



# EDCTP Update

December 2020



## Highlights

- **2020 End of Year message by Dr Michael Makanga**
- **EDCTP e-Magazine Issue 2 - December 2020**
- **Establishing a biomarker research facility - see [Fellows in times of COVID](#)**

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*Please note: EDCTP will be closed from 23/12/22 - 03/01/21*

## 2020 End of Year Message

Read Dr Michael Makanga's substantive 2020 End of year message summarising the progress of the EDCTP programme.

Evidently, 2020 has been an extremely difficult year due to the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these challenges, EDCTP's project portfolio has grown by 31.4% and the programme is providing €752.74 million of funding to EU–Africa research partnerships involving 19 European and 41 Africa countries and is advancing new interventions for key infectious diseases affecting sub-Saharan Africa, while also strengthening clinical research capacity in African countries.

Significant progress has been made also in the preparations for the successor programme to EDCTP2 – the EU-Africa Global Health Partnership: EDCTP3. In August 2020, the [European Commission published its proposal](#) and a committee has been set up for the operationalisation of the future programme.

[Read more on the EDCTP website](#)

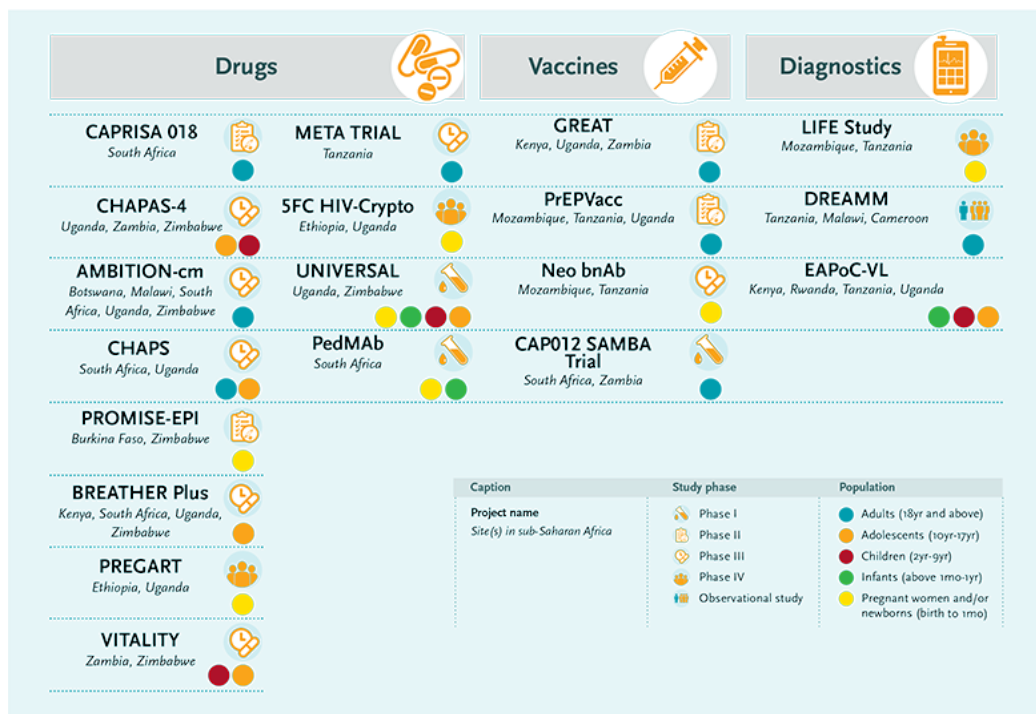


## World AIDS Day 2020

On World AIDS Day 2020, the significant progress achieved over the last two decades is justly celebrated. However, the HIV-epidemic is still far from being under control. Major challenges remain to bring down the rate of new infections and reach all those that are infected with adequate interventions.

Dr Michael Makanga, EDCTP Executive Director: "During this time of crisis, a balanced and holistic approach is key. We need to maintain investments in research and development, as well as in the most critical prevention activities and health-care services for HIV and other related diseases, to substantially reduce the overall impact of the COVID-19 pandemic."

