

# KYRGYZSTAN

*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
Testing & Treatment: in 2020, 90% of people living with HIV know their status; 90% of those are accessing treatment, and 90% accessing treatment are virally suppressed.	<b>SLOW PROGRESS</b>	By the end of 2020, 76% of people living with HIV knew their status; 63% of those were accessing antiretroviral treatment (ART), and 89% accessing treatment were virally suppressed (GAM 2021).
75-90% of key populations (disaggregated by men who have sex with men, sex workers, people who inject drugs) reached with comprehensive prevention programmes.	<b>SLOW PROGRESS</b>	The latest data shows overall prevention coverage at 72%; prevention coverage for men who have sex with men is at 66%, sex workers at 78%, and people who inject drugs at 73% (National AIDS Center bulletin, December 2020).
Research on prevalence of new psychoactive substances (NPS) use among drug users, men who have sex with men and sex workers in Kyrgyzstan.	<b>SLOW PROGRESS</b>	Limited data has been generated so far on NPS use, health risks and consequences, overdoses and intoxication.
International or pooled procurement is available as a mechanism to ensure qualified medicines at an adequate price.	<b>ON TRACK</b>	Technical assistance was provided to support draft legislation to enable public international drug procurement for the country; further work is required to develop and approve government decisions in order to fully effect this legislation.

### JOINT TEAM

UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN WOMEN, UNESCO, WHO, UNAIDS  
SECRETARIAT

## JOINT PROGRAMME CONTRIBUTIONS AND RESULTS IN 2020

*Whilst the impact of COVID-19 has slowed Kyrgyzstan's progress towards the 90-90-90 targets in 2020, the Joint Team has been able to support advances in testing and treatment through technical support for updated guidelines, treatment regimens and training in primary and maternity health services. A key focus in the country has been on prevention services for key populations, supporting sexual and reproductive health (SRH)-related programmes covering counselling, testing, distributing condoms, and delivering key messages on preventing HIV/STIs. Online training has been provided to practitioners working with people who use drugs, aiming to support specialist health workers, and to reduce the stigma and discrimination faced by vulnerable groups.*

### HIV TESTING AND TREATMENT

#### POLICY ADVICE; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Following WHO recommendations, national treatment guidelines were updated, and by March 2020, 2500 (46% of those receiving ART) people living with HIV had switched to the dolutegravir (DTG)-based treatment regimen, successfully reaching more than 80% of all people living with HIV by the end of the year; by early 2021, 90% of people living with HIV had started DTG-based treatment (NAC, January 2021). The updated clinical protocol (December 2019) was approved in the second quarter of 2020.

291 people living with HIV received training on adherence to ART, social support / case management, accommodation and meal services provided by the Joint Team, as well as counselling services and legal assistance provided to 88 people affected by HIV.

Online refresher training on prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) was delivered in partnership with the AIDS centre in Osh province for 800 doctors and nurses working in maternity provision and primary health care.

### PREVENTION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND KEY POPULATIONS

#### POLICY DIALOGUE; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; PARTNERSHIPS

Through support from the Joint Team, the international youth empowerment/awareness raising programme Dance4Life was introduced in Kyrgyzstan, reaching over 750 young people, including young people in key populations. The programme aims to reduce risks associated with HIV/STI and violence, and encourages young people for early HIV testing and treatment initiation. Technical assistance was provided to produce and release the 'School Elections' educational youth series, receiving over 1.7 million views; the series broadcasts key messages about HIV, early testing and treatment, and reduces prejudice and stigma associated with HIV.

In addition, a chatbot is under development to provide young people, including young key populations, with correct and complete information about HIV, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) to encourage early HIV/STI testing and treatment; its anticipated reach is 30 000 young people annually.

As part of a pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) prevention programme, representatives of key populations improved their knowledge and skills on promotion of condom use for triple protection (STIs, HIV and unintended pregnancy) and other SRH-related issues. 127 people including men who have sex with men, sex workers and people who inject drugs, and outreach and social workers working with these key populations all received SRH information, and 55 of these also received on-site SRH counselling during rapid HIV testing; four positive cases of HIV were identified. 1800 information brochures and videos were developed to support effective condom use as part of this prevention programme. In addition, an online training for 19 young members of key populations focused on topics related to SRH, HIV, contraceptive choice, condom use for triple protection and leadership skills.

53 people (including NGO staff, psychologists and students) from all regions of Kyrgyzstan participated in an online training on psychoactive substance addiction therapy, to help practitioners in the field of drug addiction and rehabilitation psychologists, addiction counselors in rehabilitation centers, and social work specialists.

### **GENDER INEQUALITIES, STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION**

Capacity building support equipped 22 women living with HIV in Bishkek and Osh to participate in SRH training, improving their knowledge and skills on issues, and sharing their personal experiences in leadership and meaningful participation. Support was also provided to girls and women living with HIV, preventing gender-based violence (GBV) through mentorship and counselling on types of discrimination, violence and other negative discriminatory practices and protection ways to 16 women and girls HIV positive. In addition, trained volunteers from the Positive Deviance programme provided peer-to-peer support and organized seven self-support groups based on their organizations on Positive Champions.

