The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic continues to ravage the world and India in 2021 and is a great threat to global public health. As of 16 August 2021, 205 million cases and >4.3 million deaths have been confirmed globally. In India, ~32 million confirmed cases have been reported so far with a rapid increase in the number of new cases during the “second wave” in the last few months. Daily cases touched highs of >300K, the highest in the world, during the last wave with delays noticed in every part of the care continuum including massive delays in testing. The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic highlights huge gaps in the testing capacity - a key element for timely isolation of infected persons and prevention of infection propagation in the community. Current testing challenges include sub-optimal capacity and utilization of COVID-19 testing network, scarcity of efficient models for enhancing lab capacity, inefficiencies within laboratories to facilitate rapid turnaround of quality tests, lack of coordination between public and private sectors to amplify and optimize India’s laboratory capacity and shortage of trained manpower at the COVID-19 labs. This makes delays in diagnosis of SARS-CoV-2 infections a critical point of failure in the COVID-19 strategic preparedness and response plan.

Goal of project:
FIND proposes to provide a comprehensive package of activities as part of the USAID supported Project RISE (Reaching Impact, Saturation, and Epidemic Control) to systematically address gaps in diagnostic capacity, availability, access, and quality of testing as well as implementation of current genome sequencing guidance as issued by the INSACOG.

Project approaches include:
1. Conducting situational analysis to identify key diagnostic needs and gaps including a capacity assessment of the states identified under the project.
2. Technical assistance for effective implementation of ICMR testing guidance around operationalization of ICMR laboratory guidance, including development of documentation and reporting tools, capacity building, implementation of testing & quality assurance (QA) strategies.
3. Capacity building via a mix of on-site and online methods for trainings:
   a. Online Learning: training site staff via online courses allowing the project to circumvent effects of COVID-19 pandemic and related travel restrictions. Approaches include assisted e-trainings, webinars and panel discussions
   b. Onsite trainings to supplement the online content with a focus around specific aspects of testing, reporting, troubleshooting, preventive maintenance, biosafety, sequencing guidelines/implementation etc. as identified as during situational analysis.
4. Deploy digital solutions to support automation of testing processes and data management for rapid antigen tests (RAT) testing. These will be through open-source digital applications that can be easily transitioned to states.
5. Undertake advocacy activities for continued testing, private sector engagement approaches and cross-sharing of learning.

Objectives:
Against the background and rationale stated above, FIND as Sub Recipient (SR) to JHPIEGO, will use various technical assistance approaches to implement activities identified under the project. The project will deploy a learning laboratory approach in 3 intervention states and further propagate learnings and best practices to remaining states covered by USAID’s RISE project.

Location: New Delhi

Your responsibilities:
The Senior Microbiologist will be responsible for:
- Supporting the Project Manager in implementation of all laboratory technical assistance activities including creation/review of documents for situational analysis of existing testing capacities.
- Supporting the Project Manager in preparation of an easy-to-use COVID RT-PCR laboratory set up tool kit. The kit would include lab set-up checklist, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), QMS, and training content. The training content for the laboratories would include RT-PCR testing, data management, lab quality assurance, lab biosafety, biomedical waste management and other areas as defined under the project.
- Supporting the Project Manager in preparation of specific training content related to sequencing specimen collection, handling and transportation, biosafety.
- Providing technical support across RISE project States/testing sites as and when required including site visits/handholding/technical support for testing methodologies, QA, biosafety, Biomedical waste management.
- Coordinating with identified RISE hubs/labs and identifying participants and/or master trainers for online courses, webinars and onsite/assisted trainings.
- Organizing the roll-out of online courses, webinars and assisted/on-site trainings in coordination with the external experts/resource persons, identified labs and other stakeholders.
- Ensuring that the project activities are conducted as per the workplan.
- Compilation and analysis of data related to various project activities and support the preparation of the periodic reports.
• Support external experts in publication of manuscripts/white paper on the learnings/achievements of the project.
• Any other task assigned time to time.

Skills and experience required:
• MD/PhD in Microbiology, with minimum 7 years of experience in laboratory especially in bacteriology and antibiotic sensitivity testing.
• Experience of working in a lab conducting COVID tests will be preferred.
• Experience of conducting lab assessments, developing training contents and conducting trainings will be preferred.
• Strong scientific background in microbiology, epidemiology.
• Well familiar with microbiology lab techniques, equipment, and data analysis etc.
• Good coordination skills.
• Good oral and written communication skills.
• Strong team orientation.
• Ability to work independently, with minimum handholding and supervision.
• Computer knowledge (Microsoft Office-Excel and Word).
• Energetic, resilient, and passionate.
• Professional, mature, and confident.
• Willingness to travel if required and at short notice.

Nature of appointment:
The selected candidate shall be initially offered a fixed term employment contract for 13 months.

Compensation:
FIND India offers a competitive salary and shall be commensurate with the skill and experience of the selected candidate

Deadline to send your application: 22 September 2021

Please mail a motivation letter, a detailed resume and three references to HR-IN@finddx.org

Due to high applicant volume, you may not receive a response from FIND India. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted. (But don’t wait until the deadline! We will start screening right away and if we find the right person, we will stop searching.)