

UNAIDS 2023

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# United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

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**2022 Organizational Report**



# United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)

## HIV in UNICEF’s mandate

UNICEF works in over 190 countries and territories to save children’s lives, defend their rights, and help them fulfil their potential, from early childhood through adolescence. Access to HIV treatment and prevention for pregnant women, children and adolescents has slowed, halted or even reversed in recent years. Globally, AIDS-related illness claims the life of a child every five minutes. Only half (52%) of children living with HIV are on ART, compared to treatment coverage of 76% of adults living with HIV. In 2021, 160 000 adolescents (aged 10–19 years) were newly infected with HIV, and the global ART coverage level among pregnant women was 81%, 4 percentage points lower than in 2020.

UNICEF is a member of the Joint UN Team on AIDS in 86 of the 91 countries where the Joint Programme operates

### Key UNICEF strategy for HIV

To address inequalities in the global HIV response for children, adolescents and pregnant women, UNICEF integrates HIV responses into strategic planning and programme implementation across all its core interventions, including health, nutrition, child protection, education, social policy and humanitarian response.

UNICEF’s [Strategic plan for 2022–2025](#) prioritizes actions to accelerate progress towards ending AIDS as a public health threat as part of its strategic goal to ensure that every child and adolescent survives and thrives. UNICEF’s [Strategy for health for 2016–2030](#) integrates actions for HIV across all health interventions. UNICEF’s global [Gender action plan](#) prioritizes HIV prevention and care, and promotes the leadership, empowerment and well-being of adolescent girls. UNICEF’s [Adolescent girls programme strategy](#) emphasizes support to countries to deliver multisectoral programming that addresses HIV prevention, treatment and care.

## Top results in 2022

**Greater political commitment, action and resourcing generated towards the goal of ending paediatric AIDS.** In 2022, UNICEF co-convened and launched, with WHO, the UNAIDS Secretariat and networks of people living with HIV, the [Global Alliance to end AIDS in children by 2030](#), which 12 African countries have joined. The [Global Alliance](#) supports national governments to:

- close the treatment gap among breast-feeding adolescent girls and women living with HIV, and optimize continuity of treatment;
- prevent and detect new HIV infections among pregnant and breast-feeding adolescent girls and women;
- promote accessible testing, optimized treatment, and comprehensive care for infants, children, and adolescents exposed to and living with HIV; and
- address gender equality, and the social and structural barriers that hinder access to services.

**Prevention of vertical transmission supported in hardest-to-reach populations.**

UNICEF provides guidance and technical support to countries to develop and implement their national plans for the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV (EMTCT), and promotes strategies for the triple elimination of HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B. In 2022, 80 countries had a national plan for EMTCT, and 90 countries were implementing a treat-all policy for pregnant and breast-feeding women living with HIV. UNICEF also developed guidance for achieving EMTCT in countries with low HIV prevalence and/or concentrated HIV epidemics. Adolescent girls and young women living with HIV are often missed with quality HIV prevention, treatment and care. UNICEF supported governments to tailor interventions for pregnant adolescent girls and young women through innovations such as PrEP for pregnant and breast-feeding women who are HIV-free, and access to HIV self-testing for partners of pregnant and breastfeeding women.

**Paediatric treatment regimens optimized.** More countries are using dolutegravir-based regimens, an optimal treatment protocol for children. In 2022, 73 countries were using those regimens, up from 33 at the end of 2021, a shift supported by strong UNICEF advocacy. In 2022, UNICEF, as a partner of the Global Accelerator for Paediatric Formulations Network, accelerated the development of a new HIV treatment regimen for children based on a single, fixed-dose ARV combination tablet of dolutegravir, abacavir and lamivudine.

**HIV services for children integrated into health systems.** UNICEF supported governments to ensure that HIV services for children and adolescents are integrated into primary health-care systems. In 2022, 63 countries supported by the Joint Programme have HIV services for children integrated into primary health care. At the end of 2022, 32 of UNICEF's 37 HIV-priority countries were implementing a comprehensive package for paediatric HIV treatment within primary health-care systems.

**Age-appropriate interventions and tools improved for HIV case finding in children.**

Early infant diagnostic services are the primary channel to identify children living with HIV. However, the majority of newly diagnosed paediatric HIV cases globally are among children older than two years of age. Testing strategies that go beyond early infant diagnosis are therefore essential. Outpatient testing and index testing are key to finding undiagnosed children and adolescents living with HIV. In 2022, UNICEF and the United States of America Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, with partners, convened a technical consultation to identify specific gaps in national child case-finding strategies. UNICEF also established a Paediatric Case Finding Work Group to support countries to accelerate rates of paediatric testing, diagnosis and links to treatment and care.

