

Update

The six-month inception phase of the DELTAS LRP was formally completed on August 2nd, 2016. This phase was characterised by project set-up activities which were largely completed according to our planned schedule. A full inception phase report has been submitted to the Wellcome Trust and DFID and we are currently awaiting their approval to move into the next phase of the project. In this newsletter, we provide a brief overview of project recruitment activities, the LRP presentations at the DELTAS AGM as well as priority activities for the remainder of 2016.

Recruitment

The two DELTAS LRP PhD scholarships were advertised for a four week period during May, 2016. The scholarships were only open to African nationals and required the successful applicants to be based at an African academic/research institution for the majority of the PhD programme (LSTM ‘off-site’ PhD scholarship). A total of 12 applications, from 17 African nations, were received for the two scholarships. Figures 1 and 2 present the number of applicants for each position by country and by sex.

Figure 1. Number of applicants for the ‘Equitable Careers’ PhD scholarship by country and sex

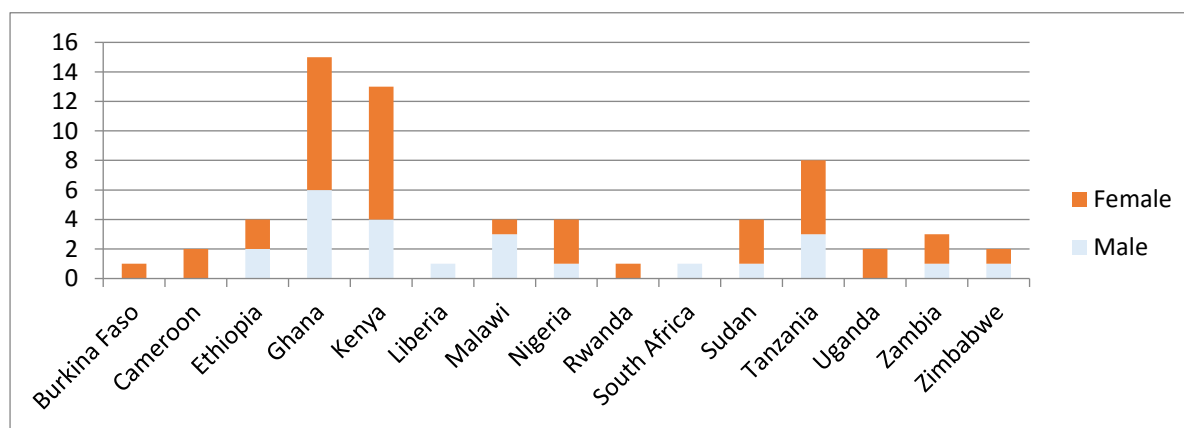
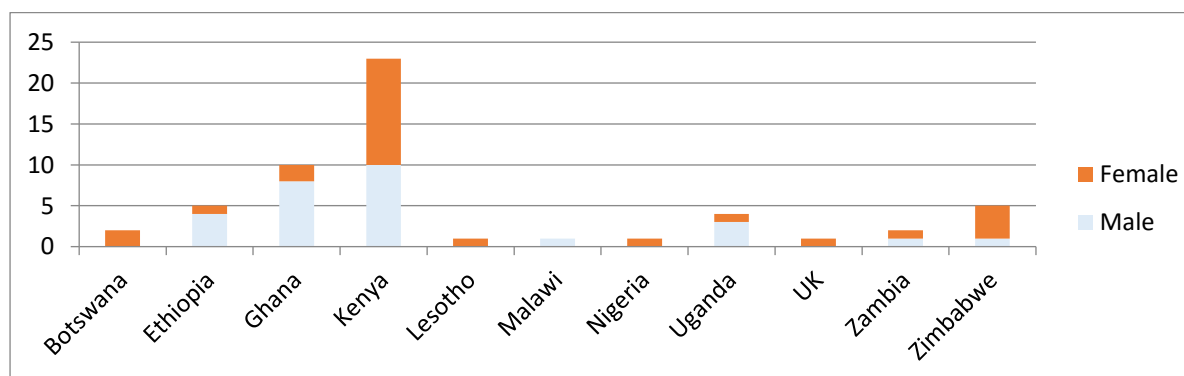


Figure 2. Number of applicants for the ‘Research Uptake’ PhD scholarship by country and sex



