

PHILIPPINES

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 the end of 2021, 90% of people living with HIV have been diagnosed, 85% of people living with HIV are accessing treatment.	ON TRACK	68% of people living with HIV have been diagnosed, 61% of people living with HIV and who know their status are accessing treatment (GAM 2021).
By 2021, coverage of HIV prevention programmes among key populations, including young key populations, increased to 50% compared to (Baseline 2017, <30% among key populations).	ON TRACK	No updated figures yet for prevention coverage since the Integrated HIV Behavioural and Serologic Surveillance (IBSS) which serves as the data source has not yet been conducted. Latest data available show that coverage of HIV prevention reached 71.8% among sex workers, 14.6% among men who have sex with men, 51.8% among people who inject drugs, and 37.6% among transgender people (IBSS 2018).
By the end of 2021, policies and guidelines to facilitate removal of barriers to access services for key populations are in place in 20 priority sites.	ON TRACK	With support from the Joint Team, the development of the Human Rights Roadmap was initiated, for expected approval in 2021.
By the end of 2021, national and local government investment on HIV increased by at least 10% from the baseline (US\$22 million in 2018).	SLOW PROGRESS	Domestic investments for the HIV program from the Department of Health and the Philippine Health Insurance increased by 4% from US\$ 781 042 in 2018 to US\$ 1 244 583 in 2020 (Global Fund Funding Request 2020-2022 in USAID Protect Health Inception Report).

JOINT TEAM

UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, WHO, UNAIDS SECRETARIAT

JOINT PROGRAMME CONTRIBUTIONS AND RESULTS IN 2020

Self-testing, community-based testing and partner-notification testing are among the range of services which have been introduced or scaled up in Philippines in 2020 to move the country closer to the 90-90-90 targets, while new treatment centres were established, and healthcare workers were trained to increase coverage. Advocacy for PrEP has made progress, including the development of government-approved guidelines. Partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs) have been a key feature of community engagement on HIV and COVID-19 prevention, as well as expanding sexual and reproductive health education among adolescents. Development of a Human Rights Roadmap has been initiated, to benefit vulnerable populations including people living with HIV, LGBTI persons and people in closed settings.

HIV TESTING AND TREATMENT

POLICY ADVICE; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Technical assistance was provided for the transition to the Tenofovir/Lamivudine/Dolutegravir (TLD) treatment regimen, including support for the Department of Health's National Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (DOH-NASPC) documentation on a fixed dose combination to be approved and included in the National Drug Formulary. Additionally, a TLD transition readiness assessment was conducted and TLD transition strategies, plans and training materials were developed; as of December 2020, 253 clients were enrolled on TLD.

Self-testing was included in the package of services offered by selected adolescent-friendly health facilities. There are discussions underway on the expansion of such facilities in key cities in Metro Manila, such as the newly opened adolescent health clinic in Pasay.

The Joint Team worked closely with the National HIV Programme in the development of case-based surveillance (CBS) guidelines, reflecting the lowered minimum age of consent in line with the new HIV law and offering CBS to individuals at higher risk including pregnant women and diagnosed TB patients. HIV testing services guidelines were updated to include facility-based, community-based, self-screening and partner-notification testing, and were approved by the DOH-NASPC Programme. Partner notification was also included in the HIV Health Sector Plan and is available in the city of Iloilo through the HIV self-screening pilot project.

Advocacy and identification of strategic treatment facilities resulted in two additional facilities in Sorsogon Province in Region 5 requesting accreditation, and two additional facilities being established in Aklan Province and Iloilo Province. Three CBOs were supported to establish a key populations-led facility which provide prevention and testing services to maximise reach to other nearby cities and towns. Support was also provided to implement a client-centred ART refill strategy 'Love on Wheels', in Region 3 and the national capital region; 45 e-bikes were distributed in 2020 to local government units to support treatment adherence through home delivery of ARVs.

PREVENTION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND KEY POPULATIONS

UPSTREAM ADVOCACY; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; FOSTERING PARTNERSHIPS

With technical support from the Joint Team, guidelines on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) have been developed by the DOH for endorsement in 2021, which aims to guide local government in the establishment of comprehensive sexual health programme. Additionally, two sets of national training of trainers on comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) have been held by the Department of Education through a series of webinars. The trainings, which were participated in by 826 teachers from 276 schools nationwide, aimed to build the skills of teachers to train their fellow teachers on how to integrate CSE throughout education (3-18 years).

