

LOCAL CAPACITY INITIATIVE (LCI) PROJECT SUCCESS STORY



JAMAICA

Collaborating to promote MSM and LGBTI Prisoners' right to equitable access to sexual health services

The Local Capacity Initiative (LCI) project funded by PEPFAR/USAID and implemented by the PANCAP Coordinating Unit in collaboration with University of the West Indies, Health Economics Unit worked to build the policy advocacy capacity of local civil society organisations (CSOs) that specifically focus on key populations to become more sustainable as they continue to support the overall goal of reducing transmission of HIV in the Caribbean.

Stand Up for Jamaica (SUFJ) is a human rights non-governmental organization (NGO) that has been working in Jamaican prisons since 2005. SUFJ, through its human rights advocacy, provides support to more than 215 self-identified MSM inmates in the Tower Street and St. Catherine prisons.

With support from the LCI Project and the Jamaica National HIV/STI Programme, SUFJ successfully engaged the Ministry of National Security (MNS) and Department of Correctional Services (DCS) in advocating for MSM prisoners equitable access to health services, particularly sexual health services.

SUFJ presented a petition paper to the Ministry of National Security to take actions to address the needs of the MSM and LGBT prison populations. The petition called for the MNS to: 1) ensure staff training include principles of equality and non-discrimination, 2) provide ongoing counseling, and medical treatment LGBT and MSM prisoners, and 3) ensure equitable access to rehabilitation, educational and skills training services to the LGBT and MSM prisoners. The petition was supported by SUFJ's research which examined strategies used to address the rights of MSM and the LGBT population in prisons.

The petition and an action plan to support lobbying efforts received the support of Ms. Joyce Stone, Deputy Commissioner of Custodial Services. Through his initiative, SUFJ, in collaboration with MNS-DCS conducted an anti-discrimination workshops for 80 inmates and correctional officers.

SUFJ, Ministry of Health, Ministry of National Security, Department of Correctional Services, and the Jamaica National HIV/STI Programme further collaborated to host a press conference titled "HIV-free Prisons" to increase public awareness of how stigma towards inmates, especially those with HIV, undermines the national response to control this disease.

The existing collaboration between the MNS-DCS and SUFJ was further strengthened with an extension of the existing Memorandum of Understanding between the two parties to support the work with prison inmates.

In summary, SUFJ was able to achieve the following:

- Conducted targeted campaigns to increase health literacy among the MSM and LGBTI prisoners;
- Secured decision and policy makers' commitment to ensure fair or equitable access;
- Collaborated with government agencies to promote MSM and LGBTI prisoners equitable access to sexual health services.

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