

# TUNISIA

*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
The 90–90–90 targets are attained.	<b>ON TRACK</b>	In 2019, 20% of people living with HIV knew their status, and 98% of those were on ART (GAM 2020). 2020 estimates indicate low testing coverage; a national testing strategy has been finalized to tackle this gap, including through self-testing and community-based testing innovations.
By 2021, supportive adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health policies are in place and the education sector's HIV response is monitored.	<b>ON TRACK</b>	A comprehensive sexuality education curriculum and training tools was designed for primary and secondary schools across 13 governorates.
80% of key populations have access to combination prevention.	<b>NO PROGRESS</b>	Collected data show insufficient access of key populations to combination prevention in 2020. Analysis showed high impact of COVID-19 related movement restrictions and successive lockouts on combination prevention.
By 2021, social protection strategies and systems that address HIV are in place.	<b>ON TRACK</b>	A survey conducted in four regions identified issues and opportunities to address social protection and food security for people living with HIV; recommendations have been made to address gaps and challenges in food security and nutrition for implementation in 2021.
By the end of 2021 the country has prepared for the transition and sustainability of the HIV response, including funding.	<b>ON TRACK</b>	An ongoing transition preparedness study and subsequent development of a transition plan, which started in 2020, will be finalized by end 2021, in partnership with the National AIDS Programme and the Global Fund.

## JOINT TEAM

UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN WOMEN, WHO, UNAIDS SECRETARIAT, IOM, OHCHR, UN HABITAT

## JOINT PROGRAMME CONTRIBUTIONS AND RESULTS IN 2020

*The Joint Team has worked with Government stakeholders to support a national testing strategy and the introduction of PrEP in Tunisia in order to continue to move the country towards a more comprehensive HIV response, especially for key populations. Specific support has also been provided to strengthen HIV testing, prevention and treatment in prison settings. Social protection and food security among people living with HIV have been assessed, as well as the impacts of stigma and discrimination in accessing health and employment. A plan addressing those gaps has been developed for implementation in 2021.*

### TESTING AND TREATMENT TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Implementation of the national testing strategy, which includes initiation of self-testing, community-based testing and partner notification, is ongoing. These new community-based approaches to testing are expected to accelerate access to HIV treatment.

Testing and counselling services were delivered in partnership through an NGO to 1,112 prisoners, including 223 female prisoners. Additionally, 700 HIV/hepatitis C tests were performed inside prisons; those testing positive for HIV were referred to the primary infectious diseases department in Tunis.

### PREVENTION IN YOUNG PEOPLE PARTNERSHIPS; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; CAPACITY BUILDING

An experts' committee on comprehensive sexuality education has been established in partnership with a range of government stakeholders and national NGOs and CBOs. It is designing a participatory, gender-responsive and human rights-based curriculum and accompanying training tools for over 130 schools across 13 governorates. Implementation will begin by September 2021. Advocacy for comprehensive sexuality education integration in schools included five-day media training on sexual and reproductive health and comprehensive sexuality education, and an intensified Joint Team presence on TV, radio, social media, written and web-based press on the issue.

### PREVENTION IN KEY POPULATIONS TECHNICAL SUPPORT; COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT; CAPACITY BUILDING

While results from an ongoing IBBS (for 2020–2021, delayed due to COVID-related movement restrictions) and key population size estimation survey are still being finalized, a needs assessment was conducted on combination prevention services, in partnership with the National AIDS Programme and CSOs.

A national workshop, including major stakeholders and an international PrEP expert, launched a consultation process on introducing PrEP in the country. Terms of reference, participants and methodology were agreed with the National AIDS Programme. Pilot implementation is being launched; the PrEP consultation is informing the ongoing NSP review and the next Global Fund grant proposal.

