

GUINEA BISSAU

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
Improving access to quality prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV (PMTCT), paediatric, and adolescent HIV services in Guinea-Bissau.	ON TRACK	The number of ART sites offering paediatric treatment services increased from 45 in 2019 to 70 in 2020, rising the number of children enrolled in ART from 6% in 2018 to 21.4% in 2020 (DHIS2, INASA 2020).
Strengthen capacity of HIV-related community outreach initiatives according to national task-shifting policy to ensure better retention of people living with HIV in services.	ON TRACK	Community outreach intensified in 2020 with support from the Joint Team and in collaboration with the National Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (RENAP+): 41 community outreach workers in six regions received a refresher training on peer education, HIV counselling and psychological support; 220 people living with HIV were reached with peer counselling activities; and a total of 4579 pregnant women in antenatal care were reached by community outreach activities for the prevention of COVID-19.
Develop national nutritional policy to support retention of people living with HIV in antiretroviral treatment (ART), based on documented local experience.	ON TRACK	Promoting community-based outreach initiatives as well as collaboration between the Joint Team, the Ministry of Health, community networks and civil society organizations enabled health and outreach workers to further build their capacity to identify and manage acute malnutrition among people living with HIV. These efforts greatly contributed to improving the retention of people living with HIV to treatment and improve their health outcomes.
Integrate HIV and family planning services into mainstream health care system in Guinea-Bissau. Develop and evaluate service package model to scale-up access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH), family planning and HIV services for adolescents and young people.	ON TRACK	The standard operation procedure for integrating HIV and maternal and child health services was finalized and implementation of pilot programmes in Bafata, Gabu, Oio, and Quinara regions is underway.

<p>Generate evidence for programme planning, monitoring and evaluation.</p>	<p>SLOW PROGRESS</p>	<p>Several projects are being prepared by the Joint Team to support the national HIV response in the area of evidence-generation, data management and resource mobilization. For instance, the roll out of a Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices study on sexual and reproductive health is planned for 2021.</p>
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JOINT TEAM

UNICEF, WFP, UNFPA, WHO, UNAIDS SECRETARIAT

JOINT PROGRAMME CONTRIBUTIONS AND RESULTS IN 2020

Through capacity building initiatives, the Joint Team focused its efforts on intensifying community outreach initiatives to expand access to HIV testing and prevention services, while ensuring retention of people living with HIV under treatment during the COVID-19 pandemic. Improved capacity of health and outreach workers strengthened paediatric HIV services, increased access to HIV testing and linkage to treatment, and improved the health outcomes of people living with HIV by addressing their nutritional needs. Adolescents and youth health was another area of focus of the Joint Team in 2020, with the further integration of HIV, SRH and family planning services to reduce their risk of HIV infection and prevent unwanted pregnancies in Guinea-Bissau.

PMTCT COVERAGE

POLICY DIALOGUE; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; CAPACITY BUILDING

The Joint Team continued to support the Government to improve the quality of PMTCT and paediatric HIV services in Guinea-Bissau. Introduction and scaling up of point-of-care (PoC) testing increased early infant diagnosis for HIV-exposed infants aged 0-2 months and ART coverage among children aged 0-14 years. Seventy-four health workers were trained in paediatric HIV service delivery and 43 laboratory technicians improved their capacity on polymerase chain reaction (PCR) for early infant diagnosis among HIV-exposed infants.

TESTING, TREATMENT, AND RETENTION IN SERVICES

TECHNICAL SUPPORT; CAPACITY BUILDING; PARTNERSHIPS

In 2020, the Joint Team procured 26 000 HIV testing kits, Dried Blood Spot testing kits, EID test supplies, and reagents for HIV PCR tests to complement the on-going effort of the Government and the Global Fund to meet the national demand and support HIV testing and treatment programmes in Guinea-Bissau. The Joint Team also supported printing and distribution of 500 copies of the National HIV Clinical Management Protocol in pocket-book format to 146 HIV service sites improving the quality of consultations and clinical management of people living with HIV.

Based on the national task-shifting policy, capacity building support was provided to community-based HIV outreach initiatives increasing access to and retention in services. As a result, 411 people (144 males and 267 females) received HIV testing and counselling (HTC) services, of whom 47 (40 females and 7 males) people tested positive for HIV and were linked to treatment and care services. Another 1000 people, that included pregnant women, vulnerable and key populations accessed HTC services in 146 HIV care facilities in Guinea-Bissau.

A total of 41 community outreach workers received refresher training to improve their skills on peer education, HIV counselling, and psychological support towards increasing retention of people living with HIV in treatment services. Mobile phone credits and internet bundles were also procured and distributed among healthcare workers to facilitate contact with people living with HIV in case of non-appearance to the scheduled appointment. This initiative considerably ensured continuity of ART, care, and support services and improved adherence to treatment among people living with HIV.

Partnership with the National Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (RENAP+) resulted in the implementation of community-based peer counselling activities, including support for people living with HIV to adhere in treatment and increased uptake of testing services among HIV-exposed children, and promotion of COVID-19 prevention measures. More than 200 people living with HIV were reached with peer counselling activities in 2020. Around 4579 pregnant women enrolled in antenatal care improved their knowledge on COVID-19 prevention through community outreach programmes.

As a result of the Joint Team's collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the NGO ALTERNAG to improve the nutritional diet and health outcomes of people living with HIV, 81 members of RENAP+ received training to enhance their knowledge around preparation of wholesome meals using locally produced nutritious food in their respective communities. In addition, 47 health technicians from nutritional recovery centres and ARV treatment centres received training to improve their knowledge on the integrated acute malnutrition management protocol to facilitate case referral and support integration of HIV services in nutritional recovery centres in Oio, Bafata and Gabu regions.

