How seed funds from IANPHI spurred self-sufficiency and health research growth at Uganda Virus Research Institute (UVRI)

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Outline of presentation

• Background of UVRI & objective of IANPHI seed funding

• Methodology

• Cascade of results, outcomes, impact

• Some challenges encountered

• Conclusion & future perspectives

• Acknowledgements
UVRI background & IANPHI mustard seed seed

- Semi-autonomous NPHI in the Ugandan MoH for research & reference on viral & tropical diseases of public health importance (e.g. NCDs, NTDs etc)
- Legal entity under a national research coordinating agency-the Uganda National Health Research Organization (UNHRO)
- Research & capacity dev’t done through international partnerships e.g IANPHI, EDCTP, Wellcome Trust, on-campus programs and others

Objective: To use seed funds from IANPHI to attain self-sufficiency & research growth at UVRI for human and economic development
The UVRI Family

• **Core Departments/Divisions:**
  – Arbo-virology/Emerging/Re-emerging Diseases
  – Entomology
  – General Virology
  – Immunology
  – Reference laboratory on Expanded Program for Immunization (EPI)
  – Epidemiology, Data & IT Management
  – Administration & Clinical Unit for Research
  – Training & Capacity Building

• **Collaborating partner programs/Units:**
  – Rakai Health Sciences Program (RHSP) by John Hopkins
  – MRC/UVRI Research Unit on AIDS & Wellcome Trust
  – CDC-Uganda
  – UVRI-IAVI HIV Vaccine Program
  – African AIDS Vaccine Partnership (AAVP) secretariat
Methodology

• Technical visit by IANPHI experts in 2007 to assess UVRI strength & gaps as an NPHI

• Participatory Rapid Appraisal (Key informant interviews, document review, FGDs with senior staff & direct observation checklists)

• Seed funds in 2008 from IANPHI

• Skill development workshops e.g bio-ethics (2008) & grant writing/management (2009)
Five IANPHI Technical experts with the UVRI team during visit on 10\textsuperscript{th} January 2007
Grant writing & management workshop in Kampala for 60 trainees of UVRI & its regional partner institutions, March 2009
Result-1: Empowering Strategic Plan of UVRI (2009/10-2014/15)

• **Vision:** To be a world class centre of excellence in health research

• **Mission:** To conduct scientific investigations on viral and other tropical diseases so as to contribute to knowledge, policy, practice and build capacity while promoting institutional sustainability

• *Became a key reference document linked to Uganda Health Sector Strategic & Investment Plan*

• A reference model for developing UNHRO Strategic Plan
Results-2: Selected from a litany of subsequent achievements

- Stronger Science & Ethics Committee from 2008 with secretariat, SOPs, PABIN accreditation & handling at least 7 protocols per month
- Active Research Support Office (2008-) with Senior Administrator, 2 Capacity Dev’t Officers, IT Officer & Finance Officer (using NAVISION) -EDCTP co-funding
- Equipped & functional IT office with resource centre (used by regional trainees), Wi-Fi, LAN, CISCO intercom, 2 websites, video conference etc
- Multiple awarded grants with >16 million USD leveraged by end of 2011 (e.g EACCR*, AAVP*, THRiVE, IDEA, CAPTN* & several research grants) *Regional hubs @ UVRI
- Tiered training/mentorship opportunities for effective career pathways(IANPHI newsletters, Sep 2011 & 2012)
- Developing capacity in Biotechnology
Results-3: Power boost & molecular lab

250 KVA UVRI generator & house co-funded by CDC & IANPHI

Part of the centralized Bioinformatics & Molecular Laboratory co-funded by IANPHI, EDCTP & Wellcome Trust
Results-4: Networking

– UVRI is now a partner in a number of networks & multi-center studies e.g ALPHA network, EDCTP Networks of Excellence, AAVP Collaborating Center, MDP, DART, IAVI networks, PEPFAR networks

– A member of IANPHI network, IDEA consortium

– Polio, Measles & Influenza regional laboratories

– A member of the Regional Steering Committee for the East Africa Health, Science & Exhibition Conference of the East African Community
Some challenges encountered

- Rapid growth→high pressure on outstretched RSO & space. Plans underway to expand IT office with yr 2 IANPHI funds; use IT interns & get an IT manager
- Run-away electricity & generator fuel expenses. Recommend increase in grant overheads to 15% or +
- ?Attract/retain young scientists & RSO staff→90% donor funding. Lobbying Gov’t/UNHRO to fund more posts in approved structure; go for more competitive donor research fellowships
- Varied numerous ‘scripts’ (grant regulations) of funders. Suggesting more bi-annual reporting & more harmonized ‘scripts’ & reporting format e.g WHO’s experience with ESSENCE
Conclusion
– This model of capacity building is a powerful success story for further replication. Replicable elsewhere

Prospects
– Acquired strength & networking platform will be used to secure more funding to address remaining gaps
– Plan to go video conferencing, digital library, webinar
– Translate RSO into a stronger Grant Management Unit with M & E services & more communicative in regular newsletters and in national/regional/global matters

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