



## 2020-2021 Joint PAHO/TDR Small Grant Scheme

### Call for Applications

### Operational Research to Support the Elimination of Communicable Diseases in the Latin American and Caribbean Region

Grant funding: up to US\$ 30 000

Deadline for submission: 31 July 2020

Only applicants from the Latin American and Caribbean are eligible

WHO Regional Office for the Americas/Pan-American Health Organization (AMRO/PAHO).

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) in collaboration with the Special Program for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR), is pleased to announce the 2020 – 2021 call for applications for the Joint PAHO/TDR Small Grant Scheme for operational research to support the elimination of communicable diseases in the Latin American and Caribbean Region.

#### Background and Rational

TDR promotes and supports research in infectious disease of poverty that leads to health improvement. It also helps strengthen individual and institutional research capacity in developing countries. Translating research results into policy and practice, and engaging individuals and communities in using research evidence to reduce the disease burden in their respective countries, are key components.

Countries in the Region of the Americas have committed to the achievement of the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which calls for ending the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and neglected tropical diseases and combatting hepatitis, waterborne diseases, and other communicable

diseases<sup>1</sup>, and the Sustainable Health Agenda for the Americas 2018-2030 which seeks to reduce the burden of communicable diseases and eliminate neglected diseases<sup>2</sup>.

The PAHO disease Elimination Initiative (EI) is a policy for an integrated sustainable approach to communicable diseases in the Americas. It provides a common and sustainable framework with prioritized lines of action to orient and guide countries of the Region as they work toward the elimination of a group of priority communicable diseases and related conditions. Innovative use of existing tools and technologies as well as the incorporation of newly developed technologies will have a major role in achieving the elimination.

This call aligns with the EI which promotes linkages and synergies within the health system and with other sectors and uses a life course approach, emphasizing primary health care (PHC) and leveraging well-established PHC platforms. It seeks to achieve economies of scale; strengthen disease surveillance and health information systems; boost integration of quality-assured health services, health systems, and laboratory networks; promote operational research and facilitate policies that favor the elimination of the selected diseases, community mobilization, and health promotion efforts. Approaching all mentioned areas, operational research and innovation will be crucial in bridging existing gaps and addressing unanswered questions.

The number and scope of communicable diseases and related conditions in the Americas is large and wide. The focus for this call will be on the following group of diseases and/or health conditions that represent a significant burden and disproportionately affect the more vulnerable populations in the Region and whose elimination is feasible using available and innovative technical means. These are: **trachoma, Elimination of Mother-to-Child Transmission (EMTCT) of Hepatitis B virus and Chagas, schistosomiasis, soil transmitted helminthiasis (STH) and tuberculosis**

## Objective

Facilitate and strengthen elimination-oriented operational research in selected communicable diseases that are potential candidates for elimination through an integrated approach

## Methodology and fund scope

Interventions and research questions within the scope of this call are listed below. These have been selected based on a priority selection process undertaken by the PAHO core working group on the Elimination Initiative. The funding is available for research only.

This PAHO/TDR call will not fund treatment and routine delivery of health services. Implementation and operational research activities supported by this call may be complementary to those supported through other stakeholders interested in the diseases and conditions covered in this call.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [Internet]. Seventieth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations; 2015 Sep 25; New York. New York: UN; 2015 (Resolution A/Res/70/1) [cited 2019 Jan 9]. Available from: [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E)

<sup>2</sup> Pan American Health Organization. Sustainable Health Agenda for the Americas 2018-2030. 29th Pan American Sanitary Conference, 69th Session of the Regional Committee of WHO for the Americas; 2017 Sep 25-29; Washington, DC. Washington, DC: PAHO; 2017 (Document CSP29/6, Rev. 3). Available from: <http://iris.paho.org/xmliuj/handle/123456789/49170>

## **Priority Research Areas by Disease and Health Condition**

### **Trachoma**

- What are the facilitators and barriers mediating the face-washing with soap and water throughout the day, among children 1 to 9 years old in indigenous communities of the Amazon basin of Brazil, Colombia, and Peru where trachoma is documented as a public health problem?<sup>3-4</sup> What is the most reliable metric for measuring them? What interventions should be implemented to increase facial cleanliness of children in this context?
- Rapid assessments for trachoma among rural communities in the Amazon basin of Ecuador and Bolivia to provide information on the need or not to subsequently implement population-based surveys.<sup>5</sup>

### **Elimination of Mother-to-Child Transmission of Hepatitis B virus and Chagas**

- Assessment of the epidemiology and cascade of care and the coverage of interventions for prevention/treatment of HBV and Chagas for pregnant women, mothers and their children up to a definitive diagnosis and/or cure
- Design, pilot and evaluate an innovative model of care and service delivery in Mother-Child Health including antenatal care that address EMTCT of hepatitis B and Chagas, integrated with other diseases.

