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International Public Engagement

Gathering views of international
public and community engagement
with research across Africa and India

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Table of Contents

Contents

Executive summary.....	3
Introduction	4
Survey Findings	5
1. Understanding of public and community engagement.....	5
2. Interest and commitment to public engagement.....	7
3. Institutional strategy.....	8
4. Barriers and incentives to public engagement.....	9
5. Improvement of support.....	11
Interviews	13
Culture	13
Benefits of public engagement:.....	13
Challenges to public engagement:.....	13
Solutions:	15
Conclusions and Recommendations.....	17
Acknowledgments	19

Executive summary

- A short survey requesting views on public engagement with research was sent to 40 international contacts in April 2016. The survey received a 78% response rate.
- A mixture of engagement specialists and researchers across India and Africa answered the survey.
- 39% of respondents were based in India and 61% across Africa.
- There was clear interest and commitment to public engagement and 83% of respondents said that they would like to spend more time engaging with the public.
- However 55% of those surveyed said that their institution had no formal public engagement strategy or policy and 38% had no dedicated public engagement staff.
- Survey results highlighted 5 key areas that could help improve support for public engagement in their region: increased availability of funding, dedicated staff, senior management support, training and organisational structures.
- 5 respondents were interviewed over the phone and further emphasised a lack of training and a lack of time and organisational support to engage with the public.
- Interestingly African respondents highlighted gaps in training and time as the main challenges to engaging with the public whereas Indian respondents and interviewees raised key issues of a lack of awareness and interest in public engagement indicating a regional difference in the support needed.
- African respondents also focused on changing policy and engaging with research communities while Indian respondents aimed engagement at school children.
- Solutions and recommendations for Wellcome include supporting public engagement specialists at programmes and institutions, offering an online toolkit for public engagement for researchers and cross-regional, cross-discipline training sessions and collaboration opportunities.

Introduction

In line with the Strengthening Research Ecosystems in Africa and Asia priority area¹, Wellcome aims to support the next generation of research leaders and strengthen the research ecosystems that they work in. A large part of the research ecosystem is how researchers apply their findings and engage with the public to raise the profile of research and encourage discussion of its impact in society.

The Wellcome Trust has dedicated funding for international public engagement projects in low- and middle-income countries within Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. Since 2006, Wellcome has supported engagement internationally, and the International Engagement Awards were first opened in 2008. The awards aim to support projects that directly involve local communities and also enable discussion and dialogue about science and health research. Projects take on a variety of forms such as film, theatre, digital storytelling or café style debates. The scheme is open to a variety of applicants including scientists, educators and artists, with up to £30,000 awarded over a three year period².

A national survey in 2015³ led by a consortium of UK public funders of research, 'Factors Affecting Public Engagement by Researchers' investigated the understanding of UK researchers to public engagement. However until now Wellcome has not asked these questions internationally. This small scale study examines attitudes to public engagement across our funding portfolio in lower- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

This study aims to help develop the Wellcome Trust's approach to supporting public engagement within international research by establishing the understanding, gaps and challenges for international researchers in LMICs when engaging with the public and communities.

A survey of views on public and community engagement with research was sent to 40 contacts in Africa and India in April 2016. The survey received a response rate of 31 (78%). Of these, 58% were researchers or academics and 42% held scientific support, communications or engagement roles at their institutions.

61% of respondents were part of Delivering Excellence in Leadership, Training and Science (DELTAS) funded projects based in research institutions across Africa: Kenya, Cote D'Ivoire, South Africa, Ghana, Mali, Zimbabwe and Uganda. The remaining 39% of respondents were based in India at the Wellcome Trust DBT India Alliance and its associated institutions, the National Centre for Biological Sciences and the Public Health Foundation of India.

Qualitative interviews followed the online quantitative survey in July and August 2016 to add insight and understanding to the larger data set. A researcher and a public engagement specialist from India and three academics from Uganda, South Africa and Zimbabwe were interviewed to explore emerging issues in greater depth.

This piece of work was a small scale study with key stakeholders; it will be interesting to follow this study up with a large scale project.

¹ <https://wellcome.ac.uk/what-we-do/our-work/research-ecosystems-africa-and-asia>

² <https://wellcome.ac.uk/funding/international-engagement-awards>

³ <https://wellcome.ac.uk/news/what-are-barriers-uk-researchers-engaging-public>

Survey Findings

Overview: A web survey of contacts in Africa and India (n=31) working as researchers and academics or holding support, communication or engagement roles at institutions.

1. Understanding of public and community engagement

It was clear that respondents had a good understanding of the ethos of public and community engagement and why it would be useful to research.

Q: ‘What if anything does public or community engagement mean to you?’...

