Approaches to address this include:

- partnerships with LMIC funders
- co-design of research calls with LMIC stakeholders
- alignment with national research priorities within LMICs.

**“We use stakeholder engagement to detect where underlying priorities are [and] then participate in co-design.”**

ODA research delivery partner, Latin America

However, it is important to recognise that priorities are multi-faceted and changing.

UK funders use co-design and stakeholder engagement with LMIC academics, NGOs and research users to ensure diverse LMIC needs shape funding calls. Investment in co-design is needed to ensure RCS investments are aligned with existing efforts and with an awareness of future priorities. Focusing on prioritisation of needs from within LMICs, allows funding to be designed around LMIC stakeholders' RCS goals. Funding calls should make use of available evidence on what works where to guide them.

### How UK funders make decisions

An RCS Programme Lead identified balancing research excellence with capacity strengthening as a challenge when making funding decisions, whereas an evaluator of RCS saw a lack of consistency within UK Funders approaches to RCS, with some programmes being explicit about RCS whilst others assumed RCS through osmosis. This inconsistent approach impacts funding decisions. A policy or portfolio level Theory of Change with RCS as a core component can ensure RCS is prioritised across a portfolio.

**“From our perspective, overall, we have a portfolio-level theory of change, which governs/sets out our overall ambitions and we have research capacity strengthening as a thread/strand within that contributing to our goals.”**

UK Funder

Funders should ensure review panels have in-depth knowledge both about the evidence of what works in RCS and the context in which funded programmes will take place. This can be achieved by:

- Greater involvement of LMIC stakeholder on review panels
- Developing guidance for reviewers on how to assess RCS as part of proposals

Some UK funders have RCS as a criterion for assessing proposals but are not prescriptive about approaches to RCS to allow for LMIC-led design and implementation. Maher et al. (2020) provide guidance on how funders can define excellence with consideration of LMIC context and societal impact. Additionally, there are initiatives for assessing research that incorporate enhanced capacity e.g., IDRC's Research Quality + (IDRC, 2018) or the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA, 2012).

Evidence of LMIC led proposals and/or equitable partnerships to deliver RCS should also be considered when making funding decisions. An African RCS Programme Lead stated that when Northern institutions lead RCS there is a lack of awareness of the institutional and country context, making programmes less effective. Whereas an LMIC funder highlighted the need for partnerships based on mutuality and two-way collaboration to foster equity and ensure LMIC partners' power in decision making.

<b>RECOMMENDATIONS: DECISION MAKING WITHIN RCS FUNDING AND PROGRAMMES</b>	LMIC Ownership	Long-term Approach	Coordination	Partnerships and Collaboration	Understanding Impact
Build long-term partnerships with LMIC funders and institutions to understand RCS goals and support the co-design of funding calls aligned with existing efforts.	●		●	●	
Invest in understanding research systems and policy mechanisms in LMICs to support informed decision making. Research should be led by LMIC partners and shared across funders to avoid duplication.	●		●		●
A long-term vision should guide funding decisions, a portfolio approach with a Theory of Change can support coordination with existing efforts and approaches to support sustainability.		●	●		
Ensure review panels are diverse and have an awareness of LMIC contexts and RCS approaches, increasing LMIC representation on panels can support this.	●				●
Support reviewers to balance research excellence and equity, especially when RCS is an embedded component of a research proposal. Use research assessment frameworks that define excellence with consideration of LMIC context and impact.			●		●
Funding decisions should be guided by LMIC leadership of programmes, responsiveness to LMIC priorities and equitable partnership practices.	●			●	
Needs assessments for RCS need to be led by LMIC partners and reflect social and institutional context with awareness of competing priorities within countries and institutions.	●				●

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## 4. Monitoring, evaluation and learning

A tendency to over rely on quantitative evidence alongside time constraints are limitations of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) approaches for RCS. Interviewed stakeholders and workshop participants highlighted that outcomes and impact were likely to arise outside the time frame of funded projects. Sustained funding is needed to understand longer-term change. Some programmes, such as scholarship schemes that have been funded in the same way for several years, have the mechanism to do this, but for many projects, funding for MEL ends when the project ends. This can severely limit the extent of evaluation, learning and subsequent understanding of impact. Additionally, funders face challenges with finding appropriate indicators which work across different partners and contexts, coordination between funders and implementers is required to support metric development (Marjanovic et al. 2017). Existing resources are available to support indicator development across different levels of RCS (see Khisa, Gitau, Pulford and Bates, 2019).

