

ESSENCE Members mini-meeting at EDCTP Forum 2021

21 October 2021

14:00 – 16:00 (time indicated at local Maputo/Central European time (UTC/GMT +2:00))

Meeting Minutes

Meeting objectives: The meeting was one of the regular meetings a year at the side of major events and conferences to which the majority of ESSENCE members attend to exchange information on what the group has done since its last annual meeting, and to receive input into some of the projects that are ongoing.

Facilitators: Linda Kupfer, Co-Chair ESSENCE, *Senior Scientist, Fogarty International Center, U.S.- National Institutes of Health (FIC/NIH)*; Thabi Maitin, Co-Chair ESSENCE, *Division Manager, Research Capacity Development, South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC)*.

Encl.: Annex 1 – Virtual roundtable - Update from members
Annex 2 – Agenda
Annex 3 – Photo de famille
Annex 4 – List of Participants

1. Welcome and introduction – **Linda Kupfer; Thabi Maitin; Moses Bockarie** *Director of International Cooperation (Africa) & Head of Africa office, European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnerships (EDCTP)*.

The meeting was chaired by the Co-Chairs and the objectives of the meeting were presented at the start of the meeting. Thabi Maitin first welcomed the participants especially those joining for the first time and invited Moses Bockarie to give his opening speech. Moses Bockarie expressed his appreciation to everyone and stated that the ESSENCE mini-meeting at the side of EDCTP forum is part of a huge community, noting over 2100 people from 94 countries registered for the event, with over 600 participations and at least 300 people participating from Africa. While the event has been very interactive and successful, he however commented on the high risk of hosting a hybrid meeting and inviting high level personalities to connect in one room. He appreciated everyone for participating in the 10th forum and this meeting, and invited the participants to have a fruitful and constructive exchanges.

2. Review of action items from 26-27 April 2021 annual members virtual meeting - **Garry Aslanyan, WHO TDR, Coordinator, ESSENCE Secretariat**

During the review, the participants were informed of the outcome of the 26-27 April virtual members annual meeting and the follows ups that the Steering Committee (SC) has worked on. These are more specifically, the request to engage with other networks (in this case, [GLOPID-R](#) and [COSTECH](#) on observer status on both sides); initiate discussion around improving collaboration and networking between different partnerships and different funders; and solidify additional memberships for all the working groups especially those coming from middle-income countries (MIC). It was also reported that the SC meet on a monthly basis and follow up with these actions and more, as well as provide regular updates on the progress and work done within the initiative by sharing minutes of the SC in batches to the broader membership.

3. Update from ESSENCE Working Groups - **Garry Aslanyan; Linda Kupfer; Thabi Maitin; Peter Kilmarx, Deputy Director, Fogarty International Center, U.S - National Institutes of Health (FIC/NIH)**
- [Working Group on Research Management](#)
 - Garry informed that the working group (WG) is currently being chaired by Elaina Davis, while noting a volunteer is needed to co-chair the group. Have had at least one meeting from the time of the annual meeting, with majority of focus on further dissemination of the second edition of the [Five Keys](#), an ESSENCE good practice document (GPD) focused on research costing and pricing.
 - Underlined that the document is one of the very valuable and appreciated tool by both funders and those who receive funding and work with funders. It is in three languages (English, French and Spanish), although the Portuguese version is expected to be released at the end of 2021. It is available on ESSENCE website and has been shared on several members' websites and through their different networks including [ACU](#) supporting research community, Wellcome Grant holders, and [IRMI](#).
 - A series of webinars have also been jointly organized with [WARIMA](#) and [SARIMA](#), [IRMI](#), [EViR](#) and [BRAMA](#) in Portuguese, noting the WG is working with IP, EDCTP and the Central African Research and Innovation Management Association (CARIMA) to organize a French version in November 2021. The webinars on sharing the GPD on costing will continue in 2021 with various stakeholders and institutions to further unpack the document, with plans to have one in Spanish.
 - The WG is looking at future directions for RM and areas where funders would benefit, with specific links to the Equitable Partnership (EP) Project, focusing on RM as a key part or important prerequisite of EP between researchers in North South, and between researchers and funders.
 - [Working Group on Implementation Research](#)
 - During the update, Linda Kupfer informed of the WG similar activities around the dissemination of the information in the [Seven Approaches](#) to investing in implementation research (IR) GPD, using members' website, newsletters, a series of webinars and meetings, as well as social media.
 - Have submitted a paper to [Global Health Science and Practice](#) aiming to get the information out to a broader audience, and participating in the annual conference on annual conference on [D&I](#) to present on funders policies and understanding the implement side of IR, and how it can play a role in global IR.
 - A [survey](#) has been sent out to the broader members to prioritize the different areas of the research that the WG could plan for and focus on in the next two years. The deadline has been extended to Friday, 29 October to allow more members share their feedback on some of the areas that have been discussed at prior meetings and within the WG.
 - Following up on April 2021 meeting, the WG has reached out to a colleague at [CUGH](#) who presented on the consortium's web-based capacity building database about improving it to include a module focused on IR training, monitoring and career opportunities.
 - During the discussion, it was noted that the European Commission (EC) has proposed that national activities should be aligned to assure national activities talk to and interact with each other to better promote the participating states role and ensure more synergies.
 - While EC would help promote ESSENCE GPD to the countries, presentations to EDCTP General Assembly on some of the discussion at this meeting and information in the GPD was advocated for. This will show that the reports are expanded, not only in Europe but Africa as well, aiming to ensure there is an alignment.
 - The co-chairs informed that ESSENCE would welcome the opportunity to join and present at EDCTP meetings, as well as engage more with EC to further link the commission to the initiative.
 - [GACD](#) although not a funder but work with a number of individual funders, showed interest at this meeting to join the WG to share valuable insights and contribute to the work of the WG.
 - [Working Group on Review of Investments \(WGRI\)](#)
 - Peter Kilmarx reported on the past and current activities of the group that was convened in 2018, including the background paper that was developed and the consultation held with key stakeholders to establish coordination and mechanism. Informed that the WG in 2020, came up with some simple metrics for health research capacity, partnership models and a gap analysis, and how the metrics are starting to be taken up by some other groups at the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA), and the White House plan that include metrics driven approach for R&D capacity.

