

PARAGUAY

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
HIV combination prevention programmes among key populations scaled-up in regions with higher prevalence and incidence of HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).	NO PROGRESS	In 2020, initial dialogues were held with the National AIDS Program and civil society organizations to identify priority areas and possible implementation actions. However, no further progress was made due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced redirection of resources and personnel to respond to the emergency.
The National AIDS Program is technically strengthened and trained in management and strategic monitoring to take over the activities that are currently covered by the Global Fund grant.	NO PROGRESS	Planned training activities could not be implemented due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

JOINT TEAM

UNFPA, WHO-PAHO, UNDP, UNAIDS SECRETARIAT

JOINT PROGRAMME CONTRIBUTIONS AND RESULTS IN 2020

In Paraguay, the COVID-19 pandemic had a knock-on impact on HIV prevention, care, and treatment services and programme implementation process in 2020. The UN Joint Team provided critical support to mitigate the effect and ensure continuity of these services among people living with HIV and key populations. Community agents were capacitated around case finding and management of sexually transmitted infections and COVID-19. Women living with HIV were trained as HIV and COVID-19 lay counsellors to support their communities with accurate prevention and treatment information. Technical support was provided for the first social assessment on impediments that prevent transgender people from accessing employment, health, education, and social protection services in Paraguay. A sustainability and transition action plan was developed and approved to strengthen Government leadership and allocation of public expenditure for the HIV response. The Joint Team procured nutrition supplies and commodities and distributed to vulnerable people from transgender and other key population groups.

COMBINATION HIV PREVENTION

CAPACITY BUILDING; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In 2020, the Joint Team continued to provide support to the National AIDS Programme and the AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF) to scale up HIV combination prevention and treatment services in Paraguay. This included training of civil society activists improving their skills around engagement and monitoring of key populations in relation to access to HIV services and eventual barriers they could have. Currently, HIV combination prevention programmes are implemented by civil society organizations in Asunción, with support from the National AIDS Programme.

ACCESS TO SERVICES FOR KEY POPULATIONS

POLICY ADVICE; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As a result of support provided to Nepyru, 50 community agents improved their understanding and skills around innovative methods of active case finding and active case management of HIV, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and COVID-19. The training also focused on human rights to scale-up rights-based and friendly HIV testing, care, and treatment services, and promote adherence to care and treatment among people living with HIV and vulnerable populations.

The first social study on barriers to access health, education, employment, and social protection schemes among transgender people was completed through technical and financial support to the Panambi—a civil society organization working to uphold the rights of transgender people in Paraguay. Key findings and recommendations from the assessment will inform the 2021-2023 advocacy action plan of the Network of NGOs working on HIV to promote evidence-based policy reform and programming that address inequalities and human rights violations among transgender people.

A comprehensive strategy of the Network of NGOs working on HIV was developed to address stigma, discrimination, and human rights violations, including gender-based violence among vulnerable and key populations. Although the strategy was rolled out at the beginning of 2020, many of the activities were interrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, for example the monitoring of specific cases was limited to virtual platforms. The outreach is community based in the capital city, Asunción and in some provincial cities where there is a presence of a civil society organization working on HIV.

SYSTEM STRENGTHENING AND SUSTAINABILITY

ADVOCACY; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; PARTNERSHIPS

With the support from the Joint Team, the Global Fund 2021-2024 grant proposal, entitled *Closing gaps to reduce the incidence of HIV and AIDS-related deaths* was approved, securing US\$ 20 640 541 to scale up community-led and based services, including mental health for people living with HIV and key populations through social contracting. Technical support activities are also factored in the grant proposal to build capacity of civil society organizations on implementing programmes and managing social contracting mechanisms.

Support was further provided to develop a national sustainability and transition action plans to strengthen Government leadership and allocation of public expenditure for HIV programmes, including salaries and consumables currently funded through the Global Fund grants. These plans were approved by the Government and the Global Fund paving a way to a sustainable HIV response in Paraguay.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE COVID-19 RESPONSE

Through technical and financial support, 16 women living with HIV were trained as COVID-19 and HIV lay-counsellors improving access to HIV and COVID-19 services among women living with HIV, including accurate information, HIV prevention commodities and personal protection equipment.

The Joint Team supported the Casa Diversa—a self-administered shelter for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people—with US\$ 6000 worth of nutrition supplies and other consumables goods to help 52 vulnerable transgender persons and people from other key population groups during the COVID-19 pandemic.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTEGRATED SDG AGENDA

The work of the Joint UN Team on AIDS is aimed at ensuring access to HIV, health and social protection services for the most vulnerable people in Paraguay, contributing to the leave no one behind principle of the Sustainable Development Agenda. Joint efforts are contributing to the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2020-2024, and are reported in UN Info.

PERSISTING AND EMERGING CHALLENGES AND BOTTLENECKS	KEY FUTURE ACTIONS TO RESPOND TO CHALLENGES AND UNBLOCK BOTTLENECKS
<p>Essential health services, including HIV and STI testing and treatment, and sexual and reproductive health services were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Pandemic-related social restrictions and lockdown measures resulted in loss of income among transgender persons practicing sex work and sex workers exacerbating their vulnerabilities in accessing basic needs, such as food and health care.</p> <p>Key populations, particularly transgender people and sex workers were also left out of social protection schemes during the COVID-19 quarantine and lockdown periods.</p> <p>Lack of access to technology and internet connection restricted HIV sensitization, service promotion and support programmes targeting key populations residing outside of big cities.</p>	<p>Support the National AIDS Programme to increase access to community-led HIV self-testing and commodity distribution services to ensure 95% of people living with HIV in Paraguay know their HIV status.</p> <p>Continue monitoring the challenges key populations face during the pandemic and provide technical support to develop appropriate responses to address inequalities and human rights violations among this group.</p> <p>Provide technical and financial support for the development and implementation of an advocacy action plan and a communication strategy for policy change and effective programming to meet the needs of transgender people in Paraguay.</p> <p>Continue supporting civil society organizations of key populations to implement the Global Fund activity plan for civil society organizations aimed at promoting uptake and improving access to HIV services among key populations and monitoring access to ART among people living with HIV; and build capacity of civil society representatives to address all forms of human rights violations including gender-based violence and ensure access to justice.</p>
<p>The frequent turnover of authorities continues to challenge coordination and advocacy actions in the national HIV response.</p>	<p>Continue close collaboration with the Government, development partners, and civil society to strengthen programme coordination and alignment with the national HIV response.</p>

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