Guidance on security measures for frontliners

Basic Physical Security

Basic physical security in our guide refers to basic safety against physical harm, whether due to accidents, violence and other threats, as well as health protection, particularly focusing on the emerging COVID-19 safety measurements that are crucial for frontliners working in the HIV field.

The physical security and safety of frontliners is a priority and a shared responsibility between them and the organizations (both governmental or non-governmental) to which they are affiliated. In instances where frontliners are not affiliated to any in-country organization, the responsibility to ensure their security falls onto them.

Frontliners

- **Office security:** Ensure that the office is secure at your place of work through basic security measures such as locks, gates, camera surveillance, alarm systems or a security guard when possible.

- **Credentials:** Carry with you documentation that shows that you are affiliated to a local organization. This is crucial because a national authority or organization is supportive in follow-up in case you run into any legal issues during your work. When possible, and if collaborating with a governmental organization, ask to include their signature or stamp on your credential card.

- **Location:** Notify your organization/focal point/peer supervisor of your whereabouts prior to a field visit or mission. Check in and out at the start and at the end of a visit. If the visit is long, check-in every hour. Use the most convenient form of communication for you. This may be a phone call, a message or sharing of your live location through applications such as whatsapp or others. If traveling to a new area, coordinate with local contacts and/or stakeholders prior to your visit.

- **Timing:** Try to conduct all visits during the day and avoid night travel as much as possible. Due to the nature of our work, it is possible that some visits might take place during the evening – try to limit these visits to urgent cases and apply all other measures when doing so.

- **Itinerary:** If you are engaged in securing routine support services such as retrieving ARVs for beneficiaries of an HIV support and care program, try to change your route between your office/home and the designated medication dispensing location every couple of weeks. Avoid carrying debit/credit card, large amounts of money and wearing expensive items such as gold.

- **Safety in numbers:** Conduct field visits in pairs as much as possible, especially if traveling to insecure areas. Where applicable and possible, conduct field visits using vehicles of your organization or partner affiliated NGO. If using organization vehicles, ensure that logos of the organization do not pose issues such as discrimination or recognition of people that you are meeting in the field.

- **Hygiene:** In your line of work, you might be making physical visits to unsanitary locations to provide services so it is important to maintain hygienic measures to protect yourself against infectious diseases. Maintain a proper distance. Wash and sanitize your hands. Avoid sitting on or using any personal items, such as bedding or towels, during a home visit.

- **COVID-19:** Avoid physical visits and meetings when possible by substituting them with phone calls and virtual meetings. If visits/meetings are necessary, take the following steps to ensure safety: wear your masks, maintain social distancing of 2 meters when speaking to someone, avoid handshakes, keep a disinfectant gel with you at all times, remove and dispose of masks properly, change your clothes directly when arriving home after a visit and take a shower. Avoid large gatherings.

HIV Organizations

- **Office security plans:** Ensure security plans are in place, or develop security plans if they are not available. Educate and inform staff on the security plans on a routine basis.

- **Credentials:** Ensure availability of identification cards for HIV frontliners in coordination with National AIDS Programs as applicable to each country context.

- **Frontliner security training:** Ensure that HIV frontliners receive security and safety training that includes basic physical security and protection.

- **COVID-19:** Provide support in terms of updated awareness on emerging COVID prevention and protection strategies as well as basic assistance when possible. Avoid the presence of many persons in one room. Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff including but not limited to masks, sanitizers, gloves, and other essential items.

Safety & Security definitions

Security relates to intentional harm such as acts of violence, aggression and criminal acts.

Safety relates to unintentional harm or accidents, events, or hazards.

The terms are used interchangeably throughout this guidance document.

The development of this document was funded via the USAID-supported LINKAGES project.