

HAITI

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 2021, an estimated 90% of pregnant women living with HIV and their babies receive antiretroviral treatment (ART); retention of people living with HIV on ART increases from 80% to 90%, and viral load suppression rises from 77% to 90%.	WITHIN REACH	By 2020, an estimated 86% of pregnant women living with HIV received ART to prevent mother-to-child transmission, and 45% of their babies were on ART (PNLS, Epidemiologic Bulletin, December 2020). 80% of people living with HIV know their status, and more than 98% of them are on ART (GAM 2021). 85% of people living with HIV on treatment had a viral load test, of whom 85% had viral load suppression (PNLS, Epidemiologic Bulletin, December 2020).
By 2021, around 90% of key populations eligible for treatment receive pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), 90% of adolescents and young people have access to comprehensive HIV and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) knowledge and adopt HIV prevention.	SLOW PROGRESS	By January 2021, about 33 health facilities were providing PrEP services to a total of 4807 key populations at high risk of HIV infection within the framework of an integrated prevention approach in targeted areas. Between March 2019 and August 2020, a total of 3320 people evaluated to be at risk of HIV infection received PrEP (PNLS, Epidemiologic Bulletin, December 2020).
At least 40% of adults aged 15-49 years, including health service providers reject stigma and discrimination behaviours towards people living with HIV and key populations; at least 40% of sexual and gender-based violence survivors have access to comprehensive services.	ON TRACK	A decrease in stigma and discrimination cases against people living with HIV and key populations is observed. 35.8% of the people living with HIV, who participated in a recent study stated to have been stigmatized at least once (Stigma Index study conducted and report, FEDHAP, MSPP, Dec 2021).

JOINT TEAM

UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UN WOMEN, ILO, UNESCO, WHO-PAHO, UNAIDS SECRETARIAT

JOINT PROGRAMME CONTRIBUTIONS AND RESULTS IN 2020

In Haiti, the Joint UN Team on AIDS abetted the country's remarkable progress toward elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and assessments were conducted to identify and address gaps in access to prevention of vertical transmission of HIV services needed to attain this target. Work to increase knowledge around HIV, sexually transmitted infections, and breastfeeding, and boost uptake of HIV testing and syphilis screening were some of the key elements of the Joint Team's support in 2020. Technical support was provided to the Government for the implementation of a monitoring system for resistance to antiretroviral medicines to improve the health outcome for people living with HIV. Thousands of workers in the formal and informal sector and adolescents and young people were trained on HIV prevention, sexual and reproductive health, gender-based violence, and stigma to promote healthy lifestyle and reduce discrimination and human rights violations. The Joint Team also made valuable contribution to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 pandemic in Haiti, including the procurement of personal protective equipment and hygiene kits, sensitizing workers in the textile sector, communities and at-risk groups on prevention methods, and training women to produce masks as income generating measures to support their families during the pandemic.

HIV TESTING AND TREATMENT

TECHNICAL SUPPORT; STRATEGIC INFORMATION; FOSTERING PARTNERSHIPS

In 2020, Haiti initiated routine surveillance of HIV resistance to ARVs to improve patient care and the health outcomes for people living with HIV. The National Strategic Plan 2020-2025 was developed to guide the surveillance programme; a training manual on early warning indicators of ARV resistance was produced; and healthcare providers were trained on analysing early warning indicators. A software application was also implemented to enable recording and periodic extraction of key early warning indicators of HIV resistance to ARVs through three electronic medical record systems (EMRs), a web-based platform (MESI), and the national HIV reporting electronic platform.

Additionally, two surveys on HIV resistance to ARVs—one among adults and adolescents, and another among children aged less than 18 months—were conducted by the National HIV Programme (PNLS) and the national laboratory to establish the baseline data for the surveillance programme. As part of the HIV resistance survey, genotyping tests were performed on the specimen collected by the national laboratory at the Regional Molecular Biology Laboratory of Martinique. However, the results are not yet available to finalize the survey reports due to lockdown measures and shift in laboratory priorities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Three training seminars on management of HIV resistance of ARVs increased understanding of 33 healthcare providers about early warning indicators and related guidelines in North, Artibonite, and Nippes departments. Five supervision missions were also completed to improve quality of care for people living with HIV to follow up on the trainings and to ensure the quality of care at site level.

