



Joint evaluation of the UN Joint Programme on AIDS's work on efficient and sustainable financing

Evaluation offices of UNAIDS and UNFPA
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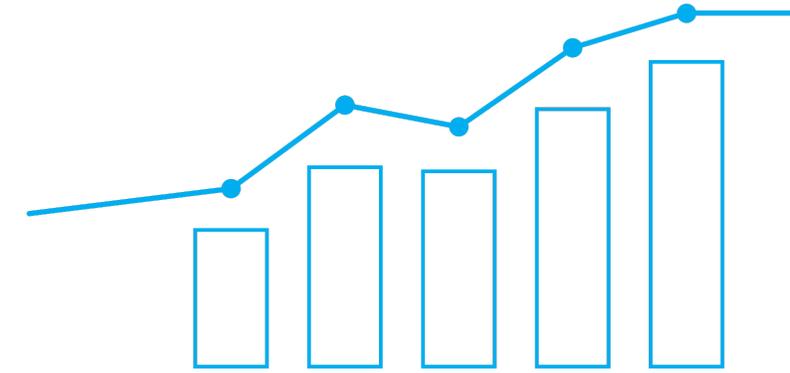




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Background and Evaluation Objectives



Changes in the AIDS financing landscape, the fiscal implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and the new Global AIDS Strategy 2021–26 present an important opportunity to assess the achievements to date and priorities going forward for the UNAIDS Joint Programme’s contribution to efficient and sustainable financing for the AIDS response.

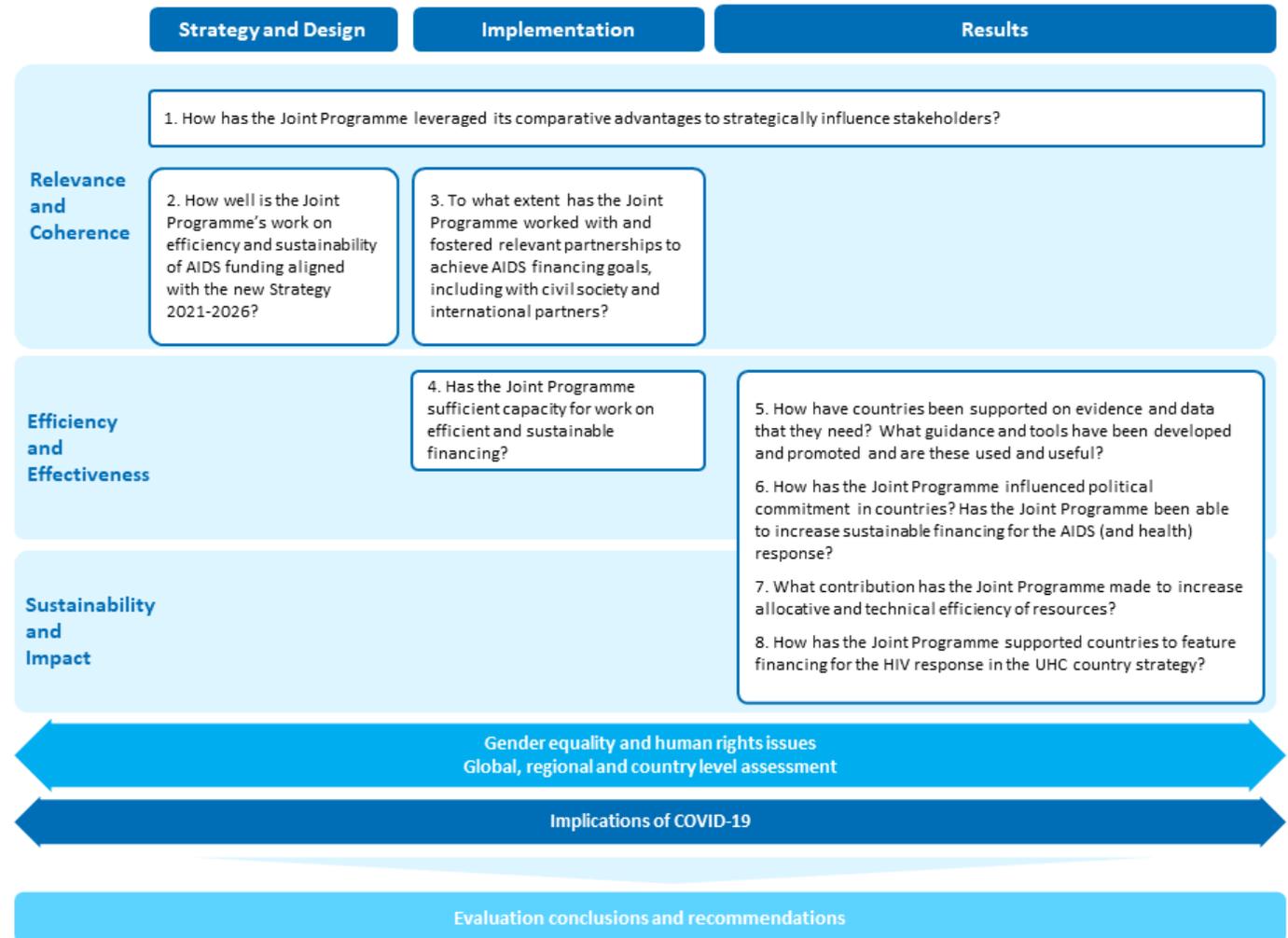
Specifically, the evaluation objectives were as follows:

