



# **PAN CARIBBEAN PARTNERSHIP AGAINST HIV AND AIDS**

## **Consultancy to Implement and Manage LCI Start-up Activities Final Report**

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## 1. Background

### **Key Populations Barrier to Access to Services**

Given the nature of the epidemic in the region, the PEPFAR Caribbean Regional programme recognised the need to support the Region's efforts to address issues that affect key populations' knowledge and practices related to HIV, in addition to their ability to access health services. MSM, CSW, and people living with HIV (PLHIV) contend with high levels of stigma and discrimination due to the perceived immorality of their behaviour. Traditional small town and island societies, highly religious and prone to gossip, tend to strongly stigmatize those openly involved in MSM and CSW behaviour. A 2009 study conducted by Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition (CVC) in five territories of the Anglophone Caribbean revealed that MSM encounter many barriers when accessing health care including: social discrimination, judgmental or moralistic attitudes, overtly hostile health care providers, concerns about privacy and confidentiality, shame, a lack of health care specific to their needs and the inability to pay for alternate private sector health care.

In response to these barriers to achieving universal access for key populations, the PEPFAR Caribbean Regional HIV Programme in collaboration with PANCAP submitted a proposal to PEPFAR to build the capacity of a regional organisation and local community service organisations (CSOs) that specifically focus on key populations to become more sustainable as they continue to support the overall goal of reducing transmission of HIV in the Caribbean. For the local CSOs, this will include technical assistance for organisational financial viability as well as capacity building to facilitate active engagement of key populations in advocacy and policy dialogue. For PANCAP, this will include facilitating links between local CSOs and government bodies to ensure their inclusion and participation in HIV policy decision making and programme implementation. Specifically, these links will serve to aid CSOs in advocating for transparency, evidence-based policies/regulations and engagement in each stage of HIV programme development and implementation for key populations.

### **The Local Capacity Initiative (LCI) Project**

The Local Capacity Initiative (LCI) Project aims to build the capacity of a regional organisation and local CSOs that specifically focus on key populations to become more sustainable. For the local CSOs, this will include technical assistance for organisational financial viability as well as capacity building to facilitate active engagement of key populations in policy dialogue and resource decision making.

The objectives for this project are:

1. Build capacity of PLHIV, MSM, and CSW CSOs and other relevant organisations to implement technically-sound HIV response activities, including addressing stigma and discrimination, advocacy for key populations, and strengthening their own financial viability;
2. Facilitate CSO involvement in national and regional policy/legislation processes, including linking CSOs and government bodies to increase advocacy for the inclusion of key populations;

3. Strengthen the capacity of a regional institution(s) i.e., the University of The West Indies (UWI) Health Economics Unit (UWI-HEU) to facilitate sustainability.

This initiative began with an assessment conducted by PEPFAR-USAID-funded Health Policy Project (HPP) of UWI-HEU's (regional institution) capacity to build capacity of CSOs in policy advocacy. Further, HPP developed an action plan for building UWI-HEU's capacity in the area of policy advocacy and communication, policy monitoring, and assessment of CSOs. In addition, HPP will be providing technical assistance to UWI-HEU to develop a curriculum for capacity building of CSOs which would serve as a model for the Region.

Actions and undertakings necessary to implement the LCI Project began on December 1, 2014 and it is estimated that all actions and undertakings will be completed September 30, 2017.

Given CARICOM Secretariat's protracted recruitment process and the need to begin project implementation immediately PEPFAR-USAID approved the PANCAP Coordinating Unit's request to hire a consultant to implement the start-up activities. The consultancy was undertaken for approximately six months (April 25, 2015 to November 30, 2015). This report is in fulfilment of the final deliverable of the project, that is, to prepare and submit a final written report on activities conducted during the consultancy, lessons learned and recommendations.

## **Role of Key Partners**

### **1. CARICOM**

CARICOM will serve as the primary counterpart organisation to the Programme and administer and manage the Agreement in partnership with USAID to achieve the agreed upon results. All technical assistance and support under this Project is to be jointly programmed by USAID and CARICOM to ensure that activities support the goals of Pan Caribbean Partnership Against HIV and AIDS (PANCAP).

