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FUNDAÇÃO CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN



The Nuffield Foundation



More attention to neglected tropical diseases

Press Release

An opportunity to contribute to a major initiative to alleviate poverty in the world's poorest populations.

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The neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) are a group of chronic disabling infections affecting more than 1 billion people worldwide, mainly in Africa and mostly those living in remote rural areas, urban slums or conflict zones. Beyond their negative impact on health, NTDs contribute to an ongoing cycle of poverty and stigma that leaves people unable to work, go to school or participate in family and community life. Whilst “the big three” infections AIDS, TB and malaria have caught the world's attention, these other disabling and sometimes fatal infectious diseases in Africa have until very recently been receiving relatively little attention from donors, policymakers, and public health officials. Yet NTD control represents a largely untapped development opportunity to alleviate poverty in the world's poorest populations, and therefore has a direct impact on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Contact

VolkswagenStiftung
Presse- und
Öffentlichkeitsarbeit
Dr. Christian Jung
Phone: 0511 8381 - 380
E-Mail: jung
@volkswagenstiftung.de

Four European Foundations – Gulbenkian, Merieux, Nuffield and Volkswagen – are funding a new fellowship programme that addresses the need to strengthen Africa's research capacity on neglected tropical diseases and related public health research in sub-Saharan Africa. The programme will support biomedical or related public health research projects that address an urgent and important translational research question in the African context. The Fellowships draw on collaboration between African and European research institutions with the Fellow based in an African institution and determining with which European institution to collaborate and on what research issues and topics. The selection process for the first round of Fellowships is underway, with 35 shortlisted candidates from 16 African countries invited to participate in a conference in Mali on NTDs still this year where final decisions will be made. There will be a wide range of research topics represented in the conference, tackling more than half of the main neglected tropical diseases as listed by WHO, such as Buruli Ulcer, Human African trypanosomiasis, Leishmaniasis, Lymphatic filariasis, Onchocerciasis, Schistosomiasis, Soil transmitted helminthiasis, Viral Haemorrhagic Fevers and Meningitis.

**Contact Afrika-Initiative
VolkswagenStiftung**
Dr. Detlef Hanne
Phone: 0511 8381 - 389
E-Mail: hanne
@volkswagenstiftung.de

European Foundations could contribute, individually or in collaborations to this or other initiatives that tackle the NTD burden of disease. For instance in funding the running costs and infrastructure of African research institutions, or in developing similar research training programmes targeting the elimination of NTD's from a medical anthropology, or other social science perspective.

More information about the Initiative under www.ntd-africa.net