



Research partnership for the control of chronic conditions in Africa

RESPOND-AFRICA

NEWSLETTER - END OF YEAR EDITION, 2021

This has been a difficult year, with severe disruption caused by COVID-19, which struck in the early stages of the metformin phase II and the INTE-AFRICA trials. However, because of the strength of our partnership and through the heroic efforts of different partners throughout this difficult time, the research partners in Uganda and Tanzania have maintained regular engagement with civil society members, policy-makers and other stakeholders.

RESEARCH STUDIES

Metformin trials

We have now completed the phase II trial of metformin versus placebo and are analysing the data.

The Phase III trial began recruitment at the end of October 2021. Our thanks to Merck who provided the IMP for the trial and also supported us with additional storage of IMP at NIMR. Anu visited Tanzania in early November.



1 - Dr Sokoi ne outside the storage areas for META trial



2 - The META team in Tanzania led by Prof Mfi nanga and Dr Sokoine

INTE-AFRICA trial

This cluster-randomised trial is comparing integrated management of HIV, hypertension and diabetes with standard vertical care for these conditions.

4272 of a target of 7035 study participants have completed follow-up. The last participant visit is scheduled for April 2022. The team in Uganda are working with the Ministry of Health to produce guidelines for implementing integrated care and conducting a survey of health facilities to assess their readiness for integrated care.



3 - NCD Focal persons sharing their experiences of providing integrated HIV and NCD care with Josephine and Prof Moffat at Namulonge HC III in Uganda in Dec 2021.



4 - Overseen by Prof Mfinanga, INTE-AFRICA staff practice using a hemocue machine as part of 2-day training in Tanzania

[INTE-COMM trial](#)

This programme involves developing and evaluating a model of community-based integrated management of HIV, diabetes and hypertension. We have conducted a scoping review and finalised the protocol which is being reviewed by ethics committees.



5 - An example of INTE-COMM stakeholder engagement - Dr Gerald Mutungi (National NCDs Control Programme, Uganda) presenting at the Uganda National Steering Committee in May 2021.



6 - MOCCA study patient representatives after the meeting with the INTE-COMM study team at TASO, Uganda.

Mapitio

This is a retrospective study of non-communicable diseases among patients living with HIV at Hindu Mandal Hospital. The study has completed and data are now being analysed.



7 - The Mapitio team in Tanzania: (L-R) David Andimile, Anna Jazza, Mohamed Zahir and Shahista Jaffer.



8 - Erik, Katie, Anu, Sokoine, Anna and Mohamed discussing the Mapitio study.

CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

We have done less staff training than we would have liked as a result of the Covid — 19 pandemic and do plan to do more in 2022.

Anu, Josephine and Sokoine and Kenneth Mugisha (from TASO) are registered / working towards their PhDs. We have also identified 3 new PhD students, 2 in Uganda and 1 in Tanzania, through open advert. Thus, we should soon have 7 PhD students. Erik has completed the first year of his online MSc in Epidemiology at LSHTM. Manav (Hindu Mandal) is starting a MBA.

Shree Hindu Mandal and NIMR continue to work towards the bronze award for Good Financial Grants Practice (GFGP).

Various on-the-job training in research methods has been done. Topics have ranged from process evaluation/ social science, clinical trial design, and social media

Fredrick Amani (NIMR) completed an NIHR course on data governance in early 2021. Joseph and Anu completed an online Advanced Epidemiological Methods short course through London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine in September 2021 (part-funded by LSTM).



9 - Virtual training with the Tanzania team on process evaluation, June 2021



10 - Social media training from IS Global in January 2021

PAPERS



Shiri, T; Birungi, J; Garrib, A; Kivuyo, S; Namakoola, I; Mghamba, J; Musinguzi, J; Kimaro, G; Mutungi, Gerald; Nyirenda, M¹; Okebe, J; Ramaiya, K; Bachmann, M; Sewankambo, N; Mfinanga, S; Jaffar, S; Niessen, L. **“Integrated HIV, diabetes, and hypertension ambulatory health services in low-income settings: an empirical socio-economic cohort study in Tanzania and Uganda”** published in September, in BMC Medicine

Jaffar, S, Ramaiya, K, Karekezi, C, Sewankambo, N, Van Hout, MC on behalf of the Respond Africa Group. **“Controlling diabetes and hypertension in sub-Saharan Africa: Lessons from HIV programmes”** published in September, in The Lancet.

