Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Applied Research Centre Frequently Asked Questions

Version 4 – updated 4 November 2026

1. Eligibility criteria

	QUESTION	ANSWER
1.1	**Which organisations are eligible to be consortium leads?**	We expect consortium leads to be academic or research organisations registered as not-for-profit organisations in a low- or middle-income country (LMIC). Where leadership is shared, the co-lead (also an academic or research organisation with not-for profit registration) may be a different eligible LMIC organisation or an eligible high-income country (HIC) organisation. Please see the call document for a full list of eligibility criteria.
1.2	**Which organisations are eligible to be consortium members?**	Consortium members must be not-for-profit, but are not restricted to academic or research organisations. Organisation types may include: academic institutions, universities, research institutes or higher education colleges; not-for-profit organisations, registered charities, civil society organisations, foundations and trusts; multilateral organisations, United Nations agencies or other intergovernmental organisations; public sector bodies, government departments, local authorities or public health bodies. For-profit entities are ineligible as consortium members. Consortium lead(s) should choose partners based on who they assess would be best placed to deliver the expectations of the SRHR Applied Research Centre. The administering organisation will be expected to carry out appropriate due diligence on consortium members.

		Please note that independent researchers, freelance consultants or other unaffiliated individuals are not eligible as consortium members on their own. Subject to need and FCDO approval, individuals may be commissioned by the Centre for specific pieces of research in line with their expertise (see Research Centre scope and design below).
1.3	**Is there a limit on the number of organisations that can be in the consortium?**	The recommended consortium size is six to eight members, and no more than ten, including the consortium lead(s).
1.4	**Can organisations be on multiple expressions of interest (EOIs) or full proposals?**	Yes, organisations may be named on up to three EOIs. Consortium leads should submit only one application as lead but may appear as consortium members on up to two other submissions. Consortium members may be named on up to three separate EOIs.
1.5	**Do the EOI participation limits apply to a whole organisation or to individual departments and affiliates? Can individual researchers appear on more than one bid?**	EOI participation limits apply to organisations as a whole; different departments or regional offices of the same organisation count as one organisation and are limited to participation in three EOIs (one as lead). Individual researchers may be named on multiple bids, but each organisation they are affiliated with remains subject to the same participation limits.
1.6	**Which countries are eligible? Which countries are not eligible?**	The call focuses on LMICs as defined by the World Bank classification for fiscal year 2026. Selected countries need not be FCDO priority countries, but must be ODA-eligible. Organisations from non-ODA or high-income countries are eligible to be consortium co-leads or members, but the focus of research should not be on these settings. **There is no requirement for UK or HIC representation in the consortium.**

1.7	**What happens if a country's income classification changes over the life of the Centre?**	Country eligibility is not fixed permanently by 2026 World Bank classification. Where a country's income classification changes during the life of the Centre, its eligibility will be considered in line with applicable ODA eligibility rules at that time. A change in World Bank income classification would not, in itself, necessarily mean that activities must immediately cease.
1.8	**Can more than one consortium member be in one country or it is strictly one member from one country only? Can one consortium member support and lead across more than one country?**	The call requires in-country presence in at least six LMICs. It does not prescribe the number of organisations representing one country, but the Research Centre is expected to demonstrate geographic breadth across countries and regions. If one consortium member can demonstrate effective and meaningful coverage of more than one country or region, this is also welcome.
1.9	**Can consortium co-leads be based in the same country?**	Co-leads can be based in the same or different countries. However, this call prioritises diverse geographic coverage, so applicants proposing co-leads from the same country should ensure that their application makes clear how their consortium achieves geographic breadth.
1.10	**Are organisations that deliver current FCDO evidence services eligible to bid or join consortia?**	The call is open to organisations delivering services to FCDO, either currently or in the past. However, if you are aware of any potential conflicts of interest, please get in touch with the RCC team directly, and we can investigate and clarify on a case-by-case basis. **Please note that organisations currently receiving core or unrestricted funding from FCDO are likely not eligible to apply.**