- Underlined that GHSA is also taking on the use of the metrics of research capacity and the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board (GPMB), as well as the UKCDR recent mention of WGRl's work and recommendations for using metrics and focusing efforts where there is no research capacity.
 - Perhaps in 2022, the WG will be expanding the data captured and tracking certain analytic capabilities and WorldReport. Are working on the analysis of indicators and predictive values and correlate, as well as on the WHO Global Observatory on R&D on developing the national health research assistant indicators.
 - Have a workstream on implementation project using the survey results that was conducted to select one or two countries where the group can have an implementation project to identify better coordination of funders and work with national health authorities to increase their capacity.
 - The second meeting of the ESSENCE Mechanism on increasing effectiveness equity and strengthening health research capacity, using data and metrics, comes up on 1-2 November 2021 with key speakers confirmed from around the world, especially leaders in developing research capacity in their countries and regions. Participants were invited to register to participate and to invite their networks.
4. Update on Equitable Partnership Project – “From Principles to Practice” – a partnership between UKCDR and ESSENCE - **Lara Pandya**, *Senior Strategic Partnerships Officer, European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnerships (EDCTP)*; **Daniela Toale**, UKCDR; **Garry Aslanyan**
- Garry Aslanyan informed that UKCDR has been working on the EP project for up to eight months in partnership with ESSENCE, and with oversight from the EP Task force consisting of 45 individuals from 2500 organizations across Europe and Africa. It was set up to develop the EP Resource Hub and funder guidance and recommendations on supporting equitable research partnerships. The goal is to expand it to include more LMICs and funders given their goal and activity.
 - EDCTP is trying to find ways that can enhance equity in the way programs are funded, aiming to help its grantees ensure that they address equity in their applications, funding and the grants that are funded.
 - Underlined that a real practical guidance coming out of the UKCDR and ESSENCE partnership will be helpful, noting EDCTP will also contribute to the case studies in terms of its epidemic preparedness consortium, which is an important partnership across Europe and Africa, and beyond.
 - On the survey that was set up in August in French, English and Spanish to request for developing case studies that would be part of a good practice document, it was noted that the analysis is still ongoing.
 - In terms of participation from various regions and the type of partnerships that people indicated in their responses (over 400), there were already some emerging areas including power relations between partners, the different aspects of enabling EP from different ways (funders and researchers, and between researchers and funders) that will form themes and areas that will be built on or elaborated within a GPD.
 - Other different levels of analysis and themes emerging include barriers to EP in terms of how agendas are shaped between northern funders and southern recipients, language barrier issues around eligibility, funding policies, and financing issues of overheads linked to ESSENCE GPD on research costing and pricing.
 - The report is expected to be published by the spring of 2022, although the priority of the task force is to consolidate the findings and work on drafting the GPD with cases that have already been shortlisted.
 - They will also be running some focus groups and workshops with research managers, funders and early and mid career researchers in November similar to the brainstorming with EDCTP 10th forum attendees.
5. Initial discussion on Ad-hoc Working Group on Partnerships and Networking - **Garry Aslanyan**
- This agenda item is a follow up to April 2021 meeting on some of the reflection by members. In particular, how member funder agencies work together and what are the modalities and best practices when they come together to co-fund and build networks that contributes to a more streamlined and better and equitable relationships with those who are funded through international and global research.
 - Upon reflection by the Steering Committee, there was a request that a small ad hoc WG be established to work on this area. However, there need to be enough interest from the members which was why a request was made in September asking members to volunteer to join the group for a preliminary brainstorm of what would be the objectives and goals of the WG.

