
2014-2015 UBRAF thematic report

Supporting women and girls

CONTENTS

ACHIEVEMENTS.....	3
MAJOR CHALLENGES AND HOW THESE WERE ADDRESSED.....	5
KEY FUTURE INTERVENTIONS	6

ACHIEVEMENTS

Gender inequalities as well as gender-based violence continue to undermine progress towards realizing global AIDS targets, placing women and girls at higher risk of HIV infection, impeding their access to HIV prevention, treatment and care services and increasing their vulnerability to institutional violence, such as forced abortion or forced sterilization. Women and girls are currently bearing a disproportionate burden of the global HIV epidemic. In sub-Saharan Africa, in 2014, women aged 15+ accounted for 59% of people living with HIV aged 15+, while the figure is 51% worldwide. The statistics are particularly worrying when looking at young women and adolescent girls. 56% of all people aged 15–24 years old who became newly infected and 62% of those 15–19 years old who acquired HIV in 2014 were female.

The Joint Programme has made significant contributions to addressing the gender dimensions of AIDS epidemics by improving integration of gender equality and human rights into national HIV strategies and plans, strengthening human rights and policy frameworks in support of women's rights - especially women living with HIV and from key populations - and supporting greater leadership by women living with HIV. Further contributions in 2014-2015 have included:

- Building gender-responsive HIV policies: Enhanced technical guidance and tools developed by UNAIDS and other partners strengthened national HIV strategies and Global Fund concept notes by increasing attention for gender equality, women, adolescents and girls, and key populations. Used by more than 40 countries, the Gender Assessment tool allowed governments and CSOs to generate strategic information to be used in integrating gender equality issues into the national HIV response. An End Review of the UNAIDS Agenda for Accelerated Country Action for Women and Girls was conducted and informed the UNAIDS Strategy 2016-2021, including integrating gender equality across all outcomes. A Technical Working Group established by UN Women and co-convened with the Global Fund - with participation by UNDP, UNFPA, WHO, donors and CSOs - commissioned and disseminated a menu of evidence-informed interventions on gender-transformative programming to support integration of gender equality issues into the Global Fund concept notes. Overall, the Joint Programme helped to integrate gender-responsive actions into the national HIV strategic plans in 30 countries and into the Global Fund concept notes in 13 countries. UN Women, WHO, PAHO and the UNAIDS Secretariat increased capacities of M&E staff from HIV programmes in 15 countries on gender-sensitive M&E for HIV/AIDS; since then, four countries have integrated gender equality into their M&E frameworks. Data on financing for gender-responsive programming to support women and girls in HIV responses is limited, but targeted investments are being made and yielding results. In Kenya, UN Women and the UNAIDS Secretariat invested in the localization of the National HIV Strategic Plan in six counties which are prioritizing actions and budgets to address HIV-specific needs of women. In Uganda, a similar effort has resulted in the Global Fund concept note prioritizing ending gender-based violence and removing discriminatory laws and practices that contribute to women and girls' vulnerability to HIV with the total budget of US\$2.3 million allocated for this work in 2015-2017.

UNODC, UN Women and WHO's Policy brief on HIV-related needs of women injecting drugs was instrumental in advocating incorporation of specific actions into national HIV strategies and plans (NSPs) in eastern Europe and central Asia (EECA).

- Empowering and engaging adolescent girls and young women: UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women and other cosponsors supported national partners in producing data examining social vulnerability of adolescents and young women in order to better address their needs in HIV prevention strategies and new NSPs in Cambodia, Kenya and Mozambique through youth-friendly, integrated HIV-SRH services. UN Women's programme 'Empowerment+Engagement=Equality!' enabled participation and leadership of over 130 young women and adolescent girls advocates, including those living with HIV, in the All In country assessments in Kenya, Malawi and Uganda. In Kenya, UN Women and other co-sponsors supported the development of the Operational Plan for Ending AIDS among Adolescents 2015-2019, launched by the President in 2015. An initiative by ILO, the UNAIDS Secretariat and South African Development Community in East and Southern Africa (ESA) empowered young women and girls in the informal economy by integrating entrepreneurial skills and economic enhancements, including access to loans, into HIV services. In Zambia, the percentage of young women who used a condom during their last sex increased from 37% to 53% and the percentage who accessed HIV services increased from 76% to 89%. Overall, there was a 72% increase in average profits and a 58% increase in expenditure on education by these women. Such outcomes provide concrete evidence on how addressing the socio-economic determinants of HIV can reduce the vulnerability of young women. UNDP supported similar initiatives in Djibouti and Egypt. UNESCO, UNFPA, UN Women and the World Bank additionally launched a joint programme to empower adolescent girls and women through education. The African Union Secretariat and Ministers of Gender launched "Empowering young women and adolescent girls: Fast- Tracking the end of the AIDS epidemic in Africa". This forms part of the mobilization and political engagement towards the CSW 60 and HLM 2016, to ensure integration of HIV/SRHR, focus on an inclusive human rights perspective, including women and girls in conflict and post conflict settings in line with the African Union Declaration on Women's Right to Health.
- Strengthening legal environments for gender equality and human rights: The UNAIDS Secretariat, UNDP, WHO and UN Women supported 69 countries to review and revise discriminatory laws, policies and practices that put women and girls at risk of HIV and hinder effective HIV responses. Legal analyses and reform efforts highlighted the relationship between HIV vulnerability and harmful cultural and gender norms and focused on removing discriminatory provisions and affording greater protection to women including from key populations in personal status laws, domestic violence and sexual offences acts, social protection policies and HIV decriminalization laws. The UNAIDS Secretariat, UNDP, UNFPA and UN Women also continued to work with traditional leaders and decision makers to safeguard property and inheritance rights of women living with HIV. In Malawi, UN Women

advocacy resulted in adoption of the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Bill that now increases a marriage age from 15 to 18 years; and of the by-laws and/or action plans by Paramount Chiefs to enforce the Bill. UNDP convened a strategy meeting to advance the Global Commission on HIV and the Law's findings on child marriage, punitive age-of-consent laws and harmful practices;

