



Request for Quotations (RFQ21-10)

Consultancy to develop the protocol and conduct preparatory activities for an acceptability and feasibility assessment for the Dapivirine Vaginal Ring (DVR) in Cambodia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines

1. INTRODUCTION

UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, is an innovative joint venture of the United Nations system, bringing together the efforts and resources of ten UN system organizations in the AIDS response to help the world prevent new HIV infections, care for people living with HIV, and mitigate the impact of the epidemic. These organizations, called “UNAIDS Cosponsors” are UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank.

UNAIDS is an organization that is dependent on the budgetary and extra-budgetary contributions it receives for the implementation of its activities. Bidders are therefore requested to propose the best and most cost-effective solution to meet UNAIDS requirements, while ensuring a high level of service.

For more information about UNAIDS please consult our website www.unaids.org.

2. RFQ DETAILS

The purpose of this RFQ is to select suitable supplier for the procurement of Consultancy to conduct an acceptability and feasibility assessment for the Dapivirine Vaginal Ring (DVR) in Cambodia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommended the Dapivirine Vaginal Ring (DVR) in 2021 for use in cis women at substantial risk of HIV infection as part of combination HIV prevention approaches. The DVR is a female-initiated option for HIV prevention. The silicone ring is easy to bend and insert inside the vagina. It is worn for 28 days and slowly releases the antiretroviral drug, dapivirine. After 28 days it should be replaced by a new ring. Open label extension studies for the DVR in Africa showed increased uptake and greater risk reduction in HIV infection (by over 50%), compared with the phase III trials.

DVR can be offered alongside oral PrEP, and other HIV prevention options, as an additional choice for women who do not want or are unable to take a daily oral tablet. While contraceptive vaginal rings have been available for several years, the DPV-VR is the first vaginal HIV prevention product. Research is under way to develop a vaginal ring that includes both contraception and HIV prevention.

To date, DVR trials, open label extension studies and rollout have focused on cis women in sub-Saharan Africa, and there is no information on whether the DVR would be acceptable and feasible to offer to cis-women in Asia. Information on acceptability and feasibility is essential initial step to planning and advocacy efforts to offer appropriate choices in the range of HIV prevention options available to cis women within the Asia-Pacific region.

2.1 Key requirements and description of services

This consultancy is intended to conduct the preparatory work, including protocol development and stakeholder consultations, to assess the acceptability and feasibility of the DVR to cis-women at substantial HIV risk and the feasibility of implementation in four Asia-Pacific countries, Cambodia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines, and provide evidence-based recommendations for next steps.

Activity 1: Develop an overarching project plan outlining overall approach and methods, regional and country-level activities, milestones and timeframes

Deliverable 1: Project plan

Timeframe: 31 December 2021

Activity 2: Develop a research protocol(s) for conducting the project, including all data collection instruments and participant facing materials, in consultation with key country and regional stakeholders (particularly WHO and UNFPA among UN Partners) for the assessment in Cambodia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and The Philippines. The assessment will focus on the communities who may benefit from this new PrEP product (assessing interest/acceptability, willingness to pay, service modalities etc.), but should also include an assessment of providers, implementers and decision-makers.

Deliverable 2: Final research protocol(s) and accompanying materials

Timeline: 31 January 2022

Activity 3: Stakeholder engagement and sensitization activities to support the development of the protocol and preparation for the project.

Deliverable 3: Summary report of activities and outcomes, including risks and opportunities

Timeline: 28 February 2022

Activity 4: Adaptation of the materials to the four Asia-Pacific countries as required: Cambodia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines.

Deliverable 4: Adapted protocol and project materials

Timeframe: 28 February 2022

Activity 5: Submit the protocol for approval from relevant research ethics committees or approval bodies for the four Asia-Pacific countries: Cambodia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines.

Timeline: 31 March 2022

Qualification and Requirements:

The consultant / institution must have:

- An advanced degree in public health, social sciences or similar.
- More than 10 years' experience working with key populations in Asia and the Pacific, particularly with female sex workers.
- Experience conducting research in one or more of the specific four countries identified will be desirable.
- Track record in undertaking feasibility and acceptability research on HIV and STIs, and/or other sexual health related interventions such as PrEP, HIV self-testing or community-based testing, microbicides or similar.
- Track record of partnership with female sex workers and their civil society organisations to ensure participatory research approaches
- Expert proficiency in written and spoken English. Proficiency in a local language would be an asset.
- Demonstrated ability to work and collaborate with other technical partners of UNAIDS, including WHO and UNFPA.

- Desirable: A consultant or consultant team associated with an accredited university or other research institution would be best positioned to lead this project.

Other conditions

Any data, information or documents generated during the period of this consultancy will be treated as strictly confidential, and the rights of dissemination and/or publication will reside with the UNAIDS and WHO.

Project next steps

This project is part 1 of a larger project funded under a grant from the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Part 2 of the project is expected to be funded and executed in 2022. Part 2 is expected to involve the conduct of the research and preparation of the final report, together with dissemination of the results of the research.

To enhance the conduct of this project, additional funding may be leveraged and complementary activities identified including a community track for consultation and sensitization.

2.2 Reporting requirements

The Consultant will work under the supervision of UNAIDS Regional office for Asia and the Pacific. Regular reporting to the UNAIDS Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific on activity progress approximately every 2 weeks, or as otherwise agreed, will be required during the consultancy period.

2.3 Finance and accounting requirements

UNAIDS will require for each completed job a detailed invoice including units provided details of expenses as well as the submission of the electronic copies prior to payment processing.

2.4 Performance monitoring

UNAIDS will review, in accordance with agreed work plan at the time of contract signature, all milestones and the quality of the deliverable. UNAIDS reserve the right to reject deliverables not compliant with the specifications in section 2.1.

Submission process

Proposals must be received no later than 24 November 2021 at 17:00 hours Bangkok, Thailand time.

The final proposal must be sent by e-mail and in English to the following address:

Email: rstap@unaids.org **Subject: RFQ (21-10)**

Proposals must offer services for the total requirement. Proposals offering only part of the requirement may be rejected.

A proposal shall consist of the Technical and the Financial Components.

The Technical Component will contain the Individual/Company Profile, the competency of the company, and the proposed approach and work plan to deliver the services requested in this RFQ.

The Financial Component will contain the detailed price information including number of units and costs per unit.

Proposals shall be signed by a person or persons duly authorized to bind the proposal to the contract.

All prices shall be quoted only in the currency of the country where the bidder is legally established or in US dollars (USD) if payments in this currency are allowed by the local legislation. For the purposes of comparison only, UNAIDS will convert all bids to its USD equivalent using the UN Exchange Rate valid on the closing date of the RFQ.