

International Institute for Legislative Affairs to Advance Trans Fat Elimination in Kenya

November 6, 2019 (NAIROBI) — The International Institute for Legislative Affairs (IILA) has been awarded a two-year LINKS grant to advocate for effective trans-fat regulations in Kenya.

IILA joins the second round of grant awardees from [LINKS](#), an online community and resource-sharing platform that connects people working to improve cardiovascular health around the world. LINKS is coordinated by Resolve to Save Lives, an initiative of Vital Strategies, the World Health Organization, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through the CDC Foundation.

“Cardiovascular disease causes 13% of deaths in Kenya,” said Emma Wanyonyi, CEO of IILA. “With this grant, we will be able to address the growing problem of diet-related risk factors, specifically the elimination of trans fat.”

Trans fats cause heart attack and stroke and were estimated to cause more than 540,000 deaths a year worldwide. [A recent analysis](#) concluded that elimination trans fats from the global food supply could save 17 million lives over 25 years.

“Cardiovascular disease kills more people each year than all infectious diseases combined, but it remains neglected by many health systems and the global health community,” said Dr. Tom Frieden, President and CEO of Resolve to Save Lives. “LINKS is catalyzing progress and building a global community of champions by supporting programs that target cardiovascular health in low- and middle-income countries, where most of these preventable deaths occur.”

Replacing trans-fat with healthier oils/fats in the food supply is a low-cost way for governments to save the lives of their citizens. Experiences in several countries demonstrate that industrially produced trans-fat can be replaced by healthier oils. Research has proved the direct connection of trans fatty acids with cardiovascular diseases, breast cancer, shortening of pregnancy period, risks of preeclampsia, disorders of nervous system and vision in infants, colon cancer, diabetes, obesity and allergies

Even though the problem of TFA in Kenya is generally acknowledged, there is limited or no data to understand the level of consumption, sources as well as the policy framework to inform a clear roadmap for elimination of TFA as recommended by WHO’s REPLACE campaign.

“The LINKS grant program will help to identify local solutions to hypertension control and advance control of non-communicable diseases through primary health care,” said Dr. Cherian Varghese, Coordinator of Management of Non-Communicable Diseases at WHO. “The program will also build capacity in health systems, which is critical to advance universal health coverage.”

In Kenya, the urban population is increasingly facing diet related NCDs (including CVDs) due to changing lifestyles and unhealthy diets- consumption foods, trans and saturated fats. The situation is aggravated by increasing fast foods coupled with aggressive advertising and marketing of junk foods under insufficient regulatory framework.

This project seeks to review TFA landscape in Kenya and implement advocacy strategies to enhance effective regulation of TFA. The project goal is to advocate for the promotion of use and consumption of healthier fats and oils, the elimination of industrially-produced trans fats, to be achieved through regulatory actions, while establishing solid monitoring systems and creating awareness among policy-makers, producers, suppliers, and the public.

“The research evidence on TFA sources, consumption, and relationships with NCDs will be vital for the multi-sectoral actions towards elimination of TFAs in our diets and enhance NCD Control programs”, remarked Prof. Yonga, Chair of NCD Alliance East Africa and NCD Research expert.

“The LINKS grant program will help to identify local solutions to hypertension control and will help in advancing control of non-communicable diseases through primary health care,” said Dr. Cherian Varghese, Coordinator of Management of Non-Communicable Diseases at the World Health Organization. “The program will also lead to capacity building in health systems, which is critical to advance universal health coverage.

The one-time LINKS grants recognize that long-term, sustainable prevention of cardiovascular disease requires commitment and funding from governments. The grants are intended to help health systems and non-governmental organizations pilot new approaches and scale up successful initiatives, which will over time will reduce health care costs associated with avoidable heart attacks, strokes, and kidney failure.

“To address cardiovascular disease, the CDC Foundation is pleased to work with partners by providing support to countries around the world seeking technical assistance through the LINKS online community and platform,” said Dr. Judy Monroe, president and CEO of the CDC Foundation. “Working together to address the health challenge of cardiovascular disease ensures that knowledge, best practices and lessons learned are shared and utilized across the globe.”

[First round grants were awarded in March 2019](#) to LINKS members in 11 countries.

LINKS [membership is free](#) and members are eligible to apply for one-time grants to improve cardiovascular health in their communities using one of three proven, effective approaches to improving heart health: increasing control of high blood pressure, reducing salt intake or eliminating trans fat. [LINKS](#) also provides members access to technical assistance from cardiovascular health experts from around the world, networking opportunities, standardized [tools](#) for cardiovascular health, and live webinars.

2019 LINKS Grant Recipients and Projects:

Caucasus Region (Armenia, Azerbaijan, & Georgia): WHO European Office for the Prevention and Control of NCDs

Reduce salt intake in the Caucasus region by collecting quality data on population salt consumption and nutritional composition of selected products, bringing together policy makers to develop national salt targets and nutritional guidelines for public institutions, and implementing a national campaign to raise awareness about salt reduction among primary care professionals and the food and hospitality sector.

Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, & Uzbekistan): Kazakhstan WHO Country Office, WHO/Europe

Reduce salt intake in Central Asia by estimating population salt intake, training researchers, primary care professionals and the food and hospitality sector on salt reduction, implementing a campaign about the risks of excess salt among consumers, cooks and caterers, and promoting food reformulation and product improvement.

Costa Rica: Costa Rican Institute of Research and Teaching in Nutrition and Health (INCIENSA)

Support salt regulation policy by assessing amount, sources and trends in population salt consumption, surveying knowledge, attitudes and practices around salt in food services, and adapting a regional social media campaign for national use.

Ecuador: Pan-American Health Organization

Improve control of high blood pressure by training health staff and developing monitoring and evaluation tools for the national implementation of the WHO HEARTS technical package.

Haiti: Weill Cornell Medicine & GHESKIO Centers

Train physician, nurses, and community health workers at 30 clinics across Haiti to implement new national primary-care blood pressure guidelines, support the Ministry of Health with strategic planning for blood pressure medication supply management, and expand a community-based blood pressure management program.

Jordan: The Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network (EMPHNET)

Implement the WHO HEARTS technical package for cardiovascular disease management in 20 health care centers in the north of Jordan and evaluate impact on blood pressure control and other outcomes including physical activity, salt intake, and adherence to medication.

Kenya: Ministry of Health and Ujamaa Health and Strategy Solutions

Train community health workers and primary health care workers on appropriate blood pressure screening, diagnosis, care, follow-up and reporting.

Kenya: International Institute for Legislative Affairs (ILA)

Assess the existing policy and regulatory framework and identify stakeholders for trans-fat elimination, and advocate for effective policy and legislative approaches for the regulation of trans fat in Kenya.

Malaysia: Ministry of Health Malaysia, National University of Malaysia, The George Institute for Global Health (TGI) and the World Health Organization (WHO) Office in Malaysia

Analyze salt levels in street foods, with a view towards accelerating mandatory sodium labelling, informing salt-reduction education messages, and engaging the food industry in reformulation efforts.

Mongolia: Onom Foundation

Expand successful blood pressure control program to all provinces in Mongolia by training healthcare professionals and increasing screening and diagnosis of high blood pressure.

Nigeria: Institute of Advanced Medical Research and Training (IAMRAT)

Determine salt content of meals served by National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme, educate students on the risks of too much salt, training school food vendors on reduced-salt cooking, and evaluating the effectiveness of salt reduction education in primary schools.

Nigeria: African Field Epidemiology Network (AFENET)

Improve blood pressure control in three communities in Anambra state by raising awareness about high blood pressure, promoting patient centered approaches for community-based diagnosis, building health systems capacity for blood pressure management, and ensuring availability of blood pressure drugs in primary care centers.

Pakistan: Indus Health Network-The Indus Hospital (IHN-TIH)

Launch a patient-centered hypertension screening and treatment program at four IHN-TIH primary care sites by using standardized screening and treatment protocols, creating a patient registry, and ensuring accessibility of regular blood pressure monitoring and convenient, affordable medication refills and adjustments.

South Africa: University of Wollongong

Establish a rigorous, transparent and sustainable mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of salt reduction legislation in South Africa.

Tanzania: Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (MUHAS)

Assess trans fat levels in street foods and edible oils/fats, and generate local evidence to promote best practice policies for trans fat elimination and the use of healthier replacement oils/fats.

Vietnam: National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology

Improve access to quality, affordable cardiovascular disease medications among rural populations in northern Vietnam by implementing and scaling up the Revolving Fund Pharmacy model, a patient-centered supply chain system to bridge gaps in government pharmacy medication supply.

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About International Institute for Legislative Affairs

The International Institute for Legislative Affairs (IILA) is a not-for-profit organization that offers technical support to government departments, Members of Parliament and other stakeholders in the legislative process in terms of research for policy lobbying, legislation drafting and capacity building. To find out more visit www.ilakenya.org, or Twitter @IILAInfo

About Resolve to Save Lives

Resolve to Save Lives is a five-year, \$225 million campaign funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Gates Philanthropy Partners, which is funded with support from the Chan Zuckerberg Foundation. It is led by Dr. Tom Frieden, former director of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and housed at [Vital Strategies](http://www.vitalstrategies.org). To find out more visit: <https://www.resolvetosavelives.org> or Twitter @ResolveTSL

About Vital Strategies

Vital Strategies is a global health organization that believes every person should be protected by a strong public health system. We work with governments and civil society in 73 countries to design and implement evidence-based strategies that tackle their most pressing public health problems. Our goal is to see governments adopt promising interventions at scale as rapidly as possible. To find out more, please visit www.vitalstrategies.org or Twitter @VitalStrat.