

## ***European Foundation Initiative for NTDs “EFINTD”***

### **Call for proposals**

### **Postdoctoral Fellowship Programme “Neglected Communicable Tropical Diseases and Related Public Health Research”**

Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) are a group of 14 infectious diseases which affect more than one billion people worldwide, mainly in Africa and mostly living in extreme poverty. Beyond their negative impact on health, NTDs contribute to an ongoing cycle of poverty and stigma that leaves tens of millions unable to work, go to school or participate in family and community life.

This Postdoctoral Fellowship Programme supports the development of locally originated and locally led research on neglected communicable tropical diseases in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is funded by five European Foundations, the Fondazione Cariplo, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Fondation Mérieux, Nuffield Foundation, and the Volkswagen Stiftung.

### **The Programme**

- provides funding for outstanding young African researchers from Sub-Saharan Africa to carry out applied research at African research institutions.
- focuses on translational or operational research questions. Proposals are welcome that address the public health issues related to preventing and treating neglected communicable tropical diseases, including those from social scientists, such as medical anthropologists, as well as from biomedical researchers.
- offers 3-year Junior Fellowships to recently qualified African postdoctoral researchers and 3-year Extended Fellowships for more experienced researchers. Further support could be possible so that Fellows can progress from postdoctoral researcher to research group leader positions.
- draws on collaboration between African and European research institutions, with the Fellow determining with which European institution he/she proposes to collaborate and on what research issues and topics. Scientific visits to non-African scientific institutions may be included but must not exceed more than 4 months annually.
- provides for additional support to the Fellows beyond salary, travel and research costs – the Mentorship Programme will enable the Fellows to establish links to leading African and non-African scientists and training will be provided in key career skills such as proposal writing and communication at annual meetings of all Fellows.

**Note:** *The application and selection process is in three stages. The deadline for the first stage is 15 May 2009. These first stage applications should be sent to [ntd2009@gulbenkian.pt](mailto:ntd2009@gulbenkian.pt) Applicants can not proceed to the second stage unless they have been invited to do so.*

### **Eligibility:**

#### **Applicants**

Applicants for junior fellowships must be postdoctoral researchers from Sub-Saharan Africa. The necessary degree (MD or PhD) must have been granted at the beginning of 2010.

For the extended fellowships, postdoctoral researchers from Sub-Saharan Africa (MD or PhD) must have substantial research experience (for example 3 years of postdoctoral

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experience or substantial pre-doctoral research experience); applicants will need to demonstrate experience and achievements (as documented by publication record) appropriate to the extended funding and mini-group leader responsibilities.

Applicants from Sub-Saharan countries outside South Africa and applicants returning to Sub-Saharan countries are particularly encouraged to apply for both the junior and the extended fellowships.

### **Projects**

The Programme focuses on neglected communicable tropical diseases relevant to Africa, including where appropriate their vectors. These include Schistosomiasis, the filariases, soil transmitted helminths, Buruli ulcer, Human Trypanosomiasis, Onchocerciasis as well as bacterial meningitis, viral diarrhoea.

Projects on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria will NOT be considered unless, in exceptional cases, the candidate is aiming at the development of new methods and techniques that might be directly transferable to other tropical diseases or is addressing co-infection between these diseases and NTDs. In such cases the candidate must demonstrate that support for their project is not available in dedicated funding portfolios of other organisations focussing on these diseases.

The biomedical or related public health research projects must address priority translational or operational research questions in the African context. To provide a relevant framework for the research, projects should preferably be linked to ongoing health development programmes which are delivering interventions. Clinical trials without significant basic research components will not be considered. The work should also aim at the development and establishment of new methods/techniques and/or address research questions related to diagnosis/surveillance, treatment and/or prevention. Where appropriate, projects should bridge biomedical and public health research questions.

Please note, that whilst the Fellow is the lead researcher on the project, the work must involve collaboration with a research institution in Europe.

### **Mentorship Programme**

A key feature of these Fellowships is the funding provided for personal mentorships. Through the Mentorship Programme, the Fellow can establish links to two leading scientists of her/his choice -one from an African and one from a non-African institution. The mentorships are intended to extend the Fellow’s scientific networks and skills base. Up to 10,000 EUR can be applied for under the Mentorship Programme for meetings between the Fellow and the mentor at one or the other’s institution.

