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We applaud the Comment by David Beran and colleagues (June, 2017)¹ on the challenges and remedies for enhancing research capacity in low-income and middle-income countries (LMICs). The absence of a clear-cut vision for sustainable research capacity and ownership in LMICs is arguably a missed opportunity under the Millennium Development Goals' mandate.² We therefore consider this initiative as timely within the context of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. However, we wish to highlight a few oversights that need to be clarified to ensure effective knowledge and skill transfer, based on our research experience in Africa.

First, the sole emphasis on partnerships between universities appears to belittle the enormous potential and contributions of non-governmental and humanitarian organisations to research capacity in LMICs.³ The system of governance in many universities is heavily bureaucratic and inhibits productive and collaborative grassroots engagement with host communities. As a result, some funding agencies now equally encourage and support non-governmental organisations and individuals with proven core competences to undertake essential non-clinical, community-based research and intervention projects.

Second, we share the view that international journals also have a vital role. For example, it is the editorial policy of some journals that studies making use of data, infrastructure, or personnel in a foreign country without involving at least one scientist from that country as an author will not be published. However, this policy is often not strictly enforced.⁴ The responsibility for equitable authorship for research conducted in LMICs

should, therefore, not be restricted to editors. The general readership could also serve as a watchdog for compliance.

Last, mutual trust among the partners is essential, but should be reinforced with a formalised mechanism for accountability. It is not uncommon now for host institutions and local research collaborators to demand a memorandum of understanding in which the rights and obligations of the collaborators are spelt out clearly, to prevent abuses by any party. Typically, such a document will address issues of data ownership, sharing, use, and archiving equitably, and discourage unwholesome data mining by foreign collaborators, among others.⁵ We believe that funding agencies, grant administrators, and institutional review boards have a duty of care to ensure that disbursement of grants are contingent on satisfactory compliance with the provisions of such memorandums. Ultimately, an international code of conduct for research projects in LMICs, championed by leading global health players, will be helpful in ensuring tangible and enduring research capacity. The time to act is now.

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