Médecins sans Fronterès and the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union) invites applications from the African region for the sixth Regional Operations Research Training Course to be held in Nairobi. This is a “SORT IT” (Structured Operational Research and Training Initiative) course and is conducted under the umbrella of the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases at the World Health Organization (WHO-TDR). The Africa course will be led by Médecins sans Fronterès and The Union and will be facilitated by various SORT IT partners. SORT IT supports organisations, projects and countries to undertake operational research in accordance with their own priorities, develop adequate and sustainable operational research capacity, and create an organisational culture of policy and practice being informed by operational research, leading to improved programme performance.

The initiative teaches the practical skills needed to undertake and publish operational research. The course duration is 10–12 months with 3 modules with clear milestones and measurable targets. Participants go through the whole research process and complete the course with a defined product which is a peer-reviewed manuscript to be submitted for publication in peer-reviewed scientific journals and which should go on to influence policy and practice.

**Purpose:** To develop the practical skills for conducting operational research, publishing the findings and fostering policy and practice change

**Course curriculum:** The course comprises three modules which will be held at Nairobi, Kenya as follows.
Module 1: Research Questions and Protocol Development – February 13-18, 2017

This will be a six day module to help participants develop a thorough understanding about what operational research is all about and to ensure that a draft research protocol is produced before the completion of the module. The teaching will be through lectures, discussions, exercises and use of completed and published operational research as examples, and participants will have the opportunity to present and discuss their written protocols with the facilitators. This six-day module will continue after a one day break with Module 2.

Brief content overview

- Introduction to Operational research
- Research Terminology
- Asking the right research questions
- Aims and Objectives
- Ethics
- Developing a plan of analysis
- Drafting research protocols

(Key Deliverable Output: A Draft Scientific Protocol)

Module 2: Data management and data analysis – February 20-25, 2017

This will be a six-day module to help participants understand data management and data analysis. The module will consist of:

2 days: Data entry (Ensure efficient quality assured data entry)

2 days: Data analysis

1 day: Application of learning on specific projects

1 day: Plenary and feedback

Brief content overview

- Designing an efficient data entry instrument
- Making an efficient computer data entry questionnaire
- Entering and validating data entry
- Introduction to data analysis
- Producing relevant analysis results in tabular form
- Daily homework on own electronic data entry instrument

(Key Deliverable Output: Draft electronic data entry instrument)
Module 3: Scientific paper writing – November 10-17, 2017

This will be a seven-day module to help participants write their scientific papers and deal with on-line submission and editors’ and reviewers’ comments

**Brief content overview**

- Learn the principles of writing a scientific paper
- Learn how to deal with peer review

*Key Deliverable Output: Draft paper to be submitted to a scientific journal*

3. Faculty for the course

The course will be conducted by the experienced and reputed faculty from The Union’s Centre for Operational Research, Medecins Sans Frontiers (Brussels/Luxembourg), World Health Organization, NGO and collaborating University partners and the successful participants of the earlier courses who have now graduated to become faculty.

4. What does the participant’s organisation gain?

- A person who is well trained in operational research and can help their program or institution undertake relevant operational research to identify challenges and improve programme performance in a sustainable manner.
- This will open up better career opportunities including the possibility of pursuing a PhD in the field of operational research. The research studies should strongly complement “innovation” within routine operations and contribute to critical reflection on program orientation and its impact over time.
- The initiative would also foster medical staff-retention in program activities including operational research. It should consequently attract qualified staff and reduce turn-over which may hamper continuity of research initiatives.

5. What does the participant gain?

- Practical skills for undertaking the entire operational research process from concept to publication and beyond.
• The experience of learning and sharing knowledge within a team of motivated participants and talented facilitators in operational research (who act as mentors) from different countries.
• An opportunity to excel and gain visibility in operational research and to prepare for increased research responsibilities and research leadership in their country.
• Possibilities of submitting published papers and eventually acquiring a PhD in operational research. Fellowships in operational research can be provided to promising and interested candidates, as a way of fostering longer term retention and career opportunities at the program level. In particular, links have been made with universities to link the fellowship program with an eventual PhD in operational research.
• Participants are strongly encouraged to help train and eventually lead others (as mentors) to maximise long term capacity development and impact. The philosophy used is “see one, do one, teach one and eventually many more”.

6. Course follow-up

• In between the modules 2 and 3, candidates will return to their respective health programmes/projects to continue their routine work and in addition collect the data pertaining to their research projects.
• Participants will be contacted intermittently after course completion to determine accomplishments and policy and practice impact of their studies. They will also become part of an operational research “alumni” organisation. A specific website forum has been developed to foster interaction.
• Course facilitators will be available to provide advice upon request.

7. Criteria for successful applicants

a) Involved actively in the running of a national or state or NGO programme or major health institution in a program or disease specific field (emergencies, health system issues, epidemics, TB, HIV, lung health, tobacco control, communicable or non-communicable diseases or other)

b) Provide written commitment to attend all three modules of the training course, return to their programme or institution after the course and implement course knowledge at programme level for a minimum of at least 18 months.

c) Provide a written statement from the coordination/operations department (in case of MSF) or relevant authority attesting to the investment of resources and granting the applicant permission to have time and opportunity to carry out and publish his/her
operational research. Please note that we do not provide any funds for conduct of research.

d) Provide a written statement from a mentor (if available) describing how the mentor knows the candidate and how the mentor proposes to provide support to complete the course successfully.

e) Ability to mobilize the funding required to carry out operational research.

f) **Outline a half page of text** that a) describes a problem that the candidate has identified within a given program and b) formulates a research question that is proposed to be developed into an operational research project. Please note that the research questions using already available routine programme data are preferred as prospective studies are unlikely to fit into the time-line and expected outputs of the course.

g) **Online application form - link:** [https://fr.surveymonkey.com/r/F9M2PSW](https://fr.surveymonkey.com/r/F9M2PSW)

h) Masters in Public Health (MPH) or an equivalent, or a strong recommendation

i) Fluent in written and spoken English

j) Computer literate

Female candidates meeting the above criteria are strongly encouraged to apply.

8. Research Questions – guidance

In your application you will be asked to formulate and submit a research question based on a perceived problem within the programme or health system in which you work. The research will have to be carried out within a 6 - 8 month time frame and therefore we strongly encourage simple research projects that are based on monitoring and evaluation data that are already collected and available in registers or treatment cards. Prospective studies and studies involving patient interventions and patient questionnaires are less likely to be accepted as suitable for this course as they cannot usually be completed within the time frame.

9. Sponsorship

The course organiser will provide a full scholarship to successful applicants (12 in all). The scholarship includes all tuition fees, travel expenses, meals and accommodation.

10. Application deadline: **November 30, 2016**
Applications have to be submitted online using the link mentioned above. All the supporting documents have to be uploaded in the online application.

If clarifications needed, please contact:

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Note:

1. Failure to provide all of the above requested information will result in the rejection of your application. Incomplete applications will be discarded.
2. The decision of the selections committee will be final in matters related to the selection to the course. You will not be able to pursue any dispute related to selection matters legally. Apply to the course only if you agree to this condition.
3. Please note that all supportive documents must be in Word or PDF format.