1.11	**Do partners commissioned later through Pillar 2 count toward the ten-organisation consortium maximum?**	Evidence requests in Pillar 2 may be addressed either by core consortium members, or by external partners that are identified or commissioned to respond. These non-core, external partners do not contribute to the ten-organisation maximum for core consortium members.
1.12	**Paragraph 3.2 allows applications to be led by "joint Lead Organisations." Does FCDO expect joint Lead Organisations to form a joint venture or other legal entity, or is the consortium-level agreement described in paragraph 3.15 sufficient? (E.g., a teaming agreement or MOU describing agreed ways of working and functional co-leadership).**	We do not expect or require a joint venture or other legal entity for consortium co-leads. A consortium-level teaming agreement or MOU is sufficient. **Institutional agreements or MOUs are not required at EOI stage.**
1.13	**If an organisation is named as Lead Organisation in more than one EOI, will all of them be rejected, or only the additional ones?**	If a lead submits more than one application as Consortium Lead, the organisation will be asked to decide which application to put forward for consideration. The other applications will not be reviewed. **Please avoid submitting multiple applications as Lead.**
1.14	**How is LMIC presence defined? What threshold does "predominantly LMIC-registered" mean in reference to consortium membership? Can an established country office of a multinational consortium partner, working with local research collaborators, satisfy the in-country presence requirement, or is a formal research institution partner expected in each focal country?**	The requirement for LMIC presence is to ensure that the consortium has meaningful and demonstrable representation in LMIC countries, whether as locally-registered organisations or via strongly embedded, locally-registered and operationally independent branch offices, departments, or affiliate organisations. Local leadership of the in-country entity must be explicit in the bid to be considered eligible and competitive.

1.15	**For an applicant that is part of a larger implementing organisation but which positions itself as a dedicated research/evidence unit, for example, a research and innovation division within an international NGO, would that unit be an eligible 'non-profit research institution' for Lead or Administering Organisation purposes, or is eligibility determined strictly at the level of the registered legal entity?**	We expect consortium leads to be dedicated academic or research entities. Research units within larger non-research organisations would likely be best suited as consortium members.
1.16	**Are social enterprises eligible to apply?**	Social enterprises – meaning commercial entities that trade in products or services to address a social or environmental problem rather than to maximise profit for owners or shareholders – are eligible to be included as consortium members (not as leads) where they have an evidenced public-benefit mission and earnings are entirely reinvested in mission-driven activities, with no distribution to owners or shareholders. This needs to be evidenced in the application. Applicants should use their discretion to determine what evidence best demonstrates their eligibility in line with these principles.
1.17	**Are there any specific eligibility requirements relating to the seniority or career stage of individuals affiliated with the lead institutions who serve as lead applicants or co-leads?**	There are no specific eligibility requirements regarding the seniority or career stage of individuals named as key personnel within consortium leads or members. Applications should demonstrate the requisite experience and expertise to deliver the objectives of the Research Centre.
1.18	**The webinar mentioned that Upper Middle Income Countries are not to focus of this call, but the Call for EOIs allows for all LMICs. Could you please clarify?**	All LMICs as defined by the World Bank classification for fiscal year 2026 are eligible to satisfy the Consortium Lead and LMIC presence requirements. Consortium members and research focal countries are expected to demonstrate a diversity of LMIC contexts, so should not focus solely or primarily on upper middle income countries, but organisations based in these countries are welcome to apply.

1.19 **New**	**For proposals evaluating or piloting digital health applications, can technology developers or health-tech social enterprises be included as formal consortium members, or must all consortium partners be strictly non-profit or academic research institutions?**	Consortium members are not limited to academic or research institutions (see Question 1.2), but must not be for-profit, commercial entities. Social enterprises are eligible as consortium members where they have an evidenced public-benefit mission and earnings are entirely reinvested in mission-driven activities, with no distribution to owners or shareholders. This evidence should be provided in the application (see Question 1.16). For-profit technology developers may be considered as implementing partners for discrete pieces of research where non-profit options are not available, but they should not be responsible for delivering the core activities of the Centre.
1.20 **New**	**Are members of the FCDO Research Advisory Group (RAG) eligible to apply and receive funding?**	Yes, FCDO Research Advisory Group members are eligible to apply and receive funding through this opportunity.
1.21 **New**	**Must the six LMICs include a South or Southeast Asian country?** **Would a consortium composed entirely of research institutions based in Latin American countries be eligible to apply?**	As per the call document, the six countries of focus must include LMICs in Africa and South or Southeast Asia, but the consortium is not limited to these regions. Contextual diversity within and across regions is a core assessment criterion.
1.22 **New**	**In a jointly led consortium, if an institution applies as a co-lead but not the administering organisation, does this count as the "one lead" application limit?**	Yes, an institution is only eligible to apply as lead or co-lead on one application. An institution applying as co-lead may appear as a consortium member on up to two additional EOIs (see Question 1.4).

