

# GC ADDA Convening Meeting

## 10 – 12 March 2025



**Date: 10-11 March 2025 | Time: 9am – 5pm**

**Venue: Main Auditorium, ISSER, University of Ghana**

### **ATTENDEES:**

**GC ADDA Participants:** Susan Winks, Nicola Elliott-Wong, Jessica Akester, Adrienne Edkins, Erick Strauss, Fidele Ntie-Kang, Kelly Chibale, Lyn-Marie Birkholtz, Richard Amewu, Amanda Rousseau, Edwin Murungi, Elizabeth Kigundu, Fabrice Boyom, Fortunate Mokoena, Gabriel Mashabela, Grace Mugumbate, Laurent Dembele, Peter Mubanga Cheuka, Rajshekhar Karpoormath, Rose Hayeshi, Vinayak Singh, Ali Mohamed Ali, Arnold Forkuo Donkor, Candice Soares de Melo, Iruka Okeke, John Ogbaji Igoli, Liezl Krugmann (Gibhard), Mathew Njoroge, Mwila Mulubwa, Roslyn Stella Thelingwani, Gregory Basarab, Ameera Mohammed Dawoodjee, Caroline Maina, Djeneba Diallo, Emmanuel Agbo, Henry Onyame Akwaffo, Joel Ojogbane Onoja, Leandi van der Westhuizen, Mariscal Brice Tchatat Tali, Mohamed Maiga, Moipone Lebeloane, Piwai Gotor, Rendani Mbau, Robi Meryl Chacha, Sabela Ramafoko, Siddaram Nadigar, Silungile Mhlongo, Konrad Mostert, Rawdat Awuku-Larbi (Baba-Adam), Solange Ndamo

**Affiliate institutions, funders & advisory board members:** Gang Liu, Jenn Maroa, Monicah Otieno, Peter Warner, Upendra Argikar, Ed McIver, Carolyn Hall, Laura Stennett, Ian Gilbert, Thierry Diagana, Timothy Wells, James Duffy, Kevin Read, Suze Farrell, Angeline Yalwala, Fatu Badiane Markey, Evelyn Gitau, Ryan Mwakwi

### **OBJECTIVES:**

1. Update the GC ADDA community on progress with network formation
2. Showcase GC ADDA Flagship Projects highlighting successes and challenges
3. Create visibility around new projects and new funding
4. Set GC ADDA critical success factors for coming 3-5 years (a balanced score card)
5. Map out key engagement points with different communities, including the diaspora, and capture what is already occurring
6. Engage the next generation of drug discovery scientists
7. Training session for Emerging Researchers
8. Opportunity for closed meetings for Flagship Projects, GC ADDA Advisory Board, EXCOM and Operational Leadership Team (OLT)

**OUTCOMES:** Following the meeting, OLT should be able to:

1. Monitor and evaluate GC ADDA against agreed critical success factors
2. Engage network members to execute selected activities
3. Incorporate training priorities into GC ADDA skills development plan (webinars, workshops, scientific exchanges, mentorship, convening meetings, etc.)
4. Execute the strategic growth targets for membership and region onboarding
5. Identify how this consortium interfaces with other consortia on the continent and beyond

### Day 1: Monday 10 March 2025 | Time: 9am – 5pm

#### VISION - PROGRESS UPDATE & NETWORK GOALS

In the morning, Susan Winks updated the group on the network formation. Then representatives from the four Flagship Projects shared updates highlighting the successes and challenges of their journeys so far and sharing the long-term thinking of using the Flagship Projects to enhance the network's capabilities on the continent.

In the afternoon, Susan Winks introduced the breakaway group activity: Groups of 6-10 people were to work together on an assigned critical success factor topic and then provide feedback to the whole.

Attendees signed up to work on targets for

1. Fundraising
2. Drug Discovery Pipeline
3. Membership
4. Capability Building
5. Patient advocacy & community engagement
6. Diaspora engagement
7. Industry engagement
8. Skills development
9. Comms & marketing

While topics 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 were well-subscribed, there was no sign-up for topics 3 and 9. These topics were handed to groups who completed their first topic early. The groups gave feedback to the whole, which formed the basis for the balanced score card exercise on Day 2.

