



Arts & Humanities  
Research Council



## **GCRF New Social and Cultural Insights into Mental, Neurological, and Substance Use Disorders in Developing Countries**

### **Call specification**

#### **Summary**

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) in collaboration with the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) is pleased to invite proposals for innovative research grants focusing on mental, neurological, and substance use (MNS) disorders in developing countries. Funding for this call has been allocated from the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF).

GCRF ([www.esrc.ac.uk/gcrf](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/gcrf)) is a £1.5 billion funding stream to support cutting-edge research which addresses the problems faced by developing countries. GCRF forms part of the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment, and as such funding under this call will be awarded in a manner consistent with official ODA guidelines ([www.oecd.org/dac/stats/officialdevelopmentassistancedefinitionandcoverage.htm](http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/officialdevelopmentassistancedefinitionandcoverage.htm)).

GCRF will address global challenges through disciplinary and interdisciplinary research and will strengthen capability for research and innovation within both the UK and developing countries, providing an agile response to emergencies where there is an urgent research need.

This call explicitly recognises that a large number of people with mental health problems live in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Within these countries, many people with severe mental disorders will not receive evidence-based treatment and there is low research capacity for mental health research. ESRC and AHRC are launching this call to fund innovative and interdisciplinary research that takes a social and cultural perspective on the challenge of mental health problems in developing countries. For this call, a wide definition of mental health is important; this will encompass mental, neurological, and substance use (MNS) disorders.

Funded research is expected to provide new insights into: the socio-economic and cultural contexts of MNS disorders and people's understanding of them; living with MNS disorders in developing countries; and prevention, worsening of and resilience against MNS disorders.

We are looking for ambitious projects, capable of proposing new avenues for research, that directly engage with this agenda. This may include comparative, cross-regional and cross-sectoral research. Proposals may fall under the remit of ESRC, or as cross-disciplinary proposals across the remits of both participating research councils. Methods should be interdisciplinary both within and beyond the social sciences, with specific funds available for

those which fall in significant part within AHRC remit. Partnerships, whether with academics, policymakers or stakeholders, are encouraged.

Proposals are invited for durations up to 30 months and must be led by a researcher at an eligible UK research organisation. Proposals will be submitted through the research councils' Joint Electronic Submission system (Je-S). All grants must **commence by 1 September 2018**.

The ESRC has a total budget of £4 million allocated to this call. In addition, AHRC will make funds available for interdisciplinary projects which fall significantly within their remit. The councils expect to fund a balanced portfolio of proposals of varying sizes and ambitions, with a maximum grant value of £1.25 million at 100% full Economic Cost (fEC). The research councils will contribute 80% fEC on successful proposals. It is expected that the portfolio will include grants which are significantly smaller than this maximum value.

**The deadline for proposals is 16:00 on 11 January 2018.**

## **Background and scope**

### **Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF)**

GCRF aims to harness the UK's scientific expertise to tackle some of the world's most pressing development challenges. It operates across a number of partners, including the Research Councils UK (RCUK), National Academies, UK Space Agency and HEFCE. The RCUK GCRF represents the largest portion of the Fund and is a strategic fund spanning all seven research councils. The research councils have each received directly allocated portions of the GCRF; ESRC and AHRC are drawing on their allocations to support this call.

Every discipline within the social sciences has the potential to make a strong contribution to the GCRF agenda, and the ESRC anticipates playing an integral role in developing and delivering the GCRF, working alongside other research councils and partners. Further information about the ESRC's approach to GCRF and details of other current GCRF calls is available on our website ([www.esrc.ac.uk/gcrf](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/gcrf)).

AHRC has developed a strategy and approach which identifies overarching themes where our researchers can make strong contributions to global challenges (<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/publications/global-challenges-research-fund/>). These areas are indicative, not exhaustive, and AHRC fully expect to fund other related fields with novel and innovative arts and humanities research at their core.

### **Call background and scope**

Goal 3 of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is to "ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages" (<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/health/>). This 'Good health and wellbeing' goal has specific targets to: by 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being; and strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol. Addressing and preventing poor mental health also underpins other SDGs: reduced inequalities; no poverty;

quality education; and decent work and economic growth (<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>).