1.23 **New**	**My institutional circumstances aren't covered here. Am I still eligible to apply?**	We have received many requests to confirm the eligibility of specific institutions based on particular legal or governance arrangements. As we cannot address each case individually in the FAQs, applicants are encouraged to demonstrate how they fulfil the spirit of the call requirements, including that consortium leads are not-for-profit academic or research organisations registered in a low- or middle-income country. Applicants are also reminded that EOIs will be assessed using the scoring criteria provided in the Call for EOIs (Section 7), which emphasise LMIC thought leadership and local expertise, contextual diversity, and equitable research partnerships.

2. Application and assessment process

	QUESTION	ANSWER
2.1	**Do all consortium members need to be identified at EOI stage?**	The clear majority of consortium members should be identified at EOI stage, but changes and additions are possible in the full proposal if necessary. However, only partners named in the EOI are eligible for the proposal development grant, and the organisation submitting the full proposal (where invited) must be the same as submitted the EOI.
2.2	**How developed should consortium structure and governance be at EOI stage?**	Applicants should describe their proposed consortium structure and governance approach in their EOIs. This is a core assessment criterion, so structure and governance arrangements should be sufficiently developed to make a compelling case for how the Centre will be set up and operated to deliver its objectives. At final award stage, operational and governance structures will be agreed and set out in the accountable grant template signed by the successful consortium. Partners will have designated points of contact within FCDO throughout the implementation of the Research Centre.

2.3	**How developed should the Centre's research agenda be at EOI stage?**	We have asked applicants to identify what they see as high-level research priorities at EOI stage but expect a detailed research agenda to be developed in the full proposal. The proposal development grant is intended to support consortium partner collaboration and co-design of the research agenda.
2.4	**How many proposals will be funded?**	We are looking to fund one proposal that will deliver all the expectations set out in the call for EOIs. We anticipate inviting up to five shortlisted applicants to submit full proposals.
2.5	**For organisations that are not likely to be the Consortium Lead, is it advisable to submit an EOI as an individual organisation to be joined up with another bid?**	EOIs should only be submitted by Consortium Leads. The Research Commissioning Centre (RCC) can facilitate the exchange of contact information among organisations interested in joining a bid.
2.6	**Are letters of support required for consortium members at EOI stage?**	No, letters of support are not required at EOI stage. Teams invited to submit full proposals will be asked to include letters of support from all consortium members to demonstrate commitment to delivering the aims of the Centre and signing a consortium agreement if successful.
2.7	**Do I need to write 500 words for every question?**	Word limits are provided as upper bounds to ensure that application volumes are consistent. We are more concerned with quality than quantity of content, so applicants are encouraged to convey their responses clearly and concisely within the 500-word limit.

2.8	**Can I upload supplementary files? E.g., tables, figures, images**	The EOI application requires three file uploads: an illustrative organogram of the proposed consortium structure, CVs of key consortium personnel, and a budget for the proposal development grant (unless opting out). All other questions should be addressed in the text boxes provided. Please note that any additional material provided via the file upload function that has not been requested will not be reviewed.
2.9	**Can a non-academic LMIC non-profit lead a work package and be named to receive proposal development funding?**	All named consortium members may receive proposal development funding in line with the eligibility requirements described in the applicant guidance. The administering organisation will manage the proposal development grant and onward payments to consortium partners, as required by the proposal development process.
2.10	**What evidence is needed at EOI to show capacity to manage a £12 million programme? Can joint leads combine experience?**	Please check the application form and scoring criteria to see what information is needed at EOI stage. In the case of joint leads, applicants should demonstrate is how each organisation's expertise and capacity match its role: for example, experience with financial and risk management for the administering organisation or experience leading a consortium for the consortium lead.
2.11	**How can applicants improve their chances of success?**	Please read the call documentation and supporting guidance thoroughly. Applications will be assessed against the four scoring criteria published in Section 7 of the Call for EOIs. We recommend accessing the online application form as soon as possible to familiarise yourself with the questions and allow ample time to complete your submission before the deadline (17:00 BST on 30 November).