**“We have learned to try and place more emphasis on qualitative data collection, descriptions and examples of how research is utilised in policy and practice, and how that helps to tell a story about what we supported and how that capacity is built and utilised in the context of the wider research environment.”**

RCS Programme Lead, Africa

Several interviewed stakeholders highlighted a need to be realistic about what MEL alone can achieve. To generate high-quality evidence about the effectiveness and impact of RCS, there needs to be investment in social science research to understand what works where and why.

### Supporting MEL of RCS

#### Embedding learning

As funders can approach RCS programmes with differing objectives, clarity about the aims of RCS programmes, reflected in MEL mechanisms is critical. Whether stand-alone or embedded RCS, it is fundamental to ensure MEL frameworks are connected to a Theory of Change both within programmes and funded portfolios, with the ability to adjust through monitoring and learning what works.

**“We built learning questions into the design of projects at the beginning so not only about what we are trying to do, but also what we are trying to learn about what we are trying to do.”**

RCS Programme Lead, UK

A UK-based RCS Programme Lead highlighted the need for those delivering RCS programmes to work with MEL staff, to ensure learning is fed back into implementing teams and programme communications. It is important that funders and those designing and implementing RCS initiatives can adjust programmes in response to recommendations that arise from evaluation and learning activities, or at least feed

them into future initiatives or wider policy. One UK funder described how evaluating support for postgraduate awards had led them to develop a programme for early career researchers, as a gap was identified beyond PhD study.

## Co-creating MEL mechanisms

The need for RCS initiatives to be designed in close conjunction with LMIC partners extends to MEL approaches. There can be hesitancy to criticise funder objectives, which could manifest itself in high approval rates for programmes in evaluation surveys, as identified by a UK ODA delivery partner. Co-creation of MEL

approaches with LMIC partners can ensure that the methods used are appropriate to the context and that learning can be fed back into implementation. [Participatory methods of evaluation](#), which involve programme stakeholders in the evaluation process, were identified by several stakeholders as a way of identifying what has and has not worked well and incorporating qualitative evidence.

**“You want people to tell you what’s not worked well, not be afraid that the funding will be shut down.”**

ODA Research Delivery Partner, UK

## Understanding long-term change

Individual scholarship programmes are better placed to track change over time, particularly where they have substantial alumni records. This has enabled them to supplement information about whether recipients complete their awards with information about career trajectory, such as profession, country of work, positions of influence, interaction with UK partners. Funders need to invest in understanding long-term impact across individual, institutional and environment levels to develop a more coherent and holistic view of what works in terms of RCS.



<b>RECOMMENDATIONS: MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING</b>	<b>LMIC Ownership</b>	<b>Long-term Approach</b>	<b>Coordination</b>	<b>Partnerships and Collaboration</b>	<b>Understanding Impact</b>
Funder level MEL should support project and programme level MEL, feeding into a portfolio-level Theory of Change, with clear objectives for RCS. This can support an agenda for RCS as form of research impact.		●	●		●
Agenda setting and ownership by LMIC stakeholders should extend to MEL mechanisms and impact definitions. MEL frameworks need to reflect LMIC contexts, with greater use of qualitative evidence.	●				●
Funders and implementers of RCS programmes need to work together to develop metrics to measure RCS outcomes. A long-term approach is needed beyond project funding periods.		●	●		●
Invest in learning within funded programmes and across funder portfolios, ensuring evaluation findings are fed back into future programme design, and sharing learning across funders and practitioners.			●	●	●
Adequately resource MEL. Monitoring and programme teams need to work together to ensure learning is fed back into programme design and implementation.		●	●		●
Make the case for RCS as a research topic to generate a robust evidence base around what works and what impact looks like. Social science research on attribution will complement and enhance MEL approaches.		●			●

# Conclusion

Building upon UKCDR's briefing paper (2021), mapping UK-funded investments in RCS in LMICs 2016-2021, this report has considered what we have learnt from these investments about how to best design, implement and evaluate RCS funding and programmes. Synthesis of evidence from 57 stakeholders (53% from the UK and other HICs and 47% from LMICs) through interviews and a learning workshop, alongside a desk-based review, identified five cross-cutting enablers:

- **LMIC ownership** of design and delivery of RCS
- **A long-term approach** to support sustainability
- **Coordination** across funders and programmes
- **Partnerships and collaboration** to design and deliver RCS
- **Understanding impact** of RCS initiatives

Recommendations for different stages of RCS funding and programming, which incorporate these enablers are summarised opposite.