Mfinanga, S; Nyirenda, M; Mutungi, G; Mghamba, J; Maongezi, S; Musinguzi, J; Okebe, J; Kivuyo, S; Birungi, J; Van Widenfelt, E; Van Hout, MC; Bachmann, M; Garrib, A; Bukonya, D; Cullen, W; Lazarus, J; Niessen, L; Katahoire, A; Shayo, E; Namakoola, I; Ramaiya, K; Wang, D; Cuevas, L; Etukoit, B; Lutale, J; Meshack, S; Mugisha, K; Gill, G; Sewankambo, N; Smith, P; Jaffar, S. **“Integrating HIV, diabetes and hypertension services in Africa: study protocol for a cluster-randomised trial in Tanzania and Uganda.”** Published in October in BMJ Open.

Birungi, J; Kivuyo, S; Garrib, A; Mugenyi, L; Mutungi, G; Namakoola, I; Mghamba, J; Ramaiya, K; Wang, D; Usman, M; Mangozi, S; Musinguzi, J; Mugisha, K; Etukoit, B; Kakande, A; Niessen, L; Okebe, J; Shiri, T; Shimwela, M; Lutale, J; Gill, G; Sewankambo, N; Smith, P; Nyirenda, M; Mfinanga, S; Jaffar, S. **“Integrating health services for HIV-infection, diabetes and hypertension in sub Saharan Africa: a cohort study.”** Published in November, in BMJ Open.

¹<https://researchonline.lshtm.ac.uk/view/creators/eidemnyi.html>

Murtagh, S; McCombe, G; Bachmann, M; Garrib, A; Jaffar, S; Lazarus, J; Mfinanga, S; Ramaiya, K; Sewankamo, N; Van Hout, MC; Cullen, W **“Integrating Diabetes, Hypertension and HIV Care in sub-Saharan Africa: A Delphi Consensus Study on international best practice”**. Published in November, in BMC Health Services Research.

McCombe, G; Lim, J; Van Hout, MC; Lazarus, J; Bachmann, M; Jaffar, S; Garrib, A; Ramaiya, K; Sewankambo, N; Mfinanga, S; Cullen, W **“Integrating care for diabetes and hypertension with HIV care in sub-Saharan Africa: A scoping review”**. International Journal of Integrated Care, in press.

Singh, S; Kirk, O; Jaffar, S; Karakezi, C; Ramaiya, K; Kallestrup, P; Kraef, C. **“Patient perspectives on integrated health care for HIV, hypertension and type 2 diabetes – a scoping review.”** Published in November, in BMJ Open.

Bukenya, D; Van Hout, MC; Shayo, E; Kitabye, I; Musenze Junior, B; Ritar Kasidi, J; Birungi, J; Jaffar S and Seeley, J. **“Integrated Health Care Services for HIV, Diabetes Mellitus and Hypertension in Selected Health Facilities in Kampala and Wakiso Districts, Uganda. A qualitative methods study.”** Accepted. PLOS Global Health.

GRANTS 2021

NIHR Centres for NCDs and NIHR Group applications were both unsuccessful and rejected at the first stage.

NIHR Health Policy and Systems Research (HPSR) Researcher Led Awards: Led by Prof Kaushik, Shree Hindu Mandal and Prof Mbanya, University of Yaoundé 1. We expect to hear the outcome before end of December.

EC Horizon Europe: We submitted under the call “Innovative approaches to enhance poverty-related diseases research in sub-Saharan Africa” with an application focused on evaluating the scale up of INTE-AFRICA with additional innovation through TB and HBV testing in some Centres. We should hear the outcome in early 2022.

WHO: We have a small grant from WHO to review national policies on screening for NCDs through qualitative and content analysis of national NCDs and communicable disease guidelines. The work will help WHO to understand the dimensions and policy related to NCD screening service and its provision in Low-Middle-Income countries. It will also advance knowledge on integration in terms of guidance and policy on provision of NCD screenings in selected countries.

IMPACT

Government policy on integrated care in Uganda has been discussed various times including a newspaper article with an interview from Dr Joshua Musinguzi, Head of AIDs programme in the Ministry of Health.

The article can be found here <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/govt-to-combine-hiv-treatment-with-non-communicable-diseases-3261696>



11 - Integration featured in the Daily Explorer

The Group produced policy briefs on the MOCCA main findings and on the MOCCA health economics study, shared with policy-makers and local communities.

