



**Research capacity building and knowledge generation to support
preparedness and response to humanitarian crises and epidemics
(RECAP)**

Work Plans

August 2018

Work Packages 7 to 10: Capacity Strengthening activities

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See also log frame and Gantt Chart document

Background:

The overall aim of RECAP is to strengthen research capacity and capability to generate knowledge to support preparedness and response to humanitarian crises and epidemics.

To achieve this aim RECAP has four key objectives that will build and strengthen research capacity and capability in this area.

1. Training on specific research methods linked to the research conducted in RECAP
2. Institutional capacity building for a sustainable and supportive research environment
3. Supporting individual researcher capability and career progression
4. Building UK capability in research on health and protection in humanitarian crises.

Approach:

In line with research capacity strengthening best practice, a collaborative approach will be used to maximise impact and sustain a (RECAP) capacity legacy. Authentic and equitable partnership working will underpin the research capacity and capability strengthening work of RECAP, and with all partners invested and involved in co-design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme activities. Within work packages 8 and 9 specifically, all partners will have joint responsibility and accountability for conducting all activities within these work packages. All institutional capacity strengthening work in work package 8 will build on existing capacity within the institution.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The institutional capacity strengthening action plans, for work packages 8 & 9 will use an adaptation of the ESSENCE framework developed in 2011 by WHO/TDR¹ to plan, monitor and evaluate capacity strengthening in health research, and will use clear and measurable indicators to monitor and evaluate at individual and organisational level.

The learning from work packages 8 and 9 will be evaluated using the Four Levels of Evaluation Framework by Kirkpatrick (2005)² – which encompasses the evaluation of process (level 1), the learning gains (level 2), application of learning to practice (level 3), and impact as a result of application (level 4).

¹ ESSENCE (Enhancing Support for Strengthening the Effectiveness of National Capacity Efforts) 2011, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Capacity Strengthening in Health Research. Geneva, TDR/ESSENCE/ 11.1

http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/stellent/groups/corporatesite/@sf_central_grants_admin/documents/web_document/wtp057117.pdf

<http://www.who.int/tdr/publications/non-tdr-publications/essence-framework/en/>

² Kirkpatrick, D. (2005) *Evaluating Training Programmes: The Four Levels*. (3rd Ed.). Williston. VT. USA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc.

All monitoring and evaluation data from these work packages will feed into the overall RECAP programme monitoring and evaluation strategy.

Sustainability and legacy:

The research influence for work package 8 and 9 (institutional and individual capacity strengthening) will draw from change theory, and particularly the work of Fullan (1982)³ and his proposed model for educational change. This model outlines four broad phases of change: (i) initiation (change agents, advocacy and need for change), (ii) implementation (stakeholder involvement and understanding the complexity of change), (iii) continuation (embedding change into structures and establishing procedures for continued support), and (iv) outcome (changes in skills, thinking and committed actions).

Work package 7 – Strengthening Capacity in Research Methods

The aim of work package 7 is to strengthen training in specific research methods related to humanitarian research conducted in work packages 1 – 6.

The work package activities are led by the LSHTM leads for work packages 1 – 6, and in collaboration with the RECAP partners involved in the specific work package. Key activities will be in:

- Developing and delivering research methods training courses / modules in humanitarian research, and where appropriate, embed these within RECAP institutions
- Developing open access training courses and resources for use beyond the RECAP programme
- Training researchers and staff in specific research methods relating to the research conducted within the specific work package.

The LSHTM lead for work package 7 will liaise with the RECAP work package leads and partners involved, to co-ordinate activities as needed. These will include:

- A mapping exercise across all the work packages, partners and institutions to establish what training, courses and resources are being planned and developed within the work packages; and to promote collaboration and reduce the potential for duplicating effort
- Establishing a means for disseminating the courses to researchers within the RECAP project and more widely
- Working with the work package leads and partners to monitor the uptake of the courses
- Sustainability – exploring opportunities with work package leads and partners for validating and embedding developed courses within institutional curricula, where appropriate

Staff:

The LSHTM leads for work packages 1 – 6, and the RECAP partners involved in the specific research methods training will lead the development of the courses. The LSHTM lead for work package 7 will liaise and co-ordinate with the work package leads and partners as required.

³ Fullan, M.G. (1982). *The meaning of educational change*. New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, USA

Work package 8 – Strengthening institutional capacity for conducting humanitarian research

The aim of this work package is to strengthen institutional capacity within the RECAP academic partner institutions in Lebanon (American University of Beirut – AUB) and Sierra Leone (University of Sierra Leone – USL). The focus is to create a sustainable and enabling research environment, that supports these institutions in becoming regional hubs of excellence for conducting humanitarian research.

In this work package, the RECAP partner institutions take ownership and lead of their institutional capacity strengthening action plans, and in collaboration and support from the work package lead, will have joint responsibility and accountability for completing the action plan activities.

