

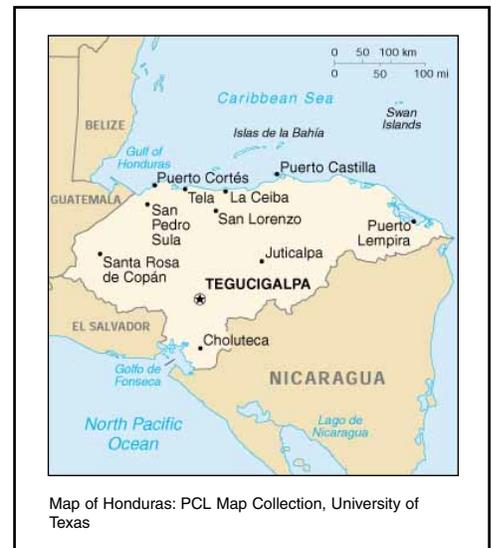
# HIV/AIDS in Honduras and USAID Involvement

Honduras remains the epicenter of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Central America, accounting for more than half of all AIDS cases in the sub-region. While urban areas have the highest rates of infection, people living with HIV/AIDS can be found in all parts of the country. By the late 1990s, the annual number of reported AIDS cases leveled off at around 1000, and recent trends indicate stabilizing rates among high-risk groups. It is important to note, however, that reported cases are believed to be substantially lower than the actual number of AIDS cases in Honduras. According to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), by the end of 1999:

- 58,000 adults aged 15-49 (1.92 percent of the adult population) were living with HIV/AIDS;
- Of the 58,000 infections, half occurred among women;
- 4400 children under 15 were living with HIV/AIDS;
- An estimated 4200 people died of AIDS in 1999; and
- Since the beginning of the epidemic, approximately 19,000 children had lost their mother or both parents to HIV/AIDS (the Ministry of Health estimates that this number is closer to 46,000).

The spread of HIV/AIDS in Honduras is largely fueled by heterosexual transmission. Prevalence among Honduran women is rising; the current male-to-female infection ratio is 1:1. The epidemic is most concentrated in the city of San Pedro Sula and other major towns of Cortes Department and north coast areas. According to the Ministry of Health:

- As of September 2000, 83 percent of reported AIDS cases were transmitted via heterosexual contact.
- About 48 percent of reported AIDS cases are found in two urban centers: San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa.
- Studies of commercial sex workers (CSWs) in San Pedro Sula indicate infection rates of 10 percent or more.
- Mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) is on the rise, accounting for 6 percent of reported AIDS cases as of December 2000.



## NATIONAL RESPONSE

In the late 1980s, Honduras created an HIV/AIDS department inside the Office of the Secretary of Health to combat the growing number of HIV/AIDS infections. In 1998, the HIV/AIDS department designed the first national strategic plan, incorporating extensive multisectoral participation by people living with HIV/AIDS, various sectors of government, civil society, chambers of commerce, and the religious sector. In 1999, the Honduran Government passed legislation to protect the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS and formed a National Commission on AIDS to coordinate national HIV/AIDS policies. A second national strategic plan for 2002-2006 is underway.

Honduran health officials rely on an extensive monitoring system to track the epidemic's progression and better target prevention efforts. Today, the national AIDS program, supported by USAID, promotes HIV prevention, including early detection and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and condom use, and HIV/AIDS surveillance. In addition, Honduras is working to improve access to antiretroviral (ARV) therapy for people living with HIV/AIDS. The Ministry of Health approved approximately \$1.4 million for the purchase of ARVs in 2002.

## USAID SUPPORT

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) allocated \$2,566,000 for HIV/AIDS pro-

gramming in Honduras in FY 2001. Through 2000, USAID/Honduras focused primarily on HIV/AIDS prevention, with special emphasis on young adults aged 15-24 and CSWs. Beginning in 2001, the new Mission strategy has focused on strengthening prevention in high prevalence groups, such CSWs, men who have sex with men (MSM), and the Garifuna (an ethnic minority) community. In addition, a condom social marketing program is being implemented, and the use of new rapid HIV tests are being promoted.

Honduras also benefits from USAID's Central American Regional HIV/AIDS program. As the largest regional HIV/AIDS donor, USAID allocated \$3.7 million toward Central American regional HIV/AIDS activities in FY 2001. The objectives of the regional program are to:

- Assist in the implementation of appropriate HIV/AIDS policies and strategic plans at the regional and national level;
- Facilitate the implementation of improved prevention and support systems and other services; and
- Maintain support for an effective regional condom social marketing effort, with a focus on correct and consistent condom use in high-risk populations and non-traditional condom distribution.