- To provide an independent assessment of the Joint Programme support considering all OECD DAC evaluation criteria, but with a focus on relevance, coherence and effectiveness.
- To draw key conclusions on what is working well, what the Joint Programme should stop doing, and what the gaps are.
- To provide a set of clear, forward-looking and actionable recommendations to the Co-sponsors and the Secretariat for maximising the contributions to efficient and sustainable resourcing of the AIDS response.

Approach and Methodology (1/2)

- Evaluation Framework based on the evaluation objectives and scope.
- Structured in terms of three aspects of the Joint Programme functioning (strategy and design, implementation, and results).
- Considers 8 evaluation questions representing the full set of OECD DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact.
- Emphasis on relevance, coherence and effectiveness.

Figure 1. Evaluation Framework



Approach and Methodology (2/2)

Theory-based approach: Theory of change for the Joint Programme's work in efficient and sustainable financing was constructed by the evaluators during the inception period.

Mixed-methods evaluation:

- Document review and Intervention Mapping
UNAIDS & Cosponsor materials, JPMS, UNAIDS evaluations, select materials from partners, wider literature
- Data and quantitative analysis
UBRAF budgets, SRA7 and 8 indicators, UNAIDS HIV financial dashboard
- 44 KIIs/FGDs
UNAIDS Secretariat and World Bank, WHO, UNDP; Key funders (Global Fund, PEPFAR/USAID); Civil society; UNAIDS Advisory Break-out Group on AIDS financing members; Others—e.g. Technical and Academic partners (e.g. OPM/TSM, Avenir), UHC2030
- Country case studies in Tanzania, Côte d'Ivoire, Viet Nam, Kazakhstan
17 KIIs on average per country (plus review of 2 transcripts in Viet Nam)
Select document and data review, drawing on materials shared by country offices and partners
Supported by in country associates (Kazakhstan associate based in EECA region)

Framework for assessing robustness of findings (strength of evidence): both quality and quantity.

Evaluation Messages ‘In Brief’



The Joint Programme has made important contributions to improving allocative and technical efficiency of the AIDS response, with support for Investment Cases, National Strategic Plans and Global Fund proposals having the most significant impact.



In countries, UNAIDS comparative advantage of convening power, political advocacy with governments and role as a neutral broker directly contribute to Global Fund and PEPFAR funding processes and domestic commitments to HIV.