We continue to work closely with our Ministry of Health colleagues and appreciate their support in 2021. Special thanks to Dr Joshua Musinguzi for writing a blog on World AIDS Day.



12 - Dr Gerald Mutungi, Assistant Head of NCDs programme, and Dr Joshua Musinguzi, Head of AIDs programme on one of their frequent site visits in Uganda.



13 - Dr Janneth Mghamba, Assistant Director - Epidemiology, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, visiting Mbaya study site in Tanzania.

COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT

At the beginning of the year a new Communications group was created to help drive our communications plan. The group has met regularly to decide on topics for blogs, identify upcoming news items and to ensure full representation and engagement in our comms activities across the partnership. One of the first things the group worked on was the new Respond Africa logo and branding.

Patient Stories

As part of our NIHR funding for community engagement, Shree Hindu Mandal commissioned a local filmmaker to produce a short film of a patient experience of living with a chronic condition. The film follows Rose who has diabetes and explores how it affects her life and that of her family. The video can viewed here².



14 - A still from our documentary featuring Rose, a patient living with Diabetes in Tanzania.

Uganda Film

Led by TASO and supported by Ivan, the team in Uganda are in final edit stage of a short film about non-communicable diseases in Uganda. The film features Dr Gerald, Dr Joshua and Dr Mina from Ministry of Health, Steven Watiti our patient representative and Dr Josephine. Work was also undertaken to film drama skits in several local languages which will be shared with patients and their families at health facilities.

²<https://www.lstmed.ac.uk/research/departments/international-public-health/respond-africa/respond-africa-stakeholder-and>

META 3 animated film

The idea to do this came from our funder, EDCTP, and follows our initial animated film which was very well received. We look forward to disseminating the animation to patients, policy-makers and funders in January.



15 - A still from the upcoming META 3 film

Talking Heads

We made a total of 7 videos about the Group's work this year – all available on our website.



16 - Talking heads with Prof Kaushik, Prof Shabbar, Josephine, Prof Moffat and Anu are all available on the website





Meet the Team

The INTE-AFRICA website hosts a series of interviews with team members across the partnership, with many more in the pipeline.



17 - Clockwise from top left: Edna (Hindu Mandal), Sama (NIMR), Feddie (TASO) and James (LSTM) featured in the 'Meet the Team' series



TV and Radio

In Uganda, Dr Ivan and Dr Simple took part in TV and radio panel discussions in March, increasing awareness of non-communicable diseases in Uganda.



18 - L-R Ivan Namakoola, Simple Ouma and the moderator (John Weeraga) live on Bukedde TV1 on 31 March.

In Tanzania, Prof Mfinanga and team have made a short film about the work of the partnership and the research studies in Tanzania. We will share this excellent film in January.



19 - Behind the scenes view of filming taking place in Tanzania



Presentations

In 2021 the partnership made presentations at the NCD Alliance, the GACD Annual Scientific Meeting, the Tanzania Health Summit and at a LSTM Seminar series.



20 - Prof Mfinanga and Dr Anu presented on behalf of the partnership in January 2021. The link to the presentation is <https://youtu.be/ZXOWkXiflEM>



21 - Prof Mfinanga presenting at the Tanzania Health Summit in Dodoma, October 2021.

The BBC in Tanzania

In mid-October, a film crew from the BBC was in Dar es Salaam to work with Kaushik and the Tanzania NCD Alliance to produce a film on integrated care for HIV, diabetes and hypertension. The story will be hosted on a dedicated BBC.com hub website, expecting to reach a million viewers and additionally disseminated on BBC's social media channels.

You can listen to an episode of the BBC world service programme 'Africa Daily' featuring Prof Kaushik here: [bbc.in/3EPpwjW³](https://www.bbc.com/news/health-56888888)

Blogs

World Adolescent Week

Edna Siima Majaliwa, Paediatrician and Paediatric Endocrinologist at Muhimbili National Hospital in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and collaborator in the META trial wrote a piece to mark world adolescent week. Her blog looked at how we recognise adolescents living with diabetes.

<https://inteafrica.org/news/world-adolescent-week-how-recognise-adolescents-with-diabetes/>

World Clinical Trial's Day

Anu and Sokoine wrote a blog for World Clinical Trials day which was published in the NIHR newsletter <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/blog/trials-in-the-time-of-covid-lessons-from-tanzania-and-uganda/27707> . The piece focused on the challenges and lessons learned from managing a clinical trial in the times of Covid-19.

