

PA-108 **LOCALLY DRIVEN RESEARCH IS BETTER FOR INFECTIOUS DISEASES OUTBREAK PREPAREDNESS: AN EDCTP CAPACITY-BUILDING PROJECT IN POST-EBOLA LIBERIA**

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10.1136/bmjgh-2016-000260.138

Background Liberia is recovering from an Ebola outbreak. Liberia suffers from brain drain and a low gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education alongside a dearth of institutions, skilled investigators and funds for research. Liberia needs to rebuild its capacity in epidemiological research. The Saint Joseph's Catholic Hospital (SJCH) in Monrovia –in collaboration with ISGlobal and the Juan Ciudad Foundation, received an EDCTP grant to strengthen its staff capacities to lead research in infectious diseases.

Methods In March 2016, a participatory planning process started. The hospital management team and medical department staff were engaged. The process was guided by scientists from ISGlobal. Thirty-two trainees were identified among staff of the Ministry of Health and SJCH; community leaders were sought to build a Community Advisory Board; and trainees' suggestions informed the design of a 6-months Moodle-based eLearning program.

Results Two workshops on Good Clinical and Laboratory Practices (GCLP) were conducted. In preparation for the SJCH to conduct biomedical research and clinical trials, another workshop to design Standard Operating Procedures was done. All trainees joined the eLearning program and received a certificate of completion. Furthermore, the SJCH defined its own institutional research program, submitted a research proposal to a local ethics board, and is pooling resources to undertake further research on infectious diseases in 2017.

Conclusions A collaborative multi-disciplinary framework that promoted participation of the community was an approach that fuelled the successful completion of all training activities of this EDCTP-awarded project. The trainees capitalised on their experiences during the Ebola epidemic to ensure all activities were planned as per best quality standards. All trainees were motivated to prevent that planning and implementation-related errors they witnessed during the Ebola outbreak, were repeated in new education and research initiatives. In addressing global health challenges today, these motivational driving forces need a responsible and prompt response from Northern countries.