

Call for applications

HRP/TDR/PAHO Joint Small Grants Programme For research on the Zika virus outbreak in the Americas

Deadline for submission: 15 SEPTEMBER 2016

Only applicants from eligible countries in the WHO Americas region can apply

This is a joint Initiative between TDR, the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases that is co-sponsored by UNICEF, UNDP, the World Bank and WHO; the UNDP/UNFPA/UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction (HRP); and the World Health Organization's (WHO) Regional Office for the Americas - the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). The Communicable Diseases Research Programme of the Communicable Diseases and Health Analysis Department and the Latin-American Perinatology, Women and Reproductive Health Center based in Uruguay are key technical PAHO/WHO collaborators.

The partners are pleased to announce this Call for Applications of the HRP/TDR/PAHO Joint Small Grants Programme (SGP). The goal is to approach the Zika virus (ZIKV) outbreak in a holistic manner that encompasses epidemiology, vector control, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and health systems. This approach should help ensure that new or improved knowledge resulting from this call supports a strengthened response to the ZIKV outbreak in the Americas.

Background

ZIKV is endemic in parts of Africa, has been reported in South-East Asia and has recently moved to South and Central America and the Caribbean. Since its detection in Brazil in 2015, ZIKV has emerged as a major public health challenge in the Americas. While the virus is known to cause mild illness (characterized by conjunctivitis, fever and rash) many of the countries affected by ZIKV are also reporting neurological and auto-immune complications. There are increased reports of Guillain-Barré syndrome and other neurological diseases in adults and ZIKV congenital syndrome that includes microcephaly and other malformations associated with pregnant women being infected by the virus. Crucial areas for response and research in the context of the epidemic touch on a range of issues from infection control to access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Based on the advice of the Emergency Committee of WHO, the WHO Director-General declared that the clusters of microcephaly cases and the other neurological disorders in endemic areas constitute a public health emergency of international concern on 1 February 2016. WHO and PAHO have developed an integrated response planⁱ, clinical guidelines for pregnant women^{ii,iii,iv}, newborns^{v,vi}, prevention of the sexual transmission^{vii} and breastfeeding^{viii} as well as epidemiological surveillance and Guillain-Barré syndrome and other neurological diseases^{ix} and how to work with psycho-social support for families and communities^x. A special guide on ethical issues emerging during the ZIKV epidemic is available from PAHO^{xi}. PAHO and WHO have also developed ZIKV research agendas to support the generation of evidence needed to strengthen essential public health to prevent and limit the impact of ZIKV and its complications^{xii}.

HRP, TDR and PAHO promote and support research that leads to health improvement and also helps to strengthen individual and institutional research capacity in low- and middle-income countries. Key components include translating research results into policy and practice, and engaging individuals and communities in using research evidence to reduce the disease burden. This is particularly needed in vulnerable and affected populations exposed to ZIKV in their respective countries^{xiii}, such as adolescents and women with unmet needs for contraception.

The research proposals supported by this Call should focus on implementation/operational research, applying adequate methods within the range of quantitative and qualitative methods. The specific target priority areas for this call are listed below. A key component of each proposal should be individual and institutional research capacity strengthening.

Priority areas for support

1. Studies of epidemiological characteristics of ZIKV transmission, including vector or human to human transmission occurring as a result of sexual or intimate contact; clinical and epidemiological consequences of ZIKV interaction with other arboviruses; risk factors for human to human transmission, infection and disease development.
2. Studies on the use of new or improved community-directed vector control interventions for ZIKV, including in combination with dengue, urban yellow fever and Chikungunya.
3. Field testing of kits for the serological diagnosis of ZIKV with the focus on different populations innovative approaches to access to testing, especially by those underserved by the existing systems.
4. Perceptions, behaviours, access to and use of modern contraception, early pregnancy care and safe abortion care in the context of ZIKV, including community members (women, adolescents) and policy-makers, programme managers and healthcare service providers.
5. Health system and health policy studies related to supply and demand side of antenatal care, infectious disease prevention and care, contraception/family planning and safe abortions.

Eligibility criteria

Researchers and health care providers working in low- and middle-countries with ZIKV outbreaks in the Latin American and Caribbean Regions of PAHO are eligible. This includes those working in programmes embedded within ministries of health, academic institutions, research institutes and nongovernmental organizations (including professional societies and civil service organizations involved in sexual and reproductive health research and/or tropical disease research activities). Applications should be headed by qualified young researchers (with a minimum of a PhD); female researchers are strongly encouraged to apply. The grant will be awarded to the beneficiary institution where the researcher(s) are based.

Applications should fall under the theme of implementation/operational research and be prepared with the holistic view on research themes outlined earlier.

Selection process

Proposals will be selected through a competitive process based on a peer review focused on scientific merit, relevance, innovation, potential for capacity strengthening for the institution and feasibility of the project.

If the proposal is selected for funding and the research involves human subjects, two ethical clearances will be required from: 1) the designated institutional and/or national ethical committee; and 2) the Pan American Health Organization Ethical Review Committee ([PAHO-ERC](#)). Final approval of grants is subject to these ethical clearances.

The publications resulting from the supported projects and data should follow the open-access policy and clearly refer to the HRP/TDR/PAHO Small Grants Programme support and indicate the grant number.

Funds

The size of the budget for each grant will be based on the scope and focus of research proposals. The maximum budget for any individual proposal supported from this initiative shall not exceed US\$ 20 000. Co-funding from domestic or other sources is encouraged. The proposal should be accompanied by a detailed and itemized budget as part of the application form. Salary of the Principal Investigator, overhead and administrative costs and travel costs that are not essential for the implementation of the project are not eligible items of the budget. The beneficiary institution will be required to provide additional documentation in case it is awarded the financing.

Study duration: one year

Application deadline: 15 September 2016

How to submit the application

All proposals should be submitted with the application form provided. Applications can be submitted in English, Spanish or Portuguese. The completed application form should be signed by all investigators and submitted by e-mail to: SGP@PAHO.ORG

Download the application form

Related links

[TDR](#)

[HRP](#)

[PAHO Communicable Diseases and Health Analysis Department](#)

[PAHO Latin-American Perinatology, Women and Reproductive Health Centre \(CLAP\)](#)

[WHO CHA](#)

[TDR Implementation Research toolkit](#)

[Reporting guidelines for implementation and operational research](#)

ⁱ <http://who.int/emergencies/zika-virus/response/en/>

ⁱⁱ [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(16\)30098-5/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(16)30098-5/fulltext)

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://who.int/csr/resources/publications/zika/pregnancy-management/en/>

^{iv} http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&Itemid=270&gid=34298&lang=es

^v <http://who.int/csr/resources/publications/zika/assessment-infants/en/>

^{vi} http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&Itemid=270&gid=32999&lang=es

^{vii} <http://who.int/csr/resources/publications/zika/sexual-transmission-prevention/en/>

^{viii} <http://who.int/csr/resources/publications/zika/breastfeeding/en/>

^{ix} <http://who.int/csr/resources/publications/zika/surveillance/en/>

^x <http://who.int/csr/resources/publications/zika/psychosocial-support/en/>

^{xi} http://iris.paho.org/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/28425/PAHOKBR16002_eng.pdf

^{xii} <http://iris.paho.org/xmlui/handle/123456789/28285>

^{xiii} http://ais.paho.org/hip/viz/ed_zika_countrymap.asp