INTEGRATED HIV, SRH, AND FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES TECHNICAL SUPPORT; OUTREACH; COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As a result of the technical support provided to two nongovernmental organizations, the Ajuda de Desenvolvimento de Povo para Povo Na Guiné-Bissau (ADPP) and Plan International, a total of 20 awareness sessions reached 3148 adolescents and young people (1651 females and 1497 males) aged 18-24 years and improved their knowledge of SRH and uptake of integrated HIV and family planning services in five priority regions—Bafatá, Gabu, Quinara, SAB and Tombali – as defined by the 2019-2023 National HIV Plan in Guinea-Bissau (PEN III), due to their high HIV prevalence among pregnant women. The Joint Team also assisted other HIV and SRH outreach initiatives including 60 community gatherings and 25 sensitization activities, allowing information-sharing among peers or between generations. A total of 140 leaflets were distributed and 60 posters were placed during a peer educators-led awareness campaign in the nine regions of the country.

The Joint Team also supported the implementation of 20 sensitization campaigns on HIV, STIs, and COVID-19 prevention and elimination of female genital mutilation (FGM) in the five priority PEN III regions reaching 1005 people aged 15-50 years. Capacity building was provided for 26 peer educators aged 17-27 years to improve their knowledge around HIV, STIs, and FGM and strengthen their skills on community outreach, education, and service delivery. Eighteen journalists were also trained to produce weekly information, education, and communication messages on SRH and broadcast on various community radio stations in the country.

Finally, as a result of technical support provided to the National HIV Programme (NACP), 1 873 122 condoms were procured and distributed to health facilities across the country as a triple prevention of HIV, sexually transmitted disease (STIs), and unintended pregnancy.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE COVID-19 RESPONSE

The Joint Team provided technical support to the Ministry of Health and NACP to identify and address the needs of people living with HIV in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Medical supplies and personal protective equipment were procured and distributed to 11 health regions, including 15 000 pieces of gloves, 10 500 facial masks and four tents to be used at temporary treatment centres. A total of 450 dignity kits were also distributed to pregnant women in six regions with low numbers of assisted deliveries, and 150 stickers and 50 posters were supplied ensure safety and raise awareness on COVID-19 prevention and correct use of masks among pregnant women.

In addition, technical support was provided to the national programme for the fight against STI, HIV and Viral Hepatitis in the development of a national strategy to ensure a community-based multimonth dispensing (MMD) of ARVs to people living with HIV. A total of 1056 people living with HIV (718 females, 338 males) participated in an online survey launched in July 2020 to analyse the impact of COVID-19 on people living with HIV. With support from the Joint Team and in collaboration with RENAP+ through the digitizers of the Bandim Health Project, the survey revealed that only 29% of respondents renewed or tried to renew their ARV treatment since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis in the country, and main issues encountered include transportation difficulties, fear of the COVID-19 infection and stock-outs at the ARV distribution centre.

Support was provided to the Association of Young Farmers of Guinea-Bissau to raise awareness and promote COVID-19 prevention measures through 12 community radio in eight regions including the autonomous sector of Bissau. Another sensitization campaign reached 4987 people (3160 males and 1827 females) in 27 neighbourhoods of Bissau city improving their understanding on COVID-19 prevention and care.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTEGRATED SDG AGENDA

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Joint Team continued its instrumental role to uphold sexual and reproductive health and rights for all in the country, including through the promotion of integrated services at all levels. For instance, the 'Ceú e Terras' health centre conducted 431 consultations on application and removal of contraceptive methods with support from the Joint Team, and 291 young girls received application or removal of intrauterine devices following their consultations. Further work on family planning and HIV has been reprogrammed by the Joint Team for 2021, including research initiatives on the specific needs of adolescents and youth.

PERSISTING AND EMERGING CHALLENGES AND BOTTLENECKS	KEY FUTURE ACTIONS TO RESPOND TO CHALLENGES AND UNBLOCK BOTTLENECKS
<p>The COVID-19 pandemic presented critical challenges in the implementation of HIV programmes in Guinea-Bissau. Lockdown measures, and delays in procurement and delivery of medical supplies resulted in significant delays in the implementation of planned programmes. Also, ARV drug stock outs in major HIV treatment sites affected people living with HIV enrolled on ART services.</p>	<p>Support innovative ways of service delivery and programme implementation to ensure continuity of HIV prevention, care, treatment, and support services. This includes, for example, ensuring the continuity of condom supply, distribution and promotion to prevent HIV, STIs and unintended pregnancies among young people and key populations, who already face increased vulnerability during the COVID-19 crisis.</p> <p>Provide technical support to NACP to strengthen coordination, quality of data collection and management, communication, and information sharing to improve planning, implementation, and monitoring of HIV programmes.</p>
<p>Early infant diagnosis of HIV-exposed children aged 0-2 months is low, as testing is conducted only at the National Public Health Laboratory in Bissau, causing delays in processing and reporting of results.</p>	<p>Continue supporting NACP to develop action to improve coverage of early infant diagnosis and viral load testing services.</p>
<p>Adolescents and young people still constitute a major object of the HIV response in Guinea-Bissau, with a need to increase condom use as a dual protection method (prevention of HIV and STIs, as well as unwanted pregnancies) and to increase access to family planning services to reduce the high adolescent fertility rate. Work is also needed to prevent early and forced marriage in adolescents and youth, and further integrate comprehensive sexuality education in schools' curricula.</p>	<p>Continue to provide technical support for the integration of SRH services targeting adolescent and young people in the public health system.</p> <p>Support the scale up of integrated HIV, family planning, and reproductive, maternal, new-born, child, and adolescent health services in Guinea-Bissau, including through the engagement of community workers and leaders.</p>

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