

**BACKUP Initiative**

Building Alliances – Creating Knowledge – Updating Partners

**Brief Proposal Summary**

<p><b>Proposal Title</b> Making the money work for women: Measuring the stigma and discrimination of people living with HIV/AIDS in the Dominican Republic</p>	<p><b>Responsible Person (name contact)</b> Magaly Caram, Executive Director</p>
<p><b>GTZ Contact</b></p>	<p><b>Partner Organization</b> Asociación Dominicana Pro-bienestar de la Familia (Profamilia) International Planned Parenthood Federation</p>
<p><b>Budget €75,000</b></p>	<p><b>Country</b> Dominican Republic</p>

**Information about applicant** *(short description of organisation, mission, staff involved, offices, capacity to manage intervention)*

The Asociación Dominicana Pro Bienestar de la Familia (PROFAMILIA) in the Dominican Republic, founded in 1966, is an affiliated member of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). The IPPF is a global network of autonomous Member Associations and is active in 181 countries. Founded in 1952, the IPPF is a leading provider of sexual and reproductive health services and is the most active NGO globally in this field, committed to integrating HIV/AIDS services into sexual and reproductive health care through sustainable actions. With the help of the GTZ BACKUP Initiative in 2005 and 2006, the IPPF developed and documented one of the most successful models of integrating HIV/AIDS services into the context of sexual and reproductive health care. An important role of the IPPF is to support its Member Associations to be strong, independent and sustainable organisations and, at the same time, national leaders in the context of sexual and reproductive health care. The IPPF provides technical, financial and management support in HIV/AIDS services through its six regional offices. Its central office is responsible for developing global strategies, forming global alliances, facilitating the dissemination of best practices and successful approaches in addition to acting on a global political scale for the integration of sexual and reproductive health services and HIV/AIDS, the access to these services for vulnerable groups and to global funding which guarantees this integration.

In the Dominican Republic, PROFAMILIA is a pioneering institution in family planning services and education both at a clinical and community level. It has recently become an institution dedicated to sexual and reproductive health and is a leading organisation in this field in the Dominican Republic. It offers services to about 1,100 people per day at its six comprehensive health care centres. The services offered include gynaecological consultations, family planning, mother and child health care, diagnosis and treatment of STDs, HIV tests including pre and post counselling, emotional support, care for victims of violence, a clinical laboratory and diagnostics.

The institution's other programmes include: a) the Community Programme, made up of community networks of about 1,200 predominately young volunteers, provides education and information, distributes contraceptives and offers referrals to health centres, in addition to funding for health care for people living in extreme poverty and b) the Marketing Programme which distributes methods of contraception through over 2,000 pharmacies, 3,000 doctors and 800 businesses in the country's main cities as well as through other institutions and a network of about 70 community wholesalers.

**BACKUP Initiative**

Building Alliances – Creating Knowledge – Updating Partners

Since 1998, the institution's education and community programmes, especially those directed at adolescents and young people, have focused on education for preventing the spread of HIV. These programmes have reached thousands of young people with prevention messages about HIV, thereby changing the levels of awareness, attitudes and practices for the prevention of HIV within this population group. In recent years, they have expanded the subject matter of their different youth programmes with regard to the discrimination and stigma of people living with HIV (PLHA) in the country.

By looking at the offer of clinical services in sexual and reproductive health care we can identify the necessity of incorporating HIV/AIDS services into the range of existing services at clinics. In this respect, in 2004 Profamilia received the support from the Center for Infectious Diseases at Columbia University in New York with the objective of qualifying clinical providers from Profamilia's Evangelina Rodríguez Health Clinic to offer treatment to people infected with the HIV virus. Within the scope of this project and with the support of the IPPF and the GTZ BACKUP Initiative, a range of services was established in 2004 at the Evangelina Rodríguez Health Clinic in the Distrito Nacional including anti-retroviral therapy for people living with HIV/AIDS. In 2005, similar services were organised at the Rosa Cisneros Clinic in Santiago. Currently, a total of 253 people receive treatment at both clinics, 54% of whom receive anti-retroviral treatment at their respective clinic. The number of people benefiting from Profamilia's services for people living with HIV/AIDS is rising significantly with the introduction of a CD4 testing machine at the Santiago clinic. This guarantees access to such testing for the entire population in the country's northern zone which receives treatment at centres of the National Care Network for PLHA.

