

WHY HONDURAS? FACTSHEET

Honduras is one of the four poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere. Honduras is a very resource limited country with a per capita GDP of \$2,654 placing it 148th out of 228 in the CIA World Factbook 2002. Honduras is 44th among the 47 countries in the Western Hemisphere countries and territories in per capital GDP above only Cuba (\$1,770), Haiti (\$1,824) and Bolivia (\$2,518). It lags significantly below its neighbors El Salvador (\$3,848), Guatemala (\$3,561) and Belize (\$3,085). Over 65% of the population is impoverished by USAID classification.

Honduras is the epicenter of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Central America. Honduras accounts for more than half of the AIDS cases in Central America. Most infected individuals live in the northeastern part of the country that includes San Pedro Sula (SPS), Roatan, and Tela. The official government estimated countrywide HIV prevalence was 1.9% in 2001 although surveillance studies in SPS in 2002 revealed a 7% rate among pregnant women, a 12% rate among commercial sex workers and among men having sex with men, and a 15% rate in the Garifuna populations along the coast and on the Bay Islands. The estimated number of adults and children living with AIDS in Honduras at the end of 2001 was 57,000 with 14,000 current living orphans.

Honduras is small enough for us to have an impact. Honduras has a relatively low overall population (6.5 million). Puerto Cortes, near SPS, is the largest port in Central America. There is a great deal of truck traffic that passes through Puerto Cortes and SPS. An immediate overall intervention is needed to prevent the rapid dissemination of AIDS with the devastating social and economic consequences as seen in Africa.

Anti-retroviral therapy is been very limited. In 2002, the Honduran government purchased anti-retroviral (ARV) medication for the first time but only for 165 individuals. Their goal for the end of 2003 (dictated by Global Funds they received) is to have 2000 patients treated by all providers within the country. At present approximately 950 individuals are receiving ARV treatment

The government is a supportive partner. The government is already counting the Siempre Unidos clinic as one of the 5 "pilot" clinics within the country. (The government is running 3 clinics and Doctors Without Borders is running one). The government has offered us free ARV medications for all our patients if we open new clinics and expand our existing SPS program. We are awaiting a final letter of agreement that would formalize this arrangement before expanding further as the medications live offer differ from those used by the government.

AHF/Global Immunity has already agreed to pay for physician and nurse salaries and for medications for opportunistic infections and core laboratory tests for 1000 patients in Honduras if the ARVs are provided by the Honduran government. AHF/Global Immunity, the largest nonprofit provider of AIDS care in the world, is an eager and capable partner of ours that shares the goal for rapid expansion of the number of patients receiving treatment at our combined program. They provide medical expertise and oversight; as well as international advocacy and fundraising expertise.

For more information email Denise Main at denise@siempreunidos.org or visit www.siempreunidos.org.

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