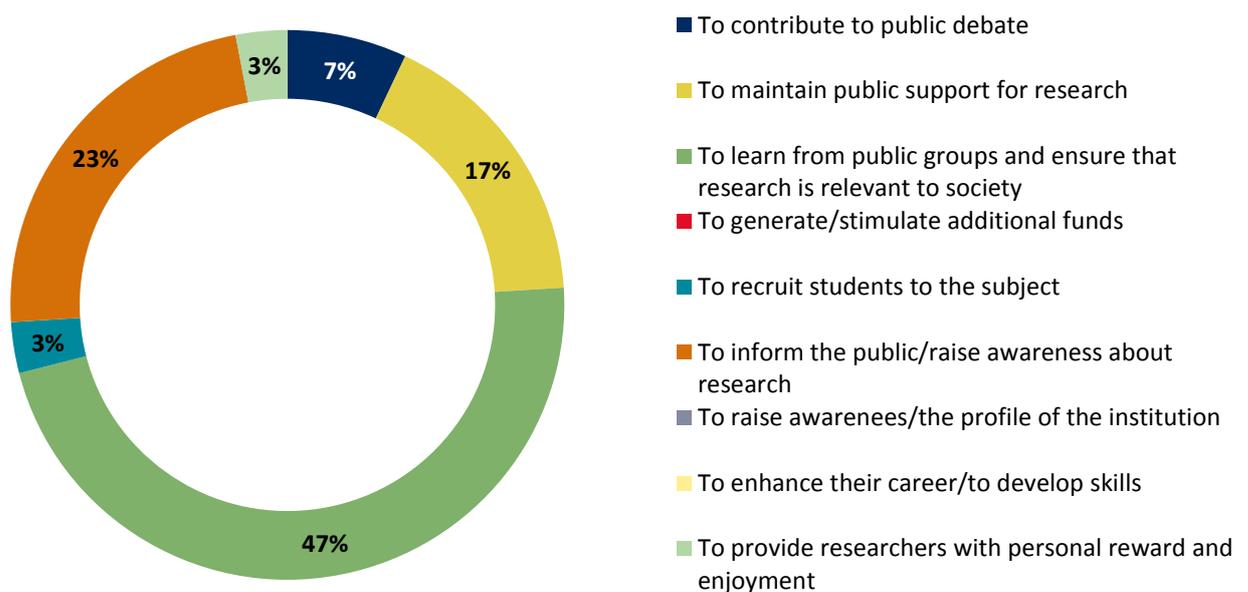
“Public or community engagement most simply can be defined as a symbiotic relationship and exchanges between the public and research/scientific community. Public engagement must result in a meaningful impact on both the groups and should not be restricted to dissemination of research knowledge or its uptake.”

Public Engagement specialist, India

1.1 Benefits of public engagement

The majority of respondents thought that learning from public groups and ensuring that research was relevant to the public was the main benefit of engagement. 87% agreed that ‘To learn from public groups and ensure that research is relevant to society’ and ‘to inform the public/raise awareness about research’ were of the top three benefits of researchers engaging with the public. Researchers in the UK public engagement survey³, also ranked these as their two main benefits of engaging with the public. However, our international respondents rated learning from public groups and ensuring research is relevant to society much higher than UK respondents who prioritized informing the public and raising awareness of research.

Figure 1.1: “What do you think is the *main* benefit, if any, of researchers engaging with the public?”



1.2 Audience of engagement

When asked to consider the importance of interacting with groups outside of academia, 93% of respondent's believed it important to engage with policy-makers and politicians over any other group. Interestingly science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subject researchers in the UK public engagement survey⁴ also rated policy-makers and politicians as the most important group for researchers to engage with. As can be seen in figure 1.2, both groups also saw journalists as the second most important group. International respondents in this survey considered it equally important to engage with school teachers as it is to engage with the general public. School teachers were also ranked higher than the young people in the schools themselves, contrasting to UK results.

It must be noted that the UK survey was a much larger scale study with 1,558 STEM respondents so not directly comparable to the 30 respondents in this international survey.

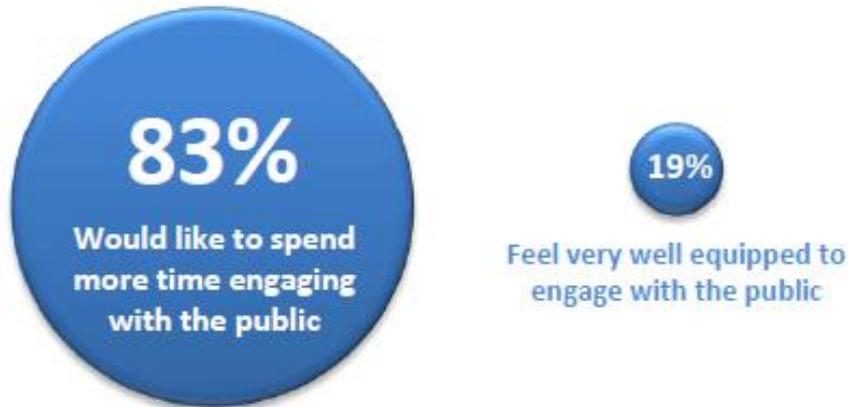
Figure 1.2 “Which groups or sectors outside academia, do you think it is important for health researchers to engage with?”

	International survey	UK survey 2015
Policy-makers and politicians	93%	78%
Journalists (i.e. in press, TV, radio) including local and national	87%	72%
School teachers	83%	62%
General public (i.e. non specialist public)	83%	78%
Young people in schools	77%	71%
Industry/business	67%	65%
Patients/Patient groups	67%	54%
Others in the media such as writers, documentary and other programme makers	63%	56%
Young people outside schools	63%	49%
Charities/ NGOs/ Other non-profit organisations	57%	57%
Prospective students	57%	59%
I don't think it is important to engage with any groups or sectors	0%	na
	n=30	n=1,558

