



Health Policy Plus: Honduras

Overview

In June 2020, the Health Policy Plus (HP+) project, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), began work in Honduras to mount a rapid, adaptable, and effective early response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The effort was part of HP+'s COVID-19 response in three North Central American countries—El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras—where HP+ worked through regional platforms such as the Northern Triangle's regional technical taskforce on vaccination and Latin America's COVID-19 response learning network. In Honduras, HP+'s technical assistance to the Honduran Ministry of Health provided leadership and expertise in surveillance, prevention and care, laboratory capacity, mental health and psychosocial support, and vaccination capacity.

Strengthening Surveillance, Diagnosis, and Reporting

As COVID-19 erupted, HP+ led support to build diagnostic capacity and strengthen molecular biology laboratories through training 170 microbiologists; developing a protocol compendium, 37 standard operating procedures, and three quality improvement manuals; and providing continuous technical assistance to troubleshoot the processing of samples. Through HP+, two new test processing labs were set-up, staff were trained, and technical assistance was provided during their first year of operation. In surveillance, HP+ supported preparation of an [epidemiological report](#), which was the first report to present data analysis on case load, positive test results, mortality, and other measures of disease progression during the first nine months of

HP+ Supports Massive COVID-19 Vaccination Efforts in Honduras

HP+ assisted the Honduran Ministry of Health to launch a COVID-19 vaccination strategy to reach vulnerable communities that were experiencing the highest incidence of COVID-19. The strategy was implemented in 18 departments during July and August 2021. More than 1 million first and second doses were quickly administered nationwide through this highly successful strategy. In 2022, HP+ is supporting the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, and USAID to implement a similar strategy in schools to prepare for reopening.

the pandemic. HP+ also helped build capacity in data management and visualization as part of support to prepare daily and weekly epidemiological bulletins.

Improving Case Management, Infection Prevention and Control, and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

Early on, [HP+ trained 412 health providers](#) on the installation and correct use of 210 ventilators donated by the U.S. Government and distributed to 25 hospitals (see our [video on this joint HP+/EpiC project effort](#)). Through an alliance with the Honduras Critical Care Association, HP+ assisted providers who were not critical care specialists to become adept in clinical management of COVID-19 patients in public hospitals. The project created an innovative mentoring program on clinical manifestations, clinical and laboratory markers, airway management and resuscitation,

and respiratory failure in 12 hospitals, training 71 first-line physicians.

HP+ developed a government-adopted [home-based care guide](#) for patients with mild COVID-19. Virtual training was organized in collaboration with the medical college of Honduras, reaching the country's 20 health regions and 3,057 health workers. In 2022, HP+ updated the guide to include new evidence and strengthen sections on mental health and prevention of violence. This guide has been translated to English and French, has been adopted by multiple countries, and has been downloaded more than 23,000 times.

HP+ trained 1,800 frontline healthcare workers in the proper use of personal protective equipment for [infection prevention and control](#) (IPC), which was critical at the beginning of the pandemic as workers prepared for the arrival of personal protective equipment and were not certain how to use it. Contributing to better IPC management overall, HP+ collaborated with the Ministry of Health to develop guidelines on infections acquired in hospitals and to increase and improve reporting by hospitals on these infections. HP+ also worked to improve mental health and psychosocial support through a guide for caregivers and a series of online trainings for psychological first aid.

Efficiency for Logistics and Vaccination

Working with laboratory authorities at the Ministry of Health, HP+ strengthened communications for purchasing and distributing materials and reagents and assisted with floor maps and equipment organization for three regional labs. An inventory module for labs was designed and implemented by HP+ and will be continued by the Data.FI project as HP+ comes to an end.

Immediately upon the development of vaccines, HP+ reviewed import documentation, facilitated

coordination with the Ministry of Health to receive the U.S. donation of 23 ultra-low temperature freezers for the Pfizer vaccine, helped the government organize and execute its vaccination strategy in two regions, and supported data analysis and reporting on vaccine administration. This work included: (1) mapping donor and Ministry of Health financial support of the vaccination strategy to identify gaps and (2) establishing and facilitating a USAID-led strategic advisory group for vaccination that included more than 10 international and multilateral organizations to align donor funding with funding gaps. Importantly, HP+ supported the development of a [vaccine administration and management guide](#) for the Northern Triangle countries.

The Way Forward

Ongoing efforts to sustain the COVID-19 response built in Honduras should include:

- Advocacy to maintain and expand the molecular biology capacity to transform labs into sentinel labs for COVID-19, dengue, and other emerging diseases.
- Sustained capacity building to expand and update case management and IPC knowledge among doctors and nurses. This includes the mentorship and training that HP+ has set up for hospital staff on oxygen therapy and airway management, arterial blood gas interpretation, central venous catheterization simulation, and IPC recommendations.
- Dissemination of the updated home-based care guide at facility and community levels.
- Advocacy to integrate mental health and long-COVID interventions into practical guidelines.

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