

CARTA News

The Newsletter of the Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa



BUILDING AFRICA'S RESEARCH ECOSYSTEM

Welcome Note

By Dr. Catherine Kyobutungi, CARTA Co-Director and Executive Director of the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC)



e are thrilled to bring you the latest updates and achievements from CARTA for the first half of 2023. As a proven Africa-based, Africa-led research capacity strengthening program, CARTA has been instrumental in fostering a culture of high-quality research and knowledge utilization through quality research training that takes place on the African continent.

Through a suite of interventions, CARTA has empowered countless scholars, academic staff, and administrators to contribute to a stronger research ecosystem on the continent and the broader development agenda. Moreover, by equipping individuals with the skills, knowledge, and cultural understanding necessary to effect positive change, CARTA is cultivating a new generation of change agents within their respective institutions.

CARTA scholars continue to actively address the myriad challenges faced by the continent; their research is generating insights that inform policies, drive change, and improve the lives of individuals and communities. We are proud to witness the growing influence of our fellows as they take up key responsibilities and appointments that position them as agents of change within their institutions.

In its current strategy, CARTA2025, the program is actively pursuing an institutionalization strategy to move beyond its envisaged lifespan. This is in recognition of the fact that capacity strengthening is a long-term investment that requires continued effort to sustain the momentum and maximize the benefits already achieved. We celebrate the progress made by the CARTA community towards institutionalization and integrating CARTA interventions within the university systems as we strive for the program's sustainability.

Thank you for being part and a supporter of the CARTA community.



CARTA has been instrumental in fostering a culture of high-quality research and knowledge utilization through quality research training that takes place on the African continent.

Continued Excellence: CARTA Among Grantees of the DELTAS Africa Second Phase

By Ann Waithaka, CARTA Communications Officer



ARTA celebrated a significant milestone on March 14, 2023, as the second phase of the Developing Excellence in Leadership Training and Science in Africa (DELTAS Africa) initiative was launched in Nairobi, Kenya. CARTA, one of the 14 grantees of DELTAS Africa II, joined funding partners, government representatives, the diplomatic community, and international development organizations at the prestigious and high-level event.

Convened by the Science for Africa (SFA) Foundation, the launch event was followed by a three-day inception meeting from March 15 - 17, 2023. The collective aim of the events was to engage the African and global scientific and funding community; increase the visibility of the DELTAS Africa program at the continental and global level; showcase the expertise of the DELTAS Africa II grantees; highlight the significance of the challenges to be addressed in phase II of the program; and provide a platform for building new relationships, productive partnerships, and networks.

DELTAS Africa is a multimillion-dollar, long-term program that was launched in 2015 with the objective of supporting collaborative consortia led by Africa-based scientists. Its purpose is to amplify African-led development of world-class research and scientific leaders on the continent while strengthening African institutions. The first phase of the program, implemented between 2015 and 2021, awarded grants to 11 consortia led by renowned senior

researchers from eight African countries. The second phase kicks off in 2023 with 14 consortia in 75 institutions across the globe. It is implemented by the SFA Foundation with continued support from Wellcome and the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

As a program dedicated to building research capacity in Africa and promoting the development of a vibrant African academy, CARTA greatly benefited from the first phase of DELTAS Africa. The program is optimistic that the second phase of the initiative will contribute equally to a significant shift in the research ecosystem, ultimately leading to impactful development in the African region.

The Science for Africa Foundation has emerged as a new bold player in promoting excellence in science on the African continent. We at CARTA are thrilled to be part of the DELTAS Africa II initiative. We cannot continue to do science in a business-as-usual way.

