

# GUATEMALA

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, the number of AIDS-related deaths declined by 75% from 2017 levels among general and prioritized populations through comprehensive HIV and sexually transmitted infection (STI) services and continuous care focused on individuals, family, and community.	<b>SLOW PROGRESS</b>	AIDS-related death in Guatemala declined by 31% between 2017 and 2020—from 1096 in 2017 to 759 in 2020. In 2020, 77% of people living with HIV in Guatemala knew their HIV status, of whom 64% of the people living with HIV accessed antiretroviral treatment (ART) and 56% of those on treatment achieved viral suppression (Spectrum, 2021).
By 2021, new HIV infections and STIs decreased by 75% from 2017 levels among general and prioritized populations and new approaches; and innovative technologies for combination prevention interventions are implemented.	<b>SLOW PROGRESS</b>	New HIV infections declined slightly from 890 in 2017 to 765 in 2020 (Spectrum, 2021).
At the end of 2021, the number of human rights violations suffered by people living with HIV and key populations will be reduced to less than 15% in terms of reported violence, stigma, and discrimination from public institutions.	<b>SLOW PROGRESS</b>	The last Stigma Index in the country was implemented in 2017 (published in 2018). The “IX National Inform on the Human Rights situation of people living with HIV and most-at-risk populations” will be finalized and published in 2021.
By 2021, social protection actions for people living with HIV in vulnerable conditions (increased by COVID-19 crisis) are implemented ensuring their wellbeing, health, and adherence to treatment.	<b>ON TRACK</b>	In 2020, the Joint Team provided critical support for social protection efforts targeting people living with HIV and key populations made vulnerable by the COVID-19 pandemic, including home delivery of ART, food and nutritional support, personal protective equipment and hygiene kits, psychosocial care, and academic scholarships.

Strengthened capacity of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance by 2021 for the implementation of political, strategic, technical, and administrative mechanisms to improve the governance and sustainability of the national responsibility of the national HIV response.

## ON TRACK

In 2020, Guatemala completed the National AIDS Spending Assessment (NASA 2016-2018). A successful Global Fund proposal was submitted for 2021-2023, mobilizing US\$ 26 870 644 to strengthen HIV programmes targeting vulnerable populations and sustain the response. A new draft proposal of the “National Law for the Prevention, Protection and Care of HIV” was elaborated in collaboration with key partners.

## JOINT TEAM

UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN WOMEN, ILO, UNESCO, WHO-PAHO, UNAIDS SECRETARIAT, IOM

## JOINT PROGRAMME CONTRIBUTIONS AND RESULTS IN 2020

*Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, Guatemala with extensive support from the Joint Team sought to ensure the continuity of HIV services and improve access for people living with HIV and key populations. Community-led home visit programmes were strengthened to deliver antiretroviral drugs and other essential medicines to people living with HIV, and a new HIV service tracking tool was implemented to boost monthly follow-up on key indicators and monitor potential HIV services disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic. HIV combination prevention and operational tools were also developed to scale up community-led services among key populations, particularly men who have sex with men and transgender persons. In 2020, the Joint Team provided financial and technical support for an HIV prevention campaign reaching over 1.6 million young people using several social media outlets. Comprehensive Sexuality Education was also integrated in elementary and secondary school curricula to improve the sexual and reproductive health knowledge of adolescent and young people and help them make safe life decisions. A new shelter was created for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex (LGBTI) people, including refugees and asylum seekers. Finally, the Joint Team also contributed to expand food assistance and nutrition education, transport allowance, and individualized counselling services to ensure vulnerable people living with HIV adhere to their treatment.*

## ACCESS TO TREATMENT

### POLICY DIALOGUE; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; FOSTERING PARTNERSHIPS

The Joint Team continued its technical assistance to the Ministry of Health to ensure efficient need assessment, estimation, and planning for antiretroviral drugs and HIV commodities in 2020. The Ministry of Health also received extensive support and logistical assistance, including contracting of transportation companies to minimize stockouts during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Support was provided for the development of a complementary technical guideline for ART management and its prophylactic use among people living with HIV, including recommendations on the use of Dolutegravir as a first-line regimen. A total of 3000 copies of the national treatment guidelines-2020 were distributed to HIV Comprehensive Care Units nationwide to improve the quality of ART services.