⁴ https://wellcome.ac.uk/sites/default/files/wtp060033_0.pdf

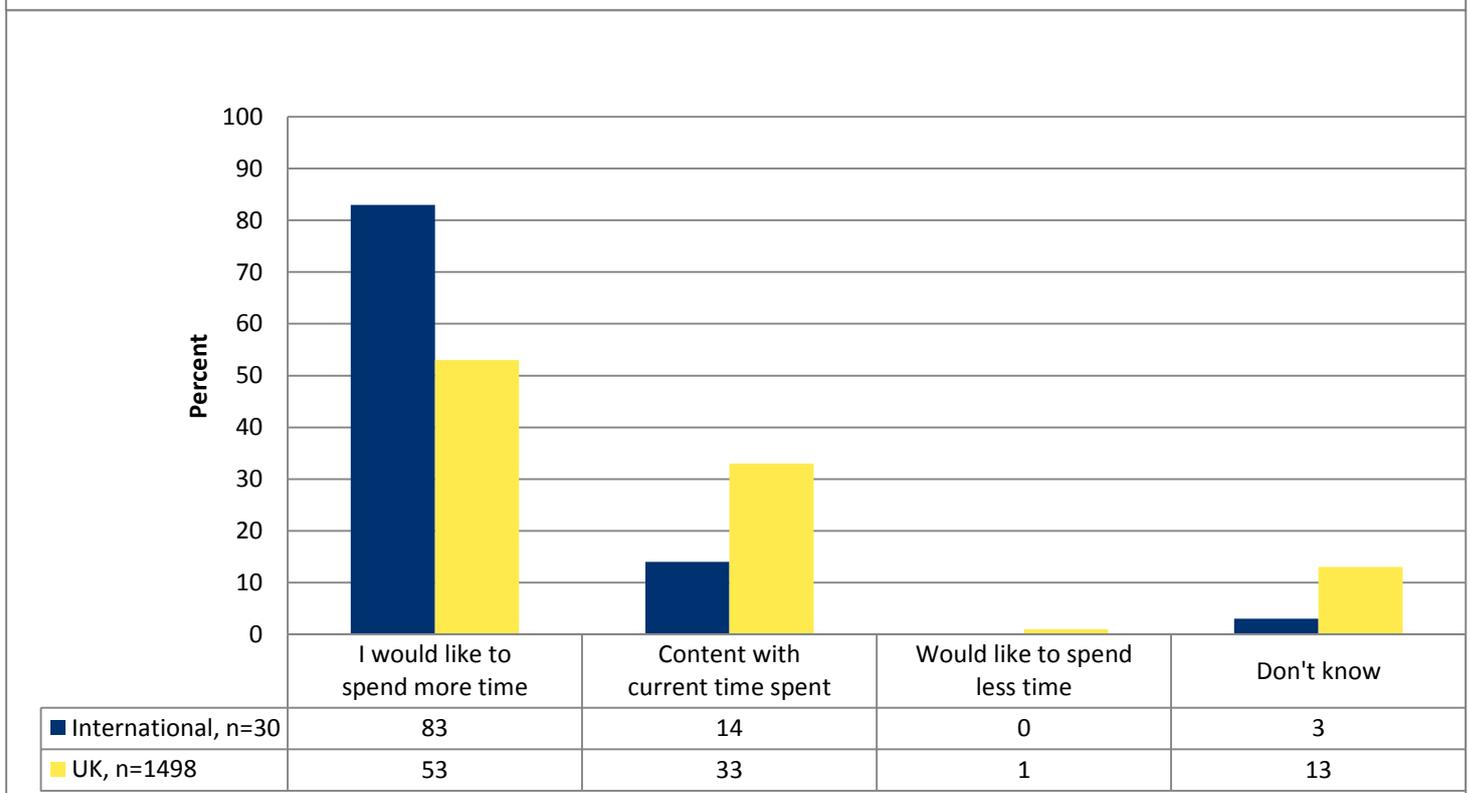
2. Interest and commitment to public engagement

The survey indicated a keen interest and commitment to public engagement, with 83% saying that they would like to spend more time engaging with the public. However only 19% of respondents felt very well equipped to engage with the public about their research. 34% of respondents had not received or been offered public engagement training in the past 5 years.



Interestingly, when UK STEM researchers⁵ were asked the same question, although our international sample set was smaller, a higher percentage of researchers internationally wanted to spend more time working in public engagement than in the UK where many were content with what they were doing already.

Figure 2.1: “How much time would you like to spend engaging with the public?”