Mapping among HIV services and CBOs was conducted, and 16 organizations and initiative groups were identified to partner in the 'Positive Deviance' programme. Over a period of four months, using the Positive Deviance approach, the Joint Team conducted capacity building training for seven women and 17 girls, provided technical assistance to four organizations, conducted training for 40 representatives of key population groups and NGO/CBO staff, and provided mentoring to support women and girls living with HIV in their workplaces in Osh and Bishkek.

After a capacity building training on Storytelling, Community Communication Skills and User Journey to combat self-stigma, stigma and discrimination provided by the Joint Team, a group of 14 Positive Deviants, representing different vulnerable and key population groups, including women living with HIV, started to implement various activities to engage more community members and share the experience of being a Positive Champion, including: mini-training sessions among their beneficiaries, trainings, providing peer-to-peer support to overcome stigma and self-stigma, support on psycho-emotional aspects and improve adherence on ARV among people living with HIV.

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

During the COVID-19 lockdown, people living with HIV who were clients at the National AIDS Centre (NAC) were provided with PPE, food kits and transportation for viral load / CD4 tests, through support from the Joint Team in partnership with the Global Fund. With high infection rates among primary health care providers, support for alternative solutions was provided, including smartphone-based consultations; Osh AIDS centre offered pre-testing counselling through this platform for pregnant women before HIV self-testing. HIV self-tests were procured and provided to the NAC. Access to ART was ensured by the provision of three-month multi-month dispensing (MMD) for all people living with HIV on ART; ART delivery was organized by multidisciplinary teams consisting of a doctor, a nurse, and a peer consultant during the lockdown period. Humanitarian assistance, in the form of dignity kits, was provided to over 100 marginalized women and girls, people living with HIV, people who inject drugs, LGBTI people and sex workers.

In response to the Ministry of Education request, the Joint Team produced video lessons supporting uninterrupted HIV/SRHR/COVID-19 education for young learners in grades 6-11 during the pandemic. The first 16 of 50 lessons are already available at the national educational portal, and have received over 2000 views. Support was also provided to establish and maintain a social media platform information site, reaching over 450 000 young people with HIV and COVID-19 messaging.

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

Development of psychosocial support guidelines has been initiated by key population community members, with support from the Joint Team and involvement of psychologists, to address the emotional burnout of key populations in crises/emergency situations, including the COVID-19 pandemic. This community-led initiative is building towards empowerment, mental health and wellbeing of vulnerable groups.



PERSISTING AND EMERGING CHALLENGES AND BOTTLENECKS	KEY FUTURE ACTIONS TO RESPOND TO CHALLENGES AND UNBLOCK BOTTLENECKS
<p>Progress is still needed towards the 90-90-90 targets, which have been impeded by the pandemic.</p>	<p>Contribute to 90-90-90 strategy achievement through support for SRH programmes, especially treatment adherence. A new project implemented by the Joint Team is expected to reach newly diagnosed people living with HIV, increasing their awareness and motivating to start treatment by peers.</p> <p>Support finalization of the PMTCT barriers and recommendations report to accelerate the progress of and continuation of infant ARV treatment.</p> <p>Develop recommendations on remote HIV service provision for pregnant women, based on the analysis of communications during COVID-19.</p>
<p>A high incidence of HIV transmission persists in Kyrgyzstan. Prevention programmes including SRH are needed, and stigma and discrimination also pose a barrier in accessing healthcare.</p>	<p>Support promotion of condom use for triple protection through CSOs applying peer-to-peer approach.</p> <p>Support capacity building for SRH in key populations and people living with HIV involving community-based organizations and raising awareness of key population groups.</p> <p>Support elimination of stigma and discrimination against key populations and people living with HIV through media campaigns and awareness raising activities in health care workers.</p>
<p>Despite much effort and funding, legal barriers still persist, impeding prevention programmes among key population groups.</p>	<p>Active involvement in legislation review process to be conducted in 2021, interaction and advocacy with law enforcement bodies.</p>
<p>Drug procurement legal mechanisms are not yet finalized.</p>	<p>Support Government in elaboration of regulatory documents to initiate international drug procurement.</p>
<p>Young people are deprioritized in the state policy on HIV, and limited funding for prevention activities comes from external sources. There is a lack of relevant instruments and capacity to work with youth in the public domain.</p>	<p>Support testing, finalization and release of HIV/SRH chatbot for young people; complete and distribute the remaining video lessons for HIV/health education; support further development of a youth-targeting social media platform, including links with other youth-facing outlets especially in remote areas.</p>
<p>Stigma and discrimination, GBV, gender inequality.</p>	<p>Support the ‘Positive Deviants’ approach to build capacity and potential of women and girls.</p> <p>Support skills development (for start-up development, business initiative support) to improve the socioeconomic situation of women and girls living with HIV.</p>

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