

## **Vietnam Receives Grant from Resolve to Save Lives for Low-Salt Foods Study Programs in Eleven Countries Receive Grants as First LINKS Community Awards**

March 21, 2019 (New York, NY)—The first LINKS grant awardees, who received a cumulative total of 1.25 million U.S. dollars, were announced today by Resolve to Save Lives, an initiative of Vital Strategies. The George Institute for Global Health and The National Institute of Nutrition in Vietnam are among the inaugural awardees. The funds will be used to assess the feasibility and cost effectiveness of introducing lower-sodium foods into the Vietnamese market by developing and testing a low-salt fish sauce.

“Our previous work has demonstrated the possibility of reducing blood pressure by replacing 60% of sodium with potassium in regular salt and Bot Canh (common seasoning). The LINKS proposal extends this to developing and testing a reduced-sodium version of fish sauce. Together these three products constitute around 70% of the total sodium consumed in some parts of Vietnam,” said Dr. Jacqui Webster, Director of the World Health Organization Collaborating Centre on Population Salt Reduction at the George Institute for Global Health. “The LINKS grant is vital in terms of supporting the transition from research to practical, real-world implementation of salt reduction interventions.”

[LINKS](#) is an online community and resource-sharing platform that connects people working to improve cardiovascular health around the world. The program is funded by Resolve to Save Lives, and implemented by the World Health Organization (WHO), the CDC Foundation and Resolve to Save Lives. LINKS members are eligible to apply for one-time grants to improve cardiovascular health in their communities.

“Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of the death in the world. Most of these deaths are preventable, and most occur in low- and middle-income countries,” said Dr. Tom Frieden, President and CEO of Resolve to Save Lives. “LINKS is building a community of champions working to promote cardiovascular health around the world by connecting leading experts with each other and providing one-time, catalytic grants.”

The grant funding will be divided among government and civil society organizations. It will advance cardiovascular health programs in Bhutan, Cameroon, Jamaica, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste, Uganda, and Vietnam. The grants were awarded to programs that focus on several approaches to improving heart health, from reducing the burden of high blood pressure to reducing salt intake or eliminating trans fat. Programs include integrating hypertension screening and treatment into routine HIV care in Uganda, working with key stakeholders to reduce salt intake in Sri Lanka, and studying the prevalence of trans fat in popular foods in Jamaica.

“A staggering one of every three deaths worldwide are linked to heart attack, stroke, and related conditions” said Dr. Etienne Krug, Director of the WHO Department for Noncommunicable Diseases. “Addressing this public health crisis by ensuring better prevention and treatment will improve the health and well-being of so many people. LINKS is a catalyst to rapidly address cardiovascular health in low- and middle-income countries, laying the groundwork to save countless lives.”

“It’s important for all of us to share knowledge, best practices and lessons learned by collectively working together to address cardiovascular disease challenges,” said Judith Monroe, MD, president and CEO of the CDC Foundation. “In support of LINKS, the CDC Foundation is pleased to work with other

partners to provide support to countries around the world seeking technical assistance aimed at improving heart health.”

LINKS is coordinated by Resolve to Save Lives, WHO, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through the CDC Foundation. [Membership is free](#) and provides access to a roster of cardiovascular health experts from around the world, standardized [tools](#) for cardiovascular health and monthly webinars. The [next webinar](#) is on March 21 and focuses on global advocacy for the elimination of artificial trans fat.

These one-time grants recognize the reality that funding for prevention of cardiovascular disease will largely need to come from the countries themselves. Some actions, such as elimination of artificial trans fat, can be implemented and then sustained with little or no investment of additional funding. Others, such as hypertension treatment, will require sustained funding for measures such as medications, but this will reduce health care costs that would otherwise be used to care for patients with avoidable heart attacks, strokes, and kidney failure.

Applications for the next round of LINKS funding are open now through June 15, 2019. For more information, visit [www.linkscommunity.org](http://www.linkscommunity.org).

#### **2019 LINKS Grant Recipients and Projects:**

##### **Bhutan: Department of Public Health at the Ministry of Health**

Strengthen hypertension management in 29 health facilities by training health assistants in hypertension care; strengthen early detection, prevention and treatment; and improve stroke registry.

##### **Cameroon: Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Services**

Standardize hypertension care and specialist services in five main health service facilities, develop electronic health management information system, and improve patient retention and care through clinic visits and community-based follow-up.

##### **Jamaica: College of Health Sciences at the University of Technology**

Assess the trans-fatty acid profile of spreadable fats, edible oils, cookie products, snacks, fast foods from transnational and local restaurants and bakeries across Jamaica to lay the groundwork for the development of national standards and policy in Jamaica.

##### **Nigeria and Pakistan: Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition**

Promote the replacement of artificial trans fat by implementing the WHO REPLACE technical package in emerging markets in Pakistan and Nigeria, targeting businesses within the SUN Business Network.

##### **Philippines: Interactive Research and Development**

Enroll 20,000 patients in a sustainable program for hypertension control in Marikina City, Manila by engaging 100 private practitioners catering to low-income populations and establishing a model for the effective treatment of hypertension in the private sector.

##### **Rwanda: Non-Communicable Diseases Division at Rwanda Biomedical Centre**

Improve hypertension control in four high-burden districts in Rwanda by optimizing services at health facilities and community outreach. Efforts to include broadening the range of providers who can provide treatment and making health materials easy to understand for a population with limited literacy.

**Sri Lanka: World Health Organization Country Office for Sri Lanka**

Provide policy and technical support to the Sri Lankan government for engaging with the food industry to reduce salt content and develop food standards to promote healthy eating, in support of the implementation of the country's National Salt Reduction Strategy.

**Timor-Leste: Noncommunicable Diseases Department at the Ministry of Health**

Improve hypertension treatment coverage and control rates through reforming care delivery at primary health care facilities in six municipalities using a simplified standardized hypertension protocol.

**Uganda: Makerere University Joint AIDS Program**

Integrate hypertension screening and treatment into routine HIV care among the 16,000+ patients receiving care at Mulago ISS, the largest HIV clinic in Uganda.

**Vietnam: The George Institute for Global Health and The National Institute of Nutrition**

Assess feasibility and cost effectiveness of introducing lower-sodium foods into the Vietnamese market by developing and testing reduced-sodium fish sauce.

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**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](https://twitter.com/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](http://www.vitalstrategies.org) or Twitter [@VitalStrat](https://twitter.com/VitalStrat).

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