[Read more on the EDCTP website](#)



## EDCTP is hiring!

EDCTP is looking for an 'Executive Governance Officer' for the office in The Hague. The Executive Governance Officer will assist the Executive Director to ensure the smooth and efficient functioning of the governing and advisory bodies of the EDCTP Association.

The post holder will coordinate the activities of the General Assembly, the Board, the Granting Committee, the Scientific Advisory Committee, and the Audit Committee, and act as the focal point between these bodies and the EDCTP Secretariat.

**Deadline for applications: Wednesday, 20 January 2021**

More information [here](#).

## EDCTP Knowledge Hub: successful webinar

The [webinar held on 30 November 2020 on data management and data sharing](#) received high interest and engagement from grantees and others alike. The event was attended live by over 650 participants from across the globe. We - EDCTP and The Global Health Network (TGHN)- were delighted by this response.

It was the first of two webinars being organised by EDCTP and TGHN to explain and promote features of the recently launched [EDCTP Knowledge Hub](#) and to seek user feedback. Distinguished guest speakers from the European Commission, the African Academy of Sciences, the Congolese Foundation for Medical Research and TDR, the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases at the World Health Organization contributed to the discussion.

Overall, panellists and participants welcomed the EDCTP Knowledge Hub as a good resource containing practical how-to guidance, all together in one place, and look forward to seeing it populated with more information and tools.

- In case you were unable to participate in the webinar, please note that the [recording](#) is now available.
- A summary of the meeting, together with the full list of all questions and answers, will be made available on the [event page](#) in January 2021.

- We encourage you to continue to provide any feedback you may have on the EDCTP Knowledge Hub.

In February 2020, EDCTP and TGHN will be hosting a second webinar focusing on the [Protocol Development Toolkit](#), which will be co-chaired by Professor Hannah Akuffo from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and Professor Christian Burri from the Swiss Tropical & Public Health Institute.

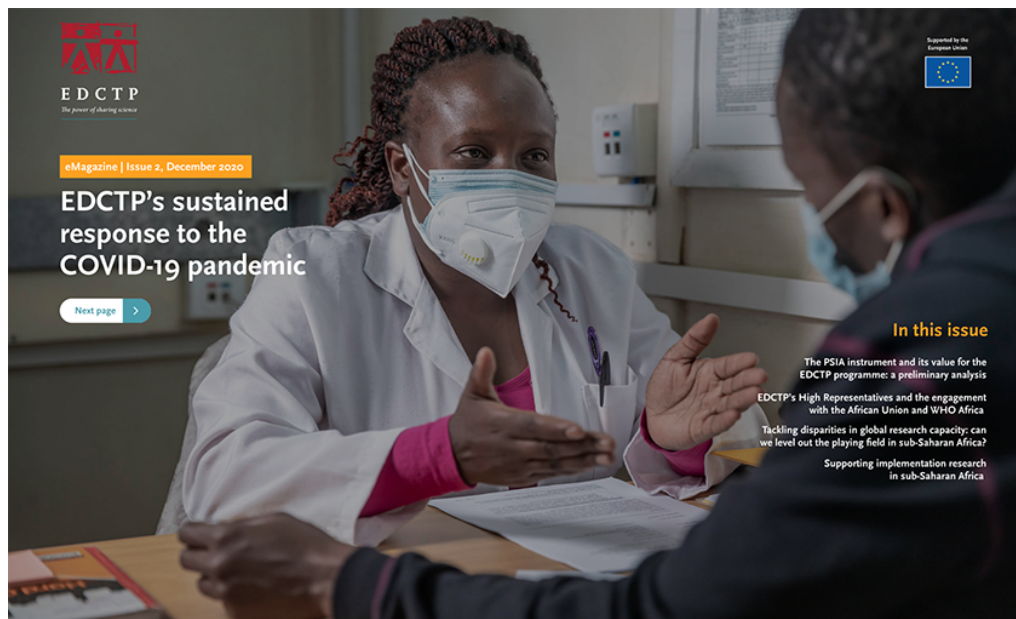
We encourage all EDCTP grantees and other stakeholders to join us for this webinar, which will be open to anyone interested in learning more about the tools and resources available. More information and registration details will be made available in January 2021 through the [EDCTP Knowledge Hub](#).

## EDCTP Magazine Nr 2 - December 2020

The EDCTP e-Magazine is an online magazine offering background information and broader topics regarding our programme.

