

CAMBODIA

Report prepared by the Joint UN Team on AIDS

PROGRESS TOWARDS THE FAST-TRACK TARGETS

COUNTRY PRIORITIES/ TARGETS BY END OF 2021	STATUS	RESULTS, END OF 2020
90% of people living with HIV know their HIV status, 90% of people who live with HIV are on treatment, and 90% are virally suppressed.	WITHIN REACH	By 2020, an estimated 84% people living with HIV in Cambodia know their status, of whom 99% were enrolled on antiretroviral treatment, and an estimated 97% of the people in treatment achieved viral suppression (GAM 2021). In 2020, Cambodia expanded the multi-months dispensing (MMD) of antiretroviral drugs, enrolling an additional 10 346 people living with HIV on treatment over nine months. The national MMD coverage increased from 32% in 2019 to 54% in 2020 (NCHADS ART database, as of December 2020).
80% of key populations are reached with HIV combination prevention services.	ON TRACK	Combination prevention services coverage among key populations reached 76% in 2020. At the end of December 2020, an estimated 88% of female entertainment workers (45 078), 62% men who have sex with men (25 180), 88% of transgender people (5452), and 27% of people who inject drugs (867) were reached through differentiated prevention service modalities including virtual outreach. 538 829 needles and syringes were distributed among people who inject drugs and 78 people who inject drugs were linked to opioid substitute therapy (OST) services (NCHADS prevention database).
HIV law amended to allow access to HIV testing and sexually transmitted infection (STI) screening, prevention and treatment services among adolescents aged 15-18 years without parental/guardian consent.	ON TRACK	An assessment on access to HIV services among young key populations is underway, under the leadership of the National AIDS Authority. Results, expected early 2021, will be used to guide advocacy for the revision of the HIV law and other related policies to enable adolescent and young people access HIV and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services without parental / guardian consent.

50% of people living with HIV have access to HIV sensitive social protection.	ON TRACK	A policy brief on social protection was developed which included people living with HIV—currently enrolled on the IDPoor programme—in the emergency cash transfer scheme as part of the COVID-19 response. About 2542 households of people living with HIV benefited from the emergency cash transfer in 2020.
30% increase in domestic investment to support the national HIV response.	ON TRACK	The Royal Government of Cambodia increased its budget allocation for the HIV response from US\$ 9.45 million for the Global Fund 2018-2020 grant period to US\$ 19.7 million for the Global Fund 2021-2023 grant period.

JOINT TEAM

UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN WOMEN, ILO, UNESCO, WHO, WORLD BANK, UNAIDS SECRETARIAT

JOINT PROGRAMME CONTRIBUTIONS AND RESULTS IN 2020

The Joint Team, in collaboration with national authorities and civil society organizations provided substantial support to ensure continuity of treatment services and retention on care among people living with HIV during the COVID-19 pandemic. Multi-month dispensing (MMD) of antiretroviral drugs were scaled up during the pandemic (increased MMD coverage from 32% in 2019 to 54% by the end of 2020 with 58% of people living with HIV initiated on treatment on the same day of diagnosis). Support was also provided to expand differentiated HIV combination prevention, pre-exposure prophylaxis, and self-testing services for key populations, and minimize service disruption during the pandemic through community-led virtual outreach and other service delivery mechanisms. Increased domestic investments were committed and Global Fund new grants secured.

HIV TESTING AND TREATMENT

POLICY ADVICE; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; CAPACITY BUILDING; COORDINATION SUPPORT; COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Continued advocacy and technical support to the Ministry of Health/National Center for HIV/AIDS, Dermatology and STD (NCHADS) led to the adoption of the standard operating procedure (SOP) for HIV self-testing in July 2020. A phased implementation of this SOP was launched in November 2020 to reach hidden and high-risk key populations and within one month, 288 people from key populations had access to HIV self-testing. The pilot of HIV self-testing in Phnom Penh showed that 71% of the people who took HIV self-testing were never tested for the virus before and the tests had a 6% HIV reactive yield. The Joint Team also provided technical and financial support to train 65 outreach workers from non-governmental organizations and procure 2000 self-testing kits to support expansion of HIV self-testing services in Phnom Penh.

Community-led HIV testing initiatives were supported reaching 32 478 female entertainment workers, 22 891 men who have sex with men, 4817 transgender persons, and 407 people who inject drugs in 2020. An estimated 75 female entertainment workers, 646 men who have sex with men, 286 transgender persons, and one person who inject drugs tested positive for HIV and over 99% of the people who knew their HIV status were enrolled on antiretroviral treatment (ART).

In 2020, the national treatment guideline was updated in line with the latest WHO recommendations and healthcare workers in all 25 provinces were trained to support the implementation process. The Joint Team advocated and provided technical support for the implementation of same day initiation of ART across all treatment sites in Cambodia, and 58% of the people living with HIV were enrolled on treatment on the same day of diagnosis in 2020. Additionally, healthcare workers in all 69 treatment sites were trained to support expansion of MMD services. An estimated 87% of the people living on HIV enrolled on MMD resided in 10 high performance provinces with MMD coverage ranging from 38% to 87%.