The Joint Team and other technical partners provided technical and financial support for the creation of the CSO Observatory of HIV Services—an independent observatory made of civil society organizations—to improve the monitoring of the quality of HIV services provided nationally.

PMTCT COVERAGE

POLICY DIALOGUE; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; PARTNERSHIPS

As a result of technical support provided to the Ministry of Health, a rapid assessment was conducted to identify gaps in prevention-of-mother to child transmission of HIV (PMTCT) services nationally due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A follow-up survey underscored the lack of adequate service delivery and access to care and treatment. It also proposed several recommendations, including creating a network of maternity hospitals to encourage facility-based child delivery to ensure safety of all pregnant women during the COVID-19 pandemic, and minimize the risk of vertical transmission of HIV. As a result, a network of 25 government

health facilities that offers integrated maternal, neonatal, and child health care services was established in four priority departments of the Great South (Sud, Sud-Est, Grande-Anse, and Nippes) to scale up PMTCT services. Personal protective equipment was procured and donated to healthcare workers in these facilities. Additionally, trainings on HIV counselling and testing, and PMTCT service delivery were held to build the capacity of nurses and dispensary assistants in health centres that do not offer PMTCT of HIV and syphilis services to increase the availability of these services in unserved or underserved areas: between November and December 2020, a total of 52 healthcare workers in two departments (Nippes and South) were trained to increase their capability on PMTCT service delivery. Additionally, 305 pregnant women in Profamil clinics received information and guidance to improve their awareness around breastfeeding, and HIV and STI prevention measures, and a further 270 pregnant women accessed prenatal care services, including routine tests and ultrasound scans.

HIV PREVENTION AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE, WOMEN AND KEY POPULATIONS POLICY ADVICE; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Joint Team, in collaboration with local partners, engaged adolescent and young people, women, and people living with HIV around SRH, gender-based violence, and HIV. For instance, nearly 3000 women traders working in the informal sector were trained on prevention of HIV, discrimination, and gender-based violence. More than 3000 adolescents and young people (1577 boys and 1432 girls) participated in peer-led sessions promoting responsible sexual behaviour, HIV and COVID-19 prevention, regular and constant use of condoms, risks around early and unprotected sexual debut, and gender empowerment. Another 1450 young people attended similar peer-led sessions in high-risk neighbourhoods in the Ouest department and almost 10% of them took voluntary HIV counselling and testing.

In July 2020, an estimated 350 sex workers, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people were sensitized around HIV and STI prevention, benefits of PrEP, and adherence to ART. Meanwhile, a PrEP management manual was developed and distributed, and over 20 healthcare sites were activated to ensure continuity of PrEP services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A SRH awareness programme which incorporates HIV prevention aspects for women prisoners was established in the Cabaret prison through a partnership between the Joint Team, the Directorate for the Penitentiary Administration, and the civil society organization PESADEV (*Perspectives pour la Santé et le Développement*). The programme includes information, education, and communication on prevention of sexual violence; HIV testing and counselling services; ART, PMTCT care and support; STI prevention and treatment, and protection of personnel against risks.

The Joint Team in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, workers' associations, and employers' organizations launched a joint pilot project to improve access to SRH services among pregnant women working in the informal sector and textile industry in Haiti. The project offered HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) screening and linkage to treatment services for mothers and their babies, and healthcare practitioner assisted childbirth services to reduce maternal mortality and vertical transmission of HIV. A total of 305 low-income pregnant women working in *Société Nationale des Parcs Industriels* (SONAPI) industrial park received HIV testing and counselling.

Meanwhile, 19 331 male and female textile workers in SONAPI were trained around HIV, STI and COVID-19 prevention reducing their vulnerability to infections. In addition, as a result of the HIV prevention programme put into place at CARACOL—an industrial park in North-East Department, 1988 workers were sensitized increasing their HIV knowledge; 337 of these workers decided to undergo voluntary HIV testing; and all the workers who tested positive for HIV were referred to treatment and care services.

