

## INDIA AFRICA HEALTH SCIENCES PLATFORM (IAHSP)

The India-Africa partnership, touted as a partnership of equals, is pillared on numerous similarities – social, financial and political. Our common concerns and fight against poverty, nutrition, sanitation, infrastructure, health and healthcare delivery, all demand innovative, sustainable and most importantly, regionally relevant solutions.

Cognizant to this demand, India is shouldering the responsibility and has taken a step forward in setting up platforms like the **India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS)**. The landmark **IAFS III held in October 2015**, under the aegis of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India set the tone for collaborative and mutually beneficial partnerships between the two regions. India has committed substantial support towards the development of Africa with dedicated focus on capacity building, sharing of technical know-how and globally collaborative academic linkages between the two regions.

To carry forward this vision of IAFS III in the area of public health, the Indian Council of Medical Research partnered with Ministry of External Affairs and other key Indian Ministries (H&FW; S&T; Commerce and Industry; Chemicals and Fertilizers) and several African regional scientific and research agencies to organize the first **India Africa Health Sciences Meet (IAHSM) in September 2016 at New Delhi**. which was attended by many cabinet ministers, policy makers, technocrats, industry representatives, leading scientists and experts from both regions as well as the international development agencies such as the Wellcome Trust, USAID, IAVI and WHO.

The deliberations highlighted the need for India and Africa to conduct joint biomedical and health research to address diseases of common concern through indigenous development of affordable drugs, diagnostics and vaccines, and also enable knowledge sharing and capacity strengthening.

Accordingly, ICMR took up the mandate to initiate and strengthen this strategic partnership in a structured and organized manner by establishing the **India-Africa Health Sciences Collaborative Platform (IAHSP)** with its Secretariat at ICMR.

Later on, a **Memorandum of Understanding was signed between ICMR and the African Union (AU)** on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2019 at New Delhi to formalize this partnership.

To carry forward the initiative, through a call for applications under the **ICMR/AU-STRC Health Practitioners/Researchers Capacity Building Scheme**, 7 Training Courses were conducted in 3 ICMR Institutes in 2019 providing training to 95 African Health Practitioners/Researchers from 26 African countries. Subsequently, next Call was announced in January, 2020 for 8 training courses (including two online/virtual courses) being offered by 4 ICMR Institutes in India under the ICMR/AU-STRC Health Practitioners/Researchers Capacity Building Scheme. Applications received for these courses have been evaluated, however the courses could not be held in India in 2020 due to the prevailing Coronavirus pandemic.

In line with the MoU, ICMR and AU-STRC have taken up the responsibility to foster and strengthen health sciences research in both India and Africa through the **ICMR-AU-STRC Research Grant Scheme**. As a part of this initiative, we shall be announcing the **ICMR-AU-STRC Joint Call for Proposals 2020** which is aimed for Indian and African researchers to conduct and support joint research to address diseases of common concern through indigenous development of affordable drugs, diagnostics, vaccines and enable knowledge sharing as well as capacity strengthening by creating India-Africa research networks for the diseases: HIV/AIDS; Tuberculosis and Cancer to start with.

## Progress Made

The table below outlines the roadmap (including the judiciously designed consultations with critical partners) for establishment of the IAHSPP.

S. No.	Meeting/Interaction	Participants
1.	Ambassadors Consultation, August 2016 ICMR, New Delhi	<i>India:</i> GoI representatives–Ministry of Health & Family Welfare - MoHFW (ICMR), Ministry of External Affairs, Exim Bank  <i>Africa:</i> Representation of Ambassadors and High Commissioners from 21 African Countries  <i>International organizations-</i> Wellcome Trust, IAVI
2.	India-Africa Health Sciences Meet, September 2016, New Delhi	<i>India:</i> GoI Ministries - H&FW; EA, Commerce & Industry - C&I; Science & Technology – S&T; Chemicals & Fertilizers - C&F  <i>Africa:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• African Health Ministers- Congo, Gambia, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Zimbabwe</li> <li>• Representation from 20 African nations and 54 African diplomatic missions</li> <li>• Pan-African organizations- African Union - AU, African Academy of Sciences - AAS, Alliance for Accelerating Excellence in Science in Africa - AESA</li> </ul> <i>Senior policy makers, technocrats, scientists, medical specialists, researchers &amp; industry leaders from both regions</i> <i>International organizations – BMGF, USAID, Wellcome Trust, IAVI, WHO</i>
3.	Expert Working Group Meeting, April 2017, New Delhi	<i>India:</i> GoI Ministries -H&FW (ICMR); EA, C&I (Pharmexcil); S&T (DST) ; RIS  <i>Africa:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional bodies like EAHRC</li> <li>• Pan-African bodies like AAS, AU</li> </ul> <i>Multi-institutional and inter-disciplinary domain experts in the area of community, clinical, laboratory and health systems research across infectious and non-infectious diseases and Industry representatives from both regions</i>  <i>International organizations:</i> Wellcome Trust, University of Cambridge, IAVI
4.	Drafting of concept notes in areas of mutual interest	Expert teams involving about 6-8 domain experts including one lead coordinator from each side (HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Cancer, Emerging and re-emerging infections, Vector control, Health Systems)
6.	Consultation meeting ICMR-AUSTRC at Abuja, Nigeria, April,2018	Discussed Action Plan to implement various activities under the MoU based on requirements of African side
7.	Signing of MoU, March,2019	Signing of MoU at New Delhi, 27 <sup>th</sup> March,2019
8.	Working Group Sessions	Working Group Sessions held during 28-29 March,2019 at New Delhi between AU delegation and Indian team (ICMR, DBT,DST,NIB,IAVI)

