

UNAIDS PROGRAMME COORDINATING BOARD WORKING GROUP

THEMATIC SEGMENT:

Priority and key populations¹ especially transgender people, and the path to the 2025 targets: Reducing health inequities through tailored and systemic responses

MEETING SUMMARY: FIRST MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP

DATE: Thursday 20 April 2023

MEETING AGENDA

- Welcome and introduction
- Presentation of the annotated outline of the background note
- Discussion on the annotated outline of the background note
- Presentation of and discussion of the zero-draft agenda
- Next steps

SUMMARY

1. Welcome and introduction

Mr. Morten Ussing, Director Governance, UNAIDS Secretariat, welcomed the PCB working group to its first meeting for the preparation of the thematic segment of the 52nd PCB (28 June 2023) on *Priority and key populations¹ especially transgender people, and the path to the 2025 targets: Reducing health inequities through tailored and systemic responses*.

The Secretariat highlighted that the working group is established to create ownership of the PCB stakeholders in the framing of the background note and discussions for the PCB thematic segment. The members play an important role in shaping the day and the documentation that informs it. Mr. Ussing recalled that the Secretariat is responsible on behalf of the Executive Director for the background note, with Cosponsor support, and the working group providing the broader steer.

Mr. Ussing reminded that it is enshrined in the PCB Modus Operandi to have a decision-making segment and a thematic segment at each PCB meeting and recalled the process for selecting the theme. The PCB Bureau sends out a call for themes to the PCB members and the proposals for themes are reviewed by the PCB Bureau on the basis of a set of criteria. In this case, the Bureau asked for two proposals, one from Germany and one from the PCB

¹ As defined in the Global AIDS Strategy 2021-2026.

NGO delegation that overlapped, to be merged into one proposal. The Bureau then put forward its proposals for the themes for the thematic segments of the following year for PCB consideration and endorsement.

Mr. Ussing reminded the working group that the call for expressions of interested participants to join the working group stressed the possibility to include a person from a key population group in the spirit of the topic of this thematic segment.

The Secretariat said that the main expected outcome of the first meeting was to listen to the comments, inputs and suggestions on the proposed focus and key messages of the draft annotated outline of the background note and zero-draft agenda. At the second meeting, the first full draft of the background note of roughly twenty pages, the near-final agenda for the day as well as suggested speakers would be discussed. The draft background note and agenda would be shared with the group ahead of that meeting. The background note and thematic segment should speak to each other.

2. Presentation of the draft annotated outline of the background note for the thematic segment

Cleiton Euzebio de Lima, Senior Adviser of Community and Key Populations at the UNAIDS Secretariat introduced the outline of the background note. Mr. Euzebio highlighted that in last UNAIDS reports, progress against HIV remains fragile among key populations globally and among priority populations, such as children, adolescent girls and young women in sub-Saharan Africa. Key populations are disproportionately affected by HIV and account for the majority of new infections in all regions. In 2021, key populations (sex workers and their clients, gay men and other men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs, transgender people) and their sexual partners accounted for 70% of new HIV infections globally. Key populations and their partners accounted for 94% of new HIV infections outside of sub-Saharan Africa, and 51% of new HIV infections in sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Euzebio further explained that structural barriers prevent progress. Stigma, discrimination, violence and criminalization against key populations exacerbate social and economic inequality, poverty and exclusion, all of which can lead to increased vulnerability to HIV and other communicable and noncommunicable diseases. Intersecting inequalities and vulnerabilities exacerbate risks. For example, the prevalence of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) is higher among transgender people in prison compared with cisgender people in prison.

The presentation further provided a deeper insight into the different chapters of the background note. Mr. Euzebio explained that the background note will open with an overview of the available current epidemiological data related to key and priority populations. It will serve as a reminder about the commitments and targets for 2025 for these populations. From this section, the paper will focus specifically on key populations, especially transgender people. The background note will take this direction both because priority populations differ based on country and region, which creates a scope that is too broad for one background note or a one-day thematic segment, and because, in every setting, key populations have increased vulnerability to HIV. In this section the outline will bring an analysis of the inequalities that are preventing progress in the HIV response for key

populations, including related to access to health services, structural barriers, and also funding.

Mr. Euzebio highlighted that the next section of the background note will focus specifically on transgender people detailing the important gaps in data that we still face about this key population. It will discuss needs and challenges faced by transgender communities, including for example, the challenges they face in engaging in national HIV responses. Adopting an intersectional approach, it will show that transgender communities are not a monolithic group and that an effective response needs to consider the intersecting vulnerabilities related to issues like youth, drug use, people in prison etc.