The Joint Programme is not sufficiently engaging the financing expertise that exists within the Cosponsor agencies, in particular the World Bank at country level. The Joint Programme should define a coherent approach to efficient and sustainable financing that resonates with the Secretariat and Cosponsors and source the needed capacities, with a light touch coordination mechanism with the Global Fund and PEPFAR on shared objectives.



The Joint Programme's inclusiveness of civil society, community-based organisations and key populations—ensuring their “seat at the table”—is regarded as central to its identity and has directly contributed to funding key population services and community-led responses. More is needed to strengthen these organisations’ capacity to engage in the financing agenda for sustained community-led responses.



The Joint Programme should create a common vision and improve coordination with regard the integration of HIV financing within the wider Health and UHC financing agenda, and the analytic products and strategic information that support this approach.



Allocative and technical efficiency, particularly focused on domestic financing, should be a priority for the Joint Programme given it is central to achieving the UNAIDS targets in the constrained funding landscape.

Evaluation Conclusions

Conclusion 1. In efficient and sustainable financing for the HIV response, the UNAIDS Secretariat comparative advantage lies in its convening power and political advocacy role. As a “neutral arbiter” UNAIDS can engage key stakeholders in HIV financing discussions.

- The core comparative advantage of UNAIDS with regards to financing work lies in its convening power and political advocacy role, being perceived as a “neutral arbiter” amongst stakeholders.
- With its country presence, UNAIDS has the mandate and has played an important coordinating role across government, donors, civil society, CBOs, communities, as well as Cosponsors of the Joint Programme.
- UNAIDS has also played a critical role in increasing the political commitment for HIV in countries, with high-level engagements being a driving factor across multiple countries.

Evaluation Conclusions

Conclusion 2. The Joint Programme as a whole makes key contributions to efficient and sustainable HIV financing through its support for analytic products and strategic information, with some tools and data viewed as more effective than others.

- The Joint Programme's role in the creation of analytic projects and Strategic Information is prime, supporting the funding allocations of the Global Fund and PEPFAR.
- UNAIDS is regarded as the gatekeeper of all data and information with regards to the AIDS epidemic, useful for resource mobilisation and prioritisation.
- NSPs, investment cases and sustainability plans are well regarded but mixed views on other tools and studies (e.g. criticisms of the NASAs being very resource intensive and duplicative).
- Need for greater coordination amongst the UNAIDS Secretariat, Cosponsors, the Global Fund and other stakeholders with regards to financing strategic information and tools.

Evaluation Conclusions

Conclusion 3. The Joint Programme is not adequately engaging the financing expertise that exists within the Cosponsor agencies, undermining the ambition of efficient and sustainable financing for the AIDS response. Greater coherence amongst the Secretariat and Cosponsors is required for the financing workstream.

- Within the efficient and sustainable financing workstream, the UNAIDS division of labour is not functioning optimally at global nor country levels. There is insufficient engagement by Cosponsors and ad-hoc and haphazard coordination between the Secretariat and Cosponsors, with COVID-19 further impacting joint work.
- At country level, the division of labour does not reflect how the Secretariat and Cosponsors are operating, in particular the World Bank's direct engagement with Ministries of Finance, with minimal coordination with other Joint Programme agencies.
- Within the Joint Programme agencies, the agenda for efficient and sustainable financing for the HIV response has lacked coherence. This is amplified by the challenge of the 'HIV focused' mandate of the Joint Programme and that of the Cosponsors which institutionally focus on financing for the SDGs and Health/UHC, with HIV as priority 'within' these.

Evaluation Conclusions

Conclusion 4. There are challenges around coordination and integration of strategic information on financing.

- Core need for greater coordination amongst the UNAIDS Secretariat, Cosponsors, the Global Fund and other stakeholders with regards to strategic information in relation to financing, with lack of information on who is doing what with which country and when.
- Clear and operational workplan recognised between the organisations (and other relevant partners) as the 'base or framework' for joint working is lacking.
- Challenges with inadequate integration of financing tools with other diseases and health areas, resulting in duplicative work.