Topics in this second issue (December 2020) are:

- [EDCTP's sustained response to the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- [The PSIA instrument and its value for the EDCTP programme: a preliminary analysis](#)
- [EDCTP's High Representatives and the engagement with the African Union and WHO Africa](#)
- [Tackling disparities in global research capacity: can we level out the playing field in sub-Saharan Africa?](#)
- [Supporting implementation research in sub-Saharan Africa](#)



## Recent events

### Gulbenkian Foundation and La Caixa Foundation | Research and innovation webinar | 09/12 2020

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the Fundação "la Caixa" organised a [webinar on the system for research and innovation in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

Presentation: HRH the Infanta Cristina of Spain, Director of International Area – "la Caixa" Banking Foundation.

Moderator: Eusébio Macete, Director of CISM (Mozambique).

Keynote speakers:

- Ignasi López Verdeguer, Director, Department of Science and Research, "la Caixa" Foundation

- Mónica Bettencourt Dias, Director of the Gulbenkian Science Institute
- Michael Makanga, EDCTP Executive Director
- Pratap Kumar, Professor and researcher at Strathmore Business School at Strathmore University, Kenya.

Closing speech: Carlos Moedas, Trustee of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and former European Commissioner for Research, Science & Innovation.

Link to the recording [here](#).

### **GLOPID-R and ISARIC | Long COVID online forum | 09-10/12 2020**

The [Long-COVID Joint Research Forum](#) took place on 09-10 December 2020. It was organised by GLOPID-R (the [Global Research Collaboration for Infectious Disease Preparedness](#)) and ISARIC (the [International Severe Acute Respiratory and Emerging Infection Consortium](#)).

From the programme introduction: "Currently very little is known about the clinical, biological, psychological and socio-environmental impact of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). While most people may have uncomplicated recoveries, some experience prolonged or new symptoms and complications.

Systematic reviews show that people worldwide are experiencing prolonged symptoms of COVID-19. There are implications at an individual level for people's quality of life and their ability to work, as well as at a socioeconomic level due to the risk of widening health inequalities.

There is an urgent need for robust scientific studies into the long-term impact of COVID-19 in both adults and children. The objectives of the forum were: 1) to gain a better understanding of Long Covid; the science and the personal impact, and 2) to define research gaps for funders and researchers to take forward." EDCTP Project Officer Jean Marie Habarugira represented EDCTP as a panellist and co-chaired one of the sessions.

### **Portuguese Council Presidency | Science and Innovation priorities briefing | 11/12 2020**

On 1 January 2021, Portugal will assume the rotating European Union Council Presidency. In anticipation of this, on 11 December 2020, Intelligence in Science (ISC) organised in cooperation with Prof. Carvalho MEP a briefing on the presidency's priorities in the area of research and innovation. EDCTP was represented in a panel discussion by Ms Ana Lúcia Weinberg, Strategic Partnerships Officer.

The event page can be found [here](#).

## **Recently signed grants**

### **[Mobilisation of funding for COVID-19 research in sub-Saharan Africa – 2020](#)**

- **Africa Suitcaselab** | Coordinator: Dr Ahmed Abd El Wahed | Multi-country blinded study to evaluate the suitcase lab for rapid detection of SARS-CoV-2.
- **COVADIS** | Coordinator: Dr Annette Erhart | COVID-19 epidemic in West Africa: infection dynamics and diagnostic approaches.
- **COVID-19 HCW** | Coordinator: Dr Marta Nunes | Surveillance among healthcare workers for SARS-Coronavirus-2-infection.
- **STRESSCO** | Coordinator Dr Ahlin Achille Massougbodji | Strengthening epidemiological surveillance in Benin and Burkina Faso for an effective response to COVID-19.

### **[Paediatric drug formulations for poverty-related diseases – 2019](#)**

- **ACOZI-KIDS** | Dr Antoine Tarral | Towards a paediatric indication for children between 1 and 14 years of age for a safe, effective, all-oral single-dose treatment formulation of acoziborole for first and second stage gambiense human African trypanosomiasis (g-HAT).
- **MiniMox** | Coordinator: Dr Michel Vaillant | Treatment for all: Developing a paediatric formulation moxidectin for neglected infectious diseases.

