

| ASCI Update

This update provides a brief overview of ASCI's achievement during the last 6 months.

ASCI has managed to mobilize additional funding for existing projects and to commission new ones. To this end, co-funding arrangements have been established with multilateral partners including UNAIDS and UNFPA, civil society organizations, such as Justice Africa, private foundations such as the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and academic research institutions such as the Health Economics AIDS Research Department (HEARD) at the University of Natal in South Africa. A wide variety of qualitative and quantitative research approaches have been supported, including field-based assessments, literature reviews, macroeconomic and epidemiological modelling, meta-policy analyses and case studies.

ASCI's research portfolio now includes a wide variety of initiatives across four priority thematic areas: uniformed services including the police, humanitarian and post-conflict transitions, fragile states and gender issues. Research partners consist of 23 different organizations and individuals, including non-governmental organizations, policy research and academic institutions. Check out the ASCI website for a description of the research projects that have been funded under ASCI.

Although a research initiative can never aspire to cover all relevant regions, ASCI has succeeded in attracting research projects in a variety of regions, including some that have been less salient in studies up to present. See the box below for a list of the major countries and regions.

Sub-Saharan Africa (14): Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, DR Congo, Liberia, Namibia, Kenya, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Rwanda, Southern Sudan

Middle East and North Africa (1): Jordan

Asia (10): Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, India, Burma (Myanmar),

Oceania (2): East Timor, Papua New Guinea

Latin America (7): El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Uruguay, Brazil

Eastern Europe and Central Asia (2): Ukraine, Russia

Caribbean (1): Haiti

ASCI's central purpose is to clarify the reciprocal links across HIV/AIDS, conflict and security and to help specify opportunities to strengthen relevant policy and programme responses. To this

end, ASCI's core staff and extended network have participated in a wide range of policy forums to seek inputs to ASCI's work and to share preliminary findings with respect to substantive aspects of the ASCI research agenda.

Early in ASCI's unfolding it became clear that the police constituted an important and neglected sector of focus. This propelled ASCI to mobilize additional resources and identify partners with whom it could support research and engage in policy discussions. In September 2007, ASCI convened the first-ever Global Consultation on the police and HIV, together with UNAIDS and UNODC bringing together experts, policymakers and representatives of national police organizations from around the world. ASCI commissioned two research papers for this Consultation and delivered a proceedings report that has been widely distributed. The Global Consultation represented a breakthrough in furthering the agenda of HIV/AIDS and the police worldwide and UNAIDS and UNODC are currently discussing how the UN could provide leadership on developing international standards for the police and HIV/AIDS.

The ASCI Secretariat plans to organize a number of meetings and thematic briefings, through which researchers, practitioners and policy experts will be informed about the outcomes of ASCI's work. ASCI's website plays a central role in reaching different audiences in a timely and efficient manner. During the period under review, an on-line research hub and information portal has been launched (<http://asci.researchhub.ssrc.org>). This globally accessible electronic platform offers a wordsearchable database, which is designed to be a richly inter-linked repository of knowledge about AIDS, security and conflict.

During the first quarter of 2008, peer review workshops will be organized in each of the thematic clusters, bringing together field researchers, external experts, selected advisory committee members and ASCI's core research team consisting of the Research Director, relevant Principal Investigators and the Project Coordinator. Providing an opportunity for critique and reflection, the meetings will also be used to consolidate and translate research findings into policy recommendations.

For each of the workshops, a thematic briefing paper will be drafted, which will formulate research findings and tentative policy recommendations. These briefing documents will then serve as a basis to engage in a policy dialogue with the relevant policy communities in order to arrive at targeted and practical recommendations that can assist policy makers and practitioners in designing effective strategies and actions in the field of AIDS, security and conflict.