

UNAIDS PROGRAMME COORDINATING BOARD WORKING GROUP

THEMATIC SEGMENT:

Testing and HIV

MEETING SUMMARY: SECOND MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP

DATE: Wednesday 1 November 2023

MEETING AGENDA

- Welcome and introduction
- Presentation of and discussion on the first draft of the background note on “**Testing and HIV**”
- Presentation of and discussion on the draft agenda for the thematic segment
- Next steps

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 53rd PCB (14 December 2023) on *Testing and HIV*.

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. The Secretariat specially welcomed the Chinese Delegation to the working group as they had proposed this year's theme of *Testing and HIV*.

Mr. Ussing underlined that the call for submission of country case studies and good practices had been sent out on 05 October 2023 and the deadline to receive submissions had been extended to 03 November 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 and reporting, extending their impact beyond the thematic segment. Mr. Ussing informed that so far, a total of 17 country case studies had been received, however, the Secretariat is reaching out to UNAIDS Country Directors to encourage submissions from certain regions particularly from or focused on the Middle East region and the African continent, to ensure a better regional balance of country case studies. Mr. Ussing welcomed the working group to share the call of submissions with their networks ahead of the upcoming deadline.

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 draft agenda as well as suggested speakers. Mr. Ussing also noted that the working group would have until 7 November to submit their comments in writing to the Secretariat.

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

Gang Sun, Senior Adviser on Testing and Treatment, Science, Services and Systems for All at the UNAIDS Secretariat thanked the working group for joining the meeting and for all comments received following the first meeting. He recognized Dr. Rachel Baggaley, thematic lead for HIV Testing and Prevention at the World Health Organization in Geneva, as well as Lisa Butler, lead writer of the Background Note, as key members of the core group working on the background note who have joined the meeting to listen and incorporate feedback into the background note. He proceeded to introduce how the draft background note has been expanded following the comments received.

Mr. Sun reiterated that the foundation of the background note reflects the different needs from higher HIV prevalence settings over low HIV prevalence settings. This was addressed by linking WHO Guidelines on differentiated service delivery particularly to delivering HIV testing services. The paper emphasizes the strong call from the working group to reflect the horizontal link between HIV testing and other service areas thus following a people centered approach and bringing the HIV response out of isolation.

The first draft of the background note also incorporates the call from the working group to not only emphasize the work being done by service providers but also explore the angle of the service recipient in order to improve demand for services and motivations for people and communities to take up those services. Mr. Sun noted that the current draft also included some focus on indigenous populations as had been suggested by the working group at its first meeting.

Mr. Sun stated that the draft background note highlighted the evolution of HIV testing policies and emphasized the positive role of communities in advancing services and links to the community's response to other pandemics such as Monkey Pox. He also noted that the UNAIDS Data for Impact team was reviewing all data presented in the background note to ensure it is all up-to-date and accurate. The draft background note concludes with a collection of recommendations for improvement of testing withing the HIV response at national, regional and global levels.

3. Discussion on the first draft

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

Member States:

- Thanked the secretariat for a very comprehensive draft background note particularly with its focus on high prevalence areas.

PCB NGO Delegation:

- Suggested to expand the use of the terminology “key populations” to “key and priority populations” throughout the document as used in the previous PCB thematic segment.
- Proposed the inclusion of new technologies and innovations in the HIV treatment component, such as home-based and self-testing for viral load.
- Recommended the inclusion of treatment literacy for clients who pick up HIV services particularly on viral load responses.

Cosponsors:

- Enquired about the number of case studies that are typically included in the background note.

In response to the comments and observations made, the Secretariat thanked the working group for their helpful suggestions.

Mr. Sun noted the need to ensure consistent terminology and would aim at finding the consistent language used in the concept to apply throughout the background note. He also noted the need to emphasize in the background note, a more balanced and comprehensive package of messaging around viral load status and the overall well-being of people living with HIV, including eliminating stigma and discrimination.

The Secretariat welcomed the suggestion to include new innovations in home-based HIV viral load testing and encouraged the working group to send examples of case studies where countries were successfully adapting new innovations.

The Secretariat clarified that the inclusion of case studies into the background note relies on the number of submissions received that speak particularly to the text and its different chapters. It was reiterated that all submissions are compiled into a conference room paper which is helpful for UNAIDS colleagues to draw upon further for various reporting.

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

Mr. Gang Sun presented the draft agenda for the thematic segment. The Secretariat suggested having four panel discussions for the segment with an opening and closing session. The opening session will have 3 keynote speakers: the Executive Director of UNAIDS, a Community Representative and a Government representative. This will be followed by a session overview which will be jointly presented by the Deputy Executive Director of UNAIDS, Programmes, and a representative from the Cosponsor lead on the topic – World Health Organization (WHO). This

session will cover the status of HIV testing around the world and highlight a few challenges faced in the HIV response under this topic. The representative from WHO will also highlight the latest WHO normative guides and the barriers for their implementation at country level.

