UNAIDS PROGRAMME COORDINATING BOARD WORKING GROUP

THEMATIC SEGMENT:

What do the regional and country-level data tell us, are we listening, and how can we better leverage that data and related technology to meet our 2025 and 2030 goals?

MEETING SUMMARY: FIRST MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP

DATE: Wednesday 22 September 2021

MEETING AGENDA

- Welcome and introduction

- Presentation of the draft annotated outline of the Background Note on "What do the regional and country-level data tell us, are we listening, and how can we better leverage that data and related technology to meet our 2025 and 2030 goals?"

- Discussion on the draft annotated outline of the Background Note

- Next steps, and

- Any other business

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SUMMARY

1. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

Mr. Morten Ussing, Chief of Governance and Multilateral Affairs, UNAIDS Secretariat, welcomed the PCB working group to its first meeting for the preparation of the thematic segment of the 49th PCB on *What do the regional and country-level data tell us, are we listening, and how can we better leverage that data and related technology to meet our 2025 and 2030 goals?*.

The Secretariat explained that while the working group is usually composed of PCB members, relevant partners are also at time invited to participated. For this thematic segment working group, we are pleased to have the Global Fund participate since UNAIDS work on Strategic Information and data is very important to the Global Fund and the collaboration between the two institutions is key. Mr Ussing also acknowledged the work of the Cosponsors on Strategic Information, as well as the critical contribution of PEPFAR and CDC to data generation and analysis. They are all represented in this working group through their membership in the Board.

The Secretariat highlighted that the virtual thematic segment only lasts half a day to ensure equal participation of PCB participants from all regions and across time zones in a virtual

PCB meeting. It is a half day dedicated entirely to one agenda item, and there is no decision making on the agenda item. This allows for the discussion to be more open and interactive than when decisions are taken right afterwards.

The working group exists to create ownership of the PCB constituencies in the framing of the background note and discussions. The members play an important role in shaping the day and the documentation that informs it.

Mr. Ussing recalled the process for selecting the theme. The Bureau sends out a call for themes to the PCB members late summer or early autumn. The proposals for themes are reviewed by the PCB Bureau on the basis of a set of criteria. The Bureau then puts forwards its proposals for the themes for the thematic segment of the following year for PCB consideration and eventual endorsement.

The Secretariat said that the main expected outcome of the first meeting is to listen to the comments, inputs and suggestions on the proposed focus and key messages of the draft annotated outline of the background note. At the second meeting, the first full draft of the Background Note as well as the agenda for the day as well as suggested speakers will be discussed. The draft Background Note and Agenda will be shared with the group ahead of that meeting. The third meeting will focus on the format of the day and finalization of the agenda. The Background Note and thematic day should speak to each other.

The Secretariat said that after the meeting, the working group members' could send additional written comments on the draft annotated outline, with a deadline of close-of-business on 28 September 2021.

The Secretariat reminded participants of the virtual nature of the PCB and the challenges it poses, as well as the need to have an interactive, lively and informative discussion during the thematic segment. Suggestions from the working group members on how to make the segment as engaging as possible in a virtual format would be welcome.

2. PRESENTATION OF THE DRAFT ANNOTATED OUTLINE OF BACKGROUND NOTE FOR THE THEMATIC SEGMENT

Chris Fontaine, Senior Adviser, Policy and Reporting, Strategic Information Department of the UNAIDS Secretariat introduced the outline of the background note for the thematic segment. Mr. Fontaine also introduced his colleagues, Mary Mahy, Taavi Erkkola and Jose Antonio Izazola, who were also present at the meeting to contribute to the discussion and to answer any questions. Mr. Fontaine explained that the purpose of the Background Note was to inform the discussions at the thematic session. He emphasised that data have been the bedrock underlying the successes of the global AIDS response. However, effective collection and utilization of data had been uneven.