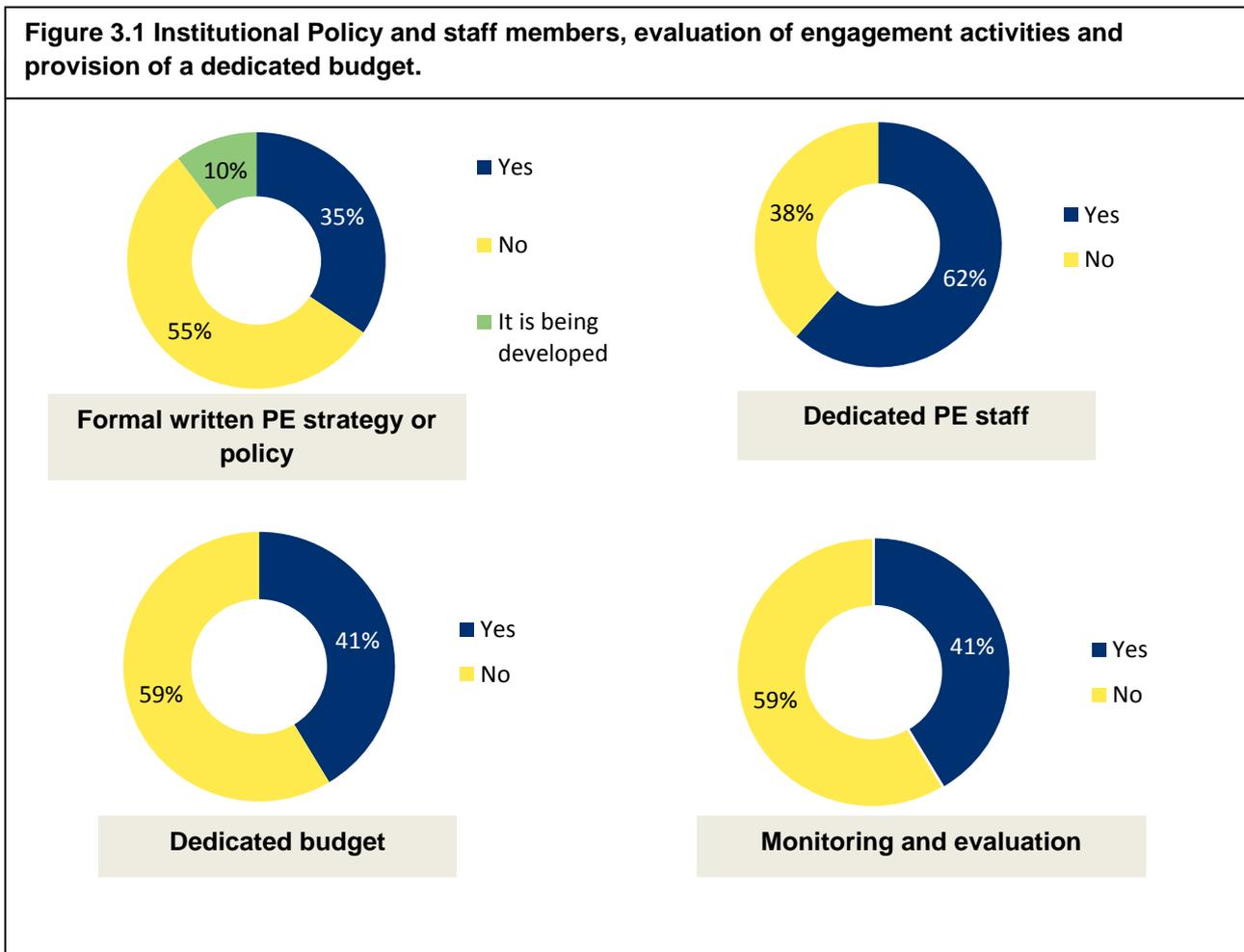
⁵ https://wellcome.ac.uk/sites/default/files/wtp060033_0.pdf

3. Institutional strategy

The majority of respondents (85%) agreed that their institutions were at least fairly supportive towards researchers who take part in activities to engage the public or local communities. However, over half of those surveyed said that their institution had no formal public engagement strategy or policy. While remembering the large difference in sample size⁶ with the UK public engagement survey, this is much higher than only 6% of UK respondents who believed that their institution had no formal written public engagement strategy.

Over a third of international respondents had no dedicated public engagement staff member at their institution and of the 62% who did, when asked to give their details many of these listed were programme directors or professors so presumably not full time public engagement specialists. Only 14% of respondents from the UK survey had no dedicated staff member at their institution. This also indicates a different interpretation of public engagement staff and to our knowledge only several of the programmes in this survey do have a dedicated member of staff to work on public engagement.

Additionally over half of international respondents had no monitoring or evaluation of public or community engagement activities in their institution, either internally or externally and two thirds had no dedicated budget to support the engagement, figure 3.1.



⁶ 265 UK Public engagement 'enablers' in the UK 'Factors Affecting Public Engagement by Researchers' survey as opposed to 30 respondents in this international survey.

4. Barriers and incentives to public engagement

4.1 Barriers to public engagement

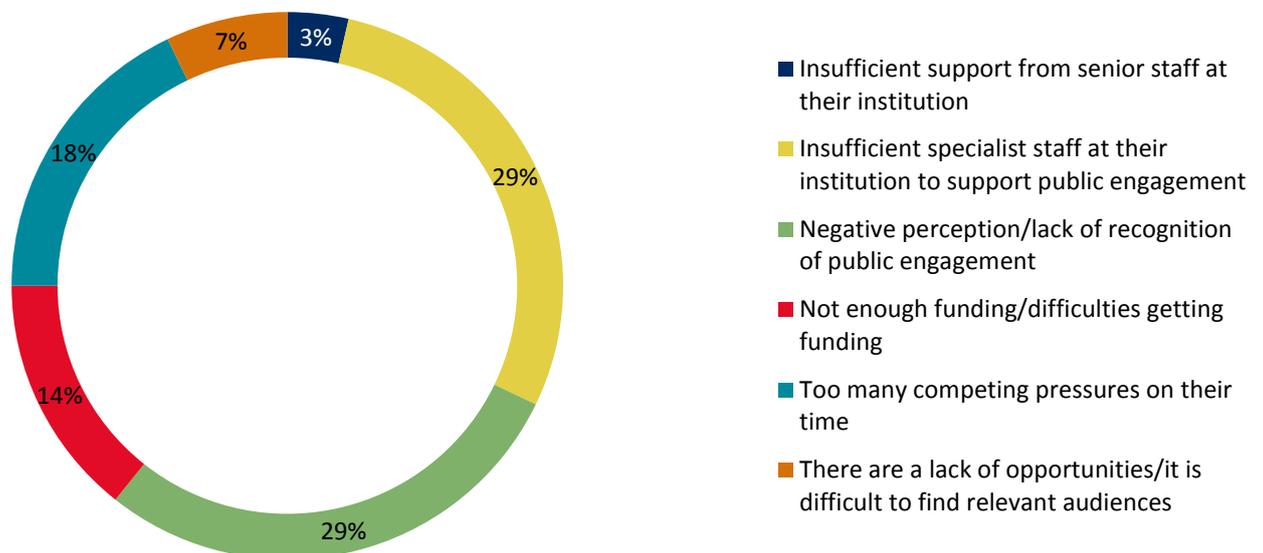
When asked what the **main** challenge in their region was of engaging with local communities, respondents selected a lack of specialist staff at their institution and a negative perception or lack of recognition of public engagement equally (Figure 4.1).

