

## UNAIDS PROGRAMME COORDINATING BOARD WORKING GROUP

### THEMATIC SEGMENT:

*Priority and key populations<sup>1</sup> especially transgender people, and the path to the 2025 targets: Reducing health inequities through tailored and systemic responses.*

### MEETING SUMMARY: SECOND MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP

DATE: Tuesday 16 May 2023

### MEETING AGENDA

- Welcome and introduction
- Presentation of and discussion on the first draft of the background note on “**Priority and key populations<sup>1</sup> especially transgender people, and the path to the 2025 targets: Reducing health inequities through tailored and systemic responses**”
- Presentation of and discussion on the zero-draft agenda for the thematic segment
- Next steps

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### SUMMARY

#### 1. Welcome and introduction

Mr. Morten Ussing, Director Governance, UNAIDS Secretariat, welcomed the PCB working group to its second meeting for the preparation of the thematic segment of the 52nd PCB (28 June 2023) on *Priority and key populations<sup>1</sup> especially transgender people, and the path to the 2025 targets: Reducing health inequities through tailored and systemic responses.*

Mr. Ussing mentioned that it was likely to be the last meeting of the working group given the compressed timeline that the group had been working with.

The Secretariat reminded 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 thematic segment is a one-day event on the PCB agenda and allows for an in-depth discussion on a specific programmatic area within the AIDS response. The members of the working group play an important role in shaping the day and the documentation that informs it.

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<sup>1</sup> As defined in the Global AIDS Strategy 2021-2026.

Mr. Ussing underlined that the call for submission of good practices had been sent out on 02 May 2023 and the deadline to receive submissions has been extended to 18 May 2023. A selected set of case studies would be used to illustrate key parts of the background note. Mr. Ussing recalled that all case studies would be compiled into a conference room paper that would accompany the background note. As had been mentioned at the last meeting, UNAIDS uses case studies to inform other publications, extending the impact beyond the thematic segment.

The Secretariat confirmed that the main expected outcome of the second meeting was to listen to the comments, inputs, and suggestions from the working group on the draft background note and zero-draft agenda as well as suggested speakers. Mr. Ussing also noted the working group will have an additional 5 days to submit their comments in writing to the Secretariat.

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

Suki Beavers, Director, Gender Equality, Human Rights and Community Engagement at the UNAIDS Secretariat thanked the working group for joining the meeting and for all input received following the first meeting. She proceeded to introduce how the draft background note has been expanded following the comments received.

Ms. Beavers reiterated that the foundation of the background note focuses on the progress against HIV which 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 including sex workers and their clients, gay men and other men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs and transgender people and their sexual partners accounted for 70% of new HIV infections globally. Key populations and their partners accounted for 94% of new infections outside of Sub-Saharan Africa and 51% of new HIV infections in Sub Saharan Africa.

Ms Beavers noted that structural barriers prevent progress as stigma, discrimination, violence and criminalization against key populations exacerbate social and economic inequalities, poverty and exclusions, all of which can lead to increased vulnerability to HIV and other communicable and noncommunicable diseases. Intersecting inequalities and vulnerabilities also exacerbate risks. For example, the prevalence of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections is higher among transgender people in prison compared with cisgender people in prison.

The presentation further provided a deeper insight into the contents of the background note. Ms Beavers explained that the background note opens with an overview of the available current epidemiological data related to key and priority populations. This section has been expanded following the first meeting by adding a lot of the data that has been collected but also focusing on data gaps. This section of the paper also recalls the commitments and the targets for 2025 for the specified populations.

Ms. Beavers flagged that the term transmasculine has been used in one paragraph in the introduction of the background note to refer to people assigned female at birth who identify on the masculine spectrum. Transmasculine includes people who identify as trans men and transgender people who identify simply as men, but also includes people who may have a less fixed identity as a man or nonbinary.

The background note then moves on to the section on key populations especially transgender people, which has been the most expanded section since the first meeting of the Working Group. It analyzes the inequalities that are preventing progress in the HIV response for key populations.

Ms. Beavers noted that throughout the background note, extracts from publications have been included as quotes in text boxes. These extracts illustrate the experiences of some members of key populations, especially transgender people in the HIV response looking at needs and challenges.

The next chapter of the paper focuses specifically on transgender people as a diverse group of people. It shows that transgender communities are not a monolithic group and that an effective response needs to consider the intersecting vulnerabilities and inequalities and their related issues such as youth drug use, people in prison, etc. The next chapter discusses how various cultures and languages have historically described and accepted transgender people under different terms other than transgender and the impact of colonial rule particularly on laws related to non-binary people. It discusses needs and challenges faced by transgender communities, including, for example, the challenges they face in engaging in national HIV responses and in accessing gender affirming care with some transgender people resorting to “do it yourself treatments”, such as buying hormones online or through friends without prescriptions or medical supervision.