These recommendations can feed into current and future research calls and programme design as well as informing those new to the field, contributing towards quality, sustainable and impactful RCS investments by UK funders.

## Summary Of Recommendations

### FUNDING MODELS FOR RCS

- LMIC leadership in fund design
- Direct funding to LMIC institutions
- Match-funding
- Partnerships to support a long-term approach
- Regional and national coordination
- Balance second stage funding and new entrants
- South-South models

### DESIGNING RCS PROGRAMMES

- Holistic approach to individual support
- Coordinate across individual, institutional and environment
- Consider support system around research
- Look at research impact and uptake
- Balance stand-alone and embedded approaches
- Amplify two-way learning
- Portfolio approach

### DECISION MAKING WITHIN FUNDING & PROGRAMMES

- Partnerships to support shared decision making
- Invest in understanding research systems in LMICs
- Long-term vision to guide decisions
- Diverse and knowledgeable review panels
- Balance equity and excellence
- Evidence of equitable partnerships
- LMIC led needs assessments

### MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

- Coordinate funder and programme level MEL
- Frameworks that reflect LMIC contexts
- Build metrics together
- Support learning and uptake
- Invest in evidence base

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# Annex 1: Learning report methodology

UKCDR has aimed to bring together learning across funders to help reflect on lessons learned from UK investments in RCS 2016-2021. This analysis is based on information gathered through stakeholder interviews, desk-based review of documents, and a learning workshop. Unless otherwise referenced, the conclusions are from the interviewed stakeholders, workshop participants, or common themes emerging from the analysis.

## Stakeholder interviews

Stakeholders were identified using a sampling matrix, see below, that identified different types of stakeholders and their geographic location.

Stakeholder types	Geographic locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UK Funders</li> <li>• UK ODA Delivery Partners</li> <li>• RCS Programme leads and/or implementers of UK-funded RCS</li> <li>• International and LMIC RCS funders involved in UK-funded RCS</li> <li>• Recipients of UK-funded RCS</li> <li>• Researchers and evaluators of RCS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UK</li> <li>• Africa</li> <li>• Asia-Pacific</li> <li>• Latin America and Caribbean</li> <li>• Middle East and North Africa</li> <li>• Europe/North America</li> </ul>

Where possible, a spread across stakeholder types and geographic locations was sought to ensure a wide range of perspectives. In total, 28 interviews were conducted involving 30 organisations<sup>1</sup>. The interview schedule (see Annex 2) was designed to capture learning at the strategic and portfolio level across different stages of RCS funding and programming. The table below shows the cross-section of the 28 interviews by type with the regions represented in brackets:

**Table 4: Stakeholders interviewed**

Stakeholder organisation type	No. of interviews
ODA Research Delivery Partner <i>UK, Asia-Pacific, Latin America and Caribbean</i>	7
UK Funder	5
Recipients of UK funded RCS <i>Africa, Latin America and Caribbean</i>	4
RCS Programme lead <i>Africa, UK</i>	4
Researchers and evaluators of RCS <i>UK</i>	3
RCS Programme lead and implementer <i>UK, Europe, Africa</i>	3
International and LMIC RCS funders (involved in UK-funded RCS programmes) <i>Africa, Europe</i>	2

<sup>1</sup> In certain instances, interviews were attended by multiple individuals. This was done to understand the different perspectives from stakeholders working in different teams or in a similar region. Each interview is counted as one data source.

57% of interviews represented the UK; 21% Africa (Kenya, Malawi, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda); 7% Asia (Indonesia, The Philippines, Vietnam); 7% Latin America (Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Peru) and 7% other European countries (Sweden, The Netherlands). The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed and then analysed using both inductive qualitative coding and coding against the stage of funding or programming data related to.