### **[Ethics and regulatory capacities -2019](#)**

- **CCRREA** | Coordinator: Ms Winfred Badanga Nazziwa | Consortium for clinical research regulation and ethics capacity in the Eastern African Region.

- **SEARCH** | Coordinator Dr Eusebio Victor Macete | Increasing the regulatory capacities for review of clinical trials in southern Africa by establishing European-African collaborations that facilitate implementation of efficient processes, harmonised procedures, standardised guidelines, and effective training programmes.

#### Career Development Fellowships – 2019

- **AZT-TB** | Fellow: Dr Laure Stella Ghoma Linguissi | Assessment of immunomodulatory effects of azithromycin in pulmonary tuberculosis patients.
- **Pfkelch13 emergence** | Fellow: Dr Moses Ocan | Predictors of local emergence and spread of artemisinin resistance among Ugandan *Plasmodium falciparum* parasites.
- **PKM-TB** | Fellow: Dr Anil Pooran | Approaches to investigate pharmacokinetic mismatch and its effect on resistance acquisition in M. tuberculosis.

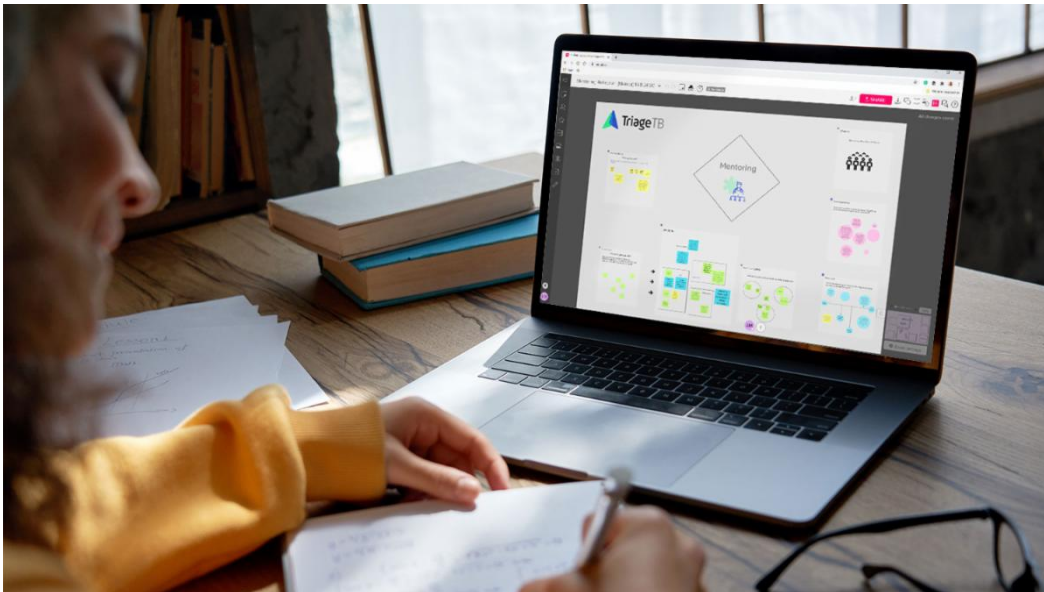
#### AREF/EDCTP Preparatory Fellowships – 2019

- **VARIAFRICA** | Fellow: Dr Sebastien Kenmoe | Viral acute respiratory infections in Africa.

## Project news

### Triage TB | First annual meeting | 16-17/11 2020

One year into the project, the TriageTB consortium got together virtually for the Year 1 Meeting on November 16-17, 2020. All consortium members from South Africa, the Gambia, Uganda, the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland attended the meeting, which was chaired by Prof Gerhard Walzl, TriageTB's Coordinator, from Stellenbosch University (SUN).



#### **Recruitment**

Recruitment was initially scheduled to have started this spring, however, COVID-19 forced the consortium to push back the start of the recruitment. The first patients were recruited a few weeks ago in South Africa, and recruitments in the Gambia and Uganda are scheduled to kick off early next year. Overall, the consortium has managed to stay productive and move the study forward despite the many challenges posed by the ongoing pandemic.

