



Cycling competition to reduce HIV related Stigma and Discrimination , Gharb Positive Club

UNAIDS in the Islamic Republic of Iran

History

UNAIDS is the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS, composed of a Secretariat and 11 UN system co-sponsors. It is the only UN entity with civil society represented on its governing body.

UNAIDS leads the global effort to end AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) as a public health threat by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals, supports countries to determine their AIDS investment needs and mobilize resources, and helps those resources go further.

Globally, UNAIDS provides the strategic direction, advocacy, coordination, and technical support needed to catalyze and connect leadership from governments, the private sector and communities to deliver life-saving HIV services.

Vision

UNAIDS draws on the experience and expertise of 11 UN co-sponsors to fulfil its vision of:

- **zero** new HIV infections
- **zero** discrimination
- **zero** AIDS-related deaths

Guided by the Global AIDS Strategy (2021–2026), UNAIDS seeks to reduce the inequalities that drive the AIDS epidemic.

The Strategy aims to unite countries, communities, and partners to fast-track progress towards the vision of “three zeros”, building on three interlinked priorities:

- Equitable and equal access to HIV services and solutions;
- Remove barriers to achieving HIV outcomes; and
- Sustainable and efficient HIV responses.

Work in Iran

Historically, Iran’s response to HIV is well-known for its longstanding harm reduction programme. In recent years, however, the main route of transmission has transitioned from injecting drug use to sexual transmission. Such changes require further efforts to control the epidemic. Meanwhile, the impact of sanctions, and latterly COVID-19, has challenged the country’s capacity to procure essential HIV medicines and diagnostics.



Training of Trainers workshop on HIV, Kerman Positive Club

The United Nations supports Iran's 5th HIV National Strategic Plan (NSP5) through the UNAIDS-led Joint UN Work Plan, which reflects the mutually reinforcing priorities and strategies of the country, the UNAIDS family, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and seeks to mitigate the simultaneous impact of the HIV and COVID pandemics, and to expedite implementation of HIV prevention, diagnosis, treatment, care and support programmes.

UNAIDS' work in Iran is primarily concerned with people living with and most affected by HIV. We mobilize political, technical, and financial resources to ensure they create maximum impact:

Maximize equitable and equal access to HIV services and solutions.

Prevention

UNAIDS promoted greater national leadership and ownership by supporting country accession to and participation in the Global HIV Prevention Coalition, developing a national primary prevention roadmap, incorporating prevention targets into NSP5, as well as strategies for Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and condom programming, targeting key populations.

Test, treat, care, viral suppression

UNAIDS successfully advocated the adoption of PrEP for sero-discordant couples and key populations into national antiretroviral treatment (ART) guidelines, supported the development of customized national ART manuals, as well as the piloting and scale-up of mobile VCT services, which were rolled out in 39 jurisdictions. UNAIDS also supported the development of Goals Testing Model to inform the national testing strategy.

Vertical transmission, pediatric AIDS

UNAIDS led and coordinated the United Nations' evidence-based dialogue with national counterparts

to establish the national PMTCT (prevention of mother-to-child transmission) programme, and the subsequent adoption of EMTCT (elimination of mother-to-child transmission) as a national priority under NSP5.

Break down barriers to achieving HIV outcomes

Community-led responses

UNAIDS has mobilized and promoted community leadership through successive World AIDS Day campaigns, in the form of concerts, music albums, competitions, festivals, exhibitions, and publications.

To promote dialogue between providers and communities, UNAIDS has supported the development of a comprehensive national HIV communication programme. UNAIDS has also leveraged its longstanding partnership with the Global Fund and the National AIDS Programme to promote positive health, dignity and prevention through the Positive Clubs project, which has reached more than 9000 people living with and affected by HIV. The work of Positive Clubs has been recognized internationally, being awarded five Red Ribbon Awards since 2008. UNAIDS hopes to support an evolution of the Positive Clubs platform, so it becomes an essential cog in the HIV response, promoting uptake by the community of various health and social protection services, and acting as a coordination node for an efficient, effective, and multi-faceted national HIV response.

Human rights and gender equality

UNAIDS advocates Iran's ownership and leadership of the human rights agenda in the context of the national HIV response, supporting its constructive participation in the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board, and pioneering knowledge

production in the form of the Stigma Index and Stigma Index II studies, in collaboration with the Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+) and Johns Hopkins University, as well as a study of the national charter of citizens' rights in the context of the HIV response.

UNAIDS also backs national efforts to reduce HIV-related stigma and discrimination in community, healthcare, and humanitarian settings, including country participation in the Global Partnership to Eliminate All Forms of HIV-related Stigma & Discrimination, development of an anti-discrimination byelaw, officially promulgated on World AIDS Day 2020, and of an ethics framework for NSP5.