Dr. Catherine Kyobutungi,
CARTA Co- Director and Executive Director of the
African Population and Health Research Center

During the first phase of DELTAS Africa I, CARTA successfully pursued its goal of rebuilding and strengthening the research capacity of African universities. The program aimed to produce well-trained and skilled researchers and scholars who could become change agents within their respective institutions and lead active research and training programs. Notably, the grant led to several accomplishments:

- The number of quality multidisciplinary Early
 Career Researchers (ECRs) at the doctoral level
 increased across African partner institutions, thereby
 strengthening their capacity to conduct research and
 contribute to quality postgraduate training.
- 2. Gender parity among PhD fellows improved. To date, CARTA maintains a strong gender policy that ensures equity in access to its training programs and opportunities.
- 3. Capacities of faculty and administration staff, and supervisors from partner institutions were strengthened to support the institutional research ecosystem and enhance supervision, respectively.

4. The program facilitated faculty exchange visits and supported institutionalization and infrastructural projects in all its African partner universities, further strengthening the research ecosystem within partner institutions.

The DELTAS Africa II grant will be vital in implementing CARTA's current strategic phase, *CARTA2025*. The phase seeks to address the problem of inadequate production and utilization of quality research by strengthening research and related capacities of researchers and the environments in which they work.

CARTA2025 encompasses four interlinked objectives: maintaining a pipeline of high-quality ECRs, establishing research hubs in partner institutions, creating research conducive environments at partner institutions, and enhancing the engagement of the CARTA community with society. The ultimate goal is to build a critical mass of well-trained and motivated researchers supported by conducive environments, who can produce high-quality research to tackle common health and development challenges in Africa.

CARTA's Rigorous Institutionalization Efforts Bearing Fruits

By Dr. Cavens Kithinji, CARTA Program Coordinator

ne of CARTA's notable achievements lies in its commitment to sustainability and scalability. To this end, the program has been carrying out rigorous institutionalization activities to mainstream its interventions and best practices in the eight African partner universities.

The interventions include the Joint Advanced Seminars (JASes) for PhD training; Supervisors Workshop (SW) to strengthen postgraduate supervision; Graduate Grant Writing Workshop (GGWW) to strengthen grant development capacities; and the Academic, Professional, and Administrative Staff (APAS) workshop to strengthen the capacities of university staff to implement and support quality PhD training programs.

By actively engaging with partner institutions and other stakeholders, CARTA aims to create lasting impact by having these interventions adopted within the institutions' routine and guidelines. This sustainability-oriented approach ensures that CARTA's efforts will continue to bear dividends long beyond the program's lifespan. Towards the institutionalization of its interventions, the program has carried out a number of strategic activities.

First, a collaborative review of the CARTA curriculum for each of its interventions and the development of associated Training of Trainers (ToT) modules. This process had perspectives and input from an array of experts in the review and refinement of the interventions' curricula to ensure its usability across institutions and ultimately address possible existing gaps in research and PhD training. Some of the experts included previous facilitators in the interventions (JASes; SW; GW; and APAS), peer reviewers, graduates, and consultants. The curricula and related training resources are in the process of being digitized and will be freely available for use.

Second, CARTA started offering ToT workshops targeting staff from the partner institutions for all its interventions with the aim of strengthening their capacity to adopt and independently carry out different CARTA interventions. The ToT initiative seeks to build the skills and knowledge of individuals who would then serve as trainers within their respective institutions and countries.

As an outcome of this latter initiative three partner institutions, namely Moi University, Kenya and Nigeria's University of Ibadan (UI), and the Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) have so far organized APAS ToT workshops while Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (KUHeS), Malawi organized a supervisors ToT. The workshops collectively attracted over 100 faculty members.

Through these institutionalization efforts, CARTA aims to build sustainable research capacity within African universities, foster a culture of Evidence-Informed DecisionMaking (EIDM), and contribute to addressing the health and development challenges faced by the continent.

As often as possible, CARTA provides opportunities for networking and sharing of experiences among partners and members of the CARTA family. This year, the program will hold the 2023 CARTA Conference at the University of the Witwatersrand between September 14 - 15, South Africa.

At this event, partner institutions will have the opportunity to showcase the exceptional work accomplished by the CARTA family to strengthen their research, research training, research management capacity, and their efforts to mainstream CARTA interventions.

