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Combination  
Prevention for HIV  
Central America and Mexico



## Success Story

# Making most at-risk populations visible in gender and violence reduction initiatives

*The USAID Combination Prevention Program for HIV began an effort in Guatemala to conform a consortium to make most at-risk visible in all efforts related to reducing violence, sexual exploitation and trafficking in persons.*



In the Central American region, most efforts to fight gender-based violence (GBV) are focused on women, and there has been little effort to apply existing legislation and policy specifically to most at-risk populations (MARPs) such as female sex workers (FSW), men who have sex with other men (MSM), and transgender women (TW). Guatemala is not the exception.

In order to address this issue, the USAID Combination Prevention Program for HIV began an effort in Guatemala to conform a consortium to make MARPs visible in all efforts related to reducing violence, sexual exploitation and trafficking in persons (VET).

As a result of the consortium's efforts and results, in March of 2012, the Government of Guatemala (GoG) published Decree 1-2012 that established an official Technical Multi-sectorial Commission on Preventing Violence, Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking among MARPs. The Commission works to promote the coordination of the agencies involved directly or indirectly in the definition and implementation of national level actions to reduce the rates of crimes related to sexual violence, exploitation and trafficking in FSW, MSM and TW, and the strengthening of key actors in prevention and care for the victims of these crimes.

The Commission is made up of representatives from government institutions (Secretariat on Violence, Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking in Persons -SVET, and the Ministry of Health), local organizations and Programs (The Pan American Social Marketing Organization -PASMO, and PASCA), and international cooperation agencies (USAID, UNAIDS and UNWOMEN).

In FY2013, and with the support of the USAID Combination Prevention Program for HIV, the Commission received technical assistance and support to develop and submit a first proposal for additional funding to the PEPFAR Gender Challenge Fund (GCF) to implement the SVET work plan, push forward policy reform, and improve the understanding of health providers and police, as well as MARP communities, about the existing laws and how they protect MARPs from the effects of gender based violence.

With this support, the SVET has advanced in important initiatives in integrating MARPs to GBV reduction efforts. For example, the Department of Monitoring, Evaluation and Capacity Building received an in-depth training on gender, sexual diversity, stigma and discrimination reduction, and HIV among other key topics. One of the lawyers who forms part of the department said, "I realized I still held on to my own prejudices and what I had learned from my parents and my religion... After this training, I don't think I will be the same person again".

These training sessions will allow the SVET's department to replicate them in local communities to better address cases of violence towards MARPs. Also, the Commission is working to review all existing protocols and laws and proposed a referral network to ensure all actors can adequately respond to GBV in MARPs at a national and local level. Moreover, the Combination Prevention Program and GCF presented the initiative and results to the Regional Coordinating Mechanism (RCM) to propose an additional country to expand the initiative.

