

MAURITANIA

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
Improve access to targeted HIV services among key populations, and intensify community-led voluntary HIV testing and counselling.	SLOW PROGRESS	The national HIV testing strategy (2020-2024) was developed. At the end of 2020, 42% of people living with HIV knew their HIV status, and an estimated 40% of all the people living with HIV were on antiretroviral treatment (ART) (GAM 2021). 18% of people living with HIV reached viral suppression (SENLIS 2020).
Elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV.	SLOW PROGRESS	As of 2020, coverage of pregnant women who received ART for mother-to-child transmission of HIV (PMTCT) in Mauritania was at 20% (GAM 2021).
Programmatic mapping and size estimation of key populations completed to inform the HIV response; Complete the Stigma Index 2.0.	ON TRACK	Stigma index 2.0 and size estimation of key populations could not be finalized in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic; they are planned for 2021.

JOINT TEAM

UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, WHO, WORLD BANK, UNAIDS SECRETARIAT, IOM, OHCHR

JOINT PROGRAMME CONTRIBUTIONS AND RESULTS IN 2020

In Mauritania, the Joint Team continued with its efforts to scale up HIV testing, treatment, support, and public sensitization programmes. HIV testing and treatment services were expanded to include key population, migrants, and refugees, including refugee pregnant women who are enrolled for antenatal care. HIV prevention and uptake of services were promoted through public outreach initiatives in collaboration with relevant government authorities and community networks. The Joint Team procured personal protective equipment and other commodities to curb the impact of COVID-19 pandemic and ensure continuity of HIV services for people living with HIV and key populations.

HIV TESTING, TREATMENT AND CARE**POLICY ADVICE; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Following the development of the national HIV testing strategy 2020-2024, the Joint Team provided technical and financial support for the validation workshop, which was held with 25 participants representing the Ministry of Health, development partners, and civil society.

The Joint Team provided technical and management support to the Ministry of Health ensuring access to HIV testing and treatment for refugees. At the end of 2020, there were 35 urban refugees living with HIV (27 males, 7 females, and a two-year-old child) in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou cities, as well as 13 refugees living with HIV in Mbera camp, and all were enrolled on ART services.

The Joint Team provided financial and technical support to the SOS Pairs Educateurs—an association of peer educators—to engage networks and associations of key populations and promote HIV prevention methods and HIV self-testing. During this one-day event in Nouakchott city, various information, education, and communication materials, including leaflets and flyers were produced and distributed among people from key population groups.

As a result of technical and financial assistance provided to the Ministry of Health, the national care strategy was developed to further strengthen synergies between HIV and other health areas, and ensure access to holistic and comprehensive care services to people living with and affected by HIV in Mauritania; this includes specific targets in terms of task shifting, availability of ARVs and inputs, nutritional care for people living with HIV, capacity building of institutions and civil society, and a reliable health information system.

ELIMINATION OF MOTHER-TO-CHILD TRANSMISSION OF HIV**POLICY ADVICE; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

As a result of support provided by the Joint Team, all pregnant refugee women in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou cities received voluntary HIV counselling and testing as part of their routine antenatal care in 2020, based on the recommendations of the national HIV response. In 2021, health facilities in Mbera camp are expected to integrate HIV testing and PMTCT services as part of the routine antenatal care services to ensure elimination of vertical HIV transmission among pregnant refugee women in the camp.

HIV PREVENTION, AND ACCESS TO SERVICES**UPSTREAM ADVOCACY; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; FOSTERING PARTNERSHIPS; RESOURCE MOBILIZATION**

To increase knowledge and promote uptake of HIV prevention, treatment, and care services among vulnerable and key populations, the Joint Team provided technical and financial support for various HIV sensitization initiatives. For instance, in partnership with the Ministry of Youth and Sport, 620 young people were sensitized on HIV prevention; 240 migrants and refugees living in and outside camps in Mauritania improved their knowledge around HIV prevention and treatment; and support to the national civil society reached 580 prisoners across the country increasing their awareness on HIV and COVID-19 prevention. Additionally, 50 men who have sex with men improved their understanding of HIV prevention and received voluntary HIV counselling and testing.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE COVID-19 RESPONSE

Through support by the Joint Team, a rapid assessment to identify the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people living with HIV and their immediate needs was completed and the results guided the pandemic response. For example, 1000 pieces of face masks, 250 litres of hydroalcoholic gel, and 20 cases of bleach were distributed to 2500 people living with HIV. An information brochure comprising key results of the survey have been developed and widely disseminated to ensure the continuity of HIV and essential healthcare services among people living with HIV.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTEGRATED SDG AGENDA

In 2020, the Joint Team continued to provide technical support for the implementation of the national Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity (SCAPP) 2016-2030 and successfully advocated for the integration of HIV/AIDS components to hasten the HIV response. The three-phase strategy provides framework that would enable Mauritania to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Support was also provided for the completion and validation of the National Health Development Plan (2021-2030).

PERSISTING AND EMERGING CHALLENGES AND BOTTLENECKS	KEY FUTURE ACTIONS TO RESPOND TO CHALLENGES AND UNBLOCK BOTTLENECKS
<p>Punitive laws and failure to recognize key populations, such as female sex workers and men who have sex with men pose a challenge in reaching people at high-risk of HIV infection with comprehensive HIV prevention, care, and treatment service.</p>	<p>Continue supporting non-governmental and civil society organizations who have been able to gain the trust of these populations to expand HIV services.</p> <p>Provide technical support to complete the Stigma Index 2.0.</p> <p>Continue supporting the Government in the implementation of the HIV self-testing pilot programme.</p>
<p>The HIV response in Mauritania is highly dependent on donor funding. Lack of dedicated domestic funding and human resource, weak health management information and supply chain systems, and low absorptive capacity of the national structures continue to hamper sustainability and efficiency of the response.</p>	<p>Provide technical and financial support to develop the National HIV/AIDS and STIs Strategic Plan (NSP) 2022-2026.</p> <p>Support technically and financially the preparation of the Global Fund grant proposal for 2022-2024 period under the new funding model (NFM 3).</p> <p>Follow up on Government's promises to increase public expenditure for the national HIV response and cover the costs of treatment from domestic resources for all people living with HIV in Mauritania.</p>

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