2.12	**Does the call encourage consortia to include researchers and evidence from underrepresented populations and settings?**	The call documents emphasise the importance of LMIC thought leadership and research that serves the needs of populations in diverse LMICs, including fragile and conflict-affected settings. A key assessment criterion is research quality, under which we include context expertise in the countries of research focus, including the lived experience of affected populations.
2.13	**In a co-led LMIC–LMIC partnership, must one co-lead be the single contracting party with FCDO? Or can both co-leads hold the grant jointly?**	The FCDO will sign an accountable grant arrangement with a single organisation, which will be the administering organisation for the consortium.
2.14	**Can we have a three-organisation joint lead (based on a strong existing partnership)?**	Our vision for this consortium is based on a single or dual leadership facility, to ensure that communication and delivery is adequately centralised and effectively managed.
2.15	**Does the EOI require a named lead contact or lead researcher, and if so, does this person have to be employed by the Lead Organisation?**	Yes, the application form requires the nomination of a key contact person for each lead organisation, and that person must be a member of that organisation.
2.16	**Do you offer a facility to connect established country-level partnerships with lead consortia or other LMIC partner institutions?**	Yes, the RCC can facilitate the exchange of contact information to identify potential consortium partners. Organisations wishing to join a bid should share their contact information via this form: SRHR Applied Research Centre: Consortium Partner List – Fill in form The contact list will then be shared with the registered mailing list. Please note that appearance on the contact list does not imply endorsement by or recommendation from the RCC or FCDO.
2.17	**Are there likely to be future calls for consortia? Do you know yet what the global health focus will be of any future calls?**	This is the only call that we have in this particular domain, and FCDO does not currently anticipate further calls.

3. SRHR Applied Research Centre scope and design

	QUESTION	ANSWER
3.1	**Will the Centre be expected to convene open calls or targeted consultancies for additional research, or will all research be conducted by named consortium members?**	We are asking applicants to design the way they would deliver on the requirements of the Centre. We expect that any bid reflects the need for embedded expertise and close coordination, which likely better suits a collaborative consortium established over a longer period than a consultancy model where partners are brought in for individual pieces of work. On-demand requests in Pillar 2 may require working across new geographies, research domains or partners based on evidence need, which could include additional commissioning. Applicants will be asked to consider their approach to managing the responsive research fund at full proposal stage.
3.2	**Does FCDO expect journal publications or other research outputs as part of this Centre, or is the emphasis more on the operational sharing of evidence for decision-making? How are academic outputs balanced against policy impact?**	The aim of this programme is to make research more contextually relevant, politically astute, and accessible to policy-makers, advocates and implementers. Academic journal articles will likely be part of the dissemination work alongside other means of information sharing, but FCDO has no set expectations on the minimum number of academic publications, and research is judged on its real-world impact rather than purely academic merits, with a strong focus on equitable partnerships. FCDO-funded research must align with an Open Science approach, including making data and methods open-source and ensuring that all publications are available open access, in line with the Research Open and Enhanced Access Policy.
3.3	**Is FCDO expecting research and synthesis that is globally or regionally applicable or more locally-focused?**	Pillar 1 should have a global remit while maintaining a focused country portfolio. Applicants should propose the countries (minimum of six LMICs) in which they propose to work, with opportunities for learning across countries and specifically for fragile and conflict-affected settings. The focus of Pillar 2 will depend on evidence need.

