

International Harm Reduction Development Program, Open Society Institute

Grant Program Announcement: Model Services for Women Who Use Drugs in Georgia, Russia, and Ukraine

In 2007, IHRD launched a new program on women, drug use, and HIV in Georgia, Russia, and Ukraine. The goals of the program are to increase understanding of the gender dynamics of drug use and access to appropriate services; to engage in regulatory reform and professional education to remove these obstacles; and to support the development of innovative, model services.

For women drug users, risk takes different forms than it does for men. Women who inject drugs are more likely to have a sexual partner who injects drugs; to use drugs and share syringes with sexual partners; to experience sexual violence, including sexual abuse from the police; and to exchange sex for money, drugs, protection, food, or shelter. All of these factors can increase women's vulnerability to HIV and other harms, and leave women drug users in need of harm reduction services that address sexual practices.

But women drug users often have little access to services that fit their needs. Most harm reduction and drug treatment programs, which have limited resources and a largely male clientele, offer few services specifically for women. Many women do not enter drug treatment because they cannot leave their families for inpatient treatment, or because they fear the stigma attached to women's drug use. Mainstream women's services, such as maternity clinics and shelters, often discriminate against or do not accept drug users. Moreover, in many countries women's drug use can be grounds for loss of child custody, or can lead doctors to pressure women into having abortions or giving their children up to the state. As a result, women drug users do not have access to sexual health services, accurate information about the effects of drug use during pregnancy, drug treatment, or prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV. Facing intense stigma and the prospect of losing their children, many women drug users avoid health care all together.

In response, IHRD is pleased to announce a new grant program to support innovative harm reduction services for women in Georgia, Russia, and Ukraine. Programs selected for grants will receive technical training and ongoing support, and will ideally become model services that can be reproduced elsewhere. To this end, IHRD will ask grantees to document their work, collect data on their results, and, eventually, host visits from others interested in developing similar projects. Program results will be incorporated into national and international advocacy to increase women's access to harm reduction, drug treatment, and sexual and reproductive health services.

Three grants are available for Ukraine, two for Russia, and one for Georgia. While proposals will vary based on setting, priority will be given to those that include (but are not necessarily limited to) one or more of the following services:

- Sexual and reproductive health services aimed at women

- Evidence-based counseling on prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, drug treatment for women, and drug use during pregnancy
- Needle exchange for women who are uncomfortable appearing at a harm reduction center—e.g., home delivery of needles, or secondary exchange
- Rape and domestic violence crisis services or support
- Events to attract women to services (e.g. support groups, play groups, “women’s zone” in center, distribution of women’s hygiene products along with syringes)
- Partnership with AIDS Center, drug treatment clinic, maternity clinic, gynecologists and obstetricians, and other services, to ensure women’s access to non-discriminatory care

For more background information and for recommendations on designing services for women, please read IHRD’s report *Women, Harm Reduction, and HIV*, available in English and Russian at http://www.soros.org/initiatives/health/focus/ihrd/articles_publications/publications/women_20070920

Application Procedure

Organizations that wish to apply for funding must first submit a **Letter of Intent (LOI)**.

Letters of intent should be about 2 pages in length, can be in English or in Russian, and should include:

- Name and location of the organization
- Name and contact information of the person submitting the letter
- A brief description of the implementing organization
- A brief outline of current services offered, including any existing services for women
- A description of proposed services and reasons for selecting them
- Total sum requested

A detailed budget is **not** required at this stage. Grants are available for up to \$16,000 in Russia and Ukraine and up to \$10,000 in Georgia over a one-year period.

LOIs must be submitted to Sophie Pinkham at spinkham@sorosny.org by **November 20, 2007**. Successful applicants will be asked to submit a more detailed proposal. Final selection will be made by February 30, 2008, and projects will begin in April 2008.

Please address questions in English to Sophie Pinkham at spinkham@sorosny.org, or in Russian to Maria Golovanevskaya, mgolovanevskaya@osi.hu.