

# GHANA

*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
By end 2021, the overall national treatment cascade has increased from 66% to 90% for HIV testing, from 60% to 90% for treatment, from 67% to 90% for viral load suppression, balancing specific needs of key populations (baseline 2019 data, National AIDS Control Programme).	<b>ON TRACK</b>	63–95–34 against the Fast-Track targets. There are an estimated 346 120 people living with HIV. (Spectrum 2021)
By the end of 2021, at least 90% of key populations, adolescent girls and young women and their partners have access to combination prevention services.	<b>ON TRACK</b>	No data available at national level. There has been significant progress in linking key populations to combination prevention services, mainly through the work of the CSO WAPCAS (West Africa Program to Combat AIDS and STI) and thanks to Global Fund funding. In eight WAPCAS districts, 88% of female sex workers and 94% of gay men and other men who have sex with men were tested and linked to combination prevention services.
Reduce stigma and discrimination against key populations, people living with and affected by HIV through promotion of laws and policies that affect access to healthcare for these and other vulnerable populations.	<b>SLOW PROGRESS</b>	The five-year Human Rights Strategy was launched in partnership with Global Fund, WAPCAS and Ghana AIDS Commission, to address human rights-related barriers to HIV/TB services.

### JOINT TEAM

UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, WHO, UNAIDS SECRETARIAT

## JOINT PROGRAMME CONTRIBUTIONS AND RESULTS IN 2020

*Strong advances were made in promoting testing and increasing adherence to ART, through the scale up of differentiated service delivery and the integration of people living with HIV in social protection systems. There has been significant progress in linking members of key populations to combination prevention services, through strong CSO partnerships. A national strategy for reducing stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV was supported through training and awareness-raising with civil society and law enforcement agencies. Dialogue with national stakeholders and community leaders on human rights and HIV prevention will continue to be a focus for activities in 2021.*

### HIV TESTING AND TREATMENT

#### UPSTREAM ADVOCACY; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; PARTNERSHIP

Through successful advocacy, US\$ 1.1 million from the Global Fund was used to procure HIV test kits to support the continuity of ARVs and essential HIV services, and strengthen the supply chain for HIV commodities. Technical support was provided to the Country Coordinating Mechanism, which led to a successful US\$ 226 million Global Fund funding application, to be implemented in 2021–2023. Key components of the application include high-impact differentiated service delivery models, family-based testing, the introduction of HIV self-testing, and the roll-out of 3–6-month MMD.

Support was provided to develop an implementation plan for point of care testing to address early infant diagnosis and viral load testing for infants, which was successfully scaled up in five districts, including training for 30 laboratory personnel. The implementation of the eMTCT 2016–2020 acceleration plan was monitored and bottlenecks were identified.

Differentiated service delivery models were scaled up in the high-burden region of Volta for 25 health facilities and 75 health workers. A three-day quality improvement training on differentiated service delivery interventions to 20 frontline health workers in 15 facilities was delivered to extend family HIV testing in Volta: 18 477 people were offered testing, of whom 11 475 were children; 7,244 children were tested, with 1,014 HIV-positive results, and 832 children were linked to care.

Three thousand households of people living with HIV received livelihood support in the form of capacity building and seed capital to promote food security, nutrition and continuity of treatment, through a pilot in the eastern region of Ghana. In addition, 47 members of the Youth Health Advocates Group of young people living with HIV attended a training on nutrition for adherence, mental well-being and ART side-effects.

### PREVENTION FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN AND KEY POPULATIONS

#### POLICY ADVICE; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

PrEP and HIV self-testing guidelines were finalized by the national technical working group. PrEP was implemented and rolled out as part of a pilot study in three regions, which provided access for 1,052 people from key populations.

One-on-one sexual and reproductive health sessions were held with 86 adolescent girls, boys and adolescent teen mothers; 934 women, girls and young people were reached with sexual and reproductive health education at Ningo Prampram. Additionally, a CSO was supported to train 200 youth advocates to lead peer education programmes on HIV prevention and sexual and reproductive health in eight districts, reaching approximately 70 000 adolescent girls and boys. A "Condomize" campaign, during which 2 000 condoms were distributed, ran during the Third African Youth SDG Summit 2020, and 23 young people were supported to participate in the 23rd International AIDS Conference, receiving information on sexual and reproductive health, HIV prevention and the reduction of stigma and discrimination.