### **2. PANCAP**

PANCAP's role will be to manage the small grants to the CSO and to lead the Call for Proposal process to identify the awardees, along with other key LCI members and partners including UWI-HEU and PEPFAR partners. LCI staff at PANCAP will coordinate this function.

### **3. UWI-HEU**

The UWI-HEU will be the primary coordinator of the capacity building component for the CSO grantees. LCI staff will help to facilitate this function.

### **4. USAID/Eastern and Southern Caribbean**

USAID will serve as the primary grantor to the Programme and administer and manage the agreement in partnership with CARICOM/PANCAP to achieve the agreed upon results. USAID will issue Implementation Letters detailing the actual budget available for the Programme.

## 2. Introduction

This report outlines all Local Capacity Initiative (LCI) project start-up activities conducted during the contract period April 23, 2015 – November 30, 2015. It further details the key processes that are integral to the timely completion of each start-up activity.

The LCI project start-up activities includes:

1. Collaborating with the UWI-HEU to develop an agenda for an Inception (two day) meeting.
2. Convening the Inception (two day) meeting.
3. Collaborating with UWI-HEU to develop eligibility criteria and small grant procedures manual.
4. Support the PCU in finalising the Memorandum of Understanding between CARICOM-PANCAP and the UWI-HEU's workplan and budget.
5. Develop and finalise a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for the LCI Project.
6. Preparing progress reports and a final report on activities conducted during the consultancy, lessons learned and recommendations.

In addition, the processes are aligned with their respective completion dates to provide a better understanding of the time associated with each activity.

### 3. Description of Activities

#### 3.1. Inception (Two-day) Meeting

An Inception Meeting was held from 28th – 29th April 2015 at the University of the West Indies HEU, Centre for Health Economics Conference Centre, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago.

The inception meeting was attended by CARICOM-PANCAP, USAID, UWI-HEU, CSOs (targeting key populations), and other donors. CARICOM-PANCAP, USAID, and UWI-HEU shared with CSOs and other partners the goals and objectives of the Local Capacity Initiative Project. CSOs and regional partners presented on their capacity building initiatives and their plans.

The meeting allowed partners to better understand CSOs present and past capacity building initiatives and how effective they were in achieving its goals. In addition, the meeting provided an opportunity for CSOs to outline the gaps that hinder their ability to achieve their mandate and to propose how the LCI project can address these gaps.

A report was prepared and circulated to all partners. Table 1 below summarises the key milestones for this activity.

**Table 1: Showing key milestone in planning and convening the Inception Meeting**

#	Activity	Date
1	Draft Inception Meeting Agenda	April 23, 2015
2	Convene Inception Meeting	April 28-29, 2015
3	Submit Inception Meeting Report	April 30, 2015
4	Share Inception Meeting Report	May 7, 2015

#### 3.2. Virtual Meetings

Virtual meetings were held based on the LCI project activity needs and availability of partners. In some cases virtual meetings were held weekly, fortnightly, and monthly to ensure ongoing technical oversight was provided to the LCI project. A total of 11 tele-meetings were held during the consultancy period (April 23 – November 30, 2015).

Table 2 below provides the date of all tele-meetings held during the consultancy.

**Table 2: Showing Dates Tele-meeting were Held**

#	Meeting	Date
1	Tele-Meeting with UWI-HEU	May 13, 2015
2	Tele-Meeting with UWI-HEU	May 21, 2015
3	Tele-Meeting with UWI-HEU	June 30, 2015

4	Tele-Meeting with UWI-HEU, USAID, and the PCU	July 8, 2015
6	Tele-Meeting with UWI-HEU	July 16, 2015
7	Tele-Meeting with UWI-HEU	July 24, 2015
8	Tele-Meeting with UWI-HEU	July 30, 2015
9	Tele-Meeting with UWI-HEU and HPP	August 14, 2015
10	Tele-Meeting with UWI-HEU	September 23, 2015
11	Tele-Meeting with UWI-HEU	October 12, 2015

Meeting reports were prepared no later than two days following each meeting. Meeting reports summarised the key points discussed and outlined commitments made by partners. Follow-up was done periodically through emails, telephone calls, and tele-meetings to encourage partners to remain committed to the timely completion LCI Project activities.

