

# COLOMBIA

*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
Comprehensive and quality care are provided to people living with HIV.	<b>ON TRACK</b>	In 2020, 123 490 people were living with HIV, a rise of 13.2% from 2019, likely due to increased access to testing. Of the 116 862 people living with HIV registered in the General Social Security Health System, 94.7% are on ART (compared to 85.63% in 2019), and 73.4% had a suppressed viral load (Cuenta de Alto Costo, 2020).
Local implementation of eMTCT Plus for towards achievement of global, regional and national targets in this area.	<b>WITHIN REACH</b>	In 2020, 1093 women were diagnosed with HIV (an increase of 17.3% compared with 2019 data); 52.2% were diagnosed prior to pregnancy. 92.7% of pregnant women living with HIV were on ART. 1127 infants (0-12 months) had mothers living with HIV, and 90.24% of these children received prophylactic medication; 14 (1.24%) were diagnosed with HIV during follow up (Cuenta de Alto Costo, 2020).
Implementation of the pilot pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) programme for HIV in the city of Bogotá.	<b>WITHIN REACH</b>	A one-year PrEP pilot was implemented in Bogotá, with the participation of 546 men who have sex with men and transgender women. 93.49% of eligible individuals accepted PrEP, and over 95% of participants showed 100% adherence over 12 months. STI prevalence was lower during the programme than beforehand (11% compared to 31%) (Report of the Pilot PrEP programme in the city of Bogotá).

<p>Implementation of projects aimed at strengthening capacities, to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of people living with HIV who are highly vulnerable by transferring knowledge and sustainable development.</p>	<p><b>ACHIEVED</b></p>	<p>Two projects were successfully implemented ('Aromas Ancestrale', and 'Positive women leaders living with HIV/AIDS generating local capacities to improve their living conditions in the context of COVID-19 in the municipality of Sincelejo Department of Sucre') resulting in income-generation training for 26 people living with HIV; training for 20 women living with HIV in reducing stigma and discrimination, and in improving wellbeing and food rights for 120 women living with HIV via distribution of food and nutrition kits.</p>
<p>Strategic information on the HIV epidemic and the national response to HIV is available, for sound decision-making.</p>	<p><b>ACHIEVED</b></p>	<p>Technical support was provided to monitor progress on HIV/Syphilis eMTCT, and for the elaboration of the prevention cascade for men who have sex with men and transgender women in Colombia. In addition, the Joint Team supported the analysis of gaps caused by COVID-19 to support the development of additional Global Fund funding requests; as well as the review of the 2020 High-Cost Account report on HIV.</p>

## JOINT TEAM

UNHCR, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, WHO-PAHO, UNAIDS SECRETARIAT, IOM

## JOINT PROGRAMME CONTRIBUTIONS AND RESULTS IN 2020

*In 2020, successful progress was made on a range of themes, including elimination of HIV mother-to-child transmission (eMTCT), HIV prevention and the response to COVID-19. This work illustrates the Joint Team's continuous support to the country's advances towards the goal of ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030. Testing, treatment, and prevention services were all intensified, particularly for Venezuelan migrants and their host communities. A PrEP programme was piloted in Bogotá with encouraging results and being considered for multi-year extension. Finally, women and girls benefited from several projects geared towards promoting healthy nutrition, generating income and livelihood, and raising awareness of human rights, gender equality, access to health and prevention of gender-based violence and HIV.*

## ACCESS TO TREATMENT AND EMTCT TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Implementation of the eMTCT Plus National Plan 2018-2021 is underway, with national guidelines for local implementation, and a national monitoring plan in place. The National Progress Report for 2019 was completed. To support target communities and first-level health care providers in implementing the HIV/Congenital Syphilis eMTCT Plus strategy, a support toolbox at departmental and local level was finalised, and local trainings were conducted to support the use of the toolbox.

Access to HIV testing was facilitated for 30 960 pregnant migrant women from Venezuela in 41 municipalities, and 131 women were found positive and referred for treatment. Comprehensive care was also provided to 128 Venezuelan migrants living with HIV in the departments of Nariño and Santander, through the contracting of specialised HIV health care facilities.

A thousand 'undetectable' badges were distributed in December 2020 as part of the 'undetectable= untransmissible' campaign, raising awareness on reducing viral load for preventing transmission, in Bogotá, Pereira, Dosquebradas, Cartagena, Bucaramanga, Cali, Barranquilla and Medellín, focusing on men who have sex with men and transgender women.

## HIV PREVENTION TECHNICAL SUPPORT; CAPACITY BUILDING

The Joint Team provided support for the implementation of a one-year PrEP pilot in Bogotá between 2019 and 2020, with the participation of 546 men who have sex with men and transgender women. 93.49% of eligible individuals accepted PrEP, and over 95% of participants showed 100% adherence over 12 months. Technical support was also provided to the pilot PrEP programme in maintaining and redesigning the website [www.prep-colombia.org](http://www.prep-colombia.org); 26 903 people visited the HIV page between July-December 2020. 92% of site visitors are from within Colombia, and 53% from Bogotá. Building on the results of the PrEP pilot, support was given to the Ministry of Health for the update of clinical practice guideline for the care of HIV/AIDS infection, which included PrEP for the first time.

