

Fellowship Opportunity in Epidemic Preparedness and Response

Executive Summary

The Medical Research Council (MRC) Unit The Gambia at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) are pleased to announce unique, interdisciplinary two-year Fellowships in Epidemic Preparedness and Response. The Fellowships are supported by The Peter Piot Fellowship Programme through funding for the Centre for Epidemic Preparedness and Response (CEPR) at the LSHTM. The Fellowship funding will be awarded for research that can improve understanding and capacity to prepare for and respond to infectious disease epidemics, particularly in lower- and middle-income countries (LMIC) of the world. This programme will seek to foster the professional development of a new generation of specialists in this field.

Introducing London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

Founded in 1899, LSHTM is a globally renowned public health institution, whose mission is to improve health and health equity worldwide, through cutting edge research and postgraduate education. With over 3,000 staff conducting research in over 130 countries around the world, including at the MRC Units in The Gambia and Uganda, LSHTM is known for diverse and multidisciplinary research.

In 2021, LSHTM launched CEPR, co-directed by Prof Martin Antonio, Professor of Molecular Microbiology & Global Health, and Prof Adam Kucharski, Professor in Infectious Disease Epidemiology. The Centre draws on the range of skills and experience at LSHTM and at its Units, including leading researchers in epidemiology, anthropology, mathematical modelling, vaccine research, clinical trials, humanitarian crisis, virology and epidemic-prone pathogens. CEPR explores key areas of investigation, provide innovative training, and offer insight into all aspects of outbreak response to students, policy makers, and healthcare professionals.

THE MRC UNITS

In 2018, the MRC Units in The Gambia and Uganda formally joined LSHTM, boosting the school's research capacity into current and emerging health issues in Africa and throughout the world.

With over 1,200 staff, the MRC Unit The Gambia at LSHTM is a centre of excellence for research and training that has contributed significantly, over the last 75 years, to produce world-class research that has informed health policies in sub-Saharan Africa and beyond. The Unit delivers innovative research that includes disease control, nutrition and planetary health, and vaccines and immunity to save lives and improve health across the world. The MRC Unit The Gambia boasts of strong research collaborations with several research institutions in West Africa.

In the 30 years since its establishment, the MRC/ & LSHTM Uganda Research Unit has become an internationally recognized centre for research on HIV/ AIDS, non-communicable diseases, and endemic, neglected, emerging and re-emerging infections. With 390 staff across four sites in

Uganda, the Unit addresses current and future health priorities of the East Africa region as well as providing clinical care for local people

Format of the Fellowship

The two-year Fellowship will give early career researchers the freedom to pursue novel research in the field of epidemic preparedness and response. Fellows will be able to work with world-class LSHTM faculty, including MRC Units from a broad range of disciplines including epidemiology, health systems, mathematical modelling, data science, diagnostics, anthropology, clinical research and more. Based on the research interests of the Fellowship applicant and their identified mentors, they will submit a research proposal as part of the application. Applicants should identify a location for the research, and, if relevant, an external partner institution based on prior work experience, so long as a suitable mentor at LSHTM in London, MRC Units in Gambia and Uganda can be identified.

The Fellow must be a national from sub-Saharan Africa*. The successful applicant will be based primarily at either the MRC Unit in the Gambia (key contact Professor Martin Antonio martin.antonio@lshtm.ac.uk) or the MRC Unit in Uganda, and will be expected to move to either location, if not already based there.

**Sub-Saharan Africa*, as defined by United Nations Development Programme, includes the following countries: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome & Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leona, South Africa, South Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Requirements of the Fellowship

Fellows will enjoy substantial time during the period to focus on their proposed project and they will be expected to present their work both internally and at international meetings. Fellows will be expected to be active participants in the Fellowship scheme by contributing internally and externally to relevant CEPR meetings and activities. They will be expected to participate in the wider activities of research groups or themes they are involved with at the Units in either Gambia or Uganda

Compensation

Fellows will receive a competitive research fellowship stipend of £25,000 per annum at either Gambia or Uganda. In addition, the fellowship will pay for fellows' accommodation, annual holiday airfares and contribution to children's school fees. They will also receive a modest research budget. Relocation and visa support will also be available for international applicants.

Eligibility Criteria

Applications from individuals based at LMICs research institutions are strongly encouraged. Support will be provided in English and proficiency in the English language is a requirement of the Fellowship. Applications will be assessed on submitted documents and scored against the following criteria:

- Completed PhD degree within the last 3 years. We will accept applications from candidates completing their PhDs by September 2022. Fellowships will only be awarded to people who have completed their PhDs by the fellowship start date
- Demonstrated interest and experience in research relating to infectious disease epidemics.
- Ability to identify a research project relating to epidemic preparedness and response that is of high scientific quality and has potential to make a clear impact on human health
- Ability to identify a research project that is deliverable within the duration of the Fellowship programme.
- Clear route for Fellowship work to benefit communities disproportionately affected by infectious diseases and/or traditionally under-served or under-resourced in epidemic preparedness and response.
- Potential for the project to generate novel interdisciplinary insights or methodology.
- Clear plan for the Fellowship to contribute to career development.
- Potential for the project to deliver a positive impact that lasts beyond the end of the Fellowship.

Timeline

This is a two-stage application process with the following timelines

Stage 1: Interested applicants are invited to submit

- a CV including summary of key outputs and publications (maximum 3 pages)
- Personal statement (maximum 1 page) outlining career goals and reasons for applying
- An outline of a proposed research project to be conducted during the Fellowship (maximum 1 page) developed in consultation with LSHTM faculty

Applications at Stage 1 will be shortlisted by a multi-disciplinary search committee and a shortlist of applicants will be invited to submit full applications in Stage 2.

Stage 2: Shortlisted applicants must submit:

- Preference for location to conduct the study
- List of two Faculty at LSHTM (either in London or at the MRC Units in Gambia and Uganda) they would be working with.
- Two letters of recommendation preferably from previous academic supervisors.
- An update of the outline proposal presented in stage one (details will be provided after stage 1)

Applications should be sent to fadinding.darboe@lshtm.ac.uk with a copy to musa.faal@lshtm.ac.uk

- The Stage 1 application deadline is 31st May 2022.
- Stage 1 applicants will be notified if they are invited to proceed to Stage 2 by 30th June 2022.
- Stage 2 applications will be interviewed either face-to-face or “virtual” in July/August 2022.
- Fellowship offers will be made to successful candidates in September 2022.
- The Fellowship start-date will be flexible, but all fellows should be in post by 1st January 2023

**An information session for potential applicants will be held on
4th May 2022 at 14.30 GMT**

<https://lshtm.zoom.us/j/96489440178?pwd=YmV5c1RFR0xtelpucWllcTd5MFZLdz09>