Good health is an essential foundation for social and economic sustainable development. Knowledge and research are critical elements for health improvement.
**BACKGROUND**

The critical mass of scientists and research institutions in low- and middle-income endemic countries (DECs) has significantly increased in the last decades. New public health strategies, tools and policies have been evaluated and implemented, which has reduced the burden of diseases and improved health. However, while these scientists and institutions are closer to the public health problems and solutions, they may not always have the competitive leadership and access to knowledge and mechanisms of support for research. TDR has actively promoted individual, institutional and partnership development through a range of mechanisms to optimize approaches for the control of infectious diseases of poverty. TDR has a strong convener role and long-term commitment to capacity development. The fast-changing environment for research and development in the area of global health and neglected infectious diseases has opened new opportunities for a strategic engagement of TDR.

This document summarizes a reorientation of TDR’s research capacity strengthening and knowledge management in the context of TDR’s new strategy. It builds on past successes to refocus its role in three ways: i) **shifting from a hands-on implementer to a facilitator, convener and strategic advisor**; ii) streamlining and consolidating a broad portfolio of initiatives around high impact deliverables; and iii) responding more closely to regional priorities.

**IMPACT GOAL**

To work towards improving access to knowledge, and increasing research and analytical capacity in low- and middle-income endemic countries to address priority public health needs.

**We aim to:**

- Analyse gaps and needs for agenda setting in research and capacity building
- Facilitate translation of evidence into action
- Strengthen capacity to conduct high quality interdisciplinary priority research needs
- Promote leadership in health research
- Foster harmonization and alignment of efforts for global health research and goals
- Engage with key stakeholders around research and capacity needs
OUR PRINCIPLES

TDR promotes the values of being

**E**  Effective and equitable in responding to needs and accessible to all

**Q**  Quality assured in promoting excellence, innovation and best practices

**U**  Useful in function, bringing practical solutions to priorities

**A**  Aligned with priorities and needs, adapted to developing countries’ settings and values

**L**  Linked with partners for synergies and interdisciplinary competencies

STAKEHOLDERS INPUT

Several consultations and external reviews over the past years have helped to refine and redefine TDR’s future engagement in research capacity strengthening and knowledge management. In addition to direct advice from TDR’s Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC), recommendations from the work of the TDR stewardship Think Tank, external reviews, consultations with hosts and recipients of career development fellowships, the African Network for Drugs and Diagnostics Innovation (ANDI), ESSENCE on Health Research and major project funders have supported TDR’s growth in this area. Recommendations from the Global report for research on infectious diseases of poverty and the publications derived from the disease and thematic reference groups form the background and basis for implementing the strategy.

IMPLEMENTING OUR STRATEGY

The research capacity strengthening and knowledge management team (RCS/KM) will operate in a matrix that cuts across TDR’s research portfolio and includes input from the broader scientific community on needs and priorities. In coherence with WHO Research Strategy, the RCS/KM team will support activities where TDR has high potential impact, can provide high quality results and promote inclusiveness through fair partnerships. TDR shares the of capacity strengthening principles of “participation and alignment, understanding the context, building on strength, long-term commitment, interlinking capacity components, continuous learning and harmonization.”
Programme features

- **Expansion and integration** of research capacity strengthening and knowledge management activities for joint planning and implementation
- **Results orientation** for planning, budgeting and evaluation
- **Focus on countries with least developed research capacity**
- **Engagement in global health initiatives** as a convener

**STRATEGIC FUNCTIONS**

1. **Research capacity strengthening**: supporting training, leadership development and project-related capacity building to strengthen the ability of countries and regions to respond to their own research needs.

2. **Gap analysis for agenda setting**: promoting evidence-based priority setting to identify emerging needs in research and capacity strengthening.

3. **Partnership and engagement**: collaborating with WHO, TDR co-sponsors and partners for harmonization and alignment with global health goals.
RESULTS CHAIN

The chart below illustrates how the proposed strategic functions and activities are designed for these outputs and outcomes.
TDR proposes a diverse modality of support from innovative learning approaches to programme-based institutional development, managing collaborative frameworks, and hosting/facilitating multiple partner initiatives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target groups</th>
<th>Research capacity strengthening</th>
<th>Gap analysis for agenda setting</th>
<th>Partnership and engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academia, research and public health institutions in DECs, WHO collaborating centres</td>
<td>DEC policy-makers, research community, funding agencies, etc.</td>
<td>DEC, public health community, academia, funding agencies, WHO collaborating centres</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Expected results | Sustainable strengthened local capacity to conduct research for improving health | Prioritized health research needs for optimal use of resources in research and in disease control | Achieve coherence, harmonization among partners and influence on their policies and practices |

| Main strategies and activities | Supporting individual training, institutional development through regional networks or platforms and South-South, North-South partnerships | Convoking networks and engaging stakeholders to review and analyse evidence for priority needs | Convoking and engaging stakeholders, facilitating interactions and advocating the use of common strategic tools |

| Issues and context | Inequities in research capacity and partnerships within regions and countries | Multiple priorities and players, and limited resources and/or access to knowledge and research results | Multiple and overlapping initiatives on global health research and capacity building |

| Assumptions | Diverse funding schemes, extensive experience in DECs, multidisciplinary alumni | Neutral platform, convening power, extensive research network in the field | Strong convening power, track record, extensive network |
SUPPORT SCHEMES

The proposed support schemes apply to the three strategic functions of this area of work:

- **Regional small grants** in collaboration with WHO regional offices to support priority research and knowledge management activities.
- **Advanced research training** including degree training, re-entry grants, and career development fellowships in collaboration with public and private partners.
- **Short-term learning** to support individual or group training linked to research projects, special initiatives or institutional development programmes.
- **Institutional programme-based** support to selected institutions to acquire sustainable critical research and training capabilities, including regional hubs.
- **Research networks and working group** to strengthen collaboration in research, training, production of analytical reports and build consensus or protocols around areas of common interest.
ANTICIPATING RISKS

TDR promotes a culture of risk management to better support the planning, implementation and decision-making at all levels. Risks will be identified, prioritized and analysed and a mitigation approach for projects and initiatives will be developed. This practice will be extended to partner institutions in the field, especially when defining new areas of engagements and initiating projects.

Activities will be planned with realistic defined milestones, timelines, costing and deliverables, with close monitoring of implementation.

ASSESSING RESULTS

Results will be assessed against predefined targets and indicators following the TDR Framework for Assessing Performance. Indicators will cover the assessment of technical deliverables, the application of core values and managerial efficiency.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical strategic results</th>
<th>Key performance indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| KM  | Reports produced through stakeholders consultations are used to set priorities | • Evidence of DECs using reports in strategy and priority setting  
• Evidence of funding agencies using reports in priority setting  
• Evidence that reports are perceived as a credible, authoritative source of information |
| RCS | DECs are leading new /strengthened health research initiatives | • No. of new / strengthened functional networks  
• No. of health research institutions that accessed further funding attributable to TDR  
• Proportion of TDR grantees' publications with first author from DEC institutions |