### 3.3. Develop MOU between CARICOM & HEU/UWI

The process of finalisation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between CARICOM-PANCAP and UWI-HEU required numerous consultations and reviews from various partners and departments within the UWI-HEU and the CARICOM Secretariat to ensure the MOU was aligned with PEPFAR/USAID and the CARICOM Secretariat's guidelines. The draft MOU was revised multiple times before finalisation and execution. Table 3 below summarises the major milestones for the drafting, vetting and execution of the MOU.

**Table 3: Showing Major Milestones in finalising the MOU**

#	Activity	Date
1	CARICOM Secretariat draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Contract Agreement	May 4, 2015
2	UWI concurrence with revised contract	August 19, 2015
3	CARICOM Secretariat vet, finalise, and sign final contract	September 8, 2015
4	UWI-HEU sign MOU Contract Agreement	September 16, 2015

### 3.4. Develop CSOs Small Grant Procedures Manual and Criteria

The development of the CSOs Small Grant Procedures Manual and Criteria for Small Grant Programme commenced with a review of the CARICOM Guidelines and Procedures Manual (GPM) and USAID Guidelines. A series of consultations were held with the PCU Director, PCU Senior Accountant, Programme Manager- Administrative

Services CARICOM Secretariat, and the UWI-HEU to inform their development and finalisation.

The approved CSOs Small Grant Procedures Manual and Criteria for Small Grant Programme was shared with UWI-HEU and Health Policy Project (HPP). Table 4 below summarises the main activities conducted in the development and sharing of the CSOs Small Grant Procedures Manual and Criteria.

**Table 4: Showing main activities in developing the CSOs Small Grant Procedures Manual and Criteria**

#	Activity	Date
1	Review CARICOM GPM and USAID Guidelines	May – July 2015
2	Meeting with Key Informants (PCU Director, Senior Accountant, and Programme Manager-Administrative Services CARICOM Secretariat)	July 1, 2015
3	Draft Small Grant Procedures Manual	July 6, 2015
4	Finalise and submit Small Grant Procedures Manual	July 8, 2015
5	Shared with UWI-HEU and HPP	August 13, 2015

Participating CSOs will be required to complete and submit the CARICOM-PANCAP Eligibility Requirement Form (Criteria for Small Grant Programme) along with their proposals for funding. The Small Grants Procedure Manual will guide the development and timely submission of their proposals. This will ensure all proposals are aligned with USAID Policy on Grants and the CARICOM Secretariat's Guidelines and Procedures Manual.

### 3.5. Develop LCI Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

The development of the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan begun with a discussion with the PCU Director to outline the focus and organisation of the M&E Plan. Subsequently, a review of the PANCAP LCI Package, CRSF 2014-2018 M&E Framework, and M&E best practices was conducted to inform the drafting of the LCI Project M&E plan. The draft reviewed, finalised and shared with UWI-HEU. Table 5 below summarises the main activities conducted in the development and sharing of the LCI Project M&E plan

**Table 5: Showing main activities in the development of the LCI Project M&E plan**

#	Activity	Date
1	Meeting with the PCU Director	July 10, 2015
2	Review of related documents	August-September 2015
3	Draft Monitoring and Evaluation Plan	October 9, 2015
4	Finalise Monitoring and Evaluation Plan	October 12, 2015



<b>5</b>	Share Monitoring and Evaluation Plan with UWI-HEU	October 19, 2015
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### 3.6. Finalise the UWI – HEU Workplan and Budget.

The UWI-HEU in consultation with the PCU and USAID drafted a LCI project workplan for their baseline assessments and capacity building programmes. Reviews from key partners resulted in the workplan being drafted four times during the period June – October 2015. The finalised workplan was later shared with the PCU.

A budget to support the baseline assessments and capacity building programmes was also drafted through consultations with the PCU. This budget provided a detailed description of the expenditure required by month for the baseline assessments and capacity building programmes. The budget was revised three times during the period July – September 2015. The finalised budget was later shared with the PCU. Table 6 below summarises the key milestones in finalising the UWI-HEU workplan and budget.