Within LMICs there is low capacity for mental health research, with very limited research specific to the socio-cultural, economic and infrastructural contexts of different LMICs. This was emphasised, for example, by a 2011 commentary in *Nature* titled 'Grand challenges in global mental health' (<http://www.nature.com/articles/475027a>). According to the 2014 APPG Report on Mental Health for Sustainable Development, (<http://www.appg-globalhealth.org.uk/reports/4556656050>), almost 75% of people with mental health problems live in LMICs, and fewer than one in fifty of such people with severe mental disorders in Low Income Countries (LICs) will receive any evidence-based treatment. In LMICs, less than 2% of annual health budgets is spent on mental health, yet globally almost a quarter of the overall 'burden of disability' comes from mental disorders.

For this call, a wide definition of mental health and illness is important. In part, this is because conditions that high-income countries (HICs) differentiate into psychiatric, neurological and cognitive disorders are treated by the same practitioners in many LMICs. The definition includes not just severe mental illness and common mental disorders, but also dementia, addictions, intellectual disability, developmental disabilities such as autism and neurological conditions such as epilepsy. The shorthand term used to refer collectively to these conditions is mental, neurological, and substance use (MNS) disorders. MNS disorders are not confined to particular groups in specific countries, although populations and nation-states do impact on their interpretation, incidence, prevalence, distribution and intensity. MNS disorders can have impacts at any point of the lifecourse. This call does not place priority on one or more age groups.

There is enormous heterogeneity across LMICs in terms of contextual and cultural factors that have a bearing on mental health and how it can be protected, and on the scope for responding to MNS disorders that arise. There are also wide variations in formal service provision across and within LMICs, linked in part to lack of infrastructure and shortages of trained professionals. These considerations have obvious implications for the need for culturally adapted, context-relevant research approaches.

Research funded under this call should consider active collaboration and/or engagement with, for example, local communities, healthcare and other practitioners (including traditional/alternative forms of medicine), wider stakeholders (including policymakers), and those with lived experience of MNS disorders and their families. In doing so, researchers should take into account the social, cultural, religious and linguistic context.

## **Call details**

This call aims to fund a portfolio of innovative and interdisciplinary research that provides social and cultural perspectives on mental, neurological, and substance use (MNS) disorders in developing countries. It is expected that proposals will address one of the following themes:

### **Socio-economic and cultural contexts of MNS disorders and people's understanding of them**

Research might address questions including (but not limited to):

- How MNS disorders are understood, and how that understanding has changed over time and varies by social, cultural, religious and linguistic context.
- The consequences of differences in understanding of MNS disorders in terms of disability, quality of life, wellbeing, economic status and social participation; and the implications for treatment-seeking and interventions.
- How stigma and discrimination are understood, how they affect – or are affected by – awareness, social inclusion, life chances and opportunities, and how they can be reduced.

### **Living with MNS disorders in developing countries**

Research might address questions including (but not limited to):

- How the roles of family, household, community, institutional, policy and individual-level factors affect conceptualisation, identification, management, coping and living with MNS disorders.
- How MNS disorders affect families, communities and carers, including the varied relationships between close relatives and people with lived experience, and what these mean in terms of assumptions about who should provide care and support.
- Interrelationships between individual, family and community poverty and mental health; how poverty-alleviation interventions such as basic income grants, cash transfers and micro-credit might provide mental health benefits, or prevent the onset of symptoms associated with MNS disorders.
- How ‘informal care’ networks shape understanding, attitudes and experiences in relation to MNS disorders.
- How community-based providers can play roles in protection against and treatment for MNS disorders, and in the promotion of mental health (including through exploration of how appropriate community-based support systems can be harnessed, strengthened and developed, alongside analyses of their affordability and likelihood of being supported and sustained).

### **Prevention, worsening of and resilience against MNS disorders**

Research might address questions including (but not limited to):

- How social, economic, and cultural factors determine MNS disorders (onset, continuation, worsening or recovery) and how they are experienced. These factors could include: social organisation, social capital, urbanisation, early life adversity, pandemics, war, terrorism, violence, natural disasters, drought, flood, forced displacement, parental interactions, education, macroeconomic recession, personal economic shocks and unmanageable debt, income inequality, extreme poverty, and other health conditions. Studies should move beyond association to explore causality.
- How intersecting inequalities (across socioeconomic groups, genders, ethnicities, place, etc.) affect vulnerability to, and ability to access treatment for, MNS disorders.
- How resilient individuals, communities and systems can be characterised and promoted, including what personal, familial, societal and cultural attributes and features (and at which levels) protect against adversity and for whom.