3.4	**Are there particular country or regional priorities within LMICs?**	Applicants should propose work in a minimum of six diverse LMICs, including but not limited to, countries in various parts of Africa and South/Southeast Asia. We expect the country portfolio to include at least some fragile and/or conflict-affected settings and some countries where FCDO has supported the country's health sector.
3.5	**Is it expected that the Centre will have a physical presence in every country on which its research focuses?**	We expect the consortium to have an in-country presence in at least six LMICs, but its research focus may extend beyond this according to organisational remit and expertise. Pillar 2 may extend beyond the core country portfolio based on need.
3.6	**How will assessors judge whether LMIC leadership is meaningful?**	Applicants should demonstrate how the consortium will ensure meaningful LMIC leadership, including through governance structures and processes, collaboration approaches, proposed staffing, and division of responsibilities. EOIs will be assessed on their approach to LMIC thought leadership and equitable research partnerships in Centre design and implementation and in developing the research agenda.
3.7	**Are South–South and North–South collaborations encouraged, and what approaches are expected?**	We don't recommend or require a particular approach beyond the overarching emphasis on LMIC leadership and equitable research partnerships. We expect applicants to convey a compelling vision for a consortium that delivers the objectives of the Research Centre.
3.8	**What team composition and disciplines are expected, and how cross-disciplinary should the project be?**	There is no required composition of disciplines and expertise, but cross-disciplinarity is strongly encouraged.
3.9	**Must each application include both pillars?**	Yes, applications are expected to address both Pillar 1 and Pillar 2.

3.10	**How does Pillar 2 relate to existing FCDO evidence services such as the K4DD helpdesk and the GBV What Works Centre? How will evidence requests be routed to the Centre?**	FCDO will co-develop a joint “shop front” with the successful applicants. FCDO expects successful applicants to build strong relationships with other evidence services.
3.11	**How much detail is needed at EOI stage?**	Please review the application form to understand what level of detail is required. This is available via the Grant Management System and also in template format on the call page. Question responses are limited to 500 words.
3.12	**Can consortium members compete for responsive research fund subawards?**	A competitive mechanism is not necessarily required for Pillar 2 evidence requests that can be addressed by expertise within the core consortium. More information about the consortium’s approach to managing the responsive research fund in Pillar 2, including competitive awarding, will be requested from shortlisted teams at full proposal stage.
3.13	**Is there a minimum number of SRHR domains? Does broader coverage obviously mean a better score?**	A consortium is expected to cover more than one domain of comprehensive SRHR, but broader coverage does not necessarily imply a higher score. We encourage the consortium not to spread itself too thinly. Applicants are expected to identify what they see as the biggest priorities for SRHR research, and provide a strategic rationale for the proposed domains.
3.14	**If not all aspects of SRHR need to be covered by the consortium, should applicants articulate a specific thematic focus within their EOI?**	Yes, EOI applicants should describe their high-level research priorities as part of their application, providing a clear strategic rationale. A more detailed research agenda will be developed at full proposal stage.

3.15	**Are any of the following in scope?** • **Sexual and gender minorities (LGBTI)** • **Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C)** • **Prevention of child and adolescent sexual abuse, including hybrid digital interventions** • **Demand generation and social norms** • **Pleasure-based approaches** • **Disability-inclusive SRHR, including deaf women and girls in rural areas** • **Engaging men, boys and elderly caregivers in menstrual health** • **The longer-term effects of GBV on survivors** • **Comprehensive sexuality education** • **Generative AI for curating SRHR information**	According to the definition in the Call for EOIs, comprehensive SRHR includes: contraceptive services, maternal and new-born care, prevention and treatment of HIV, and STIs other than HIV; comprehensive sex education; safe abortion care; prevention, detection and treatment of infertility and cervical cancer; counselling and care for sexual health. Applicants are invited to identify research and policy priorities within these domains, based on burden of need and contextual opportunity. Where research areas are already covered by other FCDO services – such as the GBV What Works Centre – these would not be duplicated here, but close collaboration is encouraged.
3.16	**How will the Centre support locally-led research on barriers for adolescents and underserved groups, and translate evidence into policy?**	Applicants should articulate their vision for the Centre, including its approach to locally-led research, the populations it serves, and how it intends to facilitate evidence uptake and use.
3.17	**Does the call envision the research centre as a single integrated multi-country research programme with a shared research agenda and common methodologies, or would a portfolio of related but country-specific research projects be acceptable?**	The call does not require a uniform, multi-country study with common methods in each country. It does, however, expect a coherent, multinational Research Centre underpinned by a co-designed, locally-led, research agenda. Pillar 1 must focus on at least six diverse LMICs, with research priorities that address questions relevant in its country contexts. A portfolio of country-specific projects could therefore fit the scope of the call, provided the projects contribute to the Centre's shared priorities and generate

