



## Global Research Programme; addressing the health needs of women and children in disadvantaged populations globally.

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### Summary

The [Department of Biotechnology](#) (DBT) in India, in collaboration with [Department of International Development](#) (DFID), the [Economic and Social Research Council](#) (ESRC) and the [Medical Research Council](#) (MRC), are pleased to announce a second joint call to fund global health research addressing the health needs of women and children globally. Originally launched in 2014, this programme aims to fund world-class and cutting edge research which addresses the health needs of the most disadvantaged populations.

For the second activity under this programme the joint funders are calling for research that will impact the ability to **prevent, diagnose and manage** prevalent chronic and infectious diseases facing women and their unborn children in low- and middle-income (LMIC) settings. Research addressing these health issues will aim to have a positive effect on the life-course of the mother and her unborn children.

The joint funders have highlighted four priority areas that disproportionately affect women of a low socio-economic status in LMIC countries and which will be the focus of this call. Proposals should only address the following issues;

1. Anaemia (including Iron, Folate and B12 deficiency related conditions)
2. Sexually transmitted diseases
3. Gestational diabetes mellitus and
4. Hypertensive disorders

It is expected that research will provide evidence on interventions for the prevention, diagnosis and management of the above diseases. Proposals should be multidisciplinary and include social science in order to understand the social, cultural, economic and political factors affecting likely uptake and implementation of these interventions. In line with developments in global health research, it is a particular steer of this call that proposals must engage with the role of both women *and* men in developing interventions that address the above challenges to ensure the appropriateness and increased likelihood of uptake.

The purpose of this call is to fund projects developed in partnership by researchers from the UK, India and low income countries (LICs) to work together in trilateral research teams. For the purpose of this call, an LIC is those countries that fall into the first two columns of the OECD DAC list available [here](#). Bids must include applicants from eligible institutions from the UK, India and an LIC and the research must be based in an Indian and LIC setting to be eligible.

**To support the development of these trilateral partnerships a £4,000 travel grant will be available to successful applicants after the concept proposal stage in order to support the full proposal development process.**

## **Scope**

The joint funders aim to fund high quality multidisciplinary research that will increase knowledge and understanding on chronic and infectious diseases for women and their unborn children in LMICs. Eligible activities under this call must address issues of prevention, diagnosis and management of diseases and can include;

- Development and testing of health interventions (including diagnostics), including late phase clinical trials
- Biomedical, nutritional, public health, behavioural, educational, structural, and community, health services and health systems interventions.
- Operational and implementation research to deliver health interventions, including research that leads to better knowledge and understanding of service provision and integration

Research that addresses the aetiology and mechanisms of disease, as well as research into early phase therapeutic and intervention development will not be supported through this call.

Proposals must include:

- A review of the relevant existing literature and scientific evidence in the area the application addresses.
- Evidence of an interdisciplinary approach including consideration of the socio-cultural context.
- Any proposed approach must engage with both men and women to ensure increased likelihood of uptake.
- Evidence of preliminary work and pilot data to support the scientific rationale for the proposed study.
- Innovative methodologies that will provide robust evidence on the effectiveness of a proposed intervention, which will have relevance at the population level.
- Evidence of active participation of policy leads and implementation partners where appropriate for consideration of:
  - I. the political and economic barriers to (future) implementation of interventions at scale
  - II. the risks around sustaining implementation of the intervention at the population level

A list of the projects funded under call 1 of this programme is available on the MRC website for this call but please note the call specification has evolved since Call 1.

## **Research impact and capacity building**

Applications should clearly set out how they will aim to deliver health improvement and development impact. Strong applications will demonstrate that the research question has been developed collaboratively by the Indian, LIC and UK research team, and is oriented toward addressing health challenges and policy debates for women's health in LMIC settings. Proposals should evidence the co-design of research and an understanding of the local context. Opportunities for staff development, such as co-authoring journal papers and training, should be taken-up whenever possible.

Projects should identify and address the key barriers to implementation and uptake of evidence-based interventions at local and national levels, paving the way for their successful adoption into routine practice with improved access and use by the populations in need. Health research in developing countries must be rooted in, and acceptable to, the institutions, communities, and societies where they will operate. Applicants should identify the potential impacts of their research on policy and practice alongside the potential scientific impact. As such, applicants should consider whether non-academic stakeholders, including potential users of the research, need to be included and involved in the design and delivery of the project.

## **Geographical scope**

As highlighted above, research proposals must be led by a UK, Indian and LIC research collaboration.

