Questions and answers from the Drivers of Food Choice Webinar

on September 30, 2015

**Q1: Which countries from South Asia are acceptable as sites of research?**

**A:** Appendix A of the RFP is a list of 34 countries that represent the highest burden of stunting in LMIC and that are prioritized in this call. We welcome research from any of the countries in Asia that are LMIC, however, and where the results of that research may be generalizable in Asia. There is no restriction to any country in South or Southeast Asia; similarly, there is no restriction to any county in Africa or the Americas.

**Q2: Which countries in South America are acceptable as sites of research?**

**A:**  While the only country prioritized in the 34 countries is Guatemala, we recognize that there are LMIC throughout the Americas, and welcome applications proposing work in one of those countries, as long as the work is applicable to countries that have similar challenges. The priority of the funders is knowledge generation that is applicable to Africa and South Asia, where the biggest burden of undernutrition is.

**Q3: Is there a genuine interest in funding research in Latin America? Guatemala is the only Latin American country on the list of prioritized countries.**

**A:** See above.

**Q4: Is Colombia a LMIC?**

**A:**  You may find a list of LMIC as classified by the World Bank on the World Bank website. <http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-and-lending-groups>

**Q5: What do you mean by “drivers” of food choice?**

**A:** As stated on page 5 of the RFP, drivers of food choice refers to trying to understand what influences the choices that people make about the foods that they acquire and eat. Those drivers or influences could be at multiple levels – the societal, community, household, or individual level.

**Q6: Would you be open to applications for research among IDP or refugee populations, or is there a preference for research in development versus emergency settings?**

**A:** The main objective is that we learn about the drivers of food choice in ways that will be applicable to and help us understand how to move forward in LMIC. As those countries often have emergency situations, work in emergency situations might be valuable; therefore we encourage applications that propose working in emergency and/or non-emergency settings.

**Q7: Can you please clarify whether the research is focused on the drivers of food choice among poor people within the countries studied?**

**A:** The priority of our funders and this program is on knowledge generation that will help inform the situations in LMIC. Those countries are diverse regarding the distribution of economic situations within the country, some with a wide range from very poor to fairly rich and others where nearly everyone is poor except for a small segment. Perhaps the very poorest people are most vulnerable to changes that are occurring in agriculture and economic markets, but most changes are experienced by people who are not the very poorest; so each group of people (or both) may be important to study. It is up to the investigative team to determine where the focus should be.

**Q8: Does the program focus more on urban or rural poor?**

**A:** The focus is on the poor. In many countries, there are challenges in rural areas as well as urban areas; applications that propose research in either one or both are welcome.

**Q9: Is Drivers of Food Choice interested in research involving commodities, livestock, cereals, etc.?**

**A:** Changes in countries that are being driven by shifts in the economic arrangements of countries, shifts in agriculture itself, shifts in people moving out of agriculture, and changes in markets are all important in driving people’s food choices. Work that ties commodities, livestock, cereals, or the agriculture side to the drivers of food choice is welcomed.

**Q10: Is there a focus on particular food products?**

**A:** There is no particular restriction or interest in certain food types.

**Q11: Would it be acceptable to focus on one food specific food type? For example, could I focus on fruits only as the 'food', or do you prefer a more general approach?**

**A:**  This type of research is acceptable if it focuses on understanding choices about a certain component of the diet and contributes to understanding how people make choices about diet as a whole.

**Q12: The highest burden of undernutrition is often in the poorest quintile, while the nutritional impacts of a rapid transition can be felt more in the middle quintiles. Is there a preference for knowledge generation on transition-related middle quintiles, or only in the poorest?**

**A:** We are open to both types of research. There are certainly challenges faced by the very poorest people in some settings, but as transitions are occurring, the people that are at the vanguard of experiencing those transitions may not be the poorest people. They may be in the middle quintiles, with later implications for the poorest people. See answer to Q7.

**Q13: Does the information about the investigators go on the cover page?**

**A:** Yes

**Q14: Is there a specific format required for the budget summary?**

**A:** No specific format is required. Please provide an estimate of the total budget. You may also include a brief breakdown of the personnel, non-personnel, and the major categories of non-personnel or a brief breakdown according to major components of the proposed project. A detailed itemized budget is not required for the concept memo.

**Q15: Are the evaluation criteria listed in order of importance?**

**A:** No. All four of the major evaluation criteria are important.

**Q16: If the research is a partnership between Southern and Northern institutions, does the lead organization have to be an organization from the South, or can it be from the North?**

A: The partnership may be arranged in whatever manner you prefer and services best the proposed project. From our perspective, we want to see significant involvement of organizations in the South and in LMIC and that the work is leading to capacity and capability development in LMIC.

**Q17: Can CGIAR submit on behalf of a multi-center research program (CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture, and Food Security)?**

A: Yes. We welcome applications from any organization or group of organizations that form a viable partnership to carry out innovative work.

**Q18: I am a researcher from Ethiopia. Do I need a partner from America (or another Northern country)?**

A: You do not need a partner from America or a Northern country. You should form your partnership with whichever organization(s) will strengthen your team’s capacity to carry out your proposed work. Your partnership must successfully address all four assessment criteria.