The Joint Team supported various community outreach activities, on HIV prevention and work-related risks, stigma, and discrimination targeting women working in informal economy. In this regard, 4052 women working in this sector improved their understanding and capacity around these issues via training sessions, short videos, and face-to-face talks with informal sector merchants. 36 800 condoms were distributed to informal workers in three markets located in disadvantaged areas of the West Department.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE COVID-19 RESPONSE

The Joint Team provided technical and financial support to Government authorities in all the ten departments for the development of decentralized COVID-19 responses. A group of experts from the Ministry of Health, the national HIV programme, and the Joint Team were deployed in the departments' health directorates to ensure strong COVID-19 preparedness and response. Family health professionals were also supported to conduct surveillance of new cases and contact tracing to limit community spread and control the epidemic. Additionally, 48 healthcare workers (70% women) working in CARACOL, SONAPI and CODEVI industrial parks received training to increase their capacity around work-related risks of COVID-19 infection and prevention to infection. Healthcare workers across Haiti received personal protective equipment to ensure safety and continuity of services. The Joint Team also procured 9000 masks and 20 hygiene kits distributed among people living with HIV. Emergency food distribution staff were trained on COVID-19 protocols and sites were supported to increase hygiene and safety measures in minimizing disruption of services and community spread.

A public awareness video on prevention of COVID-19 and promotion of safe and healthy choices targeting people living with HIV was produced and disseminated on prime-time television and social media outlets. The video featured Mrs. Maria Malia Jean, Representative of the Haitian Federation of the Associations of people living with HIV (AFHIAVIH) and a prominent community leader living with HIV, to attract a wider audience. The Blue Hotline—an HIV prevention telephone service in Haiti led by the civil society organization *Promoteurs Objectif Zéro SIDA* (POZ)—was also used to provide information and support on COVID-19 safety measures.

The Joint Team and other partners such as the US Center for Disease Control (CDC) and PEPFAR provided support to the Ministry of Health (MSPP) for the implementation of the differentiated service delivery models, including multi-month dispensation (MMD) of ART and community drug distribution to ensure continuity of treatment. At the end of 2020, 90% of people living with HIV received their ART via MMD (Source MSPP 2021 via Haiti MESI, iSanté EMR system).

CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTEGRATED SDG AGENDA

In 2020, the Joint Team's work contributed to the implementation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF 2017-2021), and the Integrated Strategic Framework 2020-2021. In addition, the Joint Team actively contributed to the 2020 Common Country Assessment in preparation of the development of the new 2022-2025 UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF).

In collaboration with networks of people living with HIV and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, 20 women living with HIV were trained in business creation and management of microenterprises.

Similarly, in collaboration with *Refuge des Femmes D'Haiti* and Food for the Poor, the Joint Team conducted trainings on entrepreneurship, marketing principles, and sewing for 15 women living with HIV to help them start making masks to generate incomes—each woman made 200 masks. The participating women also received food support, hygiene kits and information on COVID-19 prevention.

PERSISTING AND EMERGING CHALLENGES AND BOTTLENECKS	KEY FUTURE ACTIONS TO RESPOND TO CHALLENGES AND UNBLOCK BOTTLENECKS
<p>The COVID-19 pandemic coupled with political instability and increasing insecurity, presented multiple challenges in the HIV response. Social restrictions, lockdown measures, poor communication systems, and demonstration-related roadblocks and gang violence, beyond the general insecurity and humanitarian context, disrupted health services in general and HIV services and programmatic activities in particular. Lack of personal protective equipment and limited funding for HIV added to the challenges of service delivery.</p>	<p>Provide political, technical, and financial support to empower civil society and communities to continue monitoring the implementation of the national HIV response and increase access to community-led HIV services and support.</p> <p>Continue to support scaling-up of health facility networking to increase HIV and PMTCT service coverage, as well as paediatric ARV roll-out and retention.</p> <p>Continue supporting the implementation of the MMD, which is considered as one success story in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in Haiti, as well as during other emergencies.</p>
<p>In Haiti, young people aged 15-24 years (contributing to 30% of all new infections) and adults aged 25-29 years (25% of all new infections) are at higher risk of new HIV infections. Children aged 0-14 years account for 9% of new infections. Therefore, adolescents and young people remain a priority group in the national HIV response.</p>	<p>Assist with the development of high-impact strategies for adolescent and young people, who are at higher-risk of HIV infections.</p> <p>Provide technical and financial support to the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education to increase awareness and knowledge around HIV and STI prevention, and SRH among learners in schools.</p> <p>Support the institutional and community level implementation of the family planning strategy for women living with HIV.</p>

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