When asked about the three main challenges of engaging with the public or local communities, the most popular response was too many competing pressures on a researcher's time, with 73% of respondents agreeing this was in their top three challenges with engaging with the public or local community. Again despite the large difference in sample size (n=2,426 for the UK report and n=30 for this international survey), competing pressures on time also emerged as the most prominent barrier for researchers undertaking public engagement in the UK.

UK respondents also ranked a lack of opportunities and not enough funding as their second and third barriers to engaging with the public. Whereas, only 23% of international respondents agreed that there is a lack of opportunities or relevant audiences and instead ranked both insufficient specialist staff at their institution (53%) and a negative perception or a lack of recognition of public engagement (50%) as within the top 3 barriers to public engagement. Both of which UK respondents ranked as a much lower barrier to public engagement (less than 10%).

After competing pressures on their time, insufficient specialist staff at their institution, a negative perception and lack of recognition of public engagement, almost half (47%) of international respondents highlighted not enough funding or difficulties getting funding as a main barrier to public engagement.

Figure 4.1: "What would you say is the *main* challenge associated with researchers engaging with the public or local communities?"



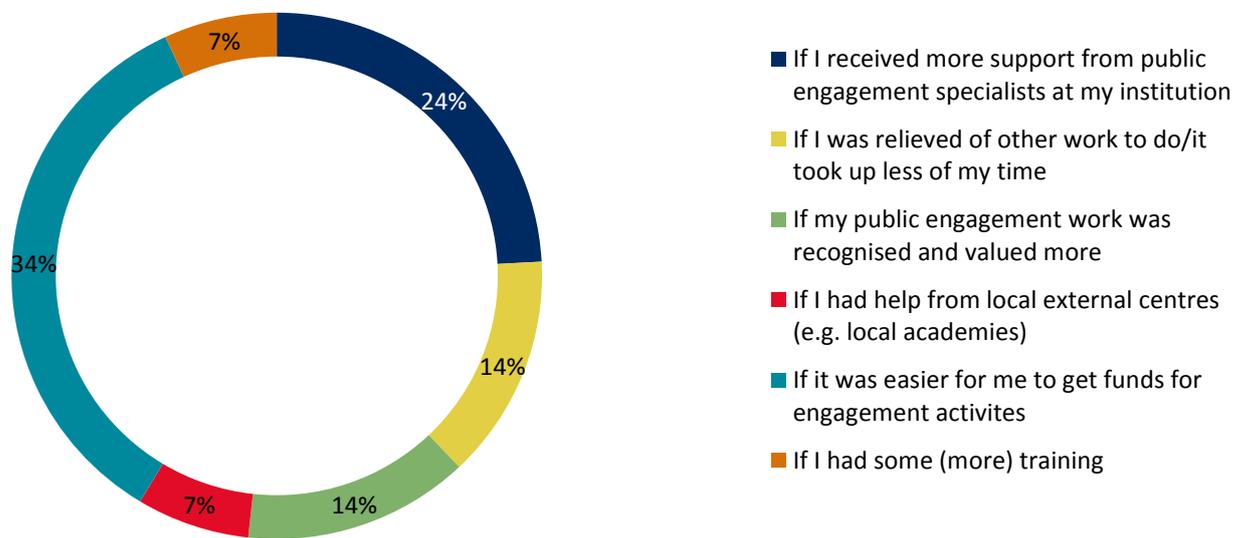
4.2 Incentives for public engagement

Respondents were also asked what top three factors might encourage them to get more involved in public engagement. The main incentives mirrored the barriers listed, with 41% agreeing if they received more support from public engagement specialists at their institution they would be more encouraged. 45%

selected if their 'public engagement was recognised and valued more' and the majority (55%) agreed they would be more incentivised if it was easier to get funds for engagement activities. Interestingly when asked to select one main factor that would encourage further engagement (Figure 4.2), the majority went with funds despite the main challenges in the previous question being listed as lack of specialist staff, time and a lack of recognition before a lack of funds.

Comparing this to the UK report⁷, international respondents were incentivized by more support from public engagement specialists, their engagement being recognised and valued more and ease of getting funds for engagement activities. Whereas UK respondents prioritised time: if they were relieved of their other work. Most noticeably, more support from public engagement specialists was one of the least popular encouraging factors for UK respondents (11%) whereas this was one of the most prominent incentives for our international respondents.

Figure 4.2: “What would *most* encourage you to get more involved in activities to engage the public or local communities?”



⁷ https://wellcome.ac.uk/sites/default/files/wtp060033_0.pdf

5. Improvement of support

Respondents were asked how they feel the support for public engagement or the delivery of public engagement by researchers could be improved in their region. This was an open text question asking the respondents opinions, so answers were classified into common themes (Figure 5.1).

Results suggested that respondents felt there are a small number of key factors which could help improve support for public engagement in their region and these factors mirrored the barriers and incentives highlighted in earlier questions:

- 1) **Dedicated staff** – insufficient specialist staff at their institutions to support public engagement was a key challenge.
- 2) **Senior management support** – negative perceptions or lack of recognition for public engagement was another key challenge.
- 3) **Increased availability of funding** – easier access to funds for public engagement activities would encourage more public engagement from researchers.
- 4) **Organisational structures** – respondents indicated that a defined public engagement structure within institutions would be beneficial rather than doing public engagement in an ad hoc way.
- 5) **Training** – respondents recommended more training on why and how to engage the public including explanations of the benefits for society, research and institutions.

