PhD position
Combined socio-ecological innovations for change in NTDs control in Africa: Barriers and facilitators of implementation

Context

This PhD project is part of the research project 'A Cross-Disciplinary Alliance to Identify, PREdict and Prepare for Emerging Vector-Borne Diseases' (PREPARE4VBD). VBD is short for vector-borne diseases, which is the name of a group of infectious diseases (caused by viruses, bacteria or parasites) transferred from animals to humans or between humans via disease vectors.

VBDs constitute a major challenge facing African healthcare systems and economies today. There is a general lack of knowledge of the key characteristics that allow certain vectors and the diseases they transmit to spread and establish in new, previously disease-free areas in both Africa and Europe.

The project aims at co-constructing new, innovative methods for the prediction, prevention and control of VBDs with a transdisciplinary design that can be implemented by the relevant authorities and societies. The project involves a total of 10 institutions in Africa and Europe and uses a One Health approach that looks at diseases from a holistic perspective on health in animals, humans, the environment and society.

Further details about the project can be found on the project web-site: www.prepare4vbd.eu

Problem

Some VBDs are over-researched and whereas others receive hardly any attention and have been grouped among neglected tropical diseases (NTDs). However, there is a lot of evidence for the control and elimination of NTDs. Cost-effective tools and elimination experiences exist in many countries in Asia, America and Europe. However, in health systems (in Africa), it seems that NTDs receive less attention and resources. Our working hypothesis is that socioecological dynamics hinder control efforts to eliminate NTDs at several levels (research-to-policy translation, decision-making, implementation in services and communities). Therefore, this study aims to investigate obstacles and facilitators for taking research innovations to the end user.

Research

The following questions may guide the project:

- What are barriers and enablers of implementing NTD/VBD control strategies in African contexts?
- Why do current innovations and evidence not lead to effective health systems and behavioural change? What are the different stakeholders' interests?
- To what extent are public and private policies matched with community needs?
- Who benefits from the present system and who bears the socio-economic costs of the diseases?
- How can local solutions be valued more?

Methodology

In collaboration with partner institutions and academic supervisors, case-studies from the PREPARE4VBD project will be selected covering different VBDs/NTDs, as well as sites where decision-making takes place concerning research funding and health policies. Last but not least, the community level will be scrutinized to identify barriers and facilitators for the implementation of health policies.

The PhD fellow will employ ethnographic, interview and survey methods at selected field-sites in Côte d'Ivoire and in partner countries of Eastern and Southern Africa.

Profile

The preferred candidate must

- Hold a good MA degree in social sciences
- Have good knowledge of French and English
- Demonstrate experience in a) medical sociological research on animal-borne diseases and/or on epidemic control
- Be able to work in close cooperation with project partners of different disciplines and in a multi-cultural team
- Have research interests that are in line with the proposed project
- Adhere to ethical standards

Women candidates are particularly encouraged to apply. Although this is an open call for candidates from any country in Africa, citizens of a West African country will be preferred.

Application process

Questions may be addressed to Dr Kathrin Heitz-Tokpa, e-mail: kathrin.heitz-tokpa@csrs.ci

Applicants must submit a motivation letter, CV (with three references) and a copy of the Master's diploma to recrutement@csrs.ci

Only candidates selected for the interview will be contacted.

Closing Date: 26th June 2022