## Desk based review

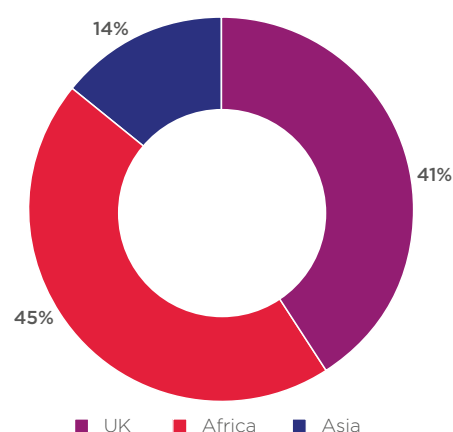
A desk-based review of literature and reports complemented lessons gleaned from the stakeholder interviews. A list of all reviewed documents is available in Annex 3.

## Learning workshop

Following the synthesis of interview analysis and the desk-based review UKCDR convened a virtual learning workshop on 10th May 2022, to validate and further develop the report recommendations.

UKCDR invited monitoring, evaluation and Learning experts, programme design experts, RCS funders, academics (all career stages), research support staff, and higher-education policy & strategy experts, from LMICs and the UK to participate in the workshop. The event was attended by 29 participants, regional distribution shown in the figure opposite.

Learning Workshop Participants



Participants were presented with the draft analysis and then were split into four breakout rooms to provide inputs and clarifications around the following learning areas:

1. Funding and partnerships
2. RCS programme models
3. Decision making within RCS funding and programmes
4. Monitoring, evaluation, learning and impact

A summary of the discussion was analysed against the existing report framework to identify areas of confirmation, elaboration and difference, these findings were then incorporated into a revised version of the report.

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# Annex 2: Interview schedule

The below interview schedule was adapted based on the type of stakeholder being interviewed.

Name:

Organisation:

Role:

## 1. UK RCS funding models and coordination

- a. Please could you begin by telling us how you make funding decisions in RCS and what you have learned (from designing funding programmes, context/demand/needs analysis to assessing RCS proposals)? Is there a policy or strategy underpinning your decisions?
- b. In your view and experience, what models and approaches to RCS calls/grants/funder coordination have worked well and not worked well?
- c. In your view and experience how does UK funding and approaches for RCS in LMICs compare with that of other country funders?

## 2. Defining RCS goals and pathways to change

- a. What approaches have you used? (e.g. theory of change, outcome mapping, logical framework, stakeholder engagement)
- b. What have you learned? e.g. what worked well, what did not work well, how this could be improved.

## 3. Assessing your individual or institution's capacity needs

- a. If so, how? (e.g. self-assessment tools, SWOT, questionnaires)
- b. What have you learned? e.g. what worked well, what did not work well, how this could be improved.

## 4. Implementation

- a. How do you make decisions in what to support in RCS and what have you learned?
- b. What have been successful models/approaches in RCS used by your organisation and why?
- c. What have been less successful models/approaches used by your organisation and why?

## 5. Sustainability

- a. What approaches has your organisation used to ensure the sustainability of RCS?
- b. What have you learned? e.g. what worked well, what did not work well, how this could be improved.

6. Planning and implementing Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) in RCS programmes/ projects
  - a. What approaches has your organisation used?
  - b. What have you learned? e.g. what worked well, what did not work well, how to improve.
7. Impact and effectiveness of UK-funded RCS
  - a. What examples of impact have resulted from UK-funded RCS in LMICs? (e.g. at the individual, institutional and environmental/systems level)
  - b. To what extent do you think UK-funded RCS is meeting needs and demand in LMICs? (you may answer this question from a project/programme level or from an overall UK funding perspective)
  - c. Where and how should the UK invest in RCS in the future to have greatest impact?