A rapid situation assessment on HIV, STI, viral hepatitis and TB in de Mornaguia, de Borj Elamri, de Manouba prisons and the El Mourouj juvenile detention centre has revealed gaps in the availability of medicines, care and staff capacity. A drug and HIV prevention, treatment and care strategy for community and prison settings has been finalized. HIV testing was introduced in a number of prisons, thanks to an open-door policy agreed to this year, with 500 tests conducted thus far. In addition to training and information activities, the prison health programme has expanded from 6 to 12 prison sites, and medical and nonmedical equipment needed for 7 prison and juvenile health clinics has been procured and delivered.

### **SOCIAL PROTECTION** **POLICY ADVICE; TECHNICAL SUPPORT**

A survey was conducted for the first time to identify issues and opportunities for addressing social protection and food security for people living with HIV; the information will be used for the national strategic plan review and the next Global Fund application. The survey sampled 1,000 people in four regions (Tunis, Sousse, Monastir and Sfax). Results show that people living with HIV face food insecurity, and social stigma hinders access to employment and limits access to food resources. As a result of the nutrition survey, recommendations have been made to address gaps and challenges in food security and nutrition, and a plan has been designed for implementation in 2021.

### **TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE RESPONSE** **POLICY ADVICE; TECHNICAL SUPPORT**

The country has been supported to prepare for the transition and sustainability of the HIV response to domestic funding. The ongoing transition preparedness study and development of the transition plan started in 2020, and will be finalized by end 2021.

### **CONTRIBUTION TO THE COVID-19 RESPONSE**

Support has been provided to the Country Coordinating Mechanism to mobilise about US\$ 235 000 from the Global Fund to support the national response to COVID-19, covering personal protective equipment for health professionals, people living with HIV and communities, as well as PCR/GeneXpert machines for testing. Support was also provided for a request of up to US\$ 1.5 million from the Global Fund in 2021 to contribute to the national response to COVID-19 and reduce its impact on the HIV response. Funds were mobilized to inform, orient and educate people living with HIV and key and vulnerable populations on HIV and COVID-19 prevention and care (US\$ 20 000 through the UN multipartner trust fund for social COVID-19 impact).

In order to protect service continuity during COVID-19, three-month MMD of ARVs were distributed to people living with HIV through lay community providers. Support was also provided to an NGO call centre, which provides information on HIV and COVID-19, to reach out to people living with HIV and key populations.

### **CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTEGRATED SDG AGENDA**

The multipartner trust fund operating in Tunisia is based on the "Leave No One Behind" principle, ensuring that marginalized and vulnerable populations, especially those affected by or living with HIV, are included in national strategies and programming.

PERSISTING AND EMERGING CHALLENGES AND BOTTLENECKS	KEY FUTURE ACTIONS TO RESPOND TO CHALLENGES AND UNBLOCK BOTTLENECKS
<p>Poor and insufficient coverage of testing requiring innovative solutions such as self- and community-based testing.</p>	<p>Support the finalization and operationalization of the testing strategy, and its integration in the reviewed national strategic plan; launch and implement the self-testing feasibility study; maintain and generalize the HIV testing in prison settings.</p>
<p>Lack of update of therapeutic protocols which are not in line with the latest WHO recommendations.</p>	<p>Support the review of therapeutic protocols and the elaboration and adoption of the transition plan to dolutegravir; then work with the Ministry of Health and people living with HIV to support implementation of the protocols.</p>
<p>Acceleration of innovative combination prevention targeting key populations is required, as HIV incidence is increasing.</p>	<p>Continue and finalize the first phase of PrEP introduction. Support the roll-out of the harm reduction strategy, including OST.</p>
<p>Lack of data to monitor progress towards targets for reducing stigma and discrimination, and for expanding social protection.</p>	<p>Finalize the IBBS/population size estimation and the gender assessment to inform the national strategic plan review and the Global Fund 2022–2024 grant action plan, and to support implementation of the national strategic plan on HIV and human rights.</p> <p>Use food security and COVID-19 needs assessments and integrate their results and outcomes in the reviewed national strategic plan and to inform social protection policies for people living with HIV.</p>
<p>Sustainable funding needed for programme to reach the Fast-Track targets.</p>	<p>Elaborate and submit the Global Fund grant 2022–2024 request based on the reviewed national strategic plan.</p>

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