

Request for Expression of Interest (Eoi) to develop and implement a strategy on community engagement and risk communication (CERC) under the PM-ABHIM Scheme for control and elimination efforts of vector-borne diseases

Overview:

Vector-borne diseases (VBD) continue to be major health problem in India. Though new innovations aimed at bridging control efforts have brought down the burden of many VBDs, the gains have been difficult to sustain. Community engagement and mobilisation is critical at this point for VBD control and elimination to reach the last mile. In order to effectively control and manage VBDs, community participation and engagement in mitigation and response to any outbreak is critical to complement the efforts of resource-constrained and over-burdened health systems. This is crucial for harnessing local knowledge and skills within the community and to build preparedness and resilience against future disease. The success of community engagement in an inclusive and participatory approach depends on their level of awareness of what is expected of them in a situation and how convinced are they of the consequences of what they are doing. Thus, communicating and having continuous engagement with the communities (in other words, risk communication) is a critical aspect of any public health response.

The aim of this Eoi is to identify institutes from across the 4 regions (that are culturally diverse including North, South, North-east/East and West/Central) of the country to join the team being constituted for implementing ICMR's multi-centre project on "Community Engagement and Risk Communication (CERC)" for outbreak preparedness of VBDs with a focus on dengue and malaria (both being highly prevalent public health concerns) and lymphatic filariasis (being a priority disease for elimination). The CERC plan will centre on prevention and control strategies for all the aforementioned VBDs, and in addition morbidity management and disability prevention for lymphatic filariasis. This project is approved under the Pradhan Mantri-Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM) Scheme. The selected institutes shall be invited to join the project team and shall collaborate to develop a full protocol and roll out the multi-centre project under the guidance of ICMR Headquarters, Delhi. The participating centre may opt to focus on dengue, malaria or/and lymphatic filariasis depending on the priority of their area/region. The process of development of protocol and project implementation shall be reviewed by an independent Expert Committee.

The overall goal of the project is to enable and engage communities to be responsive to local, context-specific needs and priorities to achieve control and elimination efforts for dengue/malaria and lymphatic filariasis respectively and to strengthen community readiness and resilience for any future VBD outbreaks.

Priority Question:

Develop and implement a strategy to communicate and engage with communities and relevant stakeholders through leveraging digital platforms (including social media) in each of the four regions to address uncertainties, risk perceptions and misinformation management to encourage positive behaviour change in the efforts to control dengue/malaria outbreaks and eliminate lymphatic filariasis?

Objectives:

- To develop an evidence- based strategy to guide the process of community engagement and risk communication utilizing digital platforms in prevention and control efforts for dengue, malaria and /or lymphatic filariasis with morbidity management and disability prevention
- To enhance capacities of key stakeholders like government agencies, non-governmental organizations, local government (Panchayati Raj Institution, Municipality etc.), and community-based organizations to engage effectively with communities
- To build community hubs representing geo-climatic diversity to integrate insights from communities into the strategy
- To foster the use of digital technologies and communication platforms/channels in engaging, communicating and delivering health information and awareness

Strategy development:

Designing the effective CERC strategy may include (but not limited) to the following operational steps:

- Understanding the context and information needs
- Designing inclusive and participatory CERC strategy
- Developing context specific messages for the VBDs of concern
- Choosing appropriate digital channels and platform for risk communication
- Engaging in partnership with relevant stakeholders

Outcome assessment:

- Number of online meetings/workshops held
- Number of intended audience reached
- IEC materials distributed/audiovisuals screened/community event
- Rumours/misinformation dispelled (identify and respond)
- Change in knowledge, practice and behaviour
- Number of cases of dengue, malaria and/or lymphatic filariasis in the selected district/state and comparisons with previous years
- Severity of outbreaks in terms of hospitalization, mortality and morbidity/disability

Deliverables:

- Detailed CERC strategy to engage with communities for prevention and control of dengue/malaria outbreaks/lymphatic filariasis with morbidity management and disability prevention
- Digital resource compendium of training modules and playbook for CERC
- Establishment of community hub (one in each region) with stakeholders from local governments, civil societies and state governments for engagement during an outbreak
- Detailed technical and financial report

Target population:

Broadly, this project will target population groups both urban and rural in the community, in particular, engaging leaders and influencers in a community who will form a critical bridge between authorities and the community.

Format of Expression of Interest (EOI) to be submitted

The EOI is to be submitted online as a single PDF of **not more than 4 pages**.

