

# Learning to Thrive in Transdisciplinary Research Spaces- An update on the CASCADE Leadership Course

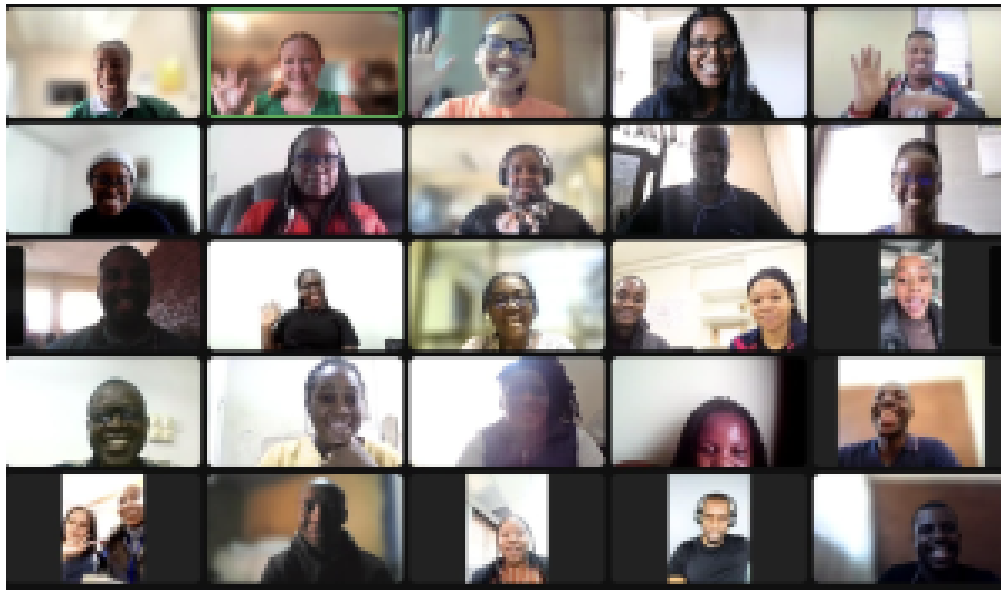
Developing strong interpersonal skills, embracing diversity, and learning to recognize complex interconnections between environmental and social systems are key to thriving as a leader in transdisciplinary research spaces. With this in mind, START, along with our partners on the Cascading Climate and Health Risks in African Cities (CASCADE) project have embarked on a learning journey with young scholars from the five project cities (Accra, Cape Town, Harare, Johannesburg, and Kampala) in the form of a five month leadership course. With the first two modules, the scholars have explored foundational concepts and motivations for transdisciplinary research, essential principles for understanding and applying systems thinking, and key concepts and approaches for understanding power, gender, and intersectionality, including a focus on agency and positionality.

Regarding the first module on transdisciplinary research and systems thinking, one scholar reported, “I thought I knew more about systems thinking than I actually did, the module showed me just how limited my knowledge was but also gave me a new and fresh perspective.”

Reflecting on an exercise on positionality, one scholar wrote, “It brought to light the ways in which my experiences, including my educational background, gender, and socioeconomic status, influence my perspectives and interactions within the research context. It also highlighted the importance of recognizing and addressing any potential biases that could impact the outcomes of my work.”

Next, the scholars will be further strengthening their skills with regard to reflexivity and empathy, and for learning and growing in the face of discomfort and uncertainty. Follow

their progress on START's social media and website, and explore the CASCADE project further on the new website!



## **ABOUT CASCADE**

CASCADE addresses urban health and climate challenges in African cities with targeted interventions. Through collaborations with key partners—University of Ghana, Chinhoyi University of Technology, Makerere University, Global Change Institute (University of Witwatersrand), African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, and START International—CASCADE aims to boost resilience and develop tailored solutions for the continent's unique and diverse urban challenges.