

# AFGHANISTAN

*Report prepared by the Joint UN Team on AIDS*

## JOINT TEAM

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

## JOINT PROGRAMME CONTRIBUTIONS AND RESULTS IN 2020-2021

*To mitigate the impacts of the challenging environment on people living with HIV and the overall HIV response in Afghanistan, the Joint Team provided technical support in mobilizing external resources, and expanding HIV prevention, testing, and treatment services in the country. Tailored integrated HIV prevention programmes reached thousands of people who inject drugs and prisoners with various services including Opioid Agonist Therapy and HIV testing. National guidelines and training manuals were developed to strengthen harm reduction programmes and hepatitis C prevention, screening and treatment services among people who use and/or inject drugs.*

## HIV PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

The Joint Team provided technical support to the Government in mobilizing US\$ 14.9 million from the Global Fund COVID-19 Response Mechanism to help sustain HIV prevention services and reduce the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on HIV prevention services in eight provinces in Afghanistan—Ghazni, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, Khost, Kunduz, Mazar, and Nangarhar.

Technical assistance was further provided to Global Fund-supported HIV prevention programmes to ensure the continuity of HIV prevention services among key populations, particularly people who inject drugs, prisoners, and other people with behaviours that put them at high risk of acquiring HIV in the eight provinces. In 2021, the Joint Team contributed financially to the implementation of the HIV prevention programme in Badakhshan, Farah, Helmand, Paktia, Parwan, and Nimroz provinces. By the end of the 2020-2021 biennium, the programme reached a total of 6967 people who inject drugs (77% of the programme target), 4225 men (97.7%) and 5137 women (88%) and 8459 prisoners (100%) with various HIV prevention services, including HIV testing, Opioid Agonist Therapy, needle and syringe exchange programme, and condom distribution.

The Joint Team provided technical support to the Government to develop the national guideline and a training manual for the scale up of evidence- and rights-based harm reduction programmes among people who use or inject drugs. Technical assistance was further provided to Afghanistan National Programme for Control of HIV/AIDS, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and Hepatitis (ANPASH) for the development of the national guideline on prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of hepatitis C in Afghanistan.

## CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTEGRATED SDG AGENDA

In 2020-2021, the Joint Team continued to make significant contributions towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3 to ensure the health and wellbeing of all people; Goal 5 to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; and Goal 10 to reduce inequalities in Afghanistan. As part of the Transitional Engagement Framework (TEF) that was prepared by the United Nations Country Team following the August 2021 regime change in Afghanistan, the Joint Team helped ensure inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized populations and more specifically people who inject drugs and harm reduction services.

## CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The COVID-19 pandemic and recent political challenges had severe impact on the delivery of HIV prevention and harm reduction services in Afghanistan. This led to a complete collapse of HIV prevention services among men and women, with behaviours that put them at high risk of acquiring HIV and significant disruption of harm reduction programmes among people who inject drugs.

Lack of supplies, such as medicines, diagnostic kits and other medical equipment coupled with lack of payment for harm reduction service providers for several months further exacerbated the challenge in six provinces— Farah, Ghazni, Herat, Khost, Kundoz, and Nimroz.

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