



# IDEA

## Identification of emerging agents

Strengthening diagnostic capacities for the detection of infectious diseases in Sri Lanka

### Duration

2017 to 2020

### Budget

280,000 EUR/year

### Partner countries

Sri Lanka

### Challenges addressed by the project

In the age of global mobility, containing pathogens is of vast importance to the promotion of global health. To prevent cross-border disease transmission in outbreak situations, the rapid identification of infectious agents is critical. Therefore, this project aims to strengthen the diagnostic capacities for infectious diseases of partner institutions in Sri Lanka, an internationally popular tourist destination. In addition, it aims to identify pathogens causing outbreak situations, which are relevant for public health in Sri Lanka (e.g. encephalitis and haemorrhagic fever viruses).

### Objectives

- » Establishment of public health laboratories for the molecular detection of pathogens, and expansion of the diagnostic portfolio to include pathogens, which are relevant for differential diagnosis
- » Realisation of trainings on the diagnostics of infectious diseases for laboratory personnel
- » Investigation of pathogens in potential reservoir hosts, such as bats, to determine prevalence, transmission routes and seasonality of zoonotic pathogens
- » Investigation of encephalitides and haemorrhagic fever cases of unknown aetiology to identify novel pathogens, and develop custom-made diagnostic methods

### Overview of activities

#### Trainings

In September 2017, a laboratory training took place at the University of Colombo. On this occasion, 9 persons were trained. In April 2018, a workshop on the diagnostics of highly pathogenic viruses followed at the Robert Koch Institute (RKI), in which 4 persons were trained. One more diagnostics training was carried out at the North Colombo Teaching Hospital in October 2018, where an additional 8 persons were trained. Visiting scientists from Sri Lanka spent several months each at the RKI, starting in October 2017, October 2018 and May 2019 respectively, for training purposes and the analysis and evaluation of their samples.

#### Strengthening of diagnostics

A real-time PCR laboratory for molecular diagnostics was inaugurated in early July 2018 at the North Colombo Teaching Hospital. The University of Colombo had previously opened another training laboratory in March 2018.

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### Detection of novel pathogens

In future, human samples from North Colombo Teaching Hospital and other hospitals are also to be analysed for novel pathogens. Sampling of feral bats and rodents, which are possible reservoir species for potentially highly dangerous pathogens, is being carried out in cooperation with partners at the University of Colombo. The samples are continuously being analysed for pathogens, both at the university and at the RKI.

### Partner institutions

- » University of Colombo  
Oldest university in Sri Lanka, located in the centre of the capital Colombo
- » North Colombo Teaching Hospital Ragama  
Most important teaching hospital, associated to the Medical Faculty of the University of Kelaniya

### Contact/supporting institution in Germany

Robert Koch Institute

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