More details about the CARTA Conference in the highlights section of this newsletter.









Transforming Financial Practices in African Universities: The GFGP Approach

By Janet Moraa, Assistant Finance Manager, Research Capacity Strengthening Division, APHRC and Ann Waithaka, CARTA Communications Officer



African universities face a myriad of challenges such as:

- Limited funding
- Weak financial management
- Effective governance structures
- Quality assurance
- Wanting infrastructure
- Ocliaboration, and knowledge exchange

These challenges ultimately affect the universities' ability to stay at the forefront of global advancements in academia and innovation. Increased investment in higher education, capacity-building programs, improved financial management systems, and the establishment of effective governance structures are essential for transforming African universities and unleashing their potential to contribute to socio-economic development.



Cognizant of this, CARTA has been at the forefront of enhancing governance and effective management processes within African universities including supporting the institutions to enhance financial and grant management. These practices

have potential for increased research capacity, improved academic programs, enhanced institutional infrastructure, and positioning African universities as drivers of development on the continent.

CARTA is among several programs in which the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) has used the **Good Financial Grant Practice** (GFGP) standardization as a capacity



development tool. An international standard, GFGP enables institutions, through capacity building and adherence to international best practices, to streamline the due diligence process and develop internal financial and grant management capacity.

In 2022, APHRC received the **highest GFGP certification, the Platinum Tier,** for solid financial and grant management practices. The Science for Africa (SFA) Foundation, one of CARTA's funders through the second

phase of the DELTAS Africa initiative also offers support to grantees seeking to build their financial capabilities and attain certification to the GFGP standard. This standard assures funders that applicants and grantees meet an internationally recognized and respected level of grant management and accountability.



CARTA, in turn, emphasizes the importance of **good financial governance and accountability** to its partner institutions and

supports them towards GFGP certification and adherence to other standardization tools and best practices.

The program is currently working with all eight of its African partner universities to identify the existing gaps in the institutions with the aim of strengthening the related institutional capacities and addressing any gaps, ultimately leading to the certification of the institutions at the different tiers of GFGP.



GFGP certification has several advantages including enabling organizations to strengthen their grant management capabilities and provision of targeted capacity building for grantees. Consequently, organizations are able to:

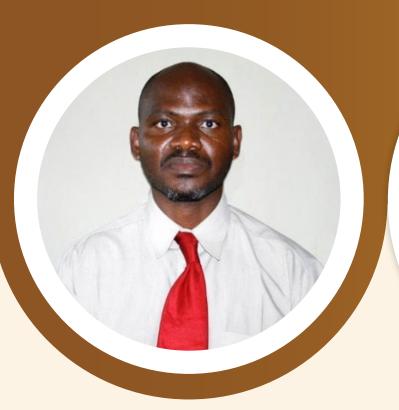
- Remove the need for multiple audits and financial assessments;
- → Improve chances of attracting more funding;
- Provide clarity to grantors on relative amounts to extend to organizations at different levels;
- Provide assurance to the funders that an organization provides governance of their funds to the highest standards; and
- Reduce the administration time for both grantors and grantees as one assessment/certification covers requirements for multiple clients.

GFGP is also an internationally accredited symbol of trust and accountability.

CARTA's perspective and work on promoting good governance, financial and grant practices has the potential to drive positive change across member institutions. Through these efforts, the program hopes to empower African universities to uphold transparent, accountable, and efficient systems that can provide an enabling environment for the production of high-quality research.

Leading CARTA's Next Chapter: Q&A with the New Chair of the CARTA Board of Management, Adamson Muula

By Topistar Karani, Communications Assistant, Research and Related Capacity Strengthening Division, APHRC



am not aware
of any competitor
of the CARTA doctoral
program anywhere else in
the world. It is therefore
both a pleasure and a
privilege to steer the
CARTA program as the
chair of the Board.





