

PATH: Combatting HIV in Vietnam through Partnerships

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COMPANY DESCRIPTION

PATH is a Seattle, Washington-based international nonprofit started in 1977 with a mission to advance global health equity and transform health care delivery around the world through partnerships. In 2014, USAID and PATH launched the Healthy Markets initiative, which brings together public institutions, businesses, and social enterprises to build a sustainable response to HIV in Vietnam and create shared value.



THE OPPORTUNITY

Vietnam has experienced significant progress in curtailing its HIV epidemic since the first diagnosis in 1990. In 2014, however, there was a notable shift in the epidemic. While HIV infections among female sex workers and people who inject drugs were stabilizing or decreasing, the rate of infection among men who have sex with men and transgender women began to rise. At the same time, years of economic reforms had transformed Vietnam into a lower-middle income country, triggering major donors, such as the UK's Department for International Development, the World Bank, and the US's PEPFAR (President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief), to reduce their support in a country where nearly 80% of funding for HIV-related programs had come from global donors.

Vietnam's Ministry of Health had to turn inward to source domestic private sector funding for the HIV program that now catered to a different demographic. The US Agency for International Development (USAID), international nonprofit PATH and others with long histories in the country recognized that the HIV epidemic could not be solved by a single sector. Together they initiated the USAID/PATH Healthy Markets project, a shared value-driven program that relies on an ecosystem of local and international players with unique assets and skills to help Vietnam address and end its HIV epidemic by the government's goal of 2030.

THE STRATEGY

The USAID/PATH Healthy Markets project was launched in 2014 as a cross-sector initiative to catalyze a market for HIV goods and services in Vietnam. Vietnam's rise to middle income status opened up domestic opportunities for commercializing HIV prevention and treatment products, from condoms to rapid diagnostic tests and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). To boost local investment, PATH and USAID worked with Vietnam's ministry of health and promoted a shared value ecosystem approach where businesses,

social enterprises, and civil society could combine expertise and assets to scale positive impact, diversify resourcing, and prompt market innovations that would drive economic and social benefits for the local community.

Through collaboration with the government and local community organizations, PATH scoped HIV-affected population's usage of and willingness to pay for HIV commodities and services, and preferred outlets and brands, among other indicators. PATH used this data in partnership with the government to roll out a Total Market Approach (TMA). In the past, high-quality condoms had been free or government subsidized for everyone, which hampered private sector incentives to compete in the domestic market. Through TMA, the government targets subsidies for those who need them most, improving equity among key Vietnamese populations and opening the door for HIV business solutions at home.

Building on this momentum, PATH partnered with local condom manufacturers, distributors, and social enterprises to improve the scale and self-sufficiency of their businesses and generate competition. A domestic condom value chain and supply chain grew and investments in other markets, such as HIV testing and private clinic-delivered HIV services, began to prosper. Today a commercially sustainable system is in place that makes affordable high-quality HIV-related products and services available to populations most at risk of HIV.



In addition to offering HIV self-testing and lay-testing services through community-based organizations and social enterprises, which saw immediate uptake compared with HIV testing at public health facilities, PATH turned to private sector allies, including advertising firm Ogilvy, television network MTV Vietnam, Facebook and dating apps Grindr and Hornet, to co-create sex positive campaigns that offered information on healthcare, safer sex, and how to live a meaningful and exciting life.

“Shared value partnerships have been key to the success of the USAID/PATH Healthy Markets project in introducing game-changing approaches and innovations. Each partner has been integral to developing a sustainable approach that has substantially increased access to HIV goods and services among those most at risk in Vietnam.” – DR. KIMBERLY GREEN, GLOBAL DIRECTOR OF HIV & TB, PATH

RESULTS – VALUE FOR BUSINESS AND SOCIETY

In the past four years, Healthy Markets has had impressive impact on generating domestic markets that respond to the needs of those affected by HIV. The ecosystem has been indispensable to the success of the initiative and in turn has generated many levels of benefit among the stakeholders by:

- Democratizing access to HIV prevention and testing services through the creation of a sustainable, scalable commercial system for new and affordable products and services. More than 135,000 people have opted for the country's first ever community-based HIV testing services, and 94% of those diagnosed with HIV have enrolled in antiretroviral drug therapy. Now about half of all HIV testing is delivered by community or private-sector entities.
- Enabling the establishment of social enterprise clinics that offer low-cost, friendly HIV services including PrEP, HIV testing and treatment, sexually transmitted infection services, viral hepatitis



treatment and more. These officially licensed clinics provide an alternative to public health facilities, and are owned by HIV-affected populations, enabling a warm and welcoming environment. The clinics have collectively reached more than 3000 people with PrEP, and thousands more with other health services.

- Selling more than 64,000,000 condoms and 8,000,000 low dead space syringes through new and disruptive value chains that include community-based organizations, social enterprises, local manufacturers and distributors, and on-line market places.
- Leveraging more than USD1 million from private sector partners and attracting more than USD4 million in investments into HIV markets.
- Opening a local system for HIV commodity and service private sector growth, innovation, competition and profit.
- Breaking down harmful stigmas, discrimination and social norms that previously hindered open discussions around HIV and LGBT+ issues.
- Changing how Vietnam's ministry of health perceives partnerships with the local private sector, community based organizations and social enterprises, among others, to create lasting impact.

More broadly, Healthy Markets serves as a learning incubator for PATH and USAID, which cross feeds learnings from this initiative into new projects and broader private sector engagement strategies in Vietnam and elsewhere.

LESSONS LEARNED, CHALLENGES AND OUTLOOK

The HIV epidemic among gay men and transgender women in Vietnam has not yet slowed, but as with all shared value programs, scale is the key to impact. The Healthy Markets team and partners are working to create more proof points so as to scale impact and gain buy-in from additional actors to meet the country's HIV elimination goals.

One thing is clear: ecosystem-based efforts to improve HIV care and prevention while combatting harmful stigmas are essential to addressing HIV epidemics in other middle income countries facing reductions in external donor funding. Conferences, reports and other opportunities for communications are helping to foster cross-learning from Vietnam's successes in stewarding public and private sector partnerships and helping other countries uncover what is feasible in their national HIV responses.

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