Health Policy Research Group

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Call for Expressions of Interest - updated

Implementation research to strengthen data and information systems for immunization coverage and equity (IR Accelerator) Initiative

This is a call for expression of interest (EOI) from implementer-led research teams who wish to undertake implementation research that will contribute to strengthening data and information systems for immunization coverage and equity in Nigeria.

We are seeking to fund up to eight (8) implementation research projects that will contribute to improving our understanding of the challenges and solutions for improving immunization data and information systems in Nigeria. Hence, the research projects will provide evidence on the real world factors that impact/influence the quality of immunization data, and potential strategies for addressing implementation bottlenecks and accelerating immunization coverage and equity.

Background

Nigeria has the highest number of unimmunized children in the world, estimated at 4.3 million in 2018. The coverage of DPT3/Penta 3 fell from 52% in 2014 (SMART) to 33% in 2016 (MICS/NICS). Hence, millions of infants are vulnerable to serious health and nutrition threats because they miss out on basic vaccines. In order to better understand how to reach these children and their families, locally relevant evidence is needed.

Implementation research (IR) can help us generate locally relevant evidence and useful information to better understand and address key challenges faced by the National Programme on Immunization (NPI) in Nigeria[1].

The Implementation Research (IR) Accelerator Initiative is part of a collaboration between the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research (the Alliance), UNICEF and Gavi (the Vaccine Alliance) which has a twofold objective to promote: i) **the generation of high quality, relevant and usable implementation research** on data and information systems for immunization; and ii) **the application and use of the evidence to address implementation bottlenecks** and accelerate impact on coverage and equity.

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[1] Peters DH, Tran NH, Adam T. Implementation Research in Health: A practical guide. Alliance for health Policy and Systems Research, World Health Organization, 2013

The Health Policy Research Group (HPRG), College of Medicine, University of Nigeria Nsukka (Enugu-Campus), is the Technical Support Centre (Mentor Institution) for the Alliance in stewarding the Implementation research initiative that was informed by research priorities proposed by a broad range of Nigerian stakeholders.

Eligibility criteria

This call is open to policymakers, programme managers and officers, and health workers who are involved in the implementation of the National Programme on Immunization at national, state and local government levels in Nigeria.

The expression of interests (EOIs) must be led by an implementer (policymaker, programme manager, programme officer, health worker in the immunization area) and supported by a researcher as a co-lead. Teams must comprise at least 50% of women.

Eligible EOIs must address one or more of the following research questions and must have a focus on strengthening immunization data and information systems

1. **Data quality and information systems**

   a. What strategies could be used to improve the quality, uptake and use of immunization data and how are feedback mechanisms being utilized to address issues of immunization data quality, and how effective have they been in decision making?

   b. How can real-time mobile data systems be deployed for immunization data reporting and what would be their effects on quality of immunization data compared to conventional paper-based system?

   c. What data coordination mechanisms can be used to harmonize and streamline immunization data and avoid duplication of functions/activities by stakeholders in Nigeria?

   d. How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected immunization services including data and information system, and what strategies could be used to mitigate the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on immunization coverage and data systems?

   e. What information, communication and technology methods can be effectively used to improve data and information systems towards **active surveillance of missed opportunities for vaccination** (MOV) in all health facilities for improved follow-up and defaulter tracking, especially for reducing the proportion of missed children?

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2. **Improving immunization coverage in hard-to-reach areas, with guidance from optimal data and information systems**
   a. What strategies could be used to improve access to immunization for children in hard-to-reach areas of Nigeria?
   b. How can health workers in hard-to-reach areas be sustainably motivated (incentivized) to improve attendance to work, and to improve the conduct of periodic routine immunization outreaches in hard to reach areas/settlements of Nigeria?

3. **Logistics and supply chain management**
   a. What are the challenges to immunization supply chain and logistics management?
   b. To what extent can regular supportive supervision be used to effectively improve immunization supply chain and logistics?
   c. How can the bottlenecks that cause delays in the release of funds for immunization logistics be resolved?

4. **Community-based resources and links**
   a. How can community-based resources (including social media influencers, religious and traditional leaders, pre-school education system, community health workers, local/traditional birth attendants, and other community links etc.) be used to improve immunization coverage in urban and rural areas?
   d. How can community-based resources and links be used to address misinformation and rumors surrounding vaccine safety, and minimize vaccine refusal or decline?

5. What are the challenges faced by healthcare workers in administering immunisation to children? What interventions are effective for addressing these challenges?

6. What is needed to institutionalize and implement the accountability framework for routine immunization at subnational levels in Nigeria?

7. How can other child health interventions such as integrated management of childhood illneses be leverage to improve uptake of immunization services?

Funding and period

The maximum amount of funding available for each EOI will be ₦9,300,000 (nine million, three hundred thousand naira only). The research will be implemented in 2021 and the end date for completion and submission of full draft research report should not exceed 31st August.

Application processes

All submissions must be received by 11.59 pm on Wednesday 2nd December 2020.
Please note that EOIs submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

EOIs should be submitted (emailed) as word document to hprg@unn.edu.ng. The subject of the email should read, "EOI - IR Accelerator Initiative"

EOI submissions should not exceed three pages (standard font size 11, 1.15 line spacing) and should include the following:
1. Implementation research question that will be addressed (must be from the priority list)
2. Aim and specific objectives of the research
3. Brief description of proposed research method (study design, study population, data collection and analysis methods)
4. Plans for research uptake and use to improve immunization programme
5. Summary of timeline and budget
6. Composition of the research team (including names, qualifications, expertise, role in the research). Multidisciplinary teams that comprise of people with qualifications in health sciences, public health and social sciences are encouraged. **Teams should be gender-balanced with women comprising at least 50% of the research team.**

Successful applicants can expect to be notified within two weeks of the submission deadline.