

# BRAZIL

*Report prepared by the Joint UN Team on AIDS*

## JOINT TEAM

UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN WOMEN, ILO, UNESCO, WHO-PAHO, WORLD BANK, UNAIDS SECRETARIAT, IOM

## JOINT PROGRAMME CONTRIBUTIONS AND RESULTS IN 2020-2021

*Brazil continues to take great strides towards the 90-90-90 targets; effective community-led outreach initiatives eased access to HIV testing services for adolescent and young people; with implementation of multi-month dispensing, access to antiretroviral treatment among all people living with HIV have improved; and dispensing of pre- and post-exposure prophylaxis increased significantly among vulnerable and key populations reducing their risk of acquiring HIV infections. The Joint Team's catalytic efforts and achievements mainly focused on reinforcing these gains through capacity building of healthcare providers, programme managers and implementers, and communities; nurturing strategic partnerships; addressing existing gaps with technical guidance and mobilizing finances; supporting the scale up of tailored programmes; empowering vulnerable people living with HIV to ensure food and livelihood security; and improving the enabling environment, especially for the youth, key populations and other people left behind, such as refugees.*

## HIV TESTING AND TREATMENT

In March 2020, the Joint Team conducted a brief survey on the needs and accessibility of antiretroviral treatment (ART) among people living with HIV during the COVID-19 pandemic. Results from the study were used to successfully advocate for a policy change in multi-month dispensing (MMD) of ART, from 1-2 months to 3-month for eligible people living with HIV. In 2021, the number of people accessing treatment through a 3-month MMD increased by 50% in comparison to 2020.

The Joint Team mobilized 147 health managers, leaders and representatives from municipal and state legislature, and civil society from 15 Brazilian Fast-Track Cities with high HIV incidence to discuss progress, challenges, and share experiences in the HIV responses. The State of São Paulo signed an updated version of the Paris Declaration on Fast-Track Cities committing to accelerate progress towards the new global HIV targets in its 645 municipalities that comprise 22% of the total Brazilian population. The inclusion of the State was a critical achievement since the state is extremely influential in the country and across the region due to its economic and political power.

In partnership with the Instituto Federal de Rio Grande do Sul and state- and municipal-level health departments, an innovative massive online open course (MOOC) targeting health and social protection professionals was developed to reduce HIV-related stigma and discrimination and improve delivery of quality and equitable HIV services. The free course was launched on a digital platform in October 2021.

Under the Bora Saber (Get to Know) community-based outreach initiative, 34 young community leaders from Roraima and Pará states were trained on pre- and post-HIV test counselling, human-centred service delivery, human rights, and the rights of people from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex (LGBTI) community, and laws related to human rights.

Between 2020-2021, and using a peer-to-peer approach, an estimated 2256 adolescents and young people aged 15-29 years received community-based HIV testing and counselling (HTC), of whom 28 adolescents and young people tested positive for HIV and 27 started ART.

Related community-based combination HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) prevention programmes reached around 2800 people at higher risk of acquiring HIV and STIs in Pará and Roraima states, including men who have sex with men, transgender people, and sex workers. In Roraima state, 80% of the beneficiaries were migrants from Venezuela and 70% were people aged 19-29 years while in Pará, 83% of the beneficiaries were young people aged 19-29 years. Services rendered in both states were results of collaborations with the local government, from the review of strategic proposals and work plans to facilitation of access to health services.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Joint Team focussed its support around mitigating the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable and key populations. For example, under the Balaio project, the Joint Team collaborated with the Barong Cultural Institute—a nongovernmental organization in São Paulo—to distribute food baskets, personal protective equipment, and hygiene kits; home-delivery of MMD of ART; and prioritization of vulnerable populations, including people living with HIV for COVID-19 vaccination. Under the Solidarity Fund, financial assistance was provided to three NGOs to help 150 people from vulnerable and key population groups build entrepreneurial projects in the food, beauty, and crafts industries, and overcome the economic and health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 800 vulnerable people from the LGBTI community and people living with HIV in São Paulo city also received 400 food baskets, hygiene and cleaning kits, and sexual health and prevention kits to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## HIV PREVENTION AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE AND KEY POPULATIONS

