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## In Philippines, local responses to HIV/AIDS epidemic boosted by UN-backed plan



HIV/AIDS information on display in a city health office in the Philippines

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The United Nations is helping the Philippines tackle the mounting number of new HIV cases by putting local governments in the vanguard of the battle, mobilizing more than 1,000 officials and over 250 activists so far across 17 regions in the South-East Asian country.

The three-year programme launched in 2009 by the UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#)) and the Philippine Government strengthens sustainable local HIV/AIDS responses by developing leadership capacities of local governments and establishing regional AIDS assistance teams.

“UNDP wanted to be a little bit different and look at HIV in a holistic way, from a governance perspective, which is a real UNDP niche, and to look at leadership issues especially at the local level,” UNDP Country Director Renaud Myer [said](#). “We also try to identify governors or mayors who take a stand on HIV publicly and then we go and provide them with direct assistance.”

According to a 2010 report by UNAIDS, the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS, the Philippines is one of only seven countries worldwide reporting an increase of more than 25 per cent in new infections since 2001.

“Local governments are in a better position to craft a more effective strategy because they know their area, they know how communities would handle this problem, and the kinds of vulnerabilities in their areas,” Under Secretary for Local Government at the Department of Interior Austere Panadero said.

The executive director of the Philippine National AIDS Council Secretariat, Ferchito Avelino, noted that there had been a great improvement in the last two years in localizing the response to HIV and AIDS.

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