

Vanguard: NIHR Global Health Research Group

About Vanguard

Vanguard is the NIHR Global Health Research Group on Vaccines for vulnerable people in Africa. It comprises a multidisciplinary group of vaccine researchers from East Africa and the UK, with expertise ranging from bioscience, social science and data analysis, to community engagement and research capacity building.

Aim

Overall the project aims to identify modifiable structural, social, and biological determinants of impaired vaccine impact in vulnerable African communities and inform the development of integrated strategies to address these, and to promote health equity.

Our specific objectives are, in Uganda and Kenya, to

1. Investigate biological drivers and mechanisms of population differences in vaccine response
2. Understand how structural, social and biological determinants of vaccine response interrelate to determine vaccine impact
3. Identify and model integrated strategies to inform development of future interventions to optimise vaccine impact among vulnerable populations

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Vanguard is led by Professors Pontiano Kaleebu and Alison Elliott.

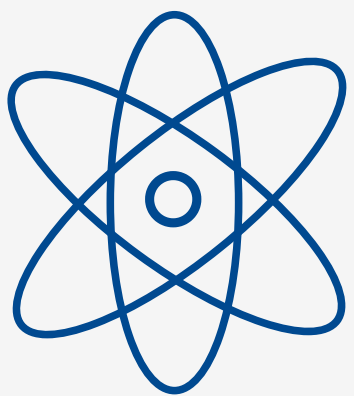
Professor Kaleebu is the Director of UVRI as well as the MRC/UVRI and LSHTM Uganda Research Unit with over 30 years' experience in vaccine research in Uganda. His roles in top level management at Uganda's MoH, and in national, Pan-African and international vaccine-relevant organisations, position him to provide strategic guidance to the programme, and to ensure maximum impact of the work.

Professor Elliott is the Head of Vaccine Research at MRC/UVRI and LSHTM Uganda Research Unit. She is a physician with main research interest in immunomodulating effects of chronic infections on responses to vaccines and other health outcomes. With over 25 years' experience of combining clinical, epidemiological and immunological research on infectious diseases, she is the project Principal Investigator with the responsibility of providing overall guidance on the implementation. She leads Work Package 7 which is in charge of Project management and governance.



How we work

Our multidisciplinary expert teams across Kenya and Uganda all work in diverse communities and engage with various stakeholders to generate a sustainable, collaborative research culture and facilitate sustainable pathways to research impact. Through seven structured work packages, these efforts are well coordinated and integrated for greater efficiency and impact.



Work Package 1: Bioscience

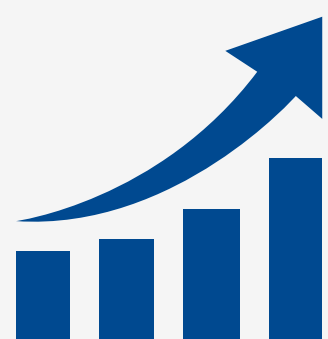
Led by **Bridgious Walusimbi**, to facilitate the achievement of objective 1, WP1 is investigating the biological drivers and mechanisms of population differences in vaccine responses. Through data and literature review, they are identifying biomarkers and contributing to the Vanguard community study regarding sample collection and laboratory investigation.

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Work Package 2: Social Science

WP2 is led by **Dr Primus Che Chi** and seeks to understand how structural, social and biological determinants of vaccine response interrelate to determine vaccine impact.



Work Package 3: Analysis and modelling

Agnes Natukunda leads WP3 in developing, modelling and testing community-based integrated strategies to optimise vaccine access, uptake and effectiveness among vulnerable populations.



Work Package 4: Vanguard Community study planning and management

In WP4, the planning and implementation of field investigations (community surveys and qualitative studies) is led by **Dr Ludoviko Zirimenya**. This team is tasked with exploring structural, social & biological determinants impairing vaccine impact.



Work Package 5: Stakeholder, Community and Public Engagement and involvement

Prof. Monica Chibita leads WP5 which is tasked with empowering vulnerable communities to optimise vaccine impact for their people through a process of co-learning and co-creation between them and researchers. This is done in collaboration with WP1, 2, 3 and 4.

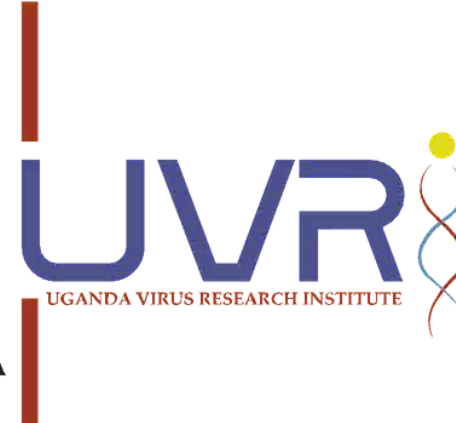


Work Package 6: Capacity strengthening

WP6 is led by **Achilles Kiwanuka** and their aim is to build capacity for, and a culture of, consultative, collaborative multidisciplinary vaccine research in East Africa. It will mainly focus on research support capacity strengthening, leadership and academic training.

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