## Annex 3: Desk-based review documents

Year	Document title	Document type	Source
2010	Research capacity strengthening: donor approaches to improving and assessing its impact in low- and middle-income countries	Academic Paper	International Journal of Health Planning and Management
2011	Research Capacity Strengthening Learning from Experience	Workshop Summary	UKCDS
2014	Seven principles for strengthening research capacity in low- and middle-income countries: simple ideas in a complex world	Guidance	ESSENCE
2015	Rapid mapping of international funders' research capacity strengthening priorities	Mapping report	UKCDS
2015	Strengthening Research Capacity—TDR's Evolving Experience in Low- and Middle-Income Countries	Academic Paper	PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases
2015	Tackling the tensions in evaluating capacity strengthening for health research in low- and middle-income countries	Academic paper	Health Policy and Planning
2016	Health research capacity development in low and middle income countries: reality or rhetoric? A systematic meta-narrative review of the qualitative literature	Academic Paper	BMJ Open
2016	Research Capacity Strengthening in Low and Middle Income Countries – An Evaluation of the WHO/TDR Career Development Fellowship Programme	Academic paper	PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases

Year	Document title	Document type	Source
2016	Implementing a national health research for development platform in a low-income country – a review of Malawi's Health Research Capacity Strengthening Initiative	Academic Paper	Health Research Policy and Systems
2016	The Road Traffic Injuries Research Network: a decade of research capacity strengthening in low- and middle-income countries	Academic paper	Health Research Policy and Systems
2017	Research capacity building—obligations for global health partners	Academic Editorial	The Lancet Global Health
2017	Strengthening capacity to research the social determinants of health in low- and middle-income countries: lessons from the INTREC programme	Academic Paper	BMC Public Health
2017	Advancing the science of health research capacity strengthening in low-income and middle-income countries: a scoping review of the published literature, 2000–2016	Academic paper	BMJ Open
2018	Mid-term evaluation of the Newton Fund	Programme Evaluation	Coffey International Development for BEIS
2018	A Guide for Transboundary Research Partnerships 11 Principles	Guidance	Swiss Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (KFPE)
2018	Strengthening Policy Research Role of Think Tank Initiative in South Asia	Book	SAGE Publishing
2019	Strengthening Mentoring in Low- and Middle-Income Countries to Advance Global Health Research Special Issue	Academic Paper	The American Journal of Tropic Medicine and Hygiene
2019	GCRF Foundation Stage Final Report	Programme Evaluation	ITAD for DFID
2019	Research Capacity Strengthening in LMICs Rapid Evidence Assessment	Evidence assessment	Research Consulting for DFID
2019	LSTM Centre for Capacity Research Guides: Lessons and Good Practice Examples for (1) Researchers and Implementers and (2) Grant Makers	Guidance	LSTM
2019	A Framework and Indicators to Improve Research Capacity Strengthening Evaluation Practice	Guidance	LSTM and APHRC for DFID
2019	A narrative review of health research capacity strengthening in low and middle-income countries: lessons for conflict-affected areas	Academic Paper	Globalization and Health
2019	Strengthening Research Institutions in Africa: A Synthesis Report	Evidence assessment	Research Consulting for DFID
2019	Towards diaspora-driven research capacity strengthening in low- and middle-income countries: results from India and Nepal	Academic paper	International Health
2019	Strengthening Policy-Relevant Tobacco Research Capacity in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: Challenges, Opportunities, and Lessons Learned	Academic paper	Nicotine and tobacco research
2019	Strengthening Research Institutions: Learning From Doing	Research report	Mastercard Foundation



Year	Document title	Document type	Source
2020	African-led health research and capacity building- is it working?	Academic Paper	BMC Public Health
2020	Understanding knowledge systems and what works to promote science technology and innovation in Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda	Evidence assessment	FCDO
2020	Health research capacity strengthening in low and middle-income countries: current situation and opportunities to leverage data for better coordination and greater impact	Guidance	ESSENCE
2020	A mapping & analysis of UK-funded fellowships & scholarships for Africa	Mapping report	UKCDR
2020	External funding to strengthen capacity for research in low-income and middle-income countries: exigence, excellence and equity	Academic Paper	BMJ Global Health
2020	Institutionalizing research capacity strengthening in LMICs: A systematic review and meta-synthesis	Systematic Review	AAS Open Research
2020	Measuring the outcome and impact of research capacity strengthening initiatives: A review of indicators used or described in the published and grey literature	Academic Paper	F1000 Research
2020	A Mechanism for Reviewing Investments in Health Research Capacity Strengthening in Low- and Middle-Income Countries	Academic Editorial	Annals of Global Health
2021	Reflections from the Think Tank Initiative and their relevance for Canada	Academic Paper	Canadian Journal of Development Studies
2021	Health research policy and systems: Moving towards evidence-informed health research capacity strengthening practice	Academic Editorial	Journal of Health Services Research & Policy



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