What is your academic and research background, and current role?

I am a professor based at the Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (KUHeS), Malawi, which was established in 2019 by the merging of Kamuzu College of Nursing (est. 1965) and College of Medicine (est. 1991). This role gives me the privilege of interacting with not only brilliant but also committed colleagues and students whose wisdom and experiences I have been able to, and look forward to continue tapping from. I am a medical doctor with postgraduate qualifications currently focusing on Public Health and Epidemiology.

I earned my medical degree from KUHeS (formerly the University of Malawi) after studying at the Flinders University of South Australia and the University of Malawi, a Master of Public Health from Loma Linda University in California and a PhD in Epidemiology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, US. My training in Public Health allows me to use my education and training in medicine for diverse health causes. I am passionate about research, especially that with potential for positive societal impact and my interests are in health services research, adolescent sexual and reproductive health research, key populations and HIV research.



How and when did you get involved with the CARTA Program?

Serendipity! That is how I would describe getting involved in CARTA. I was walking along the corridors of the College of Medicine at the former University of Malawi when I met a colleague and we chatted on several things. The University of Malawi was one of the CARTA founding members but interest among colleagues in the university had somewhat fizzled out. This was in 2009 and no activities had started after CARTA got its first grant. My colleague informed me that she had a lot on her plate and the university was not going to go ahead with being a member of CARTA. I asked for contacts and immediately sent an email to Alex Ezeh and Chimaraoke Izgubara who were

the CARTA leads at the time. I impressed on them that the University of Malawi was still interested in the partnership and I was going to be the contact person. That is simply how I joined the program!

I have been in CARTA ever since, starting from the preparation of the first-ever Joint Advanced Seminar (JAS); I was there when the term "JAS" was coined. In retrospect, seeing how far the University of Malawi, now KUHeS, has come and the mutual relationship it enjoys being an African university partner of the program, I am proud that I stepped in and played a role in reaffirming the university's commitment to the partnership. From this experience, I have come to appreciate the place and role of focal persons, as they are primarily the link between CARTA and the partners. The responsibility needs both a personal and professional commitment to ensure you keep the momentum going and your institution is active and well represented in the on-goings of the program.



You were recently elected as the new chair of the CARTA BoM, having served as a member for some time. What are some of the opportunities, challenges, and learning points?

One must be quick to observe that CARTA has been a game-changer *vis-à-vis* other doctoral fellowships in Africa. I am not aware of any competitor of the CARTA doctoral program anywhere else in the world. It is therefore both a pleasure and a privilege to steer the CARTA program as the chair of the Board.

I have taken over from Dr. Funke Fayehun, an Associate Professor at the University of Ibadan,

who succeeded Dr. Pierre Rutayisire who was until recently based at the University of Rwanda. Each of the previous Board chairpersons has been from a leading university in their own country and an academic leader of great repute. I have learned a lot from my predecessors and now it is time to put my experience and knowledge to practice as I continue learning.

I am not a new broom within CARTA to come in pontificating new changes or great opportunities, since my predecessors laid the foundation. Mine is to progress this work and enhance the efficiency and operation of the program, and with support from Board members, Secretariat, and the entire CARTA family, we will work together to take the program to the next level.



The program held a development workshop for the new and outgoing members for the CARTA BoM in March 2023. Was the training helpful for you and perhaps the other Board Members?

I have been on various boards before and have gone through such training. I would say what I particularly gained the most from the CARTA induction was the lived experiences of the facilitators in the Kenyan environment especially for a member like me based in a public University and from another country.

Over and above, the workshop clarified issues and encouraged us to work together. There are many experienced people on the Board and I look forward to working collaboratively to take CARTA to the next level. Borrowing from a motto from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, I say: Recte Sapere Fons! (for knowledge and sound judgment).



