

**FACULTY OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH SCIENCES  
STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY**

**MEDIA STATEMENT**

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***£20 million research hub could help African teens achieve their full potential***

Stellenbosch University (SU) is involved in a long-term initiative championed by the UK Research and Innovation Council (UKRI) that aims to significantly improve the health and life prospects of a generation of Africa's youth.

The project is being led by Professor Lucie Cluver of Oxford University, and consists of 12 individual studies taking place as part of the new UKRI Global Research Hubs. Prof Mark Tomlinson, a professor in Global Health at SU's Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences is a co-investigator of the initiative. Together with Dr Sarah Skeen, also from SU's Department of Global Health, Tomlinson will be involved in one part of the larger initiative - the "Child Community Care Study", which involves following up cohorts of children in Zambia, Malawi and South Africa in partnership with University College London.

The initiative is financially supported through the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), which has allocated nearly £200 million investment to the initiative - the largest single investment ever by UKRI. The GCRF funding pot is a key strand of the UK's AID strategy, helping to put British research at the heart of efforts to tackle the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The **UKRI GCRF Accelerating Achievement for Africa's Adolescents Hub** is led by an interdisciplinary team at Oxford University and the University of Cape Town, with University partners across Africa from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo to Lesotho and Tanzania. It takes the UN Development Programme's core concept of 'accelerators' – policies or programs which improve multiple SDG goals or targets – one step further.

By 2050 Africa will be home to half a billion teenagers. Despite the incredible opportunity that such a vibrant pool of young potential presents, many of these teens will already be trapped in a cycle of poverty, violence, low education and poor health, by the time they reach adolescence. This new Hub aims to help them achieve their goals and aspirations.

Researchers from Oxford's departments of Social Policy and Intervention, Tropical Medicine, the Blavatnik School of Government, English, Economics and Psychiatry will work alongside international partners including UNDP, UNICEF and the World Health Organisation, governments across Africa, donors such as the Global Fund and PEPFAR, NGOs and young people themselves, to identify and test a range of 'accelerator synergy' service combinations, from across health, education, social and economic sectors. In doing so, they will

determine which combinations, such as malaria prevention, business skills and violence prevention, offer teenagers across Africa the best opportunities to lead better, safer lives.

Professor Lucie Cluver, Professor of Child and Family Social Work in Oxford's Department of Social Policy and Intervention, said: 'We have been lucky to work for many years with governments across Africa, UN agencies and donors. They want to help their adolescents to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, but this is a major challenge with fiscal resources and shrinking global aid. This Hub aims to meet their needs: to identify what simple combinations of services are cost-effective to improve health, education, employment and safety.

The team's previous work includes 'cash plus care programmes' which now reach over two million children across Africa, and the open access 'Parenting for Lifelong Health' programmes with UNICEF and the WHO, which are being delivered in 20 countries across the Global South.

Over the next five years the UKRI Global Research Hubs will work with governments, international agencies, NGOs and community groups within the developing world. These regions include the African continent, South America, South-East Asia and the Caribbean, where they will work to tackle and provide creative and sustainable solutions to each region's specific societal problems.

The Hubs will focus on some of the world's greatest challenges from improving human health and promoting gender equality and social justice to fortifying ecological systems and biodiversity on land and sea. Other project themes include generating agricultural sustainability and fostering greater resilience to natural disasters. The overall goal of this work is to make the world safer, healthier and more prosperous.

UKRI Chief Executive Sir Mark Walport said: "From tackling climate change to preventing and treating infectious diseases, the search for knowledge is a global endeavour that requires collaboration between the world's best minds.

"The Fund for International Collaboration and the creation of twelve global research hubs demonstrate the commitment of the UK to ensuring our researchers and innovators can work with their counterparts across the world to address important questions."

**Notes to editors:**

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