



Principles guiding AusAID support for research into HIV/AIDS treatments in resource-poor settings

Introduction

The affordability and availability of HIV/AIDS treatments, particularly antiretroviral drugs (ARVs), is improving in many developing countries. With increasing international interest in implementing expanded responses to the global epidemic, many countries will seek to introduce these treatments as part of their response to the public health threats posed by HIV/AIDS.

ARVs require sound health infrastructure and careful management and monitoring if effective treatment is to be sustained and drug resistant strains of HIV/AIDS are to be avoided. This will present significant challenges for the primary health care systems in much of our region.

In response, Australia is willing to support research to help countries assess alternatives for introducing new HIV/AIDS treatments.

Such activities would usefully complement the Australian aid program's priority support for the regional response to HIV/AIDS. While HIV/AIDS drugs are important, they can only form a part of the overall national and international response to HIV/AIDS. Other aspects such as education, early prevention, community-based care and development of health care systems are vitally important and require priority attention by national governments and the international community. Australia's continuing programs in these areas will help ensure that any future treatment initiatives can be implemented effectively.

There are many challenges involved in introducing complex drug regimes in resource-poor settings. These principles have been produced to highlight key aspects that should be considered when preparing or reviewing proposals for research in this field. Funding for such activities will be dependent on the availability of funds within the relevant country programs.

Objective

AusAID will fund research and trials that are designed to help resource-poor countries assess alternatives for the introduction of new HIV/AIDS treatments.



Through support for small-scale, operational research, pilots and trials, Australia seeks to strengthen the knowledge-base in order to inform the delivery of appropriate and effective treatment options for HIV/AIDS in resource-poor settings. As well, research may assist in building the capacity of indigenous organisations.

Eligibility

Requests will be considered from:

- Partner governments and indigenous organisations in Australia's partner developing countries, or
- Australian organisations with a proven record in HIV/AIDS research, especially in resource-poor settings

Proposals for partnerships, including those that involve Full Accredited Australian NGOs and/or pharmaceutical companies, will be considered.

Scope of activities

AusAID will consider proposals that focus on (but are not limited to):

- **capacity-building** of local counterparts for operational research including clinical trials
- the **baseline capacity** required to govern the introduction of antiretrovirals (ARVs) in resource-poor settings to countries in the Asia Pacific region. This may include:
 - policy, legislative and protocol requirements
 - monitoring, surveillance and reporting capacity requirements of HIV/AIDS and opportunistic infections
 - laboratory equipment and other infrastructure requirements
 - human resource capacity requirements including for counselling, training and the provision of Information, Education and Communication materials
- evaluation of pilot programs and **cost effective models** for governments to introduce antiretroviral therapy (ART), given resource constraints, including implications for treatment of other diseases
- scaling-up effective, **existing operations** that conduct ART
- the use of ARVs to prevent vertical HIV transmission from **mother-to-child** as part of an integrated and comprehensive program
- the use of ARVs for **post-exposure prophylaxis**, covering groups such as health care workers and rape and assault victims
- the simultaneous treatment of HIV/AIDS, TB and other **opportunistic infections**
- cost effective and low technology **alternatives for testing and monitoring** in conjunction with relevant clinical research, **behavioural changes** associated with the introduction of ART



Proposals should:

- Demonstrate a **participatory** approach, including the links between the proposed research and the country's HIV/AIDS strategy, as well as adherence with other relevant country government policies
- Demonstrate links to existing or proposed **continuum of care** for people living with HIV/AIDS
- Outline any **existing research** in related fields in the country and show how the proposed activity complements these efforts
- Where proposals are not from a partner government, proposals should demonstrate links with an effective and accountable **in-country implementing partner**
- Include an **information dissemination** strategy outlining ways in which the findings of the research will be utilised by the partner agencies and/or by the broader international community, including donors
- Demonstrate respect for **human rights**, including through a peer review process to address ethical issues involving the partner agency, the meaningful involvement of People living with HIV/AIDS and other relevant stakeholders
- Where appropriate, demonstrate linkages with **in-country HIV/AIDS programs**, including those funded by AusAID and other donors
- Adhere to relevant **AusAID policies**, including:
 - Guide to HIV/AIDS and Development
 - HIV/AIDS Treatments and Australia's Aid Program
 - Gender and Development
 - Family Planning Guidelines
 - Health in Australia's Aid Program
 - AusAID Development Research Strategy
 - the relevant AusAID Country Strategy

Support will not be provided for proposals which:

- primarily fund equipment, freight or buildings
- include large proportions of recurrent costs - including the purchase and provision of ARVs - unless there is an adequate plan demonstrating in-country partner organisations can arrange to fund these recurrent costs beyond the life of the activity
- do not adequately describe methods to seek ongoing supply of treatments post-research for PLWHA who are involved in the research
- are currently funded under other Australian Government programs - research organisations seeking AusAID funds must declare all other proposals or sources of Australian Government funding which may impact on the activity
- involve retrospective funding

Management of Proposals

Funding

Proposals will be considered by the relevant country program area, and as such funding will be dependent on availability of funds within the program.



Assessment

Country program areas will arrange for assessment of proposals. Where appropriate, assessment may include peer review.

Contact

For further information regarding these principles, contact:

**HIV/AIDS Task Force
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Organisations planning to submit proposals should contact the relevant country program area to discuss the scope and focus of the proposed research, as well as to make themselves aware of the endorsement process of particular partner governments.