



FINAL EVALUATION

IMPLEMENTATION OF USER-FRIENDLY HIV TESTING AND COUNSELLING SERVICES IN THAILAND PROVINCES

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EVALUATION DATES: APRIL - AUGUST 2024



COUNTRY:
THAILAND



BUDGET:
€1,384,938



LEAD ORGANIZATION:

Program for HIV Prevention and Treatment Group (PHPT), JOINT RESEARCH UNIT, Chiang Mai University

PARTNERS:
CAREMAT, M PLUS, MIGRANT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, THAI DRUG USERS' NETWORK



START DATE:
01/10/2019

END DATE:
31/03/2024

THE PROJECT

Background

Thailand's response to HIV has been celebrated for the introduction of innovative and effective interventions. However, significant challenges remain for Thailand to meet its objective to eliminate HIV by 2030, particularly in the context of HIV testing and counseling (HTC). HTC coverage among key populations remains low despite the availability of such services, demand generation activities (outreach, peer education, promotional campaigns) and, in many settings, increased availability of HIV treatment. Detection of HIV through HTC is often delayed in Thailand, leading to adverse effects. In parallel, recent reports point to a rebound in the transmission of syphilis and other sexually transmitted infections.

Project operating model

Napneung project was designed to strengthen health systems that facilitate testing and screening for HIV and other infections. In the first implementation phase (2015-2018), strategies were developed to sensitize vulnerable populations through social media outreach and other activities. The second phase (2019-2022) was designed to identify the necessary conditions required to implement and integrate accelerated access to quality prevention and screening services within the existing national health system in medium-sized cities. The latest programmatic implementation phase (2023-2024) covers the present project evaluated. It allowed the Napneung team to operationalized the integration of project components in the national health system through targeted advocacy.

OBJECTIVES

Overall objective

To improve access to high quality and efficient testing, counseling and referral services in the existing healthcare system for at-risk individuals living in medium-sized cities.

Specific objectives

- ▶ OS1 - Facilitate effective testing and counseling services for beneficiaries.
- ▶ OS2 - Facilitate sustainability of the Napneung platform.
- ▶ OS3 - Collect strategic data to support project strengthening and integration.

EVALUATION RESULTS

Relevance

There is broad consensus that the Napneung project was and still is relevant and important in 2024. However, insufficient linkages to ongoing debates and discussions relating to HTC were established between Napneung and the relevant stakeholders. Authorities are currently discussing the approval of multiplex testing tools and protocols, and PHPT's experience would be particularly relevant there. Napneung has potential for replication, especially for countries that have similar health systems as in Thailand.

Effectiveness

Napneung facilitated access to HTC for key populations and the general population, particularly among young people. Low threshold access was repeatedly praised by beneficiaries and health service providers. The project reached a large proportion of first-time testers, while the CD4 level of positive clients was higher compared to provincial and national averages.

Efficiency

Health service providers reported cost-efficiency benefits in terms of reducing workloads. The appointment system with online and offline reservations was efficient, and testing procedures were streamlined at multiple testing sites because of the implementation of Napneung, both in primary care and community settings. Moving forward, an important challenge for HIVST services in Thailand (and beyond) will require partners to develop a reporting system for results generated outside the health system.

Impact

Napneung contributed to positive health behaviors and outcomes, to strengthened the capacity of stakeholders and organizations and to optimized systems and performance. At the normative level, PHPT successfully demonstrated that the Napneung model is feasible, and that the system can be integrated within the Thai health system. There was limited health-system or policy-level impact generated by the project. An impressive number of innovations were introduced through the project: targeting of medium-sized cities, an appointment booking system, media support for serological testing, self-testing in different settings, and multiplex testing.

Sustainability

Partner selection was targeted and partners praised PHPT's collaborative approach that facilitated transparency, accountability, and mutual learning. PHPT enhanced its partners' capacity which led to optimizations in service delivery systems and algorithms. Napneung leveraged support to successfully implement the project as planned. However, strategic relationships with the central government were not successfully leveraged to achieve the project's integration and sustainability objective.



Conclusions and recommendations

For L'Initiative:

- ▶ Work with PHPT to urgently develop an exit strategy for the Napneung project.
- ▶ Once the final Napneung project data is available, meetings with UNAIDS should be organized to leverage their political support for Napneung, as well as meetings with the Global Fund finance and accounting teams to convince them to facilitate the promotion and integration of the Napneung system in their grants.
- ▶ Consider future investments to support the scale-up of HIVST, especially in supporting the development of an effective results-reporting procedure and system.
- ▶ Consider remuneration for senior positions occupied Thai nationals on the same salary scale as international postings to ensure competitiveness and help recipients attract qualified human resources.

For the partner PHPT:

- ▶ Involve national authorities from the start of any project and regularly coordinate with these agencies to share project results, lessons learned, and good practices to strategically position the organization to capitalize on programmatic and financial opportunities.
- ▶ Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation systems to regularly analyze and disseminate project results more widely when implementing community interventions. Project data – including research data – should be regularly analyzed and discussed by the project team to allow course corrections to overcome obstacles and challenges while capitalizing on successes and good practices. Project and research data should be packaged for communications and advocacy targeting different audiences.
- ▶ Coordinate with local stakeholders in Bangkok to engage strategically with NHSO on multiplex testing.
- ▶ Invest in capacity development, especially at senior management level, to strengthen PHPT's monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning capacities and systems as well as strengthening communications, advocacy, and community engagement capacity.
- ▶ Allocate full-time managers with sufficient capacity to oversee the implementation of community-based projects.
- ▶ Formally recognize implementing partners, especially those from civil society and delegate budgets on a quarterly basis for effective financial management.

DECEMBER 2025