**Q19: Can PhD students apply as the principal investigator, since you mentioned that recipients must have experience conducting relevant nutrition research?**

A: Someone who has no track record of doing research is unlikely to be able to demonstrate alone the proven ability to carry out his or her work successfully. We encourage all applicants to ensure that their proposed team conveys the skills and experiences required to carry out the work with a certainty of success.

**Q20: I am a young scholar with some experience. Do I need to be an established researcher with several papers (to be a Principal Investigator for my proposed research)?**

A: You should be able to demonstrate the capabilities, capacity, and record of being able to carry out work where a major grant is given. If you have no track record of receiving and carrying out work, it would be beneficial for you to partner with some more experienced investigators, so the team can demonstrate the capabilities of carrying out the work.

**Q21:** **Is it important to have a partnership with an organization? I am a PhD student. Can I mention my college as the partner, since my college has been involved in good research projects?**

A: Grants will be given to institutions or organizations, not individuals. We expect to see applications where individuals are affiliated with an institution, and that their application is coming through the institution. The institution would be the recipient of the funds.

**Q22: Are you able to facilitate partnerships between Southern researchers and Northern institutions?**

**A:**  You are most likely in a better position to know ongoing research efforts in particular regions. We are, however, willing to facilitate these partnerships to our best ability. If you are looking for partners with specific characteristics in specific regions, please let us know, and we will attempt to help connect you with potential partners.

**Q23: Is a partnership between public universities and private industry collaborators with experience in consumer choice acceptable?**

**A:** Yes, this type of partnership could be a useful way to take advantage of expertise in different types of institutions.

**Q24: Would you be open to action research methodology, where in addition to generating new knowledge, there is scope to carry out an innovative intervention work and evaluate the outcomes?**

**A:** Yes, we expect to see diverse methodologies being proposed. Ultimately, the proposed methodology needs to lead to valuable contributions to knowledge.

**Q25: Could the project use secondary data from one or more LMIC?**

**A:** You may use secondary data if the available data can address issues related to drivers of food choice.

**Q26: Does the analysis have to be from an intervention?**

**A:** No. Some of the foundational work that we think is important could be done in projects that do not involve an intervention.

**Q27: NGOs often conduct operational research, especially in the area of social and behavior change. However, the studies conducted often do not have a PI and do not go through an IRB. Do you feel that applicants should detail a more rigorous study methodology (go through an IRB, for example) in order to increase the credibility of the study findings and opportunity for uptake?**

**A:** The operational research often conducted by non-governmental organizations is important in generating knowledge about program refinement and performance. For this grant program, it would be necessary to make the case for why knowledge gained from operations research is going to contribute to our understanding of the drivers of food choice. One possibility is to build on an existing project by enhancing methodologies that would provide the rigor necessary to contribute to the knowledge base on the drivers of food choice.

**Q28: Can a single organization or partnership apply for research in more than one country?**

**A:** Yes. The investigators should decide whether it is best to focus in one country or to involve more than one country where comparative work across countries could be valuable. Investigators should consider the budget for feasibility when proposing multi-country research.

**Q29: Can one organization apply for more than one grant?**

**A:** We have imposed no restrictions on the numbers of submissions. We are seeking the best proposals and science, so an organization may win more than one proposal if they have the best science. We also have an interest in having a diversity of different kinds of work because that will advance the field of work as a whole.

**Q30: Can one organization apply with more than one proposal in a complementary manner?**

**A:** This is a common situation for both applicants and funders. One of the challenges with having co-dependent proposals is that each needs to be strong enough to stand alone if one is assessed highly to receive funding and the other is not.

**Q31: Should we focus on one country, or is it better to include multiple countries and multiple continents?**

**A:** It is up to the investigators to determine what is feasible with the resources available. An application that proposes work to be done in a few countries in a way that is feasible, and where the knowledge gains would warrant that, would be attractive. One of the ways we can learn (but not the only way) is through comparison. Work done in one country is also possible, because there is diversity in each country.

**Q32: If my organization is active in many different countries, will the grant amount need to cover all of those countries, or will each country receive a grant?**

**A:** This is up to the investigative team proposing the work to decide how to apply. The grant is substantial but limited in the funding amount, so work that is being proposed in multiple countries needs to be feasible financially and logistically and there needs to be a rationale for carrying out the research in many countries, as opposed to one or a few countries.

**Q33: Do you fund interventions of research already undertaken or currently ongoing?**

**A:** If there is ongoing work, it could be useful to leverage funds from DFC with funds from research that is either ongoing or being proposed in a synergistic manner. The challenge for investigators is making clear how the funding would be used, how the work funded by DFC would be distinct from the other work, and what is the value added of the DFC work. It also means demonstrating that the ongoing work is viable and clarifying the dependencies between the two projects. If the proposal for DFC is resting on some other work, there must be assurance of the quality and viability of that other work.

**Q34: Is it OK to leverage ongoing cohort studies in one of the target countries?**

**A:** Yes. Value can be added by leveraging these resources with other resources. We encourage stand-alone projects, and also projects that build on previous or existing ongoing other work.

**Q35: Is there seed funding available for full proposal development?**

**A:** No. Given that the grants will be given in two rounds for two-years each, there is not time to provide seed funding first to help people prepare a full proposal.