



## Harm Reduction International is seeking an independent research consultant to design and implement study into the impact of COVID-19 upon harm reduction investment and expenditure

Harm Reduction International (HRI) is a leading NGO dedicated to reducing the negative health, social and legal impacts of drug use and drug policy. We promote the rights of people who use drugs and their communities through research and advocacy to help achieve a world where drug policies and laws contribute to healthier, safer societies.

HRI is a technical partner on a 2017-2020 Global Fund regional harm reduction advocacy grant, for which Alliance India is the Principal Recipient. The overall aim of the grant is to increase access to essential HIV and harm reduction services for people who use drugs in Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam. HRI's contribution is to increase the availability of evidence through community driven studies to inform advocacy for harm reduction funding.

**Problem statement:** COVID-19 represents a significant impediment to harm reduction outreach, service provision, linkages to broader health systems, and the way harm reduction services are funded. It is crucial that harm reduction services continue to operate during the pandemic and in the context of future recession. Harm reduction funding must continue and be flexible enough to allow services to adapt so that provision is sustained. Funding gaps and service closures result in increased HIV and hepatitis C infection and other blood borne viruses among people who use drugs. Interruptions also decrease the cost-effectiveness of services, so there is a strong economic argument for consistent investment.

An evidence-based understanding of how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected harm reduction funding and what actions civil society, communities, donors and governments have taken to mitigate and protect against disruptions, will guide future programming and policy decisions. This information is also necessary to inform advocacy for sustainable harm reduction financing at the national level and provide donors and governments with recommendations for protective action throughout the pandemic and the period of recession to follow.

**Scope of work:** HRI is seeking an independent research consultant to design and implement a pilot study into the impact of COVID-19 upon harm reduction funding. The successful candidate will work in close collaboration with HRI and national/regional civil society and community organisations in seven countries in Asia. This research will provide valuable insights for national and regional advocacy and facilitate learning between countries on what has worked well and what has not. It will provide evidence to inform specific recommendations for donors and governments in relation to sustainable financing for harm reduction during the pandemic and in the period of recession predicted to follow. Findings will be published in a policy report in English, disseminated in Asia and internationally.

The consultant will design a research methodology in consultation with HRI. This will involve desk-based research and consultations with relevant stakeholders, including representatives from government, donor agencies, civil society and networks of people who use drugs within the seven project countries. It will identify practices of donors and governments with broad areas of interest being: a) access to harm reduction funding levels stable or increased/decreased, b) community and civil society involvement in funding-related decision-making, c) emergency funding opportunities and the functioning of coordination mechanisms to allow quick response to emergencies such as harm reduction funding cuts/services shutting down, human rights violations, stock outs, procurement problems and d) civil society and community organisations supported to be reactive to COVID-19 context.

**Deliverables:** The consultant will:

1. Develop a research plan, following desk-based research and consultation with national and regional partners on priority areas and key issues they have experienced in relation to COVID-19 and harm reduction financing. This should include initial mapping of key information sources and stakeholders (two weeks following consultant appointment);
2. Develop survey questions for key stakeholders from government, donor agencies, civil society and community representatives which facilitate data-gathering (three weeks following consultant appointment);
3. Conduct data-gathering interviews with key stakeholders using survey questions (six weeks following consultant appointment);
4. Draft a 15-20 page report compiling findings of desk-based research and interviews, including 3-4 short case studies on practice in the project countries (linking to positive and negative impact on harm reduction services), as well as key recommendations for donors and governments on good practice for sustainable financing for harm reduction (eight weeks following consultant appointment);
5. Gather feedback from HRI and project partners and incorporate to produce final draft of report (eleven weeks following consultant appointment);
6. Prepare 5 slides for a PPT presentation on this topic (twelve weeks following consultant appointment);

All work is to be submitted to HRI in English with full references and accompanying documents (including spending and budgetary records, published articles, websites and grey literature) saved within a dropbox.

**Timeline:** The consultant will be engaged for an estimated 60 days between July - October 2020. Final submission of report is expected by Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2020. The consultant is expected to regularly report to HRI's Sustainable Financing Lead and to consult with national and regional partners during the consultancy. Consultant compensation will be commensurate with experience.

**Person specification:** The successful candidate will be an experienced harm reduction researcher and/or advocate, background in health economics desirable. They should have awareness of funding and budgetary challenges for harm reduction. Research experience, including data-gathering via interviews and desk-based research, data analysis and report writing are essential. Membership of, or close links with national harm reduction and/or people who use drugs advocacy networks is desirable and an awareness of the role research can play in informing advocacy work is vital. Excellent written and spoken communication skills in English are essential and fluency in a local language spoken within one of the project countries is beneficial.

**Place of Work:** One of the project countries (Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam)

**How to apply:** Please send a CV and a cover letter detailing your suitability for the role by Friday, 26<sup>th</sup> June 2020 to [hire@hri.global](mailto:hire@hri.global)