ENGAGED TRIALS

UK Research and Innovation

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HEALTH SYSTEMS RESEARCH UNIT (HSRU)

institute of development studies



ABOUT ENGAGED TRIALS

The Engaged Trials project focuses on how people who are involved in (or hesitant to participate in) clinical trials, can be meaningfully engaged, have influence, and take ownership of trials within their contexts. In this project, we collaborate with communities, researchers, and trial sites in South Africa to strengthen trust, improve collaboration, and make trials more relevant and responsive to community needs.



Clinical trials are essential for developing new health interventions. Yet, when communities are not meaningfully engaged, trials risk misunderstanding, mistrust, and low participation. Engaged Trials aims to change that by co-creating practical, context-specific engagement interventions that place communities at the heart of health research.

Engaged Trials is a five-year project initiated in August 2025, funded by UK Research and Innovation, and based in the Health Systems Research Unit at the South African Medical Research Council, in collaboration with the Institute of Development Studies.

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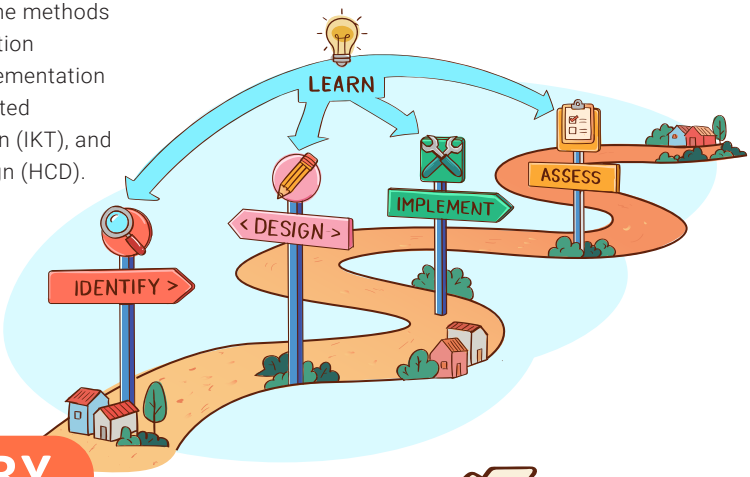
OUR GOAL

Our goal is to make community engagement a cornerstone of ethical, inclusive, and effective clinical trials in South Africa. Therefore, we will work alongside community members, trial staff, and researchers to co-create, test, and learn from innovative approaches to engagement that foster collaboration, transparency, and trust.

Objectives: We follow five key steps - Identify, Design, Implement, Assess, and Learn - to co-create and test a community engagement intervention at two South African clinical trial sites.

- **Identify** existing strategies and tools for engagement.
- **Design** a locally relevant engagement intervention together with communities.
- **Implement** the co-created approach at two trial sites.
- **Assess** how the intervention works in real-world settings.
- **Learn** from implementation and share lessons widely.

Approach: We combine methods from Participatory Action Research (PAR), Implementation Research (IR), Integrated Knowledge Translation (IKT), and Human-Centred Design (HCD).



OUR STORY

Engaged Trials builds on the CETH project- 'Strengthening Community Engagement in TB and HIV Vaccine Trials in South Africa' - which identified barriers and facilitators of engagement in low- and middle-income countries. Through interviews and case studies in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Uganda, and South Africa, the CETH team co-developed a Community Engagement Framework that informed Engaged Trials.



OUR CONTRIBUTION:
SHARING LESSONS AND RESOURCES

We will host annual webinars featuring partners, trialists, and community members to share lessons learned. We will share resources that include guidance documents and toolkits, visual storyboards, implementation frameworks, infographics, and peer-reviewed publications.



CONTACT US

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