

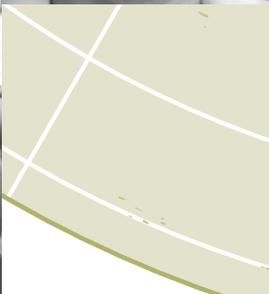
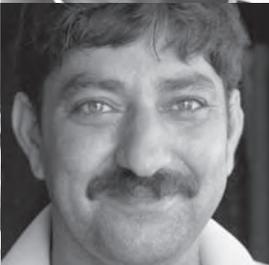
CENTRAL AMERICAN REGIONAL PROGRAM FINAL REPORT

September 2003–October 2006

USAID'S IMPLEMENTING AIDS PREVENTION AND CARE (IMPACT) PROJECT



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Final Report
for the
Implementing AIDS Prevention
and Care (IMPACT) Project in
Central American Regional Program (G-CAP)



September 2003 to October 2006



G-CAP Final Report

Submitted to USAID

By Family Health International

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GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|---------|---|
| AIDS | Acquired immune deficiency syndrome |
| ART | Antiretroviral therapy |
| CDC | Centers for Disease Control and Prevention |
| CICASAM | Centro Integral de Capacitacion y Salud de la Mujer |
| CSW | Commercial sex worker |
| FHI | Family Health International |
| G-CAP | Central American Regional Program |
| HIV | Human immunodeficiency virus |
| IMPACT | Implementing AIDS Prevention and Care Project |
| MSM | Men who have sex with men |
| NACP | National AIDS Control Program |
| NGO | Nongovernmental organization |
| PAHO | Pan American Health Organization |
| PLHA | People living with HIV/AIDS |
| STI | Sexually transmitted infection |
| UNAIDS | Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS |
| USAID | US Agency for International Development |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Implementing AIDS Prevention and Care Project (IMPACT) in the Central American Regional Program (G-CAP) mission of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) supported the development and implementation of HIV/AIDS clinical and comprehensive care diploma courses in the region. The G-CAP project consisted of Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, El Salvador, and Honduras. IMPACT supported a regional technical working group to facilitate the development of the diploma courses and to promote the establishment of regional and within-country multidisciplinary HIV/AIDS comprehensive care networks.

Throughout the life of the IMPACT/G-CAP project, IMPACT supported the development of diploma courses in Panama, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. One hundred medical professionals from the region attended the courses and received training in integrated management and care of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA).

PROGRAM STRATEGIES, IMPLEMENTATION, AND RESULTS

Introduction

At the request of USAID/Guatemala–Central American Regional Program (USAID/G-CAP), IMPACT conducted a visit to the region in September 2003 to develop a proposal for a comprehensive care program in Central America. The team visited hospitals, universities, National AIDS Control Programs (NACPs), and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working in HIV/AIDS comprehensive care and related activities in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. Country consensus meetings were held in the three countries and similar meetings were held in Nicaragua by USAID and Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) staff. The proposal and budget for \$1.3 million were submitted in December 2003 to USAID.

As a result of decisions to provide lower funding levels for a shorter period of time, USAID requested the original proposal and program be streamlined to include only select activities for rapid start-up of HIV/AIDS comprehensive care programs in the region.

USAID/G-CAP provided field support funds of \$200,000 to the IMPACT project to work with the participating countries who were developing comprehensive HIV/AIDS care diploma courses (Panama, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, with limited participation by El Salvador and Honduras), and to establish a technical working group to facilitate the process.

Country Context

In Central America, HIV/AIDS is concentrated largely in the most vulnerable populations, although it is a growing problem. Unequal socioeconomic development and high levels of population mobility are key factors driving the spread of HIV throughout the region. According to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), by the end of 2003, adult prevalence was estimated at 1.8 percent in Honduras, 1.1 percent in Guatemala, 0.9 percent in Panama, 0.7 percent in El Salvador, and 0.2 percent in Nicaragua. These estimates, however, were based on projections of outdated information or from nonrepresentational samples. USAID and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have been supporting a regional strategic plan for HIV/AIDS surveillance that will, over time, provide more accurate and representative information.

In Central America, HIV/AIDS is transmitted primarily through sexual contact, with the epidemic concentrated among socially marginalized and mobile populations, and in urban and/or major economic areas along transportation routes. In general, infection rates are highest in at-risk populations such as men who have sex with men (MSM), commercial sex workers (CSW), street children, and prisoners.

All Central American countries have a National HIV/AIDS Program and an HIV/AIDS National Strategic Plan. In 2004, all countries in Central America expanded access to antiretroviral therapy (ART) through both social security institutes and ministries of health. Costa Rica and Panama, where more than 90 and 75 percent of individuals respectively qualify for assistance, have the highest coverage. To date, the response in prevention has been limited and much of the effort is focuses on ART for PLHA, although the need exceeds current response capability. Prevention of mother-to-child transmission was also being scaled up in all countries.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES, AND ACTIVITIES

To begin the project, a meeting of the technical working group was conducted February 19–20, 2004 in Guatemala. Members of the group were selected from each of the participating countries: El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, and Honduras. Members were selected by USAID and FHI based on their involvement in capacity-development activities for medical personnel, either in an HIV/AIDS diploma course or something similar. Technical working group members from Guatemala, Panama, El Salvador, and Nicaragua attended the meeting; the participants from Honduras were not present because weather conditions precluded their attendance. Invited speakers at the meeting included representatives from PAHO, UNAIDS, Médecins Sans Frontières, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, Instituto Nacional de Salud Publica, and International Association of Physicians in AIDS Care