**HIV outcomes improved for pregnant and parenting adolescents.** UNICEF supported governments to provide services for pregnant adolescents and young mothers. This included stronger effective peer-led approaches that support and mentor young mothers and equip community health workers to provide psychosocial, mental health support and referrals. UNICEF supported research partners in the first analytical longitudinal study (Hey BABY) in Africa to assess pathways to resilience among adolescent parent families living with and without HIV (in South Africa).

**HIV prevention and treatment prioritized for adolescents, especially adolescent girls and young key populations.** UNICEF supported governments to implement tailored HIV services for adolescents and young people, including through peer-led programmes,

differentiated service delivery using digital technologies, access to self-testing, and use of PrEP. With UN partners and stakeholders, UNICEF supported the global Adolescent and young key populations network to conduct a technical update of the [adolescent and young key population toolkit](#) and to launch the "Young Champions for Equality" project to strengthen youth-led movements working for an AIDS-free future.

**Adolescents empowered and youth leadership supported in the HIV response.**

UNICEF advanced programmes that focus on empowering adolescents and young people to be agents of change to design HIV and other health services and programmes that meet their needs. UNICEF and partners in the Joint UN Programme [2gether4SRHR](#) developed, in collaboration with Y+Global (the Global Network of Young People Living with HIV) and adolescents and young people from five countries in eastern and southern Africa, a [toolkit](#) to improve the knowledge and engagement of adolescents and young people on HIV and sexual and reproductive health issues and to increase uptake of services. UNICEF also collaborated with Y+Global to implement the Ground Up! initiative, which supports the leadership of youth-led HIV and sexual and reproductive health and rights networks across six countries in eastern and southern Africa and supported young LGBTI+ advocates and dialogue with governments and partners to advance national comprehensive sexuality education.

**Evidence generated to strengthen adolescent programming.** UNICEF, together with the UNAIDS Secretariat, published an important [advocacy brief](#), which describes the HIV epidemic among young people from key populations in Asia and Pacific, and priority actions to accelerate progress. UNICEF and the "Accelerating achievement for Africa's adolescents (Accelerate)" hub sponsored research which:

- showed the negative [impacts of violence on ART adherence](#) among adolescents living with HIV;
- identified key risks and facilitators that influence [pathways between mental health and HIV outcomes](#) for adolescents;
- highlighted [key areas for interventions](#) for more effective provision of integrated services and support for adolescents living with HIV; and
- described [programming implications](#) for adolescent pathways in HIV care.

**Harmful gender norms addressed.** To accelerate progress for girls and young women, UNICEF worked in partnership with governments, UN agencies, community partners and young women. For example, through the [Spotlight Initiative](#), UNICEF supports efforts to reduce gender-based violence. As part of [Education Plus](#), UNICEF promotes young women's voices and leadership and works to accelerate actions and investments to prevent HIV, using secondary education as a strategic entry point.

**Digital innovations to reach adolescents accelerated.** UNICEF continued to build on the success of the youth-friendly "U-Test" model, which combines social media, digital outreach and traditional HIV prevention methods to reach young people with HIV information and link them to support and care, including PrEP. "U-Test" has reached 2.8 million young people, with 75 000 HIV self-test kits distributed, 139 young people who tested positive enrolled in ART and almost 2,000 young people enrolled for PrEP.

**Innovative, HIV-sensitive social protection approaches designed and implemented.**

UNICEF further collaborated with partners to implement and evaluate a "Cash Plus" model,

as part of the cash transfer and livelihood enhancement programme of the United Republic of Tanzania. A [report](#) published in 2022 examined the impact of the model. UNICEF initiated the first systematic review of bundled interventions for adolescents at risk of, or living with HIV, and how they can be strengthened further.

**Diagnostics strengthened within national health systems.** UNICEF supported governments to strengthen national diagnostic systems, especially at the community health level, and to engage with communities to increase uptake of diagnostic services across all ages, including for HIV, tuberculosis (TB), malaria and human papilloma virus. UNICEF is working globally within the [Community Health Roadmap](#) partnership to train community health workers on diagnostic tools, including for HIV.

**Continuity of HIV services ensured in humanitarian contexts.** In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and other emergencies, including the diversion of resources away from HIV services and disruptions to supply chains, UNICEF worked to protect women, children and adolescents from acquiring HIV and worked to ensure access to treatment and care to those with HIV infection.

**UNAIDS**

20 Avenue Appia  
CH-1211 Geneva 27  
Switzerland

+41 22 791 3666

[unaids.org](http://unaids.org)