Mr Fontaine also highlighted that sustainable and routine systems are needed to collect and analyse diverse and high-quality data that guide a unified approach to achieving high coverage of services among all sub-populations in need. Key areas where diverse and high-quality data are needed are:

1. Target setting, planning and resource allocation,
2. Service delivery,
3. Identifying and addressing legal and policy barriers, and societal enablers.

He stressed that community-generated data is particularly needed to mor eeffectively monitor the affordability, availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality of services for different groups. UNAIDS support to country monitoring and reporting is critical to global progress reporting and maintaining momentum towards global targets and commitments.

Mr. Fontaine presented the proposed structure for the background note. He explained that the first section is focused on answering the first two questions in the title of the thematic segment, namely "what do data tell us" and "are we listening". He said that UNAIDS gets asked this question very often: by the General Assembly, ECOSOC the PCB, various partners such as the Global Fund, and also the media and the general public. Countries annually report a set of data to UNAIDS: epidemiological, programmatic, behavioural, policy and financial data, using a standard indicator set provided to them and those data are systematically analysed. One of the outputs of that process is the Global AIDS Update. Mr Fontaine said that the most recent Global AIDS Update published in July 2021 shows that when we have good data, high-quality, granular and timely, and when it is used to guide the provision of services to those in need, we can achieve very high coverage and reach the 2025 and 2030 targets. However sometimes we do not listen to the data. This is especially clear with regards to HIV prevention and services to some sub-populations.

Mr Fontaine further explained that the sections 4, 5 and 6 focused on how to better leverage data, addressing the third question in the title "how can we better leverage that data and related technology to meet our 2025 and 2030 goals?". The chapters would focus on target setting, planning and resource allocation; service delivery; and identifying and addressing legal and policy barriers, and other societal enablers. He emphasised that the background note will aim to describe the building blocks that are needed to collect and leverage good data for these areas. They include routine data collection systems, data quality assessments, special surveys and community-led monitoring.

Mr Fontaine said that to illustrate these, good practices would be highlighted, some of which would be developed into more detailed case studies. He said that they would be looking to the working group to help identify and elaborate these. Each section would also identify gaps and challenges that must be addressed as we move forward.

The last section of the background note focuses on how data can help achieve the targets included in the General Assembly Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS which was adopted in June 2021. The targets in the new Political Declaration are more detailed and granular than in the past, and there is a much higher expectation on countries to monitor and report data on service coverage and on barriers faced by certain sub-populations.

The final section, Mr Fontaine said, would include a set of recommendations and lessons learned to move forward in addressing gaps and better leveraging technology to meet our 2025 and 2030 targets.

Mr Fontaine stressed that he would like to receive comments from the working group during the meeting and in writing over the next few days to develop the full draft of the background note, which would then be recirculated to the working group. Shortly thereafter, the second meeting of the working group would take place. Throughout October, the country case studies will be developed and submitted by stakeholders. The final background note would be posted on the UNAIDS website by 9 November.

4. DISCUSSION ON THE OUTLINE

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

Member States

- Said that the topic was important and interesting, and that there was diversity among member states on the type of data that was collected.
- Emphasized that to reach the targets, it was important to focus the discussion on the most important data that should be collected and on the tools and techniques that should be used to analyze the data.
- Emphasized the importance of making sure that data is useful for service providers to improve quality and of moving towards individual patient systems.
- Said that there was a need to distinguish between HIV specific data and data that goes beyond HIV but is necessary to inform the HIV response, for example on social enablers.
- Suggested that the paper discusses which data should be routinely collected and what needs to be captured in other ways, for example through specific studies.
- Mentioned that it was important to emphasize the importance of systematic collection of data by governments and to highlight good practices from countries.
- Asked what some of the challenges and opportunities around integration of HIV data in wider systems were, considering pros and cons.
- Emphasized the importance of community systems and suggested that challenges with sustainability should also be discussed in the background note.

