

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, November 2024



SUMMARY

The Global Forum on Bioethics in Research (GFBR) will hold a two-day meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2024 on the topic: “**Ethical issues arising in research into health and climate change**”. The deadline for application is **9am CEST/Geneva on Monday 6 May 2024 (in English)**.

This notice includes details on the following:

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If you have any questions about this call, please contact gfbr@who.int.

1. ABOUT GFBR

GFBR seeks to bring researchers, research policy makers and ethicists, among others together to share experiences and promote collaboration around **research ethics**. The Forum will be built around **case study presentations to ensure that discussion of the ethical issues remain grounded in the practical realities of how research is conducted** and prioritised, particularly in low resource settings. Compared to traditional meetings, GFBR is unique in that it is limited in size and built around small group discussions of case studies that are submitted by participants. The Forum **prioritises the participation of colleagues from low- and middle- income countries (LMICs), encourages networking and mentoring, and creates a venue for open and inclusive discussions**.

For more information visit: gfbr.global/about-the-gfbr

GFBR is seeking two types of participants for the meeting. You can **apply online** using the relevant link below:

1. **Participants** will attend the meeting and actively take part in plenary and small group discussions and networking opportunities ([participant application form](#)).
2. **Case study presenters** will present on the ethical issues that have emerged in the conduct of research into health and climate change, or on governance issues in this field ([case study application form](#)). As well as applying online, **case study applicants should send their formatted case study proposal by email** to gfbr@who.int before the deadline – see below for more detail.

(NOTE: When you open the application form, check the header to ensure you are completing the correct form. Depending on the configuration of your browser, you may need to scroll up to see the explanatory notes at the beginning of the form.)

Places are awarded on a competitive basis and **successful applicants from LMICs will receive an award to cover the cost of their travel, accommodation and single-entry visa**. Please note attendees need to cover their own travel insurance costs.

All interested applicants should review the information below and submit their application by **Monday 6 May 2024 at 9am CEST/Geneva**. The application forms will **close automatically at the deadline** so please ensure you have **submitted** your application in good time. Applications that are incomplete and/or not submitted by the deadline will not be considered.

Applications will be reviewed by the GFBR Planning Committee and selection will be made on the criteria listed below. Applicants are not limited to academic researchers; staff from government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private sector organizations are also encouraged to apply if their applications are focused on the topic.

If a case study is multi-author, and co-authors would like to attend, they must **apply separately as participants** and state the name of their co-author and title of the proposal in their application.

During GFBR, presenters from around the world will share their presentations and discuss cross-cutting issues, and then participants at the meeting will discuss the challenges and questions raised in both plenary and small group discussion.

Provisional dates for the Forum are **19 & 20 November**. The dates are subject to confirmation.

2. TOPIC SUMMARY

GFBR will focus specifically on the **ethics of research into health and climate change**, including research into interventions at all levels to respond to the health impacts of climate change, **with a particular emphasis on LMICs**. Research in this area ordinarily involves the use of rigorous methods to generate data with the aim of better understanding the impacts of climate change on health, including the health of non-human aspects of the biosphere, and identifying means better to protect and promote human and non-human health in the face of climate change. The interdependency of human and non-human health means that research into health and climate change is not restricted to the medical, health or life sciences. Research findings from areas not traditionally associated with health care, such as environmental science, entomology, the veterinary sciences and climatology may be relevant. It follows that this GFBR will take a very broad approach to concepts of health. The importance of Indigenous perspectives and voices in climate change means that GFBR is also inclusive of perspectives and forms of knowledge that stand outside western scientific traditions. In terms of non-human aspects of the biosphere, the focus of this GFBR is on research that speaks to the interconnectivity of human and non-human health, rather than studies with an exclusive focus on non-human aspects of the biosphere.

Although the literature on research ethics is well developed, particularly in relation to health research involving human participants, the literature specifically on the ethics of research into health and climate change is far less so. The purpose of this GFBR is to identify and critically engage with areas of ethical challenge in this field, and to provide those involved in research with tools and approaches to respond practically and productively.

Please read the [background paper](#) for more details on the topic, scope and related definitions.

3. CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS

Who can attend the GFBR meeting?

The majority of participants are selected through a competitive process¹. Up to 60 participants will be selected from those eligible who apply by the deadline. We are seeking broad geographical representation, a mix of disciplinary expertise including health researchers, clinicians, healthcare workers, bioethicists, policy-makers, health system functionaries, and lawyers, and a combination of people who are early in their careers and leaders in their fields.