		evidence with wider relevance, including opportunities for cross-country learning. The call also expects research to be co-created with local consortium partners, with shared decision-making on research questions, methods and use of findings.
3.18	**Why will FCDO (GRTD) manage the grant and the Centre directly? What will the relationship between FCDO and the host institution look like?**	FCDO (GRTD) will manage the grant and work closely with the consortium lead(s) to ensure the Centre's work responds to FCDO's evidence needs. The relationship will be collaborative, with FCDO and the Centre co-developing research priorities and taking an active part in facilitating close connections across relevant posts and other services.
3.19	**How long is the inception period, and is there a review point after it?**	Upon signing of the grant award, the activities of Research Centre are expected to progressively ramp up over the first six months of operation. At full proposal stage, shortlisted teams will be asked to provide a proposed workplan for the inception phase, including key milestones. Progress against the inception workplan and milestones will be reviewed as part of FCDO's ongoing programme management and oversight. The Centre will also be subject to FCDO's annual review requirements.
3.20	**What are the rights of the researcher? Can a researcher use the results of the study to publish in journals? Can they present the findings in a conference?**	Researchers involved in FCDO funded research are bound by the terms of the Accountable Grant Arrangement provided on the call page, including where this relates to intellectual property and relevant dissemination activities. Academic outputs, including journal articles and conference presentations, may be pursued by the research team. FCDO-funded research must align with an Open Science approach, including making data and methods open-source and ensuring that all publications are available open access, in line with the Research Open and Enhanced Access Policy.

3.21	**Do you encourage the use of secondary SRH data together with primary data?**	Applicants are encouraged to leverage existing SRHR evidence as well as produce new research to meet evidence needs. Secondary SRH data analysis that furthers these objectives would therefore be in scope.
3.22	**Can you speak to some of the Pillar 2 anticipated needs? Is there an additional FCDO SRH strategy on applied evidence outlined available for reference?**	Please see section 1 of the call document.
3.23	**Does the grant allow sub granting in-country to allow the consortium member to work with other organisations within member countries?**	The research in Pillar 1 should be delivered by the 6-10 core consortium members, which may include co-design, implementation support or stakeholder engagement activities with relevant in-country partner organisations. Evidence requests in Pillar 2 may be met by organisations outside the core consortium.
3.24	**There is not much mention of health economics in call, is this something you are interested in either Pillar 1 or Pillar 2?**	Health economics for SRHR is welcome as an area of disciplinary focus.
3.25	**Since Pillar 2 is a pilot, will the focus of it be developed solely by the centre, or is it intended to be driven by FCDO strategy?**	The objective of Pillar 2 is to respond to the evidence needs of FCDO and its partners as they emerge. The content of requests will therefore primarily be driven by FCDO, but FCDO will work collaboratively with the Centre to effectively manage demand and make the best use of Centre expertise.

3.26	**Pillar 2 extends beyond Pillar 1 countries. Are those countries to be selected by the consortium or by FCDO? Will applications need to demonstrate organisational capacity in those countries in the EOI?**	Pillar 2 will be developed through a pilot, so the detailed process is not yet fixed. Requests are expected to come predominantly from countries where the FCDO is active in the health sector. Applicants should therefore demonstrate relevant presence or research focus in some such countries under Pillar 1, but the consortium is not expected to have organisational capacity and expertise in the potential range of countries that could feature in Pillar 2. The approach will be developed with the successful consortium and the FCDO's Research and Analysis and Human Development Policy departments.
3.27	**Of the minimum six Pillar 1 countries, how many must be fragile or conflict-affected? The call says "at least some."**	We are receptive to applicants being propositional about the design of the consortium and its optimal coverage and balance of contexts. We don't have a required minimum that must be represented, but want to ensure these settings are considered and included to a degree that is feasible for the applicant. In the interest of geographic diversity, we encourage more than one fragile or conflict-affected setting to be included.
3.28	**Is the main focus improving access to services, or generating evidence to inform policy?**	The primary objective of the Centre is to curate and generate evidence to inform policy and decision-making, with the ultimate aim of improving access, choice, quality and sustainability of SRH services and rights. The consortium is not expected to engage directly in SRHR service delivery outside the context of research.
3.29	**Is FCDO open to AI-assisted evidence curation tools?**	FCDO is open to the transparent, ethical and responsible use of AI tools for evidence curation that maintains standards of quality, accuracy and rigour.