The mentors must agree to act as supporters for the Fellow – assisting with their career development through, for instance, introducing them to peer networks and helping them to publish in international journals. They should not be supervisors or main collaborators in the project and they should not be based at the Fellow’s host institution.

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### **Fellowship Rates**

For both the junior and extended fellowships, the official grant recipient will be the scientific host institution at which the Fellow will be employed. Basic infrastructure should be provided by the host African institutions; the fellowship can include administrative costs for the host institution up to a maximum of 5,000 EUR.

#### **1. Junior Fellowship**

The Fellowship covers salary, research and travel costs up to a maximum of 90,000 EUR over 3 years. In addition, up to 10,000 EUR for an optional Mentorship Programme can be applied for.

The budget items must be justified for by the applicant and could include:

- Salary of Fellow (depending on customary local salaries and experience).
- Travelling to conferences/workshops.
- Scientific visits to African/non-African institutions of up to 3-4 months per year.
- Additional Mentorship Program (optional, max. 10,000 EUR).
- Language courses or courses for project management.
- Consumables.
- Costs of field work (but not vehicle purchase).
- Publication costs.
- Small equipment (max. 20 % of total budget).

#### **2. Extended Fellowship**

The Fellowship covers salary, research and travel costs up to a maximum of 140,000 EUR over 3 years. In addition, up to 10,000 EUR for an optional Mentorship Programme can be applied for.

The budget items must be justified for by the applicant and could include:

- Salary of Fellow (depending on customary local salaries and experience).
- Salary of 1-2 PhD students involved in the project, (co-)supervised by the applicant.
- Salary of up to 1 technician/research assistant.
- Travelling to conferences/workshops.
- Participation in field work and associated costs (but not vehicle purchase).
- Scientific visits to African/non-African institutions of up to 3-4 months per year.
- Additional Mentorship Program (optional, max. 10,000 EUR).
- Language courses or courses for project management.
- Consumables.
- Publication costs.
- Equipment (max. 20 % of total budget). Basic infrastructure should be provided by the host institutions.

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### **Application and selection process:**

This is a three-stage process:

#### **Stage 1:**

The applicant must be an African post-doctoral researcher. Project ideas must be designed by the applicant and should be executed mainly at an African host institution. Applications must be submitted in English by 15 May 2009.

Applications must include all of the following:

- Short CV of applicant (max. 2 pages).
- A summary of the applicant’s current work (max. 1,000 words).
- A short summary of the proposed research (max. 1,000 words).

**The application must be sent by 15 May 2009 to [ntd2009@gulbenkian.pt](mailto:ntd2009@gulbenkian.pt).**

First stage applications will be evaluated by an international scientific expert committee, and decisions communicated by Mid-July 2009.

#### **Stage 2:**

Applicants who successfully pass the first selection phase will be invited to submit a full proposal (including a detailed working plan for their research) by 15 October 2009. Project ideas must be designed by the African scholars and should be executed mainly at an African host institution. In exceptional cases, prospective applicants can apply for a travel grant to the intended host institution in order to develop the full proposal. These full proposals will undergo an international review process. Details of the requirements for this stage will be sent in July 2009 to the successful applicants from the first stage; they will include:

- Project description with:
  - A research proposal written in English of not more than 4,500 words.
  - A detailed work plan including timelines.
  - A detailed budget.
  - A description of the African-European and intra-African collaborations.
- A CV – no more than 2 pages.
- A statement about the importance of the research issue and if possible evidence that the research issue is a priority for the Ministry of Health.
- Evidence that the applicant has been accepted as a prospective colleague by an existing working group at the African host institution.
- Letter of support from the African host institution stating that it will provide the basic infrastructure, and specifying the logistic or financial support it will provide the applicant.

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### **Stage 3:**

Applicants who submit full proposals will be invited to present their project at the conference “NTD 2010” in Lisbon. At the conference, they will also be interviewed by an international peer-review committee. Final decisions on Fellowship grants will be made in spring 2010.

### **Timetable:**

- **15 May 2009** – deadline for the submission of letters of interest
- **End of July 2009** – notification of the selected postdoctoral researchers for the submission of full proposals
- **15 October 2009** – deadline for submission of full proposals
- **January 2010** – Conference “NTD 2010” and final selection of applicants through interview
- **Spring 2010** – Fellowships awarded

### **Further Information**

For further information about the Fellowship Programme the conference, please contact the respective program manager of one of the participating foundations:

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