

Call for proposals

Research Partner for longitudinal study Sex work, violence and HIV in Southern Africa

Aidsfonds seeks an experienced research partner affiliated with a research institute or university to start with a **prospective longitudinal study** on the **impact** and **implementation** of our programming on reducing violence and subsequently reducing new HIV infections.

1. Background

1.1 Background of Aidsfonds

Aidsfonds is working towards a world without AIDS. We are there to help everyone living with or affected by HIV/AIDS. The main aim of Aidsfonds is to ensure that everyone has access to prevention, treatment, care and support. At the same time, our funding for scientific research contributes to advances in the understanding of AIDS. Aidsfonds always takes the lead when there are fresh insights that could be the start of new and better options. We use scientific research and innovative methods to optimise the programmes that we implement. We also believe in empowering people so they can act in their own interests. For more information see: www.aidsfonds.org

1.2 Sex work programme

The sex work programme of Aidsfonds has a long history of implementing projects, both nationally and on a global level. The programme is specialised in supporting sex worker-led health and rights programmes to end AIDS among sex workers. Aidsfonds works directly with sex worker-led organisations and service providers (law enforcement and health workers). As a result Aidsfonds has a successful track record in international work with and for sex workers. Currently we have three main international global programmes; Bridging the Gaps (focussing on human rights and access to health), PITCH (focussing on lobby and advocacy for sex workers' rights) and Hands Off II, which focuses on violence and sex work in the Southern African region.

1.3 Hands Off II programme

Violence is increasingly being recognised as an important risk factor contributing to the spread of HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) worldwide. High rates of violence perpetrated against sex workers have been consistently documented in developing countries. Sex workers exposed to violence were more likely to be infected with HIV and other STIs than those who did not report such experiences. Large-scale research shows that if violence against sex workers is tackled, we can prevent up to 25 percent of new HIV infections.¹

The first phase of the Hands Off programme (2014 - 2019) has proven that the **Hands Off model**, a combination of (i) engagement with police in the HIV response, (ii) crisis response and litigation, and (iii) movement building results in reduced violence against sex workers. The second phase (2019 –

¹ WHO, United Nations Population Fund, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, Global Network of Sex Work Projects, The World Bank. (2013). Implementing comprehensive HIV/STI programmes with sex workers: practical approaches from collaborative interventions. Geneva: World Health Organisation.

2025) will further build on the Hands Off model and intensify interventions that are proven to lead towards a reduction of violence, as well as pilot new and innovative strategies.

The main goal of the programme is to **reduce violence** against sex workers at community, national and regional level. In the Hands Off programme the definition of violence used is: *any form of abuse, coercion, stigma against a sex worker by a person, group, institution, or government which leads to physical, mental, political, social, cultural or economic harm.*

Hands Off targets **female, male and transgender sex workers**, meaning those who receive money or goods in exchange for sexual services, and who consciously define those activities as income generating even if they do not consider sex work as their occupation.

Hands Off will contribute to the reduction of violence through four long-term outcomes:

1. An empowered and resilient sex worker movement that demands its rights
2. Increased access to and use of inclusive services for sex workers
3. A more enabling environment for sex work
4. Sex workers protected and served by law enforcement.

Hands Off is implemented in South Africa, Botswana, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe. See for more information:

2. Hands Off study

2.1 The purpose of the study

The Hands Off model has proven to be successful in reducing violence against sex workers using qualitative research methods. To provide detailed information on the effectiveness and impact of the Hands Off model, in 2020 a prospective longitudinal study will start over the period of **five** years. The purpose of the study is to measure the impact of the Hands Off intervention on changes in the level of experienced violence and the number of new HIV infections in sex work communities over time in countries and locations where the Hands Off model is implemented.

The study purpose is based on the following assumption: *we can reduce the number of new HIV infections among sex workers by effectively addressing violence against sex workers. This results in increased condom-use and control over transactions and safer work environments.*²

Results of the study will be used to inform and support our advocacy agenda, to critically analyse the programme strategy and to improve the quality and delivery of interventions.

2.2 Scope and timeline

The study will be conducted within focus areas in **all five programme countries** of the Hands Off programme:

1. South Africa
2. Zimbabwe
3. Mozambique
4. Botswana
5. Zambia.

² Shannon K., S.A. Strathdee, S.M. Goldenberg, P. Duff, P. Mwangi, M. Rusakova et al. (2014). Global epidemiology of HIV among female sex workers: influence of structural determinants. *The Lancet*, 385, 55-71.

Data collection will take place over five years during three key moments:

1. At the first year of implementation of Hands Off II: July – September 2020
2. Mid-programme implementation: Jan – March 2023
3. End of programme: Jan – March 2026.

2.3 Research focus

The study will need to focus on the following **topics**:

- The level of experienced violence of sex workers in year 1, 3 and 5 of Hands Off programme implementation (disaggregated on different forms of violence and gender and age).
- The number of HIV infections in sex work communities in year 1, 3 and 5 of Hands Off programme implementation (disaggregated on gender and age).
- Patterns and dynamics of changes in the level of experienced violence and the number of new HIV infections reported by sex workers.
- Specifically, changes in the level of experienced violence and the number of new HIV infections attributed to Hands Off interventions.
- Changes in the context of sex work in the five Hands Off countries over the period of the programme implementation.

2.4 Research design and methodology

The research partner is responsible for recommending an appropriate research methodology. The final methodology will be identified in collaboration with Aidsfonds. The methodology should target a cohort sample size that is representative of the sex worker population in the different Hands Off programme focus areas. Hands Off partners will be able to support with the recruitment of participants for the study.

