

UK provides vital support to vulnerable global communities impacted by COVID-19

- UK government invests £7.2 million in 20 new research projects to address the impact of COVID-19 on the world's most vulnerable communities
- projects include delivering mass vaccination capacity in Bangladesh, protective equipment for refugees in Jordan and remote healthcare access for patients in Nigeria
- funding will help provide developing countries with technological solutions to respond to COVID-19 and future pandemics

Global communities most at risk from the impact of coronavirus due to long-term conflict, food and water shortages, and crowded living conditions will receive vital funding from the UK government.

Bringing together scientists and researchers from across the world, 20 new projects will benefit from a share of £7.2 million of UK government funding to develop new technology and processes to address the challenges faced by some of the world's most vulnerable people, such as refugees and children.

In partnership with some of the UK's leading research institutions, these international projects announced today include:

- the University of Oxford will work with the University of Cape Town to develop a parental advice app for families affected by COVID-19 school closures across Africa
- Birmingham City University will partner with Lusaka and Ndola Colleges of Nursing to help improve the clinical decision making of nurses in Zambia, helping to free up their time and prevent healthcare systems from becoming overwhelmed
- the University of Sheffield will work with the UN Refugee Agency to make personal protective equipment with digital and 3D printing for Jordan's Zaatari refugee camp, home to approximately 80,000 Syrian refugees, helping to protect those living in crowded conditions that are most vulnerable to the virus
- the University of Edinburgh will work with the Open University of Tanzania to identify measures to make voting safer and more secure in African elections to promote social distancing and to slow the spread of coronavirus

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

Defeating coronavirus is a truly global endeavour, which is why we're backing Britain's scientists and researchers to work with their international counterparts to find tech solutions to treat

and combat this virus around the world.

The research projects we are backing today will ensure that we equip some of the most vulnerable communities with the resources they need to tackle COVID-19 and build their long-term resilience to respond to future pandemics, making us all safer.

Other projects receiving funding

The University of Birmingham, Brac University and Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology

The University of Birmingham working with Brac University and Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology will lead a project to increase vaccine access in developing economies, such as Bangladesh, by researching more effective ways of storing and transporting vaccines at recommended temperatures from manufacture to the point of use. Weak supply chains with inconsistent temperature control can reduce the effectiveness of vaccines by up to 25%, so this vital project will help fast track COVID-19 vaccine delivery in developing countries once one is found.

King's College London

King's College London will lead a training programme for healthcare workers across Nigeria and Tanzania enabling them to deliver trusted and safe care to patients over the phone where internet availability is limited. Trials will involve 20 health clinics in each country to test the effectiveness of remote health appointments, recommended by the World Health Organization during the pandemic, to help minimise physical contact that could spread the virus. King's College London will work with St Francis University College of Health and Allied Sciences, Tanzania; Makerere University, Uganda; and University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

The University of Bath and the University of Lagos

The University of Bath and the University of Lagos aim to address the issue of limited COVID-19 testing capacity in Africa by leading a project to measure the disease in domestic wastewater, which can help reveal the health status of a population. By studying wastewater, real time information about infection prevalence across South Africa and Nigeria can be accessed, enabling rapid identification of COVID-19 hot spots, and helping to shape decisions around entry and exit from 'lockdown' periods.

Professor Andrew Thompson, International Champion, UK Research and Innovation said:

COVID-19 is demonstrating how the world's biggest problems transcend rich and poor countries. To find lasting, sustainable solutions to help us all during this current pandemic as well as to make us all more resilient for the future, we require global

thinking, the mobilisation of global expertise and a global response. That is exactly what these new projects provide.

Working together, researchers in the UK and across the Global South will combine their knowledge and experience to develop innovative solutions to help empower local communities to overcome the wide-ranging challenges created by COVID-19.

The £7.2 million UK government funding will be managed by UK aid programmes, the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) and the Newton Fund, through UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

The funding follows the launch of the government's ambitious [R&D Roadmap](#) in July, which committed to boosting international collaboration in research and development and establishing global scientific partnerships that will create health, social and economic benefits across the world.

Notes to editors

Further details about the projects receiving funding as part of the Agile COVID-19 GCRF and Newton Fund call can be found on the [UKRI website](#).

UKRI launched its [Agile COVID-19 GCRF and Newton Fund](#) in May 2020 to urgently understand the specific challenges faced by some of the world's poorest people in the face of this pandemic. The call was closed on 31 July and projects will be carried out over the next 18 months. A second tranche of awards will be announced later this year.

The Global Challenges Research Fund is a £1.5 billion fund supporting cutting-edge research and innovation that addresses the global issues faced by developing countries, and forms part of the UK government's Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment. It harnesses the strengths of the UK's world-leading researchers, enabling them to collaborate with experts in developing countries through equitable partnerships. The fund is managed by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

The Newton Fund builds research and innovation partnerships with 17 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America to support economic development and social welfare, tackle global challenges and develop talent and careers. It has a total UK government investment of £735 million up until 2021. The fund is managed by BEIS and delivered by UK and international partners.