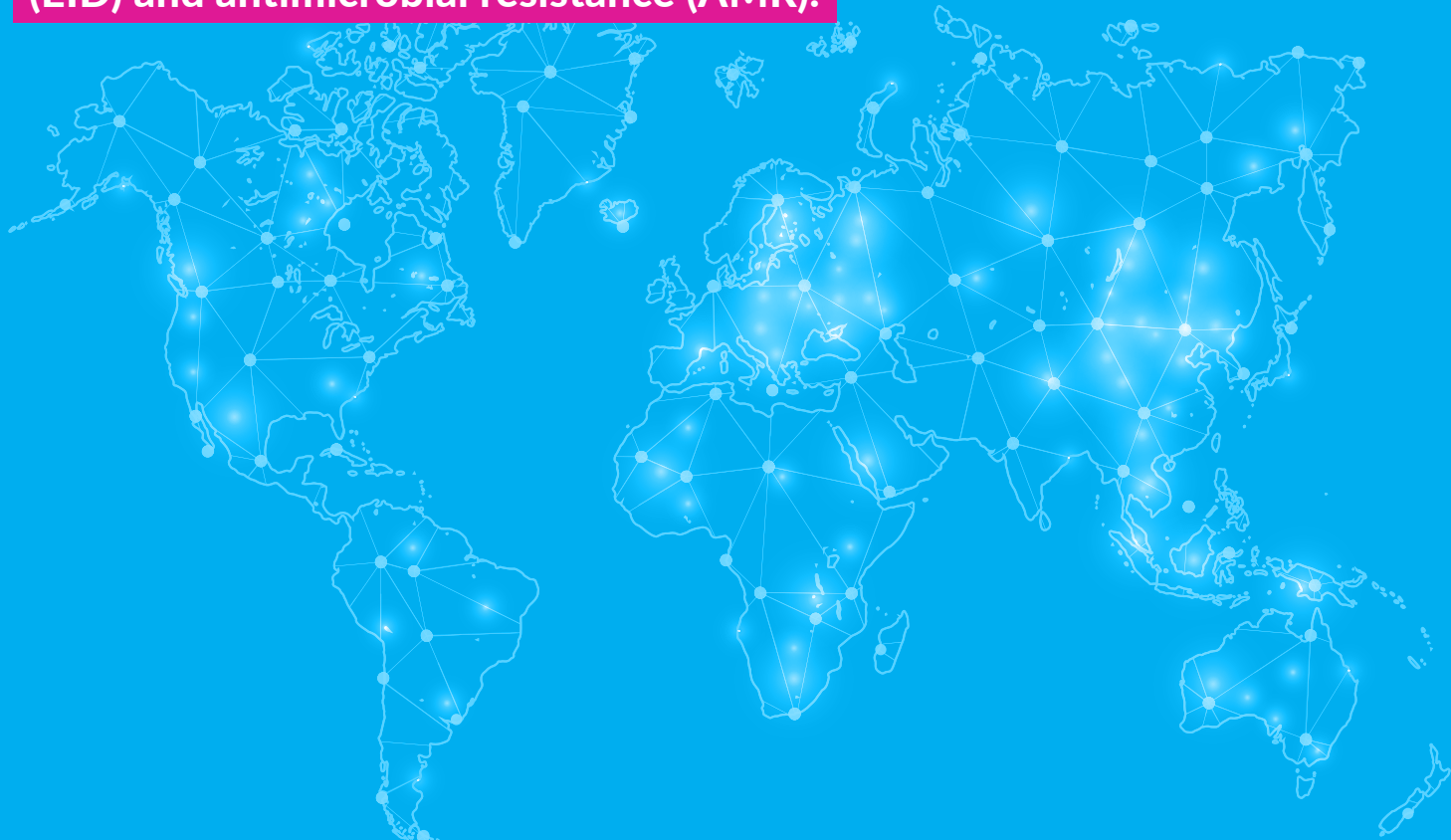


SoNAR-Global

A global social sciences network for infectious threats and antimicrobial resistance

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SoNAR-Global is a global consortium led by social scientists specialising in emerging infectious diseases (EID) and antimicrobial resistance (AMR).



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Until SoNAR-Global's creation in 2019, no coherent international network organised and fostered interactions among social scientists working on topics related to EID and AMR preparedness and response in Europe and around the world. The existence of this network is important: social scientists are uniquely positioned to evaluate linkages between infectious events, political, economic and ecological conditions, local communities and marginalised people. Such insights are crucial when instability (caused by infectious disease outbreaks, conflicts, or other stresses) exaggerates local inequalities, hampering effective preparedness and response efforts. The SoNAR-Global social science network engages the active participation of social scientists around the world to promote complementarities and synergies in the governance of prevention and response to epidemics and AMR. Partnering with major international and regional institutions, it leads activities through a programme that builds governance from the ground up—but also recognises at times the need for top-down measures.

