

# University partnerships in high- and low-income countries can increase research capacity

February 3 2015

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Developing national health research capacity in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) is a key element toward strengthening their health systems. Collaborations with universities in high -income countries may be an important tool in building research capacity, but often suffer from imbalanced power relations. In this week's *PLOS Medicine* Nelson Sewankambo from Makerere University, Uganda and Stefan Peterson from the Karolinska Institutet, Sweden, and colleagues describe their experience of setting up a mutually beneficial collaboration between the Karolinska Institutet and Makerere University in Uganda.

The [partnership](#), which was initiated in 2000, developed a model where PhD students receive a single qualification from both universities (a joint PhD degree). By doing a joint PhD degree Ugandan students have benefitted from being able to work within Uganda while having the opportunity to travel to Sweden for specialized courses and supervision. 28 joint PhD degrees have been issued so far.

The partnership has enabled [students](#) to tackle locally relevant health research questions prioritized by Makerere University and has achieved zero brain drain. All the graduates have stayed in Uganda after completing their PhDs, with the exception of short or long postdoc periods abroad. The partnership has also strengthened Karolinska Institutet to better tackle global [health](#) issues, and improve its education.

The authors conclude, "Ultimately, creating national funding lines for research in Africa's growing economies will be the key to developing and sustaining sufficient national capacities."

**More information:** Sewankambo N, Tumwine JK, Tomson G, Obua C, Bwanga F, Waiswa P, et al. (2015) Enabling Dynamic Partnerships through Joint Degrees between Low- and High-Income Countries for Capacity Development in Global Health Research: Experience from the Karolinska Institutet/Makerere University Partnership. PLoS Med 12(2): e1001784. [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pmed.1001784](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1001784)

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Citation: University partnerships in high- and low-income countries can increase research capacity (2015, February 3) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-02-university-partnerships-high-low-income-countries.html>

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