

Call for Proposals

COVID-19 Surveillance Technology and its Impact on Civil Society in the Indo-Pacific

The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) seeks individuals or organizations to conduct research on the civil society impact of surveillance and contact tracing technology deployed in Indo-Pacific countries in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Depending on proposed scope of work and country coverage (see below), 1-2 consultants may be selected. Available budget is \$25,000-45,000 per award, depending on breadth of coverage.

Applications for this project are due July 31, 2022. Project work should be completed by December 15, 2022. For more details and application instructions, please see below.

Background

In a region where privacy protections are limited, the development of various tracking and tracing technologies around COVID-19 has raised numerous concerns. There are many examples of the use of such technology in Asia – for instance, in Cambodia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, which instituted QR code scanning for entry into certain establishments. Pakistan used a contact tracing system originally developed by its intelligence services originally to combat terrorism to track coronavirus infections. Hong Kong relied on wristbands connected to smartphones to track quarantined individuals, with fines and jail terms for violators, while India mandated the use of a government app that alerted people if anyone in their vicinity has tested positive for COVID-19, using invasive Bluetooth and GPS technology.

Some countries also used drones to monitor violations of lockdown measures. Singapore passed an amendment bill allowing data from contact tracing apps to be used by authorities for investigation and criminal proceedings in respect of a “serious offence.” China, Japan, Australia and South Korea also implemented policies related to individuals’ data and movements that raised privacy concerns.

Such policies have serious impacts on civil society operations, particularly with respect to the potential for governments to seize data and violate privacy rights of civil society carrying out sensitive work. In some countries, for instance, officials have used contact tracing technology to monitor the activities of political opponents and CSOs. Marginalized groups or CSOs that work on minority issues may be particularly at risk of abuse of privacy or discrimination. For instance, contact tracing in South Korea led to homophobic abuse targeted at the South Korean LGBTQ community, while in Singapore downloading tracing apps was mandatory for migrant workers

but optional for other groups. Many countries also have inadequate data protection and privacy laws, increasing the likelihood for abuse of surveillance technology.

Scope of Work

As part of a broader project documenting the impact of pandemic-related surveillance technology on civil society, ICNL seeks consultants to assist with research around the use of such technology and its impact on civil society in the following countries: India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Maldives, Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, Mongolia, China, Japan, Singapore, Australia, and/or Pacific Island countries. Consultants may propose research that focuses on countries in a particular sub-region (e.g. South Asia) among these, but at least 6 countries should be included as in-depth case studies in the scope of work. Proposals that apply for the full amount of funding should propose broader coverage, e.g. at least 11 countries.

The individual or organizational consultant will be responsible for:

1. Conducting comprehensive research on COVID-19-related surveillance and contact tracing technology in at least 6 of the aforementioned Indo-Pacific countries.
2. Examining the impact of COVID-19 surveillance technology on civil society¹ in each country studied, with specific examples of the type of impact, the types of civil society organizations (CSOs) affected, and how CSOs have responded. Research can include both interview and survey data, as well as desk research, literature reviews, etc.
3. Developing a report highlighting the key findings of the research, including an executive summary, introduction, in-depth case studies of the selected countries, findings on civil society impact and civil society responses (including advocacy and resilience strategies), a discussion on the legality of such technologies (drawing from both domestic and international law frameworks), and recommendations/conclusion.
4. Potentially participating in a webinar or other event around the research findings.

Application Instructions

To apply for this consultancy, applicants must submit the following items in English:

- Proposal (see below).
- Line-item budget (no more than \$45,000 USD). The pricing for the cost proposal must be in USD and fully itemized. For personnel costs, please list each person to be involved in this project, the proposed day rate(s) and number of days. All other costs should be listed and explained. The proposed price should be inclusive of ALL taxes (including GST). ICNL expects to issue one Firm Fixed Price contract. Proposals that apply for the budget ceiling must include at least 11 countries in scope of work.

¹ The focus should be on civil society organizations, rather than individuals.

- Resumes/CVs of individuals to be engaged in the project, and/or background information about the applicant organization (e.g., website links or informational materials), where relevant.

Applications should be emailed to asia@icnl.org, with reference made to “COVID-19 Surveillance Research” in the subject line. All application materials should be submitted in English. Applications will be considered on a rolling basis through **July 31, 2022**. Questions related to this consultancy can be emailed to asia@icnl.org.

Proposal

Interested applicants should submit a proposal of four pages or less, addressing the following topics:

- The depth of your knowledge and experience around surveillance technology and civic space issues;
- Your experience undertaking research and writing policy reports;
- Relevant legal analysis experience, if any;
- If more than one person will be involved in this project, a description of who will undertake different aspects of the project. ICNL reserves the right to approve or reject the use of any personnel;
- Proposed countries for inclusion, any suggested revisions to the scope of work presented above, and methodology for conducting the research.

Selection Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on the following factors:

- Compliance with eligibility requirements and application procedures;
- Quality of proposal, including the proposed methodology/design and feasibility of the project (e.g., activities are targeted to achieve stated results, and anticipated results are realistic and attainable);
- Depth of experience with the subject matter of this research consultancy and experience researching and writing similar reports;
- Commitment to producing high quality reports in a timely manner; and
- Proposed budget and value for money.