- While a lot of input or interest has not been received so far, this meeting is an opportunity to remind members the background of what was discussed, receive input on how the ad hoc group can reflect on this so the initiative can follow up, as well as see if there is enough interest from members present.
6. Updates from member organizations and options for face-to-face/virtual meetings in 2022
- For all updates, please see Annex 1.
 - After the reflection on whether or not the group should plan to meet in person in 2022, and it was agreed that the most optimistic most agencies were being is potentially towards the end of 2022. The Steering Committee will further discuss on this at its next meeting.

Action (s)

- Members who are interested in joining any of the working groups or the ad hoc group on Partnerships and Networking should send an email to aslanyang@who.int
- Secretariat to
 - send a survey reminder on behalf of Implementation Research WG to allow more members participate
 - follow up with DHSC on the work around G-7 potential platforms for clinical trials in the future to maintain synergy with the work of ESSENCE.

7. Final remarks Co-Chairs ESSENCE – **Linda Kupfer and Thabi Maitin**

The co-chairs extended a grateful thank you to all the participants for their rich input and for providing update from their institution regarding work that they are doing that ESSENCE might be interested in. They look forward to welcoming everyone again in 2022 and further exchanges on members' capacity building efforts.

Annex 1 – **Virtual roundtable - update from members**– *Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (GACD) - Morven Roberts*

- The link to the impact evaluation undertaken on the 10-years workings of the alliance supporting implementation science is on its [website](#). A number of case studies will appear from the evaluations, understanding from the projects undertaken, the enablers, and impact from implementation science. The executive summary report is [online](#).
- On implementation science training, the alliance does have an [implementation science hub](#) used to run training events for researchers, particularly on non-communicable diseases and for individuals based in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). The school is completely free for users although it is a competitive process.
- Applications have just been recently closed, but there will always be upcoming events for people who are looking to get a grasp of implementation science.
- GACD e-hub is an online platform which people can take a self guided tour through the training program recorded lectures. It acts as a hub because it links through to other activities hosted by its members including Fogarty International Center, U.S. National Institutes of Health.

– *Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) - Maria Teresa Bejarano*

- Sida is making efforts to ensure that all programs that support health in countries have a component of implementation research (IR). It recently got funding for IR in addition to funds that is being provided to support the countries programs.

– *Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) - Val Snewin*

- The UK, having the G-7 presidency in 2021, picked up some actions particularly around clinical trials capacity strengthening. Based on this, and rather than reinventing the wheel, DHSC will build on the work that ESSENCE has already done in this area, in particular the work of the working group on review of investments in clinical research capacity (WGRI).
- The department of health will continue the work that is been conducted by WGRI, write an internal update on state of play particularly in the context of covid-19 and pandemic preparedness for the Department of Health (i.e. Ministry of Health and the UK).
- The link to the G-7 charter clinical trials that was agreed as part of the current presidency and associated document called 100 days pandemic preparedness plan can be assessed [online](#).

– *European Commission DG RTD (EC) - Inma Penas-Jimenez*

- The European Parliament has voted positively about the single basic act that includes the future Global Health EDCTP3 Joint Undertaking, the follow up of the second European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership programme (EDCTP2). The single basic act is expected to be adopted by the European Council before the end of this year. Commission proposal can be found at EUR-Lex - 52021PC0087 - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)
- Launching of the Team Europe Initiative on manufacturing and access to vaccines, medicines and health technologies which is more about producing medicine in Africa rather than focus on research. It will help strengthen the whole system, starting with about 1 billion euros. More here - [€1 billion Team Europe initiative on manufacturing and access to vaccines, medicines and health technologies in Africa](#).