The evaluation of this first stage of the project showed that one of the lessons learned is the great importance attributed by those receiving treatment to the integration of these services into the range of sexual and reproductive health services at the clinic. A further positive assessment was the possibility of receiving services in an atmosphere free of discrimination. Another extraordinary result of the project was the high levels of adherence, exceeding 90%. This experience demonstrated the role which sexual and reproductive health service organisations can play in response to this epidemic.

The growing demand of services for PLHA which Profamilia receives along with the inability to respond to this demand has led us to develop actions of support for the development of other health services centres. Currently, we are supporting the organization of service units at public health centres in Santiago.

**Links to national policies and GFATM** *(relationship to CCM, role in implementing national programmes (GFATM activities), involvement in national policy development or activities concerning AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other health priorities)*

Profamilia is the Principle Beneficiary of the Global Fund in the Dominican Republic and is responsible for the management of funds allocated for the prevention and control of tuberculosis. As such, it is an active member of the country's Coordinating Mechanism. In addition, Profamilia is the sub-beneficiary for the HIV component of the Global Fund project in the Dominican Republic with its Education of Couples for the Prevention of HIV Project directed at adolescents and young people. The Profamilia care centres for people living with HIV/AIDS are part of the National Comprehensive Care Network for PLHA coordinated by the government of the Dominican Republic.

Profamilia participates in the National Health Council, the highest body in this sector set up

**BACKUP Initiative**

Building Alliances – Creating Knowledge – Updating Partners

by the General Law of Health in order to establish norms and regulations and to maintain medical records. In addition, Profamilia participates in different commissions created to monitor public health policies and international treaties, especially those referring to sexual and reproductive health care, for example the Dominican Republic's Presidential Commission designated to achieve the Millennium Goals.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this project is to strengthen the actions intended to reduce the stigma and discrimination of PLHA in the Dominican Republic and to increase their participation in decision-making processes on prevention, care and treatment programmes in the country.

The project should establish the basis for developing a strategy that will reduce the current levels of stigma and discrimination experienced by PLHA in the Dominican Republic, in particular with regard to women and, at the same time, promote their participation in decisions dealing with HIV prevention and care in the country. For this purpose, a quantitative study should be conducted which will extract information on their experiences of stigma and discrimination as well as the degree of their participation in HIV/AIDS projects and programmes. In order to examine the types of differences that exist in the experiences of discrimination and stigma, a randomly selected group composed of men and women will be evaluated. The information collected in this project will be distributed to decision-makers, donors and key actors in the response to HIV/AIDS in the Dominican Republic and will enable comparisons of the situation among different groups of PLHA living in different regions of the country. This information will serve to establish the basis for future action that will aim to reduce the current stigma and offer possibilities of increased participation of people living with HIV/AIDS and of women in this group in particular.

**Key results** *(state key results/consequences of the planned intervention)* **and expected time frame**

**1. An estimate of the levels of stigma and discrimination experienced by people living with HIV/AIDS in the Dominican Republic and their participation in the national response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.**

There are numerous initiatives that attempt to measure the level of stigma and discrimination from the perspective of service providers, the media or the community however very little is known about how the stigma and discrimination is actually experienced by those living with HIV/AIDS. This project will obtain estimates of the national level of stigma and discrimination against those living with HIV/AIDS. Additionally, better knowledge of this stigma is required for a deeper awareness of certain aspects related to the situation experienced by people living with HIV/AIDS, in particular aspects regarding their relation to service providers, their working environment, interpersonal relationships, access to services and their participation in decision-making. For this research, a questionnaire will be used that was developed by the IPPF in collaboration with UNAIDS, GNP+ and the ICW and that is being maintained by a limited number of people in Lesotho, Trinidad and Tobago, India and Kenya.

