



Operational research grants in maternal, newborn and child health for post-graduate students in Rwanda

Background

The USAID Ingobyi Activity is a five-year cooperative agreement to improve the quality of reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health (RMNCH) and malaria services, in a sustainable manner with the goal of reducing infant and maternal mortality in Rwanda. The Activity builds upon the tremendous gains Rwanda has made as well as previous USAID investments in the health sector. Ingobyi partners with the GOR to build on the country's considerable achievements, guided by national health strategies, goals, objectives and data. The Activity is not just building capacity and capability but aims to achieve shared understanding of the patterns and systemic structures that underlie the health system and where and how to bring about measurable and sustainable improvements. These efforts are expected to generate a virtuous cycle that produces a stronger health system through increased access, skills, standards and institutions.

One of the ways to understand patterns and factors that underlie health system structures is through analyzing implementation data and deriving evidence based actions for performance and quality improvement. Continuous learning and adaptation (also known as learning agenda) is a major focus for the Ingobyi Activity as it strives to improve the utilization and quality of RMNCH and malaria services in Rwanda, in a sustainable manner. The learning agenda is an approach that integrates operational research into program implementation, and helps to monitor efficiency and effectiveness of interventions being implemented, through analysis/interpretation and use of data gathered from routine program implementation.

To generate evidence and actions for the improvement of quality of RMNCH and malaria services, while contributing to capacity building for health professionals in operational research using routine program data, USAID Ingobyi Activity, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health/HRH Secretariat and RBC/MCCH, plan to provide small research grants of up to \$5,000 to support targeted studies by selected post-graduate students from medical or public health institutions in Rwanda. The successful students must be interested and willing to undertake their research activities (as part of their final academic requirements) in the following areas: infection prevention and control, antenatal care, family planning, social behavioral change, clinical mentorship, and respectful maternity care. Interested students will be expected to apply for the grants by submitting a motivation letter indicating the area of interest as well as a detailed proposal to conduct the research in a hospital or health center setting. A screening process will be conducted by the MOH/HRH Secretariat, RBC/MCCH and Ingobyi Activity. Successful candidates will receive orientation on implementation and management of the research grant, and will be responsible taking the research activity to completion.

Requirements

- Must be a final year post-graduate medical student or final year MPH student at a recognized training institution in Rwanda.
- Must provide recommendation letter from research supervisor.
- Motivation letter and research proposal must show clear understanding of the area/topic of interest.
- CV or resume indicating student background, experience and qualifications.
- Must have a very good command of the English language.
- Must be conversant with qualitative and quantitative research methods.
- Must be familiar with data analysis using appropriate statistical packages.

Technical support and funding

USAID Ingobyi Activity will provide the needed funding and technical support throughout implementation of proposed research activities. Funding will be provided based on actual needs for each research area.

Number of grants: Six (6) – one student for each of the identified research areas (infection prevention and control, antenatal care, family planning, social behavioral change, clinical mentorship, and respectful maternity care).

Deliverables

- Research proposal – that will be developed after receiving orientation from Ingobyi Activity. This will include a final budget based on reasonable costs that will be agreed upon with Ingobyi Activity.
- Ethical clearance from the Rwanda National Ethics Committee and from the College of Medicine and Health Sciences at the University of Rwanda.
- Final report on findings and recommendations from the research.
- Presentation of findings to MOH, RBC and Ingobyi Activity as well as relevant technical working groups as needed.

Selection criteria

Applications/proposals will be evaluated against the following criteria:

- Relevance of study topic or research questions to RMNCH priorities of MOH, RBC and Ingobyi Activity.
- Potential to generate new knowledge and recommendations to inform improvements in RMNCH services in Rwanda.
- Demonstrated understanding of the key issues, gaps and potential solutions in the selected area of research.
- Clear identification of research questions.
- Sound study methodology and ability to use analytical methods to analyze and present data.
- Realistic timeline and cost.

Supervision: The students will work closely with USAID Ingobyi Activity's technical team leads, but will report directly to the Operational Research Advisor.

Timeframe: All studies will be expected to be completed within 9 months.

How to apply: Interested applicants are requested to submit their CV, supervisor recommendation, motivation letters and research proposals (in English), by May 23, 2021 at 23:59 to ingobyiprocurement@intrahealth.org with the subject "Application for research grant."

Note:

- CVs should be updated and should reflect the student's academic background and experience in research.
- The motivation letter should clearly indicate why the student is interested in the selected area of research.
- Students are expected to come up with a topic of their choice (from one of the following research areas: infection prevention and control, antenatal care, family planning, social behavioral change, clinical mentorship, and respectful maternity care) and develop a full research proposal. The research proposal should include key research questions, methods, and proposed budget and timeline.
- Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

DocuSigned by:
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5/7/2021

Dr. Samson Radeny

Chief of Party