

Scale up of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) in facility-based HIV prevention services in El Salvador

U.S. CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

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Background

Key populations (KP) carry the highest HIV burden in El Salvador. The Ministry of Health (MoH) provides a tailored HIV prevention package for KP through the STI Sentinel Surveillance strategy, known as VICITS by its Spanish acronym. In 2015, the World Health Organization recommended the integration of PrEP into existing prevention services as an additional HIV prevention alternative.

Methods

Following the launch of PrEP guidelines in December 2021, El Salvador received a donation of PrEP medication from the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) to jumpstart service delivery. In collaboration with PEPFAR, the MoH developed a plan to ensure an enabling environment for PrEP introduction and scale up at VICITS facilities. The plan included site-specific needs assessments, health care worker training, integration of a PrEP module into the country’s SIS health information system, community outreach and engagement, demand creation, and considerations for the sustainability of PrEP services through domestic funding.

Results

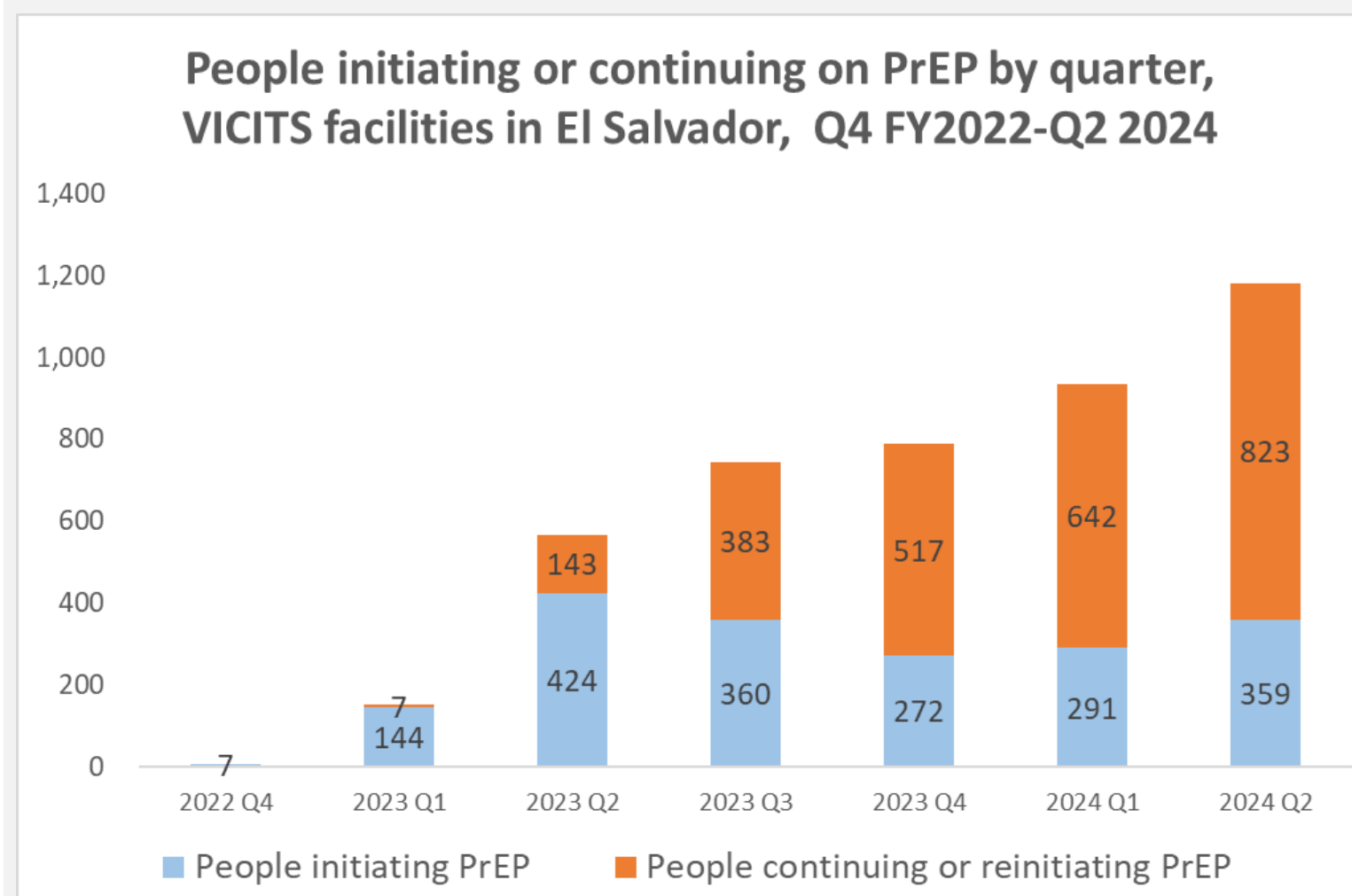
PrEP dispensation began in one VICITS facility in San Salvador in September 2022. In 2023, the MoH expanded PrEP to 11 additional VICITS sites.



El Salvador’s first PrEP client enrolls in services at San Miguelito VICITS health clinic in San Salvador, September 2022. (Consent obtained & documented)

By September 2023, 1,135 people had started PrEP, reaching 129% of the target of PrEP initiations for that year. Out of these, 94% were men who have sex with men and 6% transgender women.

In the same 12-month period, 303 people discontinued PrEP, including 3 seroconversions identified at the first or second visit following PrEP initiation. As of March 2024, 1,182 people received PrEP at VICITS facilities in El Salvador.



Source: PEPFAR Panorama

Conclusions

The integration of PrEP into existing HIV prevention packages allowed El Salvador to quickly expand PrEP while assuring sustainability based on domestic funding for staff, medication, and supplies.

NEXT STEPS

The El Salvador MoH plans to expand PrEP to 12 additional facilities and introduce a status neutral testing service approach to assure people who test negative and could benefit from PrEP are provided pathways to this service.

Affiliates / Partners



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