

HONDURAS

Report prepared by the Joint UN Team on AIDS

JOINT TEAM

UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO-PAHO, UNAIDS SECRETARIAT

JOINT PROGRAMME CONTRIBUTIONS AND RESULTS IN 2020-2021

In 2021, the Joint Team supported the Government of Honduras to transition people living with HIV to improved treatment regimens. The implementation of telehealth and procurement of biomedical equipment for Integral Care Centres (CAIs) contributed to strengthening the quality of HIV and other essential health services and reducing the cost of referrals to specialized facilities. Following an assessment of civil society-led HIV services, technical support was provided to develop and implement an online data collection and reporting tool aimed at strengthening monitoring of services. Healthcare providers were trained on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), stigma and discrimination to ensure access to right-based and quality HIV programmes. A national communication strategy has also been rolled out to mobilize communities and end HIV-related stigma and discrimination.

HIV TESTING AND TREATMENT

During the COVID-19 pandemic, technical assistance was provided to the Ministry of Health for the implementation of telemedicine and telehealth to ensure continuity of HIV services among vulnerable populations, including people living with HIV in three Integral Care Centres (CAIs) located in regions with high HIV prevalence and COVID-19 cases.

The Ministry of Health was also supported to scale up transition to Dolutegravir-based (DTG) regimen and treatment optimization among people living with HIV in line with the latest World Health Organization's guidelines. A total of 2402 people living with HIV were transitioned to the recommended treatment regimens by the end of June 2021, including in the three above-mentioned CAIs. The Joint Team also facilitated procurement of biomedical equipment, such as electrocardiograph and endoscope for each prioritized CAI and training of service providers on the correct use of these equipment strengthening access to comprehensive clinical assessment and services at CAI level and reducing the cost of referrals to specialized facilities.

The Joint Team provided technical support to scale up community-led HIV programmes through civil society organizations (CSOs) in areas with high HIV prevalence. This included identification of CSO-led services, especially among key populations and information systems used by CSOs providing HIV services. The assessment identified 10 active CSOs providing consultation and support to trace people living with HIV who are lost to follow up, promote HIV testing among populations who are at higher risk of acquiring HIV, and provide linkage services to CAIs; and search and monitor stigma and discrimination cases.

The process also revealed that the information the CSOs collect does not reach the Ministry of Health or at least takes up to three months to reach the ministry. In response, the Joint Team supported the development and implementation of a web-based platform aimed at ensuring standardized and timely data collection and submission to the Ministry of Health. The platform will strengthen government-led programme monitoring, especially to improve better quality and timelier linkages and referral services. An alliance of four CSOs offering HIV prevention and care services to key populations and people living with HIV was also established to support piloting of the web-based platform.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS, AND HIV-RELATED STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION

In partnership with the Ministry of Health, 304 healthcare professionals from four priority regions— Atlántida, Cortés, Francisco Morazán, and Olancho—were trained through three virtual training sessions improving their understanding of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and HIV-related stigma and discrimination.

The Government of Honduras in collaboration with Fundación Llaves, a nongovernmental organization, and the Joint Team, developed and implemented a national communication strategy to raise awareness, educate, and mobilize communities to end HIV-related stigma and discrimination in the country. Backed by hip hop artists and young influencers, the initiative reached over one million people through social media and digital platforms, and 24 national radio and television stations. Target populations included parents, adolescents, and young people from across the country.

Finally, the Joint Team supported roll out of a refresher training for health care workers to update them with the latest developments in SRH services SRH and reduce stigma and discrimination towards people from key populations and people living with HIV in health facilities.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTEGRATED SDG AGENDA

In 2020-2021, the Joint Team's effort in Honduras contributed to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially those related to health and well-being, reduction of inequalities, and gender equality (SDGs 3, 5 and 10 respectively).

Contributions towards SDG 3 and 5 included the implementation of telehealth/telemedicine in prioritized CAIs to guarantee continuity of HIV prevention and care services for people who live with or are affected by HIV and key populations in collaboration with CSOs. Healthcare professionals in 20 health regions were trained, strengthening their capacities on SRHR, HIV, stigma, and discrimination. Community sensitization and mass education initiatives were implemented to reduce inequality, stigma, and discrimination—in line with SDGs 5 and 10. Finally, the Joint Team formed alliances with communities, civil society, and nongovernmental organizations to coordinate efforts and improve programme implementation, contributing to SDG 17.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The reduced capacity of national health institutions, heightened by the reassignment of staff to oversee the COVID-19 response, negatively impacts effective monitoring, implementation of mitigating actions, and follow-up of HIV programme activities in Honduras.

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