World Diabetes Day

Prof Kaushik wrote a blog piece and filmed a video for World Diabetes Day. The blog, titled "Improving Health Outcomes for People at Risk of Diabetes in sub-Saharan Africa: the Clinician's Voice from Tanzania" can be found on our website <https://www.lstmed.ac.uk/news-events/blogs/world-diabetes-day-improving-health-outcomes-for-people-at-risk-of-diabetes-in-sub-saharan-africa/>

World AIDS Day

Dr Joshua Musinguzi, Head of national AIDS programme, Uganda Ministry of Health, wrote a piece titled World AIDS Day: how the HIV-care model in sub-Saharan Africa can be leveraged to improve care for diabetes and hypertension patients. <https://inteafrica.org/news/world-aids-day-hiv-care-model-sub-saharan-africa/>

³<https://t.co/WvYJA6k7i5>

The Campus

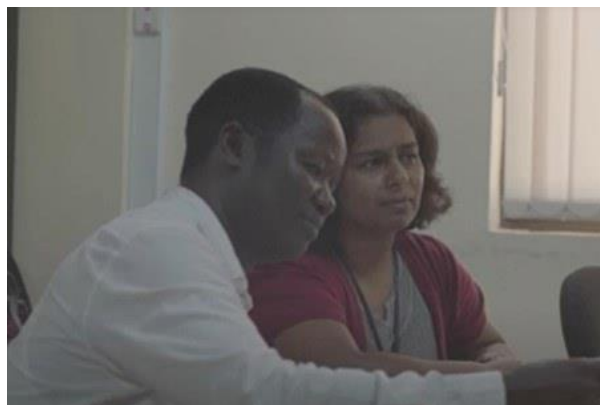
Shabbar wrote an article for THE Campus shortly after Respond Africa were shortlisted for International Collaboration of the Year, sharing lessons learned in creating international partnerships. bit.ly/3qM17rd⁴



22 - Prof Shabbar



23 - Edna Siima Majaliwa



24 - Sokoine and Anu

⁴<https://t.co/ccl6MFzHhy?amp=1>



25 - Prof Kaushik



26 - Dr Joshua Musinguzi, Head of national AIDS programme, Uganda Ministry of Health

Twitter

Respond Africa joined twitter in September sharing updates, links to publications and all our good news. In a few short months we have gone from 9 followers to 50, and in November had 15.5k tweet impressions (how many times one of our tweets has been seen on twitter).

The image shows a screenshot of a Twitter post and the profile page for RespondAfrica. The tweet, dated Sep 9, reads: "I'm not sure what's more exciting: our first tweet or the fact we've been shortlisted for an #THEAwards International Collaboration of the Year! istmed.ac.uk/RespondAfrica Congratulations to all those in the running. #INTEAFRICA #NCDs @LSTMnews". Below the tweet is a card for the organization, featuring the LSTM logo and the text "istmed.ac.uk RESPOND-AFRICA". The tweet has 2 replies, 13 retweets, and 19 likes. Below the tweet is a photo of a group of people, likely the research team, with the RespondAfrica logo overlaid. The profile page shows the name "RespondAfrica @RespondAfrica", a bio: "@Istmnews RESPOND-AFRICA is a group of researchers from Tanzania, Uganda, and the UK focusing on #NCDs such as #diabetes and #hypertension in Africa.", a link to "istmed.ac.uk/RespondAfrica", and the date "Joined February 2021". It also shows "64 Following" and "50 Followers".

AWARDS

Times Higher Education “International Collaboration of the Year 2021”



27 - James, Anu, Hazel and Joseph receiving the award on behalf of the partnership

Respond Africa were awarded ‘International Collaboration of the year’ in November 2021 at the Times Higher Education Awards, also called ‘The Oscars’ of Higher Education. Nearly a thousand people gathered in London to celebrate the sector’s recent achievement in 20 categories.

According to the judges “RESPOND-Africa’s entry stood out for creating a partnership that has resulted in a step change in research and policy.” They continued: “The range of partnerships including universities, civil society, policymakers and patient groups was impressive, as was the training and collaborative and inclusive nature of the partnerships, making a huge difference to people’s lives and leaving a tangible and adoptable model for other countries to consider.”

Best Medical Doctor



28 - Prof Kaushik being honoured by the Tanzania Medical Association with the award of “Best Medical Doctor”, November 2021

Best Researcher at NIMR, Tanzania



29 - Dr Sokoine was awarded the “best scientist employee of the year 2021” for NIMR, Muhimbili Centre in Tanzania.

