

## SUCCESS STORY

# Treatment for all: Success with ART Initiation

HIV Services and System Strengthening project



## BACKGROUND

Pito Pie is a 63-year-old Haitian man who lives in Batey de Sabana Grande de Boyá, Monte Plata Province in the Dominican Republic. He migrated to the Dominican Republic 15 years ago in search of improving the quality of life for him and his family, and today he works as a day laborer.

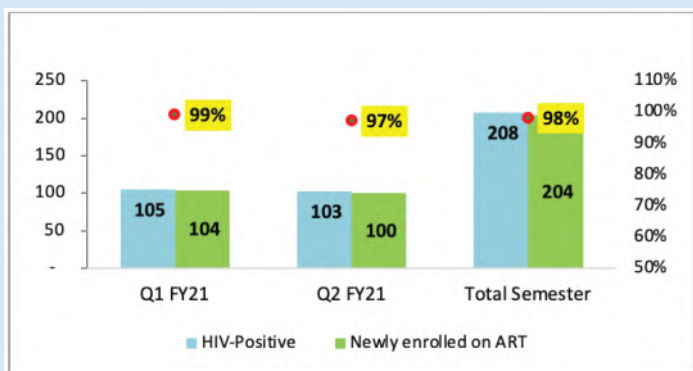
Pito is one of the 408 patients diagnosed with HIV who began antiretroviral therapy (ART) during the period October 2020-March 2021 at the ART Site of Batey Relief Alliance (BRA) Dominicana, Batey 5 Casas, a partner of the USAID project HIV Services and System Strengthening funded by the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

After his positive diagnosis for HIV, Pito was linked to ART at Batey 5 Casas in the province of Monte Plata, in the Dominican Republic. This clinic enrolled 408 of 416 (98%) patients diagnosed with HIV during Q1 and Q2 of FY21.

## INTERVENTION

The following figure details the continuous linkage of over 95% in both Q1 and Q2 for a total of 98% linkage to ART by BRA from October 1 2020 through March 31 2021.

**Figure I. ART initiation in BRA DOMINICANA among FC, Q1-Q2 FY21**



BRA attributes its success to creating trust with the clients during the entire service process. The confidentiality process is explained to all clients during HIV testing and what it means to obtain a positive or negative result. Clients can receive the HIV test wherever they feel comfortable, whether that be in the clinic, in their home, or elsewhere.

If a client is HIV positive, they are immediately linked to a peer promoter (navigator) to accompany them in those first stages of the process and ensure linkage and adherence to treatment. “During that period,” explains Matilde Marcial, ART site Coordinator of BRA Dominicana, “the client receives home visits and phone calls from the promoters. During the follow-up of the peer promoter, a link is created between the client and the ART site in order to guarantee their adherence to treatment.”

Other causes that have produced the successful results of Bra Dominicana, is the allocation of social assistance packages to those clients who start treatment which include: six months of food kits and telephone minutes, transportation to appointments and complementary analytics. Matilde confirms: “the incentivized ARV is an excellent strategy, this greatly motivates the clients to initiate ART, especially due to the situation of vulnerability in which they find themselves. Enrollment has been much easier since we implemented the food, transport and telephone recharge kits and after 6 months of this support, ART has become a part of routine life.”

Matilde also highlights that “at the time of diagnosis, all clinical tests are done in accordance with the national care and TB guidelines and are entered into the TLD treatment scheme according to clinical criteria. We focus on giving a quality service to clients to feel supported. We explain to clients the different areas of support of the project, clients are linked immediately to a promoter and are supported with a nurse or doctor to carry out clinical screenings. The idea is to create a strong bond with the health personnel and the client.”

## OUTCOMES

The case of Pito Pie is one of the many who today enjoy a better quality of life thanks to his diagnosis and linkage to ART supported by the USAID project. During Q2 FY21 period, through 19 clinical sites supported by USAID, it was possible to link 90% of patients diagnosed with HIV to ART treatment in the project.

Pito Pie says: “The light of hope came to me the day some people from BRA came and tested me for HIV... that day I tested positive... I really confess that I was glad to know it because at least I already knew what I had and they told me that they would treat me once and for all. ”

"I give thanks first to God and to the people of the BRA and the people who support them (USAID-PEPFAR), thanks to them, I am a healthy and working man, so today I can affirm that I have a better life... Thank you, thank you, thank you!"

*Photo 1: Credit: Matilde Marcial, ART site Coordinator*

*Site: BRA Dominicana*

*Photo 1: Haitian migrant patient during in a follow-up HIV appointment.*