

### Concept note

#### **Expert group meeting on the implementation of national reviews and consultations on legal and policy barriers to universal access to HIV services**

4 – 5 March 2014

Pattaya, Thailand

#### **Background**

Countries in the Asia-Pacific region adopted a regional framework for action on HIV and AIDS at the Asia-Pacific High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on Assessment of Progress against Commitments in the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS and the Millennium Development Goals, held from 6 to 8 February 2012 in Bangkok.<sup>1</sup> The regional framework for action, or “ESCAP roadmap to 2015”, was designed to support the Asia-Pacific region in the implementation of international and regional commitments on HIV and AIDS, namely the 2011 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS and ESCAP resolutions 66/10 and 67/9.

The ESCAP roadmap includes the conduct of national reviews and multi-stakeholder consultations on legal and policy barriers to catalyze progress towards the elimination of HIV-related stigma, discrimination and violence, in particular with regard to key populations at higher risk of HIV infection, by 2015, as contained in the Declaration and commitments made under ESCAP resolutions 66/10 and 67/9. As the Declaration mandates the regional commissions to conduct periodic inclusive reviews of national efforts and progress to combat HIV, an inclusive regional intergovernmental review meeting on national efforts and progress to address the HIV epidemic will be convened by ESCAP from 22 to 24 September 2014 in Bangkok in cooperation with UNAIDS, UNDP and other relevant United Nations entities. The intergovernmental review meeting would provide ESCAP members and associate members, *inter alia*, with the opportunity to assess the outcomes of the national

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<sup>1</sup> Available from: <http://www.unescap.org/sdd/publications/hivreport/mtgreport.pdf>.

review of policy and legal barriers to universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.

In pursuance of the above commitments, national reviews and/or consultations on legal and policy barriers to universal access to HIV services have been completed in at least 18 countries in the ESCAP region (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China<sup>2</sup>, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Pacific region covering seven Pacific Island Countries<sup>3</sup>, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam).<sup>4</sup> A number of other countries in the region are expected to undertake national reviews/consultations in 2014, including India and Pakistan. Information regarding those national reviews and consultations that have been completed in the ESCAP region is available from: <http://www.unescapsdd.org/hiv/reviews-consultations-legal-barriers-hiv>.

Building on recommendations of the Global Commission on HIV and the Law<sup>5</sup>, the Guidance Document, *Creating Enabling Legal Environments: Conducting national reviews and multi-sectoral consultations on legal and policy barriers*,<sup>6</sup> sets out suggested processes, methodologies and implementation modalities for undertaking national reviews and consultations. The actual process in each country, however, has been and will be unique. Thus, a national review and/or consultation in one country may provide valuable experiences and information for other countries' reviews and consultations, including the implementation of the recommendations arising from this process. Sharing strategies, successes and lessons learned between countries can enrich the national legal review and consultation process and contribute to further implementation of international and region-specific commitments on HIV and AIDS.

## **Objectives**

The objectives of the Expert Group Meeting are to share experiences and lessons learnt from national reviews and consultations on legal and policy barriers to

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<sup>2</sup> On compulsory drug detention centres.

<sup>3</sup> The seven Pacific Island Countries included Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

<sup>4</sup> On the impact of the Law on Administrative Sanctions on the rights of sex workers and people who use drugs.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.hivlawcommission.org/> and <http://www.hivlawcommission.org/index.php/regional-dialogues/asia-pacific>

<sup>6</sup> Available from: [http://www.undp.org/content/rbap/en/home/library/hiv\\_aids/creating-enabling-legal-environments--conducting-national-review.html](http://www.undp.org/content/rbap/en/home/library/hiv_aids/creating-enabling-legal-environments--conducting-national-review.html).

universal access to HIV services which have been held, and discuss the different models for implementing the recommendations arising from this process. The Meeting will also provide an opportunity for countries planning to organize national consultations and participatory reviews in 2014 to benefit from the experiences of other countries in the region. The Meeting will also serve to provide inputs on how to revise the United Nations Guidance Document to reflect the experiences and lessons learnt.

A report will be produced with the key discussion and action points agreed to at the Meeting as a reference for future action by countries, stakeholders, and development partners, including the United Nations System. The Meeting report will also serve as a key input for member State discussions at the September 2014 regional intergovernmental review meeting on national efforts and progress to address the HIV epidemic to be convened by ESCAP in cooperation with UNAIDS, UNDP and other relevant United Nations partners.

### **Expected outcomes**

The expected outcomes of the meeting include the following:

- An increased awareness among policy makers from the Asia-Pacific region of the key legal and policy barriers to universal access to HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support;
- Strengthened capacity among all stakeholders, including policy makers and civil society, to plan and implement concrete actions to address legal and policy barriers to achieving universal access to HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support;
- A regional strategy for United Nations support to countries in conducting and following up with national reviews and/or consultations on legal and policy barriers to universal access to HIV services.

### **Organization and participation**

The meeting is being organized by ESCAP in cooperation with UNAIDS and UNDP, supported by other interested members of the United Nations Regional Interagency Team on AIDS (UN RITA), on 4 to 5 March 2014 in Pattaya.

Approximately three participants per country (one Government, one civil society and one United Nations country team representative) from countries which have completed or are in the process of planning such reviews and consultations will be targeted to participate in the Meeting. Representatives of regional CSO networks, development partners and stakeholders from key populations will also be invited to contribute to the Meeting. Apart from representatives from ESCAP, UNAIDS and UNDP (who would serve as the core secretariat), other members of the UN RITA will be invited to contribute to the Meeting.

Additional information regarding the Meeting can be accessed from <http://www.unescapsdd.org/events/egm-hiv-and-law>, as it becomes available.