



## About the webinar

Implementation research projects in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) have been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, due to the government policy to lockdown and limit mobility in all of the project sites. This has affected community engagement at both primary health care and community organisation levels. Also, researchers could not visit the project sites to interact with healthcare workers and community members. As these were essential aspects of the implementation research projects, adapted ways of working were needed. These included the development of new tools, new and increased use of digital communication and approaches to coordination.

The aim of this webinar was for researchers from selected implementation research projects in the two regions, to share their experiences continuing research projects during the pandemic. Then together with public health experts discussed key lessons learnt from managing the challenge and how we can build resilient NCD research in the future.

This webinar was organised by the Scaling up Non-Communicable Disease Interventions in Southeast Asia (SUNI-SEA), an implementation research project conducted in Indonesia, Myanmar, and Vietnam, funded by the EU Horizon 2020.

# Panelists

- Jaap Koot, Department of Health Sciences, University Medical Center Groningen, the Netherland / SUNI-SEA Project Coordinator
- Vitri Widyaningsih, Sebelas Maret University, Department of Public Health and Preventive Medicine Medical Faculty, Sebelas Maret University
- Christopher Pell, Senior Researcher, Amsterdam Institute for Global Health and Development
- Bindu Patel, Senior Research Fellow, The George Institute for Global Health
- Edward Mberu Kamau, Technical Officer, Research Capacity Strengthening, Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR)
- Isobel Bandurek, Research Capacity Manager, Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (GACD)
- Yodi Mahendradhata, Vice Dean for Research and Development, Faculty of Medicine, Public Health and Nursing, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia

# Lessons learned from the webinar

1. Be prepared:
  - a. Make sure that there is a strong local partner that can take responsibility and has a strong local network, which can carry on the research.
  - b. Build capacity in local organisations in implementation research in early stages so that local researchers can carry on.
2. Build a resilient research project:
  - a. Disasters do happen, even if not pandemics, on a small scale, like political unrest, economic crises, natural disaster: prepare a plan B to reduce dependency on one single organisation or approach.
  - b. Analyse ethical and methodological issues and build alternatives for data collection, sampling etc. into the project.
3. Be flexible:
  - a. In case adjustments in research are needed, be ready to change, e.g. research area, research population, duration, etc. with limitations of ethical approval, funding agency conditions.
  - b. If local contextual changes ask for adjustments or addition of the research focus, e.g. understanding causes of the pandemic, incorporate them in the research, as it will make the research more relevant.
  - c. Use alternative methods, especially online or social media for meetings, capacity building, data collection. But beware that there is inequity in access to internet, phones, etc. Most vulnerable populations may be missed out.
4. Pay attention to communication and networking:
  - a. Build trust with local authorities, NGOs, patient groups, and other local stakeholders from the onset, and involve them in decision-making about the project. They may be helpful in organising alternatives for research activities.

- b. Establish global networking and collaboration to learn from other projects and draw lessons learned from other experiences.

## Relevant resources

We have collected the webinar related resources on the webinar bespoke [webpage](#)

- Webinar record
- Background paper on implementation research during COVID-19
- Presentations

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