

H3Africa Sustainability Working Group Meeting Summary 22 March 2018

11th H3Africa Meeting, Uganda

Present:

	Group
Melanie Newport	TBGENAfrica
Katherine Littler	Wellcome
Lebohang K	CLS / H3A
Raeesa Syed	CLS / H3A
Michelle Skelton	H3A CC
Christian Happi	Happi
Robin Mason	NIH
Mark Nicol	UCT
Catherine Hoyo	NCSU
Mayowa Owolabi	Owolabi / SIREN
Mark Guyer	NIH
Sudha Srinivasan	NIH
Stacey Chambers	NIH
Laura Skow	NIH
Jennifer Troyer	NIH
Bonnie Joubert	NIH
Afolabi Omowunmi	Dr. Abdul
Ezenwa James Onyemata	Abimiku Group
Agale Ndidi P	Abimiku Group
Ahmed Rahaman	
Laura Povlich	NIH
Nastassja Koen	Dan Stein
Yasmine Ochi	Nicola Mulder
Sara El Jadid	Nicola Mulder
Layndon Zass	Nicola Mulder
Desiree Petersen	CPGR
Taylor Hornby	CPGR
Mukthar Kader	Elizabeth Mayne
Ziyaad Parker	Nicola Mulder
Warwick Fortune	Elizabeth Mayne
Wondimu Awoke	Dr Abraham Assefa
Begna Tulu	Gobena Ameni
Moffat Nyirenda	IEC
Katte Jean Claude	Ayesha Motala
Sanni Sekossounoa	AFFOLABI Group
Emmanuel Jonathan	Abimiku Group
Rasheed Taiwo	Adebamowo Group
Ozumba Petronilla	Abimiku Group

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Much of the discussion focused around the question of what the goal of this working group is and what we are trying to sustain. There are different deliverables depending on the goal and three separate issues were discussed:

Sustaining a biomedical research enterprise in Africa;

- a. this is extremely dependent on funding and on encouraging governments and industry to invest and should be done in close collaboration with CARI.

Action items:

- work with Wellcome Trust and AESA to produce 1-page success stories and pitches geared to the right audiences.
- increase communication with CARI via AESA (Tom and Jenn)
- engage policy makers where we can, ex: Science Forum

Sustaining the network and the “brand” or “culture” of H3Africa.

- b. this is dependent on the scientist and will involve strengthening ties with AfSHG, among others.
- c. Must include scientific excellence, networking and collaboration, and sharing of resources for the global good.

Action items:

- come up with an “Ask” ...what resources are needed, and to whom, to maintain and grow the network
- increase ties to AfSHG; encourage combined meetings, workshops and fellows activities.

Sustaining the infrastructure and research that has been developed and is ongoing in H3Africa

This can be a combination of funding mechanisms that could include the next big initiative. Not H3Africa 2, but “beyond H3Africa” ...what come next scientifically as a challenge that will be better tackled by an African consortium approach?

Action item:

produce a proposal for an ambitious, big picture, high risk, high reward scientific project

Meeting notes/transcript

Nicky - discussed her participation in the South African Science Forum, which was a mix of ministers, companies, and policy makers of various sorts (check w/ Nicky re: major categories). It was a really great opportunity to be in the room with ministers. Suggestions:

- H3Africa should attend similar meetings in other countries
- H3A should have an exhibition booth with material
- There is a company (ask Nicky for name) that does this as a business and can help create target materials for different groups as well as give classes in how to interact. Could help with “one pagers”

Dwomoa - there is a “one pager” for H3A in circulation

This will be recirculated for comments

And a request for each project to produce such a document.

Michele - suggested that we do the consultation first, before spending time producing documents that may not be targeted correctly. Katherine said she (and WT/AESA Coms +policy) could help with docs, but that we need to decide what we want. She would focus a one-pager differently for health vs science and technology vs economic growth. Who is our target audience, what is the message and what is the “ask”? Nicky said we need a concrete plan, what can we do for you and what do we need to keep it going. Why should they support it?

Sudha - said we do have some concrete needs ex: fund BR resources, but how long and for how much? We need numbers. We can probably produce for politicians a document that has Background, accomplishments, and future needs/outcomes, but probably even needs to be country specific depending on govt priorities of those countries.

Elizabeth - brought up that H3A lacks visibility and we need mechanisms to increase it. We are lacking in social media presence and strategy. Decision makers don't make choices based on documents, they like sound bites. We lack a unified message, a ppt template, branding in general.

Mark – what exactly do we mean by sustainability? Projects will go on to get money from elsewhere, but how do fund (and what do we need to fund) the CONSORTIUM?-the network itself. What are the pieces and who might fund them?

Charles – H3A is an umbrella that many things sit under...the baby that we need to feed and grow is different than sustaining an individual research project. We need entrepreneurs, but first need to define what we are sustaining. Is it the Spirit?

