

# UNESCO-Merck Africa Research Summit



## **Strengthening the Capacity for Health Research in Africa**

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# Presentation Outline



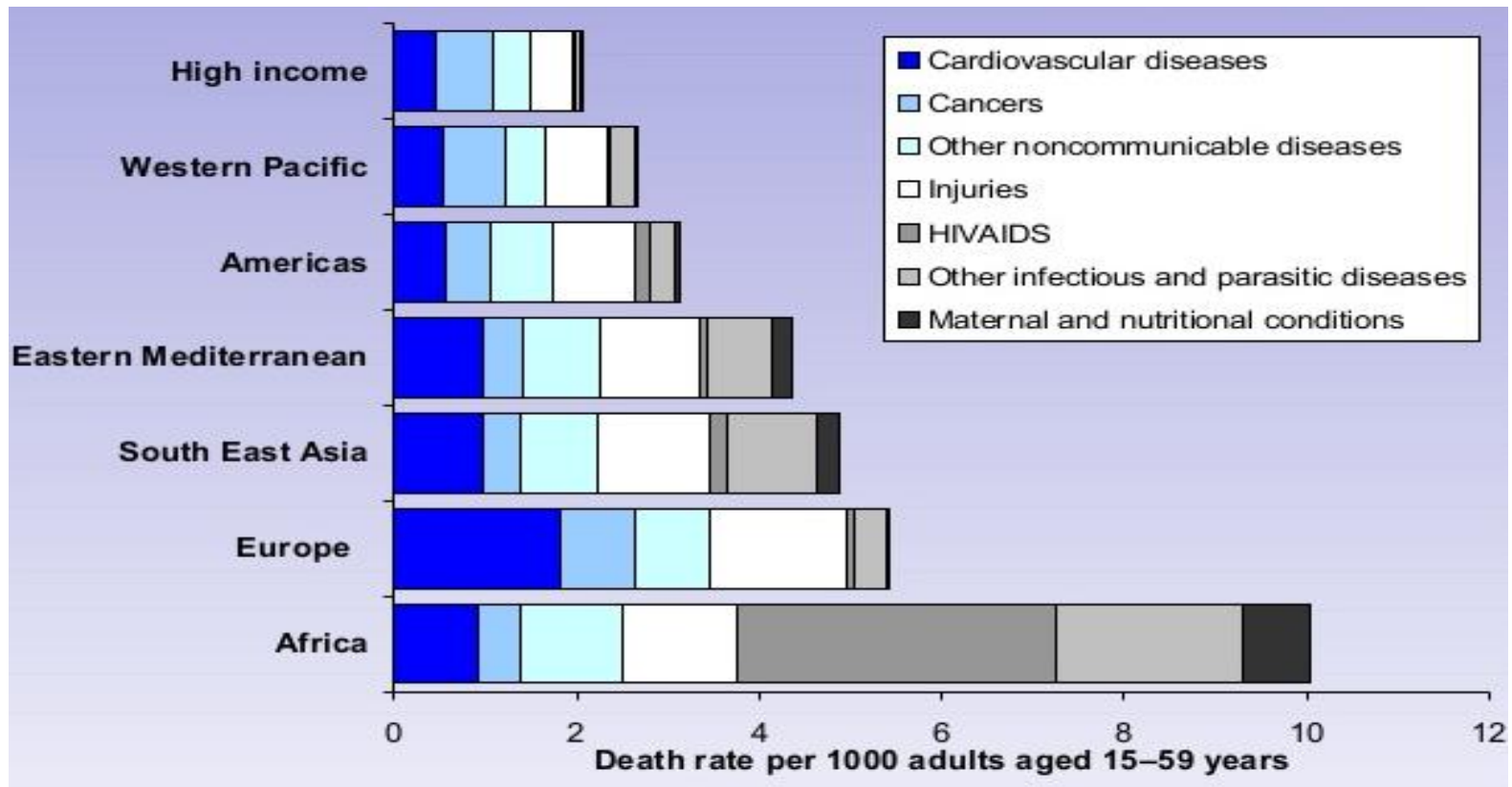
**Part I:** Personal experience with Health Research Strengthening Initiatives in Africa.

**Part II:** Challenges in Strengthening the capacity for health research in Africa.

**Part III:** New Health Research Strengthening initiatives

# The burden of Infectious diseases is greatest in sub-Saharan Africa.

## Burden of disease by broad cause group and region, 2004



*"Nothoring on earth is more international than disease Paul Russel. Source:*

*<http://www.slideshare.net/Sujatamohapatra/global-burden-of-disease-international-health-regulation>*

What is the best approach to train scientists and health professionals in Africa to produce scientific knowledge and tools to address diseases affecting the African population?