**Table 6: Showing key milestones in finalising the UWI-HEU workplan and budget**

#	Activity	Date
<b>1</b>	Develop the UWI-HEU workplan (1 <sup>st</sup> draft)	June 29, 2015
<b>2</b>	Develop the UWI-HEU Budget (1 <sup>st</sup> Draft)	July 7, 2015
<b>3</b>	Revise UWI-HEU workplan (2 <sup>nd</sup> draft)	July 15, 2015
<b>4</b>	Revise UWI-HEU Budget (2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft)	August 4, 2015
<b>5</b>	Revise UWI-HEU Budget (3 <sup>rd</sup> Draft)	August 25, 2015
<b>6</b>	Revise UWI-HEU Budget (final)	September 10, 2015
<b>7</b>	Revise UWI-HEU workplan (3 <sup>rd</sup> draft)	October 9, 2015
<b>8</b>	Revise UWI-HEU workplan (4 <sup>th</sup> draft)	October 12, 2015
<b>9</b>	Finalise and share workplan with PCU	October 19, 2015

### 3.7. Contract Regional Technical Officer (UWI-HEU) and regional consultants

The Statement of Work for the training consultant and research officer were developed by UWI-HEU in consultation with HPP and the PCU. Subsequently, the UWI-HEU advertised the all positions on the UWI Website.

The UWI-HEU recruitment process for hiring of the regional consultants and technical officer was reviewed by the PCU in consultation with USAID to ensure that all steps were in accordance with both the CARICOM and USAID recruitment guidelines.

The UWI-HEU subsequently prepared a list of candidates' scores against the maximum scores for each criterion. The short-listed candidates' scores and their

curricula vitae and applications were shared with the PCU Director for review and concurrence. An interview panel, which included a PCU representative and three HEU representatives, was convened to interview the short-listed candidates for the position of Technical Officer. Only one of the three shortlisted candidates was available for the interview on November 18, 2015. As a result, the interview panel agreed to reconvene and interview the remaining two shortlisted candidates at a later date. Table 7 below summarises key activities conducted in contracting the UWI-HEU Regional Technical Officer.

**Table 7: Showing key activities contracting the UWI-HEU Regional Technical Officer, Regional Consultant, and Research Officer**

#	Activity	Date
1	Positions advertised on UWI-HEU Website	August 14, 2015 (Closing Date)
2	UWI-HEU recruitment process reviewed	September 11, 2015 – October 2, 2015
3	List of all candidates' scores prepared	October 15, 2015
4	List of all candidates' scores shared with the PCU Director	October 16, 2015
5	CV and applications shared with the PCU Director	October 19, 2015
6	Identification of PCU Representative	October 28, 2015
7	Interview Panel convened	November 18, 2015
8	UWI-HEU selected Regional Consultant	November 20, 2015
9	UWI-HEU interviewed candidates for the position of Research Officer	November 20, 2015
10	UWI-HEU interviewed candidates for the position of Research Officer	November 27, 2015

Interviews were not required for the consultancy positions (Regional Consultant, and Research Officer). Candidates' curriculum vita were reviewed and evaluated against the agreed criteria and the candidate with the highest score from the list of all applicants was selected for each of the two consultancies. The PCU reviewed the documentation and concurred with the selections.

### 3.8. Contract LCI Senior Project Officer

The CARICOM Secretariat advertised the position for the Senior Project Officer LCI in local newspapers of Member States and its websites and of regional websites. The CARICOM Secretariat prepared a list of candidates' scores against the maximum scores for each criterion. The list with scores and short listed candidates' curricula vitae and applications were then shared with the PCU Director for review and concurrence. An interview panel, which included a USAID representative and CARICOM representatives (the PCU Director, and representatives from the

CARICOM Staff Association, Human Resource Management, and Resource Mobilisation and Technical Assistance), was convened and candidates were interviewed for the position. To date the successful candidate has not been announced. Table 8 below summarises key activities conducted in contracting the CARICOM-PANCAP LCI Senior Project Officer.