– *European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnerships (EDCTP) – Lara Pandya*

- EDCTP had a workshop at the Tenth EDCTP Forum on its recently developed tool called the EDCTP [Knowledge Hub, developed](#) in partnership with The Global Health Network (TGHN), aiming to help researchers in LMICs access tools and information resources for protocol development, data management and data sharing.
- This aligns with the issue of equity in ensuring that these resources are equally available for researchers in low resources settings – helping them with the basics for setting up, designing, conducting and managing a trial, as well as taking it to the level of giving access to their data and ensuring knowledge uptake.

- It is a useful open access tool for any grantees, regardless of whether they are EDCTP-funded or not, and EDCTP is willing to give a short presentation at some stage in case of interest. The EDCTP Knowledge Hub is hosted on TGHN's platform together with other complementary Knowledge Hubs, such as the DHSC and Wellcome funded [ARCH Hub](#): Applying Research to Policy and Practice for Health and BMGF funded Design, Analyze, Communicate ([DAC](#)) Hub, and a WHO health research framework that is currently being developed with TGHN.
 - UK Collaborative on Development Research (UKCDR) – **Daniela Toale**
- UKCDR recently published a briefing paper and some impact case studies on research capacity strengthening. It is basically about the nature of UK investments in terms of the long term implications of its partnerships. The document can be assessed here – [Briefing paper: UK funding landscape for research capacity strengthening in low- and middle-income countries](#)
 - Wellcome – **Branwen Hennig**
- Wellcome started implementing its new strategy and vision focusing. This covers
 - i) [discovery research](#) (previously 'science'), primarily covering open response mode funding schemes across a broad scientific spectrum at the more basic/fundamental end, and not including purely translational/applied research
 - and ii) three health challenge areas – mental health, climate & health, and infectious diseases - where there will be more targeted calls or directed funding, covering the whole spectrum from basic to translational work.
 - As part of the implementation of all of these areas, Wellcome has had a major internal restructure and staff changes.
- Update on AESA platform at the African Academy of Sciences (AAS)
 - AESA is the delivery platform of the AAS, set-up in partnership with the African Union's technical arm, NEPAD (now AUDA-NEPAD), with support from Wellcome, the UK FCDO (previously DFID) and BMGF. Over the last year, governance challenges at AAS/AESA have resulted in AUDA-NEPAD suspending negotiations with the AAS for renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding and Charter. There was further a breakdown in trust and communications between the AAS and the AESA senior management, centring around allegations of fund-mismanagement.
 - Given these governance issues Wellcome terminated grants with the AAS as host organisation by 31 July 2021, with the intent to transition major programmes to a new host organisation (as yet confidential). This is in line with other funding partners incl. BMGF, FCDO, SIDA etc. The AESA platform remains at AAS, but is effectively now only running approx. 10% of the previous portfolio of grants and initiatives.
 - Wellcome engaged Price Waterhouse Cooper (PwC) Kenya to act as temporary fund manager to facilitate i) the transition of Wellcome Grants out of the AAS; and ii) the running of critical business activities previously under the AESA platform, whilst ensuring uninterrupted operations of programmes/grants and minimising disruptions to grantees.
 - A new entity, the Science for Africa (SFA) foundation has been set up to manage programmes / operations going forward (taking on ex-AESA staff), when the transition to a new non-for-profit non-governmental host institution has been achieved. Meanwhile close engagement between funders continues.
- WHO TDR – **Garry Aslanyan**
- Members encouraged to help disseminate the Global Health Matters podcast where at least 80% guests are from LMICs and to listen to them as they are indeed very informative. One of the episodes recently released, is focused on communication of science.
- Comments and ideas on how to further disseminate or help with member networks should be sent via email to aslanyang@who.int or shared directly at TDRpod@who.int.