Evaluation Conclusions

Conclusion 5. The Joint Programme has inadequate focusing on follow through of analytic products (NSPs, investment cases, sustainable financing and transition plans) to longer-term results.

- Relatively strong coherence in using the NSPs/ investment cases for Global Fund processes which has directly contributed to increased and more efficient use of resources for the HIV response, however inadequate focus on longer-term opportunities to leverage the Joint Programme's government relationships to influence policies and strengthen sustainability of the HIV response.
- Some of the above challenges stem from the Joint Programme approach to activity and output-based results measurement which prevents an adequate and much needed focus on the outcomes of financing work. Stakeholders cite an 'output-driven' measurement culture and UBRAF.

Evaluation Conclusions

Conclusion 6. Joint Programme work with civil society, community-led and key population-led organisations is regarded as central to its identity and key for engaging with and increasing financing for KPs from donors, although limited progress has been made with regards to their capacity building.

- Joint Programme support to civil society, community-based organisations and key populations to engage in Global Fund processes is regarded as contributing to directing funding towards community responses.
- Progress on social contracting is viewed as an important contribution to efficiency and sustainability through directing public financing to the HIV response and improving the effectiveness of community-led service provision, particularly in transition countries.
- While there are good examples of Joint Programme contribution to political commitment, political will to commit domestic resources to key aspects of the response: prevention, services for KP, CBOs and KP-led services remains a challenge.
- Less evidence on the extent the Joint Programme has strengthened CSO, CBOs and KP-led organisations' capacity to engage with governments.

Evaluation Conclusions

Conclusion 7. The Joint Programme has made important contributions to improving allocative and technical efficiency of the AIDS response, but more work is needed in this area in particular within domestically financed HIV responses.

- Many stakeholders emphasised that the work on allocative and technical efficiency needs to be a top priority in the HIV financing space given the plateauing of external HIV financing and increased pressure on domestic resources due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Advancing on allocative and technical efficiencies was considered by many as prerequisite to achieving the ambitious AIDS targets, particularly within domestically financed HIV responses.

Evaluation Conclusions

Conclusion 8. In countries transitioning from donor funding, the Joint Programme holds a unique role in improving efficient and sustainable financing.

- In these contexts, there is less scope for donors to influence government through their more modest levels of funding, and so the Joint Programme is regarded as having a crucial role in supporting evidence-based national plans and dialogue with governments (advocating for policy and programmatic support for KP services and supporting social contracting).
- Case studies in Kazakhstan and Viet Nam highlight that decentralisation of government HIV financing will bring new challenges with the need to advocate to local governments on HIV financing and efficiencies.

Evaluation Conclusions

Conclusion 9. The Joint Programme has supported a UHC orientation in global-level strategies but not at the country-level, and there is a need to further define its approach to HIV within the UHC and multisectoral financing context.

- Global strategies have embraced a UHC orientation, but the four country case studies in this evaluation found limited to no fundamental shift in financing flows and governance.
- Coordination within the Joint Programme on HIV and UHC is limited at global and country levels and the high levels of HIV financing compared to other health priorities and reduced UBRAF funding are regarded as barriers.
- To achieve the ambition of the 2021-2026 Global AIDS Strategy, the Joint Programme needs to better define its focus and approach to HIV within the UHC and multisectoral financing context, and match this with appropriate technical expertise.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The Joint Programme should continue to focus and build upon its areas of comparative advantage in financing, including the Secretariat’s convening/coordinating role at global, regional and country levels and political advocacy, and the Joint Programme’s work as a whole on analytic tools, strategic information, and policy guidance. In particular, any change and/ or expansion in mandate for the work of the Secretariat should be carefully considered alongside the mandate of the Cosponsors and other organisations as well as its capacities and resources.