#### FEEDBACK FROM THE GROUPS:

##### 1. FUNDRAISING:

- There is little cohesive understanding of what alternative funders are available, how to reach them, and how to make a strong funding case
- Current funders cannot be relied on indefinitely – the network needs to diversify funding sources
- Need funding for physical infrastructure
- Need to improve skills in funding strategies, pitching and developing relationships with funders, including incorporating venture capital language - clarify timelines, key milestones, and acceleration opportunities
- Need to emphasize long-term vision of the network

##### 2. DRUG DISCOVERY AND PIPELINE TARGETS:

- Pharmacogenomics: African populations are underrepresented in clinical trials and there is an absence of African-centric preclinical tools
- Mistrust: Need to address lack of trust in drugs developed outside Africa
- Government support is key to success and is lacking in many regions
- Our knowledge of our own resources and capacity is underdeveloped

- We rely heavily on support and resources outside of Africa when we could be utilizing and developing our own support & capability systems

### 3. MEMBERSHIP TARGETS:

- GC ADDA is not yet broadly representative but can work towards greater inclusivity over time

### 4. CAPABILITY BUILDING:

- Strategies to retain talent: how to create staff positions (as opposed to student roles)
- Leadership training: how to transform researchers into PIs
- Chemistry: equipment and maintenance; training in medicinal chemistry and chemical synthesis; computational chemistry expertise; procurement
- Toxicology: gap analysis needed to assess current capabilities across the continent; train and retain talent; build facilities; early safety screening; networking
- Biology: chemical procurement and storage
- DMPK: *further discussion needed*
- Computational and AI: *further discussion needed*
- Strategic capacity building: where to capacitate each institution and where to share/split key resources
- Grant management support is needed

### 5. PATIENT ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

- Educated and engaged African populations are needed for drug discovery and development to be successful in terms of participation in relevant aspects and in encouraging appropriate use of medicines
- Drug discovery scientists benefit from understanding the needs of patients

### 6. DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT:

- Large diaspora community could be a useful resource but is under-engaged

### 7. INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT

- Our engagement with industry should be expanded to include the full ecosystem (vendors, local industry, etc)
- We must learn from successful country models to enhance local capacity and engagement with local industry

### 8. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- Gaps identified:
  - Project management
  - Development and use of AI tools to accelerate drug discovery

- Drug discovery training for non-scientists (general understanding of drug discovery)
- Specialised training in DMPK and Med Chem H2L optimization
- Grant writing course with ongoing support (e.g., review of proposals, training grants)
- Preclinical and clinical training
- Collaboration management for long-term impact
- We need a facility to share information amongst members
- We need to ensure sustainability of projects beyond initial funding

### 9. COMMS AND MARKETTING:

- Drug discovery research out of Africa needs greater visibility to support fundraising, increased collaborations, and greater awareness
- GC ADDA needs to be a platform that enables ease of contribution
- We need to clarify our target audiences

Day 1 ended with a Networking Dinner at Sky Bar.

### Day 2: Tuesday 11 March 2025 | Time: 9am – 5:30pm

#### TACTICS – TOWARDS ACHIEVING OUR SCORECARD

In the morning, Susan Winks created visibility around new funding secured to support the network, namely the RAFIKI, EU INFRA grant, which directly supports capacity building of the GC ADDA network through training, mentorship, scientific fellowships, strengthening sample and data management and working towards the sustainability of the network. Adrienne Edkins introduced her GC ADDA Member Project.

To support our Comms and Marketing, all members posed for photographs as individuals, in small constellations related to the different projects, member types and associated groups, as well as the whole group. These have been used on the Website.

Susan Winks introduced the balanced-score-card exercise. Attendees returned to their groups from Day 1, and worked on the tactics for the balanced score card.