#### **Capacity development**

Work Package 4 - Capacity Development and Networking, led by Prof Hazel Dockrell from The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, aims to strengthen capacities of both scientific and administrative staff of all TriageTB's partner institutions. The project's capacity building scheme consists of 13 mentor-mentee pairs.

During the annual meeting, Prof. Dockrell hosted two 45-minute brainstorming workshops (one for mentors and one for mentees), conceptualised by Liora Jaffe of LINQ. The sessions offered mentors and mentees a chance to discuss common challenges in their role as mentor/mentee – and strategies for overcoming them.

Prof Dockrell and many mentees agreed that in the current times there is an increased need for the support that the TriageTB mentoring scheme offers. “The stress of this year sometimes leaves me feeling unfocused and speaking to my mentor can help to put things into perspective again. I feel like I have benefited more this year than previous years,” said one mentee.

### **Sister project ENDxTB**

As part of the annual meeting, the project’s Scientific Advisory Board also met for the first time. The board members participated actively in the discussions and, in a designated session, provided valuable feedback on the status of the project, including a concise SWOT analysis and targeted recommendations. Here, special focus was put on the TriageTB’s collaboration with its new sister project ENDxTB. It started in mid-June this year with €6.4 million funding from the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) over five years. It aims to evaluate new diagnostics for incident, active, and recurrent TB. From 2021, the two project consortia will hold joint meetings.

This item is based on the [summary of the meeting published on the TriageTB website](#)

## **DIAMA | Annual consortium meeting | 01/12 2020**

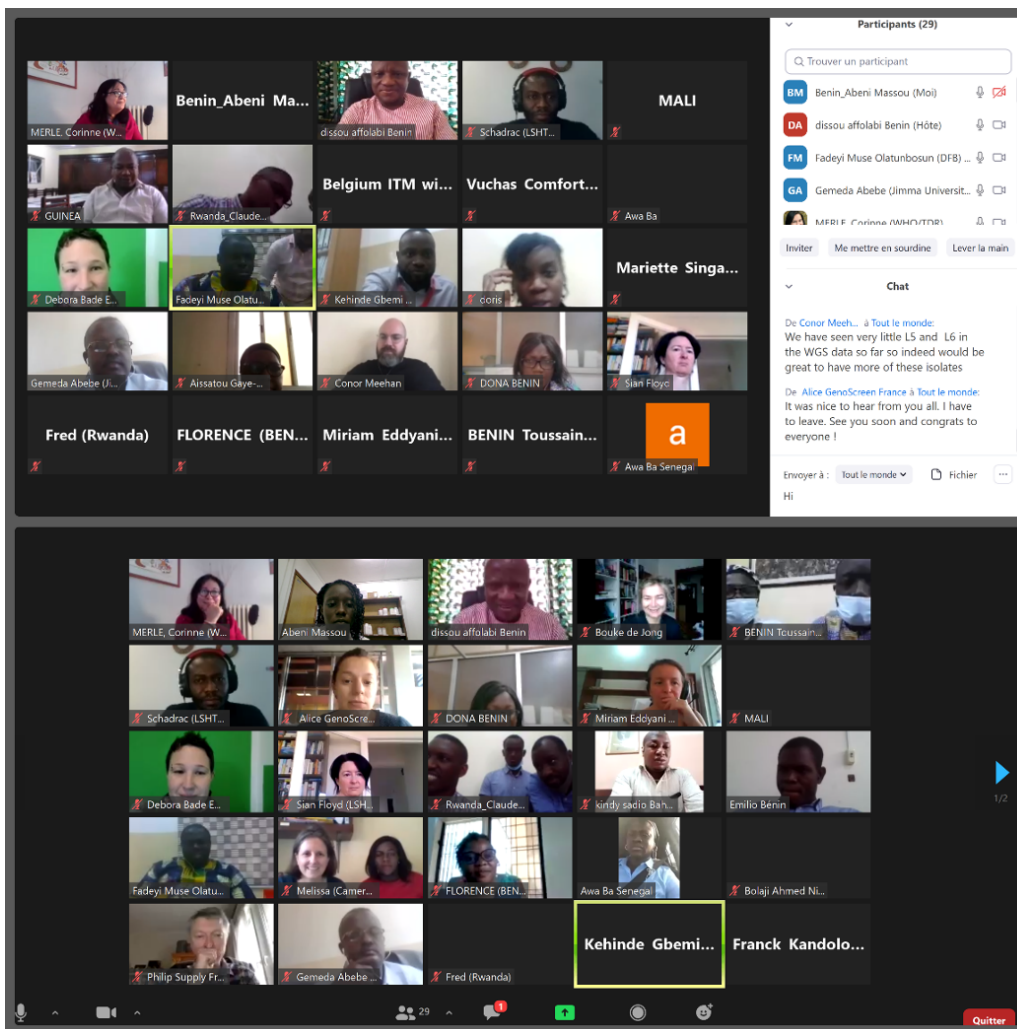
The DIAMA project (Diagnostics for multidrug-resistant tuberculosis in Africa) aims to address current gaps in the diagnosis and management of patients with multidrug-resistant (MDR) tuberculosis (TB) in Africa. This project involves nine African partners (in Benin, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda and Senegal) and four European institutions (WHO/TDR, Geneva), (LSHTM, UK), (ITM, Belgium) and (Genoscreen, France).