Our 15 partner institutions are located in Europe (France, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Austria, Slovenia and Malta) and eastern Europe (Ukraine), as well as in Africa (Senegal and Uganda), South Asia (Bangladesh), Southeast Asia (Thailand), and the United Kingdom. Partners in this consortium are wide-ranging: we include classic academic institutions, structures under ministries of health, and public health research institutions. Many partners are anthropologists, but we also include demographers, sociologists, behavioural scientists, historians, and social epidemiologists. Coordination of the consortium and network is led by Institut Pasteur.

A global network

Over the past two years, SoNAR-Global has created a dynamic network of over 650 individual members and 17 networks. Our engaging website provides a platform for global collaboration and facilitates learning opportunities as well as knowledge sharing, giving our

members reasons to return to share their experiences and to learn from those of others. The site includes a searchable directory accessible by inscription and information about our many activities—the development and implementation of our tools and models, social sciences resources (publications and policy reports, blogs, social sciences operational research mapping for epidemics), webinars on COVID-19 in English and French, as well as multiple podcasts and audio reflections.

SoNAR-Global has not only established its presence and activities on local, national and regional levels but is also visible and active on a global level. We communicate frequently and collaborate with the World Health Organisation: six SoNAR-Global members participate in the Social Sciences Research Roadmap for COVID, two now lead a social sciences methodologies sub-group for this WHO Roadmap, and one is a lead social scientist in the WHO West and Central Africa COVID-19 Platform. We are collaborating with UNICEF to scale up tools for humanitarian response and to conduct an assessment for Ebola preparedness in the Central African Republic and are integrating its Minimum Standards for Community Engagement into our engagement activities.

Regional hubs

SoNAR-Global draws inspiration and dynamism from its regional hubs. These hubs are based in Thailand (Bangkok), Ukraine (Kiev), and Senegal (Dakar), and India (Chennai). A thematic, cross-regional hub has been established on the social dimensions of viral hepatitis. There additional plans for a further regional hub in Brazil. Each hub selects its own regional issue on which to focus.

Bangkok-based regional hub

The regional hub, led by our partner Mahidol University and MORU, brings together researchers in South and Southeast Asia to exchange ideas on existing research gaps, identify relevant stakeholders, co-create engagement strategies and other context-specific

solutions, and develop and publish research outcomes to curtail the spread of AMR.

Ukraine-based regional hub

The Ukraine-based regional hub, led by the Public Health Commission of the Ministry of Health in Ukraine, focuses on the development of collaborative research and interventions to overcome vaccination hesitancy. It has brought together specialists throughout eastern Europe, mapping existing research and interventions into vaccine hesitancy, identifying major knowledge gaps and funding opportunities, developing, testing, implementing, and evaluating policy recommendations.

Dakar-based regional hub

In West- and Central Africa, this hub, led by CRCF of Senegal, develops collaborative research, capacity building and operational partnerships between scientists, communities, and authorities to improve preparedness, response, and recovery from epidemic outbreaks with a special focus on vulnerable groups.

Chennai-based regional hub

This new regional hub, initiated by N. Karikalan and other social sciences researchers at the National Institute for Research in Tuberculosis, addresses the social sciences contributions to research and action on tuberculosis in India and, more broadly, in South Asia.

Thematic viral hepatitis hub

This hub has been established by a SoNAR-Global network member (Jennifer van Nuil at the Oxford University Clinical Research Unit (OUCRU) based in Vietnam) in discussion with the coordinator. It brings together a variety of researchers working on viral hepatitis, who jointly focus on identifying cross-context social themes that guide the development of a collaborative grant application.

Capacity building

To facilitate the understanding and response to emerging infectious disease, AMR, and vaccine hesitancy, SoNAR-Global is actively strengthening social



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science capacity worldwide, developing curricula for social scientists and those seeking to work with them. To build the curricula, our teams mapped training infrastructures and teaching materials and investigated perceived needs for social science trainings on infectious threats. Based on these insights, two curricula for social scientists were developed, one on epidemic preparedness and response, which has been adapted to address the current COVID-19 pandemic (SPECIAL SOC-Epidemics, developed by our partner CRCF in Senegal) and one on AMR (SPECIAL SOC-AMR), developed by partner Amsterdam Institute for Global Health and Development. These training curricula are available online and free of charge for all SoNAR-Global members. In addition, two additional pieces of training put into operation social sciences capacities by training social scientists and other researchers or actors (in public health, biological disciplines, humanitarian action, for instance) to work together. These training opportunities will be available online by the end of 2021.