The first panel is titled Testing for HIV – HIV testing modalities. There will be three speakers focusing on the following topic areas: Community Engagement in HIV testing services and Lay-providers performing testing for HIV after training; Facility-based testing – have we fully utilized the opportunity of integrated HIV testing at primary health care facilities?; and Testing for ending pediatric AIDS - experiences from antenatal clinics.

The second panel is titled Testing for HIV – meeting the needs of populations left behind with a focus on adolescents and young people and men who are missed out. The three speakers will focus on the following topic areas: Practical ways in delivering testing services for key populations, including social network testing and community mobilization; HIV testing for Adolescent and young people; and Testing for the men who are missed out.

The third panel is titled Testing for monitoring treatment – Comprehensive Testing. The speakers will focus on the following topic areas: Viral Load testing and CD4 testing - planning and implementation; Integration of HIV testing services with other disease programmes (including safety of treatment, as well as testing for NCDs); and Public Health Laboratory systems for testing quality assurance and drug resistance monitoring.

The final panel is titled Enablers for testing services – Ethics, policy and systems. The three panelists will focus on the following topic areas: Age of consent – a country experience on the decision of age of consent for HIV testing to be fitting with the best interest for the adolescent; Human rights and gender considerations in promoting testing; and Health system support – access, procurement, and supply chain management for testing. The Thematic segment will end with a Summary and Conclusion to be presented by the UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, as per standard practice.

The Secretariat made preliminary suggestions for where each speaker may come from in order to ensure geographic balance across panels. However, these suggestions are not fixed, and the Secretariat encouraged speaker suggestions from other countries that may be better placed for the topics to be discussed while still ensuring a gender and geographical balance.

Mr. Sun recognized that in the previous working group meeting, members mentioned the importance of elaborating on the demand side of HIV Services or how to make sure that service recipients are well prepared, well supported and have the right literacy to be able to pick up those services. As such, the Secretariat noted that this conversation can be included largely across panels and speakers particularly with community representative speakers and speakers focusing on service provision, instead of having a separate speaker for the topic.

5. Discussion on the zero-draft agenda

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

Member States:

- The Chinese Delegation expressed their honour that their suggested theme was adopted by the Bureau as a thematic segment topic. They also expressed interest in presenting as speaker three on panel three as China has 20 years of experience on drug

resistance monitoring systems and will be willing to share their valuable experience in quality assurance in the HIV laboratory network of China

- Suggested that panels 1 and 2 should have an extra focus on key populations, particularly on real practices which can further attract key and priority populations to services provided.
- Highlighted the need to explore and share knowledge on new testing technologies such as self-testing or other examples of point of care technology.
- The Brazilian Delegation expressed interest to speak on panel one or two to share their country's experiences on laboratory networking.
- Reiterated the need to ensure that there are the best speakers on panel one to convey the most compelling examples on facility-based testing successfully reaching key populations.
- Enquired if there will be multiple speakers per topic under each panel or if there will be one speaker per topic area.

PCB NGO Delegation:

- Pleased with the fact that the agenda captured a lot of the elements in the background note.
- Embraced the spaces within the agenda that have been earmarked for community representatives to specifically speak on community interventions.
- Noted that a finalized list of speaker suggestions will be sent to the secretariat by COB 7th November.
- Requested clarification on the use of the word access in panel four as this could signal both physical and structural access per person as well as the affordability and cost effectiveness angle.

In response to the comments and observations made, the Secretariat thanked the working group for the excellent suggestions and interest in participating in the thematic segment as speakers.

Mr. Sun clarified that the use of access refers in general terms to location, service time, service comprehensiveness, service attitude, quality and attractivity for people to access services which also partially includes affordability. This will be made explicitly clear to speakers in preparation for the segment. He also clarified that there will ideally be 3 speakers per panel with one speaker assigned to each topic area for discussion due to time constraints as well as to give space to speakers to speak in depth about their experiences. However, the Secretariat is open to having multiple speakers per topic area or breaking up topics into two if there are excellent speaker suggestions from the working group.

Mr. Sun also highlighted that the thematic segment aims to be a meaningful interactive session, as such after each panel, the floor will be open to all participants, both in person and online, who would like to contribute, comment, or ask questions based on the topics discussed.

The Secretariat noted the need to obtain the relevant speakers for each panel particularly panels focusing on maximizing impact for key and priority populations and their specific needs, while striving for geographical and gender balance of speakers across panels.

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 close of day, 7 November 2023. He encouraged working group members to send speaker names as soon as possible, as the Secretariat needed to facilitate travel. The ambition was to have all speakers present in the room for the Thematic Segment. He also reiterated that the Secretariat would pay attention to ensure regional and gender balance of the speakers in the agenda.

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