HIV PREVENTION AMONG KEY POPULATIONS **POLICY ADVICE; TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT; COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The Joint Team supported the Government and closely collaborated with community and other technical partners to expand differentiated HIV combination prevention services for key populations. As a result of those collective efforts, in 2020, about 45 078 female entertainment workers, 25 180 men who have sex with men, 5452 transgender persons, and 867 people who inject drugs were reached through differentiated HIV prevention services including virtual interventions. Of this group, 72% of female entertainment workers, 91% of men who have sex with men, 88% of transgender people, and 47% of people who inject drugs received voluntary HIV counselling and testing. A total 1008 people from key populations were diagnosed with HIV and over 99% of them were enrolled on ART and care services. Furthermore, 538 829 needles and syringes were distributed among people who inject drugs during these outreach initiatives, and 78 people who inject drugs were linked to opioid substitute therapy (OST) services.

The National Centre for HIV/AIDS, Dermatology and STD was supported to implement pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) in 10 HIV service sites in four provinces—Battambang, Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, and Banteay Meanchey—enrolling 628 HIV exposed people on PrEP by Dec 2020. An assessment is underway to identify effective PrEP services delivery and demand creation methods, and to guide scale up of these services in additional 15 high burden provinces by 2023.

ACCESS TO SRH SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE **UPSTREAM ADVOCACY; POLICY ADVICE; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

As a result of technical support provided to the Government, the situation analysis on adolescent and youth was completed—the first study in Cambodia that included adolescents aged 10-14 years. The analysis provided critical information, including demographic profile, education and employment level, health and HIV knowledge, and access to HIV testing services.

In November 2020, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports announced integration of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in the national health education curriculum. The Joint Team supported virtual rollout of the CSE curriculum to overcome the challenges of COVID-19 related restrictions. 60 488 adolescents and young people (38 657 females) from eight provinces were also sensitized on adolescents- and youth-friendly health services as well as sexual and reproductive health and rights through online engagements, schools, and community education sessions at the health facilities.

SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV AND KEY POPULATIONS TECHNICAL SUPPORT; CAPACITY BUILDING

The National AIDS Authority was supported to conduct an HIV and social protection assessment to identify the challenges people living with HIV and key populations face while accessing social protection programmes. Desk reviews and interviews were conducted with 45 representatives of people living with HIV, key populations, and HIV and social protection programmes. Findings and recommendations from the assessment were discussed with key partners, including policy makers.

192 people from networks of people living with HIV, key populations, civil society, and representatives of the Provincial Department of Planning in 17 provinces received training about the on-demand identification of poor households (OD-IDPoor) programme—a government initiative for poverty reduction and socioeconomic development in Cambodia. Other two consultative workshops identified barriers that prevent people living with HIV and key populations from registration and accessing the benefits of the IDPoor programme, such as lack of awareness, their limited engagement in the IDPoor programme, and mobility implying not meeting the minimum three-months residency requirement to qualify, concerns around confidentiality of HIV and key population status, and discrimination in some implementation sites. Some of the proposed solutions from the workshops included establishing a tailored IDPoor identification and registering mechanism for people living with HIV during initial or routine ART visits to ensure confidentiality of their HIV status in the community.

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND SUSTAINABILITY UPSTREAM ADVOCACY; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; PARTNERSHIPS

The Joint Team together with other key partners supported Cambodia in mobilizing US\$ 41.5 million from the Global Fund for 2021-2023, as well as an additional US\$ 15.4 million to support specifically priority programmes, including differentiated and combination prevention services, PrEP, HIV self-testing, same day-ART, regimen optimization, and MMD in the 5th National Strategic Plan for a Comprehensive, Multi-Sectoral Response to HIV/AIDS 2019-2023 (NSP V), and National Strategic Plan for HIV and STI Prevention and Control in health sector 2021-2025 (HSSP).

With Joint Team's advocacy and guidance, and leadership and coordination of the National AIDS Authority, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the national budget allocation for the HIV response significantly increased (from US\$ 9.45 million for the previous period to US\$ 19.7 million for 2021-2023).

As part of the Fast-Track Cities initiative, a strategic plan was developed in 2020 for Battambang; it includes strategic direction, actions, and targets to be achieved by 2025, and will also be used to advocate and mobilize public funding from the local government through the decentralization and de-concentration policy.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE COVID-19 RESPONSE

In collaboration with civil society organizations, online surveys among people living with HIV and key population were conducted and identified challenges in accessing HIV prevention and treatment services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings were used to inform the review the Standard Operating Procedures for re-engagement in care among people living with HIV to improve treatment adherence and minimize loss to follow up. Meanwhile, continued monitoring, reporting and analysis of data on service disruptions resulted in evidence-based decision making, and improvement on access to HIV services. The UNODC guidance on treatment, care and rehabilitation service delivery during COVID-19 pandemic was translated into Khmer and shared with the Government and implementing partners to improve opioid substitute therapy and psychosocial services for people with drug use disorders.