Annex 2: **AGENDA****THURSDAY, 21 OCTOBER**

13:55 *Participants should connect at least 5 minutes in advance*

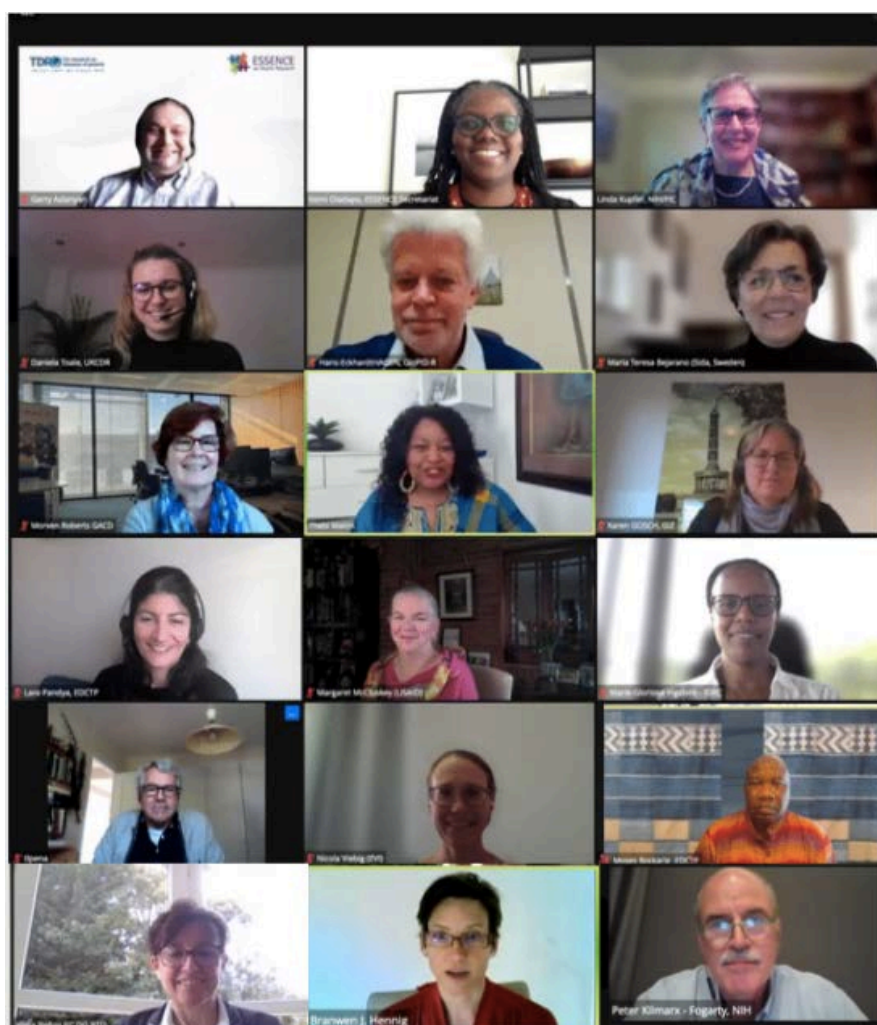
- 14:00
1. Welcome and introduction
 - **Linda Kupfer**, Co-Chair ESSENCE, *Senior Scientist, Fogarty International Center, U.S.- National Institutes of Health (FIC/NIH)*; **Thabi Maitin**, SAMRC, Co-Chair ESSENCE, *Division Manager, Research Capacity Development, South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC)*.
 - **Moses Bockarie** *Director of International Cooperation (Africa) & Head of Africa office, European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnerships (EDCTP)*.
- 14:05
2. Review of action items from 26-27 April 2021 annual members virtual meeting
 - **Garry Aslanyan**, *Coordinator, ESSENCE Secretariat, (WHO/TDR)*
- 14:10
3. Update from ESSENCE Working Groups – Implementation Research (IR), Research Management (RM), Working Group on Review of Investments (WGRI) / Proposed Research Capacity Strengthening (RCS) Handbook for Funders
 - *Presentation 5 minutes each followed by discussion*
 - **Elaina Davis**, *Global Health Research Advisor, Science, Research and Evidence Directorate, Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)*; **Linda Kupfer**; **Thabi Maitin**, **Peter Kilmarx**, *Deputy Director, Fogarty International Center, U.S.- National Institutes of Health (FIC/NIH)*, **Garry Aslanyan**

14:40 Photo de famille and short break

- 14:45
4. Update on Equitable Partnership Project – “From Principles to Practice” – a partnership between UKCDR and ESSENCE.
 - *Presentation – 10 minutes followed by discussion*
 - **Lara Pandya**, *Senior Strategic Partnerships Officer, European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnerships (EDCTP)*; **Yaso Kunaratnam**, *Research and Policy Officer, UK Collaborative on Development Research (UKCDR)*; **Garry Aslanyan**
- 15:05
5. Initial discussion on Ad-hoc Working Group on Partnerships and Networking
- 15:15
6. Updates from members and options for face-to-face/virtual meetings in 2022 – all
- 15:50
- Wrap up / Final remarks Co-Chairs ESSENCE

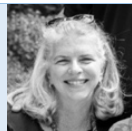



Adjourn at 16:00

Annex 3: Photo de famille




Annex 4: **List of Participants****ESSENCE Steering Committee**

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