

# MEETING TARGETS AND MAINTAINING EPIDEMIC CONTROL (EpiC)

## Mental Health



2020 - 2024



Implementer: **FHI 360**

Photo: Tran Thien Tu for FHI 360

**Meeting Targets and Maintaining Epidemic Control (EpiC)** is a global project funded by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). EpiC Vietnam's goal is to deliver efficient, affordable, results-based technical assistance and direct services while closing remaining gaps in Vietnam's efforts to meet HIV epidemic control targets, ensure global health security, combat trafficking in persons, and improve oxygen access. Across these efforts, EpiC has focused on meeting the mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) needs of project participants.

### IMPROVING HIV CLINICAL OUTCOMES

In 2022, following the peak of the COVID epidemic in Vietnam, EpiC assessed its impact on the mental health of clients living with HIV or at risk of acquisition, and their healthcare providers. The results informed a training program and pathway to deliver holistic care. EpiC developed and piloted a mental health screening, counseling, and referral approach at HIV treatment facilities and among community partners, including mentorship and coaching. To motivate behavior change among clients and optimize health outcomes, EpiC is working with the Government of Vietnam and other partners to develop and standardize two national training curricula in select provinces, including:



A training curriculum on **mental health screening and referral** for HIV health providers and community lay workers



A training curriculum on **motivational counseling skills** for HIV health providers and community lay workers

Upon finalization of these curricula, EpiC will co-facilitate a series of training-of-trainer programs and assist health authorities at central and provincial levels to scale screening, counseling, and referral.

### CARING FOR CAREGIVERS

The COVID-19 pandemic brought to light prolonged and intense pressure among healthcare workers in Vietnam. In response, EpiC integrated emergency mental health support with efforts to improve clinical outcomes, and partnered with local experts to understand the needs, identify available support, combat stigma, and train leadership on how to champion MHPSS within their hospitals. Since 2023, EpiC has collaborated with the Ho Chi Minh City Department of Health to implement a robust province-wide strategy to improve MHPSS for healthcare workers. This program is designed with three main interventions:



**Reduction of stigma and strengthening awareness of MHPSS services**



**Capacity building to provide and improve access to MHPSS services**



**Improvement of workplace systems and culture to strengthen MHPSS**

### PROMOTING SAFETY FOR SURVIVORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Since 2021, EpiC has collaborated with the Department of Social Vices Prevention of the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs to implement comprehensive interventions to combat trafficking in persons. Employing **survivor-centered**, **trauma-informed**, and **gender-sensitive** approaches, the project standardized a training curriculum for frontline responders to enhance quality of, and access to survivor support services, integrating the following elements:



**Trauma and re-traumatization prevention and response**



**Psychological first aid for survivors**



**Self-care for practitioners**

These comprise critical initial responses to stabilize survivors who have experienced trauma and ensure their safety, while first responders work with authorities to provide or refer survivors to services that meet their needs and preferences.