Program Highlights

CARTA Board of Management Convened for a Development Program



he CARTA Secretariat hosted the program's Board of Management (BoM) at the APHRC campus in Nairobi for a two-day development program from March 23 - 24, 2023 for the outgoing and incoming members. This was the first time to hold such a workshop in line with BoM recommendations following a Board performance appraisal in 2022. A BoM development report was produced and this is informing steps towards further strengthening of the CARTA governance structure.

The 15th CARTA Partners Forum



ARTA convened partners from its
African and non-African institutions
for a virtual Partners Forum on April
3, 2022. The meeting achieved its main
objectives, which were to strategize on the
use of situational analysis to strengthen
the CARTA program, share experiences on
the institutional training of trainers stepdown mainstreaming projects, and discuss
funding and fundraising possibilities.
The CARTA partners comprise 8 African
partner universities, 4 African research
institutions, and 8 non-African partner
institutions, each represented by focal
persons.

The 10th CARTA JAS3 Public Lecture



hrough the CARTA program, the University of Ibadan (UI), Nigeria held the 10th CARTA Public Lecture on *The Role of Academia in Society: A Public Health Perspective'* on May 19, 2023, at the College of Medicine. The key address was delivered in a hybrid manner by Prof. Sharon Fonn, CARTA co-Director and Professor of Public Health at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa.

The CARTA public lecture series commenced in 2013 with the inaugural Joint Advanced Seminar Three (JAS 3). The lecture has been a regular part of JAS3, which UI has hosted for each of CARTA's ten cohorts. Prof. Fonn highlighted the role of universities in the research and global knowledge ecosystem, contributing to positive impact, and why society should invest in them.

CARTA at APHRC's 20th Anniversary Grand Finale Celebrations



he African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), which hosts the CARTA Secretariat, culminated its 20-year anniversary with a grand finale celebration held on May 23 and 24, 2023. The commemoration, held at APHRC's campus in Nairobi kicked off with a day-long symposium on 'Evidence to policy impact' and was followed by a high-level live televised panel discussion on 'African solutions to health and development challenges'

on May 24. The two-day event brought together APHRC's funders, partners, alumni, staff, and government representatives from across the world to celebrate and reflect on the Center's journey and successes. Notably, the commemoration and associated events attracted substantial local, regional, and international media interest.

CARTA featured in the celebration in a number of ways. CARTA Program Manager, Florah Karimi moderated a panel session on 'Building the Capacity of African Scientists' where CARTA co-Director Sharon Fonn was a panelist and presented CARTA's strategy and major achievements. CARTA also showcased aspects of the program through poster presentations, specifically the institutionalization process and the CARTA Evidence Website.

Exciting News: Join Us at the Upcoming CARTA Conference!



e are excited to announce the 2023 CARTA Conference, taking place on September 14-15, 2023, at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. With the theme 'Building Bridges: Strengthening Research Capacity for Sustainable Development in Africa,' this conference embodies our commitment to fostering collaboration and innovation for long-term impact in the region.

The CARTA Conference will be a celebration of the remarkable work achieved by the CARTA family. It will provide a platform to showcase the innovative research and initiatives of our program, featuring the contributions of CARTA ECRs and partner institutions. Moreover, the conference will enable us to learn from our past experiences and shape the future of CARTA.

This two-day event will bring together fellows from all ten cohorts, facilitators, focal persons, and individuals

engaged in CARTA activities across partner institutions, alongside funders and other stakeholders involved in capacity-strengthening initiatives on the continent. On the first day, CARTA ECRs will showcase their research alongside the vibrant Wits research community while the second day will focus on highlighting the CARTA program's interventions, approaches, innovations, and impact.

Join us at the CARTA Conference to be inspired by the collaborative spirit that drives CARTA's mission.

ARTA's cohort 10 holds a unique distinction as the most recent cohort, at least for the time being, to undergo CARTA's rigorous training program. The cohort comprises 25 individuals with diverse backgrounds and exceptional talents from across CARTA's African partner universities. Over the course of their fellowship, the fellows have been equipped with the necessary tools and skills to navigate the complexities of their doctoral research, particularly through the four Joint Advanced Seminars (JASeS).

