

## **IHRD Request for Proposals: Women, Drug Use, and Harm Reduction in Georgia, Russia, and Ukraine**

Scant research has been done on women who use drugs in the former Soviet Union, but evidence suggests that they are at elevated risk of HIV through both sexual transmission and unsafe drug injection, have reduced access to harm reduction programs and drug treatment, and are more aggressively stigmatized than their male counterparts. Pregnant women who are drug users or HIV-positive are often counseled or pressured to abort, and are denied information on prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission and reduction of drug-related harm during pregnancy. Provider discrimination and policies such as registration of drug users and STI “carriers” discourage women drug users from seeking prenatal and sexual health care. There are few, if any, specialized services for women in the region, though an increasing share of new HIV infections in the former Soviet Union are among women, and the majority of these women are likely injecting drug users (IDUs) or sexual partners of IDUs.

As part of a three-year program on the health and human rights of drug users in Georgia, Russia, and Ukraine, IHRD and the Canadian International Development Agency are launching a new program on women, drug use, and HIV in the three countries. The goals of the program are to increase understanding of the gender dynamics of drug use and access to appropriate services; to identify the particular challenges faced by women in seeking harm reduction and reproductive health services, and health care in general; and to engage in regulatory reform and professional education to remove these obstacles.

IHRD is pleased to announce a grant competition for assessments of harm reduction and sexual and reproductive health services for women who use drugs in Georgia, Russia, and Ukraine (one assessment per country). The reports should discuss and analyze country-specific barriers to women drug users’ access to healthcare services, discuss common problems faced by women drug users, and propose specific points of advocacy in response. Specifically, they should include, but do not have to be limited to:

- Focus group interviews with affected women
- Observation at health clinics, harm reduction sites, and other services or locations frequented by women who use drugs
- Mapping of services available to women drug users, including harm reduction services and other HIV prevention services, drug treatment, and sexual and reproductive health services, and analysis of obstacles to women drug users’ access to these services
- Interviews with officials and healthcare providers
- Analysis of legislation and policy relevant to women who use drugs
- A survey of local literature, including peer-reviewed articles and accounts in community publications
- Recommendations for measures to improve the quality and availability of services for women who use drugs, including policy change and service design

Proposals will be accepted for up to \$14,000. They should be no more than 6 pages in length, and must include:

- Description of organization, qualification to undertake the project, and experience and knowledge of drug use, harm reduction, and women drug users
- Description of project
- Workplan and timeline
- Budget
- Brief (one paragraph or less) biosketches of those involved in the project
- Plan for publicizing the findings of the report

Because the projects call for several types of expertise, IHRD encourages collaboration, for example between human rights groups or social scientists and harm reduction organizations. Where possible, grantees are encouraged to draw on the expertise of drug user groups. All applicants should be comfortable working with drug users and people living with HIV.

**Proposals are due March 1, 2007. They may be submitted by email in English or in Russian to Sophie Pinkham, IHRD Program Coordinator, at [spinkham@sorosny.org](mailto:spinkham@sorosny.org)**

In April 2007, grantees from the three countries will attend a training on research methodology and design. The assessments will be released in October, and grantees will publicize and promote the reports nationally and internationally. The three assessments will then be published together, along with an IHRD paper on women, drug use, and HIV internationally. The assessments and their recommendations will be used for national, regional, and international advocacy, and in the development of demonstration sites offering harm reduction services for women.

**Please send questions to Sophie Pinkham at [spinkham@sorosny.org](mailto:spinkham@sorosny.org).**