A selection panel, consisting of LSTM, AFIDEP and AESA representatives identified the top five applicants for each scholarship and completed interviews during the DELTAS AGM at the Intercontinental Hotel, Nairobi, 4th July, 2016. Each applicant was required to complete a 15 minute written task designed to assess analytical ability and quality of written English as well as a structured 30 minute interview. Of the 10 interviewees, four were from Kenya, three from Ghana, and one each

from Ethiopia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. Seven were female and three male. At the conclusion of the interviews, the interview panel met and unanimously agreed on the top two candidates for each scholarship. The final decision for candidate selection (from the top two for each position) was made by the primary supervisor for the respective PhD scholarship. Both of the preferred applicants accepted the scholarship offer in principle. LSTM are currently working through the formal PhD registration processes which should be concluded within a 3-month period. Both preferred candidates are female Kenyans. One is set to be based at AFIDEP, the other at the University of Nairobi.

In a further development, LSTM in collaboration with the DELTAS Africa IDeAL consortium are currently exploring the possibility of extending complementary PhD scholarship opportunities to the two applicants who were rated exceptional PhD prospects, but for whom a formal offer was not initially made. If successful, this will increase the outputs and learning opportunities from the LRP as well as contributing to the IDeAL's aims of developing the careers of the most promising young African scientists across a broad range of health disciplines.

The sole research assistant position, to support Theme 2 'Research Training', currently remains vacant. An initial recruitment attempt was made over June/July, 2016; however the advertisement failed to attract a sufficient response. Only two applications for the research assistant position were received, possibly because recruitment coincided with the Brexit referendum, and neither were considered suitable for interview (the position requires a francophone speaker). LSTM have now re-advertised the position both inside and outside of the European Union (the original advertisement was restricted to citizens of the European Union only). We remain hopeful of making an appointment within the next 4-8 weeks.

DELTA AGM

The LSTM team gave two LRP presentations at the recent DELTAS AGM in Nairobi (4th-6th, July). The presentation titled, The Learning Research Programme: Lessons from DELTAS Africa Initiative, was given at both the induction meeting for new DELTAS consortia on Monday 3rd July and at the full DELTAS AGM on Tuesday 4th July. The presentation provided a detailed description of the LRP aims, objectives and activities as well as a progress update. The presentations were positively received and there appears to be considerable support and interest from DELTAS consortia for the LRP. Attendance at the AGM was also incredibly useful for the LSTM LRP team and provided useful context as we head into the active data collection stage of the LRP. In an exciting development, and with considerable support from AESA, LSTM were invited to submit a supplementary budget to Wellcome Trust to support attendance at annual DELTAS AGM and related meetings over the next four years as well as support to convene meetings between LRP partners and advisory board members (travel support was not approved in the original budget). We are currently awaiting final approval for this budget; however, we are hopeful of a positive outcome. A full description of approved travel activities will be circulated pending final approval.

LRP Workplan

The provisional LRP workplan is presented in Figure 3. A final workplan will be developed, with input from partners and advisory board members, when the PhD students formally commence as their input is considered essential to informing the study objectives. The respective study designs will not be finalised until the study objectives have been agreed. Every effort will be taken to ensure data collection activities complement (and do not duplicate) routine M&E reporting requirements of the DELTAS consortia (also yet to be finalised).

Figure 3. Provisional LRP Activities and Deliverables Timeline

Activities	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Theme 1: Equitable Careers				
PhD registration	■			
Protocol development	■			
Ethics submissions	■			
Data collection		■	■	
Data analysis & writing		■	■	
Thesis first draft			■	
Thesis revision				■
Thesis submission				■
Theme 2: Training				
Protocol development	■			
Data collection		■	■	
Data analysis & writing		■	■	
Theme 3: Research Uptake				
PhD registration	■			
Protocol development	■			
Ethics submissions	■			
Data collection		■	■	
Data analysis & writing		■	■	
Thesis first draft			■	
Thesis revision				■
Thesis submission				■
Deliverables				
Quarterly newsletters	■	■	■	■
Annual 'learning' report			■	■
DELTAS AGM presentation			■	■
Conference presentation		■	■	■
LRP Publications*		■	■	■
Final report				■

Priority Activities, Aug-Dec 2016

- Complete recruitment of the research assistant to support theme 2 'research training'
- Complete registration of the 2 PhD students
- Finalise workplans for the 3 LRP thematic areas, with input from all partners and advisory board members
- Finalise study protocols for all 3 of the LRP thematic areas
- Commence data collection for theme 2 'research training'

The Deputy PI will initiate all of the aforementioned activities, although inputs will be sought from respective individuals/organisations as required.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Kind regards,

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