

UNAIDS PROGRAMME COORDINATING BOARD WORKING GROUP

THEMATIC SEGMENT:

Testing and HIV

MEETING SUMMARY: FIRST MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP

DATE: Wednesday 4 October 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 53rd PCB (14 December 2023) on *Testing and HIV*.

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. The Bureau then put forward its proposals for the themes for the thematic segments of the following year for PCB consideration and endorsement.

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, 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

Gang Sun, Senior Adviser on Testing and Treatment, Science, Services and Systems for All at the UNAIDS Secretariat introduced the outline of the background note. Mr. Sun highlighted that the objective of the background note is to highlight the gaps in HIV testing; identify the progress, challenges and solutions in areas of Testing for HIV, Testing for monitoring treatment, and Enabling factors (including public health laboratory services) to assist all countries to reach the treatment targets by 2025; explore actions to be recommended for improving access and quality of testing services; and to highlight the recent and key normative guidelines pertaining to the area of testing and HIV.

The presentation further provided a deeper insight into the different chapters of the background note. Mr. Sun explained that the note will begin with a summary of the topic and an introduction which highlights the gaps and challenges for populations of concerns. The background paper then delves into the 3 main subtopics. The first being “Testing and HIV” which highlights ways and approaches that can serve people better; the second being Testing for monitoring treatment which focuses on viral load testing, CD4 testing, HIV drug resistance, Testing and surveillance as well as the possibility of diagnostic integration. The third subtopic focuses on “Enablers” and highlights issues pertaining to an enabling legal environment/social norm (i.e. age of consent for HIV testing) and policy and programme considerations pertaining to stigma and discrimination. This section will also address the need for community participation as well as financing considerations, highlighting the need for accessible and affordable commodities for use. Lastly, the background note will end with suggested recommendations for improvement of the HIV response in the field of testing, treatment and services, at national, regional and global levels.

Mr. Sun noted that the key messages of the paper will include:

- Meeting the needs of the ones left behind with differentiated approaches in order to meet individual needs and obtain larger impact
- Going beyond yield and realizing the need to link people who test negative to appropriate prevention options
- Spotlighting that lay-providers who passed through proper training need to be allowed to perform testing for triage and can be part of the workforce performing national HIV diagnostic algorithms
- The need to improve early infant diagnosis and that point of care nucleic acid testing (NAT) should be scaled up
- Treatment monitoring and drug resistance surveillance as important elements for reaching the 3rd 95% target
- The need to assure quality of testing needs. Highlighting that public laboratory services and systems play critical roles in ensuring the quality of testing services and must be strengthened.

- Highlighting that HIV testing is not stand-alone. HIV, STIs, viral hepatitis and other NCDs are clearly linked for many populations, and for older populations, NCDs are often a concern with greater morbidity and mortality, as such the integration of testing services needs to be explored for a more effective response.
- The need for age of consent for HIV testing to be in the best interests of adolescents in consideration of their maturity in different country contexts.
- The continued efforts to remove Stigma & Discrimination associated with HIV and promote the service for greatest access, appropriate linkage and sustainable impact.
- Recognizing that the role of civil society and community participation in service delivery and monitoring are key to success and as such need to be given the spaces and support.
- The need to improve access, procurement and supply chain management for testing commodities (including needs for local production)

3. Discussion on the Outline

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

Member States

- Expressed that the outline is well-written and captures many important aspects of the topic.
- Noted the different challenges that countries face with regards to HIV testing and the need to learn from other countries and their approaches particularly with tackling late presenters.
- Acknowledged the importance of including U=U and analyzing the cost of identifying positive cases as beneficial, particularly for governments.
- Suggested the inclusion of the expansion of PREP actions
- Reiterated the need to focus on stigma and discrimination, self-care and viral load testing.

PCB NGO Delegation

- Stressed that the background paper needs to highlight the motivation to act on the part of those who need to uptake services. Noting that there is not a straight line between availability of services and its uptake by populations.
- Supported the notion that HIV should not be a standalone service; that there are broader support functions that enable HIV testing to make it work including practical approaches to service delivery. Examples of these could be obtained from the call for submissions of best practices and case studies to inform the background note.
- Highlighted the need to include the unique experiences and challenges of Indigenous populations.

Cosponsors

- Thanked the secretariat for a well-done outline and highlighted the need to make the background note more people centered.
- Stressed the interlinkages between HIV, sexually transmitted infections, gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive rights and HIV and the need to forefront these topics as well when discussing HIV testing, treatment and services.
- Highlighted the need to include ways to increase knowledge, understanding and the appetite for HIV services.

- Emphasized the need to include the following topics in the background note: social marketing distribution, primary healthcare, self-testing and intervention and the role of the private sector in HIV testing.
- Suggested including an overview of the evolution and history of HIV testing policies.
- Noted the need to stress HIV self-care and self-testing approaches and explore the new work being done in viral load testing.
- Questioned the lack of highlighting condoms as a preventative measure in the outline.

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 background note.

Mr. Sun agreed with comments on making sure the background note is not a narrow elaboration of the topic and highlighted the need to reflect the linkages between sexual and reproductive rights, gender-based violence and HIV. He noted the need to emphasize the role of the private sector in HIV testing and the inclusion of linkages to primary health care. Mr. Sun also highlighted the need to focus on HIV treatment literacy, self-care and self-treatment and the addition of condom use as a preventative measure post-testing to the background note. Lastly, he noted the importance of including the challenges and perspectives of Indigenous populations.

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. Sun reminded the working group that the thematic segment will be a full day event to be held on 14 December 2023 in Geneva, Switzerland.

Mr. Sun presented the draft agenda for discussion. The secretariat suggested that the thematic segment consist of 4 thematic panels with an opening and closing session. The opening session will consist of the introduction of the moderator and 3 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, a Government representative and a civil society representative. These will be followed by a brief session which will provide the main highlights and key issues from the thematic segment background note presented by a member of the Joint Programme.

The Secretariat proposed having four panel discussions. The first will focus on Testing for HIV – HIV testing modalities. The second will focus on 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 third will focus on Testing for monitoring treatment – comprehensive testing; and the final panel will focus on Enablers for testing services – ethics, policy and systems. The closing session will summarize and conclude the discussions.

The Secretariat welcomed suggestions for speakers for each panel for further discussion at the next working group meeting and noted the need for geographical and gender balance for each panel's speakers.

5. Discussion on the zero-draft agenda

PCB NGO Delegation

- Noted the need to include a discussion of how to better communicate the availability or the need for HIV testing and treatment services to people living with HIV.

Cosponsors

- Reiterated the need to include a discussion on the behavioral science around the barriers to testing and what the solutions are.
- Emphasized the need to have specific, focused speakers who can talk about the primary healthcare interface.
- Pointed to the fact that countries with the highest HIV burden rely heavily on external donors and as such, the need for a discussion on solutions to diversify approaches to funding toward the “last mile distribution”.
- Recommended the inclusion of a discussion on the quality of health products that people access.

In response to the comments and observations made, the Secretariat thanked all the members for their input.

Mr. Sun emphasized the need to incorporate the behavioral science and primary health care angles into the panel discussions. He also noted the need to reflect the issue of financial challenges and ways to achieve sustainability in financing. Regarding the speakers, Mr. Sun highlighted that ideally each panel will have three speakers to enable a good conversation within the time limits.

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 Tuesday 10 October 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 will 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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