TROPICAL DATA NEWS

The Download October 2023

It has been a busy year for the Tropical Data team. We are excited to tell you about the recent updates to our training system that we rolled out in Kenya in July, as well as some exciting new projects and recent collaborations to further develop the Tropical Data service.

Training methodology updates

The key updates centre around:

- changes to the grader certification process, including the use of photography rather than relying on grading live cases with TF

- improving TT diagnosis and data collection by counting the number of eyelashes touching the eyeball or recently epilated, re-emphasising the definition of a health worker for the management questions, and adding a question about other eye conditions that may warrant treatment or referral

You can find the updated training manual here. We encourage you to contact us if you have any questions or concerns as we roll out these updates to the countries we work with. And let us say a huge thank you to all those who inputted to these updates, including our working group members and colleagues from across the trachoma community.

TO DATE

50
countries supported

3,573
EUs supported

11,463,070
residents examined

Kenya international Training of Trainers (TOT) workshop

We were delighted to welcome over 90 trainer participants from over 30 countries to our update TOT workshop in July, our biggest one yet! Thank you so much to the Kenya team for their fantastic welcome. It was a wonderful opportunity to roll out and refine our new training methods and to catch up in person, sharing our experiences from the many countries we work with.

Trainers who attended will go on to cascade these updates to others in their own countries. We look forward to future opportunities to collaborate with you all.

Expanding Tropical Data's support for serology and infection data collection

Funded by a grant from USAID and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, through the Task Force for Global Health, Tropical Data has been preparing its systems to introduce a broader package of support for countries wishing to conduct serology and infection data collection as part of their routine trachoma surveys (so-called 'plus' surveys). An important development driving this change is the decision by WHO to convene a Guideline Development Group (GDG) on the use of serology in trachoma programming. We aim to be ready to implement the recommendations made by WHO as a result of the guideline development process, which might include recommendations to include sample collection alongside clinical examinations in certain epidemiological situations.

An important facet of this work is standardising certain elements of the survey process (e.g. training and data analysis) so that data from 'plus' surveys are of consistently high quality, and comparable across time and settings. To inform Tropical Data's approach to standardisation, the service is working with COR-NTD to support a number of operational research projects aimed at better understanding the underlying causes of persistent and/or recrudescent trachoma.

Through this collaboration, Tropical Data is learning valuable lessons and piloting a range of materials that countries will be able to benefit from in the future as part of a routine package of support.

Geostatistics

Tropical Data is working in collaboration with Lancaster University (a WHO collaborating centre), to develop geostatistical methods for trachoma elimination purposes. Funded by a grant from USAID, the aim is to investigate the potential for geostatistics to help programmes improve survey design and enhance the precision of survey estimates. This project is ongoing with many different areas of research. For more information, check out the recording of our introduction to geostatistics webinar from August 2023!

If you attended or have listened to the webinar, we would also love to get your feedback here.

Tropical Data's new data collection app

We have been working with the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) to identify requirements and potential solutions for an updated Tropical Data mobile application for data collection. Funded by a National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant, UCSF's overall aim is to integrate smartphone photography for trachoma, smartphone visual acuity assessment, and mobile autorefraction to enhance community-based public health monitoring. Our new app was announced at the recent TOT workshop in Kenya and is being rolled out for projects using the 2023 updated methodology on a per-project basis.

We would like to thank the UCSF team for this opportunity to learn from their experiences supporting integrated surveys and for funding the app development as part of their NIH grant.

TROPICAL DATA

Tropical Data helps countries to collect high quality data by providing epidemiological, training, logistical and data management support to national programmes carrying out all types of cross-sectional surveys on trachoma.
More info at: www.tropicaldata.org