# Part I: My personal experiences

## Case Study# 1



Department of Tropical Medicine, University of Hawaii, USA  
Biotechnology Centre, University of Yaounde I, Cameroon

- Two main goals:
  - Conduct research on malaria.
  - Train and raise a critical mass of scientist to continue research on malaria at BTC in Cameroon.

**Where is the critical mass of scientist to continue research on malaria at the Biotechnology Center?**

# Part I: My personal experiences

## Case Study# 2



### MIM/TDR Research Capacity Building Program

- Awarded grants to early and mid-career African scientist working in research groups in Africa on malaria.
- Last round of MIM/TDR grants was awarded in 2009.
- Looking for funding to revive it

Where are the research capacity building programs to support early or mid-career African scientist in Africa?

# Part I: My personal experiences

## Case Study# 3



### The EDCTP I program

- Invested in research infrastructure, equipped laboratories and provided research awards.
- Program terminated = “We are closed till next grant”
- There is no pipeline of funding to sustain research activities

How can research groups or laboratories in Africa sustain their research activities when funding from a donor (s) phases out?

## Part II: Challenges in Strengthening the capacity for health research in Africa.



- 1) Little or no alignment between research strengthening efforts and national development agendas
- 2) Very few research leaders and solutions to local health problems
- 3) Extremely slow uptake of research results or findings into policy and practice.
- 4) Limited support for conducting and communicating research findings locally.



## Part II: Challenges in Strengthening the capacity for health research in Africa.



### 5) Too much focus on Knowledge generation

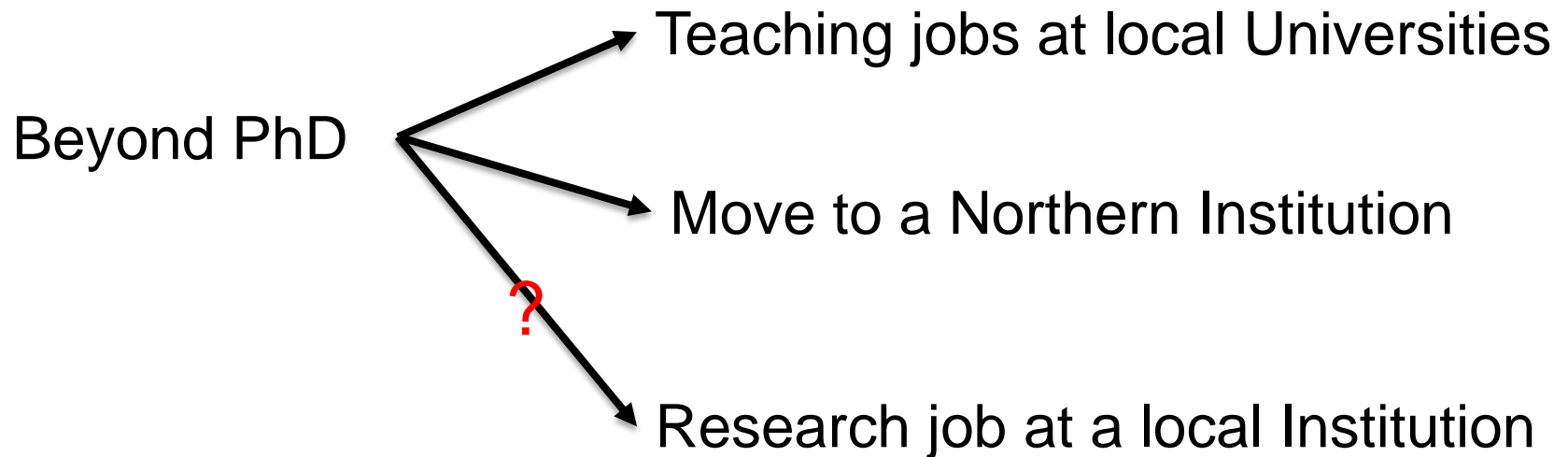
- We need to go beyond the culture of knowledge generation and embrace a culture of innovation.
- We can not only be “Data collectors”, we need to be “idea generators”
- Innovation in developing drugs and vaccines
- Innovation in designing strategies to finance, to engage and to deliver health interventions

