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HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS

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Accessible prevention and treatment services for Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) are essential to limiting transmission of the disease and ensuring persons living with HIV can maintain their health and quality of life.

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Haiti has the highest HIV burden in the Caribbean, with an estimated 150,000 people living with HIV. However the percent of Haiti's population living with HIV has remained stable at about two percent since 2008, thanks in large part to USAID's support and ongoing work in vulnerable communities. Progress toward HIV epidemic control has stalled due to frequent interruptions in treatment and patients not remaining engaged in care. Weak governance and coordination; geographic and financial barriers to accessing health services; difficulty in retaining qualified health professionals; and growing insecurity are all chronic challenges to managing HIV cases in Haiti. Human resources for health are scarce, with many skilled health care professionals leaving the country in search of better jobs or for their own safety. People living with HIV face these same challenges, and may also find themselves migrating within and outside of the country. Additionally, people living with HIV face extreme social stigma in Haiti, which may drive them to seek health care outside of their immediate communities where they can remain anonymous.

Haiti also has the highest incidence, or number of new cases, of tuberculosis in the region, further compounding the HIV epidemic. Globally, people living with HIV are 18 times more likely to develop

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active tuberculosis and are more likely to die from it. Tuberculosis is a highly infectious illness that poses particular risks to people with compromised immune systems (such as people living with HIV), both in terms of catching and surviving a tuberculosis infection. In Haiti, and around the world, medications to treat HIV and prevent tuberculosis are vital tools in stopping these co-occurring epidemics, along with screening people living with HIV for tuberculosis and vice versa.

INTERRUPTIONS IN HIV SERVICE DELIVERY due to nationwide socio-political unrest, are further exacerbated by fuel shortages, natural shocks like the August 2021 earthquake, gang violence, and the COVID-19 pandemic. These chronic challenges and recurrent crises have disrupted HIV prevention and treatment activities throughout the country, at hospitals, clinics, and pharmacies, restricting access to care, medication refills, and adherence counseling for people living with HIV. Failure to remain on consistent treatment for HIV will result in detectable viral load, which increases the risk of disease transmission as well as the risk of HIV symptoms returning and risk of mortality.

USAID STRATEGY

USAID partners with local and international non-government organizations ensure access high quality, equitable, sustainable, HIV services; promote greater Government of Haiti ownership of health systems; and contribute to greater stability and resilience in Haiti by providing resources, technical assistance, and stakeholder engagement.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

BRIDGE provides health care and supportive services such as counseling in men's and family-centered clinics. Mobile units and civil society partnerships are also used to provide comprehensive health services to the mobile populations and migrants. Medical portable records, VIPcards, that contain a patient's complete information, assist mobile populations by allowing drug refills, medical care, and lab exams from any USAID supported health facility. BRIDGE also works with bus drivers to provide after-hours care for those who cannot get to the hospital during the day for HIV services.

IMPACT YOUTH is engaging with children living with HIV by providing schooling and economic empowerment. Children and their household (including HIV-negative siblings) receive additional case management services that systematically work to assure that children are stable, healthy, safe, and in school. For example, through a Kitchen Garden project, caregivers are taught how to grow crops.

THE DETERMINED, RESILIENT, EMPOWERED, AIDS-FREE, MENTORED, AND SAFE (DREAMS) PARTNERSHIP helps adolescent girls and young women develop independence through life skills courses intended to help prevent risky and vulnerable behavior such as transactional sex, multiple sex partners, and exposure to violence.

SWITCH UNDETECTABLE=UNTRANSMITTABLE (U=U) provides social behavior change messages on HIV through printed materials and social media to enhance treatment literacy, improve treatment adherence, and reduce stigmatisation and discrimination against people living with HIV. When people living with HIV have consistent access to health care and proper medications the number of copies of the HIV virus in their blood, known as the viral load, becomes undetectable. Extensive

research has shown that when people living with HIV achieve an undetectable viral load, it is nearly impossible for them to transmit HIV—untransmittable. Community awareness of this information reduces fear and stigma around HIV, and empowers people living with HIV to seek out health care, therefore improving treatment outcomes. Panos, the local partner implementing SWITCH U=U also works with the Haitian government on COVID-19 vaccination.

EPIDEMIC CONTROL AMONG KEY AND PRIORITY POPULATIONS (ECP2)

ACTIVITY provides comprehensive HIV services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and intersex (LGBTQI) communities, people in prisons, and clients of sex workers. The ECP2 activity supports capacity building for key population-led organizations and advocacy efforts for gender equity and inclusion. This activity is also engaged in COVID-19 vaccine promotion.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

PROVIDED OVER 71,500 PEOPLE ACCESS TO HIV SERVICES including prevention, testing, and counseling between October 2021 and March 2022. Of the 2,352 diagnosed with HIV, 100 percent received lifesaving antiretroviral treatment to lower their viral loads and reduce transmission.

ACHIEVED AN 87 PERCENT VIRAL LOAD SUPPRESSION RATE at USAID supported sites in Haiti from October to December 2021. Additionally, over 1,000 people from key and priority populations received HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) a medication for people who are HIV negative can take to prevent infection. Both the viral suppression through HIV treatment and PrEP prevention achievements represent new HIV cases avoided.

OVER 1,600 MOBILE PEOPLE, MIGRANTS, AND UNDERSERVED MEN LIVING WITH HIV RECEIVED ESSENTIAL SERVICES through six health facilities across four departments. USAID partners provide priority population-tailored services and train health care workers on providing health care to people with dignity and respect.

MORE THAN 87 PERCENT OF HIV PATIENTS COUNTRYWIDE REACHED AND MAINTAINED VIRAL SUPPRESSION leading to overall reduction of HIV transmission at the community level through in-person education sessions with SWITCH U=U. These reduced viral loads signify healthier people living with HIV and fewer new HIV infections.

NEARLY 13,000 ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN RECEIVED AT LEAST ONE FULL LIFE SKILLS COURSE through Impact Youth. Through these courses, participants gain essential life skills on economic and financial literacy as well as how to reduce their vulnerability to HIV infection or proactively cope with HIV infection.

Since 2010, the American people have committed over \$4 billion to help the Haitian people to develop a more resilient, democratic future. To find out more about USAID's work in Haiti, please see <https://www.usaid.gov/haiti>, and follow @USAID/Haiti on Twitter and Facebook.