Two studies are simultaneously conducted in the project. Study 1 aims to validate three new molecular tests for the diagnosis of drug-resistant tuberculosis: The Deeplex® Myc-TB assay (Genoscreen, France), GeneXpert MTB/XDR (Cepheid, Sunnyvale, CA) and the TrueNat 2<sup>nd</sup> line assay (MolBio, India). Study 2 aims to validate two new culture-free approaches assays: vital staining microscopy with fluorescein diacetate and monitoring of bacterial load using Xpert MTB/RIF Ct values.

The annual meeting is organised in one of the participating African countries but due to the COVID 19 pandemic, the meeting took place online on 01 December 2020. All partners including EDCTP were present at this meeting. The objectives of the meeting were:

- To present the evolution of the patient’s recruitment in the study;
- To present the study update to the entire consortium;
- To present the preliminary results of the validation of the Xpert XDR.

At the end of the meeting, all objectives were achieved and the preliminary data of the Xpert XDR validation will be presented at the WHO Guidelines Development Group meeting in December.



## PANDORA | Ethics workshop | 02-03/12 2020

[PANDORA-ID-NET](#), the EDCTP-funded Pan-African Network for Rapid Research, Response and Preparedness for Infectious Diseases Epidemics, organised a [workshop on 'Research Ethics during Epidemics'](#) in collaboration with the [ALERT project](#), the EDCTP-funded Regional Network TESA ([Trials of Excellence in Southern Africa](#)) and The Global Health Network.

From the introduction: "During infectious disease outbreaks and epidemics such as COVID-19, there is a moral imperative for ethically and scientifically rigorous clinical research. This workshop will inform participants about some of the ethical challenges in conducting this research. We will cover 5 broad topics:

- Ethics of research in vulnerable populations
- Community and stakeholder engagement
- Informed consent in epidemic research
- Biobanking during epidemics
- Ethics review during epidemics.

Read more in the [PANDORA press release](#).

## UPTAKE | Project Launch | 03/12 2020

IAVI today announced the initiation of UPTAKE, an innovative behavioural science research project funded by EDCTP. UPTAKE seeks to determine factors that facilitate future uptake of long-acting technologies to prevent HIV and unintended pregnancy in adolescent girls and young women in Kenya and Uganda. In sub-Saharan Africa, this group, aged 15-24 years, is twice as likely to be living with HIV as men in the same age group.



IAVI is a nonprofit scientific research organisation that develops vaccines and antibodies for HIV, tuberculosis, emerging infectious diseases (including COVID-19), and neglected diseases such as snakebite.

Read more in the [IAVI press release](#).

## AfriCoVER | Project launch | 10/12 2020

The AfriCoVER project is a '[Community-based research into transmission of COVID-19 virus in Mozambique](#)'. The study examines how the COVID-19 virus spreads and who is most affected in a peri-urban community setting in sub-Saharan Africa. The study was funded under the EDCTP 2020 call for proposals 'Mobilisation of funding for COVID-19 research in sub-Saharan Africa'.

The Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) in Antwerp, the Instituto Nacional de Saúde (INS) in Maputo, Mozambique, and two other partners have launched a year-long population study into the transmission of the COVID-19 virus in a low-income peri-urban community in Mozambique. The project will collect clinical information from a cohort of 16,500 people and investigate who is infected, who shows symptoms, and who has developed antibodies. The risk factors for infection and severe COVID-19 illness, such as age, diabetes, and hypertension, will be assessed.

Read more in the ITM press release, English version [here](#), French version [here](#).

## New project websites

**SCINE-U** | Strengthening community structures in clinical research to improve the oversight role of national ethics regulatory bodies in Uganda  
[Visit the website](#)

**SimpliciTB** | Simplified short treatment for tuberculosis  
[Visit the website](#)

## Publications

- **SMERT** | The SMERT ethics project (Streamlining ethics review process and regulatory framework in Tanzania) published in *Nature Scientific Reports 10* | Kissa W. Mwamwitwa et al. [A retrospective cross-sectional study to determine chirality status of registered medicines in Tanzania](#).

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## EDCTP Fellows in times of COVID

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted many organisations, institutions, and professional lives of researchers globally, while sometimes bringing unexpected opportunities.

Dr Charles Drago Kato, an EDCTP Career Development Fellow (Makerere University, Uganda), is working on a project to identify and validate novel biomarkers in blood that could be used to differentiate between early and late-stage human African trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness) patients. His study is important because disease staging currently relies on an invasive lumbar puncture.



"As we did not have a local laboratory with the capacity to conduct the biomarker study, we formed a collaboration with the University of Geneva for which I was supposed to make regular short visits to acquire practical expertise in proteomics. My fourth and final visit was due in May 2020, but the COVID19 pandemic made this impossible.

However, the scarcity of diagnostic kits and drugs made the government realise the need to develop local research capacity for product development. Through the Presidential Scientific Initiative on Epidemics, I was awarded a grant to establish a biomarker research facility in the country borrowing from the experience of the University of Geneva. This project will take a period of 2 years from July 2020 and will provide high-tech equipment for proteomics/biomarker research. With this facility, we shall be able to identify novel biomarkers for a number of endemic diseases with a goal to develop better diagnostics and therapeutics tools."

## Resources



[Collaborative clinical R&D online](#)



[Clinical research capacity](#)



[Fellowships](#)

**EDCTP | Guidelines for grantees - Progress report | 23/11 2020**

EDCTP published new Guidelines for grantees on how to best use the online progress reporting facility in EDCTPgrants, EDCTP's grant management system. Go to the publication [Online Progress Report in EDCTPgrants – Guidelines for beneficiaries](#).

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## Funding opportunities

**Swiss Government | Excellence Scholarships for foreign scholars & artists | Apply in December 2020**

Each year the Swiss Confederation awards Government Excellence Scholarships to promote international exchange and research cooperation between Switzerland and over 180 countries. Recipients are selected by the awarding body, the Federal Commission for Scholarships for Foreign Students (FCS).

The Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships are aimed at young researchers from abroad who have completed a master's degree or PhD and at foreign artists holding a Bachelor's degree.

[More information](#)

**NRF South Africa | Postdoctoral fellowships | Deadline 31/12 2020**

The objectives for these postdoctoral fellowships supported by the NRF are listed below.

NRF Freestanding Postdoctoral Fellowships

- Increase the number and quality of Postdoctoral Research Fellows in South Africa.
- Enable South African Postdoctoral Fellows to obtain international exposure.
- Encourage outstanding international Postdoctoral Research Fellows to do research work in South Africa.

Innovation Postdoctoral Fellowships

Leverage innovation in universities and the implementation of science and related skills development

- Expand transformation initiatives through equity and career growth opportunities for designated groups.
- Enable young scientists and professionals to access world-class strategic and applied research opportunities in a university environment and thereby strengthen their research profiles and consequently improve their prospects of permanent employment in the national system of innovation.
- Attract young scientists and professionals of the highest calibre, to complement senior researchers' influence on innovation through research.
- Support young scientists and professionals in strategic, basic, and applied research to promote innovation.