Two Comprehensive Care Units in Coatepeque and Retalhulehu received logistical support to expand delivery of ARTs and other essential medicines for people living with HIV—taking advantage of the existing individualized counselling home visit programme led by Asociación Para la Prevención y Estudio del VIH/Sida (APEVIHS) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Similarly, end 2020, an estimated 169 people living with HIV from 17 different Departments who were enrolled on the Guatemalan Institute of Social Security (IGSS), benefited from ART home delivery, through a collaboration with the civil society organization—Asociación Lambda and Asociación Vida.

### HIV PREVENTION

#### TECHNICAL SUPPORT; CAPACITY BUILDING; RESOURCE MOBILIZATION; COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Support was provided to two civil society organizations (CSOs), Colectivo Amigos Contra el Sida and OTRANS-Reinas de la Noche, to develop two comprehensive prevention strategies and operational tools for men who have sex with men and transgender persons to scale up and ensure continuity of community-led combination HIV prevention, testing and treatment services among key populations.

Between October 2019 and January 2020, the *Live, Inform Yourself Today* HIV prevention campaign reached 1 656 727 adolescents and young people aged 13-24 years via social-media outlets, thanks to the technical and financial contributions from the Joint Team. The campaign involved a group of adolescents and young people to produce and broadcast radio spots promoting HIV prevention in Mayan language to reach their peers in rural areas, overcoming digital and language barriers. Support was also provided to conduct three workshops on the production of creative programmes for adolescent and young people and radio correspondents, which resulted in the creation of 18 scripts and 25 draft radio spots on HIV prevention.

The Joint Team provided technical assistance to integrate Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in curriculums of elementary and secondary schools run by Fe y Alegría—a CSO working to provide quality education to adolescent and young people. CSE toolkits for teachers and students were also developed and disseminated to all participating schools and 41 remote follow-up meetings were held with principals, academic coordinators, and teachers from 57 schools in 11 departments of Guatemala. A total of 15 000 students benefited from these efforts.

Twenty-three female community leaders were trained to facilitate community training sessions on CSE, and an additional 162 indigenous adolescent girls and young women from the UNESCO-Malala Centres received trainings on CSE facilitated by community leaders to improve their knowledge and skills in making safe and healthy choices in their sexual activities.

### STIGMA, INCLUSION, AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

#### POLICY DIALOGUE; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; CAPACITY BUILDING; PARTNERSHIPS

As a result of technical assistance provided to the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, an analysis of the Guatemalan Labour Code was completed to determine if the country guarantees the right to work for people living with HIV, particularly women, in accordance with international labour standards and commitments. Findings were used to inform Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare's decision-making on the Labour Code application and encourage authorities from the Ministry of Health to improve HIV norms.

The Joint Team supported the development and rollout of an education programme tailored for public officials, managers of shelter and governmental institutions, and service providers for LGBTI persons of concern to strengthen their capacity around provision of quality HIV prevention and legal services for this target group. The programme also seeks to foster inclusive and respectful state institutions and CSOs that address the needs of LGBTI persons of

concern. In 2020, nine advocacy activities—webinars, dialogue and discussion spaces, forums, and workshops—took place on various topics, including HIV, displacement, and vulnerabilities reaching more than 7000 people committed to bring positive change for LGBTI persons of concern in Guatemala.

A partnership between the Joint Team and Asociación Lambda resulted in the establishment of a shelter for LGBTI persons of concern, including refugees, asylum seekers and persons in need of international protection. So far, 53 LGBTI persons of concern have been housed in the shelter benefiting from comprehensive assistance that includes food, health care, legal and psychosocial support. An additional 175 LGBTI people accessed legal and psychosocial services, hygiene kits, and other humanitarian assistance.

