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WESTERN PACIFIC CONTINUING TO TACKLE HIV WITH SUBMISSION OF MULTI-COUNTRY CONCEPT NOTE

Eleven Pacific Island countries have endorsed a multi-country concept note to respond to the varying HIV epidemics among their respective populations, ahead of submission expected on 30 January. The concept note — among the only multi-country notes to be developed under the new funding model — was drawn from extensive consultations to set priorities and identify areas of commonality.

Total funding allocated to the 11 countries under the NFM is some \$6.4 million. In a bid to keep operational costs contained, the grant will continue to be administered by a single principal recipient. Under the rounds-based approach, the PR was the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. A tender was released in June 2014 for applications by new PRs.

The eleven countries — Cooks, Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Kiribati, Palau, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu — have different HIV epidemiology and diverse health system structures. However, during meetings in the lead-up to the submission of the concept note, representatives from each state identified commonalities including a lack of data on key affected populations, low coverage of testing, high rates of sexually transmitted infections and a pronounced level of discrimination and stigma towards people living with HIV.

Ideas for high priority interventions were shared among the nations and many countries are expecting to carry out similar activities under the NFM, while targeting populations they have identified as most in need. Mobile testing and counselling and support for prevention of mother-to-child transmission are among the shared activities, as is the supply of anti-retroviral drugs and monitoring of patients on treatment.

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