3. Responsibilities

The Hands Off programme team is looking for a research partner who will conduct the longitudinal study of the Hands Off programme. Tasks involve:

- Selection of an research methodology responsive to the study purpose.
- Obtaining ethical clearance in all five Hands Off programme countries for multiple years.
- Desk study on relevant policies, documents and literature available on sex work, HIV and law enforcement in all five Hands Off programme countries.
- Obtaining reliable, valid and cross-country comparable data on levels of experienced violence and HIV infection among sex workers during three key moments of programme implementation : year 1 (2020), 3 (2023) and 5 (2025).
- Ensuring a representative sample size in each of the Hands Off programme countries based on the total number of sex workers in-country, in coordination with the Hands Off programme partners.
- Development of a concise research report after year 1 and 3 reflecting the outcomes of the data collection, including an analysis of the results.
- Write a full research report including main findings and analysis of the results of year 1, 3 and 5.
- We encourage publication of research articles after approval of the content by the Hands Off programme team.

The **Hands Off programme team** will review the research tools, reports and analysis. The programme team will provide necessary background information, approve the deliverables and facilitate collaboration with the Hands Off programme partners.

The **Hands Off programme partners** will be able to support with the research planning and reaching sex workers to participate in the study. They will be involved in the approval process around the selection of sites to monitor over the programme period.

Hands Off partners collect on an annual basis output indicators on, for example, the number of sex workers they reach with their interventions disaggregated by age and gender. This information can be shared to inform the study.

4. Deliverables

At contracting stage, prior to the start of the study (May – July 2020):

1. Full research proposal including a detailed description of the methodology to answer the study purpose as well as the proposed source of information and data collection procedure, including a list of indicators and proxy indicators to be measured.
2. A list of research tools and instruments used to collect data for review.
3. A suggestion on the sample size that ensures correct representation of the sex work community (female, male and transgender sex workers) as well as a detailed plan to recruit participants.
4. Detailed planning and budget for Year 1, 3 and 5. A bidder who can match funding has our strong preference.
5. A description of the roles and responsibilities of each member of the research team.
6. Ethical clearance documents of all programme countries.

Year 1 (July – December 2020):

1. After the first round of data collection: examples of data collected for check.
2. Construction of baseline information for the study: data on experienced level of violence and HIV infections in different cohorts of the study.
3. Update existing context analysis based on all relevant policies, documents and literature available on sex work, HIV and law enforcement.
4. Research report reflecting the outcomes of the data collection period of maximum 8 pages, including an analysis of the results.
5. Recommendations where appropriate regarding research and methodology.
6. Final research tools and instruments used to collect data.
7. Raw data set.

Year 3 (January – June 2023):

1. After the first round of data collection in year 3: examples of data collected for check.
2. Update existing context analysis based on all relevant policies, documents and literature available on sex work, HIV and law enforcement.
3. Research reflecting the outcomes of the data collection period (data on experienced level of violence and HIV infections in different cohorts of the study) of maximum 12 pages, including an analysis of the results, compared to the outcomes of year 1.
4. Raw data set.

Year 5 (January – June 2025):

1. After the first round of data collection in year 5: examples of data collected for check.
2. Update existing context analysis based on all relevant policies, documents and literature available on sex work, HIV and law enforcement.
3. Executive summary (not more than 3-4 pages reflecting main findings, lessons learned and conclusions and recommendations).

4. A full research report that contains a set of recommendations based on analysis conducted, and formulated together with communities and partners.
5. Raw data set.

5. Profile

To lead the Hands Off study the programme team is looking for an enthusiastic, well-organised and sensitive research partner affiliated with a research institute or university. The research partner should be familiar with the theme of sex work and have a neutral attitude towards female, male and transgender sex workers who receive money or goods in exchange for sexual services and towards other key populations. Given the scope of the study, the Hands Off programme team is expecting a research team to apply, consisting out of at least one lead researcher and two research assistants.

General requirements include:

- Affiliated with / registration at research institute or university
- Background in Anthropology, Social science or International development studies
- Extensive methodological skills and experience in applying quantitative research methods
- Prior experience with longitudinal research on social topics
- Prior experience with ethical clearance processes
- Proven experience working as part of a research team
- Ability to discuss sensitive topics and adapt communication toward sex workers
- Excellent written and verbal skills in English language
- Experience with data entry in data science tools such as SPSS
- Prior experience in the region is an added advantage.

6. Application process

We are looking for a research partner who is available to start data collection around July-September 2020. The selection process will take place in May 2020 and decisions will be made in close consultation with Hands Off programme partners.

How to apply

You can apply by sending the following information to Soraya Bouwmeester sbouwmeester@aidsfonds.nl before **30 April 2020**.

1. Letter of interest.
2. A preliminary research proposal of max 3-4 pages, including: a plan outlining research methodology, suggested sample size, proposed tools and approaches for analysis of data.
3. Detailed financial proposal including daily rate costs and costs for travel to all five Hands Off programme countries, three times over the study period. There is maximum budget of €21.000 per country available for the study.
4. CV or resume of **all** research team members including a list of relevant field studies undertaken and a list of academic articles published.
5. An example of a written research report with the research leader as first author.
6. An example of a research article with the research leader as one of the authors.

Research partners with the possibility of bringing in own funds will get priority.

Proposals must include all documents requested. Proposals that do not meet the requirements will not be considered.