### **SYSTEM STRENGTHENING, STRATEGIC INFORMATION AND SUSTAINABILITY POLICY DIALOGUE; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; CAPACITY BUILDING; PARTNERSHIPS**

The Joint Team and other development partners provided technical assistance to the National AIDS Programme (NAP) and Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) resulting in the successful mobilization of a new Global Fund grant of US\$ 26 870 644 for the 2021-2023 period to expand comprehensive HIV prevention, testing, care, and treatment services among vulnerable populations in high burden municipalities.

The Ministry of Health, with technical assistance from the Joint Team, implemented the new HIV service tracking tool to ensure monthly follow up on key indicators and monitor potential HIV services disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic. In collaboration with PEPFAR, support was also provided to implement the HIV/AIDS Sustainability Index and Dashboard (SID 2020), including completion of data collection tool which will inform decision-making in the national HIV response.

A cooperation with OTRANS-Reinas de la Noche and Colectivo Amigos contra el Sida resulted in the development of the first draft prevention cascade for men who have sex with men, and the first prevention cascade for transgender women, which will contribute to improving their access to quality and tailored HIV combination prevention services.

End 2020, Colectivo Amigos contra el Sida was technically supported to improve its online scheduling system of monthly clinical appointments for HIV- and STI-related onsite services. The improved website is scheduled to be launched in 2021 and expected to handle around 580 bookings a day. As part of the Global Fund's support to the national self-testing strategy, the Joint Team also supported Colectivo Amigos Contra el Sida to launch an online questionnaire on the potential eligibility of men who have sex with men who are interested in taking an HIV self-test.

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

Technical assistance was provided for the development of national guidelines to guarantee provision and management of HIV services in Comprehensive Care Units during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, the Joint Team in collaboration with Colectivo Amigos contra el Sida sought to provide access to home-delivery of HIV combination prevention services among men who have sex with men. As a result, 80 men who have sex with men received HIV self-test kits, four had delivery pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and HIV self-test kits, and HIV prevention kits were delivered to 58 men who have sex with men. Additionally, 24 men who have sex with men were supported to attend clinical appointments and referral to HIV Comprehensive Care Units; 33 obtained support to access community HIV and STI prevention services; and four to access testing.

To support the continuity of services for people living with HIV and safety of healthcare providers, the Joint Team procured personal protective equipment for first-line health workers in 16 Comprehensive Care Units. These included, 34 900 gloves, 16 000 surgical masks, 3000 disposable gowns, 1000 mono glasses, and 400 face shields. CSOs were also supported to protect vulnerable and key populations from COVID-19 infection resulting in the distribution of 500 dignity kits to transgender women, 201 kits to female sex workers, and 405 dignity kits to women living with HIV enrolled on healthcare in facilities.

Successful advocacy efforts by the Joint Team resulted in the inclusion of people living with HIV in the National Vaccination Plan Against COVID-19 of the Guatemala Republic (in Spanish: “*Plan Nacional De Vacunación Contra COVID-19 de la República de Guatemala*”) and the addition of prisons in the National COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plans to warrant access to COVID-19 and HIV prevention and care services among these population groups.

The Joint Team guaranteed food assistance for three months for 240 people living with HIV, in three Southwestern departments highly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Another 120 people living with HIV benefited from individualized counselling and nutrition education to improve their health outcomes.

### CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTEGRATED SDG AGENDA

Dialogue and technical support resulted in the inclusion of HIV response in the United Nations Sustainable Development Coordination Framework (UNSDCF 2020-2025) as one of the priorities of the health pillar— with explicit mentions of people living with HIV and LGBTI communities under the social development priorities.

In 2020, the Joint Team provided technical and financial assistance to improve access to healthcare, education, and legal services, as well as nutritional and psychological support among LGBTI persons of concern. In this view, 50 adults from the LGBTI community received educational scholarships under a collaborative project with CSOs—OTRANS-Reinas de la Noche and Accion Humana ONG—which aims to provide access to formal and vocational education.