Directed to: UNAIDS Secretariat, Cosponsors

- The UNAIDS Secretariat should continue to leverage its “neutral arbiter”/ convener role.
- It should also continue to harness its critical role in political advocacy for AIDS financing in close partnership with the key international funders for AIDS, and reflect evolving context for HIV within the wider UHC, SDG, and COVID-19 environment.
- The Joint Programme could better leverage and coordinate in this area with Cosponsors, in particular the World Bank, given the Bank’s strong relationships with Ministries of Finance and Economy.
- The Joint Programme should emphasise the work on developing strategic information in support of efficient and sustainable financing, employing an “end-user” lens.
- The Joint Programme should build on its role with regards to engagement and capacity building of CSOs by supporting sustainable financing of civil society and community-led and KP-led organisations.
- The Secretariat and the Joint Programme should closely consider how to engage in the macroeconomic financing agenda and specifically tax reform agenda, carefully clarifying Secretariat roles in relation to its resources and the risk of overlap and duplication with Cosponsors and other agencies.

Recommendations

Recommendation 2: The Joint Programme should clearly define its approach to efficient and sustainable financing and related work plan for the Secretariat and Cosponsors.

Directed to: UNAIDS Secretariat, UNDP, World Bank; with the Global AIDS Strategy 2021-26 Results Area 8 primary contributing organisations of UNICEF, WFP, UNFPA, WHO

- UNAIDS should develop a strategy/ concept note for efficient and sustainable financing, with clearly defined overall objectives, the key activities to be undertaken to support the achievement of these objectives and key results, and related resourcing. This should be based on a ToC model.
- The Joint Programme should move beyond an activity and output-based reporting and measurement approach and focus more on the outcomes of its work. Within the work on efficient and sustainable financing in particular, greater attention should be paid on measuring the translation of strategic information, national strategies, and analytic products into policy changes and financing increases, and the impact of CSO and KP engagement in terms of increased capacity building and financing, etc.

Recommendations

Recommendation 3: The Joint Programme should seek to leverage additional and the right capacities in support of its goals of efficient and sustainable financing.

Directed to: UNAIDS Secretariat, UNDP, World Bank and other Cosponsors as relevant

- The Joint Programme should set up a “light-touch” coordinating mechanism or working group for efficient and sustainable financing, led by co-convenors and the Secretariat, which also engages closely with PEPFAR and the Global Fund. There should be agreement on a quorum of Cosponsor membership for this working group, reflecting the main HIV and health financing partners. The financing coordinating mechanism/ working group should ensure the inclusion of health financing expertise from the Cosponsors as part of its membership. The coordinating mechanism should build upon and leverage other coordinating mechanisms such as the SDG3 Global Action Plan Sustainable Financing Accelerator platform.
- The Secretariat and the World Bank should together consider how greater collaboration can be facilitated at the country level, building on the opportunity for a common approach to sustainable health financing and efficiency that builds on the World Bank’s broader work in health financing and working with Ministries of Finance.
- The Secretariat should selectively strengthen its capacity in HIV and health financing, focusing on supporting the efficiency of funding of the AIDS response (as a priority for focus with flat-lining funding) as well as broader health expertise that helps link HIV within the UHC and multisectoral context.

Recommendations

Recommendation 4: UNAIDS should continue to evolve its partnership with the key international funders such as PEPFAR and the Global Fund to ensure relevance and added value, whilst continuing to leverage the Joint Programme's comparative advantage at country level.

Directed to: UNAIDS Secretariat, Cosponsors

- Given the prominence of PEPFAR and the Global Fund in AIDS financing, the Joint Programme needs to continue to work in close partnership with these organisations, seeking to engage and coordinate with them alongside the set of Cosponsors.
- In particular, the partnership with the Global Fund should seek to ensure better coordination of the generation of analytic products and strategic information. UNAIDS also needs to improve timeliness of delivery of strategic information in country in relation to Global Fund processes.
- The partnership with both the Global Fund and PEPFAR should continue to build upon the country presence of the Secretariat and wider Joint Programme and its convening role in support of advancing the PEPFAR objectives.

