

Call for applications

Implementation Research to advance the framework for the elimination of visceral leishmaniasis in eastern Africa

Deadline for submissions: 19 November 2025 (17:00 CET)
Submissions after this deadline will not be considered

Eligibility is limited to applicants from institutions located in low- or middle-income countries (LMICs). Research coalitions or collaborative partnerships with a high- or upper-middle-income country may be considered only if the lead institution is based in an LMIC.

TDR, the UNICEF/UNDP/World Bank/WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases, based at the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland, is pleased to announce a call for applications to stimulate implementation research to advance efforts for the elimination of visceral leishmaniasis (VL) in eastern Africa.

This call is limited to applicants from LMICs who have been engaged, and who have expertise, in implementation research and in VL prevention and control.

Under this call, up to four proposals may be selected. The successful applicants will each receive **funding for a maximum amount of USD 25,000 per proposal** to conduct research in one or more areas of focus as specified below. The implementation period of the project should be a maximum of 12 months.

This call aims to advance the [Strategic framework for the elimination of visceral leishmaniasis as a public health problem in eastern Africa 2023–2030](#) and aligns with the [TDR Strategy 2024–2029](#).

Background

Most cases of VL are currently reported from the eastern African region. VL is close to elimination on the Indian subcontinent thanks to the Kala Azar Elimination Programme (KAEP) launched in 2005. The programme implemented five elimination pillars of case management, integrated vector management, effective surveillance, social mobilization and research. Implementation research (IR) provided the necessary evidence to address the specific challenges of each phase of the programme (preparatory phase, attack phase, consolidation phase and maintenance phase).

Although not all lessons from the KAEP are transferable to the eastern African focus, there is much to learn from its success. A key lesson is the essential role of IR to support elimination efforts.

TDR has supported the capacity strengthening of national research institutes and disease programmes to lead the search for innovative solutions to programme challenges. Strong in-country collaboration with policymakers and decision-makers, as well as partnerships with national and international stakeholders, have facilitated the uptake of evidence.

The eastern African focus poses greater challenges for the elimination of VL than the Indian subcontinent. In addition to the need for better diagnostic and treatment alternatives, there is still much to learn about the epidemiology of VL, its vectors and reservoirs, burden of disease, social determinants and effective preventive measures. Studies are underway to assess programme readiness in countries to implement elimination framework strategies.

The current call focuses on addressing immediate evidence gaps to support the preparatory phase of the elimination framework. The specific research questions will be formulated in consultation with national disease programmes based on national priorities and are expected to help address key implementation challenges in the VL high burden countries.

Call objectives and expected outputs

Under this call, TDR is soliciting proposals that will generate **new evidence** or a novel insight to support the framework for elimination of VL in eastern Africa. Research to reproduce existing evidence will not be considered. The following areas are of particular interest:

- Scoping review of VL research by endemic country
- Landscape analysis of endemic country institutional implementation research capacity and preparedness to support the regional VL elimination framework
- Understanding population vulnerabilities and epidemiologic barriers to VL elimination
- Socioeconomic consequences of VL for households in endemic settings
- Health service access for VL in endemic areas (pathways, delays and determinants)
- Alignment of screening programmes with standard case definitions and barriers to effective reporting
- Vector identification, distribution mapping and behavioural ecology in VL endemic areas
- Investigation of an ongoing VL outbreak; understanding of risk factors for VL outbreaks
- Investigation for VL endemicity in cross border areas of VL endemic countries

Expected outputs:

The evidence generated from this research will help to address critical gaps in knowledge to help shape interventions in support of VL elimination in eastern Africa. We anticipate that the results will provide missing information on VL epidemiology, vectors and interventions that can serve as the basis for future research or be effectively translated into actionable policies and effective delivery of interventions. By understanding and generating evidence, we hope to inform future preparedness strategies, ensuring that interventions are more resilient, inclusive and context-specific.

Eligibility criteria

TDR is committed to Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity in science. Researchers are encouraged to apply irrespective of gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religious, cultural and social backgrounds, or (dis)ability status.

Research institutions and consortia are invited to submit proposals taking into consideration the following eligibility criteria:

- Applicants submitting proposals must be researchers or health professionals working in a public health institution under the umbrella of a ministry of health, university or research institution, or a nongovernmental organization from any of the VL burden countries in eastern Africa.
- All applicants must demonstrate a track record in implementation research, health systems and infectious disease research and have knowledge of visceral leishmaniasis management or control.
- All applicants must demonstrate that the research project has been discussed with the relevant national control programme(s) and has the support of such programmes. A letter of support from the VL control programme is requested as supporting document.

Funding scope

The duration for the award will be up to 12 months.

Proposals will be considered for a total funding envelope of up to USD 25,000 per application.

Awards will be made on condition of receiving appropriate ethical clearance.

Evaluation process and criteria

Each application will be screened for compliance with the eligibility criteria. Following this, each eligible application will be reviewed on a competitive basis according to criteria such as scientific merit, relevance, gender and equity components, feasibility and public health impact of the project including capacity to deliver research results.

How to Apply

Applications should be submitted online **no later than 19 November 2025– 17:00 CET**, through the **eTDR Community Site** at the link below.

[**Click here to apply**](#)

If you do not already have one, you will need to create a new account and log in before you can apply, see instructions [**here**](#).

Before you start the online application process, please complete the form by accessing the link below:

Download the application form in English

The application form must be completed and signed appropriately and uploaded in eTDR. Incomplete applications will not be accepted. Please include:

1. Signed application form
2. Current curriculum vitae of all investigators and key team members
3. Tentative time-framed Gantt chart (max. 2 pages)
4. The support (in the form of a letter or statement of agreement) of the Director or Legal Representative of the lead institution
5. A letter of support from the country VL control programme

The applications should be submitted in English.

If you encounter technical issues with the online submission, please consult the document with [instructions on how to apply to Call for Proposals in eTDR system](#).

In case of questions/information related to technical content and scope of the call, please contact:
Christine Halleux (halleuxc@who.int)

In case of technical issues with the online submission, please contact:
Michelle Villasol (villasom@who.int)

[TDR Grant Application Form](#)