**Innovation is not just about doing things new, but differently and in a more sustainable and effective way.**

## Part II: Challenges in Strengthening the capacity for health research in Africa.



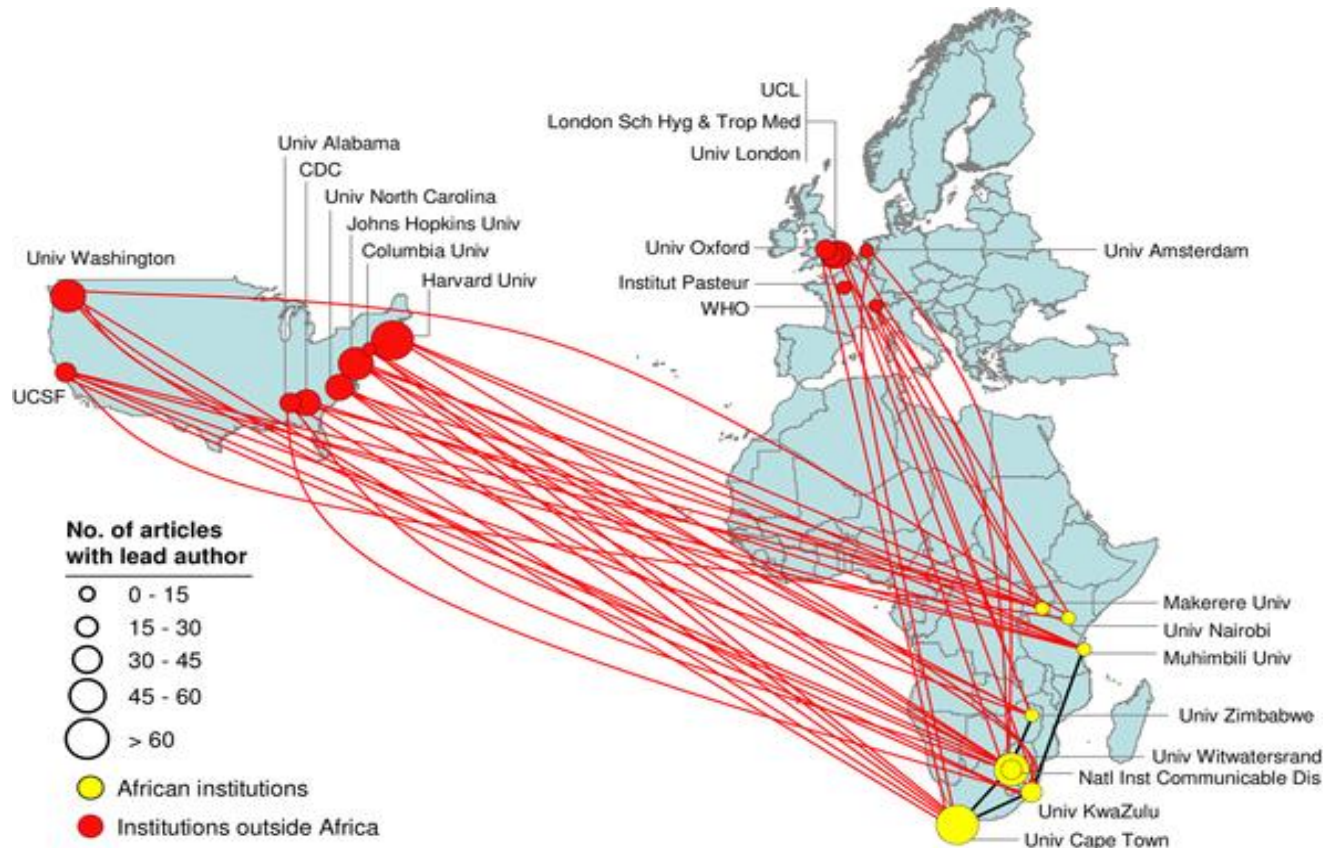
### 6) Lack of research career opportunities



# Part II: Challenges in Strengthening the capacity for health research in Africa.

8) Uneven geographic coverage.

Why the focus in a few African Countries?



**Collaboration bias towards the US and Europe for the HIV/AIDS R&D network.**

# Part III: New Initiatives for Strengthening health research capacity in Africa



## Africa Research Excellence Fund (AREF) Funding for African Researchers



**New Programme of Research  
Development Fellowships funded by the  
Medical Research Foundation's Africa  
Research Excellence Fund**

An initiative to support early career African

Source: <http://www.medicalresearchfoundation.org.uk/for-researchers/funding-opportunities/funding-for-african-researchers/>

# Part III: New Initiatives for Strengthening health research capacity in Africa



## Alliance for Accelerating Excellence in Science in Africa (AESAs)

An initiative created by the African Academy of Science and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

Two great programs

- 1) The DELTAS African program
- 2) Grand Challenges Africa

Source: <http://www.aasciences.org/index.php/news-a-events/433-aesa-launched>

Thank you