

NOTICE OF VACANCY

**Technical Assistance on Supporting COVID-19
Laboratory and Genomic Surveillance Strengthening
Activities**



**World Health
Organization**

Representative Office
for the Philippines

1. Summary

The World Health Organization (WHO) Philippines is looking for an individual contractual partner who will provide technical expertise and operational support to the Philippine Department of Health towards the strengthening of COVID-19 laboratories and genomic surveillance.

The submission of applications is due by **13 May 2022**.

2. Background

COVID-19 has had a catastrophic impact on lives and livelihoods. To date, countries are continuously challenged to strengthen resilience to detect and respond to new variants including emerging pathogens. Having a public health system capable of detecting, characterizing, and assessing the risks of this virus and its variants rapidly and routinely remains critical to inform the design and maintenance of effective countermeasures and public health and social measures. In fact, the world benefited from countries who stepped up their genomics capabilities, and openly and rapidly shared their genomic data.

In 2021, the World Health Assembly called on Member States to strengthen laboratory capacity and genomic surveillance in emergency preparedness and response. Subsequently, WHO Western Pacific Regional Office organized EMPaCT (Emerging Molecular Pathogen Characterization Technologies Surveillance Network) to establish a mechanism by which Member States can increase access to genomic sequencing capacity through developing in-country capacity and/or improving partnerships for referring samples as needed.

The Philippines has responded to the global call and established its genomic surveillance in country. As the government invested on setting up its sequencing capability, there is a need to plan and implement effective and sustainable strategies to strengthen genomic sequencing coupled with molecular testing and robust surveillance of SARSCoV-2 and other pathogens with pandemic and epidemic potential. The extensive genomic, laboratory, and clinical data provide a valuable resource for understanding and addressing outbreaks.

Outbreak Response

The purpose of this emergency deployment is to support effective country response operations related to the COVID-19 pandemic and to ensure country readiness for future pandemic. Technical support is focused on strengthening laboratory capacity to enhance COVID-19 surveillance through recommending testing strategies, integration, and expansion of ILI/SARI surveillance, and advancing genomic sequencing and bioinformatics.

3. Timeline

The contract period is from **1 June to 31 December 2022**. Depending on availability of funds and satisfactory work the contact can be extended.

4. Place of Assignment

The consultancy will be based in Manila, Philippines with the option of limited remote support (except in the scenario that travel restrictions are reinstated, limiting relocation).

5. Scope of Work

Under the overall supervision of the Coordinator Health Systems Development, the consultant will help coordinate laboratory and genomic surveillance strengthening for COVID-19 and beyond. In addition, the consultant will provide technical support to the Laboratory Pillar in the COVID-19 IMT.

Method(s) to carry out the activity

The consultant will be assigned to:

- Assess the current national laboratory testing and genomic sequencing capacity.
- Provide technical expertise and operational support for the timely response to outbreaks and health emergencies as PHLS moves towards sustained COVID19 management, in collaboration with national health officials, including laboratory staff, and other partner organizations.
- Determine the laboratory surveillance system for public health laboratories including linking them to the surveillance system.
- Manage and coordinate the strategic direction for Sars-CoV-2 genomic surveillance including but not limited to the establishment of a surveillance consortium and monitoring and evaluation framework.
- Contribute to strengthening the national capacity at the health laboratories; assess training needs and provide training for laboratory personnel in the related technical areas.
- Facilitate and provide technical oversight on laboratory and genomic surveillance strengthening activities which includes expansion and integration in accordance to APSED and EMPaCT strategies.
- Provide laboratory technical expertise in coordination with the COVID-19 incident management team to ensure laboratory priorities and activities are managed effectively and in compliance with WHO technical guidelines and national standards.
- Maintain strong and productive relationships with local and international collaborators, donors, and partners.
- Perform any other incident-specific related duties, as required by the Incident Manager or WHO Country Representative.

6. Qualifications

The contractual partner must fulfil the following qualifications:

Specific Requirements

Essential:

- Master's level degree relevant to the job such as biomedical science, public health, epidemiology, molecular biology, genomic sequencing, infectious diseases, or health emergency management.
- At least five years of practical and operational application and management of laboratories, laboratory diagnosis and surveillance of communicable diseases at the national levels.
- Related experience in laboratory networking and operations.

Desirable:

- Relevant academic background and/or experience in molecular diagnostics and genomic sequencing.
- Demonstrated experience in:
 - Planning and execution of demanding projects, including strategy development, budgeting and activities planning and prioritization.
 - Effective facilitation of trainings and capacity building.
 - Thinking strategically, handling ambiguity, and problem solving in a fast-paced, limited-structure and multicultural environment.
 - Managing numerous work streams simultaneously in high-pressure situations.
 - Building and maintaining collaborative, senior-level relationships and working with multiple stakeholders.
 - Familiarity with expansion and integration relative to pandemic preparedness and response.
 - Knowledgeable on the directions and strategies of APSED and EMPaCT
 - Experience working in resource-limited settings.
- Previous experience in UN organizations/agencies, health cluster partners, recognized humanitarian organizations, international institutions, or nongovernmental organizations, particularly in developing countries.

Technical Skills and Knowledge

- Excellent inter-personal skills, diplomacy, and tact to communicate effectively with senior officials, multiple stakeholders, and professionals.
- Excellent analytical, planning, and organizational skills.
- Ability to work collaboratively in a multicultural environment with limited supervision.
- Ability to work under pressure.
- Excellent analytical (qualitative and quantitative) skills and communication (written and verbal) skills, including the ability to prepare and present compelling presentations and program planning and memo documents.

7. Other Requirements

- Medical Clearance through WHO HR/Admin.
- Required and/or willing to relocate to live in proximity of the DOH premises.
- The contractor has no direct or indirect involvement or interest, in any form, in arms dealing, drugs, alcohol industry, tobacco industry or human trafficking.
- The contractor shall have no conflicts of interest in relation to the work being undertaken.

8. Competencies

The following competencies are mandatory:

- Building and promoting partnerships across the organization and beyond
- Moving forward in a changing environment
- Ensuring the effective use of resources
- Fostering Integration and teamwork
- Communication in a credible and effective way

9. Ethical and Professional Standards

- WHO prides itself on a workforce that adheres to the highest ethical and professional standards and that is committed to put the WHO Values Charter into practice.
- WHO has zero tolerance towards sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), sexual harassment and other types of abusive conduct (i.e., discrimination, abuse of authority and harassment). All members of the WHO workforce have a role to play in promoting a safe and respectful workplace and should report to WHO any actual or suspected cases of SEA, sexual harassment, and other types of abusive conduct. To ensure that individuals with a substantiated history of SEA, sexual harassment or other types of abusive conduct are not hired by the Organization, WHO will conduct a background verification of final candidates.

10. Submission Requirements

Interested individuals should submit electronic copies of the following:

- Cover letter
- Curriculum vitae

Address all applications to:

Dr Rajendra Yadav

Acting WHO Representative in the Philippines
Ground Floor, Building 3, Department of Health
San Lazaro Compound
Rizal Avenue, Sta Cruz, Manila

Please submit the electronic copy of the applications with the title: **Technical Assistance on Supporting COVID-19 Laboratory and Genomic Surveillance Strengthening Activities** to Ms Ying Chen (cheny@wno.int) with a copy to wpphlwr@who.int. Only shortlisted applicants will be contacted by WHO Philippines.

Deadline of submission of applications is on **13 May 2022**.