

Spotlight: Philippines S+D QI Learning Network

A national collaboration of the Philippines Society for Microbiology and Infectious Disease (PSMID) and Sustained Health Initiatives of Philippines (SHIP) to reduce stigma and discrimination in healthcare settings

Background

Stigma and discrimination (S+D) towards people living with HIV (PLWH) is evident in healthcare settings across the Philippines and remains a formidable barrier to care and treatment. The HIV epidemic in the Philippines continues to grow at an alarming rate, with key populations (KP), especially young men who have sex with men, accounting for the majority of new infections, affected further by stigma directed towards them. In 2019, a recent revision of the national HIV Law made the elimination of stigma and discrimination a priority of the state, adding that private and public HIV service providers must deliver non-discriminatory services and that the government must develop “redress mechanisms” for PLWH.

Planning and Development

Implementing Partners

With funding from Gilead Sciences and support from UCSF-HEALTHQUAL and UNAIDS Philippines, the Philippines HIV S+D QI Learning Network (QIS+D) was formed in August 2020. PSMID and SHIP lead the Network in a unique partnership model between a national professional medical association and a healthcare organization.

As a professional specialty association, PSMID has a strong non-affiliated national role and provides expert guidance to the Philippines Department of Health in areas of infectious diseases and public health. Many PSMID members are the leaders of HIV clinics of tertiary hospitals who provide medical expertise through their roles in HIV/AIDS Core Teams (HACT) and HIV training to their partner hospitals. SHIP operates three HIV specialty clinics and participates in networks with KP-led community-based organizations. The Philippines QIS+D Network is managed by SHIP, which oversees data collection, and provides a virtual training platform, which was essential to successful implementation of the program during the COVID pandemic.

Engagement

SHIP, PSMID, and UNAIDS-PH engaged diverse stakeholders, including providers, national DOH leadership, and civil society in the planning phase of the initiative. In all, 12 hospitals and HIV treatment hubs agreed to participate in the program. These facilities were both private and public, representing seven regions with the highest HIV burden. The Design Meeting was held in October 2020, and the official launch of the Philippines QIS+D Network occurred on World AIDS Day, December 1, 2020, at the PSMID 50th Anniversary Convention.

The objectives and methods of the Philippines QIS+D Network and QI Learning Network Model were explained at the Design Meeting to a coalition of DOH leadership, HIV Unit representatives, regional HIV program coordinators, PSMID, UNAIDS, HACT chairs, and representatives from community-based organizations. On October 14, 2020, during the first day of the Philippine QIS+D Network Design Meeting, participants signed a [Declaration of Commitment](#) to end all forms of HIV/AIDS-related S+D in healthcare settings and their respective communities. The Philippine QIS+D Network reaffirmed a joint commitment with UNAIDS in achieving a shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination, and zero AIDS-related deaths.



Figure 1. Network HIV Treatment Sites



Image 1: 1st Network Learning Session



Implementation of S+D QI Program

Implementation and Capacity Building

Participating facilities received virtual training from UCSF via Zoom on QI concepts and methods, with particular attention devoted to how they are applicable to S+D reduction, based on experiences from the Southeast Asia Regional QIS+D Network. The four immediately actionable drivers of HIV-related S+D in healthcare settings were introduced, based on Nyblade's framework (*J Int AIDS Soc*2013;16.doi:10.7448/IAS.16.3.18718). Participants were also instructed in the use of web-based data collection platforms. The Network utilizes tools shared by the QIS+D Network to survey healthcare worker attitudes and assess patient experience, adapted by RIHES at Chiang Mai University. Survey questions were translated into five local languages (Table 1). Led by SHIP, stakeholder surveys were conducted, and each hospital accesses its own data sets for analysis.

Baseline HCW survey results revealed concerns about transmission, avoidance of physical contact when providing care for PLWH, and insufficient policies to protect PLWH from discrimination. A second round of surveys was conducted to monitor the participating sites' stigma reduction efforts. QI coaching is guided by QI teams and a QI coach from SHIP. Coaching facilitates both data analysis and the development of S+D reduction interventions to address identified areas for improvement (Diagram 1). Examples of QI activities currently being implemented include improving privacy for PLWH, HIV education and awareness campaigns, and S+D HCW training workshops.

Since November 2019, five virtual Learning Sessions have been convened in which QIS+D teams learn from experiences of other sites during the implementation of the program. These sessions allow facilities to discuss measurement strategies, present data and results, share tested interventions for scale-up and discuss challenges.

Scale-up and Sustainability

- ✓ The Network informs policymakers and participating facilities of the knowledge gained through its activities, and how these successes can be replicated and integrated into routine processes to improve service delivery. The program hopes to institutionalize QI indicators for S+D as part of DOH policy for treatment hub accreditation or license renewal, and for private sector initiatives. A package of tested S+D interventions will be compiled and disseminated for scale-up.
- ✓ Community-based organizations have stated their interest in joining the Network, supported this year by the Global Fund's Sustainability of HIV Services for Key Populations in Asia (SKPA) Program, managed by AFAO. The EpiC Program, funded by PEPFAR, also integrates S+D QI into the facility programs they are supporting.
- ✓ Ongoing collaboration with DOH, UNAIDS, UCSF and financial support from Gilead allows for the potential expansion of the Philippines QIS+D Network to other facilities and to establish a community of practice.

Summary

- ✓ The Philippine QIS+D illustrates how robust partnerships between national organizations and clinical providers can effectively lead and facilitate S+D QI Networks, with continuous engagement from national and regional MoH leaders.

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Table 1: Example Question Translation

English	Was the clinic welcoming and friendly?
Filipino	Naging magiliw at mabuti ba ang salubong sa iyo ng clinic?
Cebuano	Malipayon ug mahigalaon ba ang clinic sa imong mag bisita?
Hiligaynon	Maayo man bala ang pagbaton kag pag-abiabi sa imo sa clinic?
Biolano	Maogma ba asin maasikasuhon an saimong clinic?

Diagram 1: QI Coaching Logic Model