Priority will be given to research that benefits the most vulnerable populations and/or those in poorly resourced settings. The funders recognise that many of the world's poor live in low-income countries *and* middle-income countries, so it is a specific objective of this programme to increase the body of research that is relevant or transferable to disadvantaged populations in both contexts. All LIC countries of focus, alongside India, need to be adequately justified and a local need identified. The relevance of all countries involved in any multi-country study must also be justified and budgets should reflect a focus on local contexts.

## **Funding available**

Funding will be provided by a partnership consisting of:

- Department of Biotechnology (Government of India)
- UK Department for International Development
- Economic and Social Research Council (Newton Fund-Bhaba)
- Medical Research Council (Newton Fund-Bhaba)

Up to £7million has been committed to this activity by the UK funders in support of the UK and LIC based research. This will be matched by DBT for funding the Indian research components.

Eligibility to apply will be determined by MRC and DBT eligibility rules. The nature of the resources requested must also adhere to MRC and DBT guidelines.

Proposals are invited to include a full economic cost (fEC) that is commensurate with the activities necessary to answer the research questions proposed. Assessors will be asked to comment on value for money to ensure that the research is necessary and cost-effective for answering the proposed research question. Projects must be 3 years (36 months) in duration. We expect to fund around 10-15 awards, depending on the quality of the proposals received.

## **Assessment Criteria**

In order to reflect the disciplinary priorities of each funder, applications will be assessed by a multidisciplinary panel chosen by all funders. The panel will also include expertise from low income country researchers. Assessors will consider whether applications are of world-class standard (being intellectually innovative, well-focused and methodologically sound), fit the criteria for this call, and whether the research has the potential to make a real improvement to health outcomes in LMICs. Assessors will be asked to comment on the following criteria when assessing proposals, and therefore applicants are advised to consider all these criteria when preparing their proposals:

- Scientific rationale
- Research management and people: including strength and clarity of collaborations and opportunities provided, relevant and complementary expertise of the team; the added value of the trilateral partnership.
- Methodology
- Research impact
- Data management plan
- Ethical considerations
- Value for money

Further details on the assessment criteria can be found in the Guidance for Applicants document.

Applicants must also describe how the proposed UK funded work is administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as its main objective and is therefore, under the requirements of the Newton Fund, [ODA compliant](#).

## **How to apply**

**\*Please download and read the Guidance for Applicants document designed specifically for this call.\***

Concept proposals using the relevant pro forma must be submitted by the UK Principal Investigator to: [international@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk](mailto:international@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk) by **16:00 UK time** on **Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2017**.

The MRC will share applications with the Indian funding partner DBT to begin the shortlisting process. Concept proposals will be screened by a joint UK-India panel and decisions will be relayed to all applicants in early June 2017. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a full research application via the Research Council's Joint Electronic Submission System (Je-S) in September 2017.

### **Timeline**

- Offline concept proposals to be submitted: 12<sup>th</sup> April 2017
- Invitations to submit full proposals: early June 2017
- Travel grants issued for applicant collaboration: early June 2017
- Deadline to submit full proposals: 14<sup>th</sup> September 2017
- Peer review: October- December 2017
- PI response: January 2018
- Final Panel Meeting: March 2018
- Successful grants to begin: September 2018

Please contact [international@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk](mailto:international@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk) with any queries on the application process.

### **Travel grants**

Applicants invited to submit full applications will be eligible for support of up to £4,000 from the UK funders to undertake visits with the Indian and LIC partners for full proposal development and networking in order to build collaborative, multidisciplinary proposals that are led by LMIC needs. The request for these funds should be described at the initial stage in the case for support form.

### **The Newton-Bhaba Fund**

The UK contribution will be channelled from the [Newton Fund](#) which is a UK Government initiative intended to strengthen research and innovation partnerships between the UK and emerging knowledge economies. The Newton Fund was launched in 2014 and originally consisted of £75 million each year for 5 years. In the 2015 UK Spending Review it was agreed to extend and expand the Fund. The Newton Fund was extended from 2019 to 2021 and expanded by doubling the £75 million investment to £150 million by 2021, leading to a £735 million UK investment to 2021, with partner countries providing matched resources within the Fund.

The Fund forms part of the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment which is monitored by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). ODA funded activity focuses on outcomes that promote the long-term sustainable growth of countries on the OECD Development Assistance Committee. Newton Fund countries represent a sub-set of this list.

## **Contacts**

Please use the following contact for more information on the application process:

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