Recommendations

Recommendation 5: The Joint Programme should further strengthen the engagement and capacity building for civil society, CBOs and KP-led organisations to engage in domestic financing debates.

Directed to: UNAIDS Secretariat, Cosponsors

- The Joint Programme should continue to strengthen CSO and KP capacity to engage in national plans and external funding processes. In addition, there should be more work to strengthen CSO and KP-led organisations to lobby for and receive funding from domestic sources, with social contracting in transitioning countries and sharing of best practices across countries to be strengthened going forward.

Recommendations

Recommendation 6: The Joint Programme should improve coordination on its analytic work and strategic information on efficient and sustainable financing, and develop a common vision around the role of future tools, in particular regarding the integration into the wider UHC agenda, and consider ways for more effective translation to policy.

Directed to: UNAIDS Secretariat, Cosponsors

- A starting point should be a clear mapping of planned and completed analytic products such as NSPs, investment cases, cost-efficiency studies, sustainability and transition plans etc by the Joint Programme by country. This should be made available widely to all partners for improved and transparent working.
- The Joint Programme should develop a strategic vision for some of its key tools, in particular with regard to the tension between being HIV specific and integrating with other disease areas.
- Additionally, there should be more processes to encourage and monitor the translation of strategic information and analytic products into national policy. This could include allocation of resources to dissemination and advocacy around key strategic information pieces; close collaboration with national actors, including CSOs, during the development and to keep track on the progress of key strategic products such as investment cases or transition plans; amongst others.

Recommendations

Recommendation 7: The work on allocative and technical efficiency should be a priority for the Joint Programme, given plateauing funding for HIV. This includes identification of efficiency opportunities through its existing work in analysis and strategic information, emphasising translation of this information into policy.

Directed to: UNAIDS Secretariat, Cosponsors

- There has been some good progress in this area over the last few years which should be further strengthened, such as modelling support for investment cases and NSPs, coordination with external donors in particular around Global Fund country requests as well as the work around social contracting and community-led service delivery generally. Nevertheless, this is an area which requires much further work, given it is central to achieving the Global AIDS Strategy and the UNAIDS targets in the current constrained funding landscape. In particular, the Joint Programme needs to play a key role in encouraging and following up on identified efficiency opportunities including leveraging technologies, and increased domestic funding.
- The Joint Programme should elevate its efforts to increase domestic resources to enable achieving the Global AIDS Targets and sustain the gains. There is a need to include quality sustainable financing plans, that include progressive integration, and support effective transition where donors have planned to exit.

Recommendations

Recommendation 8: The Joint Programme should create a common vision and improve coordination with regard to the integration of HIV financing within the wider UHC financing agenda.

Directed to: UNAIDS Secretariat, Cosponsors

- The Joint Programme should develop a clear and well-communicated approach to its work with regards to the integration of HIV within the wider financing agenda. This would entail a careful consideration of where the HIV agenda can inform and amplify the UHC financing agenda that has wide ranging benefits that also advance HIV outcomes. Similarly, it would also involve a careful consideration of the extent to which HIV-specific financing objectives and advocacy efforts increase cross-disease/UHC supportive inefficiencies, and where spill-overs, mutually supportive programme and system investments, integrated systems approaches etc are overlooked.
- Stakeholders widely view the Joint Programme's value add for UHC as partnership with CSOs, community-led and KP-led partners and fostering their inclusion within national dialogues which the Secretariat should build on with Cosponsors and partners.



20 Avenue Appia
1211 Geneva 27
Switzerland

+41 22 791 3666
distribution@unaids.org

unaids.org



UNAIDS

**Joint evaluation of the UN Joint
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Report



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Access to the report

<https://www.unaids.org/en/whoweare/evaluation>