

MEXICO

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
Technical assistance is provided to States to design new strategies to revamp HIV testing and counselling (HTC) services in Mexico.	SLOW PROGRESS	Analysis of existing HTC strategies in Chiapas State is underway. Out of 32 States, Chiapas State is the only State in Mexico implementing a strategy to increase HIV testing and diagnosis.
The Implementation Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (ImPrEP) Research Project has been completed and the set targets of 1) promotion of public policy changes to include pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) as part of combination HIV prevention programmes; 2) provision of PrEP services for men who have sex with men and transgender women in the country, are achieved.	ON TRACK	The ImPrEP Research Project was initiated to assess the impact and cost effectiveness of PrEP services in reducing new HIV infections among high-risk populations in Mexico; 3299 participants, predominantly men who have sex with men and transgender women, were identified to participate in the study. The Mexican institute of Social Security (IMSS), which provides government sponsored health services for workers, initiated the provision of PrEP as part of its HIV combination prevention strategy.
Strengthen the capacity of civil society organization to implement sustainable HIV programmes through social contracting.	SLOW PROGRESS	Advocacy is ongoing to reinstate social contracting in Mexico to further reach populations left behind.

JOINT TEAM

UNHCR, UNDP, UNFPA, UN WOMEN, WHO-PAHO, UNAIDS SECRETARIAT

JOINT PROGRAMME CONTRIBUTIONS AND RESULTS IN 2020

In Mexico, the Joint UN Team on AIDS strengthened the Government's efforts in providing free antiretroviral therapy (ART) and pre- and post-exposure prophylaxis services to improve access and ensure better health outcomes among people living with HIV, men who have sex with men, and survivors of sexual abuse. Technical support was also provided for the procurement of antiretroviral drugs, other medicines, and medical equipment to minimize drug and commodity shortages and guarantee the continuity of HIV and other medical services during the COVID-19 pandemic. The ImPrEP Research Project was rolled out to scale up combination HIV prevention services for people who are at high-risk of HIV infections in Mexico. In 2020, the Joint Team also focussed on advocacy to reinstate the social contracting mechanisms needed to expand community-led HIV programmes and reach traditionally left-behind populations such as men who have sex with men, sex workers and transgender people.

HIV PREVENTION AMONG KEY POPULATIONS

POLICY DIALOGUE; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; PARTNERSHIPS

The Government of Mexico has doubled down on its commitment to expanding combination HIV prevention services in the country, announcing a PrEP service initiative for 10 000 people who are exposed to HIV infection by the end of 2021. In this view, the Joint Team provided extensive support for the roll out of the ImPrEP Research Project to assess the impact and cost effectiveness of PrEP services in reducing new HIV infections among high-risk populations in Mexico. In 2020, the project enrolled 3200 participants, predominantly men who have sex with men and transgender women, with over 25% of the cohort between the ages of 18-29 years. Results from the study will be published at the end of 2021 to inform combination HIV prevention programmes in the country.

As a result of technical support provided to the Ministry of Health, youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services in five states were assessed for quality control and 45 of these services met the set criteria. The assessed youth-friendly services integrated SRH, HIV and STI prevention, HTC, and referral to care and treatment services.

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR PROGRAMMING AND SOCIAL CONTRACTING

ADVOCACY; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; PARTNERSHIPS

The Mexican HIV response emphasised multisectoral efforts, including a social contracting model that was implemented for over a decade, inspiring similar models in other countries in the region. The channelling of state resources to civil society organizations allowed the HIV response to reach traditionally left-behind populations such as men who have sex with men, sex workers and transgender people. However, decision that came to effect in 2019 cancelling all social contracting mechanisms in the country, pulled back the progress. In this view, the Joint Team continued to provide technical support to the National Council for the Prevention of HIV/AIDS (CONASIDA) to advocate for the reinstatement of social contracting in Mexico.

Support was also provided to further build capacity of civil society organizations. For instance, the civil society organization CHECCOS received technical support to evaluate its HIV and sexually transmitted infections detection and treatment programme. Results highlighted that the organization targeted population groups who are at higher risk of HIV infection, including men who have sex with men.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE COVID-19 RESPONSE

The COVID-19 pandemic uncovered some of the weaknesses of the health infrastructure in Mexico. Lockdown measures and diversion of human and financial resources for the pandemic response resulted in significant disruption of HIV services. For example, according to the Centre for the Prevention and Control of HIV and AIDS (Censida), between 2019 and 2020, HTC declined by 58% among women and 64% among children aged 0-14 years living with HIV. In response, the Joint Team procured and distributed personal protective equipment (PPE) to various CAPASITS—HIV speciality clinics—especially in Mexico City, Jalisco, Oaxaca, and Chiapas to prevent COVID-19 infection among healthcare workers and patients. PPE was also distributed to Justice Centres in Chilpancingo, Guerrero and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua.

