

Qualitative study: Facilitators and barriers to PLHIV enrolling and being retained in HIV care and treatment services in Vietnam

2011

Background

Despite great efforts made to increase the number of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV) receiving care and treatment and to retain them in the system once they registered, about half of all PLHIV in Vietnam are estimated to be 'out of care' and, thus, not receiving any HIV care, treatment and support services at all. In addition, only half (54%) of those who are in need of antiretroviral therapy (ART) are actually receiving it.

In order to understand why 1) a large proportion of PLHIV who know their status are not enrolling in care; 2) PLHIV who do enroll in pre-ART care are dropping out of care at higher rates than those who are on ART; and 3) to inform the design of new strategies and/or tailor existing strategies to improve access and retention in care and treatment services for PLHIV (both on ART and pre-ART) in Vietnam, the FHI360 and a consulting agency - the Institute of Social and Medical Studies (ISMS), in partnership with the Vietnam Administration for HIV/AIDS Control (VAAC) conducted the qualitative study in Can Tho and Hai Phong, Vietnam.

Study Objectives

1. Identify facilitators and barriers to accessing HIV care and treatment services among the following three groups of PLHIV who are aware of their HIV status:
 - a. **Group A:** PLHIV who have tested HIV-positive and have not yet accessed pre-ART or ART services at a local MOH or PEPFAR-funded OPC
 - b. **Group B:** PLHIV who were previously enrolled in pre-ART and ART services but are currently not receiving these services (i.e lost to follow up (LTFU))
 - c. **Group C:** PLHIV who have enrolled in pre-ART and ART services and are currently retained and receiving services
2. Provide recommendations for future interventions to reduce barriers for PLHIV so as to improve access and increase retention in HIV Care and Treatment services by the three groups of PLHIV identified above.

Study Design & Methodology

A qualitative descriptive study with in-depth interviews was conducted with PLHIV, key informants comprising of program managers, facility based staff, and community based staff and community stakeholders as well as family members/care-givers of PLHIV to get multiple perspectives on the barriers to and facilitators of HIV care and treatment uptake and retention.

The study was carried out in Hai Phong and Can Tho from March 20, 2011 – April 29, 2011 with a total of 145 participants, including 76 PLHIV, 22 caregivers, and 47 health care providers including facility based health providers and community health providers.

Through interviews with study participants, factors that influenced decision and behaviors of study participants on taking services on HIV care and treatment were emerged from each study group.

Output from ISMS

Data were coded and analyzed by ISMS researchers using ethnographic analysis software Atlas.ti version 5.1. Results were summarized in a final report delivered to FHI360.

Donors & Partners

The study was carried out for FHI 360 with funding from USAID. The Vietnam Administration for HIV/AIDS Control (VAAC) was a partner.

For more information about us and our donor and partners, please visit:

www.isms.org.vn

www.fhi360.org

www.usaid.gov

www.vaac.gov.vn

