

A systematic approach for strengthening capacity for implementation research

Imelda Bates
Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine



2-minute videos

<https://www.lstmed.ac.uk/research/centres-and-units/centre-for-capacity-research>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTa3dRPjYxQ&feature=youtu.be>

Why is it important to strengthen capacity for implementation research (IR)?

- A lack of IR capacity in LMICs is a major bottleneck in turning research findings into actions and is hindering socio-economic development
- Funders are increasingly investing in strengthening IR capacity (e.g. DFID – has invested >£155 million in 14 programmes to strengthen research capacity) and they need evidence of progress and impact
- To fulfil funders' requirements and to achieve and show impact, grant recipients need to systematically plan how they will strengthen IR capacity and use indicators to track progress

Centre for Capacity Research - what we do

We are global leaders in the theory and practice of effective research capacity strengthening (RCS)

We generate transferable evidence about how to do, track and measure the impact of research capacity strengthening programmes

We collaborate closely with RCS funders and implementers to meet their needs (e.g. DFID, WT, UKCDR, Afr Acad Sci)

Principles for strengthening IR can apply to any research topic

Maternal health

Malaria

Lung health

Gender

NTDs

Mosquitoes and tsetse flies

Livestock-human interactions

Water and sanitation

Congo river dynamics

Agriculture

Termites and soil science

Chemistry

PV energy technology



Africa Capacity Building Initiative (ACBI): Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

CEPHaS: Research Capacity Strengthening in Conservation Agriculture

Comic Relief-GSK Partnership on Health Systems Strengthening for Malaria Prevention and Control

DELTA – Learning Research Programme



Evaluation of Research Networks for Health Innovation in Sub-Saharan Africa

HORN - Research Capacity Strengthening in One Health

Generating Evidence to Foster Multi-Disciplinary Implementation Research in Lung Health and Tuberculosis

Sustainable Capacity for Africa Vector Control Research and Product Development



Strengthening capacity and leadership in epidemiological, clinical and operations research

Research Capacity Strengthening in Vector Control

RECAP - Research Capacity Strengthening in Sierra Leone

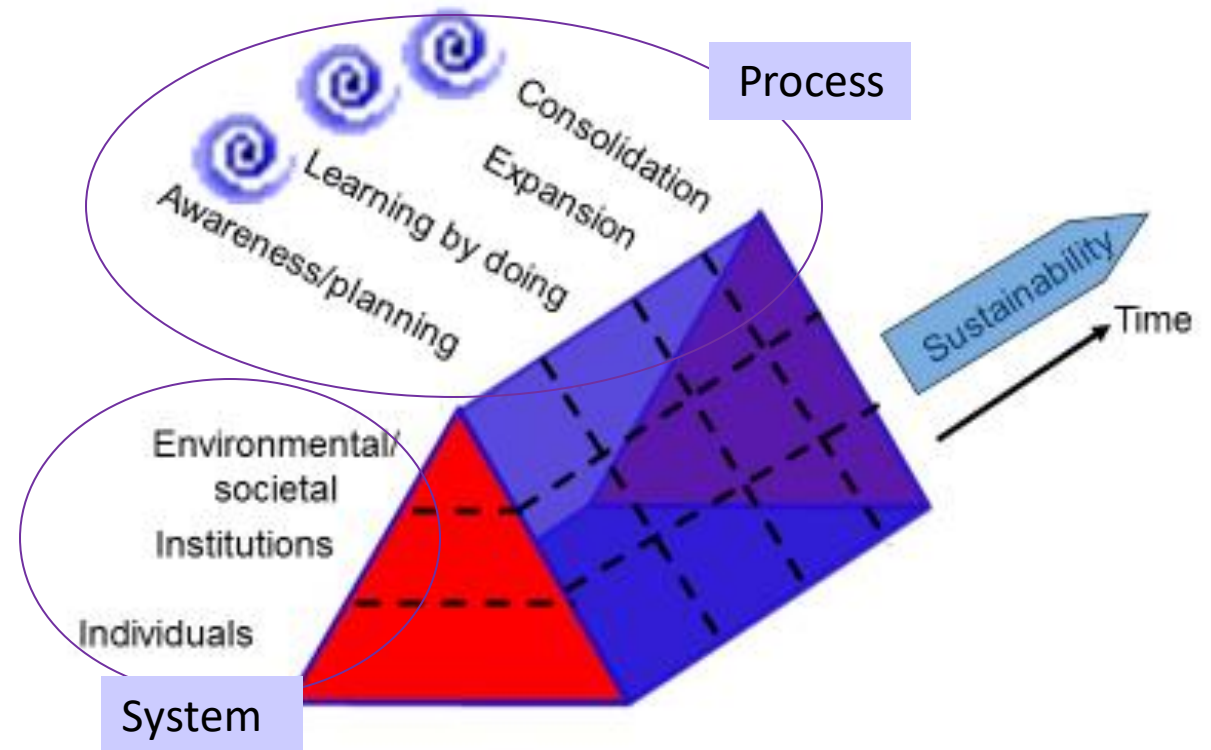
Tiny Targets - Strengthening national tsetse control programmes in Uganda and DRC

A systematic approach for strengthening IR capacity

Take the whole research system into account

Two simple concepts for 'system' and 'process'

1. The research capacity strengthening (RCS) 'prism'
2. 5-step approach for designing and tracking RCS programmes



Concept for planning, implementing and evaluating research capacity strengthening: 3 levels, 4 phases

5-stage process for successful IR capacity strengthening (CS)¹

Apply to any situation – different countries, institutions and topics

Jointly define the goal of the CS project

Describe the 'optimal' capacity needed to achieve the goal (to create a benchmark)

Determine existing capacity; identify gaps compared to the benchmark

Devise and implement a locally-owned action plan to remedy the gaps

Learn through doing; revise the plan and indicators regularly

¹Bates I, Boyd A, Smith H, Cole DC. (2014) A practical and systematic approach to organisational capacity strengthening for research in the health sector in Africa. *Health Research Policy and Systems* 12:11

Examples of lessons learnt about RCS: sustainability*

Indicators (proxy) of sustainable capacity building for different programme stages

Early

engagement of stakeholders
explicit plans for scale up and
influencing policies
inclusion of quality
assessments

Mid

improved resources
institutionalisation of activities
innovation and expansion

Late

funding for core activities
Southern-led management
and decision-making

Challenges to achieving sustainability

- high turnover of staff and stakeholders
- embedding changes into existing systems
- securing funding and influencing policy development

Participants benefit from a systematic approach to strengthening IR capacity

It stimulated honest and fair discussion between us all..... It demonstrated our strengths as well as weaknesses.

It enabled us to start some concrete actions and now we have institutional buy in, now they are engaged and committed to go further

The follow up process was helpful to keep me focused on understanding the changes occurring across the college

A piecemeal approach would not be effective at all. We need to look at each area. We can then leverage fundingand use this [review] to make sure every area is funded.

We knew ... that here are political issues. If the recommendation had come from within that could have caused issues