Call for applications

Urban health

Scoping reviews and research gap analysis on urban health interventions for the prevention and control of vector-borne and other infectious diseases of poverty

Deadline for submission: 24 September 2015, 17:00 CET

Institutions working on urban health and vector-borne disease prevention and control are invited to submit collaborative proposals where two or more institutions are forming a consortium. The proposal will include the production of a series of scoping reviews and the organization and hosting of an expert consultation/workshop using these reviews to determine research gaps and priorities.

This call, issued by the Vectors, Environment and Society (VES) unit of the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR) is in support of a long-term effort to support and strengthen research on urban health interventions for the control of vector-borne and other infectious diseases of poverty.

Under this call, only one institutional consortium proposal will be selected for one year’s funding of no more than US$ 150 000.

Background and rationale

More than 50% of the world’s population currently lives in cities. This has risen 36% (an increase of 1 billion people in urban areas) since 2000. By 2050, 75% of the global population will be living in urban conglomerations, mainly in low-and middle-income countries (LMICs). Mobility, poverty, inequality and climate change are some of the social and environmental drivers of health risks in urban settings, including vector-borne diseases such as dengue, Chikungunya and Zika virus diseases, urban malaria, leishmaniasis, lymphatic filariasis, and water- (and sanitation) based diseases such as diarrheal diseases and cholera. Multiple disease vectors lead to co-infections with resulting diagnostic challenges. These pose eminent public health challenges, necessitating intersectoral policy and action in the cities where these diseases occur.

TDR is establishing a portfolio on infectious diseases in urban settings, focusing on implementation research to prevent and control vector-borne (and to a lesser degree, water- and sanitation-based) infectious diseases of poverty. The work to be carried out beginning in 2016 includes the following objectives: a) develop and test integrated and community-oriented interventions for the prevention and control of (multiple) vector-borne and other diseases of poverty in urban contexts; and b) generate evidence on innovative urban health
interventions that address social and environmental determinants of health and that are based on civil society engagement. The implementation research is expected to lead to practical and translational output, e.g., systematic assessments of vector-borne diseases in urban settings looking at multiple vectors and diseases, multi-sectoral interventions and urban planning strategies, partnership (multi-stakeholder) strategies, community engagement strategies and/or communication strategies.

In order to determine research gaps and priorities in this future area of research, TDR intends to contract with an institution leading a consortium to conduct the research gap analysis, including a series of scoping reviews and a workshop.

**Call objective and expected outputs and outcomes**

The overall objective of this work is conduct a research gap analysis on the basis of a series of at least six (6) state-of-the-art scoping reviews that – as drafts – will inform an expert consultation and future TDR support on urban health interventions research. Specifically, these reviews should be directed to the following:

- TDR and WHO secretariat
- TDR scientific oversight boards (Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee, Scientific Working Group for Research on Vectors, Environment and Society) and governing bodies
- Research groups and scholars working on urban health issues in vector-borne diseases control
- Policy and decision makers (from multiple sectors) and their technical advisers in cities affected by vector-borne and other infectious diseases of poverty

Other audiences could include:
- Public health practitioners and programme officers in disease endemic countries
- Professionals in organizations financing or implementing public health programs directed at urban health
- Researchers working on vector-borne diseases and other relevant infectious diseases of poverty
- Professionals in research institutions and research funding agencies
- Broader academic audiences (including students), particularly in disease endemic countries

**KEY TOPICS**

The following issues could be addressed in individual reviews. *This is a preliminary and not-final set of potential themes for reviews for further refinement only. Contractors may suggest slightly different titles or foci.*

1. Vector-borne disease (VBD) transmission dynamics in urban settings: A review of entomological and epidemiological issues and research
2. Vector-borne and other infectious diseases of poverty in urban settings: A comparative perspective on the evolution of urbanization trends (with a focus on the past 10-20 years and projections into the future)
3. Social dynamics and governance issues influencing urban VBD control with an emphasis on inter-sectoral planning, communication and action, and community-oriented services
4. Housing, water and sanitation: Issues in and solutions for infectious disease prevention and control
5. Implementation research findings on infectious diseases prevention and control in urban settings: Issues and solutions in large scale interventions
6. VBD surveillance and community-based risk communication in urban areas: technological and social innovation in routine public health practice and in outbreak situations
Modified and alternative review themes can be proposed. The topic should be un- or under-investigated through evidence review work.

**KEY QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED**

- What is known, what is currently done (where, under which context), within which policy frameworks?
- What proven principles or lessons could inform research, practice and policy?
- What are critical knowledge gaps, research questions and priorities? What should be better known to guide action and policy?
- What are critical gaps in practice and policy based on available knowledge?