The activities:

- Each of the institutions will establish an institutional capacity strengthening group to manage their RECAP institutional capacity strengthening activities
- A review of the existing institutional capacity to support researchers and research management will be conducted to identify any gaps that need strengthening, and to provide a baseline measure. An evidence-based assessment tool will be adapted to meet the different institutional context and needs, and at the AUB (Lebanon), this will be conducted in collaboration with the Capacity Research Unit (CRU) – based at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine - LSTM).
- At the USL (Sierra Leone), an assessment has already been conducted by the CRU in one of USL colleges, the College of Medical and Allied Health Sciences (COMAHS), and the RECAP capacity strengthening lead at the USL and the work package lead will conduct an assessment in the two further colleges that make up USL – Forah Bay College and the Institute for Public Administration and Management (IPAM).
- A RECAP launch and planning workshop will be held in each of the institutions with the key institutional stakeholders and RECAP to jointly develop an institutional capacity strengthening action plan based on the gaps identified in the assessment, and including the RECAP activities. The work of RECAP will build on the existing research capacity work being undertaken within the institutions, and to support sustainability beyond the RECAP programme, institutional leads will gain institutional buy-in at strategic level, and align action plans with institutional strategic objectives. This will be completed by the end of December 2018.
- Institutional capacity strengthening leads and groups will lead the implementation of their institutional capacity strengthening action plans. Key stages in will include: (i) A mapping exercise across RECAP and other capacity strengthening programmes, to support institutional alignment of capacity strengthening objectives, collaborative resource sharing, and reduce any duplication of effort in resource development and implementation; (ii) context and needs-specific developments implemented – e.g. development and delivery of courses, training programmes, workshops, resources, systems, mentorship programmes, etc. (iv) embedding all development to enhance the research environment within institutional structures, practices and policies – or plans for uptake by the institution post RECAP
- Establish/support existing multidisciplinary research groups within the institution to grow humanitarian research and networks within the institution, regionally and globally
- Develop an institutional strategy in support of the university as a regional hub of excellence for humanitarian research
- Monitor and evaluate process, learning and impact resulting from implementation of institutional capacity strengthening activities.

Staff

The RECAP institutional capacity strengthening leads: Jocelyn De Jong (AUB), Haja Wurie (USL), Mohamed Samai (USL RECAP PI) will lead the institutional capacity strengthening work. Taghreed El Hajj (LSTM CRU) will lead the institutional capacity strengthening assessment, in collaboration with Hazel McCullough, the RECAP LSHTM lead. The LSHTM work package lead will support the work within this work package, and expertise will be drawn upon from across the RECAP work package leads and partners.

Work package 9 – Supporting individual researcher capability and career progression

The aim of this work package is to enable individual researcher capacity, capability and career progression within the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the University of Sierra Leone (USL), to support the conduct of high impact humanitarian-related research within these institutions.

The RECAP capacity strengthening leads at the AUB and the USL will lead the activities in this work package, and in collaboration with the LSHTM work package lead, will have joint responsibility for ensuring that the activities are achieved. The work will also draw upon the expertise from across the RECAP work packages and partners.

The activities for this work package will include:

- Postdoctoral support: two fellowships (1 in AUB and 1 in USL) of 3 years of funding to contribute to the RECAP research, and to encourage the formation of collaborative research group in their research field and to seek future funding
- A research leadership programme (for approx. 8 people) to develop future research leaders at AUB and USL, using a consultancy company with expertise in developing and running bespoke leadership programmes
- A competitive funding scheme of 2 small grants (<£20,000) for early career researchers at AUB and USL, to stimulate research through pilot studies related to RECAP's work, and gain experience in grant writing
- Core training for approximately 20 early/mid-career researchers at AUB and USL (and open to NGOs) on core skills on grant writing, data management, research dissemination, engagement and impact
- Short cross-disciplinary placements for researchers across the RECAP work packages, institutions and NGOs partners to help researchers experience work within different research settings and to foster greater cross-disciplinary understanding and working.
- A professional mentoring and development programme for early career researchers across the university and NGO partners (including M&E officers). This would involve mentoring from senior researchers, personal development planning, reflective learning and progress monitoring. This will be through workshops, one-to-one contact (in-person/remotely), and mentorship training for mentors.
- Support curriculum development for courses on humanitarian response as part of the degree programmes in AUB and USL, and advising on curriculum for key other selected courses.
- The use of research/information for humanitarian decision support. This is intended particularly for NGO and government decision-makers (approximately 30 in USL and at AUB)

Staff

The RECAP institutional capacity strengthening leads: Jocelyn De Jong (AUB), Haja Wurie (USL), Mohamed Samai (USL RECAP PI) will lead the capacity strengthening work, the LSHTM work package lead will support the work, and expertise will be drawn upon from across the RECAP work packages and partners.

Research Plans

A Participatory Action Research study will be conducted to capture the learning from the RECAP institutional and individual research capacity strengthening work within work packages 8 and 9. The participatory approach includes the participants in the evaluation and strengthening of their researchers, and research capacity, systems and support within their institutions. The qualitative study design uses documentary evidence, semi-structured interviews, surveys and Focus Group Discussions to evaluate: (i) the process used in developing and implementing the capacity strengthening work, what worked, what did not, and what could be improved, (ii) the learning gains by the institutions and the individuals involved in the capacity strengthening, (iii) how the learning gains have been applied in practice / might be applied in future practice, and (iv) impact: what effect the implemented capacity strengthening initiatives has had on the institution and individuals.

Ethical approval will be sought by the LSHTM (RECAP lead) and by the partner institutions at AUB and USL.

Work package 10 – Building capability in the UK for research on health and protection in humanitarian crises

The aim of this work package is to build UK capability in research on health and protection in humanitarian crises, to support a more effective research response to evolving crises, and a more rapid generation of evidence to inform policy makers and programmers in their decision making.

The activities to support the work package are to:

- Establish, build and support a sustained network of multidisciplinary researchers in humanitarian-related research to support closer research networks and collaboration between the RECAP UK academic and NGO partners
- Explore with the RECAP work package 4 lead (also the Centre Director) the possibility of situating / linking the network with the Health in Humanitarian Crises Centre, based at the LSHTM
- Hold two events to help develop further research ideas and explore and identify specific areas for further cooperation between the programme partners
- Work with RECAP UK partners to explore cross-disciplinary opportunities in teaching and course development and delivery, and mentorship, to build UK capability and enable researchers to be a more responsive to evolving crises and more rapid generation of research evidence to inform decision making