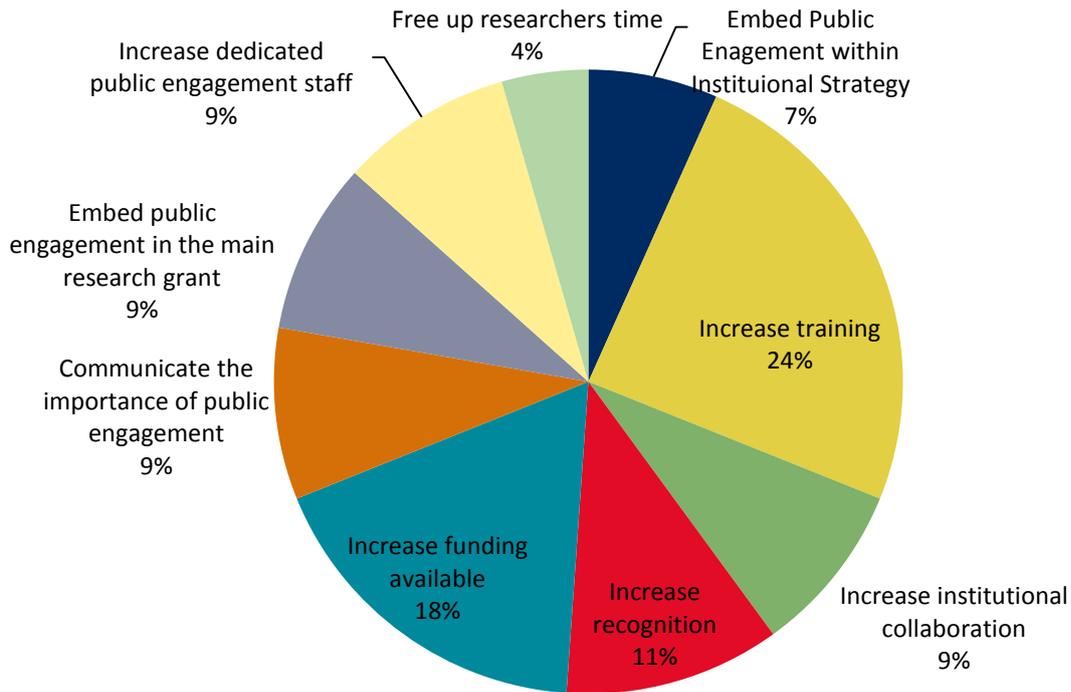
“I think if it became a compulsory part of the grant conditions, if we were given training and if there was support at the management level this would all go a long way to improving support for it.”

Programme staff, South Africa

“By putting more value into such activities; by making the senior management of research institutions realise the value of doing such; increasing the time flexibility of working around such commitments; training in public engagement; institutional of funding agency support.”

Researcher, India

Figure 5.1: “How do you feel the support for public engagement or the delivery of public engagement by researchers could be improved in your region”



Classifying this question further by country or respondent, answers could be grouped into their region (India or Africa). Although the sample is small (Africa n=19, India n=12), there were some indicative differences between regions. African respondents prioritised increasing training and only 4% of respondents mentioned communicating the importance of public engagement as ways in which the support or delivery of public engagement could be improved. Whereas respondents from India prioritised ‘communicating the importance of public engagement’ and ‘increasing institutional collaborations’ as methods of improving the public engagement support in their region.

Interviews

Overview: following the online quantitative survey, qualitative interviews were carried out with a select number of respondents to add depth and insight to the data. All respondents have completed the online survey and have different research backgrounds. 5 respondents were interviewed: 2 from India and 3 from Africa. The respondent's responsibilities included: a DELTAS programme manager, an associate professor, a public engagement officer, a DELTAS director and professor, and a researcher and university study coordinator.

Culture

Interviewees were all passionate and committed to public engagement with research however we noticed very different levels of understanding and commitment across institutions.

Also regionally, the public engagement culture in India seemed more to be reaching out to school children and education, often to encourage future funding back to the institution or research lab or because government quotas encourage this. In Africa the focus seemed more on behaviour change and research uptake into policy and the community.

Benefits of public engagement:

The benefits of public engagement highlighted in the interviews fall into the following broad categories:

- **Research project benefits:** Having the public as critics of your research. Also informing stakeholders and getting people on board with the research initially. This in the UK may be considered as weak public engagement or simply dissemination however this was an interesting point made by a manager at a new programme who highlighted that in certain research areas for example mental health where the topic is less established and accepted, a large part of engagement can be simply getting stakeholders on board. So for this programme that was the extent of public engagement. This indicates a limited capacity in the field of public engagement at some of our international programmes.
- **Institutional benefits:** Increased public awareness of research can feed into future funding and future support for research.
- **Next generation:** Attract young people and inspire the next generation.
- **Behaviour change:** Change perceptions and gives research relevance and often a purpose and the potential to improve health.
- **Policy change:** Further to just dissemination it can influence practice, policy and behaviour change and therefore the uptake of new practices and medicines.

Behaviour change: *“a local community of 200,000 people had not seen a local doctor in over four years. By advertising a local health surgery and their services amongst the community, surgery numbers went from 5 to many hundred. Holding village meetings at the health centre alone increased these numbers. This is an example of how simple direct engagement can reach a very substantial audience.”*

Researcher, Uganda

Challenges to public engagement:

The main challenges listed can be grouped into the following broad areas:

- **Time:** Time was again cited as the overarching barrier to public engagement. Researchers highlighted that doing public engagement activities informally and ad-hoc was often easier and more realistic.