The objectives of the meeting were to discuss the basic elements needed for HIV/AIDS diploma courses for medical professionals and to identify objectives and develop an

action plan for the technical working group to support the development of countries' HIV/AIDS diploma courses. The meeting offered an opportunity for participants from countries that already had such courses to share their experience. Technical working group members from each country began looking at what needed to be done in their country to respond to the growing demand for personnel with training in care for PLHA, and each team developed an action plan. In addition, during the meeting of the technical working group, members discussed possible support needs to improve and update preservice training and determined how USAID/G-CAP and FHI could provide assistance to the country diploma courses that currently exist or are under development to improve quality and ensure consistency across the region.

The technical working group identified areas for follow-up and assistance, including the following:

- translating training and educational materials into Spanish
- initiating student physician scholarships to attend HIV/AIDS diploma courses
- providing honoraria for trainers and mentors
- establishing intercountry networks and national working groups
- implementing monitoring and evaluation systems
- conducting distance meetings on those topics identified as priorities

The IMPACT action plan for the region was discussed and approved at the meeting. It was decided that IMPACT would provide regional support to the national efforts to develop special "Diploma" courses on HIV/AIDS treatment. To facilitate the activities of the G-CAP technical working group and to assist country teams in the implementation of their action plans and the strengthening of HIV/AIDS services in the region, IMPACT/G-CAP contracted a consultant to coordinate activities for the working group and country teams. The consultant facilitated regional and within-country information exchange, discussion, and network strengthening through e-mail exchanges and conference calls. He served as a liaison between the G-CAP mission, IMPACT, and members of the technical working group.

One of the requests from the technical working group was support for medical staff to attend courses and other trainings. IMPACT/G-CAP arranged for a technical training visit of a Nicaraguan physician to meet with and observe Guatemalan physicians working in ART. During the first year of the program, scholarships were provided to five Guatemalan doctors to support their participation in the Guatemala *diplomado* course.

IMPACT/G-CAP also provided funding to support the development and implementation of diploma courses in Panama, Nicaragua, and Guatemala. The goal and structure of the diploma courses were similar; the goal was to train health personnel in integrated management and care of PLHA in order to build the capacity of human resources at health clinics and, thereby, improve the quality of care and treatment provided to PLHA in the region. Each course provided opportunities for both theoretical and practical learning. At the conclusion of each *diplomado*, participants presented research findings based on clinical practice to colleagues. All the courses were accredited within their countries and are anticipated to continue being offered.

IMPACT/G-CAP worked with the *Fundacion para el apoyo al Diagnostico y la Documentacion Medica* (FADDoM) to develop and then implement an HIV/AIDS diploma course for 30 physicians at the University of Panama. One of the goals of this course was to train health personnel in order to make possible the establishment of additional clinics in the areas most affected by the epidemic in Panama. The four-month course contained seven modules with classroom and practical activities. Participants included medical personnel who provide care and treatment to PLHA from different parts of the country.

In June 2006, FADDoM convened a final evaluation workshop for the care and treatment course. At this workshop, participants provided feedback on the quality of the course as well as on the knowledge gained as a result of their participation. Participants generally agreed that more intensive and widespread prevention activities, especially targeted at those most at risk, were needed to complement clinical care.

In May 2006, similar HIV/AIDS courses began in Guatemala and Nicaragua. CARE/Nicaragua, in collaboration with the *Asociacion Nicaraguense Infectologia*, developed and implemented the training in Nicaragua. This six-month course was for medical professionals and consisted of five modules, including an overview of the epidemiological and sociological trends of HIV/AIDS, microbiology and laboratory techniques, and integrated care management of PLHA. In total, 19 health professionals in Nicaragua completed the first offering of the diploma course.

The *Centro Integral de Capacitacion y Salud de la Mujer* (CICASAM), the local implementing partner in Guatemala worked with the University of San Carlos of Guatemala on the development and implementation of the care and treatment course in Guatemala. The course was presented at the university to both professors and students. The six-month course had three modules and consisted of both classroom and practical exercises. It was designed for 80 participants, but approximately 50 health professionals attended the diploma course, which included a distance-learning component.

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

| Implementing Agency Name | Project Title | Effective Date | Expiration Date | Budget |
|--|--|-----------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| <i>Fundacion para el Apoyo al Diagnostico y la Documentacion Medica (FADDoM)</i> | Diploma Course: Care and Treatment for Patients Living with HIV/AIDS | March 1, 2005 | June 30, 2006 | \$22,899 |
| <i>Centro Integral de Capacitacion y Salud de la Mujer (CICASAM)</i> | Diploma Course: Integrated Care Management for HIV/AIDS Patients | April 15, 2006 | November 15, 2006 | \$13,660 |
| CARE/Nicaragua | Diploma Course: Integrated Care Management for HIV/AIDS Patients | May 1, 2006 | December 31, 2006 | \$20,014 |

COUNTRY PROGRAM FINANCIAL SUMMARY

USAID committed \$200,000 to IMPACT in the USAID/Guatemala–Central American Regional Program to support the development of HIV/AIDS comprehensive care diploma courses in the region.



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