In the Dominican Republic, a randomly selected group of 1,000 people living with HIV, distributed across four geographic regions, will be interviewed. These four geographic divisions are: Santo Domingo, the East Region, the Southeast Region and Cibao. The idea is to be able to explore the different stigma levels in relation to the geographical context. In each of these regions an equal number of men and women will be interviewed in order to conduct comparisons regarding the kinds of stigma experienced in both gender groups.

**BACKUP Initiative**

Building Alliances – Creating Knowledge – Updating Partners

Profamilia will work with groups of people living with HIV who will receive training to carry out the study. A total of 10 people living with HIV/AIDS will become qualified to administer the project and will be trained on ethical questions while conducting interviews, collecting and analysing information. Profamilia's Institute for Population and Development Studies will offer technical support for training as well as the collection, processing and analysis of information. People living with HIV who are part of the Institute's team will play an important role in ensuring the orientation and training of new people. The questionnaires will be applied individually however some surveys will be conducted in small groups if these are recognized as organised groups of people living with HIV (for example support groups). Data entry, adjustments and processing of the information will be carried out with the programme SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) and the same tabulation process will be created for the analysis according to the model used by the IPPF and UNAIDS.

In order to guarantee the impact of the results as well as the ideal implementation of the study, the work will be coordinated within national networks of PLHA in the following areas: assessment of the tools and instruments used, the random selection of groups, data collection, and the analysis and distribution of results. The results of this study will provide information on the development of awareness-raising and education strategies aimed at the general public in order for these strategies to be more adequate to the needs of PLHA.

The following results are expected:

- 1.1. 10 people living with HIV trained to administer the study
- 1.2. The participation of 1,000 people living with HIV/AIDS in the study
- 1.3. A comparative analysis of the stigma and discrimination experienced by people living with HIV in different regions of the country.

**2. Support for actions directed at reducing the stigma and discrimination towards PLHA and improving their participation in decision-making mechanisms.**

In order to promote the development of actions directed at reducing the stigma and discrimination towards PLHA as well as their participation in decision-making mechanisms on national HIV/AIDS prevention and care programmes and to guarantee that legislation exists and is implemented which protects the rights of PLHA, the following strategies are considered:

- a) The implementation of a series of publicity actions that will disseminate information on the results of the research, raise awareness and stimulate the development of a national strategy for reducing the stigma and discrimination of PLHA and, at the same time, promote their participation.
- b) Carrying out political actions (within the legal profession) which will develop in existing networks and coalitions including associations of PLHA as well as the AIDS NGO Coalition on AIDS.
- c) Carrying out visits and meetings with representatives of government and international organisations, the CCM (Country Coordinating Mechanism) and other organisations involved in the national response to the epidemic in order to present the results of the study and its main recommendations.

The anticipated results are as follows:

- 2.1 Six regional conferences to inform the study participants of the results. The following

**BACKUP Initiative**

Building Alliances – Creating Knowledge – Updating Partners

- will be invited to attend: officials from the health, education, justice and labour sectors, representatives from civil society and networks of persons living with HIV from the various regions in which the study was carried out.
- 2.2 Two meetings with decision-makers, government officials, in particular from the health (State Secretariat for Public Health and Presidential AIDS Council), labour (State Secretariat for Labour) and women’s affairs (State Secretariat for Women’s Affairs) sectors, international bodies (UNAIDS, USAID, the Clinton Foundation, PAHO, etc.), the Global Fund, the Country Coordinating Mechanism and PLWHA networks, to present and discuss the study’s results, including the results of the gender-based comparative analyses, with a view to promoting activities to reduce stigmatisation and discrimination nationwide.
  - 2.3 A meeting to analyse and discuss the results with the networks of organisations carrying out advocacy activities on HIV and AIDS (AIDS NGO Alliance, networks of people living with HIV, etc.). The meeting will draw up a work plan to promote implementation of the recommendations made on the basis of the study’s findings.
  - 2.4 Publication and circulation of the final report of the study (1,000 copies)
  - 2.5 Publication of informative materials directed at the general public (10,000 copies) for awareness-raising and education on the prevention and reduction of stigmatizing and discriminatory attitudes