Ms. Beavers highlighted that the next chapter details the challenges of the anti-gender movement internationally as it rolls back transgender rights as well as gender equality and sexual and reproductive rights, with intensifying vulnerabilities to HIV. The note also outlines areas of progress such as the World Health Organizations (WHO) “de-pathologization” of transgender, which is no longer classified as a condition of mental ill health, and progress in legal rights.

The note then moves on to the chapter that shows how the HIV response can more effectively reduce the risks and impacts of HIV on key populations. Examples of initiatives being implemented in all regions will be presented, especially those tailored by and responding to the needs of key populations, especially transgender people. It includes promoting gender equality and gender based violence initiatives, integrating broader health services, including sexual and reproductive health services, harm reduction and gender affirming care into HIV services, addressing stigma and discrimination in health services and other key spaces, including community, workplace, education, healthcare, justice and emergency settings, integrating health and social production, removing harmful criminal laws, improving the legal environment and changing social norms, including removing the death penalty for LGBTI people. Ms. Beavers noted that this section needs more attention and country case studies and best practices will be added to the section in the second draft of the background note.

The background note will conclude with a collection of recommendations for improvement of the HIV response at national, regional and global levels. The Secretariat has identified 5 main areas which have already been presented to the working group: Strategic Information, health services, societal enablers, community-led responses, and funding.

### 3. Discussion on the first draft

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

#### **Member States:**

- Thanked presenters for the detailed first draft of the background note and noted that they were pleased it reflects the suggestions of the working group from the first meeting.
- One delegation noted that they have recently published a comprehensive research study on access to health services for trans and non-binary people which they can share to further inform the conclusions of the background note.
- Suggested that the note expands on the increasing funding for anti-gender movements which undermine public health and are a root cause of several of the challenges faced in the HIV response. Additionally, further expansion on the topic can aid with the development of the recommendations of the background note, particularly on funding of community groups.
- Emphasized the need to address colonial legacies which have impacted existing laws.

#### **PCB NGO Delegation:**

- Expressed excitement towards how the background note is being developed and thanked the secretariat and the working group for all the work that has gone into it so far.
- Asked if the current number of case studies received is sufficient or if they can push colleagues to submit more.
- Noted that further comments will be sent to the Secretariat in writing.
- Offered to share resources and research on colonialism, sexual orientation, and gender identity as well as reports focused on funding of anti-gender movements and recommendations of how to address the issue.

#### **Cosponsors:**

- Thanked the primary authors of the paper and noted that it is not only well-written but presents the topic logically with evidence-based research.
- Agreed with all comments made by members of the working group and expressed that a couple minor comments will be submitted to the Secretariat in writing.

In response to the comments and observations made, the Secretariat informed that a total of 23 country case studies have been received. However, the Secretariat is reaching out to UNAIDS Country Directors to encourage submissions from certain regions to ensure better regional balance. Mr. Ussing warmly welcomed the working group to share the call of submissions with their networks ahead of the upcoming deadline.

Ms. Beavers reiterated the need to expand on the financing of anti-gender movements in the background note and suggested that this can be done through a case study as there are a number of studies that have been done on this topic.

She also noted that the paper can expand the section which discusses the impact of colonial laws and the narratives that this is a Western movement that is not based in culture, language and tradition.

The Secretariat welcomed the working group to share further comments with concrete details in writing as well as research reports and case studies before the deadline.

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

Ms. Suki Beavers presented the draft agenda for the thematic segment. She thanked the working group for the numerous speaker suggestions recommended to the Secretariat. She stated that the current suggestions for the moderator are Erika Castellanos of the NGO delegation (Belize/Netherlands) and Julia Ehrt, Executive director of ILGA World (Germany). For the keynote addresses, it indicated that the Executive Director of UNAIDS, Winnie Byanyima will be a keynote speaker. Additionally, it is proposed to include a member state representative for a keynote address and a civil society global leader from the transgender community, both of which are still open for suggestions. The presentation of the background note itself will be presented by the Deputy Executive Director of the Policy, Advocacy, and Knowledge Branch, UNAIDS, Christine Stegling.

The Secretariat suggested having three panel discussions for the thematic segment. The first will focus on data on inequalities and recommendations to improve the HIV response for priority and key populations, especially transgender people. Suggested speakers included a representative from UNDP/UNFPA to present the data and gaps in data about key populations, especially transgender people, including treatment cascade, prevention, and societal enablers data; a member state speaker from India to give a country-level analysis on the situation of the HIV epidemic and response, including financing, with focus on key populations, especially transgender people; a third speaker from civil society of which there are 3 suggestions; and Annette Verster from WHO to present the WHO consolidated guidelines on HIV, viral hepatitis and STI prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care for key populations.

