



USAID Assistance in Mexico: The MCG Program

- In Mexico, the POLICY Project works to promote enhanced participation in policy and planning processes and improve the policy environment for HIV/AIDS in targeted states. The project helps form multisectoral planning groups (MCGs), composed of a broad range of state and local organizations working in HIV/AIDS and related fields, helping them develop integrated strategic plans for HIV/AIDS that address the needs of vulnerable populations as well as strengthening members' skills in advocacy, policy dialogue, and multisectoral coordination and partnerships. POLICY provides follow-up technical assistance (TA) to help establish the planning groups as permanent advisory boards that, among other things, advocate for HIV/AIDS policy in their states. Additionally, POLICY provides technical updates and training on key issues, including youth and adolescents, HIV/AIDS and human rights, gender issues, and advocacy for HIV/AIDS. Since 1998, this program has been referred to as the MCG (Multisectoral Citizens' Groups) program.
- POLICY launched the MCG program in 1997 and has fostered the creation of MCGs in the states of Yucatán, Guerrero, State of Mexico and Vera Cruz; initiated the process in Oaxaca; and provided varying levels of assistance tailored to the particular needs of the states of Chiapas, Quintana Roo and Campeche and in the Federal District (Mexico City). The National AIDS Program (CENSIDA) officially took over the MCG program in October 2002. POLICY is providing training and continued assistance to CENSIDA and the MCGs to ensure the sustainability of the program, as well as support the program's expansion to new states, including Puebla, Tamaulipas and Sonora.
- A growing body of evidence suggests the MCG program has made a real difference in raising the public profile of HIV/AIDS, garnering political support for the fight against AIDS, and bringing civil society into the policy arena in a sustained manner as never before seen in the states. The states where POLICY helped establish an MCG are at the forefront of the fight against HIV/AIDS in Mexico. December 1, 2002, in Yucatan marked the first time a governor (or any public official close to that rank) has ever walked in an HIV/AIDS March for Life; the governor participated at the behest of the MCG/Yucatan. Organized in conjunction with the MCG/Mexico State, the federal government held its official events in observation of World AIDS Day in Mexico State in 2002, the first ever to be held outside of the Federal District. This year, the government's World AIDS Day events will take place in Mérida, in recognition of the MCG/Yucatán's years of commitment to improving the policy environment for HIV/AIDS. The only two National AIDS Conferences held outside of Mexico City were held in MCG states (Guerrero in 2000 and Vera Cruz in 2002), with the MCGs playing a significant role in the organization and leadership and recognized publicly by the most senior federal and state officials for their valuable contributions and the role they play in bringing public and civil society together.