

# MALAYSIA

*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
Antiretroviral treatment (ART) and treatment adherence services are available for refugees and asylum seekers living with HIV.	<b>ON TRACK</b>	In 2020, treatment coverage rate among refugees and asylum seekers living with HIV in Malaysia was 67%, a slight increase from 62% in 2019 (UNHCR Malaysia, 2020).
Elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV (eMTCT), syphilis and hepatitis B.	<b>ON TRACK</b>	By the end of 2020, 95% of the pregnant women living with HIV had access to ART, and mother-to-child transmission of HIV including during the breastfeeding period was at 1.7%. The early infant diagnosis (EID) rate in Malaysia was 95% (GAM 2021).
Scale up HIV combination prevention, differentiated care, and treatment services for key populations.	<b>SLOW PROGRESS</b>	Due to competing priorities arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, the implementation of the differentiated care model for key populations has been postponed to 2021.
Reduction of stigma and discrimination towards key populations.	<b>ON TRACK</b>	Implementation of the Malaysia Stigma Evaluation Survey (MySES) was initiated in 2020 by the Ministry of Health, to be completed by mid-2021. Subsequent initiatives will include the expansion of capacity building programmes for healthcare providers to improve quality of services.

### JOINT TEAM

UNHCR, UNDP, WHO, UNAIDS SECRETARIAT

## JOINT PROGRAMME CONTRIBUTIONS AND RESULTS IN 2020

*In 2020, the Joint Team provided technical and financial support to ensure access to HIV treatment among asylum seekers, refugees, and vulnerable populations living with HIV. Efforts were also made to prepare Malaysia for the eMTCT of HIV and syphilis and certification process, which was postponed to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. National and international academic institute and key partners in the HIV response were engaged to assess existing gaps and make concrete recommendation for the scale up HIV combination prevention and pre-exposure prophylaxis services in the country.*

### TREATMENT COVERAGE AMONG REFUGEES

#### TECHNICAL SUPPORT; COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT; PARTNERSHIPS

In 2020, an estimated 176 out of the total 269 refugees and asylum seekers living with HIV in Malaysia were accessing ART—the Joint Team provided partial and full support for monthly treatment supply of 130 people living with HIV enrolled on ART services. 73 refugees living with HIV also received periodic viral load tests as part of the Joint Team's treatment adherence and service monitoring programme. All the recorded 269 refugees living with HIV had access to a telephone-based counselling and support service facilitated by trained refugee health workers; and 11 refugees living with HIV requiring additional support received financial assistance to cover outpatient costs and transport to the health facilities.

### PMTCT COVERAGE

#### POLICY DIALOGUE; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT; PARTNERSHIPS

While the Global Validation Advisory Committee (GVAC) and Ministry of Health in Malaysia jointly postponed the review of the national progress towards eMTCT of HIV and syphilis and certification process until June 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Joint Team continued to provide technical support to address existing bottlenecks and ensure the necessary preparation for the validation processes. This included documenting the needs and challenges around active community engagement in prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV (PMTCT) programmes and the rights of people living with HIV to social protection through community and stakeholder consultations. The Joint Team further coordinated discussions between the Ministry of Health, GVAC, and World Health Organization Western Pacific Region on the requirements and planning for the review of the validation certification due in 2021.

### COMBINATION PREVENTION

#### TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT; COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT; PARTNERSHIPS

At the end of 2020, the Joint Team coordinated and led a country focus group discussion among key stakeholders, including Malaysian AIDS Council, University of Malaysia-Centre of Excellence for Research in AIDS (CeRIA), University of Mississippi Medical Centre (UMMC) and Federation of Reproductive Health Association-Malaysia (FHRAM) on assessing existing gaps and plans for the scaling up of HIV combination prevention efforts. This included plans for scaling up pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) services for men who have sex with men and other key populations and the introduction of HIV self-testing. Recommendations from these discussions will inform the development, implementation, and monitoring of HIV prevention strategies in 2021.

### **STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION TOWARDS KEY POPULATIONS UPSTREAM ADVOCACY; POLICY DIALOGUE; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; PARTNERSHIPS**

The Joint Team supported the SEED Foundation—a community-led organization working to empower people living with HIV and transgender people—to produce advocacy videos to promote positive attitudes towards transgender persons and eliminate all forms of stigma and discrimination. Video materials were also used by SEED for its international events and internal advocacy activities, including training and workshops. An estimated 250 national and international audiences are expected to benefit from these materials in 2021.

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

The Joint Team provided technical and financial support to improve access to ART services for refugees and asylum seekers living with HIV who faced difficulties in collecting their monthly supply of ARVs from the designated pharmacy; a total of 30 beneficiaries received their medication supplies without interruption using courier services. To ensure adherence to treatment, 48 refugees and asylum seekers living with HIV also received transportation subsidy for their subsequent follow-up appointments until the end of 2020.

As a result of financial and technical support provided to the Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC), 50 migrants living with HIV were identified through the Kuala Lumpur AIDS Support Services (KLASS) and PT Foundation and were provided with a three-month supply of ARVs for free, improving their access to treatment.

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

Initiatives led or supported by the Joint Team collectively contribute to the 2030 Agenda and achievement of the SDGs, via reducing child and maternal mortality rates (SDG 3), addressing inequalities and intersecting vulnerabilities including among refugees and migrants living with HIV (SDG 10), and strengthening public service systems to ensure people living with HIV get the same treatment and are not discriminated against in service delivery (SDG 16).

The first United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021-2025 for Malaysia was developed and is being finalized in collaboration with the government. The Joint Team will be contributing to the Collaborative Output 1.2: Social services are strengthened to ensure access to high quality, equity-focused provision that promotes the wellbeing of all.

PERSISTING AND EMERGING CHALLENGES AND BOTTLENECKS	KEY FUTURE ACTIONS TO RESPOND TO CHALLENGES AND UNBLOCK BOTTLENECKS
<p>The COVID-19 pandemic presented substantial challenges in programme implementation and continuity of facility- and community-based HIV services. Social restriction measures coupled with the economic slowdown heightened the vulnerability of people living with HIV and key populations, including refugees and asylum seekers.</p>	<p>Continue technical and financial support to civil society organisations implementing community-based HIV services, to address the needs of people living with HIV and key populations.</p> <p>Maintain technical and financial support to scale up treatment, periodic viral load testing, and treatment adherence programmes for the new and existing refugees and asylum seekers living with HIV in Malaysia.</p> <p>Coordinate with all partners working on the HIV response to increase advocacy for comprehensive, right based, and equitable HIV prevention, care, and treatment services for all.</p>
<p>Review of the progress towards eMTCT of HIV and syphilis has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>	<p>Continue monitoring and support the preparation process for the review of progress towards the eMTCT targets and certification.</p>
<p>In Malaysia, transgender people continue to experience wide-spread discrimination—with a lack of provisions prohibiting or penalising discriminatory acts such as eviction, job loss, denial of health services, and assault based on gender identity and sexual orientation.</p> <p>Recently implemented regulation on media productions limited the objective of the SEED Foundation in reaching wider populations with a video campaign on stigma and discrimination towards transgender people in accessing healthcare, employment, housing, education, and other public services.</p>	<p>Continue to provide convening support and policy advisory to advocacy groups in addressing stigma and discrimination in public legal and health service systems, through public engagements, capacity development, public policy recommendations and other innovative approaches, including the establishment of a hotline for people living with HIV to access legal support.</p> <p>Provide technical assistance to strengthen enabling legal environment necessary to ensuring access to justice for people who use drugs and people living with HIV.</p>

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