"STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION-FREE ZONES": AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO ENGAGING THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTORS IN CREATING MORE INCLUSIVE





1. BACKGROUND

Central America's HIV epidemic is concentrated in key populations (KPs): MSM, transgender women (TW), and female sex workers (FSW).

Despite existing HIV laws and policies that respond to KP's specific needs, there is evidence of widespread discriminatory attitudes and practices towards these populations, and stigma and discrimination (S&D) continue to be important barriers to accessing HIV services and care.

In 2016, under the USAID Combination Prevention Program for HIV in Central America, the Pan American Social Marketing Organization (PASMO) designed an intervention entitled "stigma and discrimination-free zones" as part of a broader initiative known as Generation Zero, contributing to the goal of "getting to zero discrimination".



2. DESCRIPTION

PASMO developed guidelines and works with public and private sector institutions, companies, and other organizations to meet five criteria that would allow them to become "stigma and discrimination-free zones":

-) A letter of commitment to complete the accreditation process.
- 2) An internal action plan and system for reporting cases of S&D.
- 3) An internal employee committee responsible for follow-up.
- 4) Training and sensitization of staff in human rights, sexual and reproductive rights, gender, masculinities, sexual diversity, HIV/AIDS, S&D and gender-based violence; and
- 5) An updated HIV, S&D workplace policy.

PASMO provides the technical assistance to meet the criteria and facilitates the training and sensitization sessions in coordination with other Generation Zero partners, such as local National AIDS Programs.



3. RESULTS

In 2017 and up to June 2018, PASMO successfully completed the "stigma and discrimination-free zone" process with the following public institutions, and companies in Central America:

INSTITUTIONS, COMPANIES AND ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED THE "STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION-FREE ZONE" CERTIFICATION PROCESS, 2017-2018 (GUATEMALA, EL SALVADOR, NICARAGUA AND PANAMA)

COUNTRY	INSTITUTIONS, COMPANIES, ORGANIZATIONS, ETC.	TOTAL NUMBER OF DIRECTORS MANAGERS AND OPERATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF SENSITIZED
Guatemala	1)Cultural Affair Office of the Municipality of Quetzaltenango 2)Human Rights Ombudsman´s Office	6 11
El Salvador	 3)The Justice Sector´s Technical Executive Unit 4)The Public Health Superior Counc 5)The Human Rights Offices Of San Miguel, Santa Ana and San Salvador 6)The National Judicial Council 	il 397
Nicaragua	7)Juan Bautista Arrién Institute 8)Inmaculada Concepción Private Laboratory network	23
Panama	Overseas United Inc.	32

Total: 469

In Nicaragua and Panama, the initiative appealed to corporate social responsibility efforts aligned with local HIV laws, allowing PASMO to engage private sector companies and their employees. This effort has also been closely linked to a journalist sensitization process, as part of a broader effort reach the community and society levels with anti-stigma and discrimination initiatives.



4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The "stigma and discrimination-free zone" initiative allows PASMO to engage private sector partners and important public institutions to create sustainable, long-term efforts to reduce S&D towards KPs and persons living with HIV in Central America and to operationalize existing HIV laws and policies.





