Under the *PrEP Trans Project*, 16 transgender persons were trained on partnerships and network building, HIV and STI combination prevention, on pre- and post-HIV test counselling, human-centred service delivery, human rights and specific LGBTI rights legislations, and empowerment of transgender populations. Four psychosocial support groups were established while 62 transgender people were sensitized on the benefits of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and received services from psychologists and social workers. 48 of the transgender people were linked to public PrEP programmes, of whom 9 tested positive for HIV and enrolled on ART and psychosocial services and 39 people were started on PrEP.

Six workshops engaged 75 indigenous people from Ticuna and Warao communities on intercultural perspective related to education, health, and HIV prevention. Some 1500 pieces of multi-language guides on HIV and STI combination prevention were produced and distributed among indigenous leaders and health agents from Ticuna and Warao communities.

In partnership with the Ministry of Health, PrEP, post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) and HIV self-testing services were expanded in Rondônia state in northern Brazil. PrEP dispensation in Rondônia has also increased from 201 in 2020 to 441 in 2021 while in Acre state PrEP dispensation rose from 45 to 264 in the same period. Twenty-two transgender women were engaged through a project focussed on behavioural therapy—in which individuals are

'reinforced', or rewarded, for evidence of positive behavioural change—and photographic art to encourage self-care and uptake of combined HIV prevention services, especially PrEP and PEP. Following the increase in Venezuelan migrants entering northern Brazil, an estimated 4242 HIV self-tests were distributed in Roraima state and PrEP and PEP dispensing showed a 278% increase between 2020 and 2021.

### **HUMAN RIGHTS, STIGMA, AND DISCRIMINATION AND GENDER, RACE, AND ETHNIC EQUALITY**

An online training was conducted for 50 representatives of local NGOs improving their capacities on project development and fund-raising mechanisms. The selected NGOs serve vulnerable and key populations, including people living with HIV, homeless people, gay men, and other men who have sex with men, transgender persons, and people who inject drugs. One international and seven national seminars were held to support design and implementation of programmes by networks of adolescents and young people living with HIV aimed at promoting HIV, syphilis, and STI prevention, testing, and treatment services targeting adolescents and young people aged 15-24. As a result, an action plan for the period 2022-2024 was developed and implementation is well underway.

An Integration Plan (Plano de Interiorização) for migrants living with HIV and from the LGBTI community from Venezuela and other countries was developed as collaboration and contribution to the Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V) platform and the Quito Process to ensure that these populations are linked to health and HIV services throughout the country. The plan was integrated into the migrant integration pilot project supported by the Ministry of Health.

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

As part of the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Partnership Framework (UNSDPF) for 2017-2021, the Joint Team's efforts to address issues such as access to HIV and STIs combination prevention, testing and treatment services, distribution of food baskets, and health and hygiene kits among the most vulnerable population affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, support for training and mobilization of key and priority populations, NGOs, and health professionals to scale up and sustain the HIV response; technical assistance for Fast-Track Cities, and production of research, guides and reports, among others, are directly related to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3, 4, 5, 11 and 17.

Contributing to SDG 17 on Partnerships, financial support from the Brazilian government continued to ensure sustainability of initiatives led or supported by the Joint Team in Brazil in 2020-2021, in particular around combination prevention and timely diagnosis of HIV and STIs.

### **CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED**

In 2020-2021, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to leave health facilities overcrowded. The vaccination rate in more peripheral states, such as those in the north of the country, remains below the national average. The pressure on the health system continues to be high in terms of maintaining the quality and accessibility to HIV prevention, testing, and treatment services.

The economic crisis resulting, in part, from the COVID-19 pandemic increased inequalities affecting the most vulnerable people. Although HIV prevention, testing, and treatment services are universally accessible through the unified public health system, multiple inequalities coupled with stigma and discrimination, continue to pose a challenge to the effective access to these services among the poorest and most vulnerable people in Brazil.

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