

Despite persisting humanitarian situations, Venezuela continues to make progress in expanding HIV services and education for key populations and young people with strategic support from the Joint Programme. The national HIV testing algorithms were updated in alignment with global guidelines and close to 40 000 HIV test kits and laboratory reagents, as well as 23 GeneXpert machines were procured enabling the country to diagnose 7806 new HIV cases in 2022- 2023 (WHO). In addition, over 330 000 dual HIV and syphilis were also procured and distributed in main maternity centres in 14 states, significantly increasing screening coverage in antenatal care (UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO).

HIV prevention and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services and education expanded considerably thanks to the Joint Programme's technical support. For instance, in 2023, more than 105 000 people were sensitized on HIV prevention and SRH information through community-led information initiatives (UNFPA, UNHCR, UNAIDS Secretariat, IOM). Besides, 31 centres in 14 states received support to either maintain or strengthen their services following the 2023 mapping and assessment of 94 adolescent centres (UNICEF, UNFPA). In 10 care spaces, 7583 adolescents and young people accessed dual HIV and syphilis screening services; 7139 adolescent girls accessed contraceptive methods; and over 180 000 condoms were distributed to curb new HIV infections among this population group (UNFPA). Further improving the quality of adolescent care services, 72 educators from 18 states successfully graduated from the first cohort of the Diploma in Comprehensive Adolescent Care implemented in partnership with the University of Health Sciences - 'Hugo Chávez Frías' (UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, UNAIDS Secretariat).

A total of 1630 adolescents were also trained as peer educators to expand in- and out-of-school comprehensive sexuality education (UNFPA).

In 2022-2023, 62 000 people living with HIV, including 1016 children under 15 years old accessed antiretroviral treatment and care services, thanks to the technical support from the Joint Programme and financial assistance from the Global Fund. Dolutegravir-based regimen was incorporated into paediatric treatment and 83% of all eligible people living with HIV were switched to this regimen, according to the National AIDS Programme data (UNICEF, WHO, UNAIDS Secretariat). In addition, 20 organizations of people living with HIV organized under the umbrella of the Venezuelan Network of Positive People (RVG+) received capacity building training to monitor national distribution of treatment, adherence and access among people from key populations, including people returning to the country for treatment (UNAIDS Secretariat).

In March 2023, Venezuela's Supreme Court repealed the article of the military justice code that had criminalized consensual same-sex relationships within the armed forces following robust advocacy and technical support by the LGBTQI+ community, the Ombudsman's Office and the Joint Programme. In partnership with the Ombudsman's Office, the Law for the Protection of the Rights of People Living with HIV and their Families was promoted among government officials, and 320 healthcare providers had orientation on eliminating stigma and discrimination in healthcare (OHCHR, UNAIDS Secretariat).

KEY RESULTS

- Venezuela guaranteed antiretroviral treatment and continuity of care among 62 000 adults and children living with HIV and 83% of children living with HIV were switched to Dolutegravir-based regimen.
- Expansion of HIV and sexual and reproductive health services and education, capacity building of teachers and peer educators and system strengthening initiatives benefited more than 100 000 people including adolescents and young people.
- Venezuela's Supreme Court repealed the article of the military justice code that had criminalized consensual same-sex relationships within the armed forces.
- More than 4200 women and adolescent girls who survived sexual and gender-based violence accessed multisectoral services in 2023 following procurement of HIV testing kits and antiretroviral medicines, capacity building of service providers and mapping of available gender-based violence services.

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Several initiatives reinforced evidence and national capacity needed to address gender-based violence in Venezuela. For example, a mapping initiative identified 522 available gender-based violence services (compared to 400 in 2021); HIV test kits and antiretroviral medicines were provided to comprehensive care centres for survivors of violence; and 600 humanitarian response providers received training to strengthen the humanitarian response in the country, including on the 13 gender-based violence referral pathways. As a result, a total of over 4200 women and adolescent girls who survived sexual and gender-based violence accessed multisectoral services in 2023 (UNFPA).

HIV and syphilis services were strengthened in humanitarian settings, particularly in border states and among indigenous populations, with technical and financial support from the Joint Programme. For example, 3420 dual HIV and syphilis test kits were procured to improve the screening services among pregnant women in Amazonas, Apure, Nueva Esparta and Sucre states (UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, IOM). In addition, a comprehensive strategy was developed to scale up basic healthcare services among migrants in temporary shelters and mobile assistance points and communities in border states. The strategy also comprises deployment of multidisciplinary health teams to reach most remote and underserved communities, the training of community health workers and rural physicians, and participatory activities to promote gender equality and positive masculinities, and prevent HIV, sexually transmitted infections and gender-based violence (IOM).