Accurate journalistic reporting is essential to ensure that the public are engaged and well informed about research. For that reason, GFBR will support the participation of up to **three journalists from LMICs**. The meeting will provide a unique opportunity for talented journalists to network with international experts and forge stronger connections between health researchers, ethicists, policy-makers and journalists. Funding support will be provided to LMIC based journalists only.

To apply to attend as a participant or journalist, please complete the [participant application form](#), which contains six sections:

1. Personal details (name, contact details etc.)
2. Work and training (your current and past jobs etc.)
3. Funding request
4. Your motivation to attend GFBR - your opportunity to describe why you want to attend
5. Personal references
6. Data protection consent

Journalists: Please provide details on the application form about:

- Your journalistic experience
- The ways in which you would disseminate the meeting outcomes in your local and regional context, including which media outlets you propose to use and the format of reporting.

4. CALL FOR CASE STUDY PRESENTERS

The GFBR organisers are looking for interesting and important **real-life case studies of research** that are on the Forum topic: **ethical issues arising in research into health and climate change**. The cases could demonstrate the **development of good practice; highlight ethical challenges; or present unresolved questions** for the global community.

The organisers also welcome case studies on governance issues that relate to the topic (e.g. focusing on **institutional, national, regional or international regulation, guidelines, policy, principles or issues and initiatives associated with research ethics review** or other **governance bodies, mechanisms or tools**).

The organisers encourage case studies that focus on the questions listed in Section 6 of this call ('Key themes and questions'). However, you are welcome to address other questions related to the topic.

¹ The GFBR also directly invites a number of participants e.g. expert speakers or representatives of key organisations.

Case studies **should focus on the LMIC context. Examples from high income countries (HIC) will also be considered and they will ideally show relevance to LMIC settings.** If your case study relates to a HIC please draw-out the relevance for research in LMICs in your application.

Please see the [background paper](#) for more details on the scope and themes. In general, case studies should focus on no more than three ethical issues.

If you'd like to see examples of case studies from a past GFBR meeting, on a different topic, take a look at this [programme](#).

HOW TO APPLY

To apply, please complete the [case study application form](#), which contains eight sections:

1. Personal details (name, contact details etc.)
2. Work and training (your current and past jobs etc.)
3. Funding request
4. Your motivation to attend GFBR - your opportunity to describe why you want to attend
5. Personal references
6. About your case study (key details about your case)
7. Case study proposal, using this structure:
 - a. **Brief description** to help the reader understand the **context of the case** e.g. details about the nature and aims of the research, where the research was conducted etc. Or what aspect of governance are you addressing (regulation, guidance, policy issue, ethics review etc.) and its scope (national/regional/international)? (300 words maximum)
 - b. **Ethical issues with commentary** on each issue (700 words maximum)
 - c. **Conclusions and two recommendations** for how to improve the ethics of, and ethical approaches to, research into health and climate change (250 words maximum)
8. Data protection consent

Please **also send your formatted case study proposal by email to gfbr@who.int** before the deadline (Word or pdf format). Include the three sections described under (7) above, along with your case study title, your name, institution and name of co-authors (if any).

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- The application form **does not** allow you to save partial responses and re-open the form later on. We therefore strongly recommend you **prepare and save your written responses to Sections 2 and 4 and your case study proposal off-line**, and copy them into the form when finalised.
- The application form has a **4,000 character limit (including spaces) for a long-form answer**. If your 'Ethical issues with commentary on each issue' is greater than this limit, please split your commentary into two parts on the form. Otherwise, if you enter more than 4,000 characters in one response, the text will be truncated and lost.

If you are unsure about the suitability of a possible case study or would like to discuss your proposal, please email gfbr@who.int by **30 April 2024**.

5. TOPIC SCOPE

We are interested in receiving case studies from a variety of perspectives and contexts and on a broad range of issues. A brief outline of the identified health impacts of climate change is given below, highlighting the breadth of the possible research agenda. The organisers are interested in case studies of research on these health impacts, which broadly speaking can be separated into direct and indirect impacts.

Direct health impacts

Climate change has a range of direct health impacts on human health including injury, illness and death.

- **Extreme heat** is driving a range of health effects associated with challenges to body temperature regulation, including heatstroke, heat exhaustion and hyperthermia. Extreme heat also exacerbates chronic conditions such as cardiovascular and cerebrovascular disease, respiratory disease and diabetes-related conditions.
- **Extreme climate events** are having a direct impact on health, arising most obviously from flooding and wildfire.

