UNAIDS 2024

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

2022-2023 Organizational report

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

HIV in UNICEF's mandate and strategy for HIV

UNICEF is committed to increasing access to quality prevention services, testing, treatment, care and support for children, adolescents and pregnant women. UNICEF's Strategic Plan 2022–2025 prioritizes fast-tracking the end of AIDS in children and adolescents, and actions for HIV are integrated throughout UNICEF's Strategy for Health 2016–2030. UNICEF's global Gender Action Plan prioritizes HIV and promotes the leadership, empowerment and well-being of adolescent girls. UNICEF's Adolescent Girls Programme Strategy supports countries to deliver HIV programming.

Top results in 2022-2023

UNICEF supports governments to sustain the gains made to date in the HIV response and safeguard international investments in HIV.

Elimination of vertical transmission

Greater political commitment, action and resources were generated. In 2022, UNICEF launched the Global Alliance to End AIDS in Children by 2030 together with WHO, the UNAIDS Secretariat, the Global Fund, PEPFAR, the International Community of Women Living with HIV, the Global Network of Young People Living with HIV (Y+) and the Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+). To date, 12 African countries have joined the Alliance and committed to country action plans aligned with the vision of the Alliance. UNICEF and Alliance partners developed guidance to facilitate the implementation of these country action plans. In 2023, the Alliance's framework was restructured into regional hubs to provide further support and advocacy at the regional level. Extensive global advocacy and coalition-building efforts included the development of a new toolkit to guide and align global advocacy and outreach to maximize impact.

Further progress was made towards the elimination of vertical transmission of HIV and triple elimination of HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B. UNICEF provides guidance and technical support to countries to develop and implement evidence-based national plans for the elimination of mother to child transmission (EMTCT) of HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B. By 2023, 15 countries and territories have been validated as having halted vertical transmission of HIV. Moreover, 75 countries had a national plan for EMTCT, and 86 countries were implementing a treat-all policy for pregnant and breastfeeding women living with HIV. In 2023, UNICEF and WHO published guidance to fast-track EMTCT of HIV in countries with low prevalence and/or concentrated epidemics. In 2022, UNICEF established a data mentoring programme to strengthen national health management information systems for countries on the path to triple EMTCT. A total of 17 African countries are participating to date.

HIV outcomes for pregnant and parenting adolescents were improved. In 2022, UNICEF supported "HEY BABY", the first longitudinal study in Africa to assess pathways to resilience among adolescent parent families. In 2023, UNICEF and partners published

learnings from this study, including ways to improve differentiated services for pregnant and parenting adolescents and young women.

Closing the treatment gap for children and adolescents living with HIV

The optimizing of paediatric treatment continued. With WHO and UNICEF support, over 90 countries are now using dolutegravir (DTG), a treatment option for children that is comparable with the best adult formulations—and there are early signs that viral suppression rates are improving. In 2022, UNICEF and partners, as part of the Global Accelerator for Paediatric Formulations Network (GAP-f), developed a new HIV treatment regimen for children comprising a single, fixed-dose combination tablet of the antiretroviral drugs dolutegravir, abacavir and lamivudine. In 2023, UNICEF and GAP-f partners developed a product-agnostic toolkit to accelerate the introduction of new paediatric drugs and formulations. In 2023, as part of the Rome Action Plan, UNICEF committed to support the uptake of fixed-dose dolutegravir, abacavir and lamivudine, as well as other new products, in long-term agreements with manufacturers that offer flat pricing for children living in low- and middle-income countries.

HIV services for children were integrated in health systems. UNICEF supports governments to ensure that HIV services for children and adolescents are integrated into primary health-care systems. Although only 54 countries had HIV services for children integrated into primary healthcare in 2022, 33 of UNICEF's 37 HIV-priority countries are implementing a comprehensive package for paediatric HIV treatment within primary health-care systems.

Age-appropriate interventions and tools for HIV case finding in children were improved. In 2023, UNICEF, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other partners developed technical guidance to address gaps in national child case-finding strategies, taking into account the reality that most newly diagnosed paediatric HIV cases are in children older than two years of age. UNICEF established a Paediatric Case Finding Work Group in 2022 to support countries to accelerate rates of paediatric testing, diagnosis and linkage to treatment and care. In 2023, UNICEF and partners convened a technical consultation to develop country guidance to improve identification of undiagnosed children living with HIV.