**Table 8: Showing key activities in contracting the CARICOM-PANCAP LCI Senior Project Officer**

#	Activity	Date
1	Positions advertised on Websites	May 3, 2015 (Closing Date)
3	Long list and short list of candidates' scores prepared and shared with PCU Director	September 2015
4	PCU Director reviewed and provided concurrence	September 2015
5	Interview Panel convened	October 20, 2015

### 3.9. Develop CARICOM-PANCAP LCI Project Workplan and Budget

The CARICOM-PANCAP LCI Workplan baseline assessment and capacity building programme were informed by UWI-HEU revised budget (received on the 9th October) and the CARICOM-PANCAP LCI Project Year 1 Workplan and Budget. In addition to outlining the baseline assessment and capacity building, the LCI workplan specifics the Small Grants program and the Monitoring and Evaluation activities. The workplan and budget was drafted, finalised, and approved within the period October – November 2015. Table 9 below summarises the key milestones in finalising the CARICOM-PANCAP LCI workplan and budget.

**Table 9: Showing key milestones in finalising the CARICOM-PANCAP LCI workplan and budget**

#	Activity	Date
1	Draft LCI Project Workplan and supporting Budget	October 10, 2015
2	Review LCI Project Workplan and supporting Budget	October 12, 2015
3	Share LCI Project Workplan and supporting Budget with USAID	October 13, 2015
4	USAID review and approve the LCI Project Workplan and supporting Budget	November 4, 2015

### 3.10. Commence Baseline Assessment

Due to the absence of a new Implementation Letter (IL) for Financial Year 2016, only activities which do not incur a direct cost can be executed or accelerated. The UWI-HEU has begun sensitising participating countries and their respective NAPS of the

LCI Project and upcoming activities. Surveys and key informant interviews will commence as soon as the IL is signed and funds are released. In addition, UWI-HEU has submitted to the PCU their request for the first payment from the contract agreement between UWI and the CARICOM Secretariat under the LCI Project. Table 10 below summarises key activities conducted to date in relation to UWI-HEU baseline assessment.

**Table 10: Showing completed UWI-HEU Baseline Assessment Activities**

#	Activity	Date
1	Sensitise participating countries and their NAPS	August 2015
2	Submit Invoice for first payment	October 9, 2015

#### 4. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Lessons learned in the start-up phase of the LCI project can be used to enhance not only the LCI project but also other CARICOM-PANCAP project start-up and performance. The intent is to identify, and document good practices and challenges encountered during the consultancy and make recommendations for mitigating such challenges in future.

##### 1. Contracting services for project start-up until completion of recruitment

Skilled and qualified technical support at the beginning of the project is integral to the timely coordination and implementation of project activities. The PCU recruited a consultant from April 23 - November 30, 2015, to implement and manage the start-up activities for the PANCAP/USAID Local Capacity Initiative (LCI) project. The consultant liaised with project partners to ensure all LCI start-up activities were completed in a timely manner while the CARICOM Secretariat conducted the recruitment process to select LCI Project Officer.

The presence of a start-up consultant during this protracted recruitment process allowed the project to complete the following:

1. Inception Meeting Report (April 30, 2015) – This report outlined the capacity building gaps identified and the key requirements for optimising the outcomes of the LCI project
2. Small Grant Procedures Manual and Eligibility Criteria for CSOs (July 8, 2015) – The manual will guide CSOs during the Small Grant Program.
3. LCI Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (October 12, 2015) – This plan will hold all partners accountable and inform stakeholders whether the LCI Project succeeded or not.

4. Mid Semester Report (November 9, 2015) – The report highlights the LCI project key achievements and challenges faced during the period May-October 2015
5. Final Report (November 25, 2015) – This report outlines all activities completed during the consultancy and lessons learnt with recommendations.

The absence of a dedicated person to undertake UWI-HEU start-up activities resulted in a protracted period for the development of the UWI-HEU workplan and budget.

The first draft of the UWI-HEU Workplan and Budget was produced on June 29 and finalised October 19, 2015 (approximately four months to finalise the UWI-HEU Workplan).