Every researcher explained that the priority was balancing research with administration, teaching and grant writing. This doesn't leave time for public engagement activities and applications. It was suggested that if better infrastructure or regular public engagement projects were in place these may be easier for a researcher to get involved with. Additionally, if public engagement activities were part of an institutions strategy or within grant conditions senior staff and supervisors would be more willing and accepting to give time off for public engagement activities.

- **Reward and recognition:** Every respondent mentioned that it wasn't always clear what an individual could gain from engaging with the public and therefore how much time can be justified in doing so. Several researchers raised the issue that especially at more junior levels, promotion and funding are based on published work and institutions still do not emphasise the importance of public engagement. Public engagement should be part of an institution strategy or grant funding criteria to encourage this.

"The benefits of public engagement should be made clear to researchers, rewards and incentives can give motivation"

Professor, India

"Institutions still do not emphasise the importance of public engagement. All promotion criteria within an institution is based on published work, none is based on research impact in terms of public engagement and changing practice. Public engagement should be part of an institution strategy."

Researcher, Uganda

- **Training and dedicated staff:** particularly amongst African respondents, a lack of training along with no dedicated member of public engagement staff was highlighted as a major barrier to engagement. Respondents emphasised the need for training in how to communicate science to the public. Particularly in scientific areas that are sensitive or taboo to particular communities, often it is easier for the researcher to simply not engage. It was agreed that programmes do not necessarily have the funds to hire public engagement specific staff so if more funding became available the first step would be to get the infrastructure, knowledge and training in place rather than any more public engagement grants initially.

"There needs to be more of a buy-in from institutions and senior leadership, we need to create a buzz around public engagement"

Public engagement specialist, India

- **Understanding:** Some respondents explained that there is a lack of clarity around who is accountable for delivering public engagement and what is expected of researchers. Often there is a lack of understanding concerning the concept and relevance. No emphasis is put on Public Engagement other than just to disseminate research findings to the public. This links back to a relevant staff member and training, to give the background and expertise on what tools are available and how to use them.

"I studied at medical school for 8 years and never heard about public engagement beyond dissemination, I didn't even know it existed!"

Researcher, Uganda

- **Funding:** linked to time, researchers emphasised that due to lack of institutional interest or buy-in, public engagement funds came from external grants. This means having the time and training to apply for the grant.

India

Regionally, a lack of recognition and interest in public engagement seemed the most common obstacle to encouraging public engagement in India. Additionally, the public engagement specialist in India suggested that research was often less community focused in India, this was backed up by a professor who engaged with schools on an informal basis however did not engage with the community in his research as it did not directly affect the public. An Indian respondent also explained that the government are starting to encourage institutions to be involved with public outreach however this is aimed more at one way dissemination rather than two way engagement.

“Scientists in India would much rather focus on their research rather than be involved with public engagement. Researchers are not exposed to the culture of public engagement as is the case in the UK/US”

African countries

African respondents in this survey showed a higher level of interest in public engagement but highlighted a lack of time, funding and training available. Also a lack of institutional support and structure was common across both regions.

“There are a lack of qualified staff and training opportunities within African institutions and therefore not enough people to advocate the need to do it. The universities are unable to fund this so you have to rely on grants. Without grant money, public engagement could not happen.”

Solutions:

After discussing benefits and challenges of public engagement in their region, respondents were asked about solutions to these challenges at an institutional, personal and funder level. A number of suggestions emerged:

For funders

- **Networks** – It was suggested that Wellcome could encourage group engagement between fellows across each region. They could fund a group of four fellows, from interdisciplinary fields to go to a specific location and engage with a community.
- **Grant conditions** – Researchers commented that including in grant conditions that funders would like demonstration of public engagement activities beyond journal publications would offer incentive.
- **Workshops/training** – Putting on workshops for fellows to understand how to approach public engagement and how to gain access to tools to be able to do it. Involving Wellcome funded scientists as advisors at workshops would encourage participation further. There was also suggestion to increase training available virtually as this makes it more accessible. Additionally, training or workshops on public engagement could be marketed to researchers as a scientific meeting to change the culture and stigma behind public engagement and encourage more senior scientists to participate.
- **Support** – Beyond training, it was questioned whether Wellcome could offer research support centres to help with grant application and management. This centre could also offer training for researchers. Alternatively signposting a clear point of contact to offer support for public engagement activities and grants in each region if there is not capacity to hire full time staff would be helpful.
- **Target audience** – It was mentioned that there should be more emphasis on researchers at all levels to engage with the public. Currently Wellcome funding is aimed at post-doctoral students as

the most junior, as Wellcome funds many masters and PhD students in India and Africa can these fellows also be targeted.

For Institutions

- **Strategy** – By linking public engagement into the institutional strategy this will increase awareness, understanding, recognition and buy-in from senior researchers and laboratory leaders.
- **Linking public engagement to career development** – Researchers commented that all promotion criteria within an institution is based on published work, none is based on research impact in terms of public engagement and changing practice. Performance reviews and promotions criteria should include performance in terms of public engagement. This would change the culture around engagement and researchers could see it as career advancement rather than something on the side.
- **Ring fenced funding and time** – minimum amounts of money for public engagement should be written into contracts as well as grant conditions. Also, as colleagues in the UK get allotted time for 'volunteering' or similar, international researchers should have allocated time for public engagement.
- **Tools and training** – As well as large events and grant applications, smaller informal public engagement activities should be encouraged as these are more realistic in a researchers schedule and could occur more often.
- **Recognition** – It was noted that there should be more visible engagement opportunities. An Indian respondent explained that some institutions were making school visits mandatory, however this process needs to be more 'organic' and hence more junior scientists should be targeted to embed public engagement within their research. More recognition from leadership and institutional awareness and acceptance will encourage public engagement.