Putting women living with and affected by HIV at the center of a resilient HIV and economic response, UNAIDS supported sustainable growth for women living with or affected by HIV (WLAHIV) through various capacity development programmes, income generation schemes and safety net initiatives.

Young people

A great deal of UNAIDS' work in recent years has focused on young people and their vulnerabilities to HIV. As part of multilateral partnership with two of our cosponsors, UNFPA and UNICEF, together with the Netherlands Embassy and the Ministry of Health & Medical Education, UNAIDS backstopped capacity development, normative and formative studies within the framework of a pilot programme delivering health and HIV prevention and support services to vulnerable young people.

The programme is based on a feasibility assessment that aimed for long-term sustainability, and has produced dedicated guidelines and training packages on psychological crisis interventions for at-risk adolescents, eight short animations and a short film on STI prevention, care and management, a comprehensive service package for adolescent living with or affected by HIV; as well as legal and ethical standards for service delivery, and establishment a referral system to address adolescents' legal issues.

UNAIDS also developed Standard Operating Procedures regarding adherence to treatment and disclosure, together with virtual workshops (mental crisis intervention, STI and service package for adolescent living with or affected by HIV) for service providers in Voluntary Counselling and Testing Centers (to reach approximately 1380 adolescents living with or affected by HIV).

UNAIDS has also promoted leadership and partnership among young people through its collaboration with the Iranian Medical Students

Association (IMSA), formalized in a tripartite LoA between the Centre for Communicable Diseases Control (CDC), UNAIDS and IMSA, resulting notably in the development of #REDXIR, a stigma & discrimination gamification initiative to address HIV-related misconceptions, cognitive biases, and stigma among healthcare professionals; and launch of the All Iranians Disapprove Stigmatization (AIDS) initiative, which was nominated for the 2021 Rex Crossley Award in support of UNAIDS. IMSA and UNAIDS also conducted virtual Training-of-Trainers workshops on HIV and reproductive health for 114 medical students and held an international panel on "medical students' role in control of HIV in society" as part of the 2020 World AIDS Day campaign.



HIV Counseling /Testing Booth, Khoram Abad Positive Club

Fully resource and sustain efficient HIV response and integrate into systems for health, social protection, crises, and pandemic responses.

Fully funded and efficient HIV response

UNAIDS' technical partnership with the Global Fund and the National AIDS Programme has led to the successful development and submission of successive grant applications since 2008, with UNAIDS an influential member of the Global Fund Country Coordinating Mechanism and CCM Oversight Body.

UNAIDS also leads, coordinates, and facilitates planning of the UN contribution to the national HIV response, and in this capacity chairs the Joint UN Team on AIDS, ensures that HIV/AIDS is prioritized within United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, and produces knowledge, in the form of national HIV investment cases, that provides clear direction for the national response and the UN's contribution to it.



HIV Counseling /Testing Campaign , Chatra NGO

Integration of HIV into systems for health and social protection

UNAIDS has for years supported the monitoring and evaluation functions of the National AIDS Programme, developing its capacity to track the epidemic and response through annual Global AIDS Monitoring exercises and Spectrum country estimations.

Humanitarian settings and pandemics

UNAIDS reacted quickly to the dual threat of COVID and HIV, mobilizing €553,000 through the ECHO (European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations) mechanism to deliver evidence-based, community-led support through more than 680 civil society organizations to more than 84,000 beneficiaries:

- Generating evidence including studies of SARS-CoV-2 prevalence among PLHIV and of the COVID-19-related needs of PLHIV in Iran, as well as a dedicated community-based Monitoring and Evaluation framework and capacity building of 219 service providers and PLHIV which yielded substantive granular data.
- Production of dedicated Risk Communication and Community Engagement material in the form of 16 minutes of animation on the basics of HIV/AIDS and COVID-19, prevention of COVID-19 in the context of HIV, and the necessity of continuing ART and addressing

stigma and discrimination during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Procurement of Personal Protective Equipment in the form of 1,800,000 three-layer surgical masks; 2,000,000 powder-free latex gloves; 63,000 bottles of surface sanitizer; and 60,000 bottles of hand sanitizer.
- Allocation of 26 small grants to non-governmental organizations for innovative HIV/COVID projects during the COVID-19 pandemic, so far reaching 14,350 beneficiaries (9,237 men and 5,113 women).
- Procurement of antiretroviral medicines (660,000 tablets of Vonavir® and 521,840 tablets of Truvada®) to cover the needs of 10,222 PLHIV.

UNAIDS thus works to ensure that **needs are met**, **voices are heard**, and **goals are reached**.

For further details, you can reach us at:

The United Nations Building,

8, Shahrzad Blvd, Darrou,

Tehran PO Box 15875-1557

Tel: +98 21 2285 8950

Fax: +98 21 2285 8951

E-mail: iran@unaid.org