<b>Key Population, Health, and Socioeconomic Indicators</b>		
Population	6.4 million	U.S. Census Bureau 2001*
Growth Rate	2.5%	U.S. Census Bureau 2000*
Life Expectancy	Males: 68 Females: 72	U.S. Census Bureau 2000*
Total Fertility Rate	4.3	U.S. Census Bureau 2000*
Infant Mortality Rate	31 per 1,000 live births	U.S. Census Bureau 2000*
Maternal Mortality Rate	220 per 100,000 live births	World Bank 1990
GNP per capita (US\$)	\$850	World Bank 2000
Public health expenditure as % GDP	3.9%	World Bank 1998
Adult Literacy (% of people 15 and above)	Males: 74.9% Females: 75.4%	UNESCO 2001

\* From U.S. Census Bureau 2000 HIV/AIDS country profiles, which includes data from U.S. Census Bureau, Population Reference Bureau, UNAIDS and WHO.

## **USAID-SUPPORTED PARTNERS AND NGOS**

USAID's HIV prevention activities in Honduras are implemented both through Honduran nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the Ministry of Health. Through December 2001, USAID supported **Fundacion Fomento en Salud** to provide sub-grants to approximately 15 NGOs working to prevent HIV in high prevalence populations. The **Honduran Ministry of Health** receives USAID funds to conduct surveillance activities, special studies on HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and pilot MTCT prevention activities.

**Family Health International (FHI)/IMPACT** provides technical assistance to strengthen the capacity of **Fundacion Fomento en Salud**, a local Honduran NGO.

In addition, through **Johns Hopkins University/Population Communication Services Project**, the Mission supports the development of a national AIDS communication strategy/campaign.

*USAID regional HIV/AIDS programs are also active in Honduras:*

USAID's Central American HIV/AIDS Prevention Project (El Proyecto Acción SIDA de Centroamérica, or PASCA) is designed to strengthen Central America's capacity to respond to the AIDS epidemic. PASCA is implemented through the **Academy for Educational Development (AED)** in collaboration with **The Futures Group International (TFGI)**. The project provides technical assistance on HIV prevention to governments, NGOs, and to the private sector in five Central American countries: Panama, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Project activities primarily center around policy dialogue, NGO strengthening, and grant provision for Central American NGOs working on HIV/AIDS/STI prevention.

Through **Population Services International (PSI)/AIDSMark**, USAID/Honduras supports the Pan American Social Marketing Organization (PASMO), to develop and expand partnerships with

commercial, public, and non-profit groups; to leverage regional comparative strengths and reproductive health resources; and to create a more sustainable and effective condom social marketing program in the region. The initiative is active in Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Belize and Nicaragua, and began program activities in Honduras in late 2000.

## **OTHER U.S. SUPPORT**

With support from USAID/Honduras, the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** provides technical assistance to the Honduran Ministry of Health to improve national HIV/AIDS surveillance capabilities.

## **DONOR SUPPORT**

USAID coordinates with **UNAIDS**, the **Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)**, and the **Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)** on HIV/AIDS prevention assistance in Honduras.

**Norway** and **Sweden** are providing approximately \$3.6 million over three years to support HIV/AIDS prevention programs among women and youths in Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras.

**UNAIDS** contributed \$450,000 to national programs in Central America during 1998-99, and is beginning to provide funding for regional activities, such as the mobile populations initiative (also supported by USAID).

The **World Bank** approved \$1.6 million in HIV/AIDS funding for Honduras in 1999, as part of a loan for overall health system development.

## **CHALLENGES**

Honduras is the fourth poorest country in Latin America and faces several development challenges that hamper HIV/AIDS prevention efforts:

- Widespread poverty (over 65 percent of the population is impoverished);
- Low levels of education (as of 2000, the average adult had only 5 years of education);

- Rapid population growth (2.7 percent per year);
- Limited access to health information and care, especially in rural areas.

Moreover, according to FHI, a lack of economic opportunity forces many women into the commercial sex industry; and alcohol abuse plays a role in increased sexual risk taking.

PAHO recommends the following actions to improve HIV/AIDS prevention and care in Honduras and the Central American region:

- Strengthen capacity for monitoring and surveillance at the national and regional level;
- Improve education, health promotion, and mass communication; and
- Adapt strategies for implementation and evaluation of comprehensive HIV/AIDS care to the needs and resources of communities.

## SELECTED LINKS AND CONTACTS

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**March 2002**

*(Data current as of November 2001)*