Indirect health impacts

Indirect health impacts of climate change arise as a result of cumulative changes to the environment. These include the following:

- **Mental health and wellbeing** are increasingly being undermined by climate change. Eco-anxiety and 'solastalgia' – the loss associated with climate-driven changes to our home environments – are emergent forms of distress associated with climate change, particularly among younger generations. Extreme heat is also a driver of altered affective states, suicidality and post-traumatic stress disorder; and extreme climate events can lead to short- or long-term impacts on mental wellbeing.
- **Food and water** stability is increasingly threatened by climate change, particularly through excess heat and associated droughts. Falling crop yields, salination of fresh water supplies through rising sea levels and loss of agricultural labour through extremes of daytime heat have significant health impacts, including through malnutrition and shortage of local and traditional foodstuffs leading to reliance on imported foods.
- **Human displacement and migration** are increasingly being driven by climate change, and, on current trajectories of greenhouse gas emissions, they are likely to intensify. Humanitarian organisations are already factoring climate-driven migration into crisis response. The health effects of forced migration include the mental and physical effects of the disruption of traditional livelihoods, the potentially devastating health impacts of migrating, including exposure to violence, loss of access to health and other services, increased exposure to infectious diseases and other health threats during migration.
- **Existing health inequalities** are likely to be reinforced and exacerbated by climate change. Displacement, loss of traditional livelihoods and employment and education patterns, rising costs of food and other staples, poorer mental and physical health are all likely to drive increases in poverty, further undermining health and wellbeing.
- **Loss of biodiversity and the disruption of ecosystems** can lead to food instability, particularly access to local and traditional foods. They can exacerbate the zoonotic transfer of diseases and deplete natural resources for drug discovery and development.

- **Physical activity** including manual labour and recreational exercise can become more difficult where high temperatures reduce the number of hours or locations for safe physical activity with consequences for physical and mental health.

This list is taken from the [background paper](#) and is illustrative and non-exhaustive.

6. KEY THEMES AND QUESTIONS

Case studies could address (but are not limited to) one or more of the following themes. In general, case studies should focus on no more than three ethical issues.

GFBR addresses a different topic each year. To promote continuity the organisers encourage proposals on the current topic, which also touch on past GFBR topics². However, this is not a requirement.

Justice and fairness in the research agenda

- How can the research agenda in health and climate change meaningfully address the needs and interests of those most vulnerable to its impacts, and who have traditionally lacked the power to influence global research agendas?
- How can the choice of research topic, including the location in which the research is carried out, help build research capacity in regions and populations where it is underdeveloped?
- How we can address unequal representation, under-represented voices and promote interdisciplinary approaches including via meaningful approaches to power-sharing and co-creation when setting the research agenda in health and climate change?
- In relation to the benefits that accrue from research, how can we ensure research is non-extractive – that it does not transfer its benefits away from the populations being involved in the research to those in more resource-rich regions, or those for whom the climate emergency is less immediate?
- How can research into health and climate change achieve genuine and meaningful participation and co-creation?
- What kinds of tools or other resources or practices are required to ensure that all those who participate or engage in the research process can do so effectively?

Epistemic justice

- How can the ongoing effects of epistemic injustice – the systematic devaluing of certain forms of knowledge, knowledge producers and knowledge transmitters – be addressed in the setting of the research agenda in health and climate change?
- Should some groups have special authority in setting the research agenda because of specific expertise, lived experience or vulnerability to the effects of climate change?
- Colonialism has played a significant part in driving vulnerability to the health effects of climate change. How should this be acknowledged and addressed in research into health and climate change?
- How can grassroots perspectives actually be heard, not just as mediated by leaders, elites and intellectuals?
- How can research be responsive to the worldviews, needs, and interests of Indigenous Peoples and local communities?

² For example, past Forum's have focused on the ethics of mental health research, genomics research, research during epidemics, novel trial designs (e.g. adaptive trials), health research prioritisation, the use of artificial intelligence in health research. For the full list of past topics see: www.gfbr.global/past-meetings.

- How can we reorient our ontological frameworks to ensure proper inclusion of Indigenous populations?

Research and climate

- How can the climate impact of research into health and climate change be reduced?
- What obligations do researchers have to research participants exposed to dangerous climate risks?

Incorporating the value of the non-human world

- How can we incorporate the value of non-human individuals, species, systems and ecosystems into a plausible account of the social value of research in climate change and health?
- What kinds of non-human interests matter morally in decisions about the distribution of benefits and harms in research into health and climate change?
- How can we represent the interests of non-humans and possibly even the biosphere as a whole in any approach to research participation?

