

# SOUTH SUDAN

*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, 95% of reported people living with HIV among returnees or refugees, including adolescents and key populations, who know their HIV status, are sustained on ART (new regimens).	<b>ON TRACK</b>	Number of people in the general population who know their HIV status increased slightly from 27% in 2019 to 29% in 2020. Overall coverage of ART rose to 23% from 18% (2020 Spectrum and Ministry of Health).  In 2020, about 539 686 refugees were reached with HIV services; 33 460 were tested, and currently there are 854 refugees living with HIV on ART (UNHCR Report 2020).
At least two HIV-related Bills are discussed and passed by the National Transitional Legislative Assembly parliament to remove legal barriers to the HIV response.	<b>SLOW PROGRESS</b>	Four of 10 states have made progress in addressing issues in the legal environment, including establishing by-laws to end child marriage, early marriage and gender-based violence (Northern Bahr El Ghazal, Upper Nile State, Eastern Equatoria, and Pribor Administrative Area).
Ensure that 75% of young people have the skills, knowledge and capacity to protect themselves from HIV and have access to sexual and reproductive health services by 2021, in order to reduce the number of new HIV infections.	<b>ON TRACK</b>	No data available at national level.  434 915 in- and out-of-school adolescents and young people were provided with integrated HIV, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and gender-based violence information through Joint Team's support (16.5% of 15–24-year-olds).

### JOINT TEAM

UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UN WOMEN, UNESCO, WHO, UNAIDS SECRETARIAT, IOM

## JOINT PROGRAMME CONTRIBUTIONS AND RESULTS IN 2020

*Initiatives such as MMD for ART and community mentor mothers have contributed to treatment adherence for people living with HIV, and strong community engagement has helped South Sudan make some progress in access to testing and treatment among refugees and returnees. Comprehensive sexuality education for young people has moved progress both through integrated education programming, and community youth organizations. The Joint Team also focused on the creation of an enabling environment, including through technical support and advocacy, identifying legal barriers that entrench gender inequalities, countering gender-based violence, and tackling stigma and discrimination, alongside training for service providers. A comprehensive review of the legal/policy environment in 2021 will help identify remaining gaps.*

### HIV TESTING AND TREATMENT

#### TECHNICAL SUPPORT; COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

To facilitate treatment adherence, 3-6-month MMD was implemented for people who are stable on HIV treatment. Nineteen hard-to-reach facilities in seven states received support for MMD and client retention. In addition, almost 3,900 people living with HIV who had been lost to follow-up were reinstated to treatment thanks to the Community Mentor Mothers initiative. Through the Joint Team's support, community outreach provided HIV testing for 26 081 people, of whom 699 tested HIV-positive and were linked to treatment.

Community leaders were continuously engaged through outreach and capacity building to ensure continuity of services to people living with HIV in refugee camps and surrounding host communities. Over half a million people were reached (212 134 males and 327 552 females) in all refugee camps with testing, treatment and counselling, male condom distribution, health education on HIV/TB/COVID-19/nutrition, and active case finding. Testing, ART and PMTCT services continued to be provided in the refugee camps and surrounding host communities. Almost 33 500 people were tested for HIV (including pregnant women), of whom 215 tested HIV-positive and were enrolled in ART. A total of 854 people were on ART at the end of 2020 in refugee/host communities.

### CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

#### TECHNICAL SUPPORT; POLICY ADVICE/DIALOGUE, CAPACITY BUILDING

Support was provided for the prioritization of gender-based violence and HIV in national institutions. An anti-gender-based violence bill was drafted and submitted to the Ministry of Justice and awaits debate. Capacity building and mentorship were provided to the Government's newly-launched special gender-based violence court, which has convicted at least a dozen people for various gender-based violence offences.

Advocacy workshops were conducted for 33 (22 male and 11 female) refugee community leaders to mobilize support aimed at reducing stigma and discrimination and supporting the continuity of HIV-related services during the time of COVID-19.

More than 560 service providers, including health and community development workers, were trained on child marriage, case management/response and gender-based violence prevention, and 762 duty bearers were trained on legislation, policies governing gender-based violence and child marriage. In addition, 11 centres were created to provide integrated gender-based violence case management services in health facilities. As a result, 234 344 people were reached with gender-based violence prevention and response information, and 3,775 people received medical and support services. Additionally, 2,684 people were screened for gender-based violence at refugee health facilities, while 33 rape survivors received PrEP and presumptive STI treatment.

## HIV PREVENTION AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE CAPACITY BUILDING; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Comprehensive sexuality education training was provided in partnership with the Ministry of General Education and Instruction to 57 (31 males and 26 females) teacher educators and teachers in 13 primary and two secondary schools. In addition, 42 representatives from seven faith-based organizations were trained on comprehensive sexuality education for parents, teacher educators and religious leaders.