**RESEARCH GAP ANALYSIS**

In order to determine research gaps and priorities in this future area of research, the proposal should specify a consultation/workshop mechanism to convene leading experts on the issue as a Research Reference Group (RRG). The scoping reviews would serve as background documentation to the RRG. The reference group would obtain, evaluate and synthesize scientific information on urban health research activities and challenges and propose research priorities for a future urban health research programme to be carried out by TDR.

The contracting institution is expected to produce the background papers, identify and invite relevant experts to a meeting, and convene and lead the group to inform future TDR support on research related to urban health interventions for the prevention and control of vector-borne and other infectious diseases of poverty.

**SCOPING REVIEWS**

Each review is expected to include a search strategy for existing scientific evidence (published and unpublished), an assessment of what is found for quality and relevance, a synthesis of the evidence on the urban health issue under review and a research gap analysis for discussion. Some methodological recommendations are given in the article quoted below.

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**Eligibility criteria**

1. Academic, research and public sector institutions where two or more institutions are forming a consortium and one institution is the lead institution for the contract.
2. The institutions have expertise in urban health and/or vector-borne diseases transmission in urban settings.
3. The consortium has all facilities to organize the required workshop.
4. The budget per proposal does not go beyond US$ 150 000.
How to apply / Proposal contents
The applications for the consortium of institutions should include (maximum of 10 pages, Font 10 to 12):

**Part 1** - Administrative documentation (3 to 4 pages): with names and addresses of institutions, Principal Investigator (PI) with name and references for each institution, the name and address of the coordinator for the consortium, a short description of the facilities, the experience of the institutions in urban health and infectious diseases research, experience in conducting systematic reviews and the organization of an expert consultation. One institution must be designated as the lead institution and the partner institutions need to agree on which institution is taking the lead and will receive the funds that will be re-distributed to the partners. Institutions do not have to create a legal consortium; usually this can be done through a partnership agreement.

**Part 2** – Scoping reviews and consultation process (2-3 pages): Preliminary list of titles and content of scoping reviews and proposed mechanism for commissioning them. The lead institution would manage the commissioning and production process.

**Part 3** – Workshop organization (2 pages): with the objectives and agenda of the proposed expert consultation mentioning estimated dates/period and hosting institution.

**Part 3** - The expected outputs of the workshop, relevant to expected outputs indicated above and the risk assessments and management of the project.

**Part 4** – The detailed budget, including split by activity, human resources, meeting, travel, other expenditures.

**Part 5** – The proposed timeline for implementation.

**Part 6** – The support (as a letter or statement of agreement) of the Director or Legal Representative of each institution involved in the consortium.

Proposals can be submitted in English or French.

The application (submitted no later than 24 September 2015, 17:00 hours CET ) should be sent by email (as pdf file) to:

Dr Johannes Sommerfeld
sommerfeldj@who.int and with a copy to: cabanelf@who.int
Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR)
Vectors, Environment and Society
World Health Organization
20 Avenue Appia
1211 Geneva 27
Switzerland

**Evaluation criteria**
An external ad hoc review group appointed by the Director of TDR will review the eligible proposals based on criteria such as scientific merit, relevance and feasibility, taking into account gender and equity issues. Proposals will be reviewed and evaluated by the ad hoc committee which will attribute a rank from 1 to 5 for each of the criteria, with 1 the lowest score and 5 the highest.
**Scientific merit**

- Expertise in the related field (urban health and urban arbo-viral and/or parasitic diseases research, prevention and control)
- Experience in conducting systematic reviews
- Clear and well defined objectives for the proposed workshop
- Track records in research gap analysis
- Detailed plan for the workshop agenda, proceedings, following of outputs

**Relevance**

- Demonstrated capability of institutions within the collaborative proposal to conduct systematic reviews and to organize a workshop.
- Potential of the reviews and workshop results to influence urban health policies or practice
- Appropriate plan for dissemination of results
- LMIC Institution in the Consortium

**Feasibility**

- Feasible implementation timeline (Gantt chart)
- Quality/suitability of the institution(s)/team (composition, expertise) for the proposed tasks
- Ability of the principal investigator to manage the project based on track record
- Risk assessment and management approach to the project

**Budget**

- Sound and appropriate budget
- Budget well justified

**Selection process**

Only one multi-country proposal will be selected for funding for one year for a maximum total funding of US$ 150,000. The proposal will be selected following an open competitive call for applications from institutions involved in urban health and the surveillance, diagnostics and research of vector-borne diseases. The selection of projects for funding under this call will be conducted independently by an ad-hoc committee established by TDR. The committee will review and evaluate the proposals submitted based on scientific background of institutions included in the consortium, relevance to the call and feasibility.

For further information on the call, please contact:

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**OR**

**Mrs Flor Cabanel**
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