



Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa

**Developing and Retaining the Next  
Generation of African Academics:  
Excellence, Retention and Sustainability**

**The APHRC and CARTA Experience on  
Excellence**

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# Outline

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- Why we need excellence in PG training in Africa
- The CARTA experience and contribution
- Reflections



# What we mean by excellence

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- A universal concept...
- Therefore the question: What “excellence” means in an African context is a misnomer
  - African researchers/academics compete in a global context
- Ways excellence in postgraduate training can be attained in Africa under prevailing circumstances



# Why Excellence in PG Training?

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- Globally, sub-Saharan Africa has some of the worst health and development indicators
- Excellence in research is key to understanding the drivers of, and potential solutions to the many challenges facing the region
- Yet, the continent clearly lacks centers of research excellence that can generate the evidence base to address the region's development and health problems.

# Role of PG Training in Building Research Excellence



- Universities mandated to build the human resource capacity needed to drive high-quality research on the continent currently face challenges that make this difficult
- Yet, we can no longer afford overseas training
  - High and escalating costs
  - Low rates of return of overseas-trained PhDs
  - Those who return often drift away from teaching/research
- Some implications:
  - Africa employs up to 150,000 expatriate professionals at a cost of US\$4B a year to fill the human resource gap created by brain drain (African Partnership Forum (2007):
  - The continent's share of global scientific output fell from 0.5% in mid-1980s to 0.3% in the mid-1990s

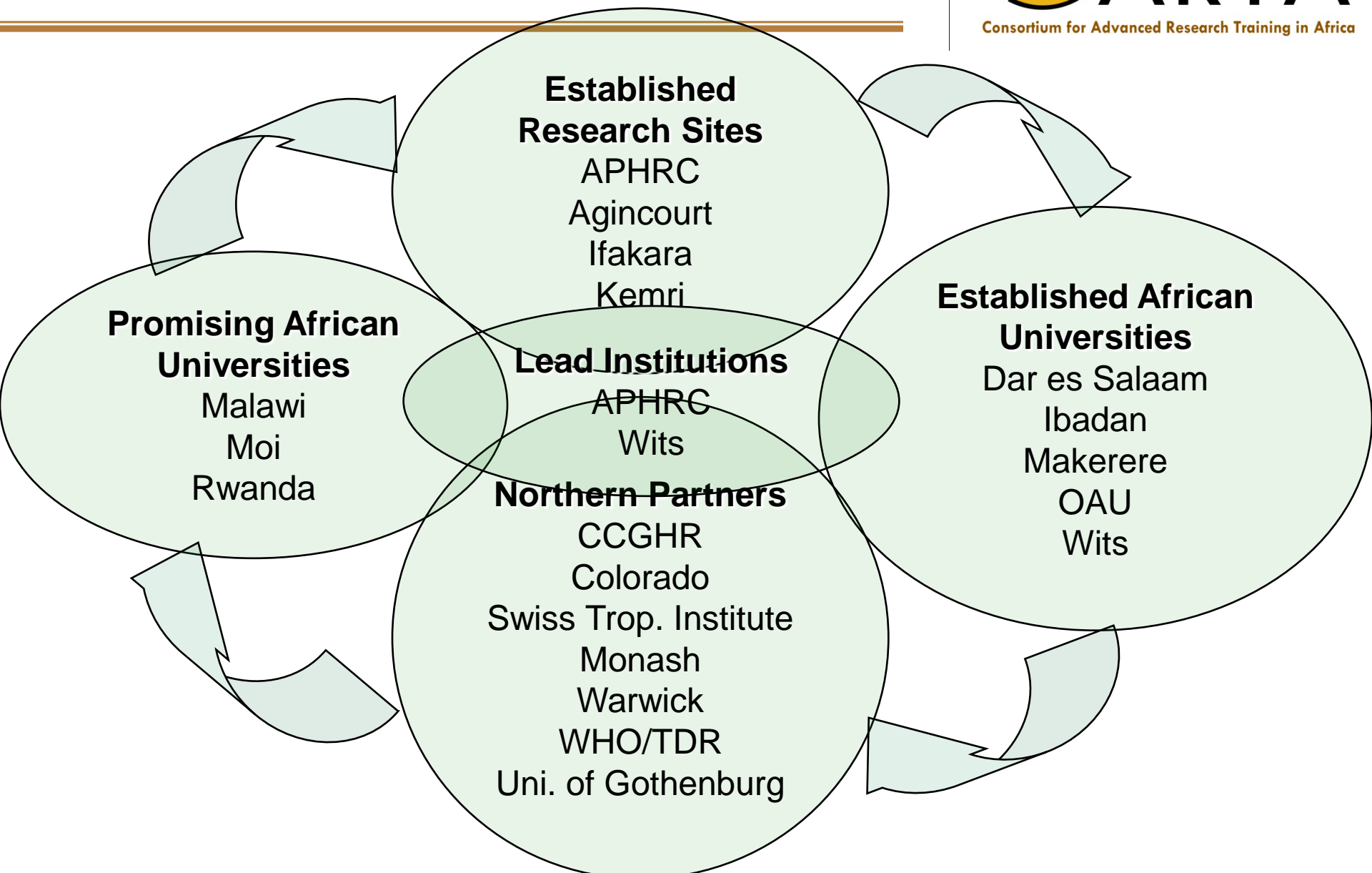
# Why CARTA?