Due to the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the normal course of their training was disrupted, requiring adaptations and measures to

ensure the collective progress of the cohort. Last year, JAS3 took place as scheduled, but only a section of the cohort was able to participate due to varying COVID-related reasons that caused delays for some of the fellows. To address this situation and with no cohort behind them to catch up with, the program organized a special JAS3 for the group that had missed it. The seminar was hosted by the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, and took place between May 4 - June 3, 2023.

With all cohort 10 fellows now having completed the JAS3 milestone, we caught up with the fellows to share reflections and experiences of JAS3, and CARTA's PhD training in totality.



Takondwa Connis Bakuwa Kamuzu University of Health Sciences, Malawi

I have learned the importance of having a simple summary of my research that can be understood by any audience (without scientific jargon). I have also been challenged to read widely and have the ability to read science with an objective lens.



The CARTA community helps a lot in the whole PhD journey and without it, I would not have come this far. As a result of the program, I am more motivated to focus academically, especially on supervision and teaching.





Chinenyenwa Ohia University of Ibadan, Nigeria

My top takeaways are the manuscript club which taught me to view my research in a more holistic way, such that I can now design and describe my research better, and the scientific blitz where I gained skills to think critically and present arguments.

Beryl Maritim University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa

The vastness of African cultures and expertise represented in the CARTA community is exceptional. I am forever indebted to CARTA for the exposure to individuals who have set the bar so high in terms of research integrity and capacity. Without the support of this fellowship, I may likely not have been able to produce the kind of research I have been able to during my PhD. Thank you CARTA!







Shakeerah Gbadebo University of Ibadan, Nigeria

CARTA has not only given me great opportunities to improve myself research-wise but also my relationship with people. Through the program, I have been exposed to notable researchers in different fields and learned a lot from the interactions.

Oluwatosin Olorunmoteni University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa

My exposure to CARTA has influenced my life and practice in many ways. It has given me the opportunity to improve my writing skills, especially with the ESE:O program in JAS 1 as well as my understanding of epistemology and research designs. I have also been exposed to excellent mentorship and networking opportunities.



James Muleme Makerere University, Uganda

The CARTA training is designed in a great way to break, build, and furnish the skills and abilities of fellows who believe in change, and becoming better people in the academic world and beyond.



CARTA JASes are very informative and each JAS session has improved my research and writing skills. Networking with facilitators and fellows from different countries has been very helpful in current and future research collaborations.





Kganetso Sekome University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa

CARTA has opened my views of science and social issues from other African cultures and countries. I have gained a lot of confidence in my skills as a researcher and an academic from the training opportunities provided by the program.

Frederick Oporia Makerere University, Uganda

I feel very confident and more knowledgeable compared to my colleagues who are non-CARTA PhD students because in many cases, I provide them with constructive assistance in their study projects.



Completions

Three fellows, all registered at the University of Witwatersrand successfully completed all the requirements of their doctoral degrees within the period. Their completions bring the number of CARTA-funded PhD completions to **145.**



Judith Mwansa-Kambafwile
Cohort 7, University of Witwatersrand



Samuel Mwaniki
Cohort 8, University of Nairobi



Olutoyin Sekoni Cohort 6, University of Ibadan

Promotions

Between January and June 2023, eight fellows from various institutions were promoted to higher academic ranks, such as Associate Professor and Senior Lecturer positions.