Meetings with decision-makers, government officials, international bodies and PLWHA networks to present and discuss the study’s findings, and other advocacy activities aimed at reducing stigmatisation and discrimination.

**M&E** *(how will the proposed intervention be monitored and evaluated; good practice, lessons learned, up-loading to SHARED)*

The IPPF will be responsible for monitoring the progress of this project with follow-up visits during the 18-month duration of the project. Personnel specialising in HIV/AIDS issues from the IPPF's central office and regional offices will evaluate the progress of the project regarding the results, activities and indicators included in the project's log frame. In addition, the IPPF will offer technical support to guarantee that the project will reach its goals and establish links at a national level which support access to the global funding mechanisms by relying on the efforts made possible by the *BACKUP* Initiative. It is hoped that these collaborative efforts to access the national funding mechanisms will contribute to both the sustainability of this project as well as it being duplicated in other places.

At the national level, Profamilia will be responsible for monitoring the quality of the interviews, tabulation and final analysis of the data, thus ensuring that these fulfil the protocol defined for the realization of the study. The activities of information dissemination (programmes and lists of participants) will be documented and an archive will be maintained with the minutes of gatherings, meetings and legal visits. Each of these minutes will include the participants, the issues and topics as well as any agreements and other results of the meetings. At the conclusion of the project, these documents will be reviewed along with press clippings and other relevant documents in order to evaluate the results of the project.

The project Making the Money Work for Women will generate a wide range of knowledge and best practices that the IPPF will be able to collect and disseminate in a global information project according to three selected topics: (1) Innovative modalities that ensure the economic empowerment of young women, (2) Ensure access to funding for young women and girls in vulnerable groups, (3) Reduce the stigma regarding HIV/AIDS towards people living with the virus in order to improve access to services and funding.

**BACKUP Initiative**

Building Alliances – Creating Knowledge – Updating Partners

The project Knowledge Management will incorporate the following two activities:

**1. Global Meeting:**

The meeting, which will take place in South Africa or Kenya, will bring together representatives of the five Member Associations in Lesotho, Uganda, Nepal, the Dominican Republic and the Philippines as well as local representatives of the following organisations in those countries: the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, UNAIDS, National AIDS Programmes, the UNAIDS-led Global Coalition on Women and AIDS, groups of people living with HIV/AIDS and other relevant actors such as PEPFAR, the World Bank MAP and other bilateral donors. The purpose of this meeting will be to strengthen the national levels of knowledge and understanding concerning the various approaches used to ensure that global funding gets to the most vulnerable groups, that it is more flexible and it responds to the needs of young women at a basic level and it shows the dominating power of the stigma and the barriers which are created regarding access to services and funding. The lessons learned in the five participating projects will be presented and the impact of these projects will be analysed and discussed as well as their potential to be expanded and transferred to other national contexts.

**2. Publishing of Best Practices:**

Once the global meeting is concluded, the IPPF will engage a consultant who will collect and analyse the resulting information from each of the projects using reports and interviews to identify which factors contributed to the successful design and implementation of the project. The lessons learned in this project in the Dominican Republic will be compiled in a document together with other projects in the IPPF network which are part of the *BACKUP* Initiative. This document will serve as a tool for strengthening capacities of over 150 IPPF member associations within the network and will be disseminated at an international level on the IPPF website [shared-global.org](http://shared-global.org) as well as through its global political activities such as international and regional conferences, international summits, coalitions and alliances.