PCB NGO Delegation

- Highlighted the challenge of adapting targets and collecting data at sub-national level.
- Emphasized that the UN data revolution for sustainable development had many important components that could be relevant to the thematic segment, including unusual data collectors and users, building capacity of communities as data users.
- Mentioned that disaggregation of data by age and sex continued to be a challenge.
- Emphasized the importance of data on social enablers collected by communities, social accountability, community monitoring and community feedback from local to regional level.
- Suggested that the background note includes a discussion on how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted data collection and use in both negative and positive ways.
- Emphasized that there was a need for data to support people-centred service integration, for example, there was a need to know about mental health of adolescents.
- Emphasized that there was a need to address the challenge posed by people not having real data with false information circulating on the internet.
- Suggested that the thematic segment should highlight the data communities collected, including on issues related to key populations, and discuss how these data could be used by governments in national AIDS responses.
- Stressed that regionally aggregated data may hide differences between countries and that this challenge should be discussed during the thematic segment.

Cosponsors

- Emphasized the importance of age disaggregation of data for key populations.

- Stressed that it would be important to highlight examples from all regions as much as possible.
- Suggested that the background note discusses how community-generated data could be better accepted and taken into account by national governments.
- Suggested highlighting the role of UNAIDS in collecting data.
- Also suggested that the thematic segment could provide recommendations on how to address the challenges the 2025 targets presented for data collection because of their granularity.

The Global Fund

- Thanked UNAIDS for inviting the Global Fund to take part in the working group.
- Mentioned that the Global Fund is a user of UNAIDS data and also provides inputs to modelling.
- Said that in the next nine years, there is a need to integrate HIV into routine facility- or community-based services on the one hand, and at the same time specialized services were also required for some specific groups. The different need for these two types of services makes data collection challenging in the context of sustainability.
- Also mentioned that sustainability of community-led monitoring was a challenge because sustainable systems do not exist and there are no streamlined technical guidelines on how to systematically generate, analyze and use community-based data.

In response to the comments and observations made, the Secretariat said that the issues brought forward by the working group were important and would be reflected in the paper as much as possible. Mr. Fontaine emphasized that we needed a mixture of routine and special data collection or research to achieve a better picture of the situation in some countries. He said that some data was more easily disaggregated, e.g. data collected at clinical settings while data collected in other context was more challenging to disaggregate. He pointed out that community-led monitoring had great value which has been proven over the years and needed to be captured in the paper. The Secretariat also said it was important to acknowledge challenges are around community-owned systems, capacity building and sustainability and discuss how to build joint ownership of data collected by communities. The Secretariat also agreed with working group comments that it was essential to focus the background note and the discussion to some key challenges in data collection and use to increase coverage of services and reach the targets.

Ms. Mahy emphasized that sustainability was going to be one of the key points to highlight in the paper because we needed to think ahead for the next 8-9 years, until 2030. She mentioned that some data collection methods are costly and cannot be sustained in the long run. Linking to the integration comments, Demographic and Health Surveys are interesting and it is important to train countries to learn how to pull those data in. Combined with education data and antenatal care data, when cross-tabulated, we can get a good understanding of where inequalities are. Mr. Izazola added that it is important to assess what the role of routine data for monitoring is and when there is a need for special studies. Mr. Erkkola emphasized that it is very difficult to measure how well services are integrated, and that because community monitoring happens at community level, and it is challenging to aggregate at global level.

5. WAY FORWARD

Mr. Ussing thanked the working group members for their comments and encouraged to send written inputs by 28th September 2021 as well as any relevant documents to support the

drafting of the analysis of the background note. He mentioned that the call for submission of good practices will be sent out to the PCB members and all permanent missions shortly and that we hope that working group members submit good practices and disseminate the call further to partners. Good examples will be important and will contribute to setting the agenda for the thematic segment.

The Secretariat encouraged working group members to start thinking of speaker names as well as ideas for panel discussions, so that we can start reflecting on the agenda of the thematic segment. The Secretariat thanked the working group for their time and excellent input, looking forward to the second meeting of the working group.

6. AOB

There was no other business.