

Press release

STRonGer kick-off-meeting,

the 13th and 14th of December 2011, Institut Pasteur de la Guyane, Cayenne, French Guiana

The **STRonGer**¹ program for "*Strengthening transdisciplinary research on Infection us and Emerging Diseases in French Guiana: linking fieldwork, benchside and bedside*" is a scientific program whose objective is to significantly reinforce, in the short term, the existing medical research capacities in French Guiana - both in terms of human resources and infrastructure - to better meet the infectious health risks for the Guianese population.

The Guianese population booming is regularly confronted to infectious outbreaks or epidemics of various origins (viral: dengue, rabies, hantavirus, ..., parasitic: malaria, Chagas disease, ... or bacterial: Q fever, histoplasmosis, ...). The emergence of these infectious agents is mainly the result of socio-economical, environmental and ecological constraints related to human activities. The infectious cycle of pathogens, vectors and/or animal reservoirs can be indeed affected by pressures on natural environments (deforestation, impacts) and changes in population behaviours.

To better understand the health risks posed by this growing interface between forest and human populations, Guianese research teams of the Institut Pasteur de la Guyane (IPG), CNRS (UMR EcoFoG), INSERM (Centre d'investigation clinique – épidémiologie clinique, CIC - EC), the Université des Antilles et de la Guyane (Epidemiologie des Parasitoses Tropicales or EPAT) as well as several teams from continental Europe (The Netherlands, Portugal, United Kingdom) are associated in the **STRonGer** consortium.

STRonGer is the first *Research Potential* project of the 7th Framework Programme for research and development (FP7-REGPOT-2011-1) obtained by a Guianese Coordinator. Of the 291 submitted projects in 2010, STRonGer has been ranked 9. STRonGer is coordinated by the Institut Pasteur de la Guyane for a period of 42 months. The financial contribution of the European Commission to the program is 3.7 million of euros.

STRonGer's operational objectives aim at:

- promoting close cooperation and regular exchanges between the different teams to strengthen the potential of research in different areas of science and technology, through the organization of quarterly seminars and/or scientific conferences involving local, regional, national or international experts,
- increasing the potential of research through the recruitment of 8 young qualified researchers,
- improving the local capacities of diagnosis by introducing new technologies,
- increasing the capacity of research laboratories, through the construction of a biosafety level 3 laboratory in entomology, and by endowing the existing laboratories of advanced technologies,
- disseminating the research results and the acquired expertise through appropriate media (book, film, website...).

In terms of research, the **STRonGer** program will strengthen scientific excellence in French Guiana and increase the international visibility of the consortium's members in the field of infectious and emerging diseases. In terms of public health, **STRonGer** should have a major impact not only for French Guiana but also for the Guiana shield².

¹ "*Strengthening transdisciplinary research on Infectious and Emerging Diseases in French Guiana: linking fieldwork, benchside and bedside*"

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