

# GAMBIA

*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
For 2020, the overall treatment cascade reaches 90% for testing, 90% for treatment and 90% for viral suppression, balancing specific needs of men, women, and children.	<b>SLOW PROGRESS</b>	In 2020, 51% of people living with HIV knew their status, and 61% of them were on antiretroviral treatment (GAM 2021).
At least 90% of young people, key population, at higher risk groups, including men who have sex with men, commercial sex workers, people who inject drugs, as well as young women and adolescent girls and other vulnerable groups, have access to combination prevention services.	<b>ON TRACK</b>	No data available on combination prevention coverage. A total of 1 669 620 pieces of condoms were provided by the Joint Team in 2020. Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) programmes will be made available with the Global Fund 2021-2023 grant period.
Stigma and discrimination against key populations and people living with or affected with HIV is eliminated through promotion of laws and policies that ensure the full realization of all human rights.	<b>ON TRACK</b>	Advocacy was conducted to involve key populations and people living with HIV in vital governance processes such as constitutional development; Truth Reconciliation and Repatriations Commission embarked on conducting investigations on human rights violations, review of laws including the criminal law, and UN Common Country Assessments (CCA), and the development of the new UN country frameworks.
The national HIV response features specific actions, dedicated resources, and monitoring framework to address unequal gender norms as means to reduce new HIV infections among women and girls.	<b>ON TRACK</b>	The National Strategic Plan for HIV and AIDS 2021-2025 included specific programmes, funding, and monitoring framework to address gender inequality and reduce new HIV infections among women and girls. The Global Fund grant for 2020-2022 also approved necessary resources for programmes targeting women and girls to improve gender equality in the HIV response. The Gender Equality Seal Initiative was launched within the private sector to further enhance women participation and equality in private sector workplaces and reduce new HIV infections among women employees.

**JOINT TEAM**

UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, WHO, UNAIDS SECRETARIAT, FAO, IOM, OHCHR

**JOINT PROGRAMME CONTRIBUTIONS AND RESULTS IN 2020**

*In 2020, the Joint Team in Gambia focused its efforts in improving access to HIV testing, better treatment regimens, and nutrition support for people living with HIV. With technical assistance, the national treatment guideline was revised to ensure smooth transition to Dolutegravir-based regimen and a district hospital was equipped with GenXpert testing machine and commodities improving access and waiting time to HIV testing. Thousands of people living with HIV, including pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers received nutritional support and cash transfers for food ensuring better adherence to treatment and health outcome. Millions of condoms were procured and distributed contributing towards Gambia's efforts increase access, uptake, and consistent use of condoms. The Joint Team partnered with the Government in conducting a study to identify the human rights violations, stigma, and discrimination encountered by people and healthcare workers affected by COVID-19. The first Voluntary National Review was also completed to assess progress towards the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Gambia.*

**HIV TESTING, TREATMENT AND CARE****POLICY ADVICE; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; FOSTERING PARTNERSHIPS**

The Joint Team provided technical and financial support to improve HIV testing in Gambia. For example, a GenXpert testing machine and 100 000 pieces of one step HIV 1/2 serum/plasma test kits worth US\$100 000 were procured for Essau District Hospital to increase access to HIV testing in Western North Bank Region. This effort will also help reduce patient referrals to the region, which is challenging due frequent break down of the ferry, irregular schedule, and long wait times at the Banjul-Barra ferry crossing.

Following the Government's formal approval for transition to Dolutegravir, the Ministry of Health was supported in revising the national treatment guidelines on HIV and AIDS and healthcare provider training manual and alignment with the latest WHO recommendations. A transition roadmap was developed for implementation across the country. Procurement of the initial batch of Dolutegravir was completed and delivery commenced beginning of 2020. In addition, the first ever task-shifting policy for HIV/AIDS and malaria was developed to improve healthcare service coverage and to enable Gambia to achieve Universal Health Coverage.

In partnership with the National AIDS Control Program, 113 nurses and social workers were trained improving their knowledge on basic nutrition concepts, nutrition counselling, education and support for people living with HIV, infant and young child feeding techniques, social and behavioural change communication (SBCC), and anthropometric measurements.

In 2020, a total of 11 088 malnourished pregnant and lactating women living with HIV accessing PMTCT services were enrolled in the therapeutic supplementary feeding programme of whom 220 women living with HIV received specialized nutritious food supplied by the Joint Team.

SBCC sessions backed by the Joint Team reached 65 peer support workers improving their understanding and skills around preparation and consumption of nutritious meals using locally grown healthy produces. Furthermore, 380 households, including households of people living with HIV, received US\$ 32.12 (GDM 1500) assistance for two months to cover expenses for 450g of rice, 60g of bean, 30g of vegetable oil and 5g of salt per person per day during the lean season—through a cash transfer programme.

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

The Joint Team procured 1 665 820 pieces of male and 3800 pieces of female condoms to assist Gambia's efforts to increase uptake and consistent use of condoms. Condom use among people at higher risk of HIV infection in Gambia, particularly men who have sex with men is low (IBBS, 2018).