The second panel will focus on Human Rights, Stigma and Discrimination and other societal enablers. Speakers will include a Human Rights expert to give an overview of latest research and evidence regarding a human-rights based approach to HIV for key populations of which there are 2 suggestions; a transgender community representative to speak on the impact of criminal and punitive laws and community-led reform efforts of which there are 4 suggestions for consideration; a member state speaker from Zimbabwe to share a best practice on improving legal environments and addressing stigma and discrimination; and a presentation from a representative of the Joint Programme on successful approaches to law reform. The Secretariat also received a suggestion to add a panelist on experiences and challenges of trans and gender diverse people in prison settings.

The third panel focuses on sustainable financing for key populations and community-led responses. Speakers include a presenter on trends and challenges in funding for community-led responses for key populations, especially transgender people, for which there are 3 recommendations; a member state speaker on good practices in financing community-led responses for key population HIV health and well-being; a key population representative presenting on key populations, especially transgender peoples, engagement in governance mechanisms and decision making for health; and a representative from the Global fund to speak

on financing, presenting on gaps, lessons learned, and recommendations for financing the HIV response for key populations.

The Thematic Segment will end with a Summary and Conclusion to be presented by UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director, Policy, Advocacy and Knowledge Branch, as per standard practice.

## 5. Discussion on the zero-draft agenda

The PCB working group welcomed the zero-draft agenda. Specific comments included the following:

### **Cosponsors:**

- Thanked presenters and the Secretariat for compiling a very rich and varied agenda.
- Suggested Erika Castellanos of the NGO delegation to make one of the keynote addresses as one of the leaders of the trans community.
- Enquired if all speakers will have to attend the segment in person or can participate through virtual inputs.
- Suggested the inclusion of Dr. Asa Radix (originally from St. Lucia) as a speaker. Dr. Asa Radix is an infectious disease/HIV specialist recognized as an expert in transgender medicine and has contributed to multiple national and international guidelines for the care of transgender and gender diverse people.
- Suggested Masen Davis as a speaker, Executive Director of Funders Concerned About AIDS and a civil society leader.

### **PCB NGO Delegation:**

- Suggested the inclusion of a panelist to panel 1 who can speak to the misinformation and false research that has been circulating about gender movements.
- Supported the suggestion of Dr. Asa Radix as a speaker.

### **Member States:**

- Suggested the inclusion of Dr. James A. Makokis as a speaker. Dr. Makokis is a national and internationally recognized leader and author in the area of Indigenous health and transgender health. Dr. Makokis can also contribute to the conversation of pre-religions and gender contexts before colonial interventions.
- Supported the inclusion of a speaker to discuss the spread of misinformation about transgender people.
- A delegation thanked the secretariat for the opportunity to present their country data and best practices and offered to submit a case study for panel 2, which is on human rights and stigma and discrimination.
- Expressed support for Erika Castellanos of the NGO delegation as one of the keynote addresses.
- Enquired about the contents of the keynote address for both civil society leader and member state in order to make relevant recommendations.

In response to the comments and observations made, the Secretariat thanked the working group for the excellent suggestions and noted the theme running through them, indicating that the working group is moving in the same direction.

Ms. Beavers noted that a speaker could be incorporated who will unpack the growing misinformation on transgender people. She also explained that the first keynote by the Executive Director will set the framework for the Thematic Segment while the keynote by the civil society leader will bring the voice, experiences, and expertise of a member of the transgender community and the keynote speech from the member state representative will provide some inspiring examples of how government is moving forward and responding to the issues of key populations, in particular transgender people.

The Secretariat clarified that the modality for this PCB is a fully in-person meeting but with the possibility of online participation. However, the Secretariat is striving towards everyone participating in-person.

## 6. Next steps

Mr. Ussing thanked the working group members for the very rich discussion during the meeting and encouraged them to send written inputs on the background note, the draft agenda and speakers by 22 May 2023. He encouraged working group members to send speaker names as soon as possible, as the Secretariat needed to facilitate travel. The ambition is to have all speakers present in the room for the Thematic Segment. He also added that the Secretariat would pay attention to ensure regional and gender balance of the speakers in the agenda.

The Secretariat encouraged the working group to share the call for best practices and country case studies with their networks ahead of the deadline of COB 18 May 2023. These case studies will inform the background note which the Secretariat aims to have available not more than four weeks in advance to the PCB meeting.

The Secretariat thanked the working group for their time and excellent input and closed the meeting.