With regards to how the HIV response can more effectively reduce the risk and impacts of HIV on key populations, Mr. Euzebio noted that the next session of the background note will present examples of initiatives being implemented in all regions, especially those tailored by and responding to the needs of key populations, especially transgender people.

Lastly, Mr Euzebio stressed that the paper will present a collection of recommendations for improvement of the HIV response at national, regional and global levels. He noted that 5 main areas of recommendations for reducing health inequities through tailored and systemic responses for key populations, especially transgender people had been identified which include: Strategic information to guide action; Health Services, Societal Enablers; community-led responses and funding.

3. Discussion on the Outline

The PCB working group welcomed the annotated outline. Specific comments included the following:

Member States

- Expressed excitement towards the topic of the thematic segment and its importance as a relatively new topic in the global landscape today.
- Noted the need to clarify the definition of key populations particularly transgender people in all their diversity while denouncing misconceptions which stigmatize the groups.
- Suggested clarity on the type of data we are looking for in order to accurately fill data gaps for the group in comparison to data on other groups.
- Suggested the inclusion of a subsection or sub-theme under Section 3 of the outline to discuss inequalities in funding, and anti-LGBT work being done to impact the law.
- Highlighted that transgender work has often been subsumed under MSM groups, but work is being done with trans organizations and community members through empowerment programmes to ensure they are raising their voices and leading their own work. However there needs to be consideration for certain spaces where this might be an issue.
- Noted the importance of community-led work which the community is ready and equipped to do with increased technical assistance and capacity building.
- Suggested the expansion of the discussions on various aspects of the topic such as mental health, STIs etc. under section 6 of the outline.
- Member States also stressed making sure key populations especially transgender people are empowered wholistically through structural interventions which address

the whole individual, e.g., through obtaining financial literacy and ensuring access to education. An example for best practices is the DREAMS initiative that comprehensively supports young girls.

- Reiterated that data on HIV and transgender persons needs to be captured separately. Countries such as India can share data accrued on HIV across the three genders. Additionally, best practices in the legal field and multisectoral approach to responding to HIV in key populations can be obtained through the implementation of the Transgender Person (Protection of Rights) Act 2019, where the lead is the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment as well as several models of service delivery for transgender persons, which are not limited to HIV can be shared.

PCB NGO Delegation

- Noted the excellence of the outline which purposefully captures the essence of the Thematic segment.
- Agreed with member states on the need to adequately define transgender people in all their diversity.
- Highlighted the issue of continued “pathologization” of transgender people related both to access to health and societal enablers. Certain countries still require transgender people to be diagnosed with a mental illness thus it is important to highlight this practice and show support towards the “depathologization” of transgender people.

Cosponsors

- Thanked presenters and highlighted the importance of the topic chosen for the thematic segment
- Emphasized the need to include challenges faced by transgender people in prisons in the outline. There is a lack of data on HIV in prisons for transgender people not only regarding access to services but structural barriers such as housing, nutrition, etc. that need to be addressed. As such the thematic segment will be a good platform to start the conversation about health and human rights in general for people in closed settings especially transgender people.
- Pointed to the guidelines available on this topic.
- Suggested examining and keeping the connection to the last thematic segment which focused on “HIV and men, in all their diversity, how can we get our responses back on track?”
- Emphasized the need for regional diversity in discussions and suggested highlighting the strong policy work being done in the LAC region in terms of advances and best practices for key populations. This surge in information particularly from Jamaica and Cuba can be drawn upon to inform the thematic segment.
- Noted the timely nature of the topic considering the development of WHO Guidelines for the health of trans and gender diverse people to be released next year.
- Emphasized the need to strengthen pandemic preparedness and primary healthcare for all populations but specifically key populations and being conscious of building resilience in the wake of new outbreaks.
- Recommended the need to reframe the reference to health services within the outline to a more comprehensive reference towards the health sector as a whole as this allows the inclusion of the governance dimension to the topic and not simply the provision of health services.

- Suggested a closer look at the inefficiencies in the use of funding; specifically what the gaps are and what areas funding can be shifted towards. From practice, it has been noted that counselling to change behavior has not had a major impact, thus, a further investment into this is not effective and can be shifted to other effective interventions.

In response to the comments and observations made, the Secretariat noted the importance of the issues raised by the members of the working group and would aim to reflect them as relevant in the paper.

Mr. Euzebio suggested that the first section of the outline of the paper will define key populations and priority populations. There could also be a section which includes comments and definitions from the working group such as a great and recent definition by WHO in their key population guidelines which was constructed with participation from the communities. Additionally, the Secretariat aims to ensure the outline and background note of the thematic segment will include regional diversity and expand its discussion of health services beyond the provision of health services into the health sector as a whole. The inclusion of the UNODC paper of information on transgender people in prisons and the challenges they face will also be incorporated.