Support for people-centred awareness for adolescents was a focus for the Joint Team, including via a nationwide creative contest to address the increasing HIV/AIDS cases in the country. Started in 2020, this project will train 50 youth organisations on child protection and basic HIV, including stigma reduction, promotion of HIV testing and treatment services, use of technology to address knowledge gaps, and encourage youth participation on HIV-responsive policies and programmes. Besides, support to a national HIV 'Innovation Hackathon' addressing SRH challenges in the community mobilised 32 adolescent groups across the country. The resulting initiatives, aiming at reducing stigma around HIV testing and promoting access to HIV prevention commodities, are co-designed, implemented and evaluated by adolescents and young people.

A series of demand-generation videos with key messages on HIV prevention have been developed in partnership with the Philippine Educational Theatre Association (PETA) and shared on partner platforms. Videos were specifically on HIV among young key populations in COVID-19 context (127 600 views), HIV and COVID-19 (35 000 views), gender-based violence (GBV) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) (80 900 views), PMTCT (85 300 views), and condoms as triple protection (150 400 views).

Technical assistance was provided to the Bangsamoro Youth Commission in the development of the Bangsamoro Youth Transition Priority Agenda, which identifies strategies and action points for youth in the areas of health, education, peace-building and security, governance, and active citizenship. The Agenda encourages youth participation in inclusive programmes which aim to promote health. The Joint Team provided technical inputs in the development of 2019 Magna Carta of Children in Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), including the articulation of age / gender-responsive culturally competent SRH services.

Following advocacy and technical support from the Joint Team, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) guidelines were approved by DOH providing access to 22 high-burden cities. PrEP is now registered with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and being dispensed in both private and CBO-run facilities. Interim guidelines have been approved, and inclusion of PrEP to the national drug formulary is also ongoing. Currently, procurement of PrEP is being supported by Global Fund and PEFPAR, targeting 7000 clients to be enrolled in three years. Demand-generation activities are ongoing, particularly those initiated by CBOs. By mid-2021, there are 500 clients initiated on PrEP.

Two webinars were delivered for law enforcement groups on the multifactorial nature of drug use and dependence, including discussion around the risks for HIV and the need for availability of HIV services. Three webinars on community-based drug treatment and rehabilitation were conducted and more than 500 people in prison participated.

HUMAN RIGHTS, STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION POLICY DIALOGUE; TECHNICAL SUPPORT; PARTNERSHIPS

The development of a Human Rights Road Map started, in collaboration with the Philippine National AIDS Council Committee on Human Rights. A desk review of local AIDS ordinances and anti-discrimination ordinances has been conducted and draft legislative templates developed, with support from HIV and LGBTI legal consultants provided by the Joint Team. Support was also provided to developing policy that protects maternal rights to healthcare among persons deprived of liberty.

Development and roll out of a social media campaign were supported, towards promoting equal rights and fair treatment of LGBTI people. Thirteen social media assets were produced for the campaign, reaching at least 130 000 people, with 11 000 online engagements.

INVESTMENT TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE RESPONSE

A local investment planning calculator developed by the Joint Team (which facilitates local government HIV/AIDS investment needs through cost and population estimates) has been revised and improved, content has been drafted for courses on local HIV investment planning, and literature review on local budget cycle and processes has been developed. A survey assessment tool is being finalised to inform the conduct of local investment planning workshop. Multimedia instruction has been provided to educate local government planning agents on local investment planning for HIV, budget advocacy, and other modules on HIV and LGBTQI.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE COVID-19 RESPONSE

The Government was assisted in the development of Joint Memorandum Circular for reference in reaching out to vulnerable groups during COVID-19 lockdown, through the convening support of the UN Joint Team—guidelines were influenced and drafted by the CSO members who were monitoring the situations of the key populations, particularly the mothers, infants, and adolescents living with HIV. Additionally, the Joint Team procured PPE for prisons and donated food packages to 15 detention facilities.

A survey on treatment and care concerns of people living with HIV in the Philippines in the time of COVID-19 was conducted which reached at least 125 000 people, with 301 respondents. These concerns for people living with HIV were disseminated to key partners and via social media, and a study conducted by an NGO on the intersection of COVID-19 and HIV in the context of human rights was supported. The findings reflect the realities of lockdown and its after-effects in terms of social protection (lack of access to public transport, and costs of couriering ARVs were the greatest barriers to people accessing treatment) and their recommendations will inform future Joint Team planning.