3.30	**Can FCDO provide a list of countries where it is active in the health sector?**	No official list will be provided. Applicants should use publicly-available information, including the FCDO website, to research where FCDO has been or is currently active in the health sector. Applications may also include countries where FCDO is not active in providing health sector support.
3.31	**Can SRHR be combined with other health domains or research interests?**	No, the focus of this call is exclusively on comprehensive SRHR. Multiple domains and disciplinary perspectives within SRHR are encouraged.
3.32	**How will FCDO ensure funds reach populations in poor settings, and will it fund institutional capacity building?**	The focus of the Research Centre is to generate and mobilise evidence for improving SRHR services, access and uptake in LMICs. It is not expected that funding for the Centre will flow directly to communities or populations outside the Research Centre, but applicants should demonstrate how their research activities will address the needs of LMIC populations, including how uptake and scale-up can be ensured, and including in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Support for multi-directional research capacity strengthening of consortium members may be included in the Research Centre budget (submitted at full proposal stage).
3.33	**The call asks applicants to justify their proposed countries based on burden of need and/or "contextual opportunity." Does contextual opportunity include existing research partnerships, implementation infrastructure, and government relationships, or is particular weight given to alignment with existing FCDO-funded programmes?**	Yes, applicants are encouraged to leverage existing research partnerships, implementation infrastructure and government relationships in their proposed consortium design. It is expected that some focal countries will align with existing areas of FCDO health sector activity, so relationships with existing FCDO-funded programmes should be considered, but other areas of strategic opportunity are welcome.

3.34	**The call refers to responsive research in Pillar 2 extending beyond Pillar 1 countries based on "FCDO and partner need." Does "partner" refer primarily to FCDO's existing implementing partners, members of the proposed consortium, or a broader set of organisations requesting research support?**	FCDO will help to coordinate Pillar 2 evidence requests, which may originate from FCDO policy teams, country posts, or FCDO partners including country governments or health sector organisations.
3.35 **New**	**Does the call's definition of "comprehensive SRHR" explicitly cover the intersection of late-reproductive maternal health and the perimenopause/menopause transition (women aged 40+), or is the primary emphasis expected to focus predominantly on adolescent and standard reproductive age brackets (15–49)?**	Applicants should justify the proposed Centre's thematic areas of SRHR focus based on burden of need and contextual opportunity in LMICs. This may include late-reproductive maternal health and the perimenopause/menopause transition.
3.36 **New**	**The guidelines note that the Centre is not expected to cover all domains of SRHR but must address several areas. If an applicant proposes a programmatic spine around digital maternal health and reproductive life-course transitions, will FCDO require explicit inclusion of other conventional SRHR domains (such as safe abortion care, family planning, or STIs) within Pillar 1, or is thematic depth in a targeted subset of neglected areas acceptable?** **Given that menopause and pregnancy at advanced maternal age intersect with non-communicable diseases (e.g., cardiovascular**	Applicants should justify the proposed Centre's thematic areas of SRHR focus based on burden of need and contextual opportunity in the range of LMIC settings in which it works. Although the Centre is expected to interact with other related policy areas of FCDO interest, its central focus must be comprehensive SRHR. See also Questions 3.15 and 3.33.

