

Publication

Applied statistical training to strengthen analysis and health research capacity in Rwanda

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To guide efficient investment of limited health resources in sub-Saharan Africa, local researchers need to be involved in, and guide, health system and policy research. While extensive survey and census data are available to health researchers and program officers in resource-limited countries, local involvement and leadership in research is limited due to inadequate experience, lack of dedicated research time and weak interagency connections, among other challenges. Many research-strengthening initiatives host prolonged fellowships out-of-country, yet their approaches have not been evaluated for effectiveness in involvement and development of local leadership in research.; We developed, implemented and evaluated a multi-month, deliverable-driven, survey analysis training based in Rwanda to strengthen skills of five local research leaders, 15 statisticians, and a PhD candidate. Research leaders applied with a specific research question relevant to country challenges and committed to leading an analysis to publication. Statisticians with prerequisite statistical training and experience with a statistical software applied to participate in class-based trainings and complete an assigned analysis. Both statisticians and research leaders were provided ongoing in-country mentoring for analysis and manuscript writing.; Participants reported a high level of skill, knowledge and collaborator development from class-based trainings and out-of-class mentorship that were sustained 1 year later. Five of six manuscripts were authored by multi-institution teams and submitted to international peer-reviewed scientific journals, and three-quarters of the participants mentored others in survey data analysis or conducted an additional survey analysis in the year following the training.; Our model was effective in utilizing existing survey data and strengthening skills among full-time working professionals without disrupting ongoing work commitments and using few resources. Critical to our success were a transparent, robust application process and time limited training supplemented by ongoing, in-country mentoring toward manuscript deliverables that were led by Rwanda's health research leaders.

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