



Term of Reference

Conduct Joint Multidisciplinary Study on Poverty, Vulnerability and HIV, and Contribute from Demographic Intelligence Perspective

Background

a) Challenges on inclusive and sustainable development for people living with HIV (PLHIV) and their families under the circumstances of China's eradication of poverty beyond 2020

The Chinese government has made remarkable progress on HIV response and implemented a series of HIV-related health services for people living with HIV, such as the “Four Free One Care” policy since 2004. However, HIV epidemic is still evolving and has been influencing the country more deeply in the past decade. Latest data shows that about 1.25 million people were living with HIV in China by the end of 2018 with more than half of them concentrating in the south central and western China where there is a long history of HIV epidemic and home to the majority of people living in poverty in this country. HIV has affected people's lives more than ever, especially for women, young people, elderly persons, key populations including LGBTI people and their partners, as well as their families.

On the other hand, social environment and public services such as healthcare, employment, education, and social protection policies and mechanisms have not been fully adapted to meet the needs of people living with or affected by HIV. Discrimination against PLHIV has significant impact on people's employment, such as losing jobs, training or promotion opportunities, which had further deteriorated family income. Although antiviral medicines are included in national free ART program which is provided for free, lifelong HIV treatment has caused side effects and other subsequent illnesses, as well as higher prevalence of co-infections and co-morbidities among PLHIV. Gender inequality on accessing HIV services are still not well recognized and addressed in some places. Discrimination against LGBTI people has also affected their access to HIV-related care and services as well as their access to employment, leading to both poor health outcomes and economic hardships.

b) UN Joint Multi- disciplinary research on poverty and vulnerability as a result of HIV infections

China is one of the “earlier adopters” for developing new UNSDCF 2021-2025 to focus on a domestic programme that addresses poverty, vulnerability and unbalanced development and an international programme that enhances China's engagement with the rest of the world, through various platforms including South-South Cooperation platforms.

To build a strong basis for the development of a new Joint plan from 2021 that is aligned to a new UNSDCF, the UN Joint Team on HIV and AIDS has agreed to focus its country envelop allocation for 2020

in such a way that it responds to national needs and **builds evidence for the linkages between poverty, vulnerability, inequality and HIV and AIDS.**

After three rounds of internal discussions, the Joint UN Team on AIDS in China has agreed to conduct a multi-disciplinary study in 2020 to better understand the situation and challenges of people living with and affected by HIV, especially people in remote areas of China, with focus on their financial burden in accessing healthcare services, and to what extent they experience increased household costs, as well as the determinants driving PLHIV to poverty such as access to employment, access to social protection, etc., based on the assumption that the provinces with the highest poverty rates also tend to be where HIV-related burden is most severe. In line with the plan, the UN China HIV Country Envelop co-sponsoring agencies, including UNWOMEN, WHO, ILO and UNFPA will contract several research institutes to conduct the multi-disciplinary research, using the same research instruments which are agreed and validated by all stakeholders.

c) HIV and AIDS, and Demographic Intelligence

UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, is the UN lead agency in sexual and reproductive health and rights. It also has strong focus on population development issues. Equipped with disaggregated data and analysis, UNFPA China office has worked with numerous national partners for the past decades to ensure that women, young people and the elderly population have equal access to high quality social services and are able to realize their full potential.

Policies targeting disaggregated sub-populations are key to alleviate poverty and improve the livelihood for people living with HIV. Demographic characteristics should be taken into consideration when developing these policies in China. Evidences show that young people and the elderly population in China are particularly at risk of being affected by HIV. Though the general trend of new HIV infections in China is stable in last 10 years, the situation for young people and the elderly population, especially key population is concerning. Meanwhile, reports also show that social insurance coverage for young people and elderly is lower than the rest of the population. Therefore, once young people and the elderly population are infected with HIV, they are left in a more vulnerable situation, which may lead to increased poverty.

Purpose

To generate national level evidences for poverty situation of PLHIV due to HIV infection, and their vulnerability to poverty situation, from the demographic intelligence lens, and to utilize the recommendations of the study to develop the next UN joint HIV work plan and conduct policy advocacy.

* This study is part of the UN joint multi-disciplinary research on HIV, poverty and vulnerability. It will approach the main topic from demographic intelligence lens focusing on particular population groups that are young people (15-24) and elderly population (60 and above). The other lens will include, among others, financial burden of PLHIV, employment discrimination and gender disparities among PLHIV.

Key research question

1. What are the particular factors that put young people living with HIV in particular vulnerable situations that may lead to poverty? What is the status of young people living with HIV on health care needs, employment, education and other social needs? Are they at lower socio-economic status or at more risk to vulnerability and poverty than other PLHIV or other age groups? If they are, what are the particular factors?
2. What are the particular factors that put the elderly population living with HIV in particular vulnerable situations that may lead to poverty? What is the status of elderly population living with HIV on health care needs and other social needs? Are they at lower socio-economic status or at more risk to vulnerability and poverty than other PLHIV or other age groups? If they are, what are the particular factors?
3. How to address previously mentioned factors at project and policy levels, in order to improve the livelihood of young people and the elderly who are living with HIV?

Key activities

- a) In partnership with Peking University and relevant UN agencies, to develop the research design, including sampling strategy, research instrument and implementation plan. In particular, to highlight the youth and elderly population lens in the research design;
- b) To collect data using the jointly agreed and validated research instruments in selected field sites, according to the sampling strategy;
- c) To conduct qualitative interviews, including focused group discussions and in-depth interviews with key informants to complement the findings in the quantitative research;
- d) To write a thematic report focusing on demographic intelligence and the cross linkage with poverty and vulnerability among PLHIV, and provide recommendation for policy development.

Expected deliverables:

1. Well-designed study proposal and implementation plan
2. A list of key indicators for the study
3. Finalized joint multidisciplinary research instrument;
4. Finalized joint multidisciplinary research report, with contributions from the contractee;
5. A demographic intelligence focused report on HIV, vulnerability and poverty;

* All documents should be submitted to UNFPA in English

Qualifications:

1. Experienced national institute in the field of HIV and AIDS, preferably with significant experience in managing national researches and policy advocacy;
2. The team members should have work experience with the United Nations agencies;

3. The team member should be fluent in both Chinese and English;
4. The team should have sufficient understanding of population and demographic issues, in particular on young people and the elderly population;

How to apply

Interested national institute should submit a technical proposal and a budget plan to Mr. Junjian Gaoshan (gaoshan@unfpa.org) before 15th September, 2020. Only shortlisted applicants will be invited for further interviews.