The Secretariat noted the need for support from the working group to include a broader analysis of laws, not only criminal law but also punitive laws, which punish and increase stigma and the “pathologization” of transgender people. Emphasis on the importance of collecting, analysing and filing the data on those who are invisible and for whom we do not have the data especially on transgender people was also noted.

Ms. Beavers reiterated the need for community empowerment with a focus on the new agreed definitions on community-led AIDS responses as well as the Global AIDS Strategy’s focus on structural interventions with the 10-10-10s as a way to flesh out the interventions holistically.

The Secretariat welcomed the working group to share further suggestions with concrete details in writing before the deadline.

4. Presentation of the zero-draft agenda for the thematic segment

Mr. Euzebio de Lima reminded the working group that the thematic segment will provide an opportunity for the PCB to discuss the inequalities that are preventing progress in the HIV response for key populations, especially transgender people and how the HIV response can more effectively reduce the risk and impacts of HIV among these populations. During these discussions, examples of successful initiatives being implemented in all regions will be presented and recommendations will be made for the improvement of the HIV response at national, regional and global levels.

Mr. Euzebio presented the draft agenda for discussion. To ensure that there is enough time for interventions and discussions, the secretariat suggested that the thematic segment consist of 3 thematic panels with an opening and closing session. The opening session will consist of the introduction of the moderator and 2 keynote addresses to provide the big picture strategic vision regarding the session’s objectives. The Keynote addresses will be given by the Executive Director of UNAIDS and a Civil society global leader from the transgender community - TBD. These will be followed by a brief session which will provide the main highlights from the thematic segment background paper.

The Secretariat proposed having three panel discussions. The first will focus on data on the inequalities and recommendations to improve the HIV response for priority and key populations, especially transgender people. The second will focus on human rights, stigma and discrimination and other societal enablers. The third will focus on sustainable financing for key populations and community-led responses. Here, there will be an expert speaker on key populations, especially transgender people's engagement in governance mechanisms and decision making for health as this is key to the conversation on funding. The closing session will summarize and conclude the discussions.

5. Discussion on the zero-draft agenda

PCB NGO Delegation

- Thanked the secretariat for the comprehensive work done so far and noted that it will be key to have different perspectives and regions represented throughout discussions.
- Suggested that for Panel 1, some background information should be shared on the upcoming gender affirming care from the WHO guidelines for trans and gender diverse people as this will be key in aiding countries to adapt such guidelines on the national level.
- Noted the wide amount of research which has been done on the state of trans organizing which has provided a full analysis of the funding situation for transgender people that can be used. Over 70% of countries around the world have less than \$10,000 of their national budgets for trans organizing.
- Suggested a session on participation of key populations especially transgender people in governance mechanisms.
- Emphasized the need for diversity in speakers throughout thematic segment as transgender people are not a homogenous group. Also noted that transgender people cut across other key populations and as such the segment can seize the opportunity to highlight the intersectionality within the group.
- Appreciated the mention of countries with criminal and punitive laws within the agenda and highlighted the need to incorporate the providers perspective to have a comprehensive discussion about the different ways countries criminalize.

Cosponsors

- Welcomed the idea of presenting WHO guidelines and reminded about the fine line of presenting technical work in a governance context such as the PCB meeting, although the agency welcomes any concerns expressed by Member States.

In response to the comments and observations made, the Secretariat thanked all the members for their input, in particular the NGO Delegation for sharing the research already done on the funding situation for trans organizing and will aim to incorporate it in the thematic segment.

Mr. Euzebio emphasized the need to incorporate the intersectionality approach not only in the discussions of the segment but also in the choice of speakers and noted that the inclusion of the provider's perspective and how this affects the response will also be taken on board.

The Secretariat will propose a revised agenda for the second meeting.

6. Next steps

Mr. Ussing thanked the working group members for their comments and encouraged them to send written inputs by Wednesday 26 April 2023 as well as any relevant documents to support the drafting of the background note.

The Secretariat reiterated that the call for submission of good practices would be sent out to the PCB members and all permanent missions shortly and expressed hope that working group members would submit good practice illustrations and disseminate the call further to partners. These will contribute to setting the agenda for the thematic segment, compiled in a conference room paper and used for other UNAIDS reports.

The Secretariat thanked the working group for their time and excellent input, and the Cosponsors and Secretariat colleagues for their preparations in anticipation for the second meeting of the working group.

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