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14 - THE ROLE OF FUNDING IN BUILDING AN EQUITABLE GLOBAL HEALTH RESEARCH ECOSYSTEM

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Resumen

Background/Objectives: Global health research continues to embody profound epistemological and ontological asymmetries rooted in structural inequities between the Global North and the Global South. Institutions based in the Global North capture the majority of research funding, often positioning themselves as principal investigators and coordinators, while institutions from endemic countries are relegated to the role of local implementers. This hierarchical configuration perpetuates an unequal distribution of leadership, resources, and recognition, allowing Northern institutions to dominate research agendas, funding flows, and authorship, while Southern partners remain underrepresented in decision-making and in the production of contextually grounded knowledge. In the field of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs), these dynamics are particularly pronounced, reinforcing dependency and limiting the capacity of endemic-country institutions to generate evidence that reflects local priorities and realities. Addressing these entrenched inequities requires a structural transformation in global health research governance that redistributes leadership, values diverse knowledge systems, and promotes reciprocal learning. Funding agencies play a pivotal role in advancing this transformation by adopting mechanisms that correct, rather than reproduce, systemic imbalances.

Methods: In this context, Fundación Anesvad has developed two research funding calls focused on NTDs, explicitly designed to foster a more just and equitable global research ecosystem. These initiatives operationalize principles of fairness, inclusivity, and epistemic justice through transparent eligibility and evaluation criteria that prioritize: (1) research that directly addresses NTDs and their social determinants of

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health; (2) leadership by institutions and researchers from endemic countries, fostering equitable North-South partnerships and strengthening South-South collaborations; (3) gender parity within research teams and the systematic integration of gender perspectives across all research stages; (4) meaningful participation of affected communities; (5) enhanced coordination with national health programs; (6) a strong commitment to open science; and (7) the translation, dissemination, and return of research findings to the populations concerned.

Results: The projects presented and selected in the two editions of Fundación Anesvad's funding calls show how equity-focused eligibility and evaluation criteria can catalyze shifts in research practices and serve as transformative instruments of epistemic and structural justice.

Conclusions/Recommendations: Intentionally designed funding calls can foster a more equitable global health research ecosystem.

Disclosures: The authors, staff of Anesvad Foundation, present experiences, results, and challenges from their work and are committed to the ethical dissemination of findings.

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