

Honduras: Siempre Unidos Siloe Project

The Challenge

Compounding one of the highest inequality and poverty rates (12.7% percent of the population live on less than \$2.15/day and 50% of people live on less than \$6.85/day)¹ in the region, Honduras ranks fourth among non-warring nations worldwide for homicide and first for femicide in Latin America. Gang violence is widespread, especially in urban areas, with murder, rape, and displacement used as punishment for resistance. Gang members target women, girls, and LGBTIQ+ people, who are at higher risk of sexual abuse.² Honduras was also the earliest Latin American country majorly affected by HIV/AIDS and, with a 7% increase in the 2010-2018 period, rates remain high.³ Against this backdrop, LGBTIQ+ people are frequent targets of discrimination, extortion, and violence not only from gangs but also from the national civil police and military police, as well as members of the public. Discrimination is perpetuated in schools, workplaces, health care, housing, and inside the home. Violence against LGBTIQ+ individuals has displaced many internally and forced others to ultimately leave the country to seek asylum.

Elevating those most vulnerable and at-risk

Siempre Unidos is a community-based service provider and advocate for survivors of violence and at-risk populations. Their work specifically supports people living with HIV, commercial sex workers, LGBTIQ+ persons, children collecting resource in municipal waste landfills and other acutely marginalized populations. To date, Siempre Unidos is unique in Honduras for its work with these populations.

The Approach

Siempre Unidos started as the only non-governmental program in the country to respond to the HIV/AIDS crisis through developing clinics and community outreach services, including testing, treatment, follow-up, and referrals. Gradually, while remaining committed to its HIV/AIDS focus, Siempre Unidos expanded its reach to engage in human rights and solidarity work with other populations experiencing marginalization and extreme vulnerability, especially commercial sex workers, LGBTIQ+ people, children, prisoners, and women experiencing violence. It does so through trained, trusted leaders—the project staff—who have a long-standing presence in participating communities and are well-positioned to engage marginalized populations. Staff provide clinic-based services and the Episcopal Relief & Development supported Siloe Project in

¹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/honduras/overview>

² <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/honduras>

³ https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2019/october/20191014_latin-america

particular engages in face-to-face interactions and small-group engagements at locations publicly known for sex work, i.e., bars, nightclubs, streets, and city parks. The project creates safe spaces in the community, providing psychosocial counseling, support groups, and health resources (i.e. condoms, COVID-19 tests, etc.), to a population that is largely excluded from other social welfare benefits, as well as acutely at risk of experiencing violence and exploitation.

While Siempre Unidos hosts community educational events, workshops, and marches, to raise awareness about the rights of marginalized groups, mobilize communities towards collective action, and encourage advocacy efforts within Honduras' legal system to support the vision and needs of those at-risk populations served by the project (i.e., women living in poverty, sex workers, LGBTIQ+ people). The Siloe Project also engages local pro-bono lawyers who provide representation to those experiencing persecution based on their HIV status, LGBTIQ+ identity, or profession such as sex workers. In addition to monitoring these cases, the project issues reports on murders and incidences of violence against LGBTIQ+ people and commercial sex workers and is working with the Women's Prosecutor's Office, Children's Prosecutor's Office, Human Rights Representative, and Police Investigation Directorate to ensure violence and hate crimes suffered by the LGBTIQ+ community are investigated and that justice is served.

2019-2022 Reach



2022 Results

Clinic-based services:

- **71** HIV+ people engaged through support groups;
- **1,400** biosafety kits delivered to beneficiaries with information on COVID-19; and
- **17,350** condoms distributed at in-person events, including face-to-face and group approaches (including to sex workers and those at higher risk of contracting HIV/AIDS).

Outreach:

- **536** community members trained on HIV/AIDS through educational sessions at project clinics; and
- **271** community members trained on the topics of sexual and reproductive health, gender equality, and violence against women and other marginalized groups as to equip them to lead advocacy and community-building efforts.