Mark – we want to sustain the biomedical research enterprise in Africa. H3Africa and whatever comes next are steps to get there that can pilot models and be incubators for scientists and their ideas. Long term there needs to be investment from African investors in a research enterprise.

Dwomoa - ?

Charles – what are we asking countries to do for us? Telling them to sustain H3A is not an easy sell. Need to sell the awareness that funding biomedical research produces benefits.

Ezekiel – need an organization that surpasses the funding cycle. An H3Africa society could maintain the network and work to produce funding.

Jen – We already have a society, AfSHG. We should build stronger links and work to make sure that society benefits from H3A. Institutions should be providing money for their investigators to join societies, go to meetings, have journal subscriptions. This is not a huge investment, but it makes an enormous difference in the ability of their staff to be successful, recognized, to network, form collaborations, publish, and eventually bring in money to the university via research funding. It benefits institutions.

Christian – need to find a way to get African governments to invest. World bank has been able to bring pressure in this regard. They will invest big money and demand in kind contributions from government.

Graham – there are two things, research projects and infrastructure – these have different needs and funding will come from different sources. Also, there could be benefit for the research project side to targeted approaches to industry.

Mark – we talk about approaching the Minister of Health or of Economics differently, but a research enterprise would drive both.

Sudha – Can we hold a workshop to engage stakeholders like we did to engage RECs?

Michele – we need to emphasize what makes us stand out and is unique to H3A. We are really able to leverage African diversity and work across borders, ex: signatures of selection work. How do we brand ourselves as poised to address the big issues?

Elizabeth – we need to emphasize what we are doing now and how it impacts health, economy, public health. The translational aspect of the work is important.

Mark – We are trying to be all things for all people but we still haven't talked about the science. Can we put forward a strong scientific plan?

Dwomoa – Good idea of high level scientific proposal. Also like the idea of engaging with World Bank. There is a third item to discuss, which is the production of educational materials, for instance should H3A be a repository resource for science teachers?

Nicky – Some of that is being done already in H3ABioNet. There is an educational resources page. We could add a GitHub repository. Needs to be curation process and people dedicated to it.

One way to use the AAS Open research would be to ask for an H3Africa channel. Working groups could all publish there.

Sudha – We need a list of deliverables and a timeline.

Charles – Any branding must include the AfSHG and H3A members must support AfSHG. The society can be a political force.

Michelle – In Rwanda we need to give strategy planning some extra time.

Christian – Could the subgroup invite the World Bank?

Overview/Summary from Michele Ramsay:

H3Africa Sustainability WG

Uganda Meeting

Thursday 22nd March - Working Group Session

Friday 23rd March - Session with Thomas Kariuki reporting on the CARL initiative, followed by a discussion

Chair: Dwomoa Adu

Co-chair: Michele Ramsay

Mark Guyer

At the WG session there was extensive discussion on the sustainable future of the H3Africa consortium. Dr Adu guided the group through the agenda.

After the presentation by Tom Kariuki, a summary of the deliberations of the previous day was presented:

To promote sustainability, we need to envision the future of the H3Africa Consortium in concrete terms.

What is the value and nature of the H3Africa Consortium? Now, in 5 years and onto the future. To fully understand this, we need to consider and document the historical roots of H3Africa in the African Society of Human Genetics.

We need a strong identity and branding for H3Africa in order to foster recognition and confidence and to garner support among our stakeholders.

H3Africa is about understanding the role of genomic diversity in health and disease on the continent. Its brand should include:

- **Scientific excellence**
- **Networking and collaboration**
- **Sharing of resources for the global good**

What is our added value?

To drive economic development

To lead to improved health

What have we built to date?

A network of investigators across the continent and further afield

Research infrastructure for genomic research and grant management

A large group of skilled investigators and scientists

We need to leverage support at continental, regional and country level and ensure that we target our messages and ask appropriately.

Who are the stakeholders we want to target:

Governments and their ministers who become our ambassadors

Policy makers

Industry (including Pharma)

Benefactors

World Bank and others

What is our ask?

We need to develop concrete requests that will support the glue that keeps the society together and we need an ambitious cross-cutting research project and vision.

Suggestions:

Coordinating Centre

Regular meetings

Sustainable databases and resources

Biobanks

Continued training and capacity development

(Wellcome Trust has offered support to develop materials)

Plans for the near future:

1. **Develop an ambitious scientific project to capture the imagination of our stakeholders. It has to be something we can sell and something that ministers and politicians will be excited about and will sell on our behalf.**

- 2. Develop advocacy materials appropriate for different stakeholders. A overall H3A vision, supported by one page information sheets for individual projects and groupings of projects.**
- 3. Develop partnerships – most immediately with AESA and the CARI initiative (Tom agreed to assist with the coordination of activities between the groups)**

It would be good to ask Tom for his PowerPoint presentation and to document some of the discussion