Preventing new infections among adolescent girls and improving their access to quality sexual and reproductive health service

Access to HIV prevention and treatment for adolescents and young key populations was strengthened. With UNDP, UNFPA, the UNAIDS Secretariat and eight leading global youth networks, UNICEF continued to support the global "Adolescent and young key populations partnership" (ayKP network) to conduct a technical update of an adolescent and young key population toolkit and to launch a community of "young champions for equality". In 2023, UNICEF validated the Joint Programme's new guidance on youth-led HIV responses and convened a new working group, co-led by youth networks, to better leverage broader sexual and reproductive health programming for adolescent and young key populations. Building on work by UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and the UNAIDS Secretariat, a revised and updated toolkit will be launched in 2024.

Adolescents were empowered and youth leadership in the HIV response was promoted. In collaboration with UNFPA, UNICEF supported a young women's leadership community within the UNAIDS-led Education Plus initiative. Through this community, UNICEF supported the development of FLOURISH, a toolkit by young women for young women advocates and leaders. UNICEF and partners in the Joint UN Programme 2gether4SRHR, in collaboration with Y+ and young people from five countries in eastern and southern Africa, developed a toolkit for adolescents and young people to improve their engagement on HIV and sexual and reproductive health issues and increase service uptake. In 2023, the toolkit was adapted into a chatbot and piloted. In 2023, UNICEF and partners convened hundreds of youth advocates in Africa to accelerate the youth-led UNITED! movement.

Evidence was generated to strengthen adolescent programming. With the UNAIDS Secretariat, UNICEF jointly commissioned and issued finely disaggregated data on size estimations for young key populations (aged 15–24 years) from over 100 countries. In 2022-–2023, UNICEF and the "Accelerating achievement for Africa's adolescents (Accelerate)" hub supported research and published six briefs to reflect adolescent experiences with health systems and help countries design more effective services for adolescents and young people living with HIV.

Digital innovations were accelerated to reach adolescents. In 2022, UNICEF expanded a digital-first HIV prevention model, "U-Test", into additional countries in western and central Africa (Cameroon and Nigeria), using peer-mediated digital tools and social media to engage young people in preventive HIV care and increase their knowledge, access and use of novel prevention and diagnostic tools. National "U-Test" flagships were established by Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria. The platform has reached over five million young people regionally, linking over 100 000 of them with essential services.

Supporting governments to sustain the gains and international investments in the HIV response

Harmful gender norms were addressed. Through the Spotlight Initiative, UNICEF supports efforts to reduce gender-based violence. This work includes supporting youth to take the lead on comprehensive sexuality education and peer education approaches to promote favourable social norms, attitudes and behaviours among adolescents and youth, both in and out of school. For example, in 2021, these interventions reached more than 7300 adolescents across six states in Nigeria.

UNICEF supported the Global Fund's "Catalytic investment in adolescent girls and young women 2021–2023", which included a focus on enhanced government stewardship and acceleration of local adaptation of evidence-based approaches for HIV prevention services for adolescent girls and young women.

Innovative HIV-sensitive social protection approaches were designed. In 2022, UNICEF continued to collaborate with partners to implement a "Cash plus" model, as part of the Government of the United Republic Tanzania's cash transfer and livelihood enhancement programme. A final evaluation report of this programme, developed in 2023, showed increases in contraceptive and HIV knowledge, HIV testing, adolescent-friendly service provision and visits at health facilities, gender-equitable attitudes, mental health and psychosocial outcomes, as well as economic empowerment outcomes such as participation

in economic activities. In 2022, UNICEF initiated the first systematic review of bundled interventions for adolescents at risk of, or living with HIV, and how they can be further strengthened. The findings from this review were updated in 2023 using newly available research. Furthermore, in 2022–2023, an external evaluation assessed the relevance, coherence, effectiveness and equity of the Joint Programme's initiatives on HIV-sensitive social protection to develop recommendations for further improvements.

Diagnostics were strengthened within national health systems. UNICEF worked with governments in western and central Africa to optimize diagnostic networks and better integrate diagnostic services into overall health systems. UNICEF is working with the global Community Health Roadmap partnership to train community health workers on diagnostic tools, including for HIV. In 2023, it led the development of the first global advocacy strategy on diagnostics and a related toolkit to advance advocacy priorities and support community-based advocates.

Continuity of HIV services was ensured in humanitarian contexts. In 2022–2023, UNICEF extended its partnership with the Global Fund to provide vital medicines and HIV and health services in Ukraine. UNICEF also ensured the continuity of essential HIV services and used civic engagement platforms such as "U-Report" to support community engagement during the Ebola outbreak in Uganda in 2022 and provided essential health and HIV services to internally displaced populations in Myanmar at both mobile and fixed sites in 2023.

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