

UK funding for research capacity strengthening (RCS) in LMICs

(UKCDR analysis 2016-2021)

Globally and equitably distributed research capacity is fundamental to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The UK has and continues to play a key partnership role in strengthening research systems in LMICs.



The UK has made significant investments into RCS in LMICs

£873m

spent on 71 standalone RCS programmes between 2016-2021.

£1.2bn

was also spent on 62 research programmes that feature a significant embedded RCS component.



Most RCS programmes (80.5%) are directed towards supporting Africa

Particularly Eastern, Southern and Western Africa. Top six country beneficiaries: Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, Ghana, Tanzania and India. Overall, countries with lower ranked R&D systems benefit from less support.



Most common beneficiaries of RCS support are African Universities

incl. University of Cape Town, Makerere, Witwatersrand, Ghana, Ibadan, and Stellenbosch. Several institutions receive investment from multiple UK-funded RCS programmes.



A total of 871 institutions and 135 countries supported.

70% of programmes support multiple countries.



SDG 3 Good Health & Wellbeing

is the most common thematic focus of RCS programmes (50%).



Majority of UK RCS support is focused on strengthening at the individual level

(53.4%) although there is movement towards more institutional and environmental/systems level.



21% of programmes co-funded by UK funders.

Coherece, complementarity and coordination in RCS exists between UK funders, but there is space for better join up.



Most commonly-used RCS approaches:

Collaboration (59.4%), Training (48.9%) and Networks/Networking (37.6%).



Most common focus areas of RCS support:

Research production (57.9%) and Communications/uptake (31.6%), and other areas (research demand, leadership, grant management, innovation) to enhance sustainability and impact.

Policy pointers for UK funders

- Continue a holistic approach to RCS
- Develop joined-up, longer-term vision and approach to maximise investments
- Continue to be demand-led and move to in-country led models
- Look into potential models to support countries with lower research capacity
- Look to expand RCS in other sectors beyond health
- Build the evidence base on what works in RCS