305 990 condoms were provided to 30 599 Venezuelan migrants, Colombian returnees and host communities in the 41 municipalities in which migration projects are ongoing, to support an educational activity on HIV prevention and proper use of condoms. In addition, 322 workshops and/or training sessions on SRH and HIV/STIs were delivered, benefiting a total of 6527 people among the Venezuelan migrant population and the host community. In partnership with Profamilia and LigaSida, the Joint Team provided 65 000 male condoms to the migrant and host population in the territorial entities of Norte de Santander, Santander, Arauca, Boyacá, Cundinamarca, Valle del Cauca, Cauca, Chocó, Nariño, Putumayo, Antioquia and Atlántico.

To generate evidence on the HIV response in Colombia, surveys targeting key and vulnerable populations were rolled out in areas with high degrees of poverty and inequality. For example, 91% of the 32 133 fishermen surveyed stated that they had heard of AIDS.

## GENDER EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT; TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE; CAPACITY BUILDING

One hundred and twenty women were beneficiaries of a citizenship project aimed at women living with HIV, implemented by the Cimientos de Luz Association in Sincelejo. Twenty urban and rural women leaders directly participated, and then shared this knowledge with 100 women living with HIV and their families from their own communities. The focus of the project was to raise awareness of gender equality, prevention of stigma and discrimination and gender-based

violence, laws that protect them and actions to protect their rights, especially to health and ARV treatment. Through this project, the 120 women were provided with the tools to strengthen their ownership in self-care and the prevention of gender-based violence and abuse in their homes.

In addition, as part of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the same women living with HIV described above participated in a photo campaign project to show how COVID-19 is affecting the rights and health of adult women, young women and girls; the campaign was disseminated through social media, as well as travelling exhibitions.

### **CONTRIBUTION TO THE COVID-19 RESPONSE** **CAPACITY BUILDING**

The Joint Team supported the training of 120 rural and urban women living with HIV/AIDS on the prevention of COVID-19, emphasising the importance of using masks, proper hand washing and social distancing. Educational material and COVID-19 protection kits (including hand sanitizer and washable masks) were provided to support this training.

### **CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTEGRATED SDG AGENDA** **CAPACITY BUILDING; COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Twenty-six people living with HIV received vocational and bio-safety training, for the development of the income-generation and life skills/ hygiene activities implemented through the '*Aromas Ancestrales*' project, in partnership with the Corporación Paz Caribe in the Sucre Department. Participants were trained in producing liquid, industrial, dish and multipurpose soaps, as well as antibacterial gel and alcohol in the context of COVID-19. Cultural education was also provided about the ancestral art of producing citronella, rosemary, turmeric essential oils, and coconut oil.

Welfare rights of 120 urban and rural women living with HIV/AIDS were supported through the delivery of food and nutrition kits, covering guidance on healthy nutrition, food preparation and handling, the importance of a balanced diet, and identification of the various food groups. Food and nutrition kits were delivered to the 120 women beneficiaries of the project, accompanied by psychosocial support, either online, by tele-consultation and/or in person with home visits.

PERSISTING AND EMERGING CHALLENGES AND BOTTLENECKS	KEY FUTURE ACTIONS TO RESPOND TO CHALLENGES AND UNBLOCK BOTTLENECKS
<p>The COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions had a direct negative impact on the provision of services to people living with HIV and key or vulnerable populations, as well as important socio-economic adverse consequences.</p>	<p>Continue to support people living with HIV by strengthening their capacities for income-generating activities, access to healthy food, advocate for their rights and contribute to the elimination of stigma and discrimination.</p> <p>Improve access to comprehensive health care for all people living with by supporting the accommodation and transport of patients to and from health services.</p>
<p>Expansion of the PrEP programme is necessary to further prevent new HIV infections among key populations.</p>	<p>Produce the final report of the pilot programmatic implementation of PrEP in the city of Bogotá, and continue to support the maintenance, management and consolidation of the online PrEP platform.</p> <p>Develop a PrEP mobile app to accompany PrEP users, reinforce adherence to the drug and improve communication with users.</p>
<p>Limited progress has been recorded in addressing stigma, discrimination and other factors hindering the promotion of HIV education for key populations such as transgender persons, people living with HIV, and men who have sex with men.</p>	<p>Develop the manual of proposals to promote the reduction of stigma and discrimination and develop outreach activities that contribute to the elimination of stigma and discrimination towards the population using PrEP, self-testing and those living with HIV and populations left behind.</p>
<p>While trainings had to be done online due to the COVID-19 crisis, capacity of facilitators needs to be further built to improve the delivery of information on essential nutrition skills to women living with HIV.</p>	<p>Support virtual trainings, including through capacity building and the procurement of specific equipment, for continued promotion and information activities.</p>
<p>There is a need to build leadership skills of women, as well as in the use of technology as a tool for advocacy, in the areas of gender equality, and food and nutrition.</p>	<p>Promote spaces to strengthen women's capacities to participate in decisions related to the COVID-19 outbreak, and its impact on health conditions and actions to prevent gender violence through advocacy before the Departmental Secretariats of Health and Women and Gender Equity.</p>

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