Enock Chisati
Cohort 7 graduate, Kamuzu University of Health Sciences
Associate Professor



Felix Khuluza

Cohort 5 graduate, Kamuzu University of Health Sciences

Associate Professor



Felishana Cherop
Cohort 7 fellow, Moi University
Lecturer



Olivia Osiro
Cohort 6, University of Nairobi
Senior Lecturer



Fellow News



Melvin Ojo Agunbiade

Cohort 3 graduate, Obafemi Awolowo University

Associate Professor



Linda Alinane Nyondo-Mipando

Cohort 2 graduate, Kamuzu University of Health Sciences

Associate Professor



Rose Opiyo

Cohort 1 graduate, University of Nairobi

Senior Lecturer



Temitope Olumuyiwa Ojo
Cohort 10 fellow, Obafemi Awolowo University
Senior Lecturer

Appointments

Within the period, four fellows were appointed to various notable roles and positions, including academic positions, and selection to join scientific committees, editorial boards, and global academies.



Godwin Anywar

Cohort 6 graduate Makerere University

- Appointed to be a member of the African Phytomedicine Scientific Society (APSS) Scientific Committee
- Appointed to the PLOS ONE Editorial Board as Academic editor
- Selected as a fellow of the Global Young Academy (GYA)



Henry Zakumumpa

Cohort 4 graduate Makerere University

- Appointed technical Lead for a \$
 2.2 million dollar grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- Selected to be a guest editor for the BMC health services research special collection on 'decolonizing global health'.



Olindah Silaule

Cohort 9 fellow University of the Witwatersrand

 Appointed as a Senior Lecturer at the University of Cape Town

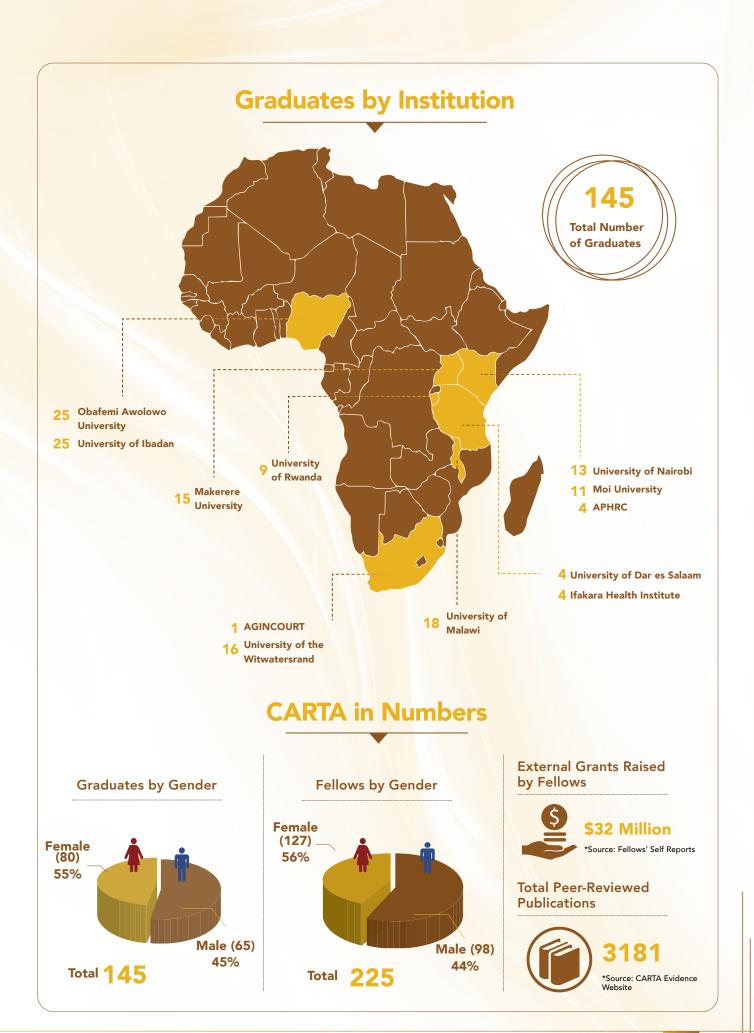


Yolanda Malele-Kolisa

Cohort 5 graduate University of the Witwatersrand

Appointed to the PLOS
 ONE Editorial Board as an

 Academic Editor





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