COVID-19 infection prevention and control measures were implemented in ART sites to ensure the safety of healthcare workers and their clients. ART service providers, community health workers and people living with HIV at these sites received 200 boxes of face masks, 10 infrared thermometers, disinfecting sprays, alcohol-based hand gel and boxes of gloves during routine care and treatment visits at ART sites.

The Joint Team supported the development of COVID-19 prevention messages and infographics targeting people living with HIV and key populations, which were disseminated via text messages, social media outlets, peer support groups, and health facilities. A variety of IEC materials, including a booklet on caring and parenting skills during COVID-19 lockdown, were distributed to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and NGOs working with families and children.

The Joint Team supported a rapid assessment on the impact of COVID-19 on returning migrants, which identified critical challenges and vulnerabilities in their access to essential health services. As a result, mitigating interventions were rolled out, including to improve access to maternal and childcare services and provide psychosocial support for gender-based violence survivors. For example, 6500 dignity kits were procured and distributed to returning migrant women/girls and pregnant women coming from Thailand and pregnant women and girls impacted by the seasonal flood.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTEGRATED SDG AGENDA

The Joint Team provided technical and financial support to create various digital campaigns on Loveisdiversity, an online media platform launched by the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQ) community in Cambodia to advocate for equality and protection of human rights for all. Informative messages on sexual, reproductive, and mental health, and gender-based violence were developed and disseminated via these platforms reaching over 3 million people and sparking active online dialogue among the viewers.

Technical assistance was also provided to the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) committee led by Cambodian Centre for Human Rights (CCHR) to promote gender equality and facilitate access to legal assistance and psychosocial counselling among the LGBTIQ community. The SOGIE committee was supported to review support requests for legal assistance and psychosocial counselling from the members of the LGBTIQ community, provide guidance, and follow up on the progress on cases, including quality of services rendered. Some of the challenges facing the LGBTIQ community in accessing legal assistance include limited trust in legal system and long process from the start of filing complaints until case are addressed and closed. These efforts contributed to the SDG 16 that seeks to ensure equal access to justice for all and SDG 5 which promotes gender equality with inclusion of diverse groups including LGBTIQ people and addresses discrimination.

PERSISTING AND EMERGING CHALLENGES AND BOTTLENECKS	KEY FUTURE ACTIONS TO RESPOND TO CHALLENGES AND UNBLOCK BOTTLENECKS
<p>Despite continuous advocacy efforts, significant challenges remain in extending access to IDPoor social protection mechanism for key populations.</p> <p>COVID-19 pandemic related economic slowdown affected the livelihood of vulnerable and key populations, particularly female entertainment workers.</p>	<p>Continue support and facilitation to enrol people living with HIV and key population in IDPoor programme.</p> <p>Support integration of HIV services into the Commune Development Plans and Commune Investment Programmes.</p>
<p>The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted access to treatment and care services for people living with HIV. Unexpected mobility of key populations and people living with HIV also imposed challenges in access to treatment services.</p>	<p>Provide technical support to expand access to multi-month dispensing, same day ART initiation and regimen optimization services in all ART sites in Cambodia.</p> <p>Continue providing technical support to strengthen collection, analysis and use of granular data, and people-centred monitoring to support programme prioritization and evidence-based advocacy.</p>
<p>Community-led HIV counselling and testing services were interrupted in 2020. Virtual HIV counselling mechanism were implemented to ensure service continuity. However, lay counsellors could not reach key populations and provide HIV testing services due to pandemic related restrictions. Lengthy procurement process for HIV self-testing kits and social restrictions also delayed the roll out of HIV self-testing programme and training of service providers to support the implementation.</p>	<p>Continue to strengthen the capacity of community-led organizations to effectively provide differentiated HIV prevention and testing services for key populations.</p> <p>Support innovative service delivery models tailored to address the needs of key populations balancing face-to-face and virtual outreach mechanisms.</p> <p>Provide technical support to expand PrEP services, including demand creation activities and community-led PrEP delivery services.</p> <p>Support scale up of HIV self-testing to selected priority provinces for key populations.</p>
<p>Private sector engagement in the HIV response remains low, due to limited compliance to national HIV guidelines, weak reporting mechanisms, poor coordination between private and public sectors, and perceptions that the role of private sector is limited to treatment services.</p>	<p>Support possibility of expansion of HIV self-testing services through private sector such as pharmacies and development of reporting mechanisms.</p>
<p>Criminalization of drug use and government-led campaign against use of illicit drugs remain barriers to accessing harm reduction and drug treatment services among people who use or inject drugs.</p> <p>Policy, legal and socio-cultural norms continue to prevent young key populations from accessing HIV and sexual and reproductive health services.</p>	<p>Increase advocacy for equitable and enabling environment that addresses stigma and discrimination and upholds the rights of people living with HIV and key populations.</p> <p>Assist with the review of existing laws and policies and development of legal provisions to improve access to HIV prevention and testing among adolescent and young people.</p>
<p>Limited framework and modalities to implement social contracting to advance the HIV response.</p>	<p>Extend technical support to develop a national framework and operational guidelines for social contracting of community-led organizations.</p>

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