[More information](#)

**Africa Oxford initiative | AfOx Travel grants, 2019+ | Ongoing call**

AfOx Travel Grants support the establishment of new collaborations between researchers in African countries and their collaborators at the University of Oxford. Travel Grants are open to all disciplines and open all year round. So far we have awarded over 100 travel grants to researchers from the African continent and the University of Oxford.

[More information](#)

**The Leprosy Research Initiative | Call for proposals | Deadline: 29/01 2021**

The Leprosy Research Initiative (LRI) recently announced a call for proposals for funding commencing in 2022. LRI funds research with a focus on leprosy – including research applications combining leprosy with other neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) or other diseases that share cross-cutting issues with leprosy. The deadline for applications (Letter of Intention) is 29 January 2021 and more details can be found [here](#).

**NTD/USAID | Request for proposal: Optimising NTD diagnostics and sampling strategies for low-prevalence settings | Deadline: 31/01 2021**

The Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD) Support Centre, a program of The Task Force for Global Health, with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through the COR-NTD grant, is soliciting proposals for:

1. Research targeting the near-term development of highly specific diagnostic markers, tools, and technologies to monitor and evaluate programs aimed at lymphatic filariasis (LF) and onchocerciasis in low-prevalence settings.
2. Research on the application of epidemiological and statistical methods that maximize the programmatic effectiveness of survey sampling strategies to detect specific LF and onchocerciasis signals in low-prevalence settings.

[More information](#)

## UPCOMING

### **MRC UK | Improving health in LMIC countries | Deadline: 08/04 2021**

This call will open on 01 February 2021. Apply for funding for research that will benefit the health of people living in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

Particularly welcome are proposals that combine expertise from more than one sector to meet a global health challenge. There is no limit to the amount of funding you can apply for. You can submit a proposal of any size, from a small seed-funding proposal to a large-scale programme grant.

You can apply if you are:

- an LMIC-based principal investigator
- a UK-based principal investigator working in partnership with LMIC investigators.

[More information](#)

### **AAS ARISE |Launch of African Research Excellence Pilot programme | 08/12 2020**

On 8 December 2020, ARISE – the African Research Initiative for Scientific Excellence Pilot Programme – was officially launched. The ARISE Pilot Programme will empower early-career African scientists in delivering cutting-edge research across Africa. It will be implemented by the African Academy of Sciences with the strategic direction of the European Union and the African Union. Through the programme, 40 young and emerging African research talents, early-career scientists, and their ideas, will have the opportunity to be recognised and offered further development opportunities with grants. Beneficiaries will be selected on the basis of scientific excellence in a continent-wide open competition. More details about the event can be found [here](#).

## COURSES

### **East African Pharmacovigilance Initiative (EAPI) | online short courses**

East African Pharmacovigilance Initiative (EAPI) is a partnership between the Pharmacy and Poisons Board and the University of Nairobi funded through the EDCTP-funded EAPI project.

The courses have interactive features like journaling for participants to document their experiences, interactive video content, and interactive text materials. Future content will be expanded to level 3 interactivity, which includes online simulations and practice sessions. The platform also has a forum section for participants.

- The pharmacovigilance (PV) course has three variations: 1) Advanced PV, which is focused on pharmacy professionals working in the PV space; 2) Basic PV course - five modules and tailored to non-pharmacy medical professionals; 3) This course can also be taken by the general public.
- The snakebite course has seven modules that enable the participant to learn more about the prevention and clinical management of snake bites.

[More information](#)

### **Lessons from Ebola: Preventing the Next Pandemic | Harvard University Online course | from 21/12 2020**

Like no other event in recent history, the 2014 Ebola outbreak has made clear the fragility of existing health systems. We have an opportunity to learn lessons to prevent the next global health catastrophe and forge partnerships across borders and disciplines.

This four-week course provides the context in which to understand the Ebola outbreak — why now, and why did so many people suffer and die? The course lays out the global governance structure — what was the global response supposed to look like, and where did it fail?

The course will feature practitioners, experts, and scholars who will focus on cultivating a better understanding of the Ebola epidemic and implications for future health systems to ensure that the world is more effective in preventing the next pandemic.

[More information](#)

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*EDCTP Communications thanks the colleagues who provided information for this Update.*



EDCTP | Anna van Saksenlaan 51, Den Haag, 2593 HW Netherlands

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