Certificate of appreciation



30 - Prof Mfi nanga, Nurse Bilton Exavery and the NIMR team at a NCD event i in November 2021



31 - Prof Mfi nanga, Nurse Bilton Exavery and the NIMR team at a NCD event in November 2021

Award for Reporting of Adverse Drug Reactions



32 - Dr. Deus Buma (left), Head of Pharmacy Department at Muhimbili National Hospital receiving a certificate as recognition for his outstanding efforts in spearheading reporting of Adverse Drug Reactions. Presenting the award was The Director General of TMDA, Mr. Adam Fimbo (right).

WHO Non-Communicable Disease Lab

The INTE-COMM project was submitted for inclusion to the World Health Organization Non-Communicable Disease Lab and was subsequently shortlisted for inclusion. https://www.knowledge-action-portal.com/en/ncd_lab



INTERNATIONAL STUDY VISITS AND MEETINGS

Shabbar visited Uganda in May 2021 and met with the Prof Moffat and his team, Ministry of Health policy-makers, patient representatives and health care workers to strategise and plan together for the next steps for the research programme.



33 - Moffat, Dr Mina, Shabbar, Dr Gerald, Dr Joshua, Francis and Josephine in Uganda June 2021.

In October Anu visited Tanzania to support Prof Mfinanga, Sokoine and the team with the start of the META 3 trial....and Jeff and Camila from IS Global happened to be there at the same time to film the Tanzania team!



34 - Camila, Prof Mfinanga, Jeff and Sokoine in Dar es Salaam, Oct 2021

The International Steering Committee met virtually in January 2021 and continued to communicate online throughout the year. We hope to be able to meet in person in 2022!



35 - Members and observers at the International Steering Committee on 20 January 2021

PPE

LSTM launched the 'Bump it Forward' campaign, where money raised through donations was awarded to organisations across Africa to assist in the purchase of P.P.E for healthcare workers during the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic.

In March, our partners MRC/UVRI & LSHTM, Uganda and NIMR, Tanzania were awarded £29,000 and £20,000 respectively as part of this campaign to procure and distribute across health care facilities. Ivan wrote a piece about the experience which can be found <https://www.lstmed.ac.uk/news-events/blogs/report-on-the-delivery-of-ppes-to-9-health-facilities-in-eastern-uganda-5th-july>



36 - The team arranging delivery of hand sanitiser in Tanzania



37 - A facility in Mayuge district, Uganda, receiving their PPE

NEW STARTERS and PARTNERS

This year we welcomed the following new team members:

Caroline Jeffery, Research Associate (Biostatistics and health economics) at LSTM

Huanyuan Luo - PhD student statistician at LSTM

Mohamed Zahir - Research Coordinator at Shree Hindu Mandal Hospital.

Jonathan Willetts, Database Programmer at LSTM

Anna Jazza, at Shree Hindu Mandal Hospital

Shahista Jaffer, at Shree Hindu Mandal Hospital

Francis Kasujja - Senior Scientist at MRC Uganda/UVRI & LSHTM

Marlena van Selm – Research Assistant at IS Global

Faith Moyo - Research Associate at LSTM

And we worked with the following new partners in 2021:

- Prof Mbanya and his team at University of Yaounde 1, Cameroon
- Africa NCD Alliance, East Africa NCD Alliance, International NCD Alliance
- University of Liverpool –through our collaboration with Dr Uzman Alam
- Kings College, London –through our continued engagement with Dr Jamie Murdoch
- Region Hovenstaden, Copenhagen –through our link with Dr Christian Kraef
- Institut D’Investigacio En Ciencies De La Salut Germans Trias I Pujol (IGTP) Spain,

Erasmus University, Rotterdam

END OF YEAR MEETING

On 15 December we held an informal ‘End of Year’ meeting where we discussed each of the research projects and other cross cutting topics such as data management, capacity building, grants management, and communications. It was great to take stock of everything we’ve managed to do, given yet another tough year due to the pandemic, and it was lovely to share a lot of laughter and jokes as well as spot a fair few festive hats and jumpers!

Even Zoom was happy, allowing nearly 30 people to turn their cameras on for a photo without freezing - a Christmas miracle!



38 - Some of the friendly faces of the Respond Africa partnership!

AND FINALLY...

Thank you everybody for all the hard work and support over the last year.

Wishing everybody a wonderful festive season and a very happy New Year. Stay safe, and see you all in 2022!