### **Schistosomiasis and Soil Transmitted Helminthiasis**

- When delivering deworming drugs (as a public health intervention) for adolescent girls, women in reproductive age and pregnant women (eligible), what are the most effective strategies to achieve acceptance/compliance in populations living in endemic geographic areas?
- Are snails still intermediate hosts for schistosomiasis transmission in St. Lucia and what malacological surveillance methods best answer this question?

### **Tuberculosis**

- Pilot the introduction and scale up of treating latent TB with the short regimen of rifapentine plus isoniazid (3HP) and document the effectiveness and challenges of the interventions used
- Assess the increase in TB diagnosis using rapid tests in population under 15 years of age.

### **Eligibility criteria**

- Application must be complete and be submitted before the deadline;
- Research proposed must be conducted in Latin America and the Caribbean;

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<sup>3</sup> Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those that, having a historical continuity with the pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed in their territories, are considered distinct from other sectors of the societies that now prevail in those territories or in parts of them. They now constitute non-dominant sectors of society and have the determination to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories and their ethnic identity as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, their social institutions and legal systems (United Nations: the concept of indigenous peoples. Seminar on data collection and disaggregation concerning indigenous peoples; 2004. Available at [https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/workshop\\_data\\_background\\_es.htm](https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/workshop_data_background_es.htm))

<sup>4</sup> Indigenous communities where there is evidence of trachoma as a public health problem according to official information from the Ministries of Health of Brazil, Colombia and Peru

<sup>5</sup> The Amazon region of Bolivia and Ecuador according to official geographical information in both countries.

- Principal investigator must be based in institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean, including national tropical/communicable disease control program, ministries of health, academic institutions, research institutes, national research institutions; and non-governmental organizations;
- The research project proposed in the application must relate to the objective and scope described in the present call
- Proposals submitted should include a signed acknowledgement letter of the manager of the program area or person in charge of the program that is related to the project at any level of the public health/healthcare services (Primary Health Care Units, Municipal Secretaries of Health, State Department of Health, or National Ministry or Secretary of Health for example). The acknowledgement letter does not mean there is need of clearance for the project, as no technical assessment is needed at this level.

### How to apply

- Duly completed and signed research proposal form
- Letter of endorsement from the ministry of health or research institution
- Curriculum vitae of principal investigator.

### Template application form

[PAHO/TDR Small Grant Application Form – PDF Version](#)

[PAHO/TDR Small Grant Application Form – word Version](#)

### Selection process and notification process

Proposals will be selected on a competitive basis by external reviewers and WHO staff (PAHO and TDR) among each priority research area. The applications will be evaluated on scientific merit, relevance, feasibility and public health impact of the project. Principal investigators will be informed of the results within one month of the application deadline. The publications resulting from the supported projects and data will follow the open-access policy and should clearly refer to the PAHO/TDR Small Grant Program support and indicate grant number.

Proposals done in collaboration between academic institutions and the national control program of the ministries of health or staff working at any level of the public health and healthcare systems are encouraged for both, the implementation of the research project and the resulting publication. This will be considered an added value for the project, and contribute to translate the research findings into policy and practice

Final protocols will need to be approved by the PAHO Ethics review Committee and relevant local research ethics committees before funds can be made available and projects can start implementation.

Funding will depend on obtaining ethical approval for the proposed research from the PAHO bioethical committee and relevant research ethics committees in the target country. Each application should be accompanied by a supporting letter from the institution indicating their interest in the project.

**Financial support:** A total of five proposals for up to US\$ 30 000 per grant will be funded. Co-funding from domestic or other sources is encouraged.

**Study duration:** 12-18 months

**Application deadline:** 31 July 2020 23:59 Eastern Standard Time

**How to submit the application**

The completed application form should be signed by all investigators and submitted to PAHO-TDR focal point and Regional Advisor on Communicable Disease Research: Dr. Freddy Perez: [perezf@paho.org](mailto:perezf@paho.org) and Ms Brindis Ochoa: [ochoabri@paho.org](mailto:ochoabri@paho.org)