

**Terms of Reference
Consultancy for review the STI program**

Objective of the consultancy:

Review the STI program and identify further opportunities to improve the STI program.

Background:

Strengthening STI Prevention and Management

Bhutan has a significant burden of STIs and also experiences related high of cervical cancer, a condition potentiated by HPV. There is scope to strengthen STI control in the extension phase through a series of interrelated steps.

Bhutan currently has no STI specialist or sexual health specialist and graduate training in STI management is an urgent priority, to provide clinical and program leadership. The project proposes to train three STI specialists, one from each of the three referral hospitals, through a regional fellowship or masters course of 6-12 months duration, ideally with part of the training completed by full time learning. These trained STI specialists will provide professional support and leadership to the National STI program. Bhutan has never conducted an STI prevalence and etiology survey and such a survey is urgently needed to inform the STI program. Accordingly, Bhutan will conduct an STI prevalence and etiology survey among (a) formal and informal potential sex workers at border sites and in Thimphu, to understand the STI burden among high risk women and (b) among antenatal clients at major centres in each region, to understand STI prevalence and etiology among low risk women in the general population and high risk women. An estimated 100 high risk and 500 low risk women will be tested counseled and treated if positive for syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, trichomoniasis and if possible HSV-2 and HPV. The results will be used to determine appropriate STI investments and to refine syndromic treatment algorithms.

There is an important opportunity for Bhutan to strengthen syndromic STI management, both through intensified training and support, including the distribution of STI management algorithm wall charts, and through enhanced supervision.

An expert program review will identify further opportunities to improve the STI program. A regional STI expert will be engaged to review the overall STI program and to identify opportunities to strengthen national program management.

All existing HIV communications and materials, including mass media, printed and interpersonal education, to identify opportunities to strengthen STI prevention and control messages is proposed (under ICB plan). This review will be undertaken by an experienced Bhutan AIDS or communications specialist and will lead to the integration of STI messages into existing AIDS communications.

Proposed to offer presumptive STI treatment for a small but important group of high risk women, formal and informal sex work, who play a major role in STI and HIV transmission. Accordingly, presumptive or epidemiological mass treatment of high risk women at border posts and in Thimphu will be conducted. Participants will be enrolled and tested as part of the above prevalence and etiology study, offered presumptive treatment with azithromycin and metronidazole at diminishing intervals, based on the prevalence findings, but probably monthly for the first three months, tapering to

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quarterly for another nine months, before being re-assessed and withdrawn. A follow-up STI prevalence survey after one year will be conducted to assess the impact of presumptive treatment.

The project extension period seeks to focus and greatly strengthen STI control in Bhutan through high level specialist training and national capacity building, research, a program review, further integration of STI messages into AIDS communications, strengthened syndromic management, presumptive treatment for high risk women and intensified evaluation.

Outcomes of the consultancy:

1. Develop a protocol for STI prevalence and aetiology survey.
2. Review and offer opportunities to improve existing syndromic STI management and management of STIs at the first point of contact with the health system
3. Examine and make recommendations to strengthen the integration of STI management services into existing maternal and child health and reproductive health services.
4. Submit to the NACP a set of recommendations based on the review to improve the existing STI programs.

Criteria for selection:

1. Working experience in the relevant area of at least 5 years in the region.
2. Experience of conducting such reviews.

Duration:

21 days

Payment:

As per agreement with Ministry of Health and the World Bank.