

AMR Hub Collaborators Meet & Greet: Africa Meeting Report

Online (Zoom), Wednesday 19th September 2023, 11:00-12:30 pm BST

The ‘AMR Collaborators Meet & Greet Event: Africa’ held on September 19th, 2023, brought together TGHN Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) collaborators from diverse backgrounds and regions across Africa. The meeting was designed to foster networking, knowledge sharing, and collaborative discussions with a focus on addressing the challenges posed by AMR in Africa. All Africa-based members of the TGHN AMR Hub [‘Collaborator Map’](#) were invited to participate.

Participants

A total of 40 collaborators participated in the event. Countries represented by participants included Nigeria, Kenya, Gambia, Uganda, Cameroon, Botswana, Ghana, South Africa, Ethiopia, Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania and Guinea.

Collaborators with a broad range of professional backgrounds and expertise contributed to the open discussion, including academics, pharmacists, veterinarians/animal health experts, regulators, statisticians, students, clinical pathologists, laboratory professionals and plant health professionals. Research areas represented included AMR detection and surveillance, One Health, molecular biology, genomics, community engagement, pharmacology, antimicrobial stewardship, policy development/implementation and animal health.

Agenda Overview

The meeting began with introductions from TGHN Director Prof Trudie Lang (‘The Importance of Collaboration in Tackling AMR in Africa’) and Dr Ryan Walker, AMR Hub Coordinator (Background to the TGHN AMR Hub and aims of the meeting). Then followed an open discussion, in which participants were invited to introduce themselves, share their current work and unique perspectives regarding AMR research in Africa, and highlight further research they thought necessary to address the threat posed by AMR in the region. Additionally, participants were encouraged to share the challenges they have faced conducting AMR research, resources and actions that would support them in addressing these challenges, and propose collaborative solutions to addressing the research gaps.

Discussion Outcomes

The following themes emerged as potential areas of focus for the group:

One Health	Attendees acknowledged the interconnectedness of human health, animal health, and the environment in the context of AMR. Collaborative efforts in Africa must embrace this holistic approach.
Antimicrobial Stewardship	Developing and implementing stewardship programs in the region, with a particular focus on inappropriate prescribing/use of antimicrobials were recognized as vital steps.
Laboratory Capacity	Limited laboratory capacity in Africa and its impact on genomic studies , molecular biology research and surveillance , was identified as a significant barrier. Expanding laboratory infrastructure was identified as a priority to enhance AMR monitoring.

<p>Genomic Studies and Molecular Biology</p>	<p>A need for conducting greater numbers of genomic and molecular studies was identified, with particular focus on harnessing artificial intelligence and data mining methodologies. A lack of laboratory capacity was identified as a key barrier to conducting genomic/molecular studies.</p>
<p>Community/Public Engagement</p>	<p>The need for increased public and community engagement activities, including youth and media engagement in AMR research in Africa was highlighted. It was proposed that a framework be developed to support these activities.</p>
<p>Diagnostics</p>	<p>Lack of diagnostic capacity, in particular a scarcity of test kits and lack of laboratory capacity, was raised as an additional barrier,</p>
<p>Youth Engagement</p>	<p>Existing efforts to engage young people in AMR research, including undergraduate students and early career researchers, were highlighted, however, it was acknowledged that greater effort is needed. A lack of institutional support was identified as a key barrier in this area.</p>
<p>Policy</p>	<p>Inefficacious policies, lack of policy implementation, and a general lack of AMR policy was identified as an area of concern in the region. It was suggested that the group include an element of policy review in its activities.</p>
<p>Barriers to AMR Research in Africa</p>	<p>Lack of technical resources (laboratory resources, testing kits), lack of facilities, lack of funding, lack of policies, lack of data, lack of institutional support, bureaucracy.</p>
<p>Enablers of AMR Research in Africa</p>	<p>Training, mentorship programs, collaboration, strengthened regulation.</p>

Next Steps

To effectively address the diverse components of AMR research identified during the meeting, it was proposed that multiple, cross-cutting **working groups** be established to address these concerns in a targeted manner. The precise focus and geographic scope of these working groups will be determined following Asian and Latin American and Caribbean Meet and Greet events (scheduled September and October respectively), in order to assess the shared challenges and areas of interest across each of these regions. These groups will be launched in a joint initiative during **World Antimicrobial Awareness Week (WAAW)**, November 2023.

Attendees were encouraged to **volunteer for leadership roles** within the working groups, promoting leadership from within the African AMR Collaborators network and fostering collaborative research and knowledge sharing. The meeting concluded with a commitment to continue strengthening the African AMR Collaborators network, pursuing funding opportunities, and developing specific interventions and strategies to address the AMR challenges identified during the event.