Research involving multiple disciplines

- To what extent are existing ethical frameworks and approaches sufficient for the necessary interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary research in this field?
- How can we ensure equality of respect for all disciplinary and methodological approaches involved in research in this field?
- Do we need any new ethical guidance or frameworks for this research? What can we learn from the UNESCO and COMEST climate change principles in this regard? What can we learn from Indigenous ethical perspectives in this regard?

Research governance

- Are the criteria and procedures for research ethics oversight adequate to the complex ethical challenges of research in the climate and health field? What adaptations may be necessary?
- How can research governance better respect the interests and perspectives of Indigenous Peoples and local communities? What changes and adaptations might be required? What opportunities are there for the co-creation of forms of ethical oversight?
- How can we respond to the challenges presented by multidisciplinary research governance?
- What guidance, procedures and processes should be developed for researchers in anticipation of potentially catastrophic climatic ‘tipping points’?

Example case studies can be found in this past GFBR meeting [programme](#).

7. DEADLINE

Submit our application online before **Monday 6 May 2024 9am CEST/Geneva, in English**. **Please ensure you include all the requested information**, as incomplete applications will not be considered.

Case study applicants are also asked to send their formatted case study by email to gfbr@who.int before the deadline.

We recommend you review the requirements of the application form well in advance of the deadline to see what’s required. The application forms will **close automatically at the deadline** so

please ensure you have **submitted** your application in good time. Applications that are not submitted by the deadline – and applications received by email – will not be considered.

8. AWARDS: DECISION MAKING AND ELIGIBILITY FOR FUNDING

CRITERIA

The GFBR Planning Committee will select successful candidates (both self-funded and those applying for funded places). The selection committee will consider the following factors when considering the applications:

- *Country of origin.* We would like to ensure a representative distribution of participants from different regions;
- *Background/current area of expertise.* Applications will be selected for a diverse representation of many different disciplines, relating to meeting topic;
- *Experience or demonstrated interest in the ethical issues* related to research into health and climate change;
- *Reasons for attending the meeting.* Participants who will be able to actively contribute to the meeting and who expect to achieve impact from the meeting;
- Case study applications only: *Relevance to the meeting topic and the LMICs context;*
- Journalists only: *Demonstrated journalistic training and experience and concrete proposals for how the meeting findings will be disseminated, including which media outlets and the format of reporting.*

SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

Successful applicants from LMICs who require full funding will receive an award to cover:

- return travel to the meeting (economy airfare and standard ground transportation costs);
- accommodation (2 or 3 nights maximum, including meals);
- a single entry visa (if required).

Participants will be expected to meet all other costs (e.g. travel insurance).

Outbound flights will be booked to arrive the day before the Forum. The return flight will be booked for the evening the Forum ends, or the following day if no flights are available.

Successful applicants from high income countries are expected to cover their own costs (including travel and accommodation). There is no registration fee. GFBR will cover the cost of the day delegate fee and conference dinner.

SUCCESSFUL CASE STUDIES

Selected presenters will be grouped into thematic sessions (see this previous [GFBR agenda](#) as an example). The session presenters will be paired with a member of the GFBR Planning Committee to provide informal mentorship and help them develop their case study (up to 3 pages) and a PowerPoint presentation. We aim to arrange two Zoom calls for the session mentor and session presenters to meet to discuss their presentations and collaboratively develop the session theme. The first call will be late August/early September for introductions to each other and your case studies and to discuss the session theme. The second call will be mid/late October to run through your draft presentations.

If your presentation is not selected your name will automatically go forward to be considered in the applications to attend as a participant.

9. NOTIFICATION

All applicants will be informed of the Planning Committee's decision by the **24 July 2024**. The decision of the committee will be final.

10. PRIVACY

The application form describes the purposes for which WHO will collect and process the personal data you provide in your application and describes your rights as a data subject. WHO's personal data protection framework includes the WHO Privacy Policy available at <https://www.who.int/about/who-we-are/privacy-policy>) and the UN Personal Data Protection and Privacy Principles, which are available at the following link: <https://archives.un.org/sites/archives.un.org/files/un-principles-on-personal-data-protection-privacy-hlcm-2018.pdf>

Support for GFBR 2024: Wellcome, the UK Medical Research Council (MRC), the National Institutes of Health and the South African MRC are providing funding for this meeting.

27 March 2024