

Making North–South Collaborations Work: Facilitating Natural Product Drug Discovery in Africa

Abstract

Many global North–South collaborations seek to address different aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for Africa. The role of the North in these collaborations is crucial from a funding point of view. However, the realisation of the SDG objectives for Africa will depend largely on strategies that are guided by the successes and challenges of previous and existing collaborative efforts. Globally, Africa has the highest disease burden with the leading causes of morbidity and mortality being malaria, tuberculosis, HIV and AIDS and more recently, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and cancer. Neglected tropical diseases are also causing long-term detrimental health effects, resulting in huge social and economic losses. Ironically, the continent is endowed with a huge biodiversity resource that has the potential to provide novel and potent drug candidates but remains largely unexplored partly due to financial and infrastructural challenges. Developing the scientific research capabilities of African institutions towards drug discovery through global networks is, therefore, an important component of improving health systems on the continent. This chapter examines experiences from three North–South collaborations—the Royal Society’s Leverhulme Trust Africa Award (LTAA), Newton Advanced Fellowships (NAF) and Cambridge-Africa Partnership for Research Excellence (CAPREx)—and proposes the adoption of structures that extend the current focus on skill transfer to include the building and maintenance of sustainable infrastructure. It is believed that these thoughts and suggestions could promote sustainable collaborative research to provide good health and well-being (SDG3), quality education (SDG4), relevant infrastructure (SDG9) and reduced inequalities (SDG10) in Africa.