The Joint Team provided comprehensive sexuality education to 31 557 adolescent girls and young women through youth-focused organizations. A further 1,938 stakeholders were sensitized on comprehensive sexuality education for young people, including county-level government leaders, social and community leaders. To improve access to condoms, 100 condom dispensers were installed in locations patronized by young people including bars, night clubs, hotels and other hotspots in Juba. A total of 4.4 million male and female condoms were distributed, targeting female sex workers, youths and other vulnerable populations.

Technical assistance in programme management and communication to a CSO coordinating the network of AIDS service organizations in South Sudan has increased NGOs' capacities for advocacy, implementation of HIV prevention services such as condom promotion/distribution, and community mobilization towards increased uptake of HIV services among young people.

## CONTRIBUTION TO THE COVID-19 RESPONSE

The UN Joint Team contributed to and made use of US\$ 45 000 worth of financial and logistical support to deliver COVID-19 hygiene and sanitation packs donated by Reckitt Benckiser Pharmaceuticals to associations of people living with HIV and health facilities across the country. More than 580 community HIV peer volunteers were also trained and provided with personal protective equipment to conduct community ARV refills and provide adherence support in the Equatoria states, greater Bahr El Ghazel states and Jonglei, while 55 426 people (36 997 females and 18 429 males) were provided integrated information on HIV/COVID-19 prevention.

Through community engagement, a capacity needs assessment on gender and human rights issues of networks of people (including women) living with HIV was conducted, and 91 (51 female; 40 male) community volunteers were trained to strengthen awareness on the impact of COVID-19 on HIV, gender-based violence prevention and human rights in Juba.

Almost 93 000 out-of-school youths were reached with COVID-19 and HIV information through the Condomize! campaign and World AIDS Day campaigns in Juba and Torit. Prevention messages were transmitted using social media and community radio reaching about 30 000 people. In addition, COVID-19 prevention materials (hand washing containers, soap, masks) were distributed to over 4,000 adolescent girls and young women through NGOs, youth networks and CSOs that work with adolescent girls and young women.

Fully 63 662 persons (28 731 males, 34 931 females) were reached with COVID-19 information and material in refugee and internally displaced persons camps and host communities. GeneXpert machines were procured and installed in five locations hosting refugees, supporting TB/HIV programmes including early infant diagnosis of HIV and COVID-19 testing.

### CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTEGRATED SDG AGENDA

Contributing to the achievement of SDG 2 on zero hunger, 168 188 people living with HIV/TB and their families received counselling, food, and nutrition support. Among them, 55 790 people were malnourished and were enrolled in the Nutrition Assessment, Counselling and Support Programme. More than 2,000 metric tonnes of fortified food and 12 310 metric tonnes of general food assistance were provided to households. The number of facilities providing nutritional services to people living with HIV and TB patients in the host and refugee communities increased from 97 in 2019 to 147 in 2020.

The Joint Team provided technical support to the Ministry of Health to enhance national and regional data collection/entry for refugees and internally-displaced persons using the District Health Information Software 2 (DHIS2) platform, and to generate and analyse monthly data reports, tracking for indicators at facility, county and state level.

PERSISTING AND EMERGING CHALLENGES AND BOTTLENECKS	KEY FUTURE ACTIONS TO RESPOND TO CHALLENGES AND UNBLOCK BOTTLENECKS
<p>COVID-19 negatively affected the implementation of planned activities, particularly the supply of HIV testing kits and ARVs, in-school activities, on-site monitoring, cross-border refugee programmes, access to HIV services, and support for nutrition security.</p>	<p>Continue to provide and expand MMD for ARVs and closely monitor the continuity of treatment.</p> <p>After relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions, expand in-school comprehensive sexuality education and support its rapid roll-out among out-of-school young people.</p>
<p>CSO capacity is generally very weak, which limits their ability to adequately represent constituents and deliver programme activities.</p>	<p>Build the capacities of CSOs to improve advocacy, effective representation of beneficiaries, and programme management.</p>
<p>Insufficient timeliness, accuracy and completeness of data, along with low retention of trained data clerks in the health sector as the country transitions to online reporting platform DHIS2.</p>	<p>Continue to support the Ministry of Health in strengthening harmonization of the health management information system through full implementation of DHIS2. Undertake capacity building for state-level data managers on DHIS2, especially for those in hard-to-reach areas, to utilize DHIS2 to review and analyse the HIV care cascades, identify programmatic gaps, and plan and improve HIV programme interventions.</p> <p>Support the expansion of technology, such as mobile data collection devices, for data collection by hard-to-reach facilities</p>
<p>Restrictive legal and policy frameworks hinder access to HIV, sexual and reproductive health, and gender-based violence prevention and response services.</p>	<p>Undertake a comprehensive review of the legal and policy environment to facilitate a structured approach to addressing the legal and policy gaps that impact HIV prevention and service delivery.</p>

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