

Joining together against HIV in Mexico.

Hand in Hand with Mexico & GILEAD | HIV

A transformative collaboration to increase access to HIV rapid testing.

In 2020, as the world faced the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries' health efforts and resources were redirected away from HIV support.

According to the official journal of the British HIV Association and the European AIDS Clinical Society, HIV testing in Latin America decreased by 44.6% in 2020*. Fewer people getting tested meant fewer HIV cases were being diagnosed, and access to HIV prevention methods were stalled.

*<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/hiv.13180>
HIV Medicine - The official journal of the British HIV Association (BHVA) and the European AIDS Clinical Society (EACS)
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TABLE 2. Impact of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on the numbers of consultations for people living with HIV and new enrolments in HIV care between January and August



Everardo Galván Magdaleno
Ashoka México,
Centroamérica y el Caribe -
HIV Program & Talent Coordinator

To help address this shortfall in Mexico's HIV prevention and treatment efforts, Gilead supported Ashoka—a non-governmental organization in Mexico that connects and supports an ecosystem of young, influential people and institutions.

Through support from Gilead, Ashoka created the campaign “De la Mano contra el VIH,” or “Hand in Hand Against HIV,” through which several organizations stepped up to help increase HIV testing throughout Mexico's many communities.

“The partnership with Ashoka began from the need to identify and assemble several different civil organizations in Mexico that were already working in HIV screening, who could help us reach more people while we provided them with the critical resources and support they needed.”

- **Geomara Fernández**
Gilead Sciences México - Senior Manager Public Affairs



Seeking Progress through Partnerships

With support from Ashoka and Gilead, each organization applied their own expertise and experience in serving Mexico's communities to help break through the stigma of HIV and get more people tested for HIV.

With a significant portion of Mexico's health resources shifted to handling the COVID-19 pandemic, Ashoka stepped in and provided valuable capacity-building and technical assistance to help the partner organizations achieve operational sustainability and set themselves up for long-term success.

“In addition to providing them with HIV rapid tests, we worked hand in hand with the organizations, providing helpful input, training, and development, giving them above all the very specific support they need to hone their system.”

- **Everardo Galván Magdaleno**

Transforming Outreach

Forging new partnerships in Mexico was the first step. Ramping up HIV testing in a vast country like Mexico would require innovation, optimized tests, and ground-breaking patient-centric solutions to be brought forward.

A challenge accepted by Inspira Cambio A.C.—one of the civil organizations that joined the “Hand in Hand Against HIV” program. Using modern technology and social media to connect with the people of Mexico, Inspira Cambio A.C. transformed their traditional face-to-face HIV counseling meetings into virtual experiences by offering testing appointments and follow-up consultations through WhatsApp or Telegram.



Aarón Rojas Cortés
Inspira Cambio A.C. -
Director of Programs
and Education

“Fortunately, we have always been very familiar with the technology. So, since it was easy for us to move from a face-to-face model to a virtual context, we started to develop virtual counseling appointments on everything that had to do with HIV. The follow-up was done on mobile applications.”

- **Aarón Rojas Cortés**

For Inspira Cambio A.C., the digital world is more than just a convenient way to counsel people living with HIV and those who may benefit from Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis; it's also a way to reach younger people and help normalize HIV awareness.

One Program, Many Provinces

For the “Hand in Hand Against HIV” program to be successful, it couldn't be limited to just the major urban centers. The program would need to reach people in more remote provinces like Veracruz as well.

That is why Ashoka partnered with The Presmanes Foundation—a Veracruz-based non-governmental organization that assists resource-limited families and educates them on preventive health. The Presmanes Foundation uses other treatable diseases like diabetes or obesity to help explain the importance of prevention, diagnosis, and early treatment for living a healthier life with HIV.



Ing. Octavio Jiménez Díaz
President of The Presmanes Foundation

To get past the people of Veracruz's stigma toward HIV, The Presmanes Foundation leveraged their previous experience with these other conditions, and began integrating rapid HIV testing and treatment services alongside their patients' regular health services.

“People would not feel stigmatized or stared at while waiting because no one else would know they were being tested for HIV.”

- **Ing. Octavio Jiménez Díaz**

Finally, to ensure safe distribution of the HIV rapid test kits to communities spread across Mexico's vast geography, Ashoka and Gilead collaborated with Maypo—a company in Mexico with one of the most advanced infrastructures for medicine distribution and traceability. Maypo facilitated the tests' swift and seamless distribution to all partners in the “Hand in Hand Against HIV” program.

“Whether they'd be going to public sector institutions, agencies, or even non-governmental organizations, we made sure that their programs could be attended to in a timely manner.”

- **Carlos Pacheco**



Carlos Pacheco
Maypo
Service Delivery Manager

Together, We Thrive

We know that it will take more than medicine to end the HIV epidemic. Together, Gilead wants to ignite change by collaborating with fearless partners like Ashoka, Inspira Cambio A.C., The Presmanes Foundation, and Maypo.

Gilead has been dedicated to developing innovative HIV medicines for life-threatening illnesses all over the world for over 35 years. However, HIV prevention and treatments alone are not enough to end the HIV epidemic. Partnerships are essential for connecting with individuals and organizations all over the world who can help us advance equity for all. To achieve our goal of eliminating HIV, we will need to combine science with people dedicated to creating positive change in their communities.

“This is a global mission. We can't put it all on a single organization. And for the success of this collaboration, we must thank Gilead and Ashoka.”

- **Ing. Octavio Jiménez Díaz**



Our dedication to innovation applies not only to how we approach making medicine, but to how we aim to support systems and policies that help facilitate broader access to prevention and medicines. Gilead will continue to champion programs and partnerships that support the wellness of all people impacted by HIV.

Together, we can help end the epidemic for everyone, everywhere.