-
- **Championing women's leadership and participation:** Women and girls, especially those living with HIV or from key populations, are important partners in the advocacy, development, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of gender-responsive HIV programmes. In 65 countries efforts by the Joint Programme focused on strengthening the capacity of women living with HIV, including adolescent girls and young women, and their networks to engage in different decision-making processes, including HIV NSP and Global Fund Concept Notes development. The International Conference on Population Development (ICPD), Beijing+20 regional reviews and the International AIDS Conference in 2015 resulted in recommendations that included women's and girls' HIV-related needs and priorities. The UNAIDS Secretariat, UNDP and UN Women also facilitated women living with HIV networks to participate in Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) reporting processes and to connect with other women's organizations in order to shape a more inclusive human rights and gender equality agenda for post-2015. UN Women, UNAIDS Secretariat, UNESCO and UNFPA provided extensive policy support to the Southern African Development Community in developing a draft resolution on "Women, the Girl Child and HIV and AIDS" in preparations for the 60th session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Botswana on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Southern African Development Community, introduced a draft resolution at the 60th CSW session; it was subsequently adopted by consensus on March 24 2016 after member states negotiations. WFP ensured that food distribution met the specific needs of women, particularly those living with HIV and mobilized women to lead on the decision-making about the management of the nutritional support.

MAJOR CHALLENGES AND HOW THESE WERE ADDRESSED

The lack of sex- and age-disaggregated data and evidence linking HIV/STIs and gender equality continues to undermine target-setting, development, implementation, monitoring and financing of gender-responsive policies and programmes, as well as the identification of gaps in services. Harmful practices and discriminatory laws and policies continue to have a negative impact on women and girls. Moreover, policies and plans still fail to comprehensively address the full diversity of women and girls living with and affected by HIV. Stigma and discrimination, including on the basis of age, sexual orientation and gender identity, sex work and drug use, continue to hamper HIV responses. National HIV responses continue to some extent to reflect gender biases in policies, programmes, institutions and budgets. These trends must be reversed in order to ensure equal access and benefit for women, men, girls, boys, transgender men and transgender women. This

can be achieved through sustained investment in research and evidence on social and structural drivers, as well as political advocacy and improved technical knowledge. Long-term investment and support is needed to facilitate increased and meaningful leadership of women living with HIV and their networks as key participants in HIV responses. This includes supporting their organizational capacities, alliance building and mobilizing of constituencies. Conceptual clarity and application of evidence-based programming aimed at promoting more equitable power relations between women and men with respect to sexual and reproductive decisions is needed. Evidence shows that this requires working with men and women as well as with communities more broadly, while ensuring that all work on HIV prevention with men and boys addresses harmful masculinities as integral part of programming. Limited resources to scale up innovative interventions for adolescents and young people, particularly girls and young women, as well as lack of youth-friendly, non-judgmental sexual reproductive health services and information hinder efforts to reduce HIV infections, STIs and unwanted pregnancies. Programming to address HIV prevention, treatment, care and support for women and girls is often considered to be in competition with, rather than linked and related to, programming and support for key populations. Key populations include women and girls, therefore a gender equality perspective increases the understanding of the needs of women and men, girls and boys, transgender people, whether they are sex workers, intimate partners of sex workers, men or women who inject drugs, LGBT or female partners of men who have sex with men.

KEY FUTURE INTERVENTIONS

Key future interventions to address these issues include:

- Shaping a leadership and advocacy platform for women and girls in all their diversity to end the AIDS epidemic;
- Mapping and reviewing the global and regional strategies and initiatives relevant to gender equality dimensions of HIV (for example, Updated Global Strategy for Women and Children's Health, FP2020 and UNiTE) and develop, or better utilize existing frameworks and mechanisms for coordination;
- Continuing to highlight and document the gender equality and human rights gaps in the HIV response, including rights violations against women living with and affected by HIV;
- Focusing on strengthening the integration of HIV and sexual reproductive health and rights in global dialogues and political processes, including the Agenda 2030 on the Sustainable Development and the UNAIDS "Fast Track" initiative;
- Continued advocacy for and promotion of the engagement and leadership of women's groups, including young women and adolescent girls, grassroots organizations, organizations of women living with HIV and key populations in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating HIV policies and programmes, as well as in key national, regional and global decision-making forums and initiatives;
- Establishing and enhancing multisectoral partnerships with regional political platforms, research institutions, NGOs, faith-based leaders, women's organizations,

including networks of women living with and affected by HIV, to highlight linkages between HIV and gender equality;

- Strengthening national stakeholders' understanding of gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation of HIV programmes and support harmonized data collection by building capacity in the collection and use of harmonized gender equality and HIV/AIDS indicators;
- Reviewing efforts to apply gender-responsive budgeting for HIV response to distill lessons and approaches for sustainable financing for gender equality in HIV responses;
- Evaluating experience of conducting gender assessments of HIV NSPs and continue conducting gender assessments, building on lessons from the evaluation. Develop guidance on gender-responsive budgeting for the HIV response, as a part of efforts towards supporting greater resource allocation for gender equality in HIV NSPs;
- Implementing a platform for action to engage men and boys in support of gender equality and ending the AIDS epidemic, empowerment of women and elimination of all forms of violence and review evidence on what works to scale up their engagement;
- Maintaining key gender equality and women's empowerment priorities for the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS 2016.

UNAIDS

20 Avenue Appia
CH-1211 Geneva 27
Switzerland