PERSISTING AND EMERGING CHALLENGES AND BOTTLENECKS	KEY FUTURE ACTIONS TO RESPOND TO CHALLENGES AND UNBLOCK BOTTLENECKS
<p>The COVID-19 emergency resulted in the disruption of HIV and other healthcare services, significantly impacting progress in the HIV response, especially in the first six months of the year.</p>	<p>Continue supporting the Ministry of Health and Social Assistance to ensure the overall resumption of critical HIV prevention, testing, care, and treatment services.</p>
<p>Supply chain management and estimations of antiretroviral drugs and HIV-related commodities processes continue to present challenges in the provision of HIV and STI testing, prevention, care, and treatment services.</p>	<p>Provide technical support to the Ministry of Health and Social Assistance in a) planning, procurement and stock management of HIV medicines and supplies, b) price negotiation process, and c) accelerating the transition to Dolutegravir.</p>
<p>There is a need to strengthen community-led HIV testing and prevention programmes to reduce new HIV infections among vulnerable populations. The national HIV testing guidelines should be updated, and a national prevention strategy must be developed to increase access and quality of HIV testing and prevention services.</p>	<p>Support the scale up of PrEP, post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), HIV self-testing, and partner notification programmes, and efforts to improve adherence and retention of people living with HIV in care, through efficient implementation of the Global Fund grant and PEPFAR funded programmes, advocacy to the National AIDS Programme and the Ministry of Health on the benefits of scaling up these initiatives nationwide, and advocacy on social contracting.</p> <p>Heighten advocacy to ensure a swift reform of the national HIV law to enable adolescent people access testing, prevention, and care services without parental/guardian consent.</p>
<p>At 17.5%, the mother-to-child transmission of HIV rate remains high (GAM 2021). There is an urgent need to improve HIV testing and prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) services for pregnant women living with HIV through the implementation of the Strategy for the Elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, syphilis and Hepatitis B.</p>	<p>Provide technical support and monitoring for the implementation of Global Fund financed programmes, including US\$ 2.7 million budgeted for the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B programmes.</p>
<p>Bottlenecks to the systematization of HIV, STIs and opportunistic infections prevention and treatment services.</p>	<p>Advocate for homologation of norms, guidelines, protocols, and quality care standards between the Ministry of Health and other national health institutions.</p> <p>Continue supporting the Ministry of Health to strengthen technical skills and update knowledge on HIV, STIs and opportunistic infections diagnosis, prevention, treatment, and care.</p> <p>Continue to advocate to develop a culture-based approach to implement healthcare activities and health strategies for indigenous populations.</p>

<p>Challenges in the prioritization and establishment of linkage between HIV, human rights, and gender-based violence coupled with priority shift due to the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in underfunding of human rights and gender related activities.</p>	<p>Increase advocacy to address human rights violations and gender-based violence and improve access to legal services and fair justice for affected people living with HIV and key populations.</p> <p>Provide technical support to implement the Stigma Index 2.0, planned to be implemented in 2021.</p> <p>Provide technical assistance to implement the HIV Gender Assessment Tool.</p> <p>Support CSOs to actively engage in social monitoring and advocacy to end human rights violations as well as violence against people living with HIV, LGTBI community, sex workers, women, and girls.</p>
<p>Non-integrated and non-harmonized national health information system, including HIV data. Limitations for quality data collection, processing, analysis, and interpretation of results further impair the programme planning, implementation, monitoring, and decision-making processes.</p>	<p>Support the Government to improve and harmonize the national health information system.</p> <p>Continue to support evidence-based decision making through generation of key strategic information to strengthen and sustain the HIV response.</p> <p>Provide technical support to strengthen the epidemiological surveillance of HIV, STIs and other opportunistic infections at national, regional, and local levels.</p>
<p>Improving coordination between HIV programmes supported by different partners, and alignment of HIV response with other public health, and social development priorities.</p>	<p>Increase advocacy with senior government authorities to strengthen and support the leadership and governance at the National AIDS Programme, and re-positioning HIV response as a high-level priority on the national political agenda.</p> <p>Continue to strengthen coordination and collaboration with the Government, development partners, CSOs, and communities to advance and scale-up the HIV response.</p>

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