



## FINAL EVALUATION

# IMPROVING HEALTH CARE FOR PRISONERS AND FORMER PRISONERS LIVING WITH OR AFFECTED BY HIV, HCV AND TUBERCULOSIS IN MAURITIUS

EVALUATOR: JULIETTE PAPY - HMST  
EVALUATION DATES: JANUARY - APRIL 2024



**COUNTRY:**  
MAURITIUS



**BUDGET:**  
€988,568



**LEAD ORGANIZATION:**  
Prevention Information  
Lutte contre le Sida  
(PILS)

**PARTNERS:**  
Aides Infos Liberté  
Espoir et Solidarité  
(AILES), KINOUETE



**START DATE:**  
01/05/2020

**END DATE:**  
31/03/2024

## THE PROJECT

### Background

Mauritius has an HIV epidemic that is concentrated among key populations (people who inject drugs, transgender people, prisoners, men who have sex with men [MSM] and sex workers). Injecting drug use is the main driver of the epidemic. As in many countries, the prison system in Mauritius does not provide a comprehensive package of HIV prevention services (e.g. condoms and syringes are not available in prisons), due to beliefs that recognizing sex and drug use would encourage undesirable behavior.

### Project operating model

The project set up a partnership between three NGOs with expertise in various areas in terms of HIV/health (PILS, WINGS) and Kinouete (the only NGO with access to prisons in Mauritius). The project adopted a community-based approach to better address the health needs of prisoners and former prisoners, based on an approach involving documentation, advocacy and the provision of services within and outside prisons.

## OBJECTIVES

### Overall objective

The objective of the project was to improve access to high quality health systems for prisoners and former prisoners in Mauritius in relation to HIV, hepatitis C virus (HCV) and tuberculosis (TB).

### Specific objectives

- ▶ Improve the rules, regulations, protocols, procedures and laws within institutions working with prisoners and former prisoners.
- ▶ Increase the number of prisoners who are registered and remain in the health care continuum.
- ▶ Provide space for former prisoners to engage in socio-economic activities, share their experience, and remain in the continuum of care.
- ▶ Reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

---

## EVALUATION RESULTS

---

### Relevance

The project is relevant to the challenges faced by target prisoner and former prisoner groups, including the lack of HIV prevention and harm reduction in prisons, the lack of information on prisoner access to quality health services, and the large number of prisoners on ARVs that are lost to follow-up after they are released from prison. The project is aligned with national HIV and drug strategies, as well as the Global Fund (GF) strategy, but did not sufficiently include national authorities (prison services and Ministry of Health) in the development of the project.

### Effectiveness

«Discreet» advocacy has made it possible to relaunch methadone substitution treatment in prisons and to start treatment for hepatitis C, but the advocacy space remains limited, particularly in terms of collaboration with prison authorities. The project made it possible to initiate peer education on HIV, HCV and TB in prisons, without having a comprehensive prevention approach (no condoms or needle exchange programs...). Access to alternative work paid by the day has been highly appreciated by former prisoners, but is not sufficient to guarantee access to and retention in care, and to facilitate their professional re-integration due to high levels of stigma and discrimination.

### Efficiency

Overall, project efficiency was deemed average: some outcomes were not met and some objectives were too ambitious. The main challenges have been very high turnover of NGO staff, closures and restrictions due to the COVID 19 pandemic, and challenging collaboration with the Mauritian Prison Service around activities in prisons.

### Impact

Key outcomes include: 1) HIV and HCV awareness among prisoners, former prisoners and prison officers using a community-based approach, a referral system for prisoners upon release and training for prison officers; 2) enhanced visibility on access to health care and the needs of prisoners and former prisoners, and strengthened national engagement to address these needs; 3) CSOs positioned as community partners to improve access to health services for prisoners and former prisoners.

### Sustainability

Project sustainability was deemed average: although the project has created some momentum regarding health issues in prisons, the lack of a memorandum of understanding with prison authorities and the limited funding under the new Global Fund grant highlights the need to raise funds from the National Social Inclusion Foundation (NSIF) and to take stock of what has worked and what needs to be adapted in future projects. However, NGOs have gained valuable skills and experience to strengthen their commitment to prisoners and former prisoners in the field of health and beyond.



## Conclusions and recommendations

The project established a new form of collaboration between civil society and Mauritian prison services to improve the health of prisoners and former prisoners, through highlighting the shortcomings of the current system and the need to review national policies to promote the social reintegration of these groups. Project successes include a peer education program, training of prison officers, advocacy around re-starting treatment, and the introduction of hepatitis C treatment in prisons. Although the project did not achieve all of its objectives, which were certainly too ambitious, it enabled certain approaches to be trialed in prisons and mobilized modest funding from the Global Fund for workshops with prison officers.

The evaluation recommended the following actions:

- ▶ Involve prison services and the Ministry of Health (MoH) from project conceptualization to foster national ownership.
- ▶ Strengthen collaboration with prison services and the MoH, through the prison health committee, and advocate for the inclusion of the AIDS unit, the MoH harm reduction unit and the national AIDS secretariat.
- ▶ Continue the peer education program in prisons and advocate for an increase in the number of NGOs. Advocate for health sub-committees to be established in all prisons.
- ▶ In collaboration with prison services, MoH and the community, strengthen mobilization, referrals and retention in care of prisoners and former prisoners.
- ▶ Strengthen advocacy with MoH for a comprehensive package of prevention measures in prisons in line with the National HIV Strategy, and advocate to the Ministry of Labor, Public Sector and Business to reduce stigma and revise current policies that create a barrier to employment
- ▶ Co-create with the former prisoners a comprehensive community approach to support people upon their release from prison, and support community strengthening and inclusion in the project steering committees.

FEBRUARY 2026