Some 220 teachers were trained to lead HIV prevention interventions in secondary schools in all regions, and an HIV online outreach was implemented for 177 tertiary students, focusing on HIV prevention, testing and treatment and safe sexual practices. Three HIV indicators were implemented as part of the Education Management Information Systems, which enabled data on HIV indicators to be collected as part of school-based surveys among teachers and students for the first time. The HIV Alert module (a programme aimed at teaching secondary students about HIV prevention and sexual and reproductive health) was updated to revise school-based HIV prevention materials with the most innovative interventions.

### **STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION POLICY DIALOGUE; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; PARTNERSHIPS**

Nineteen media personnel (11 female) and 19 regional directors (six female) from the Commission on Human Rights Administration for Justice from Western, Volta and Greater Accra were sensitized on key antistigma provisions in the strategy, and discrimination against people living with HIV, using an online training manual.

Capacity strengthening through technical and financial support was also provided for 38 CSOs and two law enforcement agencies to enhance their understanding of both the strategic plan and their roles in supporting its effective implementation and monitoring.

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

Technical guidance and support to the CCM delivered a successful Global Fund COVID-19 Response Mechanism Fund application of US\$ 13 million. CSO engagement, essential HIV commodities and high-priority HIV activities were included in the grant application.

Through advocacy with the Ministry of Health, Ghana Health Service, Global Fund and partners, the Joint Team ensured that ARVs and essential HIV services were available throughout COVID-19-related restrictions, and the MMD policy was enforced. Informing interventions, a survey was conducted on the needs of people living with HIV in the context of COVID-19, which showed that 79% of people living with HIV successfully refilled their ARVs, although 13% received a different ARV from the one they usually receive and 15% indicated that their pick-up centre was out of stock.

Five hundred hygiene kits and 500 food packs were distributed to marginalized young people living with HIV in three regions during lockdown, and new mothers living with HIV were linked to treatment throughout breastfeeding in the context of COVID-19 through the Community Mentor Mothers initiative, an intervention in the central region.

Multiple communication campaigns delivering critical prevention and health messages were rolled out. Partnering with the Ghana AIDS Commission, national telecommunication agencies and CSOs, a social media communication campaign on COVID-19 and HIV and STI prevention ran throughout 2020. The most high-impact post on HIV and COVID-19 prevention reached more than 71 000 people.

### **CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTEGRATED SDG AGENDA**

The Joint Team contributed to the UN Social Economic Recovery and Relief Plan to ensure that people living with HIV and vulnerable populations would not be left behind. The contribution was specific to social protection policies and the right to HIV testing and treatment as part of the essential medicines regime during COVID-19, including through ensuring availability of MMD.

Under the technical supervision of the Ghana Statistical Service and the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, the Joint Team conducted a Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment to identify people who are food insecure, where they are located, what contributes to their food insecurity and how their situations can be improved. Follow-up initiatives will contribute to achievement of SDG 2, including a seed programme in the eastern region to address food security needs of people living with HIV.

PERSISTING AND EMERGING CHALLENGES AND BOTTLENECKS	KEY FUTURE ACTIONS TO RESPOND TO CHALLENGES AND UNBLOCK BOTTLENECKS
<p>COVID-19 restrictions caused delays in activities, including implementation of differentiated service delivery, which requires close monitoring.</p>	<p>Support implementation of Global Fund investments on reaching the 95–95–95 targets by helping the Country Coordinating Mechanism monitor progress.</p> <p>Provide technical support to ensure people living with HIV, young people and key populations are engaged in community-led implementation and monitoring of the national response.</p> <p>To reach the third 95 target on viral load suppression, support retention in treatment and enhance the HIV testing chain (e.g. strengthen sample management).</p>
<p>Low stocks and reported intermittent stock-outs of ARVs caused concern and limited the availability of commodities for six-month MMD.</p>	<p>Advocate for stronger supply chains to resolve stock-outs of ARVs and PrEP.</p>
<p>Use of strategic information and data-driven planning and policy decision-making are not optimal. Focus is needed to improve data use, reporting, dissemination and overall data quality assurance.</p>	<p>Support data quality assurance through routine joint monitoring, reporting and dissemination by the Government and key implementing and development partners.</p>
<p>Stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV and key populations continue to be challenges, which are aggravated by punitive laws and social intolerance.</p>	<p>Support the implementation of the five-year plan and scale up innovative human rights and HIV prevention policies.</p> <p>Facilitate dialogue on these issues with Government, civil society, human rights groups, and members of key populations.</p>

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