Vulnerability assessment and community engagement tools

Finally, one of SoNAR-Global's major actions has been to develop and adapt useful tools for social scientists around the world, particularly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has adversely affected populations across the planet and created new kinds of fragilities—not only biological, but social, economic, political and cultural. To address the needs of these marginalised and excluded populations, countries must be able to identify these groups, to better understand both their vulnerabilities and resilience, and to work with them to develop strategies that can allocate resources more efficiently and effectively and can achieve buy-in—from local authorities, associations, nongovernmental agencies and from communities and excluded people themselves.

Following our Medical University of Vienna-led scoping analysis of

Vulnerability Assessment (VA) tools, our University College-London team adapted its existing VA tool for infectious diseases (ID-VA). In February-March 2020 in Uganda, after our partner Makerere University undertook training, the ID-VA was carried out in Kampala. Our partner is now analysing the results of what may be the only systematic social sciences data in real time of local vulnerability to infectious disease on the eve of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our partner at James P. Grant School of Public Health at BRAC University in Bangladesh is currently carrying out the same VA to identify the wide-ranging consequences and vulnerabilities created by the COVID-19 pandemic there.

Moreover, following unprecedented additional funding by the European Commission, SoNAR-Global partners are now implementing the ID-VA in France, Germany (Rachel Carson Center of the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich), Italy (CENSIS and Sapienza University), Malta (University of Malta) and the Ministry of Health) and Slovenia

(University of Ljubljana), where over 1,000 in-depth interviews with wide-ranging populations are taking place.

Although our analyses are ongoing, our preliminary analyses suggest commonalities across these European countries. First, complex, interacting, and cumulating factors are rendering certain social groups even more marginalised. Elderly people coping with long-term chronic illness have also had to manage successive confinements in some European countries; not only have these populations been more susceptible to the worst consequences of COVID-19, but they have also suffered from social isolation and at times, difficulties obtaining much-needed medicines, food, and other kinds of support. Indeed, we have found mental health problems as a result of the pandemic occurring across a very wide range of populations. In other cases, we have found that experiences of adverse conditions such as unemployment have varied significantly across populations. In some cases, unemployment has had highly negative consequences, including impoverishment and hunger, even when states have provided financial support for unemployed populations. In other cases, unemployment support has been sufficient to allow those not working to make ends meet. In France, Germany

and Italy, SoNAR-Global is working with the MOOD network to determine whether results from this qualitative analysis can be scaled-up to extend our insights to apply to a representative sample of these national populations. All partners will present their findings in a series of public webinars and conferences in the autumn of 2021.

But SoNAR-Global's work does not just stop with investigating the complex nature of vulnerabilities in European countries or in Uganda and Bangladesh. Our findings should guide policy and practice. Hence, we are facilitating stakeholder dialogue meetings—a participatory approach in local authorities, formal and informal leaders, as well as locally active association and NGO representatives meet to dialogue about the VA findings, to identify priorities and problems and to develop policies and actions to address vulnerabilities and boost resilience. These meetings, led by partner NIVEL and supported by MUW and UCL, will begin in September-October 2021 and continue through to at least the end of the year.

We encourage readers to stay tuned to our activities. These next several months promise substantial actions in Europe and around the world.

Learn more about Sonar-Global in this video



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PROJECT SUMMARY

The rise of emerging infectious diseases (EIDs) and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in the last 20 years increases the need for improved prevention and response. The EU-funded SoNAR-Global project will establish a sustainable international social science network to attract the active participation of social sciences and advance complementarity and synergy in the governance of prevention and response to EIDs and AMR. The project is driven by social scientists specialised in EIDs and AMR, and aims to become an integral part of emergency response. SoNAR-Global will develop an open-access platform, adapt, test and assess vulnerability assessment tools and engagement models, and create and assess curricula for training social scientists and non-social sciences actors interested in working with them.

PROJECT LEAD

Tamara Giles-Vernick currently conducts research at the interstices of medical anthropology and ethnohistory (historical research using anthropological tools), investigating infectious disease transmission and global health interventions in Africa. She leads multidisciplinary research examining the changing nature and contexts of human contact with great apes and monkeys in equatorial Africa and the health consequences of that contact. She also conducts anthropological research on hepatitis B and vaccination, the historical emergence of HIV in central Africa; malnutrition; infantile diarrhoea in the Central African Republic; an historical epidemiology of malaria in West Africa; hepatitis C transmission in hospital and dental settings in Egypt; a comparative history of pandemic influenza; a history of global health in Africa; and the history of epidemiological surveillance.

PROJECT PARTNERS

SONAR-Global is led by the Institut Pasteur in France. For a full List of our project partners please see: <https://www.sonar-global.eu>

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