	risks, bone density, metabolic health), does FCDO support applied research where SRHR outcomes are closely linked with chronic disease screening and mature women's health systems?	
3.37 **New**	**Pillar 2 involves responsive, call-down technical evidence for FCDO posts and partner governments. Is FCDO expecting the Centre's core roster of experts to have dedicated technical advisory capabilities in digital health governance, health data security, and digital public infrastructure, or is this expected to be sub-commissioned on demand?**	There are no predetermined areas of expertise that must be demonstrated for Pillar 2, but strong applications will present disciplinary breadth across some or all of clinical, social, economic, behavioural, gender, health systems, and policy determinants of SRHR outcomes. Applicants are expected to show how they would identify and source additional expertise to meet evidence requests of FCDO and its partners where it doesn't exist within the consortium. This approach will be further developed at full proposal stage.
3.38 **New**	**The call mentions that the Centre should cover some fragile and/or conflict-affected settings. Could you please clarify how these settings are defined for the purpose of this call, or direct us to a relevant classification or list of eligible countries? Does a fragile region within an otherwise stable country qualify?**	FCDO does not maintain an official list of fragile and conflict-affected settings, so applicants should justify why the countries they have selected meet this criterion and how they will generate learning for SRHR in FCAS contexts. Fragile or conflict-affected regions within larger countries would be eligible as areas of focus. FCDO expects consortia to take a risk-based approach and consider their likely exposure to UK sanctions and terrorism legislation and to take all reasonable steps to mitigate the associated risks, including in relation to making funds available to designated persons or entities, or proscribed groups, including those on the following lists as updated from time to time: Consolidated List of Financial Sanctions Targets in the UK – HMT Treasury Proscribed Terrorist Organisations in the UK – UK Home Office

3.39 **New**	**Is a multi-country pragmatic cluster randomised trial an acceptable flagship activity within Pillar 1?**	At full proposal stage, shortlisted applicants will be asked to develop a comprehensive research agenda and milestones for the Centre. Applicants should justify why the proposed subject areas, geographies, research designs and methods will meet the Centre's objectives.

4. Finance and budget

	QUESTION	ANSWER
4.1	**Are any budget details required at the Expression of Interest stage?**	Budgets for Research Centre delivery are not required at the EOI stage; they will be assessed as part of full proposals for shortlisted consortia. A budget template and eligible cost guidance are provided on the call page for applicants' reference. The budget for the proposal development grant (max £30,000) is submitted as part of the EOI, using the separate template provided.
4.2	**What is the basis for the funding – e.g. will it be on a full-economic costing basis, including overheads, or is there an expectation that the lead institution will be required to contribute towards the cost of running the Centre?**	The Research Centre is funded on a full-economic costing basis, including overheads. Full proposals will be assessed for value for money using the '5Es' framework— Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Equity, and Cost-Effectiveness—and must provide a detailed, transparent budget breakdown, including overheads, supply chain costs, risks, and any cost-sharing or savings initiatives.

4.3	**What funding arrangements will apply to the successful consortium?**	Unless otherwise agreed, payments will be made to the administering organisation quarterly in arrears, upon FCDO approval of required financial reporting documentation. The administering organisation is responsible for onward payments to consortium members.
4.4	**Is there a cap on overhead/ indirect cost rates that can be charged?**	Full proposals will be assessed for value for money using the '5Es' framework—Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Equity and Cost-Effectiveness—and must provide a detailed, transparent budget breakdown, including overheads, supply chain costs, risks, and any profit, cost-sharing or savings initiatives. Further guidance will be provided at a later stage of the competition.
4.5	**Can costs for a PhD stipend be included?**	A PhD stipend can be included in UK ODA (Official Development Assistance) funds, provided certain conditions are met: The research must be ODA compliant, SRHR focused and primarily benefit the stated research purpose of the application in a country or countries on the OECD DAC list (i.e., LMICs), and the main purpose of the grant must be the research in the interest of the consortium, not the individual.
4.6	**Can the budget be managed by the HIC co-lead, or must it sit with the LMIC organisation?**	The Administering Organisation may be HIC based.
4.7	**Is there a rule how the budget should spread between countries?**	There is no prescribed rule on how the budget must be spread between countries, but budgets will be assessed for fair and equitable financial distribution.

4.8	**Are travel grants or MSc funding available?**	The £30,000 proposal development grant can be used to support travel for consortium partners in preparing the full proposal. These should be costed using the budget template provided. Travel costs may also be included in the full consortium budget (which is submitted at full proposal stage) where needed. The proposal development grant and the Research Centre budget may not be used to support MSc studentships. **Please note this is a correction to a previously published version.**
4.9	**Can a consortium member, rather than the lead, run Pillar 2? Can it hold the responsive research fund, or must the Administering Organisation hold it?**	The administering organisation manages the funding for the consortium and can disburse it to meet the requirements of the Research Centre, which may include assigning responsibility to a consortium member for administering Pillar 2. More information about the consortium's approach to managing the responsive research fund in Pillar 2 will be requested at full proposal stage.