A. Rationale for choice of sites (states and districts) to be included

The proposal should clearly state the rationale for the project, the recommended sites; and the likelihood of utilization of the model by stakeholders in the future. The proposal can also provide evidence from previous work on the topic in the country or elsewhere; learning from best practices; any challenges and opportunities of effective implementation.

B. Operational steps

Provide a clear and detailed description of proposed operational framework and activities (including the target population and strategies), project work plan and deliverables. You may include preparatory activities, mapping, a timeline, steps of implementation, and measures of output/outcome indicators.

C. Address feasibility and scalability

Address the feasibility and scalability of the proposed strategy, including the resources needed for implementation, the capacity of the implementing organization, and the potential for wider adoption and scale-up.

D. Project Team

Summarise and justify the composition of the project team, based on the expertise of the individual team members in designing and implementing the project. Also, highlight the skill set and expertise the members shall bring to the research team that shall be constituted by the ICMR Headquarter for the development of final protocol and project implementation.

E. Established relationships with state and district departments and other stakeholders

Operational feasibility would be key for implementation of this project. Include the collaborations that have been established with the potential stakeholders and participants including state and district departments (e.g., health, disaster etc.), local communities, community leaders, and faith healers among others.

Illustrative Budget outline (additional to the 4-page limit)

The final site budgets for the proposal will be developed by the selected project team(s) under the guidance of ICMR. In this EOI, provide an estimated budget outline (no budget justification required at this stage) under the following headings: staff, recurring contingency, data management, travel and equipment.

Who can apply?

- Medical Institutes/ Research Institutes/ Universities/ Colleges
- Government and semi-government organizations
- Non-government organizations

The Institute/Organization should have:

- Experience in working on communications and advocacy in health-related areas, working/engaging with communities for risk communications, developing CERC strategy, undertaking capacity building for CERC engagement strategies, etc. and creating creatives and knowledge-based products like TV/Radio jingles, short films, etc.
- History of collaboration with community-based organizations and experience working with Central or State Governments, UN Agencies like WHO, World Bank etc.
- Catchment area catering to various geographical and population groups
- Documentary evidence of their recognition including a DSIR certificate
- Preferably a multi-disciplinary team of investigators to be involved

The EOI can be submitted through ONLINE MODE ONLY by Investigators motivated to lead the regional centres with institutional approval.

Criteria for selection of Investigator:

- Professionals who have regular employment
- Endorsed by the Head of the Institute/College/Organization
- Experience in undertaking projects on communications and advocacy in health-related areas, and working/engaging with communities for risk communications
- Good quality publications on the relevant area
- Subject specialization

- Relevant previous research grants

One- page CV of the principal investigator and other key investigators (additional to the 4-page limit)

Please provide a one-page CV of the PI and other key investigators from each identified area. Each CV should include:

- Academic and professional qualifications
- Current position and affiliation
- Up to five most relevant previous research grants
- Upto five most relevant previous publications
- Experience in undertaking projects on working on communications and advocacy in health-related areas, and working/engaging with communities

Review process:

The EOI documents for the ICMR’s Multi-centre Project on Community Engagement and Risk Communication (CERC) for pandemic preparedness will be evaluated and shortlisted by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). The ICMR team will screen the applications for technical accuracy and eligibility. The shortlisted teams will then collaborate to develop a detailed proposal, under the guidance of ICMR Headquarter. The proposal will be evaluated based on factors such as proposed methodology, feasibility, implementation capabilities, prior experience, engagement with public health and potential for seamless integration. The feasibility and suitability of integration of the proposed methodology in the final proposal to be developed under the guidance of ICMR Headquarter shall also be considered while shortlisting the EOI.

Points to be kept in mind while submitting the EOI

1. The EOI must address the specific question that is mentioned in the call text.
2. Collaborative, multi-centre, interdisciplinary, innovative initiatives from the applicant will be encouraged.
3. Should focus on outcomes that are translatable into policy.
4. Evaluation of the utilization of digital technologies and solutions relevant to the Indian context will be prioritized.
5. Foreign collaboration is not allowed under the call.

Interested parties should fill out the Google form at the below link and submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) as per the Format given above. Only shortlisted Investigator will be contacted.

Link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdrRbdkVv1Km-kEYpjGQSEJonhnlx - s0gtwEc9MX7FI06Vg/viewform?usp=sf_link

Timeline:

Activities	Date
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Release of Call	11-September-2023
Last date for submission of EOI	13-October-2023
Shortlisting of EOIs	13-November-2023
Proposal Development Workshop	15-December-2023
Submission of a full proposal	29-December-2023

For any queries related to the call, please contact:

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