



## FINAL EVALUATION

### SAVING THE FUTURE 2.0 (STF2.0) – STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY-BASED INNOVATIVE INTERVENTIONS TO PREVENT HIV TRANSMISSION AMONG PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS IN VIETNAM

EVALUATORS: INGA OLEKSY AND NGUYEN NGOG NAM - HMST  
EVALUATION DATES: NOVEMBER 2024-JANUARY 2025



**COUNTRY:**  
VIETNAM



**BUDGET:**  
1,484,435 €



**LEAD ORGANIZATION:**  
Center for Supporting  
Community  
Development  
Initiatives (SCDI)

**PARTNERS:**  
17 Cbos in Vietnam,  
Pierre Nicole Center  
in France, Mainline  
Foundation in the  
Netherlands, Vietnam  
Network of People who  
Use Drugs (VNPUD)



**START DATE:**  
01/02/2020

**END DATE:**  
30/06/2025

## THE PROJECT

### Background

The use of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS), especially methamphetamine (meth) has been increasing rapidly world-wide and in Vietnam. In addition to causing other harms to the users, meth is known to be associated with increased HIV infection through enabling unsafe sexual practices and low treatment adherence among the users. While HIV programs traditionally worked with injecting drug users, the non-injectors have been neglected and there are no other interventions for them, creating major unmet need.

### Project operating model

The STF2.0 project has been implemented in seven Global Fund-supported provinces, through the network of 17 Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) working with Key Populations, focusing on young people 16-24 years old. The project studied the target population and then developed a set of differentiated interventions to meet their needs through community-based interventions, in collaboration with formal health services.

## OBJECTIVES

### Overall objective

To enhance quality of HIV interventions among young people aged 16 to 24 who use drugs through differentiated multi-dimensional interventions.

### Specific objectives

- ▶ To prevent HIV infections among young people who use drugs (YPUD) through addressing direct risk factors as well as its underlying risks including drug use, mental health problems and childhood trauma, using multi-dimensional interventions and differentiated approaches.
- ▶ To strengthen the capacity of key population organizations to engage with young members and implement multi-dimensional interventions.
- ▶ To increase community participation and youth leadership in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating drug harm reduction and HIV programs by means of innovative strategies.

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## EVALUATION RESULTS

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### Relevance

The general relevance of the project is considered as excellent. This is based most importantly on the selection of its clients, namely Young People Who Use Drugs, between 16 and 24, who are at higher risk of contracting HIV. This is the only project in Vietnam that provides harm reduction services targeting this group, and especially focuses on ATS use.

### Effectiveness

The project demonstrated high effectiveness on all of its three objectives: it reached 9,305 YPUD with differentiated services, provided capacity building for 17 CBOs and its 75 Outreach Workers (OWs), and supported 14 Young Leaders in developing and implementing educational projects for their peer groups, and developed wide range of online educational materials for YPUD and general public.

### Efficiency

The project efficiency is considered satisfactory, with appropriate budget absorption throughout the life of the project, directly proportionate to the project period and activities implemented. The project could further benefit from nurturing robust external partnerships, especially at the national level, with government authorities and with the CCM members. These partnerships would help establish an important buffer in view of any potential adverse situations.

### Impact

The project made a huge impact on the lives of YPUDs, demonstrating that combining mental health elements into harm reduction model was an effective approach at the community level. The project developed a number of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), educational materials and effective online educational content to support these new interventions. The project was instrumental for the government updating multiple legal guidelines and regulations for treatment of PWUD.

### Sustainability

Sustainability is considered satisfactory as some CBO project activities are likely to continue beyond the project. All CBOs have high ownership of the project, some possibly also attaining Social Enterprise status. Project advocacy allowed the introduction of new laws and treatment guidelines for YPUD. Long-term sustainability requires additional external funding. L'Initiative is funding a project continuation: "Developing a REinforced Access to Mental Health Care for Key Populations (DREAMH)".



## Conclusions and recommendations

The project demonstrated that Harm Reduction services can be effectively delivered at the community level through a strong network of CBOs, using evidence-based mental health interventions, combined with rights-based drug policy. The project achieved most of its targets and generated significant changes in many lives. This is an extraordinary achievement, given very difficult external circumstances (COVID period; disrupted funding; complex legal and regulatory environment for PWUD).

The SCDI effectively introduced the topic of ATS drug use and its correlation with HIV and mental health issues. It sensitized and educated the general public and the authorities, also about its linkages to mental health. The project played a catalytic role in the development of the National Guidelines on Treatment of ATS disorders.

The project demonstrated that drug use in Vietnam is an evolving complex issue and PWUD a very diverse group, with more than 70% of the users having experienced significant trauma in their childhood. By bringing this evidence to the public forum, the project paved the way to reframe the ATS drug use among the YPUDs as an issue to be addressed constructively with positive outcomes. The project showed the importance of testing the innovative approaches in the SEA region.

Key recommendations - the project should :

1. collaborate with partners to solidify SCDI as a leader
2. strengthen collaboration and advocacy with key stakeholders at national level (government and CCM)
3. disseminate specific Harm Reduction models/knowledge developed (assess outcomes of the online educational materials on YPUD behavior)
4. introduce an informal certification program for partner CBOs, completed with clear benchmarks.

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