



## ARGENTINA

“Test, Link & Treat” in Pilar

### HIV Environment in Buenos Aires

Pilar is a city in the northeast of Buenos Aires province and an important urban centre, with a population of nearly 300,000 people.<sup>1</sup> It is estimated that 1 in 3 people living with HIV (PLHIV) in Buenos Aires and the surrounding area have not received a HIV diagnosis.<sup>2,3</sup> This shows a clear lack of knowledge and information on how, when and where to get tested. Additionally, of the people that have a positive diagnosis, 21% are not receiving treatment.<sup>2,3</sup>

Despite recent efforts by the Ministry of Health to address these issues, there is still a need to facilitate access to diagnosis and improve the treatment cascade.



### Key Challenges

Testing campaigns have been previously implemented by the government, however there is scope for improvement in their reach and success. Due to budget constraints, it is difficult to improve these campaigns.

Furthermore, once people are diagnosed with HIV, linkage to the health care system and engagement in the process may be challenging due to a lack of information and bureaucracy.<sup>3</sup>

### Aim

The aim of the Test, Link and Treat project is to engage and train personnel from the main medical centres of Pilar, enabling them to administer rapid HIV tests and link patients effectively to the healthcare system. In addition, a mobile unit will be set up in order to offer rapid HIV testing in the most remote areas of the city.

A further aim is to train counsellors and tutors to provide support and aid adherence to PLHIV who are in the first months of their treatment.

As a benchmark, the project expects to detect 500 new cases of HIV. The goal is to have 90% treatment adherence among newly diagnosed PLHIV within the first six months of treatment and viral suppression within a year.

### UNAIDS 90-90-90 Targets to be Achieved by the Project



**First 90:** Diagnosis and testing



**Second 90:** Access to care and treatment



**Third 90:** Retention in care and adherence

## Phases of the Project



### Awareness

Social networks and a website will be used to help raise awareness of the campaign. In addition to this, promotion of the campaign and HIV testing will take place at key events in Pilar, e.g. sporting events, and shows.



### Testing

Rapid HIV testing will be carried out by trained staff in partnering healthcare centres. A mobile unit will be used to target people in hard to reach areas.



### Linking

After testing, people who are diagnosed with HIV will be linked efficiently and effectively to the healthcare system to ensure timely treatment.



### Treatment

Retention in care and adherence to treatment will be encouraged by trained peers at monthly patient meetings.

## Key Milestone

### Cascade Data Generation

There is a lack of accurate cascade data reporting specifically to the Buenos Aires metropolitan area. The project will gather data from testing sites pre and post project implementation, increasing both the amount of data available on the local cascade and allowing the success of the intervention to be measured accurately.



Furthermore, qualitative data (anonymised/collated) will be collected on patients' experience of the healthcare system and what they perceive as barriers and gaps in services. This could provide valuable insights for impactful policy making in the future.

## Measuring Impact and Success

- The number of people tested during the project and the prevalence of HIV.
- The proportion of people linked to, and remaining in care after 6 months (at least 90%) and 12 months.
- The proportion of people with suppressed viral load (at least 90%) after 12 months.
- The number of monthly and/or total visits to the website.
- Results from a satisfaction survey.

## Key Learnings and Potential Extensions

### Key learnings:

- Leveraging the power of social networks.
- Tests carried out in vehicles makes it easier to target high risk areas.
- The rapid nature of the tests eliminates the possibility of patients unable to receive their test results.

### Possible extensions:

- If the budget permits, patients should also be tested for STI's (current testing only covers HIV and syphilis).
- Ensuring data recording and analysis processes are designed in a way so they can be applied elsewhere.

## Key Stakeholders

### External partners:

- HELIOS foundation

1. Pilar.gov. 2017. Pilar. [Online]. [3 April 2017]. Available from: <https://www.pilar.gov.ar/>.  
2. Cesar C, et al. (2016) The HIV care cascade in Buenos Aires, Argentina: results in a tertiary referral hospital. *Rev Panam Salud Publica*. 40(6):448-54.  
3. Lavadenz, F, Pantanali, C and Zeballos, E. (2015). Thirty Years of the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Argentina: An Assessment of the National Health Response. *Directions in Development*. The World Bank. 1-172.

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