### **GENDER EQUALITY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND INCLUSION ADVOCACY; POLICY ADVICE; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

In 2020, the Joint Team heightened advocacy efforts on elimination of stigma and discrimination resulting in the adoption of the 'leaving no one behind' principle in the National Human Development Analytical Report for 2021. This would allow Gambia to report national advances on key human development, including equitable access to health care, elimination of gender inequality, and prevention of human right violations.

The Joint Team conducted focused group consultations with 20 people living with HIV and 10 representatives from the Gambia Association of People Living with Disabilities (GAPD) as part of the development of the 2021-2026 Global AIDS Strategy. Meanwhile, 20 female sex workers and men who have sex with men were engaged during the 2020 UN Common Country Assessment (CCA) focused group consultations identifying their concerns in areas of human rights, stigma, discrimination, and livelihood and capacity development needs, which were subsequently reflected in CCA as issues to be addressed in the next United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022-2026.

As a result of support provided to the Gambia Police Force Female Association, 250 participants across the nation were sensitized on sexual- and gender-based violence, HIV, and women empowerment.

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

The Joint Team conducted a study to examine the human rights violations, stigma, and discrimination experienced by healthcare workers and clients who acquired COVID-19 or affected by the pandemic. The study revealed that crucial rights, such as right to health, right to means of livelihood, freedom of movement, freedom from torture and ill-treatment, and the right to personal liberty were violated and stigmatisation and discrimination of persons who have acquired COVID-19, affected persons and health workers were reported. These findings led to the development of an action plan with short-, medium-, and long-term interventions aimed at addressing COVID-19 related, stigma, discrimination, and human rights violations for implementation by the Government and key stakeholders.

Between November and December 2020, the Joint Team provided financial support to 5189 beneficiaries in vulnerable households, including people living with HIV whose livelihoods were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic using a mobile money transfer system. A total of 8083 malnourished pregnant and lactating women living with HIV aged 18 years and above—identified through Reproductive Child Health clinics across the country—received nutrition supplements.

The Joint Team—through the national working group on Risk Communication and Community Engagement—supported the Ministry of Health to roll out 16 synchronised radio and television live programmes on COVID-19 prevention and services. The programmes were aired on 13 commercial and nine community radio stations, and the Gambia Radio and Television Service (GRTS) reaching a total of 2 519 867 people across the country.

## CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTEGRATED SDG AGENDA

In 2020, the Joint Team in partnership with the Government completed the first Voluntary National Review of Gambia's progress towards the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Voluntary National Review process allowed consultations with various stakeholders, including people living with HIV nationwide and the final report was presented at the high-level political forum in New York in July 2020.

The Joint Team continued to make significant contributions to the “leave no one behind” principle, gender equality, human rights, and HIV-related issues that are central to achieving the SDGs. In 2020, technical assistance was provided for the launch of the Gambia SDG Investor Map to better align investment opportunities with Gambia's development priorities and attain national and global targets.

Support was also provided to conduct the Common Country Assessment in preparation for the development of the UNSDCF 2022-2026 ensuring active participation of people living with HIV and people from key population groups in the development process and in the establishment of UNInfo in Gambia— an online tool for planning, monitoring, and reporting on national United Nations Development Action Frameworks and Business Operations Strategies.

PERSISTING AND EMERGING CHALLENGES AND BOTTLENECKS	KEY FUTURE ACTIONS TO RESPOND TO CHALLENGES AND UNBLOCK BOTTLENECKS
<p>Inadequate investment in HIV prevention programmes, lack of access to prevention services, especially among key population groups, and low uptake of condoms, particularly female condoms continue to impede progress in the national HIV response.</p>	<p>Provide technical and financial support for community- and facility-led outreach initiatives aimed at improving uptake and use of female condom.</p> <p>Support the Ministry of Health to ensure distribution of government procured male condoms through outlets other than health facilities to improve access and uptake.</p>
<p>Community health workers are overwhelmed with parallel community based PMTCT services. There is inadequate integration of community health programmes. The COVID-19 pandemic has also diverted scarce human resources away from the HIV response.</p>	<p>Further support the Government in replicating integration of PMTCT services in high prevalence regions, with strong engagement of community health workers.</p>
<p>Malnutrition among people living with HIV remains a challenge in Gambia. Lack of recent data on malnutrition and food security among this group prevents planning and implementation of effective programmes.</p> <p>Enrolling vulnerable people living with HIV to the United Nations-led lean season programme had been a challenge as beneficiaries were not forthcoming for assistance.</p>	<p>Support a survey on malnutrition prevalence among people living with HIV in Gambia.</p> <p>Provide financial support to roll out a two-month emergency COVID-19 cash transfer for vulnerable households, including people living with HIV or other chronic illnesses.</p> <p>Provide technical support to the Government to expand the Moderate Acute Malnutrition programme in PMTCT sites in provincial regions and peri urban centres using the funds secured from Japan to run the programme for one year. 624 pregnant and lactating mothers living with HIV who are enrolled on PMTCT have already been identified for support in 2021.</p> <p>Continue supporting social and behaviour change communication efforts to improve knowledge around nutrition and HIV among people living with HIV.</p>

---

Report available on the  
**UNAIDS Results and Transparency Portal**

[open.unaids.org](http://open.unaids.org)