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- No individual African university or country has the human resource capacity to mount globally-competitive doctoral programmes
- Hence... CARTA!

# CARTA Member-institutions



# Key Elements of CARTA



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**Build and retain a vibrant African academy able to lead world-class multidisciplinary research that impacts positively on public & population health**

## **BUILD THE NEXT GENERATION**

- Model doctoral training program**
- Strong supervision and mentoring**
- Joint Advanced Seminars**

## **DEVELOP INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY**

- Strengthen research infrastructure**
- Faculty & staff training**
- Development of vibrant research hubs**





# Elements of Students' Training

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- **Strengthening doctoral training**
  - Registration in other universities
  - Exemption from teaching responsibilities
  - **Three supervisors** – home, training, external
  - Joint Advanced Seminar Series
  - Strong online support – Learning portal
  - Participation in international conferences
  - **Targeted sandwich/internship** at a Northern/Southern univ.
  - Research grants for student-initiated projects
  - Library support to students
  - Monthly stipend to facilitate fulltime studentship
  - Post-doctoral components – currently unfunded

# JAS seminars



## 1. Introduction to critical thinking and research

Build critical thinking, essential concepts and seminal literature, conceptualising research projects, research design, developing instruments, literature & data resources, research ethics

## 2. Data management and analysis

Mixed-methods approaches, identifying appropriate analytical models, model assumptions, common errors in data analysis, from basic analysis to complex modelling

## 3. Interpretation & presentation of research findings

Communicating research to policy makers, presentation skills, scientific writing, identifying appropriate journals

## 4. Life beyond PhD

Proposal writing, budgeting, managing research grants and partnerships, research ethics, developing course outlines and teaching materials, research and policy linkages

# Inter-JAS



- Implement research skills learned in previous JAS
- Keep students actively engaged with research process, mentors and peers
- Use CARTA website to complete tasks
  - Reading materials, links to online resources
  - Interactive - communication among fellows, enhance supervision and information exchange
  - Virtual list-serve, chat room, internet library links
- Regular assignments with feedback
- Online courses
- Promote on-time graduation
- Students & supervisors present research training seminars at home institutions for other graduate students



# Institutional strengthening



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- Training for administrators, Librarians, Bursars
  - Post-graduate training administration
  - Research management including grant reporting
  - E-resources, Retention strategies, etc.
- Training of faculty
  - Project management
  - Mentoring of PhD supervisors; enhancing of skills
- Development of University-wide systems
  - Coherent research agendas
  - Research policy including ethical reviews, etc.
- Research Infrastructure
  - Internet connectivity
  - Graduate seminar rooms
  - Computer labs, etc
- Other support
  - Access to JAS materials
  - Relief teaching support, etc

# Current Funding



- Expected program cost:
  - About US\$20M over initial 5-8 years
- Secured:
  - Wellcome Trust: \$5.8m/5yrs
  - Carnegie Corporation of NY: \$1m/18 months
  - Gates Foundation: \$200K
  - Ford Foundation: \$1m/2 years
  - British Council £105K/3years
- Potential
  - MacArthur Foundations: \$1m/3years (submitted)
  - European Union €2m/5years (submitted)
  - Other Foundations, Bilateral funders
  - African governments and philanthropists
  - Individual philanthropists

# Reflections...

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- **Retention**

- We must think outside the box!
  - Buy out time
  - Redefine parameters for salary negotiations
  - Apply limited research funds to productive faculty
- Consider flexible appointments
  - Existing expertise outside the university
  - Research appointments (non/limited teaching)
  - If accounts/bursary is a problem, outsource!

- **Sustainability**

- Excellence is sustainable anywhere in the world!
- The only thing that is not sustainable is mediocrity



# Thank you

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