



Call for Application for Operational Research in Health

1. BACKGROUND

Health for All is a Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation project implemented by the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, Basel, in collaboration with the HAP Center in Albania. The main goal of the project is to make possible that Albanian population benefits from better health thanks to improved primary health care services. It is expected that MoHSP and its regional entities improve stewardship, management and effectiveness of primary health care and citizens in target regions have access and use effectively primary health care services of better quality. HAP is supporting the Ministry of Health and Social Protection in development of a Primary Health Care Strategy, as an element of strengthening and improving the health System in Albania. Apart from that, many other interventions are foreseen for its implementation phase, in respect to human resource in health and their management, introduction of new approaches of extending PHC services in the framework of universal coverage such as home-based care for NCD patients and extension of nurse role, strengthening the managerial capacities of health managers in PHC and beyond, strengthening the role of nurses and improving their professional capacities etc.

There is a lack of evidence in PHC and Public Health in Albania that creates a gap between policy making and planning processes and operations/actions to undertake in order to gain health benefits. Moreover, the findings and results of operational research that has been conducted thus far, are not systematically translated into policies and strategic documents by decision makers. All the above, speaks for the lack of human resources and capacities to conduct operational research, insufficient financing and deficient translation of research results into policies and strategies.

In this light, HAP aims at strengthening and improving PHC organization and services in Albania through the support for operational research on health system and services and strengthening of young researcher capacities. In order to achieve the aforementioned objective HAP will carry out a series of interventions such as: 1) launch a funding initiative to support operational research activities, 2) Implement initiative with the purpose of producing evidence-based data in relation to health system and services and also project impact; 3) support the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and its subordinate institutions in order to translate the research data and findings into policies and strategies. In parallel with that, HAP will contribute to increasing operational research capacities in the country, by training young researchers.

2. Objective of this call

The objectives of this call are:

- to provide funding opportunities for conducting operational research on different aspects of health services in Albania with a focus on primary health care (PHC) and public health (PH), and
- support research capacities of young researchers in the country, through training and opportunity of implementing operational research activities.



3. Suggested domains for operational research

The following is a list of suggested PHC and PH domains to be explored through operational research implementation. However, the applicants are invited to propose other issues, but closely related to Primary Health Care and Public Health. **Note: this call for application is supporting only operational research and not research on clinical issues, the last are not eligible for this call.**

Eligible domains of research can be:

- Exploring issues of Human Resources in Health – primary health care and other levels (education, distribution, productivity and motivation, roles and responsibilities, etc.). A specific topic of research would preferably be the role of nurses in the present and in the future health system of Albania.
- Exploring non-communicable diseases as a public health issue (diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, etc.)
- Exploring connections of Primary Health Care and Public Health
- Exploring issues of quality of primary health care in Albania
- Exploring issues of health information system in primary health care and beyond,
- Exploring the need for alternative services in primary health care – coordination with other services, for instance social services, home services, palliative care, rehabilitation services etc.
- Exploring issues related to management of primary health care
- Other health and system related issues in the primary health care are also acceptable.

Transversal themes such as **gender aspects** and **principles of good governance** are of great interest for HAP, and applicants are very much encouraged to accommodate these themes/subjects in their research projects.

4. Organizational aspects of the scheme

The initiative of “Micro-funding for Operational Research in Health System and Services” will be organized and managed under the leadership of HAP. **The technical aspects of the initiative will be elaborated and decided by a Research Advisory Board (RAB).**

4.1 Composition of the Research Advisory Board

The Research Advisory Board (RAB) is composed by senior researchers in public health and health service management. They also are representatives of research institutes, bodies and high education (academic) institutions. RAB main goal is to advice and support HAP on implementing the initiative.

A secretariat of the RAB will coordinate the application process, management of the call, and other logistic issues. The secretariat can be reached by a dedicated address, operational.research@hap.org.al and all communications related to micro-funds on operational research will be done through this channel of communication.

4.2 Timeline of operational research projects

The operational research activities will be implemented along one calendar year January 2020 – January 2021.



4.3 Research projects supported

The best research proposals will be supported, in accordance with the budget allocated. The successful applicants will also be supported with training activities to be conducted in Albania on different operational research aspects.

4.4 Amount of funds

The micro-funding initiative will support research proposals up to 3,000 CHF. The disbursement of the funds will be completed after submission of specific deliverables, as explained in **Part 7** of this Call for Application (CfA).

A budget form should be submitted explaining how this fund will be spent, supporting budget items listed by the applicant. **Ineligible expenditures** related to this call are:

1. Payment of any salary to mentors involved to the study implementation
2. Purchase of IT equipment or equipment available through the applicant's institution (e.g., computer software/accessory, projector, printer, etc.)
3. Payment for the preparation of the research project to the research applicant or others assisting the research applicant;
4. Expenses for past activities already completed;
5. Expenses that are not related to the research project implementation.