Importantly, several respondents raised the point that they and institutions should be involved in our discussions before any decisions are made.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

There is clear enthusiasm and interest in public engagement amongst Wellcome funded researchers across the DELTAS community and our contacts across India. Although this was a small scale study, it is a strong first insight and evidence into the attitude and needs of researchers to feed into the design of an approach under the Wellcome Research Ecosystems in Africa and Asia priority area.

Comparing to a larger scale UK focused report⁸; international respondents seemed to want to spend more time engaging with the public and currently had less public engagement support from their institutions, with no specialised staff or institutional strategy surrounding this.

Respondents considered journalists, politicians and policy makers and school teachers more important than the general public to engage with, which differs to a funder's typical view of engagement being predominantly with the general public.

The main barriers to researchers engaging with the public were a lack of funding and time, a lack of awareness and understanding of what public engagement is, a lack of recognition and reward for researchers and a lack of training and support to carry out the engagement. A clear barrier was lack of specialist or dedicated public engagement staff or support at institutions.

African respondents highlighted limited training and capacity to carry out public engagement as a challenge to their work whereas Indian researchers and public engagement specialists highlighted more of a gap in interest and recognition of public engagement work. Additionally, African respondents seemed to view policy makers and the community as key stakeholders of their engagement whereas Indian researchers seemed to view public engagement as mainly school engagement.

Although small scale, this study provides a wealth of information and offered great insight to the attitudes and needs of Wellcome's international researchers with their public engagement work. Along with the recommendations offered below, next steps should include a larger scale project to gather further evidence. Before any solutions are offered it is important that our international stakeholders including our sample from this project are consulted to ensure that real needs are being catered for. Additionally regional and cultural differences should be considered as this research indicated a difference in understanding, challenges and outreach between India and Africa.

Respondents offered solutions and suggestions for an improvement of public engagement with research in their region; these along with our recommendations are listed in the section below.

Recommendations for the Wellcome Trust

1. Funding

It has been highlighted that funds for public engagement are available; however a lack of awareness or understanding means that funds are not frequently taken up. To raise awareness, a simple solution could involve Wellcome sharing public engagement resources and expertise. A toolkit provided by Wellcome could be pulled together from existing materials or quickly and inexpensively created. The toolkit could include appropriate guidelines for public engagement and principles of best practice to be shared with researchers, programmes and institutions. It should also include a list of funds available and grant or funding application assistance. Additionally, case studies and examples of past relevant funding work so that it is more culturally and regionally relevant to researchers would be useful. This toolkit could be implemented as online guidance at an institutional level which would make it easily accessible and could act as a short term solution for a lack of training or specialist staff at institutions and in the long run a useful tool for researchers.

⁸ https://wellcome.ac.uk/sites/default/files/wtp060033_0.pdf

2. Training

Similarly, it would be hugely beneficial for Wellcome to implement formal training for researchers in India and Africa. Researchers will feel further equipped to carry out engagement activities and the events would also raise awareness about the importance of public engagement which will help further embed a culture of public engagement across these regions. A particular emphasis should be put on encouraging senior staff to attend these training days so they are also further likely to carry out public engagement and also encourage their staff to do the same. A suggestion was marketing the training for senior staff as a scientific meeting or a scientific skills workshop to encourage those with misconceptions to attend.

3. Time

Many researchers seemed uncertain about taking time away from their research project or laboratory. In addition to traditional research grants and award supplements for public engagement, Wellcome could fund researchers 'time off in lieu' or similar to compensate the institution for the days that the researcher is away from their day job working on public engagement. This would hopefully encourage researchers themselves, their institutions and project leaders to allow more time to carry out PE work. Similarly, Wellcome could pay for cover or support staff to step-in when researchers are away from the lab working on PE projects. Additionally, smaller side projects and one off public engagement events should be encouraged for researchers who cannot give up a large amount of time.

4. Reward

To increase recognition and awareness Wellcome could also offer regional or scheme specific public engagement awards. Researchers could apply with an idea and win funding and support to carry out the idea and also extra training and resources and a respected 'Wellcome award' or commendation on their CV.

5. Staff

Firstly, Wellcome should aim to encourage programmes and institutions to appoint a public engagement member of staff. As it is unfeasible for Wellcome to hire an appropriate member to every institution that we fund in Africa and Asia, Wellcome could instead pay for the extra training necessary for current members of staff to take on the new expertise and act as PE advisors for their institution. Additionally, regional specialist staff funded by Wellcome could be really useful to offer public engagement expertise and aid to a subset of programmes/institutions. Perhaps a specialist could be posted in certain regions and travel to different programmes or offer training programmes regionally or by online learning.

Arguably, at this point it would be more effective for Wellcome to fund staff, expertise and training at institutions than handing out more funding or awards for public engagement so that the foundations are in place.

6. Strategy

Similarly, it would be useful if Wellcome could encourage programmes and then if possible institutions to embed public engagement into their strategies so that organisations are further compelled to create a culture of public engagement within research. This could begin with ensuring this is embedded into AESA and India Alliance strategies and then into future funding calls and grant conditions.

7. Collaboration

Lastly, Wellcome should encourage collaboration between funding schemes and between regions. Fellows interviewed were open to collaborate across schemes and regions. Wellcome could foster this, with collaboration starting with DELTAS and India Alliance researchers; this would develop new public engagement ideas, offer learnings across regions and provide networking opportunities.

Acknowledgments

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Wellcome exists to improve health for everyone by helping great ideas to thrive. We're a global charitable foundation, both politically and financially independent. We support scientists and researchers, take on big problems, fuel imaginations and spark debate.

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