After lunch, the groups presented their tactics to the group, which have been summarised as follows:

#### 1. FUNDRAISING:

- Develop fundraising strategy
- Identify & approach prospective funders
- Identify funding calls
- Engage with funders forums
- Develop relationships with funders (target: ministries)
- Collate financial targets per area of funding needed
- Offer training in funding pitching
- Hire a fundraiser to support the network

- Obtain seed funding for smaller projects

2. DRUG DISCOVERY AND PIPELINE TARGETS:

- Establish Member Projects
- Map Member Projects on pipeline
- Identify potential new areas to explore including pipeline targets
- Obtain new projects / chemical matter
- Explore existing resources
- Form disease-specific groups

3. MEMBERSHIP TARGETS:

- Establish performance-based criteria for existing members
- Identify gaps e.g. geographical and linguistic
- Open a call for applications targeting under-represented regions
- Take action to probe under-represented regions including media coverage (e.g. translate website into other languages)

4. CAPABILITY BUILDING:

- Map out the expertise within the network
- Conduct capability gap analysis
- Understand procurement issues per region and action improvements
- Improve procurement issues through vendor relationships and exploring regional central procurement structure
- Improve analytical infrastructure and maintenance
- Understand toxicology gaps & improve expertise
- Understand stakeholder capabilities and needs
- Set up sample management systems in GC ADDA member institutions
- Strengthen computational screening

5. PATIENT ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

- Generate insight into patient communities and patient journeys
- Identify community stakeholders and existing initiatives
- Develop engagement plan for collaborations with existing initiatives
- Utilise social media platforms

6. DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT:

- Establish an African drug discovery diaspora community and create a database
- Create diaspora platform and engagement strategy
- Draw up Terms of Reference and onboard diaspora members

7. INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT

- Create a map of vendors

- Identify champion in each region to engage with the vendors
- Develop a "Friends of the network" concept to engage adjacent industry partners
- Research best practices for successful country models for API and scale-up industries
- Create centralised business plan ("one voice, one business plan") with slide deck, including: survey of available industries, summary of regional expertise, etc.
- Pool shipping knowledge and best practices
- Get involved in existing industry programs (e.g. Novartis Next Generation Scientist, GSK OpenLab, MSD Fellowship program)
- Work with industry partners to support access to screening libraries
- Work with industry partners to identify new mentors and mentorship opportunities

### 8. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- Collate / design workshops for identified gaps including: Intro to basic concepts, Grant writing, Project management, AI in drug discovery, Drug discovery for non-scientists, Pre-clinical and clinical research
- Train the trainer
- Design accessible workshop format including online tools, sharing materials and engage industry experts to present
- Enhance Member access to information including capabilities directory to map skills and opportunities, closed member site
- Improve communication for non-scientists, particularly for project managers, grant managers, ops/finance staff supporting drug discovery
- Establish grant writing support
- Facilitate Mentorship programs
- Offer Internships / fellowships
- Offer / access grants for training
- Offer support for article submission
- Create sustainability plan
- Manage collaborations

### 9. COMMS AND MARKETING:

- Develop comms and marketing strategy including engaging the academic community and product development stakeholders
- Develop comms strategy template for other groups to incorporate
- Identify champion

The meeting adjourned, and attendees separated for the closed meetings and training sessions:

Closed meetings of the OLT, Advisory Board and EXCOM.

# GC ADDA Convening Meeting

## 10 – 12 March 2025

### Training sessions:

- Grant Proposal Writing Training Session by Laura Stennett
- Toxicology Assessment During Drug Discovery and Development: Case Examples by Monicah Otieno

Status	Action Summary	Due date
✓	GC ADDA Website to be live	31 March 2025
✓	H3D-F to compile a balanced scorecard based on feedback and share with OLT for approval.	25 April 2025
□	GC ADDA Member resource page on website	End June 2025
□	OLT to engage with GC ADDA Members and champions to initiate activities articulated in the balanced scorecard to achieve year 1 targets	July 2025
□	Summary of meeting and approved balanced scorecard to be shared with GC ADDA members (all groups)	Mid-May 2025
✓	Annual report of GC ADDA activities as discussed at the convening meeting will be shared – <i>incorporated into Newsletter Q1</i>	End March 2025
□	Member projects and member platforms to be approved at OLT April and communicated to all GC ADDA members – <i>carried over following OLT decision at meeting on 25 April</i>	June 2025
□	Emerging researchers to be approved and notified – <i>carried over to follow approval of Member Projects</i>	End June 2025
✓	Quarterly newsletter of network updates and upcoming opportunities to be shared at the end of each quarter	End March 2025