### **Methodological opportunities**

The UK has world-leading data resources for social and economic research, providing a huge opportunity for comparative analysis into some of the most pressing global challenges we face today. Given the richness of these resources we encourage applicants to fully

exploit these through a secondary/data analysis approach when addressing the aims, objectives and themes of this call. Proposals are permitted which use a range of data sets and resources. We recommend applicants use the Low and Middle Income Longitudinal Population Study Directory ([https://www.ifs.org.uk/tools\\_and\\_resources/longitudinal](https://www.ifs.org.uk/tools_and_resources/longitudinal)) as a reliable starting point for longitudinal population study data resources. The use of any data resource is acceptable provided applicants are able to justify the data's ability to provide answers to the research questions posed in the proposal.

Given the tremendous diversity of the social sciences and arts and humanities, particularly in their inherent methodological approaches, it will be essential for interdisciplinary research to be methodologically robust. We encourage methodological innovation where it is appropriate.

## **Eligibility**

For this call, standard ESRC eligibility rules apply. Principal investigators must be based at an UK research organisation eligible for research council funding (<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/eligibilityforrcs/>). Co-investigators may be based anywhere in the world, but, additionally for GCRF calls, the co-investigator's research organisation must submit a 'letter of support' using the template provided within the Je-S guidance. This is to ensure comparability of standing between international organisations and RCUK recognised UK research organisations and to ensure commitment to the project. Further information on eligibility is provided within the ESRC Research Funding Guide (<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-funding-guide/>). Guidance on the inclusion of international co-investigators is also available (<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/inclusion-of-international-co-investigators-on-proposals/>).

Proposals which duplicate work previously supported by the ESRC will not be funded. The ESRC will not fund contract research or consultancy work where the results and physical outputs are to some extent already pre-defined and known. Proposals which are not deemed to be within the scope or remit of this call will be rejected.

## **Funding**

ESRC are leading this call on behalf of both research councils. Funding is available for applications which fall under the remit of ESRC, or as cross-disciplinary proposals across the remits of both participating research councils. The ESRC has a total budget of £4 million allocated to this call. In addition, AHRC will make funds available for interdisciplinary projects which fall significantly within their remit. Use of the full budget will be contingent on the quality of the applications received. The councils expect to fund a balanced portfolio of proposals of varying sizes and ambitions, with a maximum grant value of £1.25 million at 100% fEC. The research councils will contribute 80% fEC on successful proposals. It is expected that the portfolio will include grants which are significantly smaller than this maximum value.

### **Funding of international co-investigators**

GCRF calls follow standard ESRC policies in that the ESRC (with AHRC where applicable) will fund 100% of the justified costs for international co-investigators. However, costs funded at 100% fEC must not exceed 30% of the total cost of the grant (at 100% fEC),

including the combined cost of all international co-investigators and UK business, third sector or government body co-investigators.

Applicants should note the ESRC's policy on the inclusion of international co-investigators on proposals (<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/inclusion-of-international-co-investigators-on-proposals/>).

The overhead rate for DAC list country co-investigators is up to 20% of salaries and other staff-related costs (ie statutory contributions analogous to UK National Insurance or Superannuation contributions).

Indirect costs may not be charged on non-staff related direct costs, eg equipment, consultancies and conferences as well as travel and subsistence. Please note that any indirect costs claimed must be within the 30% cap. Further guidance is provided in the Je-S guidance for applicants.

## **Stakeholder engagement**

The primary purpose of research funded under this call is to promote the economic development and welfare of a developing country or countries. We expect researchers funded under this call to have identified the potential impact of their research on relevant policy and practice, and to actively consider how this can be maximised and developed in ways which are realistic and appropriate to the particular context.

We recommend that a minimum of 10% of the overall budget should be dedicated to deliver the activities outlined in the impact summary. Researchers are encouraged to be innovative in the kinds of user engagement, knowledge exchange, communications, and research uptake activities they plan to undertake. Applicants must consider how the impact of research on MNS disorders in LMICs can be increased through innovative knowledge exchange approaches, particularly bearing in mind the likely need to compensate for lack of capacity, infrastructure and workforce to inform, educate, and empower people living with MNS disorders and their families.