This also resulted in the key baseline assessment activities, prerequisite to in-country surveys and interviews, not being completed, namely:

1. Development of the pre-assessment questionnaire to achieve greater insight on CSO's capacity before the in-country visit.
2. Finalise list of CSOs targeted for baseline assessment (along with the inclusion criteria).
3. Sensitise participating countries and their NAPS of upcoming baseline assessment.
4. Coordinate activities and plan logistics for baseline assessment activities.

Consequently, development of project tools and planning of the baseline assessment activities will commence when the Technical Officer and Consultants are contracted.

### **Recommendation**

Project partners (Organisation/Institution) should identify a dedicated person to implement start-up activities given the level of effort required for timely deliverables and the need to adhere to the donor and contracting partners' guidelines and procedures. This will facilitate the timely completion of key project activities while it contracts staff to undertake the responsibilities under the project.

## **2. Anticipating the need for Institutional Agreements**

The PCU did not anticipate that an institutional agreement between CARICOM-PANCAP and UWI-HEU was needed. As such, a framework for cooperation between the CARICOM Secretariat and the UWI-HEU was not established prior to the start-up, resulting in the late disbursement of funds, and a delay in clarifying roles and responsibilities of each partner in relation to project activities.

A draft MOU was developed and subsequently shared with the UWI-HEU on May 4 2015. Finalisation and signing of the MOU occurred on September 16, 2015, bringing the five month protracted process to an end.

The process for finalising this institutional agreement encompassed reviews and consultations addressing the following key areas: disbursement of funds, procurement

of goods, roles and responsibilities, and the legality and technicality of the drafted document.

The absence of the MOU between the CARICOM Secretariat and the UWI-HEU at the beginning of the project resulted in the delay of the baseline assessment. UWI-HEU baseline assessment initially scheduled to commence on July 20, 2015 was deferred to October 14, 2015. The following activities which require direct funding were placed on hold:

- Surveys and key informant interviews
- Travel UWI-HEU team to participating countries
- Technical Officer and Consultants Salaries
- Training Venue
- Catering
- Training materials

Only activities not requiring the disbursement of funds continued, these include:

- Develop UWI-HEU Workplan and supporting Budget
- Recruitment of Technical Officer and Consultants

The existence of the MOU between the CARICOM Secretariat and the UWI-HEU now clearly outlines the agreed upon roles and activities, governance structure, funding, reporting, evaluation requirements, effective dates, duration, amendments, and termination conditions.

Roles and responsibilities and disbursement methods are clear and therefore project activities can now move forward, providing funds are available and the UWI-HEU technical officer and consultants are contracted.

UWI-HEU and the PCU currently awaits the issuance of the new LCI project Implementation Letter to commence project activities.

### **Recommendation**

Prior to project commencement, parties should discuss the need for a MOU. If it is determined that a MOU is required, parties should begin the process for drafting, reviewing, and vetting, finalisation and signing in a timely manner.

### **3. Reviewing guidelines with partners prior to the start of the project**

The project experienced a protracted recruitment process for the selection of a technical officer and consultants due to inadequate clarification of around staff recruitment and procurement of consultant in accordance with the donor and CARICOM guidelines and procedures.

UWI-HEU publicly advertised the positions for technical officer and consultants on August 14, 2015. However this was done prior to clear guidance being provided to UWI-HEU by PCU that they were required to contract staff in accordance with CARICOM guidelines and procedures. The PCU was required to review and approve

the UWI-HEU's procedures to ensure that they were aligned to CARICOM's. At the request of USAID, UWI-HEU made available the World Wide Web advertisements which were reviewed by the PCU and USAID to ensure the process was governed by the principles of best value for money, transparency, non-discrimination, and equal treatment and confirmed with CARICOM's guidelines and procedures.

Following USAID and PCU's approval the recruitment process resumed on October 15, 2015. The UWI-HEU convened an interview panel, which included a representative from the PCU, to conduct interviews of short listed applicants on November 20. As stated earlier in the report the panel will reconvene for another series of interviews on November 27, 2015.

Unclear guidance resulted in the late recruitment of UWI-HEU's technical officer and consultants who are responsible for development and implementation of the key technical aspects of the LCI project.

### **Recommendations**

Recruitment guidelines and procedures should be discussed and agreed upon prior to the commencement of the project to avoid delays in recruitment.