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**MULTI-COUNTRY SOUTH ASIA GLOBAL FUND HIV PROGRAMME**

## CONCEPT NOTE

### 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting – APCOM South Asia Strategic Information Advisors (ASASIA)

#### **I. BACKGROUND**

Reliable data is needed for public health policy makers, health care service providers, HIV programme managers, donor organizations and other stakeholders to make informed, evidence-based decisions on programme planning and policy in the response to the HIV epidemic. Such Strategic Information (SI) is used to properly plan interventions, provide evidence to prioritize for populations most at risk and affected, monitor progress and guide advocacy efforts.

Founded in 2007, the Asia Pacific Coalition on Male Sexual Health (APCOM) is a coalition of members – governments, UN partners, non-profits and community based organisations – from Asia and the Pacific. APCOM represent a diverse range of interests working together to advocate, highlight and prioritize HIV issues that affect the lives of men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender people. One of the core mandates of APCOM which is embedded in its new Strategic Plan for 2014-2019 is to strive to improve the development, availability and use of such strategic information. While APCOM has made significant strides to advance strategic information focusing on the diverse communities of MSM and transgender people in the region, gaps in knowledge and data remain.

In 2013, APCOM joined the [Multi-Country South Asia Global Fund HIV Programme](#) (the Programme) as a regional Sub-Recipient. The Programme responds to the HIV epidemic among MSM and transgender people by focusing on strengthening community systems to improve coordination with local governments and health care providers, deliver concentrated and quality capacity development support, and provide technical assistance to ensure high intervention impact and sustainability. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) serves as Principal Recipient of the Programme. A core component is development and dissemination of strategic information, including biological, behavioural, and psychosocial research, as well as supporting strengthening of national monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems.

In order to generate evidence and contribute to development of a strategic information knowledge base for the Programme, APCOM has produced a range of policy briefs and papers in the context of HIV and the MSM and transgender community in South Asia. These include a scoping paper, [Where to from here? Identifying priorities for strategic information development](#), which identifies significant gaps in the literature available on MSM and transgender people in the region, including research into HIV/STI incidence rates, transgender health, mental health and prejudice, and calls for community and

development partners to have access to relevant information to generate evidence-based programmes. Focusing on the area of faith and HIV and the law, the [Discussion Paper: Islam, Sexual Diversity and Access to Health Services](#) and [Policy Brief on South Asia Legal Environments for MSM and Transgender People](#) examine how these issues present hurdles for prevention efforts for HIV, access to health and securing equal opportunities. The [Policy Brief: Overlooked, Ignored, Forgotten: HIV and Basic Rights of Transgender People in Asia and the Pacific](#) raises issues on poverty, gender identity crisis and how they create an unhealthy environment which elevates the risk of transgender to HIV/STI infection and violence.

Since Phase 1, the Multi-Country South Asia Global Fund HIV Programme has contributed valuable strategic knowledge on the impact of HIV on MSM and transgender populations in South Asia through development of a number of key knowledge products, including<sup>1</sup>: [MSM Country Snapshots](#); [South Asia Regional Advocacy Framework and Resource Guide on HIV, Human Rights and SOGI](#) and national advocacy frameworks for [Bangladesh](#), [Bhutan](#), [Nepal](#), [Pakistan](#) and [Sri Lanka](#); [Regional Legal Reference Resource](#); [A Framework for Media Engagement on Human Rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in South Asia](#); [Scan of Law and Policies Affecting Human Rights, Discrimination and Access to HIV and Health Services by Key Populations in Pakistan](#); Mapping and Size Estimation of MSM in Bhutan; Formative Assessment on Stigma and Discrimination Impacting Universal Access to HIV and Health Services for MSM and Transgender People in Bhutan; and [Surveying Nepal's Sexual and Gender Minorities: An Inclusive Approach](#).

## II. CONTEXT

Within this context, the APCOM South Asia Strategic Information Advisors (ASASIA) was formed. The members of the advisory group consist of experts from diverse qualifications and sectors with relevant regionally applicable experience in policy, research, program development and organizational management. The role of ASASIA is to function as a peer review of the knowledge generated under the Multi-Country South Asia Global Fund HIV Programme, including knowledge products, research studies, strategic plans, etc. Additionally, ASASIA will contribute to the achievement of APCOM's core mandate on development of strategic information and explore opportunities to strengthen strategic information beyond the Programme. It is anticipated that the review processes will help ensure quality of those identified knowledge reference and plans produced and published under the Programme. The ASASIA is to work in a complimentary fashion with the APCOM Knowledge Reference Group (AKRG), a small panel of experts convened to identify the main principles for information development that are crucial for effective, evidence- and rights-based HIV programming for MSM and transgender people covering the Asia-Pacific region.

The first meeting of the ASASIA is planned on 7 February 2015 in Bangkok, Thailand.

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<sup>1</sup> For a full list of knowledge products of the Multi-Country South Asia Global Fund HIV Programme see: <http://issuu.com/undpasiapacific/stacks/3cf6eab90e614ef298f37e4b405caabb>

### III. OBJECTIVE

The overall objectives of the 1<sup>st</sup> APCOM South Asia Strategic Information Advisors (ASASIA) meeting can be described as follows:

1. To review and provide feedback for improvement of ongoing studies listed below:
  - a. South Asia urban response on health services to address HIV among MSM and TG people (Seven Cities Study)
  - b. Regional study on violence against sexual minorities and South Asia urban response on health services
2. To review the Multi-Country South Asia Global Fund HIV Programme Phase 2 Knowledge Management and Communications Strategy
3. To synthesize the findings from strategic information products thus far developed under the Programme, which will then be used to feed into the Expression of Interest (EOI) submission for continuation of the Programme under the GF New Funding Model (NFM)
4. To recommend topics and areas of focus for upcoming knowledge products to be developed by APCOM (linked to APCOM 3.1.3 under the grant) and other grant partners that will fill existing gaps in knowledge.

### V. OUTCOME

The outcome of the meeting will be;

- 1) Consolidated feedback for quality assurance and improvement of the following on-going studies:
  - a. South Asia urban response on health services to address HIV among MSM and TG people (Seven Cities Study)
  - b. Regional study on violence against sexual minorities and South Asia urban response on health services
- 2) Recommendations for improvement of the Multi-Country South Asia Global Fund HIV Programme Phase 2 Knowledge Management and Communications Strategy.
- 3) Key findings synthesized of the produced strategic information of the Programme and APCOM Gaps for use in development of the EOI.
- 4) Knowledge gaps identified and topics recommended for knowledge products to be developed by APCOM and other grant partners under the Programme, and included in the EOI.

### V. PARTICIPANTS

The panel comprises of 5 experts and members from APCOM, UNDP and other partner organizations:

ASASIA

1. Dr. Tasnim Azim
2. Ms. Bushra Rani
3. Mr. Siddharth Dube
4. Mr. Shambhu Kafle
5. Dr. Venkatesan Chakrapani

APCOM	6. Mr. Roy Wadia 7. Mr. Dédé Oetomo 8. Mr. Midnight Poonkasetwattana 9. Mr. Shankar Silmula 10. Mr. Craig Knowles
UNDP-APRC	11. Mr. Edmund Settle 12. Ms. Anna Chernyshova 13. Mr. Ian Mungall
APMG	14. Mr. Lou McCallum
The winning bidder for Violence Against Sexual Minorities Study	15. TBD

## **VI. BUDGET**

The budget for the meeting will be booked under the line item APCOM 2.1.4.