The applicant should develop a budget with eligible expenses, explaining and justifying expenses. The budget can be developed according to the research needs.

5. Research Applicants

To be eligible to receive a grant, applicants and their proposed research project must meet ALL the requirements listed below:

The eligible candidate:

An eligible applicant must fulfil the following conditions:

- Albanian citizen
- Maximum age limit 35 years
- Minimum accomplishment of bachelor or master studies in the field of interest
- Researcher/scientist or professional serving in a public academic institution, and/or public health service. The applicants working in private organizations that will propose research work with a focus on and interest for public services will not be excluded.

The eligible research project:

A proposed research project must fulfil the following criteria:

- Scientific research proposal contributing to a better understanding of Albanian health system and services with a focus on primary health care, HRH, public health and other domains as mentioned previously



- Sound and feasible research methodology with realistic (achievable) timeline and financial means
- Research to be carried out in Albania

Mentorship

The mentoring process will be led by a mentor from the academia (University level teaching institutions), organizations where the mentee is conducting the research, or someone with deep interest in the area proposed. The mentoring process will be organized by the mentor and the mentee. RAB will be informed about the mentoring process and the progress of research for every successful applicant.

The mentor should satisfy the following conditions:

- Academic staff with a research experience, or
- Scientist affiliated to a research institute with an academic degree such as PHD (preferably), or at least MScPH degree
- Expert in the subject area proposed by the applicant for research (in this case co-mentoring is desirable)
- Has a publication record
- Mentoring track-record desirable

6. Evaluation process and criteria:

HAP will run the selection process with the support of RAB. RAB will conduct the selection process, the supervision of research activities as well as coordination for development of curriculum and implementation of research-related training activities. The Board will evaluate the submitted applications within a month after submission. The evaluation of research proposals will be conducted on the following criteria:

- Research proposal (study protocol) of the study - up to 40 points
- Work plan and timeline with specific activities - up to 30 points (Workplan of project activities is part of the Application form)
- CV of research applicant and a motivation letter, listing research experiences, involvement in research activities, and trainings on research issues if there are, and expressing reasons of their motivation for application - up to 10 points
- CV of mentor(s) – up to 20 points

7. Expected Results from the micro-funding scheme:

HAP is expecting beneficiaries of these micro-funds to coordinate and carry out research activities in the framework of strengthening and improving primary health care and public health. At the same time, it is expected by the candidate to follow and produce research related outputs, that will ensure the quality of the research process.

The research applicant is responsible for the following:



- a. **Develop the study protocol:** the study protocol should be developed before the implementation of the operational research. The Study Protocol will be a document that will be assessed by RAB and later evaluated from the Ethical Committee on Research in Albania.
- b. **Obtain Ethical Clearance:** all the research activities supported by HAP will be subject of ethical clearance process. The applicant must follow the ethical approval process administered by the Albanian Ethical Committee. The applicant is responsible for issuing the approval.
- c. **Conduct the study** (literature review, use and analyzes of secondary data, primary data collection, etc.).
- d. **Elaborate a Study Report:** At the end of the process, a well written report on the study process, analyzes, findings, discussions and recommendations is expected to be submitted by each research applicant.
- e. **Publication and/or dissemination** of study findings is highly recommended (in the form of articles, participation in national and/or international scientific events, policy notes, policy briefs, etc. communication and dissemination modes).

8. What to submit, where and when:

The interested candidate should submit the following documents in English language:

- a. **A research proposal that should** follow the lines presented in Annex 1 of this (CfA) “Application Form of Research Proposal”. Explanations about the application items are listed in the same annex.
- b. **Workplan** as per Annex 2 of this (CfA).
- c. **Financial proposal** should be submitted in a separate sheet. Ineligible expenses are mentioned in part **4.4** of this (CfA).
- d. **A letter** from the institution where the research will be conducted confirming the interest for this research and willingness to support implementation of the project. A format of the Letter is provided as Annex 3 of this (CfA).
- e. **CV of research** applicant and a **letter of motivation**, demonstrating previous research experiences in case there are, and/or training experiences on research topics, and expressing what is their motivation for application to the scheme.
- f. **CV of mentor** supporting the applicant along the process, from conceptualization to finalization of the project.

All the items mentioned above should be submitted to the secretariat of the of micro-funds for operational research, on the addresses operational.research@hap.org.al.

The deadline for submission is *20 February 2020, 4pm*. Delayed submission of any required items will not be accepted.

9. Enquiries

If you have any questions concerning this call, please send them by email to operational.research@hap.org.al by 7 February 2020. Phone enquiries will not be answered.