The Joint Team provided critical support for the procurement of several antiretroviral drugs, other medications, and medical equipment to prevent shortages as well as guarantee the continuity of HIV and other health services during the pandemic.

Under the Spotlight initiative, the Joint Team partnered with Posadas Hotel Group to offer sexual assaults survivor kits, free hotel accommodation and food for up to seven nights to 437 women and their children, and adolescent girls who have left home due to increased levels of violence, in the Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Ecatepec, and Naucalpan municipalities. This initiative was subsequently expanded to Celaya, Guanajuato, and Aguascalientes municipalities in collaboration with INDESOL, CONAVIM and INMUJERES. A total of 780 dignity kits were procured by the Joint Team and delivered to shelters in the State of Mexico, Guerrero and Chihuahua and 770 sexual violence care kits to the Women's Justice Centres in Aguascalientes, Campeche, Coahuila, Durango, Hidalgo, Chihuahua, Guerrero and the State of Mexico.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTEGRATED SDG AGENDA

Since 2003, the Government of Mexico has made free ART services available to all people living with HIV and men who have sex with men are also able to access PrEP service free of charge through the ImPreP project, significantly improving their quality of life. The Joint Team provided significant technical assistance to the Government to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic related procurement, shipping, and distribution disruptions and maintain the availability of antiretroviral and PrEP medicines in the country. Support was also provided to procure post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) medicines to treat survivors of sexual abuse, which spiked during the COVID-19 pandemic. These efforts significantly contributed to the principle of leaving no one behind.

The Joint Team is actively encouraging development opportunities and protection for all, in particular people living with HIV, women, including transgender women, and men who have sex with men, who often experience greater vulnerabilities to homelessness, unemployment, interpersonal violence, and poverty. For instance, the Spotlight Initiative aims at preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls in five municipalities (Chihuahua, Ciudad Juárez, Ecatepec, Naucalpan, and Chilpancingo).

PERSISTING AND EMERGING CHALLENGES AND BOTTLENECKS	KEY FUTURE ACTIONS TO RESPOND TO CHALLENGES AND UNBLOCK BOTTLENECKS
<p>Mexico has a concentrated HIV epidemic mostly among men who have sex with men and transgender women. While urban areas are more reflective of this dynamic, in the rural areas the rate of infection among men and women is closer to 2:1. These create significant challenges in the national response as HIV services offered in CAPASITS are focussed on provision of antiretroviral treatment and are homogeneous in their execution. Although the use of CAPASITS to implement the national HIV response has increased access to treatment for thousands of people living with HIV, very little has been done to scale up prevention services at these sites, leaving the prevention efforts for underfunded non-governmental organizations and forcing the number of new infections to remain constant in the last few years.</p>	<p>Provide technical assistance for the finalization of the ImPrEP Research Project and the publication and distribution of key findings and recommendations to the Latin America and Caribbean region.</p> <p>Provide technical and financial support to Censida as part of an interorganizational working group, to expand PrEP services in Mexico.</p> <p>Provide technical and financial support for the implementation of various communication strategies and sensitization activities, including the ImPrEP Research Project communication strategy targeting adolescent and young people to create awareness and increase uptake of HIV prevention and SRH services.</p>
<p>Due to funding cuts for all community health activities led by civil society organizations in 2019, the country experienced a lack of progress in rolling out HTC initiatives. The slow progress in 2020 is also attributed to the closing of HIV detection services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>	<p>Continue supporting the Government and partners to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on HIV services and address the bottlenecks to ensure the continuity of services during the pandemic.</p> <p>Provide technical assistance for the implementation of combination HIV prevention strategies and implementation of new HIV testing technologies in Mexico.</p>
<p>The level of violence experienced by women and girls and new HIV infections are major challenges that affect sexual and reproductive health in Mexico.</p>	<p>Continue providing technical support to the Spotlight programme to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in Mexico.</p>

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