



HEALTH POLICY PROJECT / DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Building capacity for improved health policy,
advocacy, governance, and finance



Photo by Health Policy Project

Overview

In the Dominican Republic, the Health Policy Project (HPP) aimed to build country ownership and the capacity of civil society to effectively address HIV-related stigma and discrimination (S&D) and gender-based violence (GBV) at the national and subnational levels. The project's strategy complemented ongoing efforts by the Government of the Dominican Republic, USAID, and implementing partners; and contributed to improved communication and dialogue, leadership and management, policy implementation and planning, and integration of GBV and S&D into HIV programming.

Capacity Strengthened for Improved Program Management

In collaboration with other PEPFAR implementing partners, HPP created a guide for the effective management of programs designed to reduce S&D and GBV in hospitals and the community, respectively. The guide contains technical instruments developed and validated by HPP and selected nongovernmental organizations; the instruments include analytical summaries of the S&D and GBV environment in the Dominican context, proposals for curricula, and program management and evaluation tools.

Capacity Strengthened for a More Integrated Response to GBV

HPP conducted sensitization trainings on GBV for national health authorities, the police and judicial systems, and groups of key populations. As a result, national authorities signed an order to institute additional training programs to further sensitize the police and prosecutors on human rights and the needs of key populations—including more employment opportunities.

HPP also developed a training guide for community leaders on how to incorporate GBV work in HIV response efforts.

Partnerships Built for More Effective Program Design and Implementation

In coordination with a local Dominican university, HPP measured the levels of stigma and discrimination experienced by people living with HIV and other key populations at three public hospitals. The study revealed the current environment and conditions that are necessary to understand and account for when designing and implementing interventions.



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HPP also contributed to the development of the S&D Technical Working Group, which comprises government representatives, civil society organizations, international organizations, and representatives of key populations. The group supports the development of important initiatives, such as the National Dialogue on HIV and the Law (sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme); Human Rights Watch for Vulnerable Groups; and Seminar on Human Rights, Discrimination, and HIV conducted by Parliamentarians for Global Action).

The Way Forward

Interventions to reduce stigma and discrimination within public hospitals remain crucial. HPP trainings on S&D and GBV should be used as continuing education for health personnel at all levels of service delivery. HPP's achievements could be further leveraged by (1) designing and implementing a comprehensive program to raise awareness about the negative impacts of stigma and discrimination beyond the health sector; (2) further strengthening the legal environment and regulatory mechanisms to promote a better enabling environment for S&D reduction; and (3) expanding on the availability and quality of GBV services at health facilities.

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