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9.	Call for Applications for ICMR/AU-STRC Health Practitioners/Researchers Capacity Building Scheme (Training Courses In India 2019)	Announced on ICMR and AUSTRC websites with last date of submission of Applications as 30 <sup>th</sup> June,2019 for 7 training courses at 3 ICMR Institutes-NICPR, Noida; NIN, Hyderabad; NIE, Chennai
10.	Administrative and Technical review of Applications by ICMR and its Institutes and AU-STRC(July, 2019)	Candidates selected for 7 training courses and AU-STRC conveyed decision to candidates
11.	IAHSP Secretariat at ICMR processed for necessary clearances/visa process in India and respective African countries (August,2019)	Award letters issued to selected candidates; Indian High Commissions in African countries sent formal intimation about selected candidates for visa purposes; MEA and MHA, GOI requested for necessary political and security clearances for selected candidates.
12.	ICMR-AU Course1 organized at ICMR-National Institute of Cancer Prevention and Research(NICPR), Noida during 2-6 September, 2019	ICMR-AU Course (No.1/ NICPR/Sept,2019) on 'Basic Molecular Biology Techniques relevant to Cancer Research' at ICMR-NICPR, Noida, attended by 11 African researchers from Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Togo, Mali, Cameroon, Comoros, Tanzania and Egypt .
13.	ICMR-AU Course 2 organized at ICMR-National Institute of Cancer Prevention and Research, Noida during 11-13 September, 2019	ICMR-AU Course (No.2/NICPR/Sept,2019) on 'Cervical Cancer Screening for Pathologists' organized at ICMR-NICPR, Noida, attended by 9 African researchers from Nigeria, Sudan and Zambia
14.	ICMR-AU Course 3 organized at ICMR - National Institute of Cancer Prevention and Research, Noida during 22-25 October, 2019	ICMR-AU Course (No.3/NICPR/Oct,2019) on 'Research Methodology & Biostatistical Analysis' organized at ICMR - NICPR, Noida, attended by 13 African researchers from Liberia, Uganda, Kenya, Sierre Leone, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Mali, Tanzania, Burkino Faso and Ghana
15.	ICMR-AU Course 4 organized at ICMR- National Institute of Epidemiology, Chennai during 4-8 November, 2019	ICMR-AU Course (No.1/NIE/Nov, 2019) on 'Biostatistics for Health Research' organized at ICMR-National Institute of Epidemiology, Chennai, attended by 21 African researchers from Tunisia, Burkino Faso, Liberia, Niger Republic , Ethiopia, Nigeria, Mali, Cameroon, Benin
16.	ICMR-AU Course 5 organized at ICMR- National Institute of Epidemiology, Chennai during 18-22 November, 2019	ICMR-AU Course (No.2/NIE/Nov, 2019) on 'Principles and practice of epidemiology, public health surveillance, outbreak investigation and response' organized at ICMR-National Institute of Epidemiology, Chennai, attended by 15 African researchers from Sierra Leone, Kenya, Egypt, Uganda, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Sudan, Gambia Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Malawi, Tanzania, and Liberia.

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17.	ICMR-AU Course 6 organized at ICMR- National Institute of Epidemiology, Chennai during 2 <sup>nd</sup> to 6 <sup>th</sup> Dec, 2019	ICMR-AU Course (No.3/NIE/Dec, 2019) on 'Epidemiologic data analysis and Inference' organized at ICMR- National Institute of Epidemiology, Chennai, attended by 21 African researchers from Sierra Leone, Kenya, Egypt, Benin, Zambia, Morocco, Burundi, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Gambia, Gabon, Togo, Cameroon, Ghana and Tanzania.
18.	ICMR-AU Course 7 organized at ICMR- National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad during 9-20 December, 2019	ICMR-AU Course (No.1/NIN/Dec, 2019) on 'Training Course on Assessment of Nutritional Anaemias' organized at ICMR- National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad, attended by 5 African researchers from Cote d'ivoire, Zimbabwe, Burundi, Nigeria and Ethiopia
19.	Call for Applications for ICMR/AU-STRC Health Practitioners/Researchers Capacity Building Scheme (Training Courses In India 2020) Proposed to be held in 2021/22 now	Announced on ICMR and AUSTRC websites with last date of submission of Applications as 29 <sup>th</sup> February, 2020 for 8 training courses at 4 ICMR Institutes-NICPR, Noida; NIRT, Chennai; NIV, Pune and NIRRH, Mumbai.  Applications received for these courses have been evaluated, however the courses could not be held in India in 2020 due to the prevailing Coronavirus pandemic
20.	ICMR-AU-STRC Joint Call for Proposals 2021	Joint Call for Proposals 2021 document & related guidelines under the ICMR-AU-STRC Research Grant Scheme are being finalized in consultation with AUSTRC.  A Joint Secretariat virtual meeting was held for discussions in this regard between ICMR and AUSTRC on 18 <sup>th</sup> November,2020