Technical assistance was provided to Philippine National Health Insurance Corporation in developing advice on ARV delivery, which was approved and released, and the Principal Recipient of Global Fund funds received technical support to explore options for differentiated ARV delivery models for hard-to-reach areas, such as the tuberculosis (TB)-HIV collaboration TB STRiders—motorbike riders who would normally be carrying TB tests were also engaged to deliver ARVs.

In response to the threat of COVID-19 and associated lockdown, a service model of adolescent health and HIV telemedicine in Iloilo was supported to provide online medical consultations for people living with HIV, schedule home-based laboratory services, ARV and other medication refills, psychosocial support services, and renewal of PhilHealth membership, in partnership with the Family Planning Organization of the Philippines. Free tele-psychotherapy services were provided to 60 people living with HIV and key populations. Also, guidelines were developed for safe adolescent and youth engagement with online platforms promoting mental health wellness among at-risk adolescents living with HIV.

An information dissemination campaign on HIV and COVID-19, and the rights of people living with HIV and key populations in the time of COVID-19 was produced, including Filipino-translated materials; 38 social media assets were produced and at least 7700 people were reached.

A programme was implemented to provide economic opportunities for female and transgender sex workers and other women disadvantaged by the COVID-19 pandemic. A partnership with a private sector food corporation has been formalised, providing financial management training to the 266 women enrolled in the programme. Additionally, a social amelioration programme was implemented to provide allowances to community health volunteers who continued providing HIV services during COVID-19.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTEGRATED SDG AGENDA

The Joint Plan on AIDS has contributed to the Partnership Framework for Sustainable Development under the People Pillar. The Joint Team conducted a study on intersection of COVID-19 and HIV in the context of human rights, working on the principle of 'leave no one behind'. The findings of the study reflect the realities of people's experience during the lockdown in terms of social protection; which are still happening as the COVID-19 crisis continues to affect the country. The recommendations can be used as basis to develop plans under the Socio-Economic and Peace-building Framework, specifically on "Shoring Social Protections Systems" which is one of the objectives under People Pillar. The recommendations can also be used as an advocacy tool for policy change, and were referenced in the development of the country's human rights roadmap. The Joint Team also supported the implementation of an impact assessment of the pandemic on national HIV response; the findings and recommendations have been utilized by the UN system and government partners as they develop adaptive plans in their COVID-19 response.

PERSISTING AND EMERGING CHALLENGES AND BOTTLENECKS	KEY FUTURE ACTIONS TO RESPOND TO CHALLENGES AND UNBLOCK BOTTLENECKS
<p>The COVID crisis has severely impacted the implementation of the Joint Plan, diverting resources and focus, and delaying or preventing programmed activities; using online modalities has been challenging due to inadequate technology and lack of internet connectivity, especially in rural communities.</p>	<p>Develop a joint operational plan with the national capital region, particularly aiming to address the gaps brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as a strong monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan with specific output and outcome indicators.</p>
<p>Current investment is insufficient to implement planned activities, and greater collaboration is required.</p>	<p>Leverage investments and strengthen collaboration among the Joint Team, government, CBOs and other partners.</p> <p>Popularize and localize AIDS policy to ensure full and proper implementation; and support local government units in the development of local investment plans.</p>
<p>Slow scale-up of prevention services.</p>	<p>Continue to provide support for scaling-up coverage of PreP services, as well as for the adoption of the Combination Prevention Standard Operating Procedures.</p>
<p>Additional efforts are needed to close the treatment gaps, including through addressing the delays in receiving testing results.</p>	<p>Advocate for the approval of the revised Differentiated Testing Guidelines and the revised HIV Treatment guidelines; support expansion of Rapid HIV Diagnostic Algorithm (rHIVDA) testing sites; and support registration of Dolutegravir and its inclusion in the national drug formulary.</p>
<p>Persistence of barriers to access HIV services, including stigma and discrimination directed to people living with HIV and key populations.</p>	<p>Support the operationalisation of the Human Rights Roadmap, through its integration in the next AIDS Medium Term Plan.</p>

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