Please note that outreach and engagement activities in themselves do not constitute impact. The development of a clear impact strategy will be important to ensure research impact is achieved. When completing the impact summary section of the form, applicants may find it helpful to refer to ESRC guidance on developing an impact strategy ([www.esrc.ac.uk/research/evaluation-and-impact/developing-an-impact-strategy/](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/research/evaluation-and-impact/developing-an-impact-strategy/)).

It is recommended that each proposal includes plans to hold a seminar or workshop with key stakeholders in the country or countries where the majority of the research is taking place, to set out the aims of the projects and fully ground it in the local context. This should take place at the earliest opportunity to facilitate the potential co-production of knowledge and allow researchers to 'reality-check' their plans.

## **Partnerships and collaboration**

For this call we strongly encourage proposals which involve partnerships and collaborative relationships, particularly with developing country partners. Partnerships may build on existing relationships or represent new collaborative relationships. The configuration of partnerships and collaborations should be driven by the research and impact objectives

underpinning the proposal. The principal requirement is for substantive, targeted and high-quality collaborations or partnerships, demonstrated through clear leadership roles, and balance and proportionality in partners' roles and responsibilities. All partnerships, including international ones, should be based on mutual respect and understanding for different cultural, ethnic, social and economic beliefs and practices.

Collaborative partnerships with non-academic stakeholders, including potential research users and intermediary organisations with a mandate to communicate research, are also encouraged where appropriate. The exploitation of new knowledge does not just occur at the end of a research project, but is rather embedded throughout the research process itself, so we expect such stakeholders to be included and involved in both the early design and on-going conduct of research projects.

## **Capacity building**

An important aspect of GCRF is capacity development, and we strongly encourage all proposals to this call to identify research capacity-building activities as part of, and not separate to, the stated research agenda. Examples of building capacity include:

- Provision of new opportunities for those with relevant skills who have not previously worked on development relevant research projects to orient their research towards global issues
- Support and mentoring for more junior team members
- Co-design of research and implementation with developing country partner staff

Further information on capacity-building in relation to GCRF is available on the ESRC website ([www.esrc.ac.uk/research/international-research/global-challenges-research-fund-gcrf/capacity-development/](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/research/international-research/global-challenges-research-fund-gcrf/capacity-development/)).

Associated studentships will not be funded through this call.

## **ODA compliance statement**

This call is funded through the GCRF, which forms part of the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment. In turn, this is monitored by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (<http://www.oecd.org/>). ODA-funded activity focuses on outcomes that promote the long-term sustainable growth of countries on the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) list ([www.oecd.org/dac/stats/daclist.htm](http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/daclist.htm)). Funding within this call will be awarded in a manner that fits with official ODA guidelines ([www.oecd.org/dac/stats/officialdevelopmentassistancedefinitionandcoverage.htm](http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/officialdevelopmentassistancedefinitionandcoverage.htm)).

To comply with ODA requirements, all proposals must make clear how their primary purpose is to promote the economic development and welfare of a developing country or countries on the DAC list. There are no priority countries. Proposals may relate to any country or countries on the DAC list except those which are flagged as likely to graduate from the list during the course of the proposed project. If a country is flagged as likely to graduate it should not be the primary focus of a proposal, although it can be included as an additional case study or comparison. In such proposals the primary purpose of the research should be to promote the development and welfare of a developing country not due to graduate from the list.

Applicants must clearly demonstrate how they meet ODA requirements throughout their case for support and pathways to impact submission. In addition, **all proposals must include a mandatory attachment addressing the following three questions:**

1. Which country / countries on the DAC list will directly benefit from this proposal?
2. How is your proposal directly and primarily relevant to the development challenges of these countries?
3. How do you expect that the outcome of your proposed activities will promote the economic development and welfare of a country or countries on the DAC list?

Important considerations:

- To be ODA compliant the principal motivation of the project must be to directly benefit a country or countries on the DAC list, and the key/principal beneficiaries of the research should be located in a DAC list country or countries.
- It is fine for research to take place outside of a DAC list country or for projects to include a comparative element as long as the principal motivation is to benefit a DAC list country or countries. (It is also fine for research projects to have secondary impacts outside of eligible countries).
- If a focus country within a proposal is flagged on the DAC list as likely to graduate from the list during the course of the project then the research would not be ODA compliant unless the primary focus is on a country or countries not due to graduate.
- The impact-generating and knowledge exchange related activities must be focused on a DAC list country or countries, and if the applicants intend to generate impact via international organisations or international non-governmental organisations they should explain why this is likely to lead to greater impacts than working directly with stakeholders in-country.
- Compliant proposals must address development challenges in an eligible country or countries and be likely to contribute directly to their economic development and/or welfare. Impacts should be targeted at specific DAC list countries and should not depend on the trickle down of a global public good.

Further guidance on how to submit the ODA compliance statement as a ‘non-UK component’ attachment is provided in the call-specific Je-S Guidance for Applicants. General advice on ODA and links to other useful sources of information are provided on the ESRC website ([www.esrc.ac.uk/research/international-research/global-challenges-research-fund-gcrf/official-development-assistance-oda/](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/research/international-research/global-challenges-research-fund-gcrf/official-development-assistance-oda/)). RCUK guidance on ODA in relation to GCRF is available at <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/gcrf/>.

Initial ODA compliance assessment will take place within the ESRC, though final decisions may include input from commissioning panels as well as external sources of ODA expertise.

## **Assessment**

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria (in no particular order):



- Originality/potential contribution to knowledge
- Contribution to promoting the welfare and economic development of people in DAC list countries (GCRF criterion)
- Interdisciplinary nature of the proposal
- Design and methods, including data and information management
- Value for money
- Outputs, dissemination and impact
- Research ethics

Applications will undergo peer review before being considered by a specially convened panel of academic and non-academic experts at a meeting in May 2018. The panel will be asked to assess the proposals against the fit to the call and the assessment criteria. The panel will then make formal recommendations to the funders. The funders may wish to apply some conditions on grants, and there may be subsequent negotiations on the details of the support offered. Funding decisions are expected to be announced in late May 2018 and awards are expected to commence **on 1 September 2018**.

### **Additional award conditions**

It is anticipated that successful applicants awarded funding under this call will form a strong, high-quality network to generate additional value from these research projects. Grant holders will be expected to participate in network events as an additional condition of their award. The nature of such events will be discussed with the final grant holders.

### **How to apply**

Proposals must be submitted to the Je-S system by the **call deadline 16.00 (UK time) on 11 January 2018**. (<https://jes.rcuk.ac.uk/jes2webloginsite/login.aspx>)

Where call-specific guidance provided in these call documents differs from generic Je-S help, the call-specific guidance should always be followed. Care and attention must be given to completing the proposal correctly and complying with all technical requirements. Proposals that are not completed correctly may be rejected by the ESRC office.

The final submission process is the responsibility of the host institution, and the research councils cannot accept responsibility for any delays which may occur. It is recommended that applicants submit in good time before the call deadline at this stage. We strongly advise applicants to confirm with their relevant administrator that the proposal has been submitted successfully to the ESRC.

### **What we will do with your information**

In accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, the personal information that you provide within the Expression of Interest will specifically be used for the purpose of administering the call. The information will be viewed by ESRC and AHRC staff and selection panel members but will not be used for any other purpose without your specific consent.

For further information on how your information is used, how we maintain the security of your information, and your rights to access information we hold on you, please contact the Joint Information Services Unit ([jisu@epsrc.ac.uk](mailto:jisu@epsrc.ac.uk)).

## Commissioning timetable

- Call announced – 8 November 2017
- Closing date for proposals – 11 January 2018
- Decisions announced – May 2018
- Grants start – 1 September 2018

## Contacts

If you have any questions or would like further information about the scheme, please use the contacts below. In the first instance, we encourage the use of email so that research council staff may direct your enquiry to the most suitable respondent.

- Email: [gcrfmentalhealth@esrc.ac.uk](mailto:gcrfmentalhealth@esrc.ac.uk)
- Rebecca Griggs (ESRC)  
Telephone: (+44) 01793 413107
- James Dracott (AHRC)  
Telephone: (+44) 01793 416017

We will collate an FAQ document which will aim to answer commonly asked questions. This FAQ document will be updated regularly and can be found on the ESRC website (<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/funding-opportunities/gcrf-new-social-and-cultural-insights-into-mental-neurological-and-substance-use-disorders-in-developing-countries/>).

Enquiries relating to technical aspects of the Je-S form should be addressed to:

- Je-S helpdesk  
Email: